The Union Army had something to do with it: General Lee's plan at Gettysburg and why it failed

Paul Mengel

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THE UNION ARMY HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT:

GENERAL LEE’S PLAN AT

GETTYSBURG AND WHY IT FAILED

by

Paul Mengel

Thesis

Submitted to the Department of History and Philosophy

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in

History

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Ypsilanti, Michigan
DEDICATION

To Kathy, who always thought I should do this sort of thing, and to my parents,

who helped make it possible.
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ABSTRACT

The question considered is what General Robert E. Lee’s plan for the battle of Gettysburg actually was, and why he fought the battle the way he did, based on a reexamination of extensive commentaries left by the participants in the battle.

General Lee believed that the Confederacy could not outlast the Union but had to win battles to cause the Union to abandon the war. This was one purpose of the invasion of the North. An initially favorable opportunity arose at Gettysburg. Despite some setbacks, Lee was encouraged and kept attacking. His plans failed because the Union Army had so weakened the Confederates that, on the third day, Lee’s subordinate commanders did not show their usual initiative and a pitifully small percentage of the army was involved. Accordingly, the attack failed, no victory to discourage the North took place, and attrition eventually led to the inevitable logical conclusion.
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Introduction

E. Porter Alexander was the de facto chief of artillery for the First Corps of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, commanded by Lt. Gen. James E. Longstreet. He was also one of the more fair-minded observers and reporters of that army's activities. Alexander was remarkably free of the rote ideology of the “Lost Cause.” For instance, although he fully understood how certain of the comments made after the war by Longstreet might have grated on Lee’s admirers, he consistently defends Longstreet from his critics and is willing to criticize certain of the moves of General Lee. He opines that Hooker’s decision to recross the Rappahannock at the end of the battle of Chancellorsville without waiting for the relatively straight-on attack that Lee was planning might have spared the Confederates a rather nasty licking. Though not completely reconstructed (I don’t think any Confederate, including Longstreet, ever was), his relatively even-handed consideration of the wisdom of the various strategic and tactical decisions of the Confederates is almost unique among first-hand reporters.

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2 Ibid., xxiv-xxv
4 See Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy*, 233-234, 245-246, 277-278
On page 200 of his *Military Memoirs of a Confederate* he makes the following very interesting statement regarding the stand of a small portion of the Union Army of the Potomac that had a brief but intense struggle with elements of Stonewall Jackson's wing on August 28, 1862, on the eve of the Second Battle of Bull Run (Manassas):

The notable part of this action was fought by Gibbon's Brigade of three Wisconsin regiments, and one Indiana reenforced by two regiments of Doubleday’s, --the 56th Pa. and the 76th N.Y., --in all about 3000 men. Opposed was Taliaferro's front line of two brigades (A. G. Taliaferro's on the right, and the Stonewall brigade, now only about 600 strong, under Baylor, on the left) with some help also from Ewell's front line of Lawton's brigade, and Trimble's. These troops were all veteran infantry, and it is to be noted that the decidedly smaller force of the Federals had never before been seriously engaged. They had, indeed, the great aid and support of two excellent batteries, but their desperate infantry fight, attested by their losses, illustrates the high state of efficiency to which troops may be brought solely by drill and discipline. It may be a sort of mechanical valor which is imparted by long-trained obedience to military commands, but it has its advantages, even though there may be appreciable differences in it from the more personal courage inspired by a loved cause.  

The unit, the "mechanical valor" of which so impressed Alexander, would add another regiment, a Michigan one, and would fight itself almost to extinction in the desperate attempt to deny the Confederates the high ground south and east of Gettysburg on July 1, 1863. By then it had acquired a name. It was called the Iron Brigade.  

If even so dispassionate an observer as Alexander, forty years after the fight (years which he had spent very successfully in the revived republic for which the Iron Brigade fought) can still see nothing but the results of drill and discipline in the efforts of the Iron Brigade and appears not to consider that they may have fought for an equally beloved cause as he did himself, certainly conveys much of the attitude of the Confederates. The attitude of those

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6 Ibid., 200.  
8 Gallagher Introduction to *Military Memoirs*, xix.
less fair-minded without forty years of distance between themselves and the events can be imagined.

Of course, the Confederates lost the war. In view of the courage imparted by the much-loved cause, how could this have happened? It certainly was no fault of the Union (as perhaps only someone as little reputation to risk as Pickett could have suggested).\(^9\)

The tenor of Confederate history was much as is described by General Francis W. Palfrey in his *The Antietam and Fredericksburg*.\(^10\) Attributing the quote to an unnamed New England veteran, he comments, "A few more years, a few more books, and it will appear that Lee and Longstreet, and a one-armed orderly, and a casual with a shot-gun, fought all the battles of the rebellion, and killed all the Union soldiers except those who ran away."\(^11\) However reticent he was to adopt the quote as his own, it is clear that Palfrey saw truth in it and was rather sick and tired of it. The feeling is easy for a modern student of confederate writing to share. The chapter on Gettysburg in Shelby Foote's *Narrative History of the Civil War* is called "The Stars in their Courses."\(^12\) So maybe it was Longstreet, maybe Stuart, maybe Ewell. Maybe just sheer bad luck or God's will or fate, any explanation other than that the Union Army had just won.

It is considered a truism that the winners write the history, but the history of the Civil War, or at least the war in the Virginia theatre, was, if not written only by the losers,

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\(^9\) Pickett is supposed to have said, when asked, why the battle had been lost that he believed "The Union Army had had something to do with it." Carol Reardon, “The Convergence of History and Myth in the Southern Past, Pickett’s Charge” in *The Third Day at Gettysburg and Beyond* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 84. Her note to the quotation (footnote 98) comments “A frequently repeated story, one version of which can be found in LaSalle Corbell Pickett, ‘My Solider,’ *McClure’s*, 1908, 569.” Accordingly, as with anything from Pickett transmitted by his widow LaSalle, it is perhaps questionable if he ever really said it.


\(^11\) Ibid., 64-65.

commandeered by the losers and made to serve their own purposes.\textsuperscript{13} This is especially true of the Battle of Gettysburg, at least with regard to the strategy and tactics employed. The Union history of Gettysburg tended to be the story of individual units, many of whom seemed to believe that their own little part of the battle had been decisive and had saved the Union. One example is the abiding belief of the men of Carroll’s Brigade that their charge on Cemetery Hill on the night of July 2, 1863, saved the day, a story that they relentlessly repeated to all who would listen for the rest of their lives.\textsuperscript{14} More successful ultimately, as it has become part of the popular version of the battle, as enshrined in the movie \textit{Gettysburg}, is the claim to have saved the Union of the 20th Maine.\textsuperscript{15} Very little attention has been paid to the strategy and the tactics of the battle with the exception of the long-running battle between supporters of Sickles and supporters of Meade as to whether the unauthorized advance of Sickles’ Third Corps on July 2, 1863, had saved the Union or had almost destroyed it.\textsuperscript{16}

On the Confederate side it has been different. It became convenient both to certain individuals and to the south as a whole to find explanations that explained the loss and yet sanctified it. The Battle of Gettysburg became the focal point of the most acrimonious debate, which sought to explain the general defeat (which occurred because of the loss of the Battle of Gettysburg) and, accordingly, that specific defeat. Lesser scapegoats such as Ewell and Stuart were toyed with, but eventually the towering figure

\textsuperscript{13} Among numerous other writers, see, for instance, William Garrett Piston, \textit{Lee’s Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History} (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 104-136.
\textsuperscript{15} See Mark Perry, \textit{Conceived in Liberty: Joshua Chamberlain, William Oates, and the American Civil War} (New York: Viking Penguin, 1994), 425, where it is stated baldly that the “little regiment saved the Union,” which might be considered a bit extreme.
\textsuperscript{16} The nature and duration of this dispute can be discerned from the title of the classic account of this controversy, Richard A. Sauers, \textit{A Caspian Sea of Ink: The Meade-Sickles Controversy} (Baltimore, Md.: Butternut and Blue, 1989).
(and appropriate Judas) of the scalawag Longstreet was chosen. Modern interpretations have chipped away at this conclusion (adopted for many years by many non-confederates) but some of the assumptions upon which it was based remained unquestioned. Perhaps it was not the mistakes of Longstreet, but of somebody else, maybe even the deified General Lee.

Maybe, however, it wasn't General Lee or anybody on the Confederate side. Maybe the Union just won. Maybe, of all people, it was long-curled, shadbake attending, ridiculous Pickett who had been right all along.

Background

Civil War History, and particularly the literature on the Battle of Gettysburg, has had a peculiar hybrid nature (perhaps all history, particularly military history has some of this character) in that the original sources as to what actually occurred slide almost imperceptibly into analysis and historical interpretation. Accordingly, the original historiography of the Battle of Gettysburg was fought out by veterans of the battle (and even some veterans who were not veterans of the battle, such as Richard Taylor, who though hundreds of miles away from Pennsylvania in July, 1863, felt qualified to comment), in such venues as the Annals of the War, Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, and most unremittingly in the Southern Historical Society Papers.

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17 See Piston, 104-136 for the forging of the consensus and 171-183 for its persistence.
21 Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, 4 vols., edited by Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel (New York: 1884-1888; Reprint, Seacaucus, New Jersey: Castle, Book Sales, n.d.). All references herein to Battles and Leaders are to Volume 3 (where the Gettysburg articles are collected) unless otherwise noted.
The version that these veterans established (with appropriately disparate views on
certain things, as their controversy demanded) of the Battle of Gettysburg reads
approximately as follows.\textsuperscript{23}

For whatever reason, presumably the ones stated in his subsequent reports,
General Lee decided to invade Pennsylvania. General Jeb Stuart, with the cavalry (it is
seldom noted that he didn't have all of the cavalry) being absent on a long raid behind the
Union lines (within the spirit of his orders or against them, depending on your view),
General Lee was blind, and, having learned of the nearby presence of the Army of the
Potomac from a scout of Longstreet's, hurried to call his widely scattered units, which
were raiding far and wide to collect supplies, back together. On June 30, 1863, advance
elements of Hill's corps met Union cavalry just west of Gettysburg and, not knowing
precisely what was up ahead, decided to retreat for the moment. The next morning,
General Hill having no objection, one division of the corps, commanded by Henry Heth,
headed towards Gettysburg to see what they could find. They accidentally ran into
Buford's cavalry in the fields north and west of Gettysburg and a battle evolved, fought
piecemeal by Heth, who was delayed long enough by Buford's cavalry for Union
infantry, including the above-noted Iron Brigade, to come up. The earliest Confederate
thrusts were defeated, sometimes disastrously so.

\textsuperscript{22} Southern Historical Society Papers, 52 vols. (Richmond: 1876-1953) [CD-ROM] (Carmel, Indiana:
Guild Press of Indiana, 1997; Indianapolis: Oliver Computing L.L.C., 1997). Subsequent citations will be
in the form Volume SHSP Page, i.e. 5 SHSP 92. These citations are equivalent to the C.D. citations which
take the form \textless shv5 92\textgreater .

\textsuperscript{23} In order not to litter this very general (and, for the most part, uncontroversial) rendering of the general
course of the Battle of Gettysburg, it should be noted that the essence of this account can be found many
places. The standard account remains Edwin B. Coddington, The Gettysburg Campaign, a Study in
Command (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1968; Reprint, Dayton: Morningside Books, 1979;
Ewell's corps was marching down from the North and arrived near Gettysburg in the early afternoon. They renewed the fight, Hill's corps joined in, and the Union Eleventh Corps, stationed north of the City, was put to flight, as eventually was the exhausted First Corps west of Gettysburg. The defeated Union troops retreated to Cemetery Hill, a relatively imposing piece of high ground, given the nature of the country, just south of Gettysburg. General Lee, who, despite the fact that he had not wanted a "general battle" joined until all the troops were up and having already been talked into letting Hill help Ewell in the late afternoon battle, ordered General Ewell (whose corps was coming in from the North and was now in the city) to take the hill, "if practicable." Whether out of confusion, misreading the peremptoriness of the order, or sheer common sense (an explanation, it might be noted, that would not be much considered until relatively modern times), Ewell did not deem it practicable. Thus, the hill remained in Union hands, and, during the night, additional Union corps arrived in the neighborhood of Gettysburg, until by daybreak, of the seven Corps of the Union Army, only the Fifth Corps, relatively nearby, and the Sixth Corps, still with a long march ahead of it, were missing.

What happened next is a matter of considerable controversy and will be dealt with at length in the thesis itself. For the purposes of the background of the present research, it is, I hope, necessary only to say that the following decisions were eventually (how eventually is a matter of controversy) made.

1. The main attack would not be made by Ewell's corps on the left from the city or its near environs against either Cemetery Hill or Culp's Hill, a larger hill somewhat to the east.
2. Nonetheless, the corps was to remain in position over on the extreme left and would not return to the main line of the Confederates, which had been set up along Seminary Ridge, west and southwest of Gettysburg.

3. The main attempt would be made by Longstreet's Corps, after having marched south, well to the right of the present Confederate position, hopefully beyond the left flank of the Union, who were occupying a long fishhook shaped position, from Culp's Hill in the extreme northeast, by way of Cemetery Hill at the apex, and along Cemetery Ridge to the south, though, as far as the Confederates knew, they had not occupied Little Round Top south of the end of Cemetery Ridge.

4. When Ewell heard the sound of Longstreet's guns, he would "demonstrate" on his front, to turn the demonstration into a real attack, should opportunity offer.

And so Longstreet marched off to the right. At approximately 4:00 p.m. he attacked (way too late for Longstreet's later critics, though, it should be noted that they had no such criticism for the even later attack after a long flank march that had been made by Stonewall Jackson, surprising and routing the poor Eleventh Corps [which had just been again routed north of Gettysburg] at Chancellorsville). After desperate fighting that eventually stretched far enough north to almost reach Cemetery Hill and included some of Hill's corps (but not all, as will be discussed in the thesis), the attacks were repulsed. Almost at the end of the fighting south and west of the city, Ewell's corps finally attacked Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill, and was generally repulsed, though certain Union works were occupied because their defenders had been hustled off to deal with the emergency on the Union left.
Lee wanted to try again the next day, but for whatever reason, the battle on the Confederate left in front of Culp's Hill (but not this time Cemetery Hill) flared up on the morning of the 3rd, well before any attack could be mounted on the Confederate right. Lee had to rethink the matter and eventually a massive charge was made on the Union center, the famous Pickett's charge. It was repulsed. Although the Second Corps (Ewell's) was pulled back from north and east of Gettysburg to the main lines west of the city, the Army of Northern Virginia stayed defiantly in its lines all the 4th (the day coincidentally that Vicksburg on the Mississippi was surrendered, though, of course, nobody in and around Gettysburg yet knew that). Then the army sadly returned to Virginia. The war went on for two more years.

The historiography (as opposed to the history) of the Battle of Gettysburg can be said to have begun in earnest on January 19, 1872, when Jubal Early made a speech at Washington & Lee College in Lexington, Virginia, in which he intimated that the reason the battle of Gettysburg had been lost was that General Longstreet disobeyed orders. He, claimed Early, had been expected (though, as Early carefully phrased it, at least in the beginning, it was not within Early’s knowledge whether he had been actually “ordered” to do so) to attack at dawn on the second of July. However, stewing over the General's rejection of his plans (there had been a debate the night before about what to do next, though how real and how spirited it was will be considered in the thesis), recalcitrant, ignorant, or just plain slow, Longstreet had frittered away most of the day before making the attack, which was fatal to the Confederate cause because, as Longstreet frittered, the balance of the Union Army came up, the battle was lost, and the Confederacy fell, all due
to the unconscionable actions of a single man (who continued his treason after the war by becoming a Republican).\textsuperscript{24}

Compared with what came afterwards, Early’s rebuke of Longstreet was really rather mild, certainly compared with his comments about anybody and everything Northern.\textsuperscript{25} And it might even be fairly said that Longstreet had “started it” (perhaps dating the historiography back to a year after the war ended) by his comments to the author William Swinton, who stated, citing Longstreet:

Indeed, in entering on the campaign, General Lee expressly promised his corps-commanders that he would not assume a tactical offensive, but force his antagonist to attack him. Having, however, gotten a taste of blood in the considerable success of the first day, the Confederate commander seems to have lost that equipoise in which his faculties commonly moved, and determined to give battle. (emphasis in original)\textsuperscript{26}

The story of the “sunrise attack order” was soon proved to be ridiculous (though Early never gave up on it, and Gen. Gordon, after the war a prominent Georgia politician, would take it up undismayed many years later)\textsuperscript{27} but Longstreet, in defending himself, managed to offend some of those who rallied to his side, including Lee's wartime aides who knew perfectly well that no "sunrise attack" order had been given, by appearing to claim to have been the brains behind Lee and otherwise casting aspersions on the military


\textsuperscript{25} As Early spoke in 1872 at the height of the North’s “oppression” of the South, it might be useful to contemplate what might have become of those who said such things as Early said of Northerners (including, one might add, in 1872, the sitting President, Ulysses S. Grant) about Hitler or Stalin.


genius of the saint and martyr who, it should noted, was safely dead by now, so that Early need not worry that the man himself might disavow the story of his defender.28

Thus, history melts into historiography, as the original sources engage in polemics and debate over what Lee really had in mind the evening of the first and the morning of the second. "Sunrise attack" order or not, that Longstreet was the major villain of the piece (with supporting roles for Stuart and Ewell) emerged as the standard interpretation, and it informs the multi-volume biography of Lee by Douglas Southhall Freeman and his multi-volume Lee's Lieutenants.29

The modern historiography can be said to have been initiated by a non-scholar, a newspaperman, Glen Tucker, who followed a more general account of the Battle of Gettysburg30 with a volume entitled Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg.31 In it, he argued conclusively that the dawn attack order had been a myth and that, despite the long accepted explanation, Longstreet may not have single-handedly lost the Battle of Gettysburg.32

The definitive modern account of the battle was Coddington's.33 Coddington may not have been the first to do so but his account reincorporated into the general story the fact that the Union Army of the Potomac, had, after all, been there too. He stresses (as is

28 Piston, 126-128.
32 It should be noted that, although there was certainly no specific "sunrise attack" order, it does not follow that Longstreet's actions were fully in accordance with his commander's intentions or not open to question.
indicated in his subtitle, *A Study in Command*), the correct choices made by the Union command, comparing them to the confusion and mistakes of the Confederates.\(^\text{34}\)

Lee's plans were only discussed in passing in Henry Pfalz' three volumes of hour-by-hour (almost minute-by-minute) accounts of the battle.\(^\text{35}\) It is clear, however that he believed that General Lee had erred badly in his conduct of the battle.\(^\text{36}\)

Yet somehow it didn't quite add up. The traditional tale (already greatly telescoped above) was that Lee had tried both flanks and didn't quite make it, so he had to change his plans and attack in the middle. Why, then, had Lee stated in his report that the plan hadn't changed?\(^\text{37}\) For that matter, why would he point his troops at a point halfway down the battlefield, a point that was hardly key to the line, and could be counter-attacked from higher ground on either side? These are the questions asked in *Lee's Real Plan at Gettysburg*.\(^\text{38}\) It was determined by Harman that the plan didn't change, and was directed at Cemetery Hill, and that the traditional explanation (usually to be found in the recollections of Union veterans) that Little Round Top was the key is just wrong.

Another mystery of the battle is the supposed comment by Lee on the evening of the third, that Pickett's charge was not properly supported for reasons that he did not

\(^{34}\) See particularly Coddington, 443-445.
\(^{36}\) See especially *Pfanz, Gettysburg: the Second Day*, 426
understand. An explanation of this comment is attempted in the second recent volume whose title includes the phrase "Lee's Real Plan at Gettysburg." In Carhart's view, the supports were supposed to be Stuart's cavalry, which, having at long last arrived, was supposed to attack from the rear and this was supposed to be the main attack, conceived by Lee in accordance with the lessons of the Battles of Napoleon, as distilled in the writings of Baron Jomini. The great charge was designed to center all Union attention at one point, while the battle was being decided at another point.

A more general reinterpretation of Lee's generalship is found in Last Chance for Victory by Scott Bowden and Bill Ward. These two authors attempt to rehabilitate Lee's generalship, attributing all the bad things that happened to the Confederates on those three days in July to the errors of others. Their view was that it was a good plan, that Lee perceptively adjusted it, and that, wherever the fault lies for the negative results, it was not at the feet of Lee.

This book presents an opportunity for comment on an interesting historiographical sidelight of the Battle of Gettysburg. Among other sources, their revisionist version depends heavily on taking the writings of General Trimble (who is generally regarded as a pest and blowhard in the traditional treatments of Gettysburg) seriously. They also rely on a rather late article in the Southern History Society Papers to place Lee at the scene as the July 2, 1863, attack began, which, if believed, convicts Longstreet as not just incompetent and possibly traitorous but as a barefaced liar, in view of Longstreet's

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42 See, for instance Pfanz, Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill, 81.
complaints that Lee was not on the scene at the crisis\textsuperscript{44} (the kind of criticism of the sainted Lee that alienated not only Longstreet's detractors but many of his possible defenders).

Just take Trimble and add in the testimony of Youngblood and you have a battle of Gettysburg completely different than that to be found in mainstream historians. In view of the availability of testimony that can support nearly any interpretation, there can never be a definitive version of Gettysburg. So, therefore, it is virtually impossible to "prove" a thesis about Gettysburg (if, indeed, it can be considered possible to "prove" any historical thesis, in the light of conflicting testimony). However, an explanation that explains many different phenomena and seems to explain the evidence in a manner that seems most probable in light of the known facts can perhaps be obtained.

Statement of the Problem

Millions of words have been spilled over Gettysburg. The battle has been analyzed and reanalyzed. And yet, after more than 140 years, there is surprisingly little agreement as to what the plan of General Lee was, either strategically or tactically. Lee wrote nothing of his plans after the war, despite an intention and a desire to do so, an intention that was frustrated by his inability to get his hands on official records.\textsuperscript{45} Thus, the only testimony from the one man who could have cleared the question up definitively (assuming he was telling the truth) was that of official reports written to a superior, a type of writing that will never be completely lacking a certain spin, even when written by the saintly Lee. The problem I intend to analyze is what specifically Lee intended to

\textsuperscript{44} James Longstreet, From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America, ed. and with Introduction by James I. Robertson, Jr. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960), 368.
\textsuperscript{45} Piston, 100.
accomplish by invading Pennsylvania and what tactical plans he adopted once there to accomplish that purpose.

In order to do this, it is necessary to look at things the way they appeared to General Lee. Of course, it is impossible to know what anybody is thinking, particularly someone as distant in time and culture as Robert E. Lee, but some inkling of his attitude can be discerned both from his own writings (sanitized as they are to avoid direct criticism of anyone) and how it coincided or, to some extent, deviated from the thinking of his fellow Confederates and admirers.

There is a modern tendency to suggest that the Confederates were conflicted, that down deep they knew they were fighting for slavery, which was wrong and against their ancestral Republic, so that the whole effort was conducted with ambivalence and an inclination to see the hand of the Almighty removed from an unrighteous cause. Though certainly quotes can be gathered to support that view (as, as I will argue, they can be found for almost every view), in the main, I think it is almost certainly wrong, at least with regard to the men that fought the war.

In fact, so opposite was their attitude that, in a very real fashion, they never quite believed that the Union was resisting them at all and certainly never came to an understanding as to exactly why this unthinkable thing was happening. Everybody has his moments of doubt but, for the most part, the thing that most characterized the Confederate attitude, both during and after the war, was the unshakable conviction that they were right. Surely the more sophisticated among them, which would include General Lee, never believed in the vulgar assumption that one Southerner could beat any ten Yankees, but they did subscribe to a more subtle version of the same view, in that the
Yankees certainly could not have anything of value to be fighting for, since they were so clearly in the wrong, and, if pressed, they would more easily give up than men who believed in what they were doing and were fighting for such sacred things as home, freedom, and self-determination. Walter Taylor puzzled over what, if anything, the Yankees were fighting for:

(W)hy were these people, so lately friends, arrayed in hostile ranks with such deadly purpose? And as I reasoned, it seemed to me that one side was acting clearly on the defensive; its country was being invaded, its homes and its firesides threatened; all that it asked was to be let alone and to be permitted to enjoy the fruit of the victory it had won jointly with the other from England, in the establishment and the maintenance of the principle that all governments derived their just powers from the consent of the governed. But what motive impelled the other side? Was it lust of power? Was it the distorted view of the idealist of his duty to force his theories upon his neighbor? Or was it the development into action of the implacable hatred that had long slumbered in the heart of the abolitionist against the so-called aristocracy of the South?46

Further, as pointed out by the “Rebel War Clerk,” John B. Jones, the North had much less to fight for.

Besides, our men must prevail in combat, or lose their property, country, freedom, everything—at least this is their conviction. On the other hand, the enemy, in yielding the contest, may retire into their own country, and possess everything they enjoyed before the war began.47

In a very real sense, discernible through their writings, the Confederates never abandoned this view (with natural modifications given the actual result) and tended to view the historical developments since the end of Reconstruction as a tacit apology from the North. While the North would not abandon their historic victory, they had, at least, come over to the general Southern view that the African Americans, in fact, were not equal to white Americans, and the North demonstrated this repentance by quietly leaving

to the ancestral Southern leadership the intelligent management of these sub-humans, given the South’s historical expertise in these matters. Given the fact that, even at the time of the war, the average Northerner had little better opinion of African-Americans than the average Southerner had had, there was much truth in this conclusion.

General Lee, as will be apparent, subscribed to this view, but in a particularly reasoned and nuanced manner. For one thing, he knew that the South was on its own, that the issue of slavery muddied the waters for foreign observers, who did not understand the “vital rights involved.” For another, he suspected that hunkering down on the defensive and repelling however many invasions “that inflict no loss upon the enemy beyond the actual loss in battle” would not sufficiently discourage the enemy before the South’s resources were used up. He rightly suspected that, once it came to a siege of Richmond, it was all up for the South and knew that it took only one major defeat in the Richmond environs to cause that to happen. Thus, his constant preoccupation was to get the battles away from Richmond, so that any defeat was redeemable. Given the objectives for which he was fighting, the Seven Days Battles outside Richmond were rightly considered Confederate victories, despite the fact that the Union prevailed in almost every individual battle and inflicted far more casualties on

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48 These bald assertions, of course, could easily give rise to a completely different study (or many studies). For virtually this attitude in a book written in 1937 (conveniently almost exactly halfway between the war and today), see Paul H. Buck, The Road to Reunion: 1865-1900 (New York: Vintage Press, 1937). As to reconstruction, “So again the North sent its armies into the South, this time to overthrow the moderate Reconstruction governments established under the auspices of Lincoln and Johnson, and to rule by martial law until new strictures based upon Negro rule and directed by Republican chieftains might make a conquest of the Southern spirit. The result was disorder worse than war, and oppression unequalled in American annals,” 25-26. This (to put it mildly) is no longer the mainstream view. Further, see the list of agreements about the “Negro Problem” at 308. There is no indication the author disagrees with such consensus or that he considers it possible for anyone but a vindictive fanatic to do so.


51 Wartime Papers of Robert E. Lee, No. 745, 759 (Letter to A.P. Hill, June __, 1864).
Lee’s smaller army than they themselves suffered. The battles of the 1864 Virginia campaign, which might seem superficially similar in that the Confederates won the battles but the Union refused to retreat and kept coming on, are also not improperly considered Confederate victories as they inflicted losses and delay on the North in an election year. However, although the Confederates managed to interpose themselves between Grant and Petersburg, assuring the war would last almost another year, though a tactically pathetic performance by the Union may have saved the southern cause for the time being, the riveting of the siege on Lee may have been the greatest union victory of the war because it made the end inevitable (next, of course, to the capture of Atlanta, which provided the time for that inevitability to occur).

How to get the enemy away from the environs of Richmond and keep them away was Lee’s problem. Defeating them in front of Richmond didn’t solve the problem. They marched away, licked their wounds, and marched back again. Even so complete a Union debacle as Fredericksburg (the battle Longstreet so loved) did not achieve its purpose. The Union Army marched away, licked its wounds, and, refitted and reinforced, was prepared to try something new.

No, all of these brilliant victories accomplished nothing toward the main purpose of winning the war. Major General Henry Heth alleged that Lee told him the following:

I beg to call your attention to the popular feeling after the battles of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. At Fredericksburg we gained a battle, inflicting very serious loss on the enemy in men and material; our people were greatly elated -- I was much depressed. We had really accomplished nothing; we had not gained a foot of ground, and I knew the enemy could easily replace the men he had lost, and the loss of material was, if any thing, rather beneficial to him, as it gave an opportunity to contractors to make money. At Chancellorsville we gained another victory; our people were wild with delight -- I, on the contrary,
was more depressed than after Fredericksburg; our loss was severe, and again we had gained not an inch of ground and the enemy could not be pursued. 52

The War would not end until one of three things happened. Either the Confederacy would conquer the North (even the most sanguine Confederate, except for occasional bursts of enthusiasm, knew that this was out of the question), the South would be conquered, or the North would give up.

Lee had seen enough of Northern determination to know that little unpleasantnesses like Fredericksburg would not shake Northern resolution. All it took was a blowhard like Hooker refitting and reanimating the troops, and the Union had an army again. Only a massive shock would serve.

Accordingly, he needed to win a major victory on Northern soil. In his comments (and the comments of his aides, which can almost be considered his comments, so faithfully did they serve and idolize him) as to his purpose in both the first Northern invasion, leading to Antietam, and the fatal 1863 invasion that ended at Gettysburg, this purpose can clearly be discerned. In the fall of 1862, though the army had fought major battle after major battle in driving the Union first away from Richmond (in the Seven Days) and then out of Northern Virginia at Second Bull Run, was lacking in shoes and supplies, and depleted by casualties and straggling (which included those who just could not keep up as well as those who decided to opt out of Northern expedition in what they believed to be a solely defensive war), Lee moved north. As he did so, he advised Jefferson Davis that, in his opinion, with his victorious army, however depleted,

52 See letter of Henry Heth, published in 4 SHSP 151-160 (No. 4, October, 1877), quote at 153-154. The conversation that Heth records purports to be one between Lee and a Major Seddon, a brother of the secretary of war. He then records it verbatim as if he had been there until he gets to the final line, in which he appears to be quoting Major Seddon. It is thus uncertain whether all of the Lee quotations in the Heth letter are second-hand from Major Seddon.
sweeping everything before it, it was now time to suggest peace. He remained confident that his army would continue to do so, as he proved by standing defiantly to fight a Union Army twice his size that had “more quickly than convenient” moved to the attack in possession of a lost order that revealed all his dispositions, a stance that Alexander deemed little short of madness.\textsuperscript{53}

Of course, it didn’t work out. However imperfect a victory Antietam was (and it was very imperfect), the North chose to regard it as one, and, far from throwing in the towel, Lincoln deemed it enough of a victory to announce the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.

But what would happen if you tried the same thing, not at the end of a long and exhausting campaign, lacking shoes and supplies, with the men falling out from exhaustion? The Maryland campaign, had, by necessity, been improvised rather on the spot. What if you set out from the beginning with the intention of blasting the hell out of the Army of the Potomac in its own backyard?

First you would have to come up with reasons for trying it that would convince Jefferson Davis, who was not particularly adventurous in military strategy. Jefferson Davis remained convinced (such was the self-evident righteousness of the Confederate cause) that the longer they hung on, the surer the victory would be. Expending precious resources (and particularly precious manpower, which was the most limited resource the South had) on ambitious gambles was not his idea of a plan. There were ample supporting reasons that could be given, not the least of which being that armies rather wore down a countryside, and better that that countryside be (at least for a time) in Pennsylvania than in Virginia.

\textsuperscript{53} Alexander, \textit{Military Memoirs}, 249 & 270.
So Lee marched North. Through a misunderstanding (at best), Stuart’s cavalry was off on a jaunt to the rear of the Union Army, and the exact location of the Army of the Potomac was unknown to Lee, a matter of some, to use the typical civil war term for such inconveniences, “embarrassment” to him. The lead elements stumbled into each other and the battle was on, unplanned by anyone.

But, cavalry or no cavalry, by the morning of July 2, 1863, Lee knew exactly where the Union Army was. There it was right in front of him. Yes, it was in a pretty formidable position, but wasn’t the fact that it was in a formidable position on its own soil an opportunity rather than a problem? It wasn’t going anywhere (despite what Sickles later claimed). It would not skulk away as it had so many times. He didn’t even need to hold it in place to kill it. It would hold itself in place. All he had to do was kill it.

And to do so, he had the finest army that the world had ever seen. If he could just get it to act in concert, it didn’t matter if the Union Army was entrenched in the Gates of Hell, that army was history. In so believing, Lee betrayed the extent to which he shared, even in a fairly sophisticated form, the prejudices of his troops. The Union Army would not stand and fight. What had it to fight to the death for? These were just foreign mercenaries and mechanical soldiers. When push came to shove, they’d bolt. The pursuit would chop them to pieces (although they would certainly not abandon their strong positions as organized bodies of troops, when the hammer blows struck, they would, as every Union Army always had, bolt).

Thus his excitement, rather noticed by everyone, though generally described in more felicitous terms than Longstreet chose.54 There they were! They weren’t going

54 Probably the most incendiary of all the quotes that Longstreet maddened his former colleagues with was found in Manassas to Appomattox, 384. “That he was excited and off his balance was evident on the
away. We have the end of the war in our grasp. This afternoon. Tomorrow. No more Army of the Potomac. No choice for the North but to give up their criminal enterprise of trying to coerce free people (which they hadn’t really much believed in in the first place, but which they had been talked into by nefarious politicians for their own inscrutable purposes). It was at his fingertips. He could touch it.

Every decision and every move of Robert E. Lee from the time he first discovered that the battle that Generals Hill and Heth had stumbled into was, as a matter of fact, going rather well, were made with the distinct purpose of getting as many of his troops as possible in action against the enemy. Unfortunately (as many of the Confederates were to comment), the enemy was fighting a little better than usual. Successes were being gained but they were being gained at a fearsome price. And Lee, as was his practice, was leaving it in the hands of his corps commanders to decide just what troops to commit when, in support of the general battle plan. That they would not support the attacks without very good reasons (reasons that could only be known to the men on the spot) was not within his frame of reference. And yet, interestingly enough, the units that the men on the spot did not commit (or when they were ordered to commit, such as in the

afternoon of the 1st, and he labored under that oppression until enough blood was shed to appease him.” Walter H. Taylor, one of Lee’s aides, gives the quote in full and waxes apoplectic about it in Taylor, General Lee, 195. It was specifically with regard to this quote that Alexander made the comment referenced in footnote 3 above. Yet Lee’s agitation was noted by others. Major Justus Scheibert (who it is alleged by Thomas L. Connelly was specifically recruited by Jubal Early and others of the Southern Historical Society as a distinguished foreigner who would refute the claims of the Comte de Paris, who was believed too pro-union in his sympathies (Thomas L. Connelly, The Marble Man, Robert E. Lee and His Image in American Society (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977; Louisiana State University Press Paperback Edition, 1978), 87) stated: In the days at Gettysburg this quiet self possessed calmness was wanting. Lee was not at his ease, but was riding to and fro, frequently changing his position, making anxious inquiries here and there, and looking care worn.” Letter of Maj. Scheibert dated November 21, 1877, 5 SHSP 92 (No. 1-2, dated January-February, 1877, but actually 1878).

55 See, among numerous others than could be cited, the aforementioned Major Scheibert quoting Lee in the same article, “Captain, I do everything in my power to make my plans as perfect as possible, and to bring the troops upon the field of battle; the rest must be done by my generals and their troops, trusting to Providence for the victory.” 5 SHSP 91.
contributions of Hill’s corps to Pickett’s charge, did not fight particularly well) tended to be units that, though successful enough, had been thoroughly mauled by the Union Army, in achieving those successes.

From all Lee knew, it was a good plan. That the Union Army had retired down the Peninsula though undefeated had been primarily the result of the phantom hordes conjured up by Pinkerton, not any defect in the skill or determination of the Union soldier. The same phantom hordes (though Lee presumably did not know it) had saved him at Antietam. The victories at Second Bull Run, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville had all been made possible by incredible mistakes by the Union command, mistakes Lee had, at least subconsciously, learned to depend on. At least two members of the Union high command would make comparable whoppers at Gettysburg. Perhaps Fredericksburg might have given him pause. Despite the incredible folly of the Union tactics, the troops had moved resolutely to achieve the impossible. Perhaps, if well commanded, those troops would do the same to a better result.

The Biases of the Author

Despite his or her best efforts, no author approaches a historical problem without certain beliefs and biases that color his or her interpretation. Rather than deny that this is the case, at this point, I would like to set forth some of my own.

Over many years of study of the Battle of Gettysburg, first casually and then more insistently, I have had the feeling that, despite all the work and effort that had been put into the question, the story as it had evolved didn’t quite add up. Very prominent in the story is the dispute on the morning of July 2, 1863, between Lee and Longstreet over which way McLaws’ division was to face, whether northeast up the Emmitsburg Road
(Lee) or due east toward the Round Tops (Longstreet). Equally prominent in the received tale of the battle is “Hood’s Protest,” in response to which Longstreet insists the attack go up the Emmitsburg Road.

Next in the story is the actual attack, which, despite all the arguing and wrangling, goes due east, as if the matter had been never discussed. My earlier reactions to this disconnect were somewhat like that experienced when two pages of a book are accidentally turned over and what comes next doesn’t seem to quite fit what had come before. First they fight all day over which direction the attack is to assume, decide definitively that it will go one way rather than another and then it goes in the discarded direction. And everybody seems O.K. with this? How, in fact, could this have happened?

Sadly, in what follows, although I will give my own explanation, I will also conclude that the question that initially fascinated me doesn’t really matter very much. Either way, the plan “remained unchanged” in its essentials, being that the enemy was there and Lee intended to attack him there.

As noted above, Bowden and Ward conclude that the attack changed direction because Lee changed it and Harmon concludes that it changed direction by mistake.

In discussing my own biases, I feel it appropriate to note the biases of Bowden and Ward. Their opinion on this matter is based on the not unnatural assumption that Lee, being a great general, would not allow an attack based on outdated information to proceed without his own personal attention and correction. Their bias, that Lee could do no wrong (or very little wrong, because, as will be seen, they do charge him with one major mistake) compels this conclusion because, had Longstreet dawdled and diddled all
day long on July 2, 1863, it would have been criminal negligence to allow him the primary responsibility for the all-important attack of the third. Accordingly, they are remarkably gentle with Longstreet for his actions on the second, for which they give him high praise. The only major fault they find in Lee is to have allowed Longstreet to remain in charge on the third, once Lee saw that he was procrastinating and not getting into the spirit of the thing. 56

I disagree emphatically with Bowden and Ward about the believability of the late story from Youngblood, primarily due to the fact that Longstreet, in his last and most bitter writing, complains about Lee not being there on the right to help in the attack that now had to go forward toward conditions that had changed greatly since the plan was formulated. It is not that I believe Longstreet to be above lying, but it seems to be illogical that he would have 1) not pointed out that the whole attack had been in accordance with Lee’s plan in the course of defending himself against his tormentors and 2) it seems highly unlikely that after thirty years of resentment caused by being blamed for the whole debacle, he would have invented a new resentment. Finding himself being blamed for the whole disaster, when, in fact, he had been the only one right about the whole thing, which Lee had admitted to him (or so he claimed, and, even if it was true, that Lee once told him he should have listened to him, it is likely Lee referred only to Pickett’s charge), here he is up the creek without a paddle, trying to implement a plan based on outdated information, and Lee has left him to “get out of his scrape the best he can.” He would not have forgotten Lee’s presence; certainly he would not have long resented its absence.

56 Bowden & Ward, 473, 505-506.
In addition, it seems hard to believe that Lee’s ride to the right to completely change the plan would have left such little impression in the record as it has. There were seventy thousand Confederates there. Somebody would have seen him other than Youngblood. Hood didn’t mention his being there (though Hood appears in Youngblood’s story). McLaws got the impression that he was but didn’t see him.

This is not the only problem I have with Bowden and Ward’s interpretation. I believe they are wrong to chastise Ewell for not continuing the attack on July 1, 1863, and I believe they too readily accept the testimony of enthusiastic confederates that the Union Army was completely devastated and retreating in wild disorder, both on the first and at other times. That these destroyed units seem to have been a little more resilient on the last two days of the battle than might be thought logical, and the strange reluctance of Confederate units that had won relatively bloodless victories over a fleeing foe on the first two days to attack again, lead me to conclude that the thing hadn’t been as clear-cut as all that.

There are other differences, such as the importance of Stuart’s absence on his raid. So convinced was I that Bowden and Ward had gotten many things seriously wrong that, in rereading some of the works from which I had formed my general impressions of Gettysburg, I was horrified to learn that so offended had I been by many of Bowden and Ward’s views that I hadn’t noticed (or chose not to remember, at least consciously) that their take on just exactly what Lee thought he was up to in Pennsylvania was virtually identical to my own. I disagree on some of the reasons behind the specific moves he made in accordance with the plan to defeat the Union decisively on Northern soil, emphasize more the necessity of not just defeating the Army of Potomac (on points, as it
were) but destroying it, and am more willing to see his insistence that this was the Confederacy’s best shot and it had to be taken, whatever the odds, but in essentials, the theory is the same. So, at the outset, I wish to acknowledge that, which may seem lost in my constant criticism of their views as to details.

And this is where my own biases come in. I was, at base, offended by the apparent consensus that the Confederacy had lost the Battle of Gettysburg, rather than the Union had won it, by making unprecedented and unexpected mistakes. Perhaps it is my Northern birth and residence (particularly my Northeastern birth and residence, because the Midwesterners who tended to predominate in the other more successful Union armies seemed to have been regarded as not quite so hopeless) but it is also the rejection of my common sense, that one army should be so skilled and another army so inept as to make the outcome of any struggle between the two preordained unless the superior force was severely off its game. In essence, Bowden and Ward continue the historic tendency to seek the answer only in the Army of Northern Virginia, without giving the Union much thought. They do struggle to be fair, listing several reasons in their concluding chapter for the defeat that credit the Union, as opposed to pointing out the errors of the Confederacy, particularly the stand of the First Corps on July 1, 1863, and Hancock’s leadership, as well as Meade’s courage in deciding to stay and fight.\footnote{Ibid., 501-502, 504, 408.} I also will struggle to be fair, and if the evidence shows that the Army of the Potomac was so inept as to only be capable of victory when the Confederacy seriously went wrong, so be it, but I don’t think the evidence shows it. The Army of Northern Virginia had consistently defeated the Army of the Potomac, but there was no battle when the result was not dictated by major errors by the Union high command. It never was because the Army of Northern
Virginia killed some and the others ran away. Yet the Confederates seemed not to realize that and confidently disregarded the possibility that the Army of the Potomac, if properly led, might give it more than it could handle.

Along the same general lines, the somewhat offputting nature of some of the sources should be noted. It is hard to read Longstreet, even if you come to him with the thought that he might have been right, without the nagging desire that he should be wrong. Whether or not Lee was the superman depicted in most of the Southern sources (and I think it more to his credit that he definitely was not a superman, and had human flaws and weaknesses), one cannot help but be impressed by his refusal to cast blame on others. Longstreet’s lack of reluctance to do so turns into obsession, much to his detriment, and he seems gratuitously to take shots at some (such as Wilcox)\(^58\) that he would have been better off leaving alone.

\(^{58}\) See version of his Philadelphia Times article in 5 SHSP 81: “General Wilcox steps forward as a willing witness in all concerning the battle of Gettysburg, and seems to know everything of General Lee's wishes and the movements of the First corps, and in fact everything else except his own orders. His brigade was the directing brigade for the echelon movement that was to protect McLaws' flank. He went astray at the opening of the fight, either through ignorance of his orders or a misapprehension or violation of them. Had he but attended to his own brigade instead of looking to the management of the general battle, the splendid exhibition of soldierly given by his men would have given better results.” This quote curiously does not appear in the version of the article published in *Annals of the War*, the paragraphs on either side of it in the SHSP version appearing on 442 consecutively. It also turned Wilcox from a mild adversary, who knew nothing personally of the daylight attack order but was inclined to believe there was one, to a raging antagonist. Apparently, there were other issues with Wilcox. See Piston, 134. Longstreet could never seem to receive the merest hint of his imperfection without blaming the hider for losing the war. His excuse for starting the whole thing (which, arguably, he did, not Early, by heavily criticizing Lee to William Swinton, who used his comments in his history of the war, *Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac*) is found in a statement allegedly published by the Philadelphia Times in connection with Longstreet’s article and reprinted in 5 SHSP 86. “The letter from General Longstreet, which accompanies these enclosures, dwells particularly upon a point which he wishes to have his readers understand as the justification of his present narrative. It is that while General Lee on the battle field assumed all the responsibility for the result, he afterward published a report that differs from the report he made at the time while under that generous spirit. General Longstreet and other officers made their official reports upon the battle shortly after its occurrence, and while they were impressed with General Lee's noble assumption of all the blame; but General Lee having since written a detailed and somewhat critical account of the battle -- and the account from which General Longstreet's critics get all their points against him -- Longstreet feels himself justified in discussing the battle upon its merits. It is in recognition of his soldierly modesty
Then, of course, there is Jubal Early. He might not have been much of a general, but, when it comes to polemics, he is very good at what he chose to do. As an attorney I can’t help but be somewhat impressed by his method of attack by indirection. He has to be watched the more closely for it.

Finally, there is the problem, with Confederate sources, of running into statements that grossly offend modern sensibilities. Two particular quotes from Walter Taylor come to mind. First, he discusses the inscrutable purposes of the master of the Universe in allowing McClellan to find the famed “Lost Order” before Antietam, inexplicably causing the defeat of the more righteous side:

To me it is as if He who controls the destinies of men and of nations had said: “You, people of the South, shall be sorely tried, but the blame is not yours, and therefore to you shall fall the honors—genius, skill, courage, fortitude, endurance readiness for self-sacrifice, prowess in battle, and victory against great odds; but this great experiment to demonstrate man’s capacity for self-government, with its corner-stone of universal freedom, must continue with undivided front, and therefore I decree to the other side determination, persistence, numbers, unlimited resources, and ultimate success.”

Given Taylor’s recognition of the Lord’s apparent preference for self-government and universal freedom, it might be interesting to see how Taylor sees this applying to the ex-slaves:

It should be recorded of the negroes of the South that during those four years of war and its distressing consequences they were universally loyal and their conduct...
in all respects admirable. Let the fact be noted that while the white men went to
the front, the women and children were left at home and on plantations with
negroes, without fear or apprehension; and although of the same racial instincts
and passions as the negro of to-day, so far as my knowledge and observation
enable me to speak, not a single case of assault was ever recorded or ever
occurred in the South during that period. Here is cause for reflection for the
philanthropist: The negro under a condition of servitude, acknowledging his
subordination to his superiors, is well mannered and contains himself within the
bounds of perfect and unfaltering respect for the white race, even when no one is
near to make him afraid. The same negro, with the supposed advantages of
freedom and education, after the expenditure of much money and time in the
effort to elevate him, becomes a wild beast and a terror, a prey to uncontrollable
passion. How shall this be explained? Is it not fairly chargeable to the vicious
legislation at the close of the war,—by which it was sought to humiliate the people
of the South,—to the unqualified enfranchisement of the blacks and to the corrupt
teaching of the meddling and misguided fanatics who came among the negroes
and implanted in their minds erroneous and dangerous notions as to their rights
and privileges, so that, with vast numbers of them, their conception of freedom is
unbridled license, and their tendency to a life of idleness, immorality, and crime is
truly sad and disheartening.⁶⁰

Taylor further smugly notes that the North did not dare try Jefferson Davis
because they knew full well that the Confederates were right on the legal point, and the
fact that there might have been some aspect of mercy and a feeling that doing so could
serve no constructive purpose involved in the decision occurs to him not a whit.⁶¹

I mention these things, not to mock the silly beliefs of these old-time people (or
to invite speculation on who Taylor thought he was fooling: himself, or others, in his
“memory” of how the slaves had behaved during the war, in light of how they actually
behaved) but to point out that they were serious and truly believed these things. Taylor’s
book was published in 1906 and, if the writer well knew that slavery was gone forever, it
is clear, had he been able to swing a magic wand, he would have re-established it without
qualm. Steven E. Woodworth, in his Davis & Lee at War,⁶² refers often to Lee’s

⁶⁰Ibid., 266-267.
⁶¹Ibid., 299.
⁶²Steven E. Woodworth, Davis & Lee at War (Wichita: University Press of Kansas, 1995)
ambivalence about the war effort, and attributes (at least in part) Lee’s urgency to win to his (Lee’s) knowledge of widespread ambivalence throughout the south. While I subscribe wholeheartedly to his views about Lee and Davis’ respective grand strategies for the war and will quote him extensively, I don’t think Lee (or the Confederacy) was as conflicted as Woodworth does. In the same letter of Lee’s to James Seddon, which I quoted above, appears the following line (quoted by Woodworth but only in part):

   In view of the vast increase of the forces of the enemy, of the savage and brutal policy he has proclaimed, which leaves us no alternative but success or degradation worse than death, if we would save the honor of our families from pollution, our social system from destruction let every effort be made, every means be employed, to fill and maintain the ranks of our armies, until God, in His mercy, shall bless us with the establishment of our independence.

   It seems to me that, if the man is conflicted about the thing, he is doing, at least in this letter, a fairly good job of hiding it. To understand the Confederates and why they did what they did, it is important to realize that this is how they felt, and how they felt in good faith. Perhaps a consensus has been reached that they were dreadfully and egregiously wrong about certain things, but it is impossible to understand them if your modern sensibilities revolt and conclude that they just couldn’t have thought and felt that way. They felt and thought as they felt and thought. And their actions cannot be

63 Ibid., 157.
64 Ibid., 214.
65 Wartime Papers of Robert E. Lee, No. 361, 388 (Letter to James A. Seddon dated January 10, 1863). In a letter quoted by his son in Capt. Robert E. Lee, Jr., Recollections and Letters of General Robert E. Lee (Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing Co., 1924), 258, from February 26, 1867, Lee is quoted as saying “The dominant party cannot reign forever, and truth and justice will at last prevail.” It never seemed to occur to the ex-Confederates (including Lee) since they had been so self-evidently and obviously in the right, how anything they had done might have genuinely upset anyone in the north or that there could be anyone who might be honestly and sincerely disturbed by the way they had, left to their own devices, begun to treat the ex-slaves.
explained without that awareness. Maybe they were wrong, horribly wrong, but let us do them the courtesy of admitting they were serious.66

Keeping in mind and attempting to guard against my instinctual desire to defend the Northeasterners of the Army of the Potomac (and the First Corps, praised by Bowden and Ward, did, in fact, include a fair proportion of Midwesterners, particularly the famed Iron Brigade), not to mention how my own German ancestry tends to make me react poorly to tales of the “Flying Dutchmen” of the Eleventh Corps, let us proceed to examine what it was that Lee was trying to do, what measures he adopted, and why they did not succeed.

A Note on Time

In today’s digitalized and videotaped world, it is generally possible to determine the exact timing of events to the hundredth of a second. It was not in 1863. Accordingly, the time that anything happened (and synchronization with other events on other parts of

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66 Whether the Confederates in general, military and civilian, felt guilty about slavery or ambivalent about their cause is outside of the topic of this study. Generally see (for both the evolved scholarly consensus of Southern guilt and ambivalence and the questionable viability of that theory) Gary W. Gallagher, The Confederate War (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997). My own opinion is that the Confederates gave up because they lost, not that they lost because they gave up. As it affects only those 70,000 or so Confederates who fought in the Battle of Gettysburg, it seems to me (and hopefully this whole study will vindicate the belief) that they didn’t just think that they were going to win, as that construction would make of the whole thing a more open question than they regarded it, but it never occurred to them that they might lose. All the hand-wringing over the defeat and why they had fought the battle in the first place imports back a whole lot more uncertainty over the business than I think they felt. Maybe they should have thought (or, in hindsight felt they should have thought) that invading Pennsylvania and attacking uphill might not have been such a great idea, but I doubt many entertained such views at the time (aside from Longstreet, and I’m not even completely sure about him, at least on the second of July). The multi-volume work of reminiscences by North Carolina troops, Walter Clark, ed., Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War, 1861-65, 5 vols. (Goildsboro, N.C.: Nash Brothers, 1901), 5: i., published in 1901, contains the following dedication: “In the Name of the More than 125,000 Soldiers, Living and dead, whom This State sent to the front in one of the Greatest and Most Unequal Conflicts Recorded in History, These Volumes Fraught with the Testimony of Comrades to Immortal Courage, are inscribed to the Heroic Women of North Carolina, who inspired our citizen soldiery by their Faith in God, by their Magic Influence and Immeasurable Good Works, and to Their Fair Daughters, whose unshaken Fidelity has Preserved the Fame of Our Glorious Dead: With Such to Inspire the Living and Honor the Fallen the Men of North Carolina will ever be Equal to Victory-Superior to Defeat.” Any lingering guilt over fighting for slavery seems well hidden.
the field) is uncertain, despite the fact that there were (according to the latest calculations) at least 160,000 people in the neighborhood, even excluding the residents of Gettysburg. Standard time was not adopted until 1883, and watches were inaccurate. It is impossible to tell where or how anybody’s watch was set or how long ago that had been and how much time the watch had lost or gained in the meantime. Nevertheless, despite some anomalies, there seem to be at least three generally agreed upon. The final definitive orders for Longstreet to move to the right on day two occurred at about 11 a.m. The attack of July 2, 1863, began about 4:00 (though Fremantle, one of the more reliable observers, and, as a member of the English upper classes, presumably the owner of a relatively decent watch, places it at 4:45). According to Alexander, he looked at his watch at the start of the cannonade that preceded Pickett’s charge and it said 1:00, so about 1:00 p.m. is a good estimate for the start of the bombardment, though the varying testimonies as to when the bombardment started, how long it lasted, and when the charge actually occurred are all over the lot.

In view of the above and the polemics that eventually evolved, it is necessary to keep on the lookout for spin-based time estimates. For instance, those who insisted that Ewell should have taken Cemetery Hill on the evening of the first will place the Union retreat earlier (thus leaving much daylight) than those who argue that it would not have been “practicable.”

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69 Alexander, Fighting for the Confederacy, 257; Military Memoirs, 422.
71 Isaac R. Trimble, “The Battle and Campaign of Gettysburg,” 26 SHSP 116-127 (1898). He has the battle over by 2:30 and the Confederates wandering around town doing nothing in particular with the guns
Dawn in those parts at that time was around 4 a.m. and dusk about 7:30 p.m.,

again, depending upon the watch.

silent (except for artillery on the hill, which perhaps should have given even Trimble pause, for after all, it was that hill that he thought somebody should have been about the business of attacking) at 3, 123.

Virtually the only one in agreement with Trimble about the earliness of the end of the battle, interestingly enough, is Hancock, who reports his arrival at 3 p.m. and asserts that the 1st and 11th Corps were already in the process of retreating through the town. 27-1 OR 368.
Chapter 1. The Strategic Plan

Lee’s brief comments, never after much elaborated on his purpose in the Pennsylvania campaign, appear in his two official reports. In the first report, dated July 31, 1863, all he says is the following:

The position occupied by the enemy opposite Fredericksburg -being one in which he could not be attacked to advantage, it was determined to draw him from it. The execution of this purpose embraced the relief of the Shenandoah Valley from the troops that had occupied the lower part of it during the winter and spring, and, if practicable, the transfer of the scene of hostilities north of the Potomac. It was thought that the corresponding movements on the part of the enemy to which those contemplated by us would probably give rise, might offer a fair opportunity to strike a blow at the army then commanded by General Hooker, and that in any event that army would be compelled to leave Virginia, and, possibly, to draw to its support troops designed to operate against other parts of the country. In this way it was supposed that the enemy's plan of campaign for the summer would be broken up, and part of the season of active operations be consumed in the formation of new combinations, and the preparations that they would require. In addition to these advantages, it was hoped that other valuable results might be attained by military success. Actuated by these and other important considerations that may hereafter be presented, the movement began on June 3 (emphasis added).72

The January __, 1864, report is roughly similar and even briefer:

Upon the retreat of the Federal Army, commanded by Major-General Hooker, from Chancellorsville, it reoccupied the ground north of the Rappahannock, opposite Fredericksburg, where it could not be attacked excepting at a disadvantage. It was determined to draw it from this position, and, if practicable, to transfer the scene of hostilities beyond the Potomac. The execution of this purpose also embraced the expulsion of the force under General Milroy, which had infested the lower Shenandoah Valley during the preceding winter and spring. If unable to attain the valuable results which might be expected to follow a decided advantage gained over the enemy in Maryland or Pennsylvania, it was hoped that we should at least so far disturb his plan for the summer campaign as to prevent its execution during the season of active operations. (emphasis added)73

What were the valuable results? What were the other important considerations that might be presented hereafter?

72 Lee July 31, 1863 report, 27-2 OR 305.
73 Lee January __, 1864 report, 27-2 OR 313.
As argued by Steven Woodworth in *Davis & Lee at War*, there were two reasonable strategies for winning the war. As nobody who was reasonably sane in the Confederacy anticipated a military conquest of the North, and, as victory only required survival, not conquest anyway (though it would have been nice to conquer and include Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland), it was necessary to get the North to give up.

One way this could have been done was to stand on the defensive, hold onto every bit of territory that was possible, and persevere until the Union got sick of the whole thing. This was Davis’ strategy. As described by Woodworth:

Davis proceeded on the assumption that to win the war the South need only to avoid losing. Interior lines and the inherent advantages of the defender would allow the weaker Confederacy to fend off Union attacks until the North wearied of the contest. He thus favored a defensive grand strategy that held such key points as the South would need to enable it to endure a long war. Offensive action, because it might lower enemy morale and raise that of southerners, was desirable but only within the bounds of well calculated risks. Since victory could be won-eventually-without such actions, Davis was ordinarily prepared to risk on them only such resources as he thought the South could afford to lose without jeopardizing its chances of enduring to the point of northern exhaustion.\textsuperscript{74}

The other strategy was based on the appreciation that, given the North’s preponderance in men and resources (not to mention accessibility to possible immigrant “mercenaries”), the North would never give up, if all that it was costing them was time and expense. What was needed was a severe shock, something to convince them the cause was hopeless. This was Lee’s way. Again as expressed by Woodworth:

Like Davis, Lee realized that the Confederacy was at a serious disadvantage in terms of men, money, and material. His solution, however, was just the opposite of Davis. Since the South was weaker, it must strike hard and fast, winning victories that would at least demoralize the North and perhaps even temporarily paralyze its military strength. If the war dragged on for years, if the North’s military and industrial potential were given time for complete mobilization, the weaker South would be doomed. In a long, grinding war of attrition, the arithmetic was all against the poorer and less populous Confederacy. Thus Lee

\textsuperscript{74} Woodworth, 328.
was prepared to take massive gambles, not because the South could afford to lose them but because it could not afford failure to win them, even by refraining from taking them.\textsuperscript{75}

Woodworth’s conclusion is that either might have been a reasonable strategy, but neither was attempted. What was attempted was an uneasy compromise between the two, which did not work.\textsuperscript{76} In connection with this uneasy compromise, reference is frequently made to the correspondence between Lee and Davis in the time just before Gettysburg, in which Lee desperately tried to get hold of whatever units he could, particularly veteran units that had previously been with his army.\textsuperscript{77} Bowden and Ward portray this correspondence as an example of Davis’ dreadful incompetence, while Woodworth is somewhat more sympathetic. In any event, the net result was that Lee went into Pennsylvania somewhat less strong than he might have been.

Although Davis had many claims to meet and was constantly bombarded by demands for protection, whether reasoned or hysterical, from all points of the compass, by 1863, there was certainly every reason for him to let Lee try out his ideas, within the limits of the logistically and politically possible. It is impossible to evaluate the situation as it appeared to the decisionmakers in Spring 1863 without keeping in mind the events of the past remarkable year.

In the spring of 1862, the Confederacy was rather at its lowest ebb. After First Bull Run, practically nothing had gone right. West Virginia had fallen. Johnston had retreated from the advanced line near Manassas and, after having transferred his army to the peninsula, retreated again practically to the outskirts of Richmond. New Orleans had fallen. The Federals had established enclaves on the shores and offshore islands of North

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 329-330.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 331.
\textsuperscript{77} See Ibid., 234-237; Bowden & Ward, 36-38.
Carolina. After Forts Henry and Donelson had fallen, necessitating a retreat that lost Nashville, the great counteroffensive had failed at Shiloh and the Western Army was again going backwards.

McClellan, with his enormous army, was inching up the Peninsula. Northern troops were gathering in Northern Virginia, threatening to advance on Richmond from the other side. It all looked pretty hopeless, particularly with Joe Johnston in command.

Joe Johnston has received pretty poor press. He is been immortalized as “Retreatin Joe,” and stigmatized as too jealous of his reputation to ever risk it by actually fighting a battle that he might lose. The story is often quoted that he had a reputation as a crack shot but, when hunting, would never bag a bird, because the conditions were never just right enough to risk a shot and possibly miss.\(^78\) All this is true enough, as was his almost pathological obsession with rank and his inability to discern that nobody other than himself was likely to consider the fact that Lee outranked him as an injustice of monstrous and historical proportions, worthy of serious consideration even with the nation fighting for its life.

But maybe Joe just had an overly healthy appreciation of reality in a situation where such an appreciation might be counterproductive. There is a joke told about the Vietnam War. MacNamara called in all his systems analysts, and figure filberts, and computer programmers and ordered them to analyze all the figures and data and tell him when the war would be won. The answer came back that the war had been won three years ago.\(^79\) Johnston, without the computers and the systems analysts, represents the flip

\(^{78}\) See, for instance Woodworth, 26.

\(^{79}\) I might follow the example of Douglas Southall Freeman, who, in *Lee’s Lieutenants, Volume 3, From Gettysburg to Appomattox* (New York: Charles’ Scribner’s Sons, 1944; First Paperback Edition, n.d), 139, attributed the famous (and poorly attested) story of Stuart’s meeting with Lee on the night of July 2, to
side. He saw the negatives of the Confederacy’s situation and consistently acted upon them. Since success was at least questionable and disaster likely, instead of fighting on the Peninsula, he retreated. Instead of attempting some bold but risky stroke to attempt to retrieve the situation at Vicksburg, thus risking costly disaster, he did nothing. Before Sherman’s army, he retreated all the way to Atlanta. Maybe all of these things were the logical moves in the circumstances, but the logical moves were slowly losing the war. This is not to assert that Johnston was “wrong.” If the Yankees were “in earnest” as so far they appeared to be, and they stayed “in earnest,” there was nothing he (or probably anybody else) could do about it. The point was to do something that reduced their earnestness. Johnston was said to have commented, upon hearing about Fredericksburg, that no one would ever attack him in such a place. The remark is nearly true in a way Johnston did not intend, in that nobody would attack him in such a place because they would be confident they could turn him out of it. In fact, someone did attack him in such a place, at Kennesaw Mountain, but the one who did it (Sherman) decided it had been a bad idea much more quickly than had Burnside at Fredericksburg. 81

In the spring of 1862, the change took place that created the lasting fascination that is the American Civil War. Joe Johnston was shot at the Battle of Seven Pines and

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80 “tradition” but, in fact, a version of the anecdote appears in Harry G. Summers, Jr., On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War (New York: Dell Publishing, 1984), 42, though he places the inquiry of the computer in the opening days of the Nixon administration. To me, it sounds more like McNamara, but perhaps one cannot be overexact about “tradition.”

81 See Gen W.T. Sherman, October 7, 1864. “I now think Hood will rather swing against Atlanta and the Chattahoochee bridge than against Kingston and the Etowah bridge, but he is eccentric and I cannot guess his movements as I could those of Johnston, who was a sensible man and only did sensible things.” 39-3 OR 135

81 After having written this paragraph, I went on the web to try to track down the source of the Johnston quote, and I found almost identical sentiments on the Web site of the Richmond Civil War Round table (http://members.tripod.com/~g_cowardin/rcwrt/042000.htm). They are attributed to Dr. Steven H. Newton, author of Joseph E. Johnston and the Defense of Richmond (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998). I might add that Dr. Newton states that at Kennesaw Mountain Johnston “failed to take full advantage of the opportunity.”
replaced by Robert E. Lee. Had the logical and over-realistic Johnston not been shot, it is very likely that McClellan would have taken Richmond, a soft peace arranged (with slavery surviving--it was still untouched in the border states) and McClellan elected the 17th President in 1864 (or, at least, 1868, if he was willing to wait, as McClellan likely would not have been).

But Johnston was shot. There was a madman loose in the Shenandoah Valley that everybody but Lee thought was a fool. With huge armies bearing down on Richmond from two directions, he wanted to take the offensive. He had a crazy notion that the drive of the Northern of the two armies could be deflected if it could be convinced to chase all over the place after him.

Meanwhile, the new commander of the major field army, renamed the Army of Northern Virginia to suggest that it had every intention of returning there, planned an offensive. It would be timed to allow the crazy man of the valley, one Stonewall Jackson, to reinforce the main army, and take the almost ludicrous risk (with the fall of Richmond and maybe the Confederacy at stake) of dividing the army in the face of a numerically superior foe, leaving a small force to keep McClellan out of Richmond, while using the bulk of the army to hit his overexposed northernmost elements in an attempt to panic McClellan and drive him away from Richmond (or convincing him, which would be equally effective, to drive it away himself).

Thus began the famed year of victory of the Army of Northern Virginia. Although no battle worked quite as planned, the goal was accomplished. McClellan “changed his base” (to, in what was contemptuously ignored in both sections of the

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82 See Woodworth, 122. The chapter about the beginning of the Valley campaign in James I. Robertson, Jr.’s definitive biography of Jackson, Stonewall Jackson: The Man, the Soldier, the Legend (New York: McMillan Publishing, USA, 1997), 359-392 is entitled “A Crazy Fool.”
country, the place from which the war would eventually be won, under a new general, many years later). Richmond was saved.

There were, however, some dark spots in the apparently miraculous victory. The first was the Battle of Malvern Hill, when Lee, having struggled to destroy the enemy army with flank attacks, found it on the verge of escaping with only a frontal assault upon a strong position left as a means for averting that escape, assaulted that position with heavy loss. The second dark spot appears in Lee’s official report. Lee’s report contains the line “His losses in battle greatly exceeded our own, as attested by the thousands of dead and wounded left on every field.” Although civil war casualties can be endlessly debated, there seems pretty fair agreement on the fact that, for once, in the Seven Days, the South had suffered far more casualties than the North. Lee knew his own casualties, but, given his victories and what was left on fields from which the enemy had fled, he presumably assumed that he had done greater devastation to the enemy host than he actually had. This was to be a portent for the future.

A year of incredible victories followed, which changed the entire character of the War. In contemplating the history of the Civil War as a whole, it is impossible to escape the view that there is a great anomaly in an otherwise consistent storyline. Everywhere the larger and better supplied Union armies move forward inexorably. There are glitches to be sure (Grant’s seemingly endless attempts to somehow get at Vicksburg) and fiascos caused by political generals (the Red River campaign, for instance) but, for the most part,

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83 D.H. Hill, “McClellan’s Change of Base and Malvern Hill” in Vol. 2 of Battles and Leaders, 383-395. “It was not war—it was murder,” 394.
84 Battle Report on Seven Days dated March 6, 1863, 11-2 OR 489-498.
85 In Vol 2 of Battles and Leaders; Confederate Casualties, Killed 3286, Wounded 15909, Missing/Captured 940, Total of 20,135, 317; Union Casualties, Killed 1734, Wounded 8602, Missing/Captured 6053, Total of 15,849, 315.
things are going as expected, the hand of God being, as Voltaire reportedly said, with the biggest battalions. Meanwhile, the Confederate High Command seems at least as interested (if not more) in fighting amongst themselves as against the Yankees (Davis against Johnston, Davis against Beauregard, Braxton Bragg against nearly everybody). The end result of this sorry mess will surely not resound in story and song.

Yet, against all odds, there is a bright spot in this gloomy and unedifying spectacle, the spectacular career of victories of the Army of Northern Virginia, always outnumbered, always victorious: that all of the victories were aided by the seemingly miraculous cooperation of the Union Commanders and the one draw saved from disastrous defeat through the same benefit could possibly be ignored or at least underappreciated.\(^{86}\)

What method is even the most conservative and unimaginative of Commanders in Chief going to choose when out of all his possible weapons and tools, only one seems to ever work? What would his only successful General suggest?

Lee’s thinking on the matter is evident already in his reports on the Antietam campaign. Lee was well aware that the invasion was improvised, rather made up as he went along, after the thrashing the Union Army had been given in the Second Battle of Bull Run/Manassas, and that the army was lacking in most of the things that might be

\(^{86}\) The bizarre tribulations of the Army of the Potomac (and Pope’s temporary Army of Virginia) are too familiar to require much citation and include McClellan’s fear of Lee’s massive phantom legions that he and Pinkerton conjured up in the Seven Days and at Antietam, Burnside’s stubborn hammering at a virtually impregnable position at Fredericksburg, Joe Hooker’s strange hesitation after pretty much getting the drop on Lee at Chancellorsville (he may have been stunned by a near-miss from a cannonball), and Pope’s insistence on pursuing what he believed to be a defeated and fleeing enemy into an almost perfect trap at Second Bull Run/Manassas. James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: the Civil War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988; Paperback Edition, New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), Seven Days, 468; Second Manassas/Bull Run, 531; Antietam, 544; Fredericksburg, 572; Chancellorsville, 640; Joe Hooker and the Cannonball, 644, though McPherson comments that Hooker seemed in a daze even before the near-miss of the cannonball knocked him unconscious.
necessary for a successful invasion, not least due to unavoidable (as well as the usual avoidable) straggling that the breakneck pace imposed. Yet he felt the army had the one thing it needed, the prestige of victory, and that the time was right to propose to the Union that it was time for it to give up.

Lee announced the movement to the President (that is, did not request approval but announced what he was planning to do, subject to the President’s specific disapproval), with the following words:

The present seems to be the most propitious time since the commencement of the war for the Confederate Army to enter Maryland. The two grand armies of the United States that have been operating in Virginia, though now united, are much weakened and demoralized. Their new levies, of which I understand 60,000 men have already been posted in Washington, are not yet organized, and will take some time to prepare for the field. If it is ever desired to give material aid to Maryland and afford her an opportunity of throwing off the oppression to which she is now subject, this would seem the most favorable.\(^87\)

The same letter expresses the impracticability of assaulting the Washington fortifications, arguments that would be repeated in the weeks before the 1863 campaign regarding the impracticability of assaulting the Union in its Rappahannock lines, and the desirability of getting the enemy north of the Potomac (and, thus, out of Virginia, though for the present, due to Second Manassas, the state seemed about as clear of Union troops as it was to get in the war):

After the enemy had disappeared from the vicinity of Fairfax CourtHouse, and taken the road to Alexandria and Washington, I did not think it would be advantageous to follow him farther. I had no intention of attacking him in his fortifications, and am not prepared to invest them. If I possessed the necessary munitions, I should be unable to supply provisions for the troops. I therefore determined, while threatening the approaches to Washington, to draw the troops into Loudoun, where forage and some provisions can be obtained, menace their possession of the Shenandoah Valley, and, if found practicable, to cross into

\(^{87}\) Lee to Davis, September 3, 1862, 19-2 OR 590.
Maryland. The purpose, if discovered, will have the effect of carrying the enemy north of the Potomac, and, if prevented, will not result in much evil.\textsuperscript{88}

Lee acknowledges that the army is not exactly in the greatest shape for the invasion but feels that the time is so right that the attempt should be made.

The army is not properly equipped for an invasion of an enemy’s territory. It lacks much of the material of war, is feeble in transportation, the animals being much reduced, and the men are poorly provided with clothes, and in thousands of instances are destitute of shoes. Still, we cannot afford to be idle, and though weaker than our opponents in men and military equipments, must endeavor to harass if we cannot destroy them. I am aware that the movement is attended with much risk, yet I do not consider success impossible, and shall endeavor to guard it from loss. As long as the army of the enemy are employed on this frontier I have no fears for the safety of Richmond.\textsuperscript{89}

The punch line comes a few days later, revealing what Lee’s purposes were in this incredibly risky venture (the extent and intentions of which have been carefully doled out to the notoriously risk-averse President over a couple of days) as the movement proceeded to a point from which it could not easily be recalled.

The present position of affairs, in my opinion, places it in the power of the Government of the Confederate States to propose with propriety to that of the United States the recognition of our independence. For more than a year both sections of the country have been devastated by hostilities which have brought sorrow and suffering upon thousands of homes, without advancing the objects which our enemies proposed to themselves in beginning the contest. Such a proposition, coming from us at this time, could in no way be regarded as suing for peace; but, being made when it is in our power to inflict injury upon our adversary, would show conclusively to the world that our sole object is the establishment of our independence and the attainment of an honorable peace. The rejection of this offer would prove to the country that the responsibility of the continuance of the war does not rest upon us, but that the party in power in the United States elect to prosecute it for purposes of their own. The proposal of peace would enable the people of the United States to determine at their coming elections whether they will support those who favor a prolongation of the war, or those who wish to bring it to a termination, which can but be productive of good to both parties without affecting the honor of either.\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid, 590-591.
\textsuperscript{90} Lee to Davis, September 8, 1862, 19-2 OR 600.
In Lee’s report, the venture obviously having turned out not as successfully as hoped, supplies and keeping the enemy out of Virginia are stressed more, but the other purposes are not completely slighted:

The war was thus transferred from the interior to the frontier and the supplies of rich and productive districts made accessible to our army.

To prolong a state of affairs in every way desirable, and not permit the season for active operations to pass without endeavoring to inflict further injury upon the enemy, the best course appeared to be the transfer of the army in Maryland.

Although not properly equipped for invasion, lacking much of the material of war, and feeble in transportation, the troops poorly provided with clothing, and thousands of them destitute of shoes, it was yet believed to be strong enough to detain the enemy upon the northern frontier until the approach of winter should render its advance into Virginia difficult, if not impracticable.

The condition of Maryland encouraged the belief that the presence of army, however inferior to that of the enemy, would induce the Washington Government to retain all its available force to provide against contingencies which its course towards the people of that State gave it reason to apprehend.

At the same time it was hoped that military success might afford us an opportunity to aid the citizens of Maryland in any efforts they might be disposed to make to recover their liberties.  

All of the reasoning involved in the Gettysburg Campaign are already present: the difficulty of getting at the Union where they were, the need to get (or keep) them out of Virginia, the benefit of obtaining needed supplies, and the suggestion of possibly much greater results. The greater results that might be obtained are somewhat less prominent in the report (written not only after the Maryland campaign, but after the Pennsylvania invasion, as well) and the positive results that were obtained are stressed. A similar deemphasis might be suspected in the Gettysburg report.

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91 Lee, Battle Report of Sharpsburg Campaign, August 19, 1863, Wartime Papers of R.E. Lee, No. 307, 312-313
There are other hints in Lee’s further writings about his purpose, not limited to those specifically dealing with the Pennsylvania invasion, though they tend to be the more acceptable reasons, such as supplies and getting the Union Army out of Virginia for a while.\textsuperscript{92} There also appear indications that Lee knew he was fighting primarily to affect northern public opinion, “If successful this year, next fall there will be a great change in public opinion in the North. The Republicans will be destroyed & I think the friends of peace will become so strong as that the next administration will go in on that basis.”\textsuperscript{93} He put it more strongly in a letter to his son: “Nothing now can arrest during the present administration the most desolating war that was ever practiced, except a revolution among their people. Nothing can produce a revolution except systematic success on our part.”\textsuperscript{94}

There exist several memoranda of purported conversations that a Colonel William Allan had with Lee after the war. One memorandum is dated April 15, 1868, and refers to a letter to a Mr. W. M. McDonald.\textsuperscript{95}

The South was too weak to carry on a war of invasion, and his offensive movements against the north were never intended except as parts of a defensive system. . . To have lain at Fredericksburg would have allowed them time to collect force and initiate a new campaign on the old plan. In going into Pennsylvania, he diverted their attention, kept them thinking of Washington

\textsuperscript{92} See letter to his cousin Margaret, Miss Margaret Stuart dated July 26, 1863, \textit{Wartime Papers of R.E. Lee}, No. 533, 561 “I knew that crossing the Potomac would draw them off and if we only could have been strong enough we should have detained them.”

\textsuperscript{93} Letter to his wife dated April 19, 1863, \textit{Wartime Papers of R. E. Lee}, No. 403, 438.

\textsuperscript{94} Letter to G.W.C. Lee dated February 28, 1863, \textit{Wartime Papers of R.E. Lee}, No. 382, 411

\textsuperscript{95} The memorandum appears in slightly different form in both Gallagher, \textit{Lee the Soldier}, 13-15 and Charles Marshall, \textit{Lee’s Aide-De-Camp}, ed. Frederick Maurice (Originally published Boston: Little, Brown, c1927; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press Bison Books Edition, 2000), 248-252 (where it is stated that that is was found in Colonel Marshall’s papers). The letter to McDonald, dated April 18, 1868, is also extant and can be found in Jones, \textit{Personal Reminiscences}, 286-287. The letter and the memo are consistent. Lee’s son, Robert E. Lee, Jr. adds the detail that McDonald was attempting to write a school history, Lee, Jr., \textit{Recollections of General Robert E. Lee}, 102. Thus, what appears to be a number of separate pronouncements all arise from what was ultimately the same source. Though it can seem that Lee talked about Gettysburg frequently, so many of the attributed comments turn out to be duplicates of one another, it is clear that he virtually never talked about it.
instead of Richmond, and got ample supplies for his army. He did not want to fight, unless he could get a good opportunity to hit them in detail. He expected, however, probably to find it necessary to give battle before his return in the fall, as it would have been difficult to retreat without it. He had no idea of permanent occupation of Pa. He was troubled as it was to forage, so weak was the force he cd [sic] spare for the purpose. He expected therefore to move about, manoeuvre & alarm the enemy, threaten their cities, hit any blows he might be able to deliver without risking a general battle, & then towards fall return nearer his base.⁹⁶

However, even years later, the battle having been fought (and lost) and, by now, the war itself having been fought and lost, there are hints of greater intentions with allusions to a “good opportunity to hit them in detail” and allowance that it would probably be necessary to give battle. Whatever modest gains he was willing to settle for if nothing better came along, there was always a willingness to seize any opportunity that might arise.

Lee’s aides tend to speak with one voice and that voice was Lee’s, though the exact wording may have been their own, because, they, in fact, were the ones who actually wrote the reports. Accordingly, some of their testimony can be considered almost to be Lee’s testimony.⁹⁷

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⁹⁶ Allan memorandum in Gallagher, Lee the Soldier, 13-14.
⁹⁷ There are some exceptions. His aide, Charles Marshall, seems to have been particularly hard on Stuart, and, as will be noted below, A.E. Long seemed to be somewhat prone to flights of fancy, but see, for instance, the phraseology employed with regard to the Union retreat on the afternoon of the 1ˢᵗ of July. “The enemy was driven through Gettysburg with heavy loss, including about 5,000 prisoners and several pieces of artillery.” Lee’s July 31, 1863 Report, 27-2 OR 307; “The enemy gave way on all sides, and was driven through Gettysburg with great loss. Major-General Reynolds, who was in command, was killed. More than 5,000 prisoners, exclusive of a large number of wounded, three pieces of artillery, and several colors were captured.” Lee’s January, 1864, report, 27-2 OR 317; “The enemy gave way at all points and were driven in disorder through and beyond the town of Gettysburg, leaving about five thousand prisoners in our hands.” Taylor, General Lee, 189; “The enemy gave way on all sides and was driven through Gettysburg with great loss. . . More than 5000 prisoners, exclusive of a large number of wounded, three pieces of artillery, and several colors were captured.” Marshall, 227. Incidentally, modern figures give the total captured and missing in the Union 1ˢᵗ and 1⅓ Corps, the only troops present on the first day, both of which remained in defensive positions on Cemetery Hill for the rest of the battle and sustained other casualties (though perhaps few additional captured), had a total captured and missing for the three-day battle of 3676. See Table 2 and John W. Busey & David G. Martin, Regimental Strengths and Losses at Gettysburg, Fourth Ed (Hightstown, N.J.: Longstreet House, 2005).
Taylor begins the discussion of the question by acknowledging “The great superiority of the North” and the need for the South to “husband its resources. . . inasmuch as the hope of success rested rather upon the dissatisfaction and pecuniary distress...making the people weary of the struggle.” “Nevertheless,” he continues:

[I]n the judgment of General Lee, it was a part of a true defensive policy to take the aggressive when good opportunity offered...His design was to free the State of Virginia, for a time at least from the presence of the enemy, to transfer the theatre of war to Northern soil, and by selecting a favorable time and place in which to received the attack which his adversary would be compelled to make on him, to take the reasonable chances of defeating him in a pitched battle; knowing full well that to obtain such an advantage there would place him in position to attain far more decisive results than could be hoped for from a like advantage gained in Virginia. 

Marshall emphasizes the necessity of keeping the Federal Army away from Richmond and the necessity of avoiding a siege, though not without reference to the possibly great effect of a great victory in the North:

The operations of the United States Army, based upon political as well as military reasons, had given great prominence in the struggle to the possession of the Confederate capital. . . The fall of Richmond and the suppression of the “rebellion” were regarded in the North as almost synonymous. . . [T]he incidental advantages of preserving the part of Virginia north of the James and of keeping it free from the presence of the enemy were not disregarded but the defense of Richmond controlled all considerations. . . [Lee] frequently spoke and often wrote to the effect that if the siege of Richmond were once undertaken by an army too strong to be beaten off, the fall of the place would be inevitable, no matter how successfully it might be defended against a direct attack. . . As in the campaign of 1862, so again in the campaign of 1863 the desire to keep the enemy employed at a distance from Richmond, and the impossibility of maintaining his army near enough to Washington to accomplish this object without moving north of the Potomac, led to the invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania. . . Of course, while seeking to obtain these ends, General lee was not unmindful of the valuable results that might follow a decided success in the field. . . A victory over the Federal Army in Virginia would have tended to strengthen the peace party in the North, only so far as it would have tended to assure the Northern people that they could not succeed. . . The “copperheads” were never weaker than when the Federal armies were successful, and the arguments for peace in the North would

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have been much more convincing if victory had placed Washington, Baltimore, or Philadelphia within our reach than if gained in Virginia.\textsuperscript{99}

He also mentioned that the South’s sources of men were quickly drying up and that it was necessary to accomplish as quickly as possible “the greatest possible results. . . in attaining both the chief end of bringing a satisfactory peace, and the immediate object of thwarting and frustrating the designs of the enemy.”\textsuperscript{100}

Another Lee aide, Colonel A. L. Long undertook for himself the assignment of writing the memoirs that Robert E. Lee had not lived to write.\textsuperscript{101} Much is found in Long that doesn’t exist elsewhere, though some of it I find highly questionable (see below).

What he says is this:

On entering I found that he had a map spread on the table before him, which he seemed to have been earnestly consulting. He advised me of his designed plan of operations, which we discussed together and commented upon the probable result. He traced on the map the proposed route of the army and its destination in Pennsylvania, and with his quiet effective matter he made clear to me his plans for the campaign. He first proposed, in furtherance of his design, to maneuver the army in such a way as to draw Hooker from the Rappahannock. At this point I suggested that it might be advantages to bring Hooker to an engagement somewhere in the vicinity of the old battlefield of Manassas. To this idea General Lee objected, and stated as his reason for opposing it that no results of decisive value to the Confederate States could come from a victory in that locality. The Federal Army, if defeated would fall back to the defences of Washington, as on previous occasions, where it could reorganize in safety and again take the field in full force. . .

There was in his mind no thought of reaching Philadelphia, as was subsequently feared in the North. Yet he was satisfied that the Federal army, if defeated in a pitched battle, would be seriously disorganized and forced to retreat across the Susquehanna—an event which would give him control of Maryland while it would very likely cause the fall of Washington City and the flight of the Federal government. Moreover, an important diversion would be made in favor of the Western department, where the affairs of the Confederacy were on the decline. . .

\textsuperscript{99} Marshall, 183-187.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 188.
\textsuperscript{101} A.L. Long, \textit{Memoirs of Robert A. Lee: His Military and Personal History} (Edison, N.J.: The Blue and Gray Press, 1983). The Blue and Gray edition seems to be a faithful reprint of the original edition of 1886 right down to period font but publication details of the original publication are not included.
General Lee entertained the reasonable expectation that with his powerful cavalry he would be able to obtain all necessary supplies in Pennsylvania. It was his intention to subsist his soldiers on the country of the enemy, and he knew that the fertile Cumberland Valley could supply an army of any size. He had strong confidence of success in this movement, relying greatly on the high spirit of his army and the depressed condition of Hooker’s forces. Everything, indeed, seemed to promise success, and the joyful animation with which the men marched North after the movement actually began and the destination of the army was communicated to them appeared a true presage of victory.\textsuperscript{102}

All of the usual elements appear in the foregoing, including getting the Union Army out of Virginia and the prospect of supply in a less war-ravaged land. However, the supply is only referenced with regard to the army of invasion during the invasion and the whole emphasis is on winning a victory where it will not be just another one of those victories “that cost the enemy only their losses in that battle.” What was wanted was something decisive, something that might end the war, because, as Taylor, pointed out, the untapped manpower of the South was getting pretty scarce. In the end, there was only one infallible method for assuring that it didn’t ever come to a siege of Richmond, which would be the end. That would be ending the war before it came.

Unfortunately, I do not think that Long is entirely to be trusted, for reasons that will appear below, but, at any rate, for what it’s worth, this is Long’s testimony as to Lee’s thinking. A historian often remarks about a source that it should be “used with caution.” The phrase is in one sense delightfully exact in that it is not an expression used to declare that a certain source is totally unreliable, because if that were the case, the source could not be used at all, with caution or otherwise. In another sense, though, the phrase is but a tautology, because every source must be used with caution, even the ostensibly most reliable. It would hardly do to taint Alexander with the traditional “use

\textsuperscript{102}Ibid., 268-269
with caution” brush but that hardly means that he is to be accepted unconditionally in any assertion that the Iron Brigade fought with mere mechanical valor. The least dishonest source of all, when his prejudices are kept in mind (such as never singling anybody out for invidious criticism, however deserving they might be), at least intentionally dishonest source, might well be Robert E. Lee, yet he also has limitations of vision and high motivation to “spin” certain statements (perhaps even at times unconsciously so). However, reverting to the more traditional sense of the phrase, it might be kept in mind that the “use with caution” admonition, in my opinion, applies to Colonel Long, for reasons that I hope will be made clear. While on the subject, and to save words later, one might add to this cohort Isaac Trimble, Jubal Early, and James Longstreet (especially when engaged in pitched combat with each other).

That being said, Long adds the specific statement that “The proposed scheme of operations was submitted to President Davis in a personal interview, and fully approved by him.”103 This statement appears to be true but points to one of the oddities in the history of the Gettysburg campaign.

It is fairly well accepted that Lee’s plan was approved in a series of cabinet meetings in Richmond that took place between May 14 and May 17, 1863.104 Yet the evidence for this conference (or these conferences) is tantalizingly slight, allowing for varied interpretations. Coddington specifically states “No minutes were kept—at least none have been found—so there is no way of knowing exactly what Lee said in favor of his proposal or what questions were asked of him.”105 The references cited by all authors

103 Ibid., 269.
104 See Coddington, 6-7; Woodworth, 230-232; Bowden & Ward, 35-36.
105 Coddington, 7.
indicate that the specific timing of the meetings is based largely on comments in the diary of Confederate War department clerk John B. Jones.\textsuperscript{106}

For May 15, 1863, Jones says:

The Secretary dispatched Gen. Lee a day or two ago, desiring that a portion of his army, Pickett’s division, might be sent to Mississippi. Gen. Lee responds that it is a dangerous and doubtful expedient; it is a question between Virginia and Mississippi; he will send the division off without delay, if still deemed necessary. The President, in sending this response to the Secretary, says it is just such an answer as he expected from Lee, and he approves it. Virginia will not be abandoned. Gens. Lee, Stuart, and French were all at the War Department today. Lee looked thinner, and a little pale. Subsequently he and the Secretary of War were long closeted with the President.\textsuperscript{107}

May 16, 1863:

It appears, after the consultation of the generals and the President yesterday, it was resolved not to send Pickett’s division to Mississippi and this morning early the long column march through the city northward.\textsuperscript{108}

On May 26, 1863: “The President and the cabinet have been in council nearly all day. Can they have intelligence from the West, not yet communicated to the public?”\textsuperscript{109}

The timing seems to fit the only account of the conference, that by Confederate Postmaster General John Reagan, and found in two places in his memoirs, reporting long first meetings and a reconvening some days later. Yet Reagan does not give specific dates, and the exact timing of these events is so poorly documented that it has even been argued that the conferences took place in January and February.\textsuperscript{110} Kegel’s thesis was that the northward pointing thrust of Confederate strategy was a joint enterprise between Lee and Jackson, the whole scheme centered on disrupting anthracite coal production, so

\textsuperscript{106} Jones, Rebel War Clerk.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 325.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 325-326.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 333.
it is natural for him to place the conference before Jackson’s death. Likewise, it seems to be generally accepted that the Jackson’s cartographer, Jedediah Hotchkiss, was set to work on a suitable map for the invasion route as early as February.\textsuperscript{111} He also invokes war clerk Jones’ diary, with the added bonus that he is able to put Reagan at the scene and discouraged.\textsuperscript{112} It seems a little early in that Chancellorsville had not yet been fought and Grant did not succeed in getting across the Mississippi and in Vicksburg’s rear until late April.\textsuperscript{113} However, the very possibility that, contrary to the consensus view among modern scholars, the serious planning for the Pennsylvania invasion went back much further than generally thought, can be documented as well or better than the standard view just goes to indicate how little can be known of the nuts and bolts of the momentous decision by the Confederate command to try the “Pennsylvania gambit.”

Lee’s strategy as proposed at the conference is summarized in Bowden & Ward as follows:

1. Taking troops away from the Army of Northern Virginia by sending them to help raise Vicksburg during a time when the Federal Army of the Potomac would again resume the offensive would leave Lee little choice but to retire to the works around Richmond, thereby resulting in two sieges instead of one;

2. Remaining on the defensive line of the Rappahannock River was tantamount, given the lack of sufficient food and forage, to a middle Virginia siege and, with the logic of simple arithmetic, a stalemate. Like a siege, stalemate doomed the Confederacy to an agonizing, irrevocable defeat—“a mere question of time” as Lee would later describe it, and;

\textsuperscript{111} Woodworth, 220-221.
\textsuperscript{112} Kegel, 201, cites the Jones notation for March 1, 1863, “Met Judge Reagan yesterday, just from council Board. I thought he seemed dejected. He said if the enemy succeeded in getting command of the Mississippi River, the Confederacy would be ‘cut in two’ and he intimated his preference of giving up Richmond if it would save Texas, etc. for the Confederacy.” Jones, 266.
\textsuperscript{113} James R. Arnold, \textit{Grant Wins the War: Decision at Vicksburg} (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997), 79-83. As the title indicates, the conviction of the devotees of the Lost Cause (and, to some degree, of this thesis) that the failure at Gettysburg was what doomed the Confederacy is not universally shared (to say the least) among modern scholars. See, for instance, in addition, Richard M. McMurry, “The Pennsylvania Gambit and the Gettysburg Splash” in Gabor S. Boritt, \textit{The Gettysburg Nobody Knows} (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 175-202.
3. In order to accomplish the political imperative of the South and win independence, a major military victory on Northern soil was needed that would severely damage Lincoln’s political stock, for which every possible veteran brigade and division were needed for duty with the Army of Northern Virginia.\(^{114}\)

This summary is certainly consistent with Lee’s views. In the letter to Seddon already quoted from, he states:

The country has yet to learn how many valuable advantages, secured at the expense of many valuable lives, have failed to produce their legitimate results by reason of our inability to prosecute them against the reinforcement which the superior numbers of the enemy enabled him to interpose between the defeat of any army and its destruction. . . The lives of our soldiers are too precious to be sacrificed in the attainment of successes that inflict no loss upon the enemy beyond the actual loss in battle. Every victory should bring us closer to the great end which it is the object of this war to reach.\(^{115}\)

On April 16, 1863, Lee wrote to Davis as follows:

I do not think General Hooker will venture to uncover Washington City, by transferring his army to James River, unless the force in front of Alexandria is greater than I suppose, or unless he believes this army incapable of advancing to the Potomac. My only anxiety arises from the present immobility of the army, owing to the condition of our horses and the scarcity of forage and provisions. I think it all-important that we should assume the aggressive by the 1st of May, when we may expect General Hooker’s army to be weakened by the expiration of the term of service of many of his regiments, and before new recruits can be received. If we could be placed in a condition to make a vigorous advance at that time, I think the Valley could be swept of Milroy, and the army opposite me be thrown north of the Potomac. I believe greater relief would in this way be afforded to the armies in Middle Tennessee and on the Carolina coast than by any other method.\(^{116}\)

A further letter to the President makes the first reference (though it is a cryptic one, hardly to be understood, except in light of what came afterwards) to the “effigy” army under Beauregard.

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\(^{114}\) Bowden and Ward, 35.


\(^{116}\) Lee to Davis, April 16, 1863, 25-2 OR 725.
I bring these facts to Your Excellency's notice now that you may take such means as in your judgment seem best to increase the strength of the army. This can be done, in my opinion, by bringing troops from the departments of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. No more can be needed there this summer than enough to maintain the water batteries. Nor do I think that more will be required at Wilmington than are sufficient for this purpose. If they are kept in their present positions in these departments, they will perish of disease. I know there will be difficulties raised to their withdrawal. But it will be better to order General Beauregard in with all the forces which can be spared, and to put him in command here, than to keep them there inactive and this army inefficient from paucity of numbers. There are many things about which I would like to consult Your Excellency, and I should be delighted, if your health and convenience suited, if you could visit the army. I could get you a comfortable room in the vicinity of my headquarters, and I know you would be content with our camp fare. Should this, however, be inconvenient, I will endeavor to go to Richmond, though I feel my presence here now is essential.\textsuperscript{117}

In a dispatch to Seddon a few days later, he once more invokes the diseases prevalent in more southerly places in connection with urging concentration in the eastern theatre. Also present is an apparent (only apparent, and then, in keeping with Lee’s style, mild) suggestion that the commanders in the West would not know how to properly employ such troops.

If you determine to send Pickett's division to General Pemberton, I presume it could not reach him until the last of this month. If anything is done in that quarter, it will be over by that time, as the climate in June will force the enemy to retire. The uncertainty of its arrival and the uncertainty of its application cause me to doubt the policy of sending it.\textsuperscript{118}

The evidence seems clear, both from these dispatches, the reports of his aides, and his sentiments expressed elsewhere, that Bowden and Ward’s summary is probably reasonably accurate (if not even exactly accurate) as to what Lee was thinking during these conferences. But agreeing that Lee believed all of these things, it does not necessarily follow that they were set forth as baldly to Jefferson Davis, particularly

\textsuperscript{117} Lee to Davis, May 7, 1863, 25-2 OR 782-783.

\textsuperscript{118} Lee to Seddon, May 10, 1863, 25-2 OR 790.
Bowden and Ward’s point three above. The evidence seems to indicate that point three was perhaps not explicitly stated.

As mentioned above, the only full account of the conference appears to be found in the memoirs of Postmaster general John Reagan, thus the only “full” account (and it is a pretty brief one at that) comes from the self-admitted lone dissenter to the decisions made. Reagan states:

During the early part of 1863 the question was discussed between the President, his cabinet and Gen. R. E. Lee as to whether our army should go north of the Potomac. General Lee favored such a movement. One of his reasons for it was that army supplies had become scarce south of that river, while they were abundant north of it. My own belief is that he favored such a campaign because he believed he commanded an invincible army, which had been victorious in so many great battles, and in all of them against greatly preponderating numbers and resources. . . In the Cabinet I opposed the plan of crossing the Potomac. . . This view was not favored by any other member of the Cabinet, and I had to give it up. While I had very decided view on this subject I had to yield. I could not expect, on such a question, to overrule the opinion of great military men like President Davis and General Lee.119

Apparently, some time passed, because he continues, though in the same paragraph):

After a time the President received dispatches from both military men and civilians in high authority, urging the reinforcement of Pemberton by sending to his relief a part of General lee’s command. Mr. Davis called the attention of the Cabinet to these communications, and requested the members to meet him early the next day (Saturday) to consider the question so involved. This encouraged me. We met early the next day and remained in session until after dark in the evening, in the anxious consideration of the questions involved in the campaign of 1863. This ended by the conclusion that General Lee should cross the Potomac and threaten Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, and that Gen. J. E. Johnston should collect such forces and supplies as he could in the Gulf States and go to the relief of General Pendleton.120

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120 Ibid., 121-122.
Reagan says he could not sleep and early the next morning asked that the cabinet reconvene. It was to have been reconvened on Monday, but the cabinet reconvened on its own the next day (Sunday), the question was reconsidered, and “it at once appeared that it would be useless to attempt a further consideration of that subject.”\(^{121}\)

Reagan takes up the subject again (his first discussion was for the purpose of showing that Davis was willing to hear conflicting views on matters and revisit decisions already made) in connection with serious matters discussed by the Cabinet.

Early in the year 1863 the question of the invasion of the country north of the Potomac was being discussed by the Cabinet and General Lee. One of the considerations favoring such a policy was that supplies for our army were much reduced—and these were abundant in the territory of the enemy. Another consideration was that successful campaign in the territory adjacent to Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia might cause the withdrawal of the troops then menacing Vicksburg and Port Hudson.\(^ {122}\)

Once more noting the urgent nature of the problem on the Mississippi and letters from “Governor Peters of Mississippi, and others” and that the meeting was on a Saturday and involved “anxious discussion of the campaign after nightfall,” he continues:

General Lee did not meet with us on this occasion, though he often did so in his capacity as Military Advisor to the President, and latterly as general in the field. He was not a man of many words and when he spoke it was in the fulness of conviction. He had expressed his view on the subject of a campaign north of the Potomac. Every possible contingency was pointed out in our discussion, and it early became apparent to me that I stood almost alone. . . It was urged in opposition to my view that the best way to protect Vicksburg was to put Washington and Baltimore in danger and thus cause the withdrawal of troops from Grant’s army for their defense. . . In the end it was determined that General Lee should cross the Potomac and put himself in a position to threaten Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia.\(^ {123}\)

\(^{121}\) Ibid., 122. Incidentally, January 16, 1863, the first date mentioned by Kegel as possible for the cabinet meetings was a Friday; February 28, 1863, the next possible date, was a Saturday; May 16, 1863 was a Saturday; and May 17, 1863, Sunday.

\(^{122}\) Ibid., 150-151

\(^{123}\) Ibid., 151-152
I have included very nearly all that Reagan had to say about these meetings because it is pretty much all anybody said about them. Obvious is that the deliberations occurred over a span of time, but who said what to whom and when is not clear.

Woodworth notes that “in these memoirs, written many years after the fact, Reagan consistently confuses this meeting with another held ten days later,”¹²⁴ that is, he garbles what was discussed in the original marathon meetings (by standard reckoning, May 14, 1863, through May 17, 1863,) and the reconvening later (by standard reckoning, May 26, 1863). Accordingly, the sole record of decision-making at the highest level over one of the most fateful (if not the most fateful) strategic decision of the Confederacy is brief, possibly garbled, as remembered by a very old man many years later, and comes from the lone dissenter to the decision. Accordingly, Reagan could be remembering it slightly wrong, and his own opinion as to what Lee had in mind was formed not from his own clever deciphering of subtle clues, but because Lee said it flat out. Yet the partial and either begrudging (or uncomprehending) cooperation that Davis provided him in the undertaking suggests that things had not been said that directly. Davis did not forbid anything and seemed to try to be cooperative, but as in the instance of the missing brigades (see above) seemed to not quite, in the modern parlance, “get it.”

Woodworth believes that Lee downplayed the audacity of his plan, misleading Lee perhaps unintentionally.¹²⁵ He alludes to the strange episode of the Beauregard effigy army found discussed in several letters for Lee to Davis at the end of the month.

On June 23, 1863, Lee wrote:

If an army could be organized under the command of General Beauregard, and pushed forward to Culpepper Court-House, threatening Washington from that

¹²⁴ Woodworth, fn. Fn 130, 372.
¹²⁵ Ibid., 230.
direction, it would not only effect a diversion most favorable for this army, but would, I think, relieve us of any apprehension of an attack upon Richmond during our absence. The well known anxiety of the Northern Government for the safety of its capital would induce it to retain a large force for its defense, and thus sensibly relieve the opposition to our advance. Last summer, you will remember, that troops were recalled from Hilton Head. North Carolina, and Western Virginia for the protection of Washington, and there can be little doubt that if our present movements northward are accompanied by a demonstration on the south side of the Potomac, the coast would be again relieved, and the troops now on the Peninsula and south of the Potomac be withdrawn.

If success should attend the operations of this army, and what I now suggest would greatly increase the probability of that result, we might even hope to compel the recall of some of the enemy's troops from the west. I think it most important that, whatever troops be used for the purpose I have named, General Beauregard be placed in command, and that his department be extended over North Carolina and Virginia. His presence would give magnitude to even a small demonstration, and tend greatly to perplex and confound the enemy. Of course, the larger the force that we can employ the better, but should you think it imprudent to withdraw a part of General Beauregard's army for the purpose indicated, I think good results would follow from sending forward, under General Beauregard, such of the troops about Richmond and in North Carolina as could be spared for a short time. The good effects of beginning to assemble an army at Culpepper Court-House would, I think, soon become apparent, and the movement might be increased in importance as the result might appear to justify. 126

On June 25, in the first of two letters, Lee states:

It is plain that if all the Federal Army is concentrated upon this, it will result in our accomplishing nothing, and being compelled to return to Virginia. If the plan that I suggested the other day, of organizing an army, even in effigy, under General Beauregard at Culpepper CourtHouse, can be carried into effect, much relief will be afforded. 127

In a second letter on the same day Lee refers to “the proposed army of General Beauregard at Culpepper Court-House.” 128 Woodworth concludes, not unreasonably, that Lee broached the subject only after he was safely in Pennsylvania, practically engaged with the enemy, and beyond quick recall. 129 This seems a reasonable explanation for why Lee (who, after all, had been in the capital and engaged with the President in the lengthy

126 Lee to Davis, June 23, 1863, 27-3 OR 925.
127 Lee to Davis, June 25, 1863, 27-3 OR 931
128 Ibid., 27-3 OR 932
129 Woodworth, 238-239
consultations that Jefferson Davis loved) had not brought the subject up when there would have been ample time to implement it, if it was such an important part of the campaign plan. Confederate mythology would have it that interception of Davis’ profession of inability to implement this part of the plan halted a Union evacuation of Gettysburg, citing as evidence the extraordinary promotion of the officer, Ulrich Dahlgren, who had intercepted the letter of Adjutant General Cooper on behalf of Davis informing Lee that it was “the first intimation that [President Davis] has had that such a plan was ever in contemplation,” and that it was too late to set up an army for Beauregard.\textsuperscript{130} Thus the Union Army was still there when Pickett (and Pettigrew and Trimble) attacked, the attack was repulsed, the battle was lost, and thus the war was lost. The evidence of the attitudes of the Union command on the night of July 2, 1863, shows that this is untrue.\textsuperscript{131}

The entire episode of the Beauregard effigy army does seem strange. It seems unlikely that this possibility occurred to General Lee only when it was too late to do anything effective about it. As noted above, he was alluding to it, though somewhat tangentially, as early April 16, 1863. He never stops repeating that there is disease and fever in the far south in the summertime, the Union is unlikely to do much of anything down there, and such troops as are down there should be brought north. Woodworth’s explanation seems to have been the correct one (and Reagan’s account of the conference(s) seems to support it.) Thus, it seems very likely that Lee, whether consciously or unconsciously, was not entirely forthcoming at the conference with Davis

\textsuperscript{130} Col. Edward A. Palfrey, “Some Secret History of Gettysburg,” 8 \textit{SHSP} 521-525 (1880). The dispatches captured are found at 27-1 \textit{OR} 75-77 (in the Union part of the Records).
\textsuperscript{131} See Coddington, 449-453.
and the other politicians and that greater goals than had been explicitly discussed were an essential component of Lee’s plan from the beginning.

Yet Lee himself (again if Colonel Allan is to be believed) made comments that imply the contrary. In a Memorandum of Colonel Allan dated February 19, 1870, Lee is quoted as having said:

[He] had urged the Govt. before going to Penn. In 1863, to bring Beauregard to Manasses with all the troops that could be got, & threaten Washington in that quarter. Mr. Davis promised to do so, but it was never done, probably the difficulties were too great. Did not expect much more than a demonstration, but Beauregard with a few troops there, wd. have produced a great diversion, and a great moral effect. Mr. Davis did not like the movement northward said he was afraid Lee could not get away, that the enemy would attack.132

This comment suggests that Lee had been frank about his plan and explicit about Beauregard’s participation and that Davis had, albeit reluctantly, gone along, knowing full well what was contemplated. Just before the above quote in the memorandum is found the following:

Spoke feelingly of Gettysburg, said much was said about risky movements—Everything was risky in our war. He knew oftentimes that he was playing a very bold game, but it was the only possible one.133

An interesting commentary on the plans of the invasion comes from, of all people, Jubal Early. We have already mentioned Early’s influence on the interpretation of the war, and, in fact, it is unavoidable.134 The modern tendency is to take Early rather lightly. After all, he was never considered particularly a military genius, and his primary efforts in independent command, the “raid” (though he argues that was not exactly what

132 Allan Memorandum of February 19, 1870, Gallagher, Lee the Soldier, 17.
133 Ibid.
134 For a good discussion of Early’s goals and influence, without the demonization present in Nolan’s Lee Considered, Connelly or Piston, see Gary Gallagher, “Jubal A. Early, the Lost Cause, and Civil War History: A Persistent Legacy” in Lee and His Generals in War and Memory, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 199-226.
it was) on Washington and the subsequent campaigning in the valley, are generally considered to have been disasters. In his postwar writings, he had a clear agenda, pursued it ruthlessly and skillfully, and was benefited in this endeavor by almost the perfect adversary in Longstreet. Longstreet was not only widely considered a turncoat and a traitor, but he defended himself with almost incredible clumsiness, managing to almost gratuitously offend those who he might have been thought to be most needful of ingratiating. By the end of his life, Longstreet was so frustrated and so embittered that he could not put pen to paper without digging his hole deeper.

Early was a lawyer and at least a skillful enough one to make good use of the gifts he was given. In the winning of hearts and minds (at least Southern hearts and minds and, as Gallagher points out, not just Southern ones), he was spectacularly successful. Perhaps in a matter that might be considered at least partly about hearts and minds (i.e. how the North could be made to give up), his ideas deserve a listen. While I do not believe that Early was above lying when it suited his purpose (several instances will be set forth below), as a good lawyer, Early seemed capable of limiting his invention to the absolute minimum necessary, as he knew that, putting aside for the moment the question of the morality of the matter, lying was a dangerous tactic, to be used with restraint. A skillful lawyer takes pains not to lie but to spin, and spinning consists of emphasizing certain points and deemphasizing others and is most effective if no actual falsehoods are involved. Lies can be disproved. Spin cannot.

His comments on the purpose of the invasion can be found set out most clearly in a letter in the series in the *Southern Historical Society Papers*, which purported to answer certain questions by an at first unnamed foreign scholar (who would subsequently be
revealed to have been the Count of Paris), questions that provided a perfect opportunity for ex-confederates to set forth their opinions and which contained a question heaven-sent for venting spleen at Longstreet.

The editor set the scene for the series of papers as follows:

In February last the Secretary received a letter from a distinguished foreign military critic propounding a Series of questions as to the causes of the failure of the Confederate army to win the battle of Gettysburg, and requesting us to obtain the opinions of leading Confederates who were participants in that great battle. We at once had twenty Copies of the letter made, and sent them to representatives of every Corps and division and every arm of the service of the Army of Northern Virginia. We have received a number of replies and have the promise of several others, and We are Sure that our readers will agree with us that the series of papers form the most valuable contribution to the history of that Great campaign which has yet been published.

As the letter of our distinguished correspondent was not intended for publication, we suppress both the letter and the name of the writer. But we would be recreant to the cause of truth did we withhold the able, interesting and valuable papers which we have received in response to this letter.

There are, as will be seen, honest differences of opinion between the writers of these papers in reference to certain points; but we shall publish them without alteration, just as they are received from the accomplished soldiers who have prepared them. We print the papers also in the order in which they have been received.135

The first letter of response, not particularly surprisingly, was Jubal Early’s.136 Early’s response to the first two questions, whether the invasion had been a mistake and whether, if made, should have been limited to raiding parties, he sets forth (almost without even spin), an excellent analysis of just where the Confederacy found itself at the time and what, if anything, could be done about it. In Early’s opinion, “To have confined our efforts east of the Mississippi to an entirely defensive policy would have exposed us

135 4 SHSP 49-50 (1877).
136 Letter from General J.A. Early dated March 12, 1877, 4 SHSP 50-63
to a certain, though slow process of exhaustion.”¹³⁷ This sentence is certainly congruent with Lee’s views.

He begins by pointing out the fact that the Trans-Mississippi had been almost entirely cut off and that the Union had total naval superiority, which would allow it to attack at any point it chose, creating a border to defend consisting not only of the northern land line, but the entire Mississippi and coastline.

In this condition of things, it was very apparent that unless we could break through the cordon that was gradually closing and tightening around us, we must infallibly be crushed as a victim in the coils of a boa constrictor. To set down and content ourselves with a mere defensive policy, would be to await an inevitable collapse of our cause, sooner or later, by the gradual process of attrition and exhaustion. The only hope for us, then, was to strike such a blow as would alarm the North and shake its faith in the financial credit of the Federal government, and its ability to conduct the war to a successful issue.¹³⁸

As to staying in place and awaiting more attacks across the Rappahannock, Early points out:

(I)t was always practicable for the Army of the Potomac to recross to its position of safety after a repulse. The result, therefore, must have been, as we always feared it would be, that that army, heavily reinforced under some new and more sagacious commander, would have been transported, by way of the Potomac, Chesapeake, and James river, to the position Grant was finally forced to take on the south of the James, when a siege of Richmond and Petersburg would have ensued, and the fall of those cities would have been only a question of time.¹³⁹

He concludes the section upon the wisdom of the invasion:

Unless, therefore, we had made up our minds to perish by degrees, it was necessary to adopt one of the other alternatives. . . [I]t was necessary for us to threaten Washington or the States north of the Potomac. To have moved directly on Washington would have been idle, for Hooker would have moved back into the defences of that city on the south, and if we could have entered them we would then have had to cross the Potomac, which would have been an impossibility.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 50.
¹³⁸ Ibid., 54.
¹³⁹ Ibid., 55
To threaten Washington, therefore, it was necessary to pass through the lower valley and cross the Potomac into Maryland, which amounted to an invasion.

If we could have gained a decided victory north of the Potomac, it would have done more to produce a financial crisis at the North and secure our independence than a succession of victories on the soil of Virginia. It is true that it may be looked upon as somewhat of the nature of a forlorn hope, but it was our best chance for success, and we should have taken it.  

The next question was about how uncoordinated the attacks had been, so, of course, Early was in his glory. All of the ex-Confederates, when they got to that question, were able to turn lustily to the beloved question of whether Longstreet single-handedly lost the Battle of Gettysburg, and clearly hadn’t enjoyed anything quite so much since Fredericksburg (or at the least, Chancellorsville). More of that later.

Early’s analysis may have been exactly Lee’s analysis, but it seems to have been independently arrived at because, although, in the years after the war, he became one of Lee’s most energetic defenders, he was never particularly close to Lee in life, and it is unlikely that Lee went over the matter with Early in such detail. However, there is nothing in it that appears wrong, and Lee could look at the same maps and would naturally have known as well if not better what the Union was up to in the late spring of 1863 and what it meant to the Confederacy. Modern observers who believe that the Confederacy should have stayed on the defensive assume that Early was wrong and that slow exhaustion would not have been the result of staying behind defenses and stubbornly disputing every inch.

Well, Lee stubbornly disputed every inch in 1864, and, tactically, at least, won every battle. Yet, still, Grant got himself to the south side, began the siege, and Lee’s prediction of the results of such a siege, made when he did not yet have the benefit of

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140 Ibid., 55-56
hindsight, appears to have been correct. The 20,451 (official) to 28,000 men\textsuperscript{141} lost at Gettysburg might have delayed the matter a little, but, in March and April of 1865, Grant and Lincoln had all the time in the world. Whether it was a result of Sherman’s taking Atlanta or not, Lincoln and the Republicans had won the election and “the thing would be pressed.” The “natural results of the enemy’s numerical superiority” had come about.

The primary foreign authority on the art of war at the time of the Civil War (whose writings were used at West Point) was Baron Antoine Henri de Jomini. His influence, filtered at West Point through the interpretations of Dennis Hart Mahan and Henry Halleck, has been blamed for some of the overcautious and formulistic blunderings of Union commanders early in the war.\textsuperscript{142} Yet Jomini based his principles primarily on the battles of Napoleon. This would hardly be a source liable to inspire a strategy of caution. In fact, though Jomini does mention maneuver and includes a distressing number of geometrical diagrams, his teachings are almost entirely consistent with what Lee did. Jomini stresses that the passive party always loses and recommends

\textsuperscript{141} See Tables 1 and 2. Confederate casualties were conceded to be, of necessity, incomplete, because the records of the defeated party were, of course, in some disarray at the end of the war. The figure of 28,063 (3,903 killed, 18,735 wounded, 5,425 captured) is found in Thomas L. Livermore, \textit{Numbers & Losses in the Civil War in America: 1861-1865} (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1957), 103 and is almost certainly too high. Interestingly enough, Alexander used them. See \textit{Military Memoirs of a Confederate}, 443-446. The most painstaking modern accounting is found in John W. Busey and David G. Martin, \textit{Regimental Strengths and Losses at Gettysburg}, 4\textsuperscript{th} ed. Hightstown, N.J.: Longstreet House, 2005). The Union losses (3,155 killed, 14,531 missing, and 5,369 missing and captured), as recalculated differ little from the 1889 revision found in the Official records (3155 killed, 14,529 wounded, and 5365 missing) and other calculations (Busey & Martin, 123-125). Confederate losses as recalculated (with the admonition that they are completer than earlier estimates, but still cannot be considered entirely complete) are 4,708 killed, 12,693 wounded, and 5830 missing and captured (Busey & Martin, 257-261). Part of the reason that the number killed exceeds even Livermore’s figures while the wounded are greatly reduced results in part from including those who had died from wounds by the end of the year. Busey & Martin’s Confederate figures are based on many sources but seem to rely most heavily on Robert E. Krick, \textit{The Gettysburg Death Roster: The Confederate Dead at Gettysburg}, 3d ed. (Dayton, Ohio: Press of Morningside Bookshop, 1993)

\textsuperscript{142} Antoine Henri de Jomini, \textit{The Art of War}, tr. Capt. G.H. Mendell and Lieut. W.P. Craghill (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1862; Modern edition with Introduction and Commentary by Horace E. Cocroft, Jr, Rockville, Md: Arc Manor, 2007), 5 (Cocroft’s Introduction). The French original was published in 1836 and Lee, of course, product (and highly-class ranked product at that) of West Point, would not have needed a translation and would have read Jomini unfiltered in the original French.
the defensive-offensive.143 Most contrary to Jomini’s reputation as the archguru of McClellan, recommending careful and systematic maneuver and engineering, he points out that the aim of all of these maneuvering and engineering (illustrated by his at times virtually incomprehensible geometrical diagrams) is to destroy the enemy army:

As to the objective points of maneuvers,--that is, those which relate particularly to the destruction or decomposition of the hostile forces,--their importance may be seen by what has already been said. The greatest talent of a general, and the surest hope of success, lie in some degree in the good choice of these points. This was the most conspicuous merit of Napoleon. Rejecting old systems, which were satisfied by the capture of one or two points or with the occupation of an adjoining province, he was convinced that the best means of accomplishing great results was to dislodge and destroy the hostile army,--since states and provinces fall of themselves when there is no organized force to protect them.144

Jomini also stresses that no rules or formulas are sufficient and that the primary ingredient in success is the military art of the commander (as what else could a student of the campaigns of Napoleon conclude?).145 Accordingly, Lee could hardly have been expected to rigidly apply rules and doctrines, Jomini’s or anybody else’s, but, as will be noted below, many of his movements around Gettysburg find support in the writings of Jomini. Though he was not superhuman and liable to err (as it will be argued, in particularly human ways), there does not seem any particular reason, barring overwhelming evidence, to believe that Lee didn’t know what he was doing.

Many modern scholars believe that the Virginia theatre was a sideshow, that, while the world watched the competitors on the narrow space between their two capitals, the war was actually decided in the west.146 As a result of the western campaigns, Sherman’s army was approaching Richmond from the south, even as Richmond finally

143 Ibid., 54-55, 71, 135-136.
144 Ibid., 66.
145 Ibid., 150, 250, 254-255.
146 See footnote 113 above.
fell. The Western campaigns give rather a mixed verdict on whether the South should have fought only on the defensive or attacked vigorously. Johnston fought on the defensive and retreated. Hood attacked and had to evacuate Atlanta. Is there any indication that Johnston wouldn’t have been turned and forced out of Atlanta? When Atlanta fell, there were still two months to go before the election. The war record of Joseph E. Johnston certainly gives no indication that he would have been able to hold on to Atlanta and would not have been flanked, turned, and forced to retreat, as he had every other position he had occupied in the campaign. Sherman’s army would have been knocking at the back door of Richmond in early 1865, no matter what anybody in the Confederacy had tried to do about it. The only way to avoid the natural consequences of this fact was for the war to have already ended before he could get there. And the only way to have done that was for the Union to have given up. Was it so crazy to believe that a spectacular victory on Northern soil might have produced such an end? It may have been, as Early admitted, a forlorn hope, but what other one did the Confederacy have?

It was certainly a truism of the “Lost Cause” that the whole thing had been a forlorn hope from the beginning, that the defeat was inevitable because of overwhelming “numbers and resources.” Taylor was particularly obsessive in his quest to produce evidence of how badly the Confederates had been outnumbered in this battle or that. However, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville had been won against overwhelming odds, although largely due to mistakes on the part of the Union commanders that could not have been hoped for. Further, the mood of the Confederate soldier marching to Gettysburg was confident, even arrogant, and, as Alexander cheerfully admits, there

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147 See Alexander, Fighting for the Confederacy, 222. “But, like the rest of the army generally, nothing gave me much concern so long as I knew that Gen. Lee was in command. I am sure there can never have
was no doubt on anyone’s part that the result was to be a resounding Confederate victory. It was only after the fact that the overwhelming numbers and resources seemed quite so overwhelming.

There is, of course, a logical problem with the inevitable defeat thesis in that it makes those who made the attempt seem particularly bone-headed in attempting that which they knew to be impossible. The party line of the “lost cause,” of course, was that they had had no choice, that their rights were under assault, and they had no honorable alternative than to fight it out to the best of their abilities, however doomed the effort. This, of course, doesn’t precisely wash, particularly since their rights were not under assault (at least not immediate assault) when they seceded in the first place. They seceded because they thought they would get away with it and they fought because they thought they could win. They may have been wrong but at least the Confederates, however distasteful some of their other ideas may be to modern sensibilities, are to be spared the reproach of being so honorable as to be well nigh suicidal, and it has never seemed, at least to me, to be particularly honorable, for “honorable” men to take their wives and children with them in the exalted sacrifice necessitated by their honor.

The first point, that they thought they could secede and get away with it, has been dealt with above, how the Confederates never quite got used the idea that the North would be willing to fight at all, even after years of evidence to the contrary. As to the second point, whether they could win, they were equally confident and equally wrong, but perhaps with more justification.

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been an army with more supreme confidence in its commander than that army had in Gen. Lee. We looked forward to victory under him as confidently as to successive sunrises."
In analyzing whether the Confederacy had any hope of winning the war, it is frequently pointed out that other combatants who have fought under disabilities with regard to numbers (or at least resources) have been successful. Two examples come immediately to mind and if one, Vietnam, could hardly have served as an object lesson to the Confederates, the other, the American Revolution, was constantly before their eyes.

The colonists certainly never conquered Great Britain, nor did even the most starry-eyed, unrealistic Confederate expect to conquer the North. But they did expect to wear the North out. Had the colonists not worn out the British? All the Confederates had to do was to emulate George Washington, who lost more battles than he won, and did his best not to have to fight any battles at all. Yet how different were the circumstances. The British had to transport their army across an ocean (and the British, primarily a sea power, did not have much of a standing army). And despite the horror stories that have come down as part of our national mythology, life pretty much went on as usual in most of the colonies through most of the war. Still, the colonists almost ran out of patience before the British did.

The Confederates did not have the luxury that the Colonists did of basically staying out of the enemy’s way until they got tired of it. The enemy was there in overwhelming numbers and they could not ignore them because the enemy was intruding upon their social system and the very things they were fighting for in a way the British never did.

In a very real sense, the Confederacy was not only fighting the Union, but it was also fighting the future. From this point of view the war was lost when it started because
the thing the south was fighting for was a social system in great danger of becoming obsolete in the near future, and if there is anything war does, it is to accelerate the future.

How else to explain secession? Although the Republicans had won the White House, the Democrats still controlled Congress (until the Southerners departed) and, as evidenced by the Dred Scott decision, the Supreme Court. What was so urgent that they had to secede? Weren’t a few misguided firebrands getting ahead of themselves, abandoning ship when the ship was in no immediate danger of sinking and wasn’t even being buffeted by particularly high winds?

Yes. And no. The election of Abraham Lincoln was, to the south, as much of a firebell in the night as the Missouri controversy had been to Jefferson. The North, that ugly, industrializing, immigrant-infested commercial society, was increasing in size and power. The ancient agrarian social system, based on aristocratic leaders (though they never were quite unequivocally in charge as legend or Northern opinion at the time maintained), agriculture, and slave labor was looking increasingly anachronistic. At the very least, the Northern predominance would be likely (particularly under the direction of a party whose main issue was the prohibition of slavery in the territories, if it claimed no constitutional right to interfere with it where it existed) to increase, as the numbers and the wealth of the North increased. By the time the actual attack came, it would already be too late (in fact, as it proved, it already was).

So how does one defend such a society? That the war came at all was bad enough in that industrialization and centralization much against the Confederacy’s taste was coming about as a result of the fighting. And one does not maintain aristocracy and a slave-labor system from the hills. It was of no use to hold off the North for years and
years, as encroaching Union armies undermined the very basis of Southern society, as “contrabands” streamed into Union lines whenever they appeared. The South, as many have assumed, did not have forever.

Early pointed out the Union naval supremacy. Interestingly enough, naval supremacy was also the basis of British power. In many centuries of constant naval warfare between the British and the French, the French achieved the upper hand but once and briefly. In that tiny span, a British army had to surrender at Yorktown, rendering renewal of the effort to reconquer the colonies unlikely, if not totally out of the question. Many Confederates did hope for foreign recognition, perhaps a fleet to cut off the Union Army and to create another Yorktown (without which, one wonders how long it would have taken the British to give up?). But Robert E. Lee was not one of them.

Of course, Vietnam was not available to the Confederates for comparison, but, among many points of difference, two may be pointed out. For one thing, the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese were making no effort to maintain a stable society against foreign intervention, as were the Confederates. They had no slaves or deference from poor whites to worry about as they took to the jungles. And, more importantly, to the extent they did have fixed points that required saving, they were off-limits (not to bombing, but to invasion) as Richmond, Atlanta, and New Orleans definitely were not. One can hardly maintain an aristocratic, hierarchical society with a slave-based labor system, off in the woods, where betrayal by ex-slaves would be a constant danger.

In *Retreat to Victory*, Robert G. Tanner points out many of the reasons that the vast spaces of the Confederacy were not nearly as suited to the discomfiture of invading
armies as were such other “vast spaces” such as those of Russia. As Early points out, it was far likelier the Confederacy would become exhausted by a purely defensive contest than the Union would. The Confederacy did not have the luxury of waiting around until the Union got tired of the whole thing. They would have to take some steps to speed up the process. And, if a victory at Gettysburg would not necessarily have had the sudden and spectacular results some ex-Confederates claimed for it, it certainly (particularly if combined with the “destruction” of the main Union Army, which Lee always aimed at) would have centered Union minds wonderfully.

It seems to me highly unlikely that a crushing and humiliating defeat of the main Union Army by the heavily outnumbered Confederates defending a strong position in their own country would have been met by the North with supine indifference as, after all, Grant had just won the war in Vicksburg, and in another two years or so, the always successful Western armies would have fought their way to the rear of Richmond. Regardless of whether the Eastern theatre would have had the importance that it assumed in the minds of observers at the time, both North and South, had they been in possession of all of the facts and engaged in a rational consideration thereof (the hypothetical decision maker assumed in so many contexts in the law and economics and history and who does not actually exist), the fact is that it had that importance, and “the whole world was watching.” Foreign recognition may well have followed (though it was apparently not as imminent as it had been in 1862). That the Northern public would have regarded with perfect equanimity a victorious Southern host within a few days’ march of

149 See McPherson, 554-557.
Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, supremely confident that the real war was being fought and won in the west, seems rather hard to imagine.150

Perhaps a pig-headed administration would have “stayed the course” until victory in the West became apparent enough prior to the 1864 Presidential election to save it. American administrations have been known to continue to pursue wars when it was quite clear that the majority of the public wished to conclude the enterprise, though, perversely enough, they generally only want it ended on some basis that can be considered “victory.” But, to be sure that that would not occur, it would be necessary to slow down the Union in the West. Modern scholarship does not allege that Lee’s doubts about the Western commanders were ill-founded. In fact, two months after Gettysburg, a substantial portion of the Army of Northern Virginia was sent West and a smashing victory resulted at Chickamaugua. Two months after that, the fruits of that victory had been frittered away, and the slow but seemingly unstoppable Union conquest of the Western confederacy once more began inching forward. In hindsight, he seems to have been correct that the odds could not be improved by sending more Confederates West but by luring more Union troops eastward. With a victorious Confederate host loose in Pennsylvania, it is unthinkable that the Western armies would have been left to their systematic (but time-consuming) conquest.

But there was no need to worry about the 1864 Presidential election in the North if the war were to end in 1863. This Lee had set forth to Pennsylvania to accomplish.

150 See Appendix for further discussion of these points.
Chapter 2. The Meeting

The battle began with what will continue to be its pattern for the whole three days, virtual unanimity on what happened and querulous debate over why it happened. The oft-told tale is that portions of General Pettigrew’s brigade had marched off towards Gettysburg on the evening of June 30, 1863, looking for shoes (though, as an aside, it should be noted, that other Confederate units had already been through Gettysburg and the possibility that any available shoes would have survived these earlier visitations was small). When they found elements of the Army of the Potomac there (Buford’s cavalry), without orders to press the matter, they turned around and went back, reporting to Corps Commander Hill and Division Commander Heth that they had run into the Army of the Potomac.

Hill then did two very problematic things. Much of all that Hill did in those three days was problematic, but he has been subjected to less bad press over it than either Ewell or Longstreet, perhaps because he was killed in action near the end of the war, though a hero’s death had not saved Stuart from similar recriminations. First, he insisted that the Army of the Potomac was nowhere near the place. This is an interesting belief (if it is true that Hill actually had it) because, even though Stuart had not been heard from, the report of the scout Harrison had alerted Confederate command to the fact that Union troops were moving in their direction. And secondly, he said he hoped they were, because that is just where he wanted them.  

In Lee’s reports, he makes the statement that “It had not been intended to fight a general battle at such a distance from our base, unless attacked by the enemy.”\textsuperscript{152} With reference to this quote, it should be noted that Lee made virtually the same remark, that “My desire has been to avoid a general engagement” in a letter to Davis dated August 30, 1862, the dawn of the second day of Second Bull/Manassas.\textsuperscript{153} The Battle of Second Bull Run/Manassas occurred after Lee had sent Stonewall Jackson’s corps\textsuperscript{154} well to the rear of General John Pope’s Army of Virginia, where it amused itself by taking the union supply depot at Manassas, consuming what they could, carrying off what they could, and destroying the rest. They then marched slightly to the west and awaited the Union response. Meanwhile, Lee with Longstreet and his corps were charging North to be available to join in when and if somebody caught Jackson. The Army of Virginia did catch Jackson and launched a furious assault on him. At just the right moment,\textsuperscript{155} Longstreet launched an attack on the attacker’s flank, causing the usual Confederate victory and Union debacle.

It would appear that driving into an enemy’s rear, sacking and looting his supplies, and then sitting down to wait for him to come after you, the whole while setting up an ambush for him when he does, would seem as good a way as any to guarantee a

\textsuperscript{152} Lee report of July 31, 1863, 27-2 \textit{OR} 308: January ____, 1864 Report, 27-2 \textit{OR} 318 (slight difference in wording.).

\textsuperscript{153} Lee to Davis, August 30, 1862, \textit{Wartime Papers of Robert E. Lee}, No. 281, 266-267.

\textsuperscript{154} At this point technically there were no corps, but “wings.” Jefferson Davis, in a display of the legal punctiliousness that could come over him at inopportune times, had resisted “corps” as unauthorized. Shortly thereafter (in the fall of 1862 after Antietam) corps were authorized. Woodworth, 63, 200.

\textsuperscript{155} There are issues involving Longstreet’s behavior at Gettysburg involved here. Lee wanted an earlier attack and Longstreet convinced him to wait. The attack, when it came, was devastating. Confederate commentators, who could never contemplate the possibility that Longstreet ever did anything right, concluded that Longstreet getting away with such a thing was pregnant with seeds of disaster for the future, in that it led Longstreet to believe that he could pick and choose what orders of the Commanding General to obey and led him to mistaken notions of his own genius. Some go so far as to assert that the attack, however successful it had been, would have been more successful if undertaken on Lee’s timetable. See “Scapegoat in Victory: James Longstreet and the Battle of Second Manasas” in Gallagher, \textit{Lee and His Generals}, 139-157.
general battle, not prevent one, yet Lee innocently proclaimed he was hoping to avoid one. This seems to me less a deliberate lie than a pious fiction adopted for use in correspondence with the ever nervous President Davis, meant rather as a spoonful of sugar to make the medicine go down easier, that this was the South’s (maybe the world’s) greatest army, the only way to get any gain from it was for it to fight battles, and battles are dangerous. Woodworth’s take is similar. In any event, there is no evidence that Davis ever called him on it, perhaps appreciating the courtesy of deferring to his sensibilities. Bowden and Ward make much of the courtesy of Southern gentlemen (rather, too much, I am inclined to think, but that is for later on) in parsing Gettysburg orders. Yet, in this case, I think, such an assessment would not be far wrong. The point, however, with reference to Gettysburg, is that Lee’s disinclination to fight a general battle was generally quite easily overcome.

While the general consensus is that what occurred at Gettysburg was a “meeting engagement,” that the armies stumbled into one another at a place where neither expected the battle, there are certain hints in the literature that it was not all so unexpected as that. Both Trimble and Long (the credibility of neither of which is particularly unsuspect) claimed that Lee had told them in advance that he expected the great battle of the War to take place at Gettysburg. When he was contemplated the map with Long in the episode set forth above, Lee was alleged (by Long) to have said:

in his view, the best course would be to invade Pennsylvania, penetrating this State in the direction of Chambersburg, York, or Gettysburg. He might be forced to give battle at one or the other of these places as circumstances might suggest, but, in his view, the vicinity of Gettysburg was much the best point, as it was less distant from his base on the Potomac, and was so situated that by holding the

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156 Woodworth, 179-184.
passes of the South Mountain, he would be able to keep open his line of communication.\textsuperscript{157}

According to Trimble:

At the conclusion of our interview, he laid his hand on the map, over Gettysburg, and said hereabout we shall probably meet the enemy and fight a great battle, and if God gives us the victory, the war will be over and we shall achieve the recognition of our independence.\textsuperscript{158}

A late article in the Southern History Society Papers by Leslie A. Perry (he was a civilian member of the war records Board and appears on the title page of the Official Records in that capacity beginning with Vol 30-1) argued that Lee, far from being surprised, was concentrating his army skillfully for the clash he knew would take place at Gettysburg or in its general vicinity. He concludes:

This formal statement by General Lee made at the time, together with various orders and movements detailed in the foregoing, all compiled from official and perfectly reliable sources, determine conclusively that all the divisions of the Confederate army were moving in unison, like a huge machine, toward a common centre, and with a common object, propelled by the comprehensive mind of its commanding general, who had and was following out a definite plan of operations, evolved as early as June 28th, when he first received information that the Union Army had crossed the Potomac and was advancing, and were not set in motion by a temporary impulse growing out of a trivial raid for shoes at Gettysburg on the morning of July 1st. That was merely an incident in the concerted movement of a great army.\textsuperscript{159}

Be all of that as it may, Hill is perhaps to be less believed in his assertion that the Army of the Potomac was nowhere near the place than the implication he didn’t care if

\textsuperscript{157} Long, 268.

\textsuperscript{158} Trimble, “Gettysburg,” 26 SHSP 116-127 (1898), 121. Just prior to this, Trimble has Lee saying: “When they hear where we are they will make forced marches to interpose their forces between us and Baltimore and Philadelphia. They will come up, probably through Frederick; broken down with hunger and hard marching, strung out on a long line and much demoralized, when they come into Pennsylvania. I shall throw an overwhelming force on their advance, crush it, follow up the success, drive one corps back on another, and by successive repulses and surprises before they can concentrate; create a panic and virtually destroy the army.” I think this is consistent with what Lee was thinking, but have trouble believing he actually said this to Trimble in so many words.

\textsuperscript{159} Leslie J. Perry, “General Lee and the Battle of Gettysburg,” 23 SHSP 253-259, quote at 258-259.
they were. The Army of Northern Virginia was concentrating and, if anybody got in the way, even the Army of the Potomac, it was just their tough luck. This attitude recurs too often to be disregarded.\textsuperscript{160}

Whether innocently on the search for probably non-existent shoes or just the vanguard of an army secure in its prowess and looking for trouble wherever they could find it, Heth set out for Gettysburg. First he ran into Buford’s cavalry and then he ran into the Union First Corps, continuing the fight, disregarding a clear order to “report back if he encountered infantry.”\textsuperscript{161} Although Heth (and Hill) have been censured for bringing on the fight before Lee wanted it,\textsuperscript{162} he has not been generally taken to task for not, in conformance to the clear letter (and spirit) of his orders, calling the whole thing off when he met infantry. Perhaps realizing this, he ignores the opening salvos with the cavalry, the fact that he sent various units piecemeal to deal with them, and paints the entire encounter with a stunning lack of detail, as one of profound surprise, in which he met large masses of the enemy about 9 a.m. and was driven back almost before he knew it, without having to make any other decisions (and without pushing the battle without informing his superiors he had run into infantry):

On July 1st I moved my division from Cashtown in the direction of Gettysburg, reaching the heights, a mile (more or less) from the town, about 9 o’clock A.M. No opposition had been made and no enemy discovered. While the division was coming up I placed several batteries in position and shelled the woods to the right and left of the town. No reply was made. Two brigades were then deployed to the right and left of the railroad leading into Gettysburg, and, with the railroad as a point of direction, were ordered to advance and occupy Gettysburg. These

\textsuperscript{160}The most common reference for this attitude is to be found in Fremantle, an independent and generally reliable, if highly sympathetic, observer. “The staff officers spoke of the battle as a certainty, and the universal feeling in the army was one of profound contempt for an enemy whom they have beaten so constantly, and under so many disadvantages.” Fremantle, 262.

\textsuperscript{161}See Taylor, 187.

\textsuperscript{162}Again Fremantle, “I have the best reason for supposing that the fight came off prematurely, and that neither Lee nor Longstreet intended that it should have begun that day. I also think that their plans were deranged by the events of the first,” 262.
brigades, on moving forward, soon struck the enemy, which proved to be Reynolds' corps of the Federal army, and were driven back with some loss. This was the first intimation that General Lee had that the enemy had moved from the point he supposed him to occupy, possibly thirty miles distant.163

On the next line in Heth’s letter, we are already magically past noon, with Ewell’s corps coming in from the North (see below).

Briefly (as we are dealing with decision-making, not the details of the battle) Heth’s morning fight was a disaster.164 The Iron Brigade made mincemeat of Archer’s Brigade in MacPherson’s Woods, and Davis’s (a relative of the President and relatively inexperienced in command) Brigade got trapped in an unfinished railroad cut and was cut to ribbons. After a decided Union victory, there was a lull.

When Lee first heard the firing up ahead, he was concerned. He asked Hill what was going on, and Hill didn’t know. First Hill and then Lee proceeded as fast as they could in the direction of the firing.165 At this point, Lee clearly wasn’t happy with the way things had gone. He restrained Heth, who had wanted to continue the fight. Heth describes what happened next in his letter:

My division was then formed in a wooded ravine to the right of the railroad, the ground rising in front and in rear. The enemy was evidently in force in my front. General Rodes, commanding a division of Ewell's corps en route to Cashtown, was following a road running north of Gettysburg. Rodes hearing the firing at Gettysburg, faced by the left flank and approached the town. He soon became heavily engaged, and seeing this, I sought for and found General Lee. Saying to the General: "Rodes is very heavily engaged, had I not better attack?" General Lee replied: "No; I am not prepared to bring on a general engagement today -- Longstreet is not up." Returning to my division, I soon discovered that the enemy were moving troops from my front and pushing them against Rodes. I reported

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163 Heth letter, 158.
164 In Alexander’s words, they received “a genteel whipping, by the very superior force they had inadvertently pitched into.” Alexander., 232.
165 The source for the details that Lee heard the firing, was distressed, and rode up to see what was going on is Long, 275. That he met and conversed with Hill is also in Taylor, 187-188. Whether the details were quite so dramatic as Long painted them may be subject to doubt but there is no doubt from Fremantle’s comments and what would follow with Heth that the story is true in essence.
this fact to General Lee and again requested to be permitted to attack. Permission was given.¹⁶⁶

In conformance with orders and marching to the sound of the guns, Ewell’s Corps arrived North of Gettysburg about 2 o’clock. Ewell had been ordered to “avoid a general engagement.” However, one of his divisions, Rodes’, had arrived right at the right angle between the Union First Corps, which had defended against Heth north of Gettysburg, and the Union Eleventh Corps that had arrived slightly later and been posted North of Gettysburg. And, known to Ewell but not to Lee, Early’s division was expected shortly and it was coming in right on the Eleventh Corps right flank, which was in the air.

This paper is about Confederate command decisions and not directly about Union ones, but, as had happened so often in the past that the Confederates had rather come to expect it, the Confederates were about to be handed one of those incredible lucky breaks that seemed to fall from the sky to the Army of Northern Virginia. Though Shelby Foote may have thought that the Stars in their courses conspired against the Confederates, if they did so, it was about time, because they had always rather coursed in the opposite direction.

Before we begin to discuss the first of Lee’s lucky breaks at Gettysburg, I want to make it clear what I mean by lucky breaks. Lee was indeed fortunate to meet Pope and Burnside and that an otherwise highly competent general (yes, he was, but this is a big otherwise) McClellan was somehow psychologically constituted as to believe (or choose to believe) that the forces arrayed against him were twice the size that they were. But, of course, the fact of the matter is that, reluctant as we are in this century to believe wholeheartedly in the designs of an all-wise providence (particularly in favor of what we

¹⁶⁶ Heth letter, 158.
now view to have been the side God should not have been on) it is not impossible to explain Lee’s “luck” as anything but mystical. People made mistakes when meeting Robert E. Lee that they didn’t make when meeting a more prosaic and predictable general like Johnston. Had Hooker gotten the drop on almost anybody other than Lee, it is unlikely that he would have hesitated in strange discomfort that the whole thing seemed just a little too easy and there might be a nasty shock waiting for him just a little way up the road unless he stopped and thought a while. Lee certainly behaved in such a way as to feed McClellan’s delusions and was able to recognize Pope’s and Burnside’s errors and capitalize on them. The spell that Lee had cast on the Army of the Potomac can best be exemplified by Horace Porter’s report of an incident that took place at the Battle of the Wilderness:

A general officer came in from his command at this juncture, and said to the general-in-chief, speaking rapidly and laboring under considerable excitement: “General Grant, this is a crisis that cannot be looked upon too seriously. I know Lee’s methods well by past experience; he will throw his whole army between us and the Rapidan, and cut us off completely from our communications.” The general rose to his feet, took his cigar out of his mouth, turned to the officer and replied, with a degree of animation which he seldom manifested: “Oh, I am heartily tired of hearing about what Lee is going to do. Some of you always seem to think he is suddenly going to turn a double somersault and land in our rear and on both of our flanks at the same time. Go back to your command, and try to think what we are going to do ourselves, instead of what Lee is going to do.”

Of course, Porter’s point is how great and unshakeable Grant was, but the story also serves to show how mesmerized the Army of the Potomac had become by Lee (and this is after Gettysburg). The theory has been advanced that because of pre-war stereotypes and the sympathy of many northern “gentlemen” among Northern professional soldiers, the entire Northern army (not just McClellan) was convinced that

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the Southerners (and not just Lee) were better soldiers than they were and that attitude prepared them for and conditioned them to expect defeat. Whether or not that is so (and the point is well argued), they had had enough bad experiences in the presence of Lee to explain the phenomenon even without looking further.

It is usually pointed out that the Army of Northern Virginia was “overconfident.” Even Bowden and Ward allude to this. However, this was an army of men who had to be willing to charge uphill (sometimes barefoot) over rocks and thorns to attack people with guns who were shooting at them from field fortifications or, even if no breastworks had been constructed, from behind convenient rocks and fences. War is so frequent in history and similar behavior so well documented that it is easy to lose sight of just how extraordinary it actually is. It is hard to imagine what would make men do that unless they believed they were fighting for their homes and families, which they certainly believed they were, far more than the Northerners who were fighting for more abstract concepts and could just retire to their undestroyed homes if defeated. To do that, they almost had to be overconfident. Heth mentions Napoleon’s axiom that the moral is to the physical as three to one. Contrary to the usual Confederate obsession with the disparity of numbers and the odds against which they fought (which Lee apparently shared to some degree), after listing the Confederate numbers at Gettysburg, Heth implies they had, in essence, outnumbered the North, assuming, apparently without hesitation, that the three-to-one factor unambiguously benefited the South without any thought of the possibility

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169 Bowden & Ward, 500.
170 See Jones, Rebel War Clerk, footnote 47 above.
that there might be some morale on the other side.\textsuperscript{171} Of course, there was the physical, and the men who charged to even greater disaster at Nashville were motivated by the same factors (without, of course, the mystical faith in their ability that the Army of Northern Virginia alone among the Confederate armies showed).

Was the Army of Northern Virginia overconfident as they approached Gettysburg? Damn straight they were overconfident. They almost had to be.

The Eleventh Corps, which was posted North of Gettysburg, was the same Eleventh Corps that had quietly been cooking their dinners at Chancellorsville when Stonewall Jackson’s men had come screaming out of the woods on to their unsecured flank, sending them scurrying unfed to the rear as fast as they could. For this, they had received the name of the “Flying Dutchmen” (there were a lot of Germans in the corps), but faulty deployment had a lot to do with their response. It was to happen again at Gettysburg.

Their line may have been too far North of Gettysburg to be comfortably manned with the men available, but its major defect was that, on the right (eastern flank) it had been “refused,” but “refused” in the wrong direction. Instead of bending the right back to avoid flanking on that side, it was bent forward to encompass what has since become

\textsuperscript{171} Heth Letter, 159-160. Heth’s numbers were 62,000 Confederate and 112,000 Union. Had he access to the modern revised numbers of Busey & Martin (approximately 70,000 Confederate and 90,000 Union, his argument might have even be stronger. He adds “(T)he Army of Northern Virginia was never stronger than on entering Pennsylvania, and I am perfectly satisfied in my own mind, that this fact entered very largely in determining General Lee to make the attack on the 3d of July, at Gettysburg; for there was not an officer or soldier in the Army of Northern Virginia, from General Lee to the drummer boy, who did not believe, when we invaded Pennsylvania in 1863, that it was able to drive the Federal army into the Atlantic Ocean. Not that the fighting capacity of its great adversary was underestimated, but possibly the Army of Northern Virginia had an overweening opinion of its own prowess.”
known as Barlow’s Knoll. They were hit (admittedly in front)\(^{172}\) by Gordon’s brigade, but two more brigades were observable streaking towards their empty right flank. They might not have been the army’s best soldiers but they had the sense to understand what should be done when you are hit in front and other troops of the enemy can be seen swooping down on your unprotected flank. They got out of there.\(^{173}\) Barlow would be immortalized as the stricken general found by Gordon (and kindly treated) on the Battlefield of Gettysburg and met many years later in Congress, to each one’s surprise (each had thought the other dead) and delight.\(^{174}\) Barlow gets a fairy tale in Gordon’s book and a knoll named after him. What his men got was a hopeless position to try to defend and another depressing rout at the hands of the Confederates in a position the Iron Brigade could have scarcely attempted to defend, and to have their courage assailed by the very man who put them in that position.\(^{175}\)

Enough of Barlow. The point is that whether or not Lee had become so used to Union mistakes that he had embarked on his plan to force a great battle on Northern soil, which his superior army couldn’t help but win, depending upon them, for the time being, he had another one. Ewell saw the opportunity and attacked. He had been told to “avoid

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\(^{172}\) In his only substantive letter to be found in the Bachelder papers, Barlow, perhaps feeling a little guilty, insists in a very short letter dated March 31, 1983, “I lately saw John M. Daniel of Lyndenburg, Va., the late Democratic candidate for Gov. of Virginia. He was on Early’s staff at Gettysburg, and was present at the attack on me. He entirely corroborates my very distinct recollection that the attack on me was fair and square in front.” David L. Ladd and Audrey J. Ladd, trans., ed., ann., *The Bachelder Papers: Gettysburg in Their Own Words*, Vol. 2, September 6, 1880 to April 12, 1886 (Dayton, Oh.: Morningside House, Inc: 1994), 938. The editors note that, judging by his maps, Bachelder remained unconvinced.

\(^{173}\) Perhaps after putting up more of a fight than they ever got credit for. Gordon’s brigade (which was not seriously engaged at any time in the rest of the battle) sustained more casualties than it would have had the battle been the rout Gordon complacently described. See Busey & Martin, 285 (112 killed, 297, wounded, 128 missing/captured, 29.1% of those engaged.).

\(^{174}\) Gordon, 151-153. It is, of course, a wonderful story. However, I am more inclined to believe in the literal truth of some of the early chapters of Livy than in anything reported by Gordon.

a general engagement” but he was the Corps Commander, he saw an opportunity, and he took it. Once Lee saw it, he unleashed Heth. However reluctant he had been to begin the battle before all the troops were up, at this point (as Bowden and Ward argue, and I think correctly) he saw that the opportunity he had been looking for had presented itself, and there were two Union corps ripe for the picking. It might not have been planned that way, but it was working out very well.

The First Corps, which had been fighting all day, was finally overwhelmed. Whether the Eleventh Corps fought well or poorly, they had been hit at a vulnerable place, and they were in full retreat as well. The two Union corps retreated through the town to Cemetery Hill. The Confederates reported a disorganized rout. The Union accounts stress an orderly retreat. The reality is probably somewhere in the middle. The Union had been badly beaten but they probably had hardly been rendered as harmless as the Confederates later seemed to think.

Before we leave the first day, I would like to note an interesting comment from Bowden and Ward. They claim:

During the Civil War, units with good or excellent leadership and corresponding high morale were able to attack and inflict more damage on the defenders than they suffered in return. In this connection, with regard to the final retreat of the Iron Brigade, they state:

Perrin’s soldiers enfiladed what was left of the Federal line there and pressed home their advantage against the Iron Brigade with fire and cold steel, inflicting greater losses upon the Midwesterners than they themselves had suffered during the advance.

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176 Bowden & Ward, 166-167.
177 See Pfanz, First Day, 323-330.
178 Bowden & Ward, 74.
179 Ibid., 174.
The sources they footnote are all Federal. However, Perrin’s brigade, which did not fight again during the three days (though they may have taken artillery casualties) had a percentage of casualties of 34.9. The Iron Brigade, which had been fighting all day, did take an incredible 63.0% casualties. They were also stationed on Culp’s Hill, which was to be attacked on the night of the second and the morning of the third. So, while it may be true, it is hard to be sure. What is sure is that the Iron Brigade would defend for two more days and Perrin’s brigade did not attack again. Units that had been completely defeated and took incredible casualties seemed able to defend, whereas units that attacked and won were seldom were able to attack again. As Alexander commented (with regard to “Pickett’s” charge:

This fighting spirit in the troops, after a period of rest, is something as real, though not as tangible, as ammunition, & should be economized in the same way. Even the best divisions, after one really severe & bloody action, cannot be expected to exhibit the highest development of spirit, particularly on the offensive, until after a little rest.  

This should be kept in mind. As we proceed through the battle and find that this or that unit was supposed to attack and didn’t, it may be more than some dereliction of duty or stupidity on the part of their commander.

At any rate, at this point, both Union corps were in at least full retreat (or headlong flight as it appeared to the attacking Confederates). It was at this point that Lee, who had arrived on the field in time to authorize Hill’s final thrusts, concluded that all that was needed was to “push those people” a little, and Cemetery Hill (and the battle) would be theirs. He sent an aide to apprise General Ewell of this belief.  

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180 See Tables 1 through 4.  
181 Alexander, Fighting for the Confederacy, 277.  
182 Taylor, 190.
Chapter 3. The Cavalry

There has been much discussion about the impact of Jeb Stuart’s ill-timed raid. Most of it has centered upon the somewhat legalistic point as to whether Stuart violated his orders. Stuart’s detractors labor to prove that he did. Bowden and Ward expend much energy on the difference between “riding around” the Federal Army (which he did and which he was allegedly not authorized to do) and riding “through” the Union Army (i.e. behind the advanced corps and in front of the trailing corps) which, they say, is what he was supposed to do and what would have gotten him to the right flank of the army in plenty of time to keep Lee informed of the Union Army’s whereabouts. Bowden and Ward assert that Stuart knew very well that riding around meant riding through because there had also been oral consultations. This may well be so, but if the Confederates meant other than what it appears from reading their literal words today, it is hard to believe this conclusively proven.

Stuart’s defenders argue equally strenuously that he did not violate orders. Modern commentators tend to blame Lee for issuing confusing and vague orders that were easy for Stuart to misconstrue (if, in fact, what Stuart did was not positively authorized).

As I will argue frequently with regard to other confederate commanders, whether they violated orders or squeezed by on loopholes ingeniously hidden in those orders and

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183 See particularly, Marshall, 230. It is frequently stated that Marshall wanted Stuart shot, with or without trial. See Emory M. Thomas, “Eggs, Aldie, Shepherdstown and J. E. B. Stuart in The Gettysburg Nobody Knows, 101-121, 107. Marshall refrains from such an explicit recommendation in his book but the general sentiments thought to have given rise to such an assertion remain present.

184 Bowden & Ward, 115-119.

185 In the nineteenth century, his primary defender was Col. John S. Mosby. See his “The Confederate Cavalry in the Gettysburg Campaign” in Battles and Leaders, 251-252. For modern defense, see Mark Nesbitt, Saber and Scapegoat: J.E.B. Stuart and the Gettysburg Controversy (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1994)

186 See Coddington, 108-111.
thus had not technically violated them is rather beside the point. Stuart was a Corps Commander, and not only a Corps Commander but the Commander of the Corps of Cavalry, used to operating on his own, far out of sight of the Commander of the Army. He had to use his own judgment. He was expected to use his own judgment. In this case, regardless of the technical nuances of his orders, his judgment may have been poor.

And yet, as Stuart’s defenders maintain, Lee had plenty of cavalry. Mosby accuses Brig. Gen. Beverly Robertson, who was left in charge of the cavalry, for not obeying orders. Stuart’s orders (to Robertson) seem clear enough:

After the enemy has moved beyond your reach, leave sufficient pickets in the mountains, withdraw to the west side of the Shenandoah, place a strong and reliable picket to watch the enemy at Harper’s Ferry, cross the Potomac, and follow the army, keeping on its right and rear.

As long as the enemy remains in your front in force, unless otherwise ordered by General R. E. Lee, Lieutenant-General Longstreet, or myself, hold the Gaps with a line of pickets reaching across the Shenandoah by Charlestown to the Potomac.

If, in the contingency mentioned, you withdraw, sweep the Valley clear of what pertains to the army, and cross the Potomac at the different points crossed by it.

You will instruct General Jones from time to time as the movements progress, or events may require, and report anything of importance to Lieutenant-General Longstreet, with whose position you will communicate by relays through Charlestown.

After the enemy has moved beyond your reach, leave sufficient pickets in the mountains, withdraw to the west side of the Shenandoah, place a strong and reliable picket to watch the enemy at Harper’s Ferry, cross the Potomac, and follow the army, keeping on its right and rear.

As long as the enemy remains in your front in force, unless otherwise ordered by General R. E. Lee, Lieutenant-General Longstreet, or myself, hold the Gaps with a line of pickets reaching across the Shenandoah by Charlestown to the Potomac.\footnote{Stuart to Robertson, June 24, 1863, 27-3 OR 927.}
Robertson defends himself on the grounds that, had he been guilty of any
dereliction of duty, he surely would have been censured either in Lee’s report or
Stuart’s.¹⁸⁸ Whatever Stuart might have been moved to say about him, if you base your
defense on the fact that General Lee had nothing bad to say about you in his report, it
seems a pretty slim support. Although Robertson was in charge, there was another
brigade left under the command of William E. “Grumble” Jones, who, Nesbitt claims, on
the authority of Stuart aide Henry McClellan, was, if irascible, a fine outpost officer.¹⁸⁹

The story is that Robertson and Jones with their brigades were still down in
Virginia. They did not realize the Union Army was gone, so they did not themselves
head for Pennsylvania until after Lee had already learned from the spy Harrison that the
Union Army had been on the move. As Nesbitt points out, Lee already had known that
the Union Army was building bridges over the Potomac.¹⁹⁰ The Union Army was
supposed to come north, it was being lured north. There were outposts in the mountain
passes. Lee wrote to Jefferson Davis on the 23rd of June that the Federals were building
bridges over the Potomac. All in all, it seems rather unlikely that, when the scout
Harrison reported the motion of the Union to Army on the night of the 28th of June,¹⁹¹
Lee was completely thunderstruck.¹⁹² And with all the controversy over the orders, it
seems to have been forgotten that everybody agrees that, come early or late, Stuart was

¹⁸⁹ Nesbitt, 70; Reference is to H.B. McClellan, I Rode with Jeb Stuart: The Life and Campaigns of Major
General J.E.B. Stuart (Originally published as The Campaigns of Stuart’s Cavalry, 1885; Reprint, Ed.
¹⁹⁰ Nesbitt, 65 citing Lee letter to Davis, June 23, 1863, 27-2 OR 297-298.
¹⁹¹ Or whenever, Stuart’s defenders tend to quibble over the date.
¹⁹² Coddington is also somewhat skeptical that Lee could have been all that surprised, 182-183.
supposed to find Ewell’s corps, which was nowhere near Gettysburg.\textsuperscript{193} Had he already linked up with Ewell, how was he supposed to know what was going on at Gettysburg?

Yet, in the end, did it matter? The essential mission of the cavalry was to find the Union Army. The Union Army got found. Jubal Early makes this point.

I have never thought that our failure at Gettysburg was due to the absence of Stuart's cavalry, though I can well understand the perplexity and annoyance it caused General Lee before the enemy was found. He was found, however, without the aid of cavalry, and when found, though by accident, he furnished us the opportunity to strike him a fatal blow.\textsuperscript{194}

Connelly believes that Jubal Early was compelled to climb down about the cavalry because, when he was in the midst of his cherished project of collecting as much testimony from as many former Confederate officers as possible to pin the blame for the loss of the battle (and the war) on Longstreet, he was horrified to find that not all the criticism centered on Longstreet and that, in fact, some of them dared to criticize him. Nolan argues that he was a little guilty about the cavalry because he realized that he himself had failed to follow orders in that he did not properly look out for Stuart. Thus, a corrupt bargain: you lay off on me failing to find the cavalry and I'll lay off on Stuart.\textsuperscript{195} Possible. Logical?

Let’s back off and take a little look at this proposition. The infantry was supposed to find the cavalry? And what was the cavalry supposed to do after the infantry found it? Find the Union Army. Wait a minute. Isn’t it the cavalry that was supposed to find things and wasn’t the whole battle compromised, if not caused, and lost because the cavalry failed to find the Union Army? Why not just skip the middle-man and instead of having Early find Stuart so Stuart could find the Union Army, why not just have Early

\textsuperscript{193} Lee to Stuart, June 23, 1863, 27-2 \textit{OR} 923.
\textsuperscript{195} Connelly, 88-89.
find the Union Army? I do not doubt that Early would have made every effort to square possibly dissenting voices (he was a warrior in controversy and, like Longstreet, did not wish to go into combat with one boot off) or that he may have felt a little guilty over some of his actions and non-actions in the battle but that he would be castigated and the whole case against Longstreet fail when it was revealed that he had failed to find the cavalry I find a little much.

And here’s where we get back to William Allen’s memo. In that memo, Lee is quoted as saying:

He did not know the Federal Army was at Gettysburg, could not believe it, as Stuart had been specially ordered to cover his (Lee’s) movements, and keep him informed of the enemy’s position, and he (Stuart) had sent no word. He found himself engaged with the Federal Army, therefore, unexpectedly, and had to fight. . . Stuart’s failure to carry out his intentions forced the battle of Gettysburg.¹⁹⁶

This is certainly consistent with the line in his report (which Alexander regards rather skeptically)¹⁹⁷ that the battle became “in a measure, unavoidable.”¹⁹⁸

Modern commentators have expressed similar skepticism. On the night of the first, the Confederates had scored a substantial, if incomplete, victory. The Union showed no inclination to attack and indeed, in the remaining two days of the battle and the next day when the armies remained in place but without renewing the battle, there were only two Union attacks (other than counter-attacks, as were constantly happening about Little Round Top and the Wheatfield on July 2), both caused by unique circumstances: the effort to recover lost breastworks at Culp’s Hill and the ill-starred and ill-considered cavalry assault on the Third that cost the life of Farnsworth. The options

¹⁹⁶ Allen Memorandum in Marshall, 250-251. It should be noted that Nesbitt is exceedingly skeptical about Marshall; and the Allen Memorandum was, according to editor Frederick Maurice, found in Marshall’s papers.
¹⁹⁷ Alexander, Fighting for the Confederacy, 233.
available to Lee included attempting the flanking maneuver suggested by Longstreet (though, admittedly, the absence of the cavalry might have “embarrassed” such a move), remaining in place (at least a day or two, not forever, of course; there are supply difficulties for a concentrated army in enemy territory), withdrawing to the gaps in the mountains, behind which there was a supply line (which, admittedly the Union might try to cut), or just going back to Virginia. None of these are particular good options, but wandering around in the country of an enemy with superior resources, commandeering his property, with 70,000 armed men is bound to cause a reaction (indeed, was intended to cause a reaction) that might incur some danger. The point that Lee was “forced” to fight the battle of Gettysburg because the cavalry was absent and he didn’t know where the enemy was is a complete non-sequitur. One would think that, in the absence of the cavalry, and fighting “blind” as it were, one would look for any available possibility to avoid the battle. Staying in place until the cavalry finally arrived would, as it turned out (though Lee could hardly have known this), cost him only a day, an important day to be sure because it eliminated the possibility of fighting the enemy “in detail” (or, at least, much reducing it). Then, with cavalry in hand, one could fight, maneuver, or retreat, as one chose.

Yet, from Lee’s changing point of view, the comment, as illogical as it seems, does make a certain sense. What rendered the battle “unavoidable” was not that the absence of the cavalry had caused the army to stumble into a battle unexpectedly but that it had caused (if at all) the army to stumble into a battle that it was winning. This was the key.
Accordingly, all of Lee’s statements that he wanted to avoid a general battle and was only in Pennsylvania to collect supplies and keep the Federal army out of Virginia were true enough, after a fashion. Lee certainly would have been willing to leave it at that if nothing better turned up. Yet all of his writings and his general outlook on the proper Confederate strategy reveal that he was always on the lookout for a chance to “strike a blow.” Trusting in an all-wise providence (and we twenty-first century people should not underestimate the degree to which the people of the Civil War era were willing to trust in an all-wise providence, or what we might consider, hoping to catch a break, or flatter ourselves that there is very much difference other than that in the nineteenth century there may have been a more reverent and appropriate attitude towards the unknown powers of the Universe), Lee was on the look-out, as always, for such an opportunity. On the afternoon of the first, the unwanted and premature battle had suddenly changed. There was Ewell’s corps coming in, as if by magic (or as ordered by an all-wise providence), in exactly the right place, Rodes’ division on the hinge between the Union corps, and Early’s Division directed like an arrow at a hanging and too advanced right flank. This was it.

It is important to stress what I am not saying. I am not saying that Lee was deviating from his normal practice of not blaming anyone for anything and seeking to pin on Stuart the fact that the battle (lost as it had been) was fought at all. Even less I am saying that Lee had been somehow Machiavellian enough to give Stuart too discretionary orders that he knew well Stuart might convert into an ill-timed quest to recover reputation so that the battle he sought might become, in a measure, unavoidable (just being able to conceive these thoughts says more about me, or perhaps about our times, than it does
about Lee). What I am saying is that Lee, in perfectly good faith, could believe as true two apparently irreconcilable things, that he was both trying to avoid a general battle and was seeking one because he did not see them as irreconcilable. Given the proper conditions, either might have been appropriate so they could co-exist.

And, if Lee’s complaints and impatience about the absence of Stuart continued apace, it was because he still needed him, and, needed him more than ever, not to find the enemy army, the enemy army was found, but to participate in following up (if not causing) the rout that he now saw as possible. 199

Another possibility suggests itself from the design for the campaign that Lee had allegedly outlined to Trimble. The conversation allegedly took place on the 27th of June. If close in spirit (if not in words) to what Lee was thinking, the problem when he learned the next day that the Union Army was a lot closer than he thought it was was not so much that Lee didn’t know where the Union Army was, but that the Union Army apparently did know where Lee was. Accordingly, they would be showing up perhaps less separated and less bedraggled than he wanted them. Had he learned earlier than he had from Stuart that the Union was on to him, he might have concentrated the army more quickly. Stuart apparently learned that the Union Army was well on its way to Pennsylvania as early as the 25th. A quick turnabout and a message to Lee could have gotten there that day or at least by the 26th. The Confederates would have had at least two full days to concentrate. They might have been at Gettysburg by the 29th, fallen back to the mountain passes, or

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199 The quotes that Lee was much concerned about the absence of Stuart are legion. See, for instance, the Heth letter, 156. Nesbitt argues that Heth’s letter is the source of all the complaints that “every officer” heard Lee’s complaints and that Heth was trying to shift some of the blame from himself for having started the battle prematurely, 134-137. Longstreet quotes Anderson, one of Hill’s Division Commanders, quoting Lee (quoted by Nesbitt, 126) in “Lee in Pennsylvania,” Annals of the War, 420, in terms that may suggest that Lee was, in fact, not only disturbed by his “ignorance” or what was in front of him but concerned about Stuart. Interestingly, Longstreet quotes Anderson quoting Lee (thus we have it third hand) for the complete non sequitur “If it is the whole Federal force, we must fight a battle here.”
rushed forward to attack the oncoming Federals strung out on the march.\textsuperscript{200} But then what? Meade would not have rushed his men, strung out and bedraggled, in the general direction of Lee.\textsuperscript{201} In fact, the sudden surprise at Gettysburg resulted in more Union strung-out and bedraggledness than an earlier concentration might have. Longstreet tends to make the argument (appropriately or inappropriately) that, if the Confederates had done something earlier, the Union would have done what it did in response proportionately earlier. The equivalent argument with regard to the concentration seems, however, possibly valid. Lee was perhaps more upset by the fact that the Union was behaving inconveniently than that he could have done anything about it if he had learned about it earlier. He would have to concentrate his raiding troops earlier than he had hoped. Had he known the Army of the Potomac was on its way, the same thing would have just happened two days earlier and would have been just as inconvenient. The problem was what the Union was doing, not that Stuart had failed to report it.

At this point, one is almost reduced to despair of the possibility of keeping any speculations about what would have happened had Stuart done something other than he did to a reasonable length. The general disapproval of Stuart’s actions seem to assume only two possibilities. Stuart was out of touch and the army was “blind.” If he had not been out of touch, he would have “found” the enemy, reported to Lee, the enemy been found, and all the bad things that happened would not have happened. There is a distressingly common tendency in historical writing, when the historian believes that a

\textsuperscript{200} See Marshall, 229-230.
\textsuperscript{201} Nor, by all indications, would have Hooker, who had commanded the army up until Meade was appointed on June 28, 1863. His failings at Chancellorsville had been caused by hesitation, not rashness (unlike, say, Pope’s). It does not seem that Lee’s plans were so based upon the character of Hooker that Hooker’s replacement by the cautious George Meade would necessitate starting from scratch and rethinking the whole thing.
bad thing has happened, to simply “unthink” the bad results that followed from the
disapproved action. It tends to be ignored that the result would not have been simply that
the bad thing wouldn’t have happened but that something else would have. What would
have followed from Stuart’s duty reporting that the enemy was moving north is capable
of almost endless permutations. If Stuart, when he found the enemy (which he apparently
did on June 25, 1863, almost at the beginning of his ride) had reported back, what would
Lee have done? And what would Stuart have done next? He had only come in contact
with a portion of the Union Army (Reynolds’ left wing of three corps). First, it would
have taken some time for him to have realized that. So, then, what of the rest of the
Union Army? He could have ridden “through” the army and then located the rest of it.
But how was it possible to know that the Union Army could be ridden through until the
rest of it was located? If Stuart probed further, to get a fix on the remainder of the Union
Army, would he have had some point been cut off anyway, leaving Lee to wonder, in
light of the single message that portions, at least, of the Army of the Potomac were
moving North, what the rest of it was doing, and whether it was moving with enough
separation to safely allow him to fall upon a corps at time, as he allegedly told Trimble he
planned to do? It tends to be forgotten in the conviction that Stuart’s job was finding the
enemy and reporting back that the Army of the Potomac was in almost an unprecedented
condition, rapidly moving in widely (just how widely nobody knew) separated portions
of possibly varying speeds and was spread out over a lot of country. Would the portions
come closer together or separate, speed up, slow down, turn? Stuart had never been
called upon to keep accurate track of such a rapidly changing situation, and there is no
reason to believe he would have been able to do as well in keeping tabs on the ebb and
flow of the Union advance as the spy Harrison (who could blend in and learn the intentions of the various portions of the Union Army far better than whooping and hollering Confederate horsemen with plumes in their hats).

On the twenty-fifth of June, when Stuart “found” the enemy (or, in fact, just a portion of it), Ewell’s corps was in the general vicinity of Chambersburg, Hill’s corps was on pace to arrive there (with Lee) the next day, and Longstreet’s corps was a day behind. Not knowing anything about the Union whereabouts, Lee sent Ewell’s corps off in several directions, eventually to arrive as far as York and Harrisburg, from which they were recalled on the twenty-ninth. Napoleon’s corps were constituted so that one corps, if it ran into the enemy, could hold on for a day while the other corps, which were supposed to be only a day’s march from each other, concentrated, hopefully sooner than the enemy, who had also learned of the location of at least one of the corps. Lee was familiar with the battles of Napoleon, primarily through the writings of Jomini. Had Lee known earlier that the Union Army was moving North, he might not have sent Ewell and his divisions off towards York and Harrisburg, but, as it turned out when one of the Confederate corps ran into the Army of the Potomac, Ewell’s corps had already been recalled and, in fact, arrived in the nick of time before the other corps under Longstreet could get there. Part (at least) of the plan was to gather supplies by levying Pennsylvania under contribution. Would the single report that parts of the Union Army were moving North have caused Lee to eschew that part of it or would he have had his troops raiding as long as possible become concentrating? And, if he had waited for Stuart to find out more about the rest of the Union Army and send back word (if he had ever managed to do so), how long before Lee acted as he did act on the night of the 28th when he learned from
the spy Harrison not only that the Union Army was moving North but pretty much the
gaps and distances between the various Corps? At most, the concentration would have
been two days earlier. But would that have been so desirable? At the time the Union
was only crossing the Potomac and would have scarcely been advanced enough for Ewell
to arrive on the scene and hit them in precisely the right place.

There are problems with the Trimble quote other than that it came from Trimble.
One can hardly expect (and Lee was hardly so dependent upon the favor of all-wise
providence that he would have expected it) for a strung out and bedragged army to rush
up and attack him “in detail.” It would have been necessary to attack them as they rushed
up. As it turned out, the new commander of the Army of the Potomac was George
Meade, who certainly would not have been railroaded into attacking until his whole army
was up, if at all. After the Battle of Gettysburg, Meade failed to attack when the Army of
Northern Virginia was stranded by high water with its back to the Potomac, which all the
pressure on him to attack (which pressure had been an integral part of Lee’s plan) could
not compel. There was not to be another major battle in the east in 1863. Part of the
reason surely was that both armies had been badly mauled at Gettysburg, but, in addition,
each side maneuvered to be able to fight the enemy to an advantage, were unsuccessful in
doing so, and then called the whole thing off.\footnote{See, General Martin T. McMahon, “From Gettysburg to the Coming of Grant” in Vol. 4 of Battles and Leaders, 81-94. This is the sole article in Battles and Leaders on these matters. The Gettysburg section is 197 pages long. McPherson dismisses these operations in a paragraph, 681. Russell F. Weigley, in A Great Civil War: A Military and Political History, 1861-1865 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), which has a more strictly military orientation than McPherson, gives them about a full page, 312-313.} As for being to Gettysburg before the
Union troops got there, there is virtually no possibility that George Meade would have
marched up to the famous fishhook line south of Gettysburg, occupied by the
Confederates and facing in the opposite direction, and smashed his army against it in bullheaded Burnside fashion. There was nothing foreordained about the fishhook line that made it so obvious that an army marching in from the opposite direction would have naturally occupied it, just facing the other way.

Nothing Stuart could have done or left undone could have resulted in the battle beginning in a more fortunate way for the Confederates. That, paradoxically, might have been his greatest contribution to the Confederate defeat. Proceeding more cautiously and with better information, the Confederates would never have managed to set off the wild scramble to get to Gettysburg that wound up producing the Union Army on the scene almost as strung out and bedraggled as Lee could have wished them.

And, in further defense of Stuart it should be kept in mind that Stuart’s orders, however interpreted, did include doing the enemy any damage he could. On this occasion, as on others, he had two major assignments, only one of which was to keep an eye on the Union Army. The second was to get in the union’s rear and disrupt its plans. This had two sub-components, one to wreak havoc and snatch supplies and the other to make the Union Army look ridiculous. In view of Lee’s more ambitious aims for the campaign, it is well to keep this is mind. Stuart, plumed hat and all, was particularly good at this sort of thing and Lee was particularly adept at using such tools as he had to best advantage. At least, thus far he had been.

There is pretty much general agreement that the eventual meeting between Lee and Stuart was a bit frosty. He is supposed to have said “General Stuart, you are here at last” followed by a lengthy meeting full of Stuart acting the aggrieved cavalier and Lee trying only to speak to the needs of the moment. The traditional story is found many

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203 Lee to Stuart, June 23, 1863, 27-3 OR 923.
places and is immortalized in the movie Gettysburg. Both Nesbitt and Tom Carhart dispute this, pointing out that the story of Lee’s rebuke rests on a single letter written by a very old man and that it was not Lee’s way to rebuke people within the hearing of others. In any event, he now had different work for Stuart to do, and set about getting him to do it. Carhart is correct that the specific details of Lee’s meeting with Stuart are not particularly well supported, but his thesis is not dependent on whether Lee ordered Stuart to do what he did and was completely pleased with him, or whether Stuart took advantage of vague orders or flatly disobeyed them in pursuit of glory. But with Stuart we are now already at the night of the 2nd preparing for the battle of the 3rd. We must return to the night of the 1st.

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204 Bowden & Ward, 419-423.
205 Nesbit, 90; Carhart, 137-141. The letter referred to was one from a Brigadier General Thomas Munford (who had been a colonel with Stuart) to a Mrs. Charles Hyde of Lookout Mountain from 1915, using as his source McClellan (who may not even have been there and likely would not have witnessed Lee’s private upbraiding of Stuart, even if it had occurred).
206 Review of footnotes rather confirms this. Bowden & Ward cite the same letter and secondary sources. Marshall, who is the most critical of Stuart of anybody, does not include it. The attitudes of Lee’s aides (which generally mirror those of Lee, though sometimes expressed with a virulence that Lee would not have adopted) indicate that Lee was not particularly pleased with Stuart, regardless of how he greeted him when he returned.
Chapter 4. Taking Cemetery Hill if Practicable

Much ink has been spilled over whether Ewell violated orders when he failed to attack Cemetery Hill on the evening of the first. Bowden and Ward argue that the phrase “if practicable” or “if possible” was just an example of Lee’s southern gentlemanliness and that, in fact, it was an order.207 Others, particularly Coddington and Pfanz, argue that it was truly a discretionary order and that Ewell was truly to use his discretion and that, if he, as the man on the scene, truly thought it to be a bad idea, he had leave not to do it.208 It has been argued,209 on the basis of Lee’s report, that Ewell was obeying orders because the injunction he had been given earlier in the day to avoid a general engagement was repeated with the understanding that what was meant was another general engagement because clearly a general engagement had already taken place. This is, in fact, where the injunction to avoid a general battle is placed in Lee’s report:

“It was ascertained from the prisoners that we had been engaged with two corps of the army formerly commanded by General Hooker, and that the remainder of that army, under General Meade, was approaching Gettysburg. Without information as to its proximity, the strong position which the enemy had assumed could not be attacked without danger of exposing the four divisions present, already weakened and exhausted by a long and bloody struggle, to overwhelming numbers of fresh troops. General Ewell was, therefore, instructed to carry the hill occupied by the enemy, if he found it practicable, but to avoid a general engagement until the arrival of the other divisions of the army, which were ordered to hasten forward.”210

As will become obvious, if it is not already, that Lee’s reports are subject to question when the flaws of a subordinate might be revealed by greater frankness, this is a fairly slim reed.

207 Bowden & Ward, 199-206.
209 See Pfanz, “Old Jack is Not Here” in The Gettysburg Nobody Knows, 56-74, particularly see 72.
Bowden and Ward argue that Ewell showed awareness that the “if practicable” or “if possible” was mere polite verbiage, by changing the phrase to “if he could do so with advantage” in his report,211 thereby importing a great deal more of discretion than there had actually been.

What this argument ignores (and as I shall emphasize at several more points) is that ALL of the orders, regardless of how peremptorily phrased (and, admittedly, one finds few peremptory phrases in Lee’s orders) were discretionary, at least to a point. Otherwise, of what use was a Corps Commander? A Corps Commander was not a potted plant. If Lee had worded the order in such a way that even those without the sensitivities of a mid-Nineteenth Century Southern gentleman could see that is was a directive clearly meant to be obeyed, but as Ewell moved to the attack, he suddenly discovered that the whole Union Twelfth Corps (one division of which was wandering around in the vicinity with the whereabouts of the other unknown to the Confederate command), it would have been criminal for him to have gone ahead anyway. He had already disregarded a clear order, for which he has been uniformly praised, not censured, because as the man on the spot, who could see more clearly than the Army commander, what was going on in his immediate front, he acted as a Corps Commander was supposed to act.

Lee’s command style corresponded to what the Germans would call Auftragstaktik (mission tactics). Auftragstaktik can be shortly described “The commander devised a mission (Auftrag), explained in a short, clear order, and then left the methods and means of achieving it to the officer on the spot.”212 Certainly, there was no direct connection. To the extent Lee or any American Civil War officer, North or

South, had any knowledge of or placed any reliance on foreign military science, the inspiration was French, not German, and *Auftragstaktik* as a doctrine as opposed to a practice (from which practice the concept was derived) was a later development and to some extent consisted of putting a thin veneer of doctrine over what amounted to subordinate commanders doing what they damn well pleased.²¹³ The particularly Prussian aristocrats who tended to act as semi-independent potentates had no parallel in the Army of Northern Virginia as, to the extent the South had such aristocrats and they existed in reality as opposed to myth, Longstreet, Ewell, and Hill were certainly not them. And further, what is under discussion here is perhaps only “the independence of subordinate commanders” which the Germans considered a “very different thing.”²¹⁴

Whatever the principle is called, the primary theorist from which it developed was Moltke, a commander almost directly contemporary to Lee and one dealing with the same general problems in connection with the same available technology.

What Moltke said was this:

“Strategy,” he once wrote, “is a system of expedients,” and on another occasion, “No plan survives contact with the enemy’s main body.” While it was on the march, an army had to be ready for anything, not hamstrung by rigid orders. “Only the layman perceives the campaign in terms of a fixed original conception, carried out in all details and rigidly followed to the end,” he wrote. . .

One does well to order no more than is absolutely necessary and to avoid planning beyond the situations one can foresee. These change very rapidly in war. Seldom will orders that anticipate far in advance and in detail succeed completely to execution. This shakes the confidence of the subordinate commander and it gives the unit a feeling of uncertainty when things develop differently than what the high command’s order had presumed.

²¹³ Ibid., 152-153, 308-310. In this respect, the most “Prussian” action of any higher commander at Gettysburg was on the other side, that of Sickles, which will be discussed below.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 308.
The basic rule was that “the higher the authority, the shorter and more general” the orders. It was the responsibility of the lower echelons to fill in the necessary detail.\textsuperscript{215}

The parallel can be followed further in that “On several occasions in the 1866 campaign, for example, armies of over one hundred thousand men went a day or two without any orders at all, an incredible notion by modern standards.”\textsuperscript{216} Fremantle commented of Lee (referring to the second day’s battle) that “What I remarked especially was, that during the whole time the firing continued, he only sent one message, and only received one report.”\textsuperscript{217}

Neither Lee nor Moltke had computers, field telephones or radios, and they were trying to control tens of thousands of men over wide areas. Particularly as Lee was depending upon opportunities arising and being taken advantage of, it was ludicrous to assume that Lee could be there to always be on the spot to see them develop, much less that his couriers could convey appropriate orders fast enough to take advantage of a rapidly changing situation. Lee is often criticized as a hands-off commander and Meade’s performance in this respect regarded as superior.\textsuperscript{218} But what, in fact, did Meade do to warrant such praise? He sent people. He sent Reynolds to Gettysburg, who selected the battlefield, and Hancock here and there over the whole three days. To the extent he tried to muscle in on the responsibility of subordinate commanders, such as

\textsuperscript{215} Ibid., 152.
\textsuperscript{216} Ibid., 152. One must be careful not to carry any of this too far, but, interestingly Lee shared the German horror of a long war in competition with opponents with (at least potentially) far greater resources which time would enable them to bring to bear, as well as the preference for Bewegungskrieg (a war of movement) as opposed to stellungskrieg (a war of position). See Citino, 306-307 and passim. Experience proved that, for the Germans, when it turned into a stellungskrieg, the Germans lost, as would be the case with the Confederacy.
\textsuperscript{217} Fremantle, 266. Not that there is much need for further documentation of Lee’s command style, but Fremantle continues, “It is evidently his system to arrange the plan thoroughly with the three corps commanders. And then leave to them the duty of modifying and carrying it out to the best of their abilities.”
\textsuperscript{218} Coddington, 443-445, 448-449.
when he ordered Slocum to denude the right wing to succor the left on the evening of the second (a move against the better judgment of the local commanders, though how vigorously they asserted this is a matter of some dispute), it almost led to disaster.\footnote{See Pfanz, \textit{Cemetery Hill and Culp’s Hill}, 194-196. In fact, the title of Pfanz’ chapter detailing these events is “Blunder on the Right.”} Lee’s attempt to get too specific in view of Longstreet’s apparent inactivity (see below) resulted in orders at best outdated and, at worst, literally impossible to follow. Whatever Lee’s theoretical thinking as to the desirability of leaving things in the hands of the man on the spot, as a practical matter, there wasn’t much else he could do.

So, with regard to Ewell, the point is not what Lee wanted him to do or even ordered him to do, but whether Ewell, in the exercise of his responsibilities as a Corps commander, acted wisely. Too much of at least the Southern commentary on the battlefield has assumed that where Union units were or were not, as became obvious when reports and reminiscences were published after the war, would have been obvious at the time.

Early’s explanation (which he acknowledges was different from what he felt at the time) was the following:

I was exceedingly anxious for the advance against the heights, and would have made it with my own division, immediately after the enemy was driven through the town, if Smith had come to me with his brigade when sent for, as soon as Gordon’s ammunition was replenished. General Smith had been posted so as to protect our left flank, and receiving information, which he credited, that the enemy was advancing on that flank, in the exercise of a discretion necessarily entrusted to him, he did not think it prudent to withdraw, for which he was not censurable. My other two brigades were greatly encumbered with prisoners at the close of the fight, and by the loss already sustained, which was 208, their joint numbers had been reduced below 2,550. Gordon’s brigade had sustained a loss of 378, and its strength, therefore, was below 1,700. I here make no allowance for loss in marching in either brigade since we crossed the Potomac. Gordon, in his report, says he went into action with about 1,200 men -- one regiment being detached to support the artillery. Subsequent developments have satisfied me that
the attack, if made, though Rodes may have joined in it, would probably have met
with a repulse. It turns out that Steinwehr's division had been left on Cemetery
Hill as a reserve, with several batteries of artillery, and Doubleday, who was not
at all disposed to exaggerate the forces on his side, says that division numbered
3,000 or 4,000. We may, therefore, assume that it was fully 4,000 strong.\textsuperscript{220}

If asked why it was that I was myself so anxious to go on, my reply is, that I knew
nothing of the rest of Meade's army, but that it was moving north; that I took it for
granted there was an object in fighting there; and that I regarded it my duty to
fight the enemy when I met him, and continue to do so until the victory was
complete, or the orders of my superiors arrested me. If I had known then all I
know now, probably I would have had a different view.\textsuperscript{221}

He also points out that taking any particular hill was not the point of the exercise.

I now proceed to consider the question in its general aspect. The idea upon which
all the criticisms upon the failure to take Cemetery Hill on the afternoon of the 1st
are based, is the assumption that the possession of that hill itself would have been
of material advantage to us. We had already inflicted upon the enemy a very
serious loss, and the probability is that, if we had pursued, and his troops were so
demoralized as to make no resistance at all, we would have inflicted no further
damage on him, but merely have sent his flying corps further to the rear, to the
cover of Meade's advancing columns. . . What we wanted was not the possession
of Cemetery or Culp's Hill merely, but a decisive victory and a crushing defeat of
the enemy on the soil of Pennsylvania. The possession of either of those hills on
that afternoon might have made that fight a complete one and a victory for us, but
it would not have insured the kind of victory we wanted, for we would have had
to seek the enemy elsewhere and fight him again.\textsuperscript{222}

In this particular part of the review, Early is not engaged in his cherished project
of blaming Longstreet but is defending himself (and Ewell, who by this time was dead).

He appears a little touchy to do so for he is defending against the rather offhand comment
made by Fitzhugh Lee in his own article in the series, that “a little more marching and
fighting” would have gained the victory. Yet there is nothing in his explanation that
seems strained or does not make sense. Early was not stupid enough to make up stories
when the truth would serve the same purpose.

\textsuperscript{220} Early Review, 4 \textit{SHSP} 257-258.
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., 267.
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., 266-267.
Bowden and Ward assemble all sorts of testimony from various Confederates who said that they were raring to go and that the hill could have been theirs if attacked by a reasonably competent company. 223 None of these people were Corps Commanders or even Division Commanders. The responsibility was not theirs. Their enthusiasm cannot be disregarded out of hand, but it is only what it is, and hardly definitive.

On this point, there is the testimony of Trimble. Most modern scholarship minimizes or even ignores Trimble, considering him a pest and a blowhard. Bowden and Ward believe him implicitly. The decision seems to have less to do with Trimble than with the writers’ attitude toward Ewell. To defend Ewell, Trimble must be denigrated.

To attack him, Trimble must be embraced. But, for what it’s worth, here it is:

This was about 2:30 P. M. Soon after General Ewell rode to the town, passing a numerous body of prisoners. I said to an officer: "Fortune is against you to-day." He replied: "We have been worse whipped than ever."

Riding through one of the streets with his staff, General Ewell was fired on from the houses; and soon after rode out to a farmhouse, near a hospital. At this time, about 3, the firing had ceased entirely, save occasional discharges of artillery from the hill above the town. The battle was over and we had won it handsomely. General Ewell moved about uneasily, a good deal excited, and seemed to me to be undecided what to do next. I approached him and said: "Well, General, we have had a grand success; are you not going to follow it up and push our advantage?" He replied that "General Lee had instructed him not to bring on a general engagement without orders, and that he would wait for them."

I said, that hardly applies to the present state of things, as we have fought a hard battle already, and should secure the advantage gained. He made no rejoinder, but was far from composure. I was deeply impressed with the conviction that it was a critical moment for us and made a remark to that effect.

As no movement seemed immediate, I rode off to our left, north of the town, to reconnoitre, and noticed conspicuously the wooded hill northeast of Gettysburg (Culp’s), and a half mile distant, and of an elevation to command the country for miles each way, and overlooking Cemetery Hill above the town. Returning to see

223 Bowden & Ward, 181-184. Included, of course, is Gordon, 154. Even Bowden & Ward acknowledge that Gordon’s recollections “occasionally outpace facts, and thus must be used with great caution.” Fn 75, 215.
General Ewell, who was still under much embarrassment, I said: "General, there," pointing to Culp's Hill, "is an eminence of commanding position, and not now occupied, as it ought to be by us or the enemy soon. I advise you to send a brigade and hold it if we are to remain here." He said: "Are you sure it commands the town?" "Certainly it does, as you can see, and it ought to be held by us at once." General Ewell made some impatient reply, and the conversation dropped.224

On a matter of strict credibility, it is impossible to make a definitive choice. However, one thing should be noted. Trimble's estimates of the hours of daylight remaining are earlier than almost everybody else’s (though not, as noted above, much earlier, if at all, than Hancock’s). However smashing a victory, it takes time to organize a new attack.

A letter from Hancock was printed in the *Southern History Society Papers* that was used as proof that there was an hour in which the Confederate tide would have been irresistible. Fitzhugh Lee cites it, in defense of his “little more marching and fighting” comment on which he had been attacked by Early. Hancock says:

I am in receipt of yours of the 14th inst., and in reply have to say, that in my opinion, if the Confederates had continued the pursuit of General Howard on the afternoon of the 1st July at Gettysburg, they would have driven him over and beyond Cemetery Hill. After I had arrived upon the field, assumed the command, and made my dispositions for defending that point (say 4 P.M.), I do not think the Confederate force then present could have carried it.

When I arrived upon the field, about 3 P.M., or between that and 3:30, I found the fighting about over -- the rear of our troops were hurrying through the town pursued by the Confederates. There had been an attempt to reform some of the Eleventh corps as they passed over Cemetery Hill, but it had not been very successful. I presume there may have been 1,000 to 1,200 at most, organized troops of that corps, in position on the hill. Buford's cavalry, in a solid formation, was showing a firm front in the plain just below (in line of battalions in mass, it is my recollection) Cemetery Hill, to the left of the Taneytown road.

224Trimble, “Gettysburg,” 26 SHSP 123-124. The wording of the “impatient reply” appears in *The Bachelder Papers*, Vol 2, Letter of Maj. Gen. Isaac R. Trimble dated February 8, 1883, 931 as “When I need advice from a junior officer, I generally ask it.” If Ewell had actually said this (given the sensibilities of Southern gentlemen), it is perhaps best to suspect a little pique talking when Trimble spoke of Ewell. Ewell appears to have been Trimble’s Longstreet.
I at once sent Wadsworth's division of the First corps, and a battery of artillery, to take post on Culp's Hill, on our right. The remainder of the First corps I placed on the right and left of the Taneytown road, connecting with the left of the Eleventh corps. These were the troops already on the battle field when I had arrived and had made my dispositions.

About the time the above described dispositions were made, Williams' division of the Twelfth army corps came upon the field and took position to the right and rear of Wadsworth's division of the First corps, and, subsequently, Geary's division of the Twelfth corps arriving, I caused it to move to our left and occupy the higher ground towards Round Top, to prevent any local turning of my left, (feeling safe as to the front). 225

Setting aside Hancock’s obvious interest in showing that the situation was a mess when he arrived and that he had promptly straightened the mess out, in view of the disparity between the various watches on the field, it is impossible to be sure that the hour (or less than an hour) during which Hancock seems to acknowledge an attack probably would have succeeded was the hour when the Confederates could have organized a new attack to take advantage of the situation. For it to be argued that the men on the spot, whose men were disorganized by victory, could have been gathered up in sufficient force to attack the hill, it must be assumed not only that Hancock’s hour existed but that the commanders on the scene would have recognized it and been able to organize a new attack before the hour ended.

It is clear that, when Lee arrived on the field in the middle of the day, the speed of the battle (as Lee was planning it) went from full stop to full go. Ewell may well have had a problem picking this up but this seems hard to believe in that it was his own attack that caused the change of speed. Maybe “Old Jack” would have kept screaming up that

hill and taken it, and maybe “Old Jack” would have had a nasty surprise waiting for him.

It would have been dependent upon whether the attack he managed to mount happened during Hancock’s hour or not. But, as Early points out, they weren’t there to take hills or destroy corps, they were there to destroy an army. Taking the hill on the night of the first would not necessarily have contributed to that end. Confederates tended to write as if the whole point had been to take Gettysburg and the fishhook-shaped line.226

The first day ended with the famous colloquy between Lee and Longstreet.

Longstreet told the story with minor discrepancies but they agree in essence. According to his first account:

When I overtook General Lee, at five o’clock that afternoon, he said, to my surprise, that he thought of attacking General Meade on the heights the next day. I suggested that this course seemed at variance with the plan of the campaign that had been agreed upon before leaving Fredericksburg. He said “If the enemy is there to-morrow, we must attack him.”227

In his Battles & Leaders version, Longstreet quotes Lee as saying “No, the enemy is there, and I am going to attack him there” and “No; they are there in position, and I am going to whip them or they are going to whip me.”228 In the final version, Lee says “if he is there tomorrow, I will attack him.”229

228 Longstreet, “Lee’s Right Wing at Gettysburg,” Battles and Leaders, 339-340. Hood supports this quote but puts it on the morning of the second and has it “The enemy is here, and if we do not whip him, he will whip us.” Hood, “Letter of June 28, 1875,” 4 SHSP 145-150 (1877). This letter began as a letter to Longstreet (who is the “you” in the letter) and was published in the Southern Historical Society Papers, and was subsequently included in its entirety in his own memoirs, John B. Hood, Advance and Retreat, ed. and with Introduction by Bruce J. Dinges (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996; Bison Books Edition, 1996), 55-59.
229 Longstreet, Manassas to Appomattox, 358.
Regardless of the words used, it was clear that Lee intended to attack and that Longstreet didn’t want to. Longstreet had established his position as early as his letter to his uncle, Augustus Longstreet dated July 24, 1863, and included in his first article. There he introduces it with the statement that it was written “shortly after the battle of Gettysburg, when there was a sly undercurrent of misrepresentation of my course, and in response to an appeal from a respected relative that I make some reply to my accusers.” It is impossible to know to what this refers (perhaps only to Pickett’s charge) but it is an interesting statement in view of the much-noted fact among Longstreet’s defenders, that his conduct at Gettysburg had not been called into question prior to Lee’s death. Of course, this is Longstreet, who, if not yet quite the embittered old man of *Manassas to Appomattox* (the article was published in the Philadelphia Weekly Times November 3, 1877), might be suspect when in full defensive-offensive mode (it is perhaps ironic, or maybe just a coincidence, that Longstreet’s inclination when in verbal combat is not to stand on the defensive but to attack vigorously) but, in view of the later battle, it seems believable as sort of what in the law is called a “declaration against interest” in that it pushes the controversy back well before Lee’s death, which Longstreet’s defenders argue was the necessary precondition to begin it. In the letter, he purportedly declared:

> The battle was not made as I would have made it. My idea was to throw ourselves between the enemy and Washington, select a strong position, and force the enemy to attack us. So far as is given to man the ability to judge, we may say with confidence that we should have destroyed the Federal army,

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230 Gen. G. Moxley Sorrell, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer*, Ed. Bell Irvin Wiley (Jackson, Tn.: McCowat-Mercer Press, Inc., 1958), 157; Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy*, 237. Alexander adds, “His objection to it was not based at all upon the peculiar strength of the enemy’s position for that was not yet recognized, but solely on general principles. Long includes the substance of the conversation in very vague terms (claiming to have been present), 277.


232 Early, “Supplement to General Early’s review-- Reply to General Longstreet, 4 *SHSP* 282 (1877)
marched into Washington, and dictated our terms, or, at least, held
Washington and marched over as much of Pennsylvania as we cared to, had
we drawn the enemy into attack upon our carefully chosen position in his
rear.233

His fuller account follows Lee’s alleged statement that if the enemy is there, we
will attack him:

I replied: If he is there, it will be because he is anxious that we should attack
him -- a good reason in my judgment for not doing so." I urged that we should
move around by our right to the left of Meade and put our army between him
and Washington, threatening his left and rear, and thus force him to attack us
in such position as we might select. I said that it seemed to me that if, during
our council at Fredericksburg, we had described the position in which we
desired to get the two armies, we could not have expected to get the enemy in
a better position for us than that he then occupied. I said, further, that he was
in strong position and would be awaiting us, which was evidence that he
desired that we should attack him. I said, further, that his weak point seemed
to be his left; hence I thought that we should move around to his left, that we
might threaten it if we intended to maneuver, or attack it if we were
determined upon a battle. I called his attention to the fact that the country was
admirably adapted for a defensive battle, and that we should surely repulse
Meade with crushing loss if we would take position so as to force him to
attack us, and suggested that even if we carried the heights in front of us, and
drove Meade out, we should be so badly crippled that we could not reap the
fruits of victory; and that the heights of Gettysburg were in themselves of no
more importance to us than the ground we then occupied, and that the mere
possession of the ground was not worth a hundred men to us. That Meade's
army, not its position, was our objective. General Lee was impressed with the
idea that by attacking the Federals he could whip them in detail. I reminded
him that if the Federals were there in the morning it would be proof that they
had their forces well in hand, and that with Pickett in Chambersburg and
Stuart out of reach, we should be somewhat in detail.234

There would be differences of detail in Longstreet’s other accounts, but not in
substance. There is much modern sentiment that Longstreet’s plan to move to the right
would have been a good idea.235 However, it assumes an awful lot: first, that they could
have gotten around the left; second, that they could have found a suitable position there;

234 Ibid., 421.
235 Beginning with Tucker, Lee and Longstreet, 50-54.
third, that they would have been able to get there and get into position before Meade knew what they were doing (all of this without the bulk of the cavalry under Stuart); and fourth, that having accomplished all this, Meade would have been forced to attack them. Lee knew George Meade from the old army and must have been aware of his cautious nature. Lee’s reading of enemy commanders tended to be pretty good. He read McClellan well enough to be able to throw him down the Peninsula and to survive leaving the Army in place on the 18th of September after the Battle of Antietam when the most half-hearted offensive thrust might have destroyed it. And, as noted above, George Meade (as it turned out) never attacked the entire time he commanded the Army of the Potomac. And as Jomini had noted:

[C]alculations upon the co-operation of columns proceeding from the general front of the army, with the intention of effecting large detours around an enemy’s flank, it may be stated that their result is always doubtful, since it depends upon such an accurate execution of carefully-arranged plans as is rarely seen.

A cautious and sensible commander like Joe Johnston would not have attacked on July 2, 1863. His caution and good sense was well on the way to losing Richmond (and possibly the war) the previous spring. As Lee and Longstreet stood and gazed at the high ground south of Gettysburg, only a few days would pass before Vicksburg fell, to which Johnston’s cautious and sensible refusal to attempt to do anything about Grant’s  

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236 Technically, Meade commanded the Army of the Potomac until the end of the war, yet Grant, having been appointed Commander of all the Union armies, made his headquarters with the Army of the Potomac from the beginning of the 1864 campaign beginning with the Battle of the Wilderness and extending to the end. The constant attacking that proceeded to the end of the war was Grant’s doing, not Meade’s.

237 Jomini, 146.

238 For the view that Johnston had actually done only what he had to do, in view of his limited troops and uncertainties as to Federal intentions, see Newton, Joseph E. Johnston and the Defense of Richmond. His later retreats, in view of what he faced, can hardly be considered indefensible. They did not seem, however, to be winning the war and it is hard to blame anybody, either Davis or Lee, for not allowing the thing to play out in hopes that the appearances might prove to have been deceiving. Russell E. Weigley considers Johnston to be a “strategist of distinction,” at least in the Atlanta Campaign. See Weigley, 359-360.
army loose east of the Mississippi had contributed. The next year, Johnston’s cautious and sensible approach was well on the way to losing Atlanta when he was replaced by Hood. Lee had no use for cautious and sensible approaches. The bird was here. The bird might be too high, the wind and the sun might be right but the bird was here, and he was going to take a shot at it. Maneuvering to get the bird in a better position might well work, or the bird could be gone for good.

Added to this was the fact that two corps had already been fought and, if not quite destroyed, had been seriously defeated and injured. What reinforcements might join the Army of the Potomac before the hypothetical battle in the hypothetical perfect position between Meade’s army and Washington? And, by definition, if the army was between the Union Army and Washington, would not the Union Army be between the Confederates and their line of retreat through the valley? And what, given the Union’s overwhelming numbers and resources, might march up behind them while they were ensconced there? The Union had control of the sea and a superior rail system. With Washington threatened, it is possible that some of Grant’s army might be called east to help deal with the crisis (though, loose in Mississippi, Grant’s army was perhaps the least available resource the Union had, even had somebody wanted to make use of them to defend Washington, thus saving Vicksburg) but it is more likely like reinforcements would be summoned from somewhere else.

I suspect that many of these thoughts passed through Lee’s mind. But the essential point remained that the enemy was here and he was injured. The opportunity existed that might never come again.

239 Whose aggressive and combative approach would clinch it, leaving this example rather a wash.
There was much coming and going to and fro between Lee’s headquarters and Ewell’s over on his left as Lee pondered what to do. When Lee first visited the commanders on the left, they were not optimistic about a resumed offense. However, they resisted moving elsewhere, in that they thought it would be bad for morale to give up ground captured. Having returned to his headquarters, Lee had second thoughts and ordered them to come around toward the right anyway. Ewell himself came to Lee’s headquarters to argue against this, asserting that there was high ground to the left that they could take. This may or may not have been after the Corps command had learned that Culp’s Hill was occupied and could not be taken except by attack. In any event, the Corps was left where it was.\footnote{Coddington, 364-366.}

It was during these consultations that Lee is claimed to have made the statement that Early had not yet mentioned but only revealed in his “Review” of the Gettysburg series:

When General Lee had heard our views, both in regard to attacking from our flank and our being removed towards the right, he said, in these very words, which are indelibly impressed on my memory: "Well, if I attack from my right, Longstreet will have to make the attack;" and after a moment's pause, during which he held his head down in deep thought, he raised it and added: "Longstreet is a very good fighter when he gets in position and gets everything ready, but he is \textit{so slow}." The emphasis was just as I have given it, and the words seemed to come from General Lee with pain. I give this expression by General Lee now with great hesitation. I have mentioned it to personal friends often, but have had very great doubts about giving publicity to it, for reasons that will readily occur. But occurrences have taken place and disclosures made which now justify, in my estimation, its publication, if they do not imperatively demand it.\footnote{Early Review, 273-274.}

This is seldom believed, particularly in view of General Lee’s disinclination to criticize people in front of others. Given Lee’s general character (and the convenience of coming up with it just when Early did) I do not believe it (the first citation of Early that I
believe contains an outright lie, perhaps because it is the first having to do completely with facts and not analysis. But I would not be surprised (were it possible to find out, which, of course, it was not) that General Lee may have said something along the lines of Longstreet having to make the attack and may have betrayed that the prospect did not particularly fill him with enthusiasm. This may have been because he had just been with Longstreet and found out that Longstreet did not want to attack. Or it may have been because he was aware that Longstreet’s divisions were not yet up and that an attack by divisions still moving up would, of necessity, be later than an attack by divisions already on the scene. Or perhaps, its essence is true, though Lee upon virtually unanimous testimony would have been too much of a gentleman to say it. Lee was later quoted as saying that if Jackson had been present at Gettysburg, they would have won.242 There seems little doubt (as far as can be ferreted out from Lee’s comments) that Lee was not happy with Ewell not taking Cemetery Hill. But based purely on speculation, it may also be that Lee realized he had the perfect spot for Jackson, repeating the flank march at Chancellorsville. As Early would not have noticed (or chosen not) to remember, Lee also had the perfect man for the second part of his evolving plan, smashing into the enemy when it was confused and disordered by Jackson’s attack—Longstreet. Except Jackson was dead. I have avoided sports metaphors to this point, but this (and it’s only speculation, I know, scarcely, if at all, supported by any but the most indirect and general evidence) seems to cry out for one. Longstreet was playing out of position and Lee could

242 Rev J. William Jones, D.D., *Personal Reminisces, Anecdotes and Letters of Gen. Robert E. Lee* (New York: Appelton and Co., 1875), 156, admittedly a very suspect source, in that Jones was (1) Head of the Southern Historical Society and (2) Almost as lyrical about Jackson as he was about Lee. There is a more specific version, specifically detailing Ewell’s mistakes to be found in Lee, Jr., *Recollections of General Robert E. Lee* 416-117. It presents some difficulties (i.e. referring to “heights which Ewell took” (which heights?) and will be dealt with below among Lee’s alleged post-war comments.
only hope for the best. Perhaps the true import of Lee’s later assertion that if Jackson had been there (however dubiously attested), he would have won, was not that Jackson would have taken Cemetery Hill on the night of the first (or at least not only that Jackson would have taken Cemetery Hill on the night of the first.) Yes, it would have probably been better to hold the hill than have the enemy hold it (unless it scared an Army of Potomac ripe for the plucking away). But, on another level, what was Cemetery Hill to him (until the Union Army was substantially all up and ripe for destruction, as would be the case on the following two days)? Maybe he had the perfect assignment for Jackson and Jackson was not there. He would have to proceed as best as he could without him.
Chapter 5. The Second Day’s Plan and how it changed

Reporting on the course of the various coming and goings to the Confederate left on the night of the first, Jubal Early remarks:

Lee's purpose was to ascertain our condition, what we knew of the enemy and his position, and what we could probably do next day. It was evident from the first that it was his purpose to attack the enemy as early as possible next day -- at daylight, if practicable. This was a proposition the propriety of which was so apparent that there was not the slightest discussion or difference of opinion upon it. It was a point taken for granted.

There was very little doubt in anybody’s mind that Lee proposed to attack the next day, early if possible, later if need be. As seen from Longstreet’s testimony above, this is one point on which Longstreet and Early agree. It would probably be going too far to say that anything that Longstreet and Early agree on must be true, but there is probably a pretty good chance it is.

It was clear that Lee intended to attack. Other than Longstreet’s flanking moves, did he have other alternatives? Alexander, for one, believed that he did. After noting that Lee’s statement in his report, that battle had become “in a measure unavoidable” is “qualified” (the emphasis is Alexander’s), he concludes:

[I]t does not seem improbable that we could have faced Meade safely on the 2nd at Gettysburg without assaulting him in his wonderfully strong position. We had the prestige of victory with us, having chased him off the field & through the town. We had a fine defensive position on Seminary Ridge ready at hand to occupy. It was not such a really wonderful position as the enemy happened to fall into, but it was no bad one, & could never have been successfully assaulted. As Gen. Jackson once said, “We did sometimes fail to drive them out of position, but they always failed to drive us.” The onus of attack was upon Meade anyhow. We could even have fallen back to Cashtown & held the mountain passes with all the prestige of victory, & popular sentiment would have force Meade to take the aggressive.(emphases in original)

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243 Early Review, 4 SHSP 271.
244 Alexander, Fighting for the Confederacy, 233-234.
There is much sense in Alexander’s statement. However, it is still dependent on the condition that Meade would have been “forced” to take the aggressive. That is the rock upon which all the rosy alternatives flounder. It was, of course, not clear on the night of July 1, 1863, but it eventually become apparent (to paraphrase Alexander) that commanders sometimes failed to attack, but Meade always failed to attack. It certainly could be argued that, with the Confederates defiantly perched just west of Gettysburg or in the mountain passes with a lush valley and relatively secure supply line behind them (which would have obviated Lee’s concern about foraging in the face of the enemy or the general adage that an invading army living off the land must keep moving), had Meade still failed to attack, he would have been sacked and replaced by somebody who would (maybe already Grant, who by this time would have been the hero of Vicksburg). That might have happened.

But the enemy present in the immediate front, perhaps not completely concentrated and already partially defeated, that was not something that might happen. That was something that had happened. Lee’s reports contain the bland southern gentlemanly like statements that “Encouraged by the successful issue of the engagement of the first day, and in view of the valuable results that would ensue from the defeat of the army of General Meade, it was thought advisable to renew the attack”245 and “the success already gained gave hope of a favorable issue.”246 Lee, in his reserved way, tailored to avoid offending Jefferson Davis’ cautious sensibilities is saying that the opportunity he had been seeking the whole war had come and that he was going to pursue it. If this is not quite the “subdued excitement, which occasionally took possession of

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245 July 31, 1863 report, 27-2 OR 308.
246 January __, 1864 report, 27-2 OR 318.
him (Lee) when ‘the hunt was up,’ and which threatened his superb equi poise247 that Longstreet referred to, much less evidence that Lee “was excited and off his balance . . . and he labored under that oppression until enough blood was shed to appease him,”248 it is certainly evidence of something that Longstreet had noticed and later exaggerated (and re-exaggerated). This was the opportunity Lee had been seeking the whole war. Had he passed it up, the perfect opportunity wistfully longed for the perfect Fredericksburg on Northern Soil never had presented itself, the army returned safely but inconclusively back to Virginia, and the deadly work of attrition eventually taken its inevitable toll, the moment would likely have later been viewed in hindsight as the point at which Lee had failed to rise to the occasion and had surrendered his claim to be among the great captains who saw their moment and seized it. In view of everything Lee had said and done, both before and after that moment, there was never, for good or ill, much real chance of that.

The famous dawn account controversy was actually a duel with competing red herrings. Doing battle on this field with Early, who was a lawyer, and from his postwar writings, seems to have been a reasonably competent one, Longstreet was out of his league.

A good lawyer, as noted above, should do his best to avoid lies. It is not just a question of morality, but of tactics. Lies are dangerous. The misstatement of specific facts can be demonstrated by revealing the true facts. But spin, which is what a good lawyer does, cannot be disproved. Spin consists of emphasizing certain facts or interpretations and deemphasizing others. The truth is not hidden except hidden in plain sight.

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248 As it had become by Longstreet, *Manassas to Appomattox*, 384
That there was a dawn attack “order” can be easily disproven. Clearly there was no such order.\textsuperscript{249} In any event, given Lee’s way, it would be unlikely that he would give such an order. Of what use is a Corps commander, carefully chosen, if you have to tell him exactly such things as exactly where and when and with precisely which troops to attack? Longstreet triumphantly states that Lee never gave him a specific order to attack at a specific time.\textsuperscript{250}

Which is all true enough as far as it goes. But what is left unsaid in Longstreet’s version of the tale, that whether or not it was dawn or six o’clock or nine o’clock, it was clear that Lee wanted the attack to proceed as early as possible. The job of a Corps commander does not consist of reading the mind of his commander and then doing exactly that and not exercising any discretion. The whole argument over whether there was a specific order or not, and in which dispute posterity has awarded the victory to Longstreet, is rather beside the point. Lee wanted an early attack and he did not get one. How much of this had to do with the nature of the case (needing to reconnoiter the ground, troops not up or tired, not having specifically determined what exactly the role of the other two Corps might be, etc.) and how much this had to do with Longstreet not wanting to attack (maybe for perfectly good reasons) and dragging his feet can be debated endlessly and perhaps to no particularly good purpose.

But Early’s herring is equally red. Nobody ever really considers whether the famed “dawn attack” would have succeeded. They just assert it. Early, in an impressive display of sophistry, “proves” Longstreet’s guilt by arguing that (having assumed the point at issue, that an early attack was essential) either Lee diddled and hadn’t been able


\textsuperscript{250} Longstreet, “Lee in Pennsylvania,” \textit{Annals of the War}, 422.
to decide what he was doing or Longstreet disobeyed him. Since it is unthinkable that Lee could have been so incompetent, it necessarily follows that Longstreet must have caused the mess by disobeying orders.\textsuperscript{251}

Fitzhugh Lee, to his credit, does attempt to analyze what Union troops were where when, but he blithely ignores the fact that this hardly could have been known at the time, attributing this knowledge to Lee’s superhuman wisdom (or concluding that, in view of the fact that the Union Army was clearly not all up, something of the sort must have been assumed by Lee.)\textsuperscript{252} The basis of the argument is that the Union Army was not yet completely up and in position and that, therefore, the earlier the attack, the better. This ignores that the Confederate army was not completely up yet either (Longstreet was not just missing a full division but one brigade (Law’s) of another division, in total almost a third of his men. And it further, and, I think, more importantly ignores the fact that had Longstreet attacked almost any earlier than he did, he would not have caught Sickles in the overextended line that he did catch him in, in the air on both flanks, and with a salient in the middle. It is true that Little Round Top was not occupied by the Union until just before the Confederates got there, but the only reason it was occupied even then was that the Confederates appeared to be going for it. At any time after 8 a.m., the Fifth Corps was in the field and could have been rushed to the endangered point.\textsuperscript{253} Further, the attack as it was supposed to take place went up the Emmitsburg Road and ignored the Round Tops. Had there been no flank there, there would hardly have been

\textsuperscript{251} Early Review, 4 SHSP 293. “There is one thing very certain, and that is that either General Lee or General Longstreet was responsible for the remarkable delay that took place in making the attack. I choose to believe that it was not General Lee, for if any one knew the value of promptness and celerity in military movements he did. It is equally certain that the delay which occurred in making the attack lost us the victory.”

\textsuperscript{252} Fitz. Lee, Review, 185-187

\textsuperscript{253} Pfanz, Second Day, 61-62.
any necessity for the right units of Hood’s division to attempt to secure it. A dawn attack
would presumably have gone up the Emmitsburg Road and Little Round Top’s name
would not have come down to posterity, and it would have remained one of those hills
around Gettysburg, just as high and as arguably “controlling” other hills occupied by the
Union, as little known as Wolf’s Hill and Powers Hill, that were not part of the battle
because neither army determined to make them part of it.

Although, there is much debate as to whether Longstreet was slow or recalcitrant
or downright defiant, there is surprising agreement on what actually did happen.

Early in the morning of the second, Lee sent one of his staff officers, Capt.
Samuel R. Johnston, to reconnoiter his right.254 This is the first of the many events that
cause modern scholars to doubt the “daylight attack” order. As Lincoln could not replace
McClellan with anybody but needed somebody, an attack on the right, at daylight or
otherwise, had to be by certain units and in a certain direction, and if the intention was to
roll up the enemy’s left flank, it had to be ascertained where the enemy’s flank was.
Arguably, if he had been working in accordance with the spirit of Lee’s intentions,
Longstreet could have been determining all these things.

Perhaps Longstreet was overtechnical in his defense that he had not had an
“Order” until 11 o’clock in the morning of the second. He is unapologetic about not
wanting to attack. Others would cite the letter to him from Hood, which said:

General Lee was seemingly anxious you should attack that morning. He remarked
to me: "The enemy is here, and if we do not whip him, he will whip us." You
thought it better to await the arrival of Pickett's division -- at that time still in the
rear -- in order to make the attack; and you said to me, subsequently, whilst we
were seated together near the trunk of a tree: "The General is a little nervous this

morning; he wishes me to attack; I do not wish to do so without Pickett. I never like to go into battle with one boot off.” 255

However, what he says there is not that he doesn’t want to attack ever, but that he wants to wait for Pickett. Pickett’s division was the smallest of his three divisions (it was missing two brigades, which Lee could not extract from Jefferson Davis from other duties), but even if not a third, it was at least a quarter of his force, and not knowing what he would run up against, it is hardly the minor consideration that his attackers paint it.

A peculiar incident began the famous march to the right of the Confederate First Corps. General McLaws arrived, with his division close by, and met with Lee. Lee instructed him to attack up the Emmitsburg Road and place his division perpendicular to the road. Longstreet intervened and told him to place it parallel to the road. Lee immediately reversed him.256

At this point, Lee rode off to his left to see if anything could be done there. As the scouting party had not yet returned, it is clear, as modern commentators point out, that there were still a few details to be filled in, to make an attack on the Union left. Longstreet apparently did nothing while Lee was gone. He did not reconnoiter in that direction (of course, as a reconnaissance was already taking place, that would have been superfluous) and did not make any moves to get any portion of his troops over to the general direction of the Union left, or even prepare them to march there or give them instructions to be on the ready to move at a moment’s notice. Longstreet did not want to attack, that is clear, as is admitted by the sympathetic observers, Alexander and Sorrell. Whether this was at all, or without Pickett, or without Laws is at least open to question.

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255 Hood letter, 148.
256 Coddington, 374-375 and Pfanz, The Second Day, 110. The primary ultimate source was Lafayette McLaws, "Gettysburg," 7 SHSP 64-82 (February, 1879), 68.
Finally, the order was given. Longstreet asked for permission to await Law’s brigade, the last brigade of Hood’s division. Bowden and Ward accept this permission, though the testimony for it comes only from Longstreet. In Longstreet’s report, he says only that “Fearing that my force was too weak to venture to make an attack, I delayed until General Law's brigade joined its division.” He first mentions that the delay was with General Lee’s specific permission in the newspaper article that would be reprinted in both the *Southern Historical Society Papers* and *Annals of the War*. Lee says nothing about the matter, and, given his disinclination to criticize the actions of his subordinates (and having in hand Longstreet’s report that says “I delayed,”) his passing over it in silence is hardly evidence for Longstreet’s allegation that the decision was cleared with him. Lee says nothing in his reports as to why the attacks took place when they did, in his first report stating merely, “The preparations for attack were not completed until the afternoon of the 2d” and, in the second, more exactly (with no reference to when the preparation for the attack had been completed) “About 4 p.m. Longstreet's batteries opened.” McLaws does comment that nobody seemed in any particular hurry (including Lee).

In any event, about eleven o’clock, the two divisions marched off. As Sorrell acknowledged, things were not going the way Longstreet wanted them and he failed to conceal some anger.

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257 Bowden & Ward, fn 92, 274.
260 Lee July 31, 1863 Report, 27-2 OR 308. Perhaps it is beating a dead horse, but if this is what Longstreet considers the “critical” line in the report that provided Early with all his ammunition, at least with regard to the second day, he does seem a mite touchy.
262 McLaws, “Gettysburg,” 7 *SHSP* 76.
263 Sorrell, 157.
It is clear that Longstreet was not happy, but perhaps anger is a little off the mark. Maybe he was hurt, or if that word seems too touchy-feely, perhaps a better term is one that imparts part of both anger and hurt: offended. Longstreet’s detractors have argued that Longstreet was full of himself, overestimated his own importance and military genius, and dared to question the great Commander. Longstreet’s postwar writings certainly give no reason to question that assessment. However, he was a corps commander, the senior corps commander, and one whose advice had actually proved to be correct on at least one occasion in the past, and here was the commanding officer, however courteously and in the manner of a Southern gentleman, ordering him to do things like he was the lowest private in the Army. Longstreet clearly knew, as his detractors acknowledge when they argue he chafed over it, who was the commander and who was the subordinate, but the way the matter had been handled (particularly given Lee’s ways) had been at least been a little unseemly.

Thus, a little of Longstreet’s seemingly bizarre behavior on the march to the right can be explained. He’d never had an order before (at least an order so peremptory and detailed) and wasn’t quite clear on how to handle it. Even Longstreet’s greatest defenders have a little trouble with what happened next.

The march approached a point at which it would have been exposed to a Union signal station on Little Round Top. According to Longstreet, this “wouldn’t do.” McLaws and Longstreet began discussing (if no stronger term is appropriate) what to do next. The path taken by Alexander and his artillery earlier in the day was clearly visible but it apparently occurred to no one to use it.\(^{264}\) Longstreet later claimed that he

\(^{264}\) With regard to this controversy see Pfanz, *Second Day*, 490, fn. 45 to p. 119. Eventually, a counter-march was ordered. As to why everybody ignored Alexander’s route, Pfanz says "It must be assumed that
straightened out the mess by coming up with the notion that Johnson (who Longstreet claimed was in charge of the route of the march so that he, a Lieutenant General, could do nothing to override the authority of Johnson, a captain) was only in charge of leading McLaws, so that he himself had authority to clear up the mess by giving orders to Hood’s division.\footnote{265 As difficult and agenda-driven as Early might have been, he never said anything quite so ridiculous as this. Whether due to Longstreet’s startling (and seemingly unnecessary) insight that, after all, he was a Lieutenant General and probably had some authority to order somebody to do something, the column arrived at its destination some time between 3 and 4 p.m.\footnote{266 McLaws relates what happened next: While this was going on an order came from General Longstreet, borne by Major Latrobe, such is my recollection, asking why did I not charge, "as there was no one in my front but a regiment of infantry and a battery of artillery." I told the officer that I would charge so soon as my division was formed for it; that the enemy was in great force in my immediate front, with numerous artillery, and extended far to the right. In a very short time after this the order was repeated, and I informed the officer again that the enemy was so strong in my front that it required careful preparation for the assault, or it necessarily would be a failure; that the opposite artillery was numerous, and it was necessary to break its force by the fire of our artillery; that as soon as it opened, and my men were all up, I would move forward, but requested that he come to the front and see for himself.

Not long after the order came peremptorily for me to charge, the officer representing that General Lee was with General Longstreet, and joined in the order, and I got on my horse and sent word that in five minutes I would be under way. But while collecting my staff to send the orders for a simultaneous move of the whole line, a courier dashed up with orders for me to wait until Hood got into position. I suppose by this time Hood's protests against attempting to charge up officers like Longstreet, McLaws, and Kershaw were practical men who must have noted the route of Alexander's battalion and avoided it for what they deemed to be a good reason. Unfortunately, we do not know the reason." If the indefatigable Harry W. Pfanz throws his hands up with regard to the possibility of ascertaining the truth, we are truly in the realm of the unknowable. Alexander opines that nobody “had the authority” to order a change in the route, \textit{Alexander, Fighting for the Confederacy}, 236-237. Long places Lee on the scene straightening out the mess, which appears to be highly unlikely, and renders, to my view, his assertions as to things nowhere else attested highly suspect. Long, 282.\footnote{265 Longstreet, “Lee in Pennsylvania,” \textit{Annals of the War}, 423.\footnote{266 Coddington, 378-381 and Pfanz, \textit{Second Day}, 119-123. The usual cautions as to times.}}
the Emmettsburg road had been received, and hence the delay. I sent to communicate with Hood at once in order to follow his movement.267

Roughly about this time, as McLaws alludes to, Longstreet’s other division commander, John B. Hood (his third, Pickett, of course, had not yet arrived) was also giving him trouble, engaging in what has come to history as Hood’s protest. The general details (except as to one, about which more below) are fairly well agreed upon, as reported by Longstreet, Hood, and Law. In Hood’s words (much abridged):

I found that in making the attack according to orders, viz: up the Emmettsburg road, I should have first to encounter and drive off this advanced line of battle; secondly, at the base and along the slope of the mountain, to confront immense boulders of stone, so massed together as to form narrow openings, which would break our ranks and cause the men to scatter whilst climbing up the rocky precipice. I found, moreover, that my division would be exposed to a heavy fire from the main line of the enemy, in position on the crest of the high range, of which Round Top was the extreme left, and, by reason of the concavity of the enemy's main line, that we would be subject to a destructive fire in flank and rear, as well as in front; and deemed it almost an impossibility to clamber along the boulders up this steep and rugged mountain, and, under this number of crossfires, put the enemy to flight. I knew that if the feat was accomplished it must be at a most fearful sacrifice of as brave and gallant soldiers as ever engaged in battle. . . . I was in possession of these important facts so shortly after reaching the Emmettsburg road, that I considered it my duty to report to you at once my opinion, that it was unwise to attack up the Emmettsburg road, as ordered, and to urge that you allow me to turn Round Top and attack the enemy in flank and rear. Accordingly, I dispatched a staff officer bearing to you my request to be allowed to make the proposed movement on account of the above stated reasons. Your reply was quickly received: "General Lee's orders are to attack up the Emmettsburg road." I sent another officer to say that I feared nothing could be accomplished by such an attack, and renewed my request to turn Round Top. Again your answer was: "General Lee's orders are to attack up the Emmettsburg road." . . . A third time I dispatched one of my staff to explain fully in regard to the situation, and to suggest that you had better come and look for yourself. I selected, in this instance, my adjutant general, Colonel Harry Sellers, whom you know to be not only an officer of great courage, but also of marked ability. Colonel Sellers returned with the same message: "General Lee's orders are to attack up the Emmettsburg road." Almost simultaneously, Colonel Fairfax, of your staff, rode up and repeated the above orders. . . . As my troops were moving forward, you rode up in person; a brief conversation passed between us, during which I again expressed the fears above mentioned, and regret at not being

allowed to attack in flank around Round Top. You answered to this effect: "We must obey the orders of General Lee." I then rode forward with my line under a heavy fire.268

This sequence of events has been interpreted as Longstreet’s most pigheaded and indefensible action. The magisterial four-volume biography of Lee, written by Douglas Southall Freeman in the 1930s, painted Lee as a basically uncomplicated character, a simple, dignified, and honorable Southern gentlemen, who (like all simple, dignified, and honorable Southern gentlemen, among which must be included Douglas Southall Freeman), simply did his duty and the right as he was able to see it.269 Longstreet (at least at this point in the story) is practically painted as a Judas to Lee's Christ, Freeman alleging that "hundreds of [Lee's men] were to be slain needlessly before the fiery sun had set, because the pique of one man had thrown away the advantage that an early assault would have given them."270

In *Lee's Lieutenants*, Freeman has softened some towards Longstreet.271 However, he still states (of Longstreet):

He said nothing to expose his thoughts, but his every important act for the next few hours showed that he had resolved to put on Lee the entire responsibility for what happened. In plain, ugly words, he sulked.272

Softened or not, this is still the Lost Cause interpretation. Longstreet did not get his way so he is doing the military equivalent of throwing a tantrum, though it puts the entire cause for which he has fought for years in jeopardy.

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268 Hood letter, 4 SHSP 148-150. Virtually no one doubts that this is pretty much what happened. None of Longstreet’s various writings contradict it.
269 Connelly, 153.
271 See Glenn Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg*, 261, fn. 9 to p. 59 and James I. Robertson Jr., "Introduction" to *From Manassas to Appomattox*, xiii.
Shelby Foote's account is what he claims it is, a narrative, and is without footnotes (though there is a bibliographic note at the back). However, Foote seems to be following the Freeman account and comments, "Above all, by a sort of extension if not reversal of his native stubbornness, he was determined to carry out Lee's orders to the letter." His explanation for the direction of the attack, after Longstreet has denied Hood three times, is that Hood flatly disobeyed orders.

Among modern scholars, the most scathing is Robert Krick. In his view, Longstreet was bound and determined to follow Lee’s orders to the letter, cause a disaster, and teach Lee a lesson about what happened to commanding officers who ignored his brilliant counsel. As Robert Krick is one of the most, if not the most, preeminent modern scholars on the Army of Northern Virginia, and, as such, must have had to stomach an awful lot of Longstreet, those who have had even a modest dose of Longstreet’s prose can appreciate his distaste. However, it would seem that such an explanation is a little too extreme if an alternative explanation can be found. It may be nothing more than that Longstreet was unfamiliar with trying to carry out such detailed orders, and was not quite sure what he was allowed to change (if anything) and what he wasn’t. Perhaps he was depending upon Hood, as the man on the spot, once he was out there, to do what had to be done to avoid the defects that had been created in the orders by the changed situation, or perhaps he figured that the necessary adjustment would happen lower down in the chain in the command, or maybe he just hoped for the best.

\[274\] Foote, 501. As Longstreet's nickname was "Old Peter," Foote does not forebear from commenting that "all that was lacking . . . was a cockcrow." To torture the metaphor, as no one has ever noted any particularly Christ-like qualities in John Bell Hood, who played the part of Christ in the drama would have been obvious to a Lost Cause believer.
Even Longstreet’s severest critics never accused him of a lack of concern for his men. It would seem hard to believe that he would teach Robert E. Lee a lesson by getting them slaughtered.

Lee’s report is somewhat uncommunicative on what was supposed to happen and if any change was made to the plan, stating:

It was determined to make the principal attack upon the enemy's left, and endeavor to gain a position from which it was thought that our artillery could be brought to bear with effect. Longstreet was directed to place the divisions of McLaws and Hood on the right of Hill, partially enveloping the enemy's left, which he was to drive in.

General Hill was ordered to threaten the enemy's center, to prevent re-enforcements being drawn to either wing, and co-operate with his right division in Longstreet's attack.

General Ewell was instructed to make a simultaneous demonstration upon the enemy's right, to be converted into a real attack should opportunity offer.

Edward Coddington and Harry F. Pfanz each have their own slightly different interpretation of whether the plan (which all authorities agree started out as an attack up the Emmitsburg Road) changed and, if so, how so. Coddington favors a two-part plan, the first step to take the high ground immediately in Longstreet’s front, the area later known as the Peach Orchard, which he believes is the “position from which it was thought that our artillery could be brought to bear with effect” referred to by Lee and only then to

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276 Even Early says in his first letter in the SHSP “I must here take occasion to declare that I have never had, and do not now have any suspicion of a want of fidelity on the part of General Longstreet to the cause of the Confederacy at Gettysburg or at any other period of the war. I am willing to accord to him great merit as a fighter, but I think his efficiency on such an occasion as that at Gettysburg was materially impaired by a constitutional inertia, mental and physical, that very often delayed his readiness to fight. When once ready, and in the fight, he always fought well, and sometimes most brilliantly.” Early letter, 64-65. Early limited his claims against Longstreet to slowness in the fight and slander against Lee in his arguments. At least the second is true. Longstreet seemed to labor to prove that anyone who said a word against him had been a totally useless soldier. As, by the end, this included almost all of the surviving officers of the Army of Northern Virginia, if Longstreet is to be believed, it is a miracle that, Lee notwithstanding, they ever won a battle. Perhaps the competent ones had already died before the controversy got as heated as it did.

move to an oblique attack on Cemetery Hill (just south of Gettysburg) or Cemetery Ridge (the higher ground running north-south from just below Cemetery Hill in the North to just above the Round Tops in the South) up the Emmitsburg Road. He acknowledges that the problem with the two-part approach is that such a plan would require Lee to have been “willing to expose his movements against the Yankee left flank prematurely.” But, he concludes, had Longstreet intended from the beginning for Hood to begin the attack, his orders to McLaws to attack are “inexplicable.”

Pfanz agrees that, if Hood was always to attack first, the continuing orders to McLaws to attack are “inexplicable.” He concludes that the plan changed.

As noted above, two fairly recent books have advanced fairly novel theories about Lee's plan and its evolution. Harmon, in Lee’s Real Plan at Gettysburg, argues that Lee’s plan remained essentially unchanged from at least the beginning of the morning of July 2 through the end of the battle the next day, including the last assault, which has come down to history somewhat inaccurately as Pickett’s Charge, basing his argument in part on the undeniable statement of General Lee that the plan did not change. Bowden and Ward not only believe the plan changed, but they believe that Lee himself changed it.

The reason that such contrary views have evolved is that the sources, despite broad general agreement, on certain points, as set forth above, diverge at this point in crucial particulars. Douglas Southall Freeman comments in a footnote in his Lee’s Lieutenants:

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278 Coddington, 377-378.
279 Ibid., 378.
280 Ibid., 384.
283 Bowden and Ward, 264.
Reservation has to be made concerning the sequence of events at this stage of the opening action. Longstreet’s report (O.R., 27, pt. 2, pp. 358-359) lacked detail. Neither Hood nor McLaws filed any report. McLaw’s account (7 S.H.S.P., 64) contained some manifest errors. In Hood, 55 ff, is a narrative which is accurate but is of little use regarding incidents not on Hood’s own front. None of Longstreet’s three versions of the events of the afternoon was specific in timing. Of necessity, McLaws’s order of happenings has to be followed, though not in confidence that his memory was accurate. The chief point in doubt is at what stage of the exchange of messages with McLaws, over the beginning of the attack, Longstreet heard from Hood. Some of the evidence would indicate that Longstreet ordered McLaws to go into action before Hood was deployed, but the stronger probability is that both Hood and McLaws took longer to get into position than Longstreet had anticipated.284

Note that Freeman is of the opinion that the testimony of McLaws is full of errors.

This article by McLaws, along with an article by William Youngblood, are the two primary sources that mention Lee’s presence at the point of attack and lead Bowden and Ward to conclude that Lee was present at the point of attack and “to suggest otherwise seems incredible.”285

McLaws (who in any event, tended to get things wrong, particularly, as noted in all the sources, with regard to the timing of the scouting mission, which had already taken place and which he took to be just beginning)286 does not claim to have seen him and only that an officer "represented" that Lee was with Longstreet.

The testimony of William Youngblood is more precise:

In the afternoon about 2 o'clock . . . this was our extreme right. I was sitting on my horse within hearing of Generals Lee, Longstreet and Hood . . . . General Hood said to General Lee: "My scouts report to me that there is a wagon road around Round Top, at its foot, which has been used by farmers in getting out timber, over which I can move troops. I believe I can take one of my brigades, go around this mountain and simultaneously attack from the flank or rear, with the men in front, and capture Round Top." General Lee asked General Longstreet's opinion, Longstreet said "I have great faith in General Hood's opinions and his ability to do whatever he plans to do." This was all the reply Longstreet made.

285 Bowden & Ward, fn 120, 278.
286 See Pfanz, 110.
General Lee stood with head bowed, looking upon the ground in deep thought, for, it seemed, a long time. When he raised his face to look at Generals Longstreet and Hood he said: "Gentlemen, I cannot risk the loss of a brigade; our men are in fine spirits, and with great confidence will go into this battle. I believe we can win upon a direct attack." Extending his hand to General Longstreet, he said: "Good-by, General, and may God bless you"; turned and, shaking General Hood's hand in farewell, said, "God bless you, General Hood; drive them away from you, take Round Top and the day is ours," and with tears in his eyes he turned, mounted the iron gray and rode away.  

This story, first told in 1910, when Hood, Longstreet, and Lee were all dead, finds no echo or even the hint of an echo in anything ever written by Hood, Lee, or Longstreet. It includes numerous poignant little details (never suggested by anyone previous) like the tears and the blessings. It does not command great confidence.

Longstreet, in his three accounts, is never more specific as to the time he last conferred with General Lee than in the one vaguely-worded reference to "about this time." His report, to be found in the Official records, does, as Freeman says "lack detail." In his next writing on the subject, found in Annals of the War, he states, "I left General Lee only after the line had stretched out on the march and rode along with Hood's division, which was in the rear." His only reference to his orders from the general was that he was to "envelop the enemy's left, and begin the attack there, following up, as near as possible, the direction of the Emmitsburg road." There is no suggestion that the orders changed or that Lee was there to change them.

In his Battles and Leaders article, he makes the statement that has suggested the opposite:

As the line was deployed, I rode along from left to right, examining the Federal position and putting my troops in the best position we could find. General Lee at

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287 Youngblood, "Unwritten History," 38 SHSP 314-315..
289 Longstreet, “Lee in Pennsylvania,” Annals of the War, 423..
290 Ibid., 424.
the same time gave orders for the attack to be made by my right—following up
the direction of the Emmitsburg road toward the Cemetery Ridge, holding Hood's
left as well as could be toward the Emmitsburg Road, McLaws to follow the
movements of Hood, attacking at the Peach Orchard. 291

This paragraph certainly exhibits why many have had severe doubts about
Longstreet as a witness (by the time of this writing, he is heavily engaged in defending
himself from the accusations of the Lost Cause school that he lost the Battle of
Gettysburg). It attributes to Lee orders that, if given at the time, would have demanded
that Hood march up the Emmitsburg Road with his right flank fully exposed to major
forces of the enemy, who may well have (had he marched up the road) destroyed his
force long before it made contact in the direction it was going.

The longest and most problematic version is found in Longstreet's memoirs
*Manassas to Appomattox*. He specifies that Lee rode with him "a mile or more." 292
As the march to the right was a winding four-mile affair, 293 this means that Lee left
Longstreet early in the march. Most controversially, he opines:

General Hood appealed again and again for the move to the right, but . . . he was
reminded that the move to the right had been carefully considered by our chief
and rejected in favor of our present orders . . . Failing to adopt it, General Lee
should have gone with us to his right, leaving the battle to be adjusted to the
formidable and difficult ground without his assistance. If he had been with us,
General Hood's messengers could have been referred to general head-quarters, but
to delay and send messengers five miles in favor of a move that he had rejected
would have been contumacious. 294

Hood, as noted above, described his numerous protests and does not mention any
presence of General Lee at any of these deliberations. Evander Law, the senior Brigadier

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292 Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, 366.
293 Coddington, 378-381 and Pfanz, 119-123.
294 Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, 368.
in Hood's division, who took command when Hood was wounded, claims credit for the suggestion that the orders be protested and specifically comments:

I do not know whether the protest ever reached General Lee. From the brief interval that elapsed between the time it was sent to General Longstreet and the receipt of the order to begin the attack, I am inclined to think it did not.  

As noted, Bowden and Ward think the plan of the attack changed and that Lee changed it, and that he had been on the spot with Longstreet and Hood to do it. I do not think that the evidence supports Lee being there. As noted above, Longstreet had been stewing in his resentments for many years when he made the charge that Lee left him on his own out there with a changed situation with a Union left flank to be assaulted that was supposed to be somewhere off to their left. Instead, the Union front extended far to their right and covered some particularly nasty looking ground. I also find it unbelievable that if Hood had delivered his protest directly to Lee, he would not have mentioned it in his account.

The accounts are clear that Lee was much excited about the apparent fact that the Round Tops were unoccupied. He is reported as having quizzed Johnson, upon his return. He could have been excited because he realized that the Round Tops were the key to the field and he wished to take them or he could have been excited because he intended to attack in a completely different place entirely and the Round Tops being occupied could be inconvenient for the attacking column, which otherwise planned to ignore them. Given the repeated injunctions that the attack was supposed to go up the Emmitsburg Road, and the fact that the original orientation intended for the attack keeps

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295 Evander M. Law, "The Struggle for 'Round Top' " in Battles and Leaders, 322.
cropping up in reports even when the attack had, in fact, gone off in an entirely different direction, I think it was the latter.

But, while it is fascinating to speculate whether the attack veered away from the Emmitsburg Road by design or accident, and if by design, whose design, it is ultimately unimportant. Lee’s objective was not this or that hill, but the Army of the Potomac. Thinking the Round Tops unoccupied, he did not rush to occupy them, but proceeded with the assumption that his attack plan would not be “embarrassed” by any Union presence on the Round Tops. That’s why he wanted the attack to get to its point of origin without being seen. Had Longstreet hurried off and got to the point of attack much earlier than he did, if he did so in such a hurry as to be seen, the Union would react much as they did later when they saw the attack forming and rush to occupy the Round Tops. About this, Longstreet approaches being right in his assertion that, at any time of the day, the Union would have reacted to its presence much as it did. His detractors claim that the troops were not available to do so. This, if true at all, is true only of the very early morning, at a time when it could not have been known whether the proposed attack up the Emmitsburg Road would be practicable because it was unknown whether there was a significant Union presence on the right flank of the proposed attack.

Seeing the Round Tops occupied, somebody, whether it was Lee, Longstreet, or Hood, had to do something about it. Unfortunately for the Confederates what they did was try to take it, expending far more troops than might have been strictly necessary, troops that were supposed to be used for the main attack up the road. A smaller number of troops could have kept the Union forces on Little Round Top occupied while the planned attack proceeded further to the North.

According to Bowden and Ward, the new plan was to take the Round Tops (or at least Little Round Top; only William Oates ever attached much importance to Big Round Top)\(^\text{298}\) and to proceed en echelon all the way up the line. This attack, they argue, failed when Posey’s brigade got drawn into a lengthy skirmish over the buildings of the Bliss farm (between the lines at this point) and Mahone did not attack at all. Pender, who commanded the division next in line, figured something was wrong and, while trying to do something about, was shot, leaving as commander of his division the senior brigadier, Lane, who was unwilling to act on the little information he had as to what he was supposed to do or what Pender had intended.\(^\text{299}\) Harman believes that the direction of the attack was unchanged but, after Hood, who despite all his best efforts had not managed to get his orders changed, went down at the beginning of the battle and his troops, leaderless, wandered off in the general direction of the enemy.\(^\text{300}\)

There is some controversy over whether the attack was supposed to be as originally conceived, or as modified, en echelon. Coddington discusses this point:

Longstreet in saying Anderson’s brigades would move “en echelon” made no mention of the order he employed for his own. Longstreet, “Lee in Pennsylvania,” *Annals*, 424. Hill’s and Anderson’s battle reports were probably the basis for Longstreet’s statement. Gen. Cadmus Wilcox, who commanded the right brigade in Anderson’s division, however, denied ever having received an order to move in echelon. By implication Gen. A. F. Wright in his report substantiated Wilcox. See “General C.M. Wilcox on the Battle of Gettysburg, *SHSP*, VI, 98; OR XXVII, pt. 2, pp 608, 614, 622-623.”\(^\text{301}\)

What Wilcox said was this:

\(^{298}\) Col. William C. Oates, “Gettysburg--the Battle on the Right,” 6 *SHSP* 172-181 (1878). Oates has come down to history as the loser in the battle with Chamberlain’s 20th Maine, now so prominent in the popular image of the battle.

\(^{299}\) Bowden & Ward, 335-341.

\(^{300}\) Harman, 55.

\(^{301}\) Coddington, fn. 122, 738.
Nothing was ever said or ordered of an echelon movement of which my brigade was to be the directing brigade, or that I was to guard McLaws' flank. No brigade commander of Anderson's division, so far as I know, ever heard of the orders claimed by General Longstreet to have been given; certainly I never did until I read his article in the Times. Had there been such an order as the echelon movement, it would have been impossible of execution, as the lines of battle held by Anderson's and McLaws' divisions were nearly, if not quite at right angles to each other, and my brigade was on the right of the former.  

Wilcox, after a few digs at Longstreet (Wilcox was one of the few of Longstreet’s antagonists as unreserved as Longstreet himself), strangely claims as evidence “the reports of both my division and corps commanders,” both of whom, Hill and Anderson, as noted by Coddington, state that the attack was to be made en echelon (Hill) or by brigades (Anderson).  

Wright’s report says:

About noon, I was informed by Major-General Anderson that an attack upon the enemy's lines would soon be made by the whole division, commencing on our right by Wilcox's brigade, and that each brigade of the division would begin the attack as soon as the brigade on its immediate right commenced the movement. I was instructed to move simultaneously with Perry's brigade, which was on my right, and informed that Posey's brigade, on my left, would move forward upon my advance.

Lang (who commanded Perry’s brigade to Wilcox’s immediate left) seems to agree with Wilcox, stating:

About 5 p.m. I received an order from General Anderson to the effect that General Longstreet was driving back the enemy's left, and that Wilcox would advance whenever General Longstreet's left advanced beyond him. I was ordered to throw forward a strong line of skirmishers, and advance with General Wilcox, holding all the ground the enemy yielded.

Thus, there is no clear answer as to how the attack by Hill’s corps was supposed to be made. What is clear is that, whether the orders were specifically to move en

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303 Hill, 27-2 OR 608; Anderson, 27-2 OR 614
304 Wright report, 27-2 OR 622.
echelon, or whether moving as soon as the unit on the right moved was merely the best way, given the vagaries of watches and communications, to get everybody going at as near as possible the same time, was that everybody was supposed to attack.\textsuperscript{306} Whether couched in terms of “threatening” the center or “demonstrating” on the enemy’s right, that was the point.

I believe Harman is correct that Little Round Top was a side issue that eventually absorbed much more attention (at least with relation to Lee’s original plan) than it deserved. There is a passage in Longstreet’s first article that suggests that Little Round Top only acquired its crucial importance later.\textsuperscript{307} Early claims to have divined the crucial importance of the Round Tops early on and pointed them out to Lee, though he acknowledges that “dusk was approaching.”\textsuperscript{308} It would seem that, by the time Lee was conferring with Ewell and Early, if it was already too late to attack Cemetery Hill, it would also have been too late to see the Round Tops off in the distance. Early had been through Gettysburg a few days before, but on the lookout for supplies, not to reconnoiter for appropriate positions to occupy in a battle that nobody expected, or at least nobody expected to develop in quite the way that it did. Even if Early could have seen the hills in the gathering darkness, while they may have become “the key to the position” in the course of July 2 (repeat, “may have”), they certainly weren’t the key to the position on the night of July 1, when nobody in either army was anywhere near them. I believe Harman is entirely correct that the Round Tops had no importance in the original plan.

\textsuperscript{306} Everybody who could. It seemed to be rather accepted that Heth’s division was too beat up to participate, but it is unlikely they had recovered much by the next day when they were selected to take a prominent role in what turned out to be an even more desperate effort. Arguably, Pender’s division was in almost as bad a shape, and Pender seems to have had no notion that his division was somehow excused from participating.


\textsuperscript{308} Early review, 272-273.
(though, had they been occupied, it is perhaps unlikely that an attack completely ignoring them would have been conceived). As Harman points out, the Emmitsburg Road did not lead to the Round Tops; it led to Cemetery Hill. However, regardless of what the original plan had been, once the Confederates feared that the Union would occupy them and the Union feared that the Confederates would occupy them, they became part of the battle. As each side seemed at the beginning perfectly willing to leave them alone, perhaps the epic struggle over the Round Tops was all just a big misunderstanding. As they couldn’t get together in the middle of the field and agree on ground rules, each was forced to change their plan and head for the Round Tops in fear the other would. Of course, the defense of the Round Tops was ultimately the only unconditional success the Union had on July 2, 1863, so declaring that including them in the battle had all been a big mistake might not have set very well.

Accordingly, although it seems uncontroverted that the original plan was to go up the Emmitsburg Road, it did not. This could have been (as Bowden and Ward insist and as Pfanz implies) that Lee changed the plan. Maybe Longstreet was attempting to follow his orders in light of the actual conditions that he found to keep both to the Emmitsburg Road and to drive in the left by trying to do both. Maybe Hood determined that the troops apparently on Little Round Top had to be dealt with and decided to do it. Maybe his lower commanders, absent Hood’s leadership after he was wounded, did it on their own or just drifted off in that direction. One of Hood’s brigade commanders, Robertson, makes an interesting point that may partially explain why things turned out as they did, so apparently contrary to Lee’s original intentions:

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309 Harman, 38.
310 Pfanz, 153-154.
Our advance (Law’s & mine) now amounted to & was a charge. Since as Law advanced he inclined to the right making the space between his left & the Emmitsburg road, which my brig. was to fill, much greater, & I found in advancing that the Emmitsburg road diverged much more to the left in its course towards Gettysburg than I, or I believe Gen H. believed.\(^{311}\)

Or perhaps General Lee believed. A modern student of the battle, having read numerous books and articles on Gettysburg, most of which contain maps, having visited the field and perused guide maps (or even having played Avalon Hill’s Gettysburg in his youth) tends to have the features of the field impressed upon his mind, as something definitive and well-established. That was not the case at the time of the battle, most of whose participants had never been there before and had no idea (unless they could get it properly scouted out) where roads went or how the high ground connected together. It might not have been quite as obvious then as it may appear it should have been today just how oblique an attack would be made by following the Emmitsburg Road (if an oblique attack was intended at all). Clearly that the road was to some degree diagonal to the Union position was known, else it would not have been a flank attack. That following the road AND keeping your right flank tight on the unit to the left was totally impossible may have occurred to no one until Robertson attempted to do it and found it so.

Why the plan did not continue as originally planned could have been for any number of reasons. In the absence of clear evidence as to why, it is impossible to determine.

But, ultimately, the “plan,” in fact, did not change, whether or not the “plan” was to take Cemetery Hill as the key to the position and to do so by moving up the Emmitsburg Road. The plan, the basic plan, was expressed in the few words “that, if the

enemy, is there tomorrow, I will attack him.”  

That was the whole point, from the time Lee realized that the unexpected battle was getting off to a very encouraging start on the first day. The taking of Cemetery Hill by Early on the night of the first would have only been a means to an end, to make it easier to destroy the Army of the Potomac as it arrived. The hill was not taken. An “embarrassment” perhaps, but not fatal to the plan. Lee remained convinced, as he first stated in his reports and from which he never deviated, if he could get his units to act in concert, to make a single attack all along the line, the Union Army would have been destroyed, which had been his goal from the beginning. Only then would there be a chance of peace before the North’s superior resources crushed the Confederacy.

For this purpose, he had Corps and Division Commanders, who, hopefully, knew what they were doing. It was not their assignment to attack the Union Army at Cemetery Hill or at Little Round Top, or anywhere in particular (not perhaps even up the Emmitsburg Road, despite Lee’s insistence to McLaws, and Longstreet’s derivative insistence to Hood, that that was the direction the attack had to go to “follow the orders of General Lee.”) Accordingly, if Union troops appeared on Little Round Top, Longstreet, as a Corps commander, in exercise of his authority, could attack him there, contain him with a few units while he looked for other likely targets, or, if he viewed it safe enough, leave him alone. Whether Hill’s men were to attack en echelon or not, or what kind of

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312 Harman notes that when Lee said those words, where the enemy was, where he would attack them, was, in fact, Cemetery Hill, 20. Jomini asserts that the “The guiding principal in tactical combinations, as in those of strategy, is to bring the mass of the force in hand against a part of the opposing army, and upon that point the possession of which promises the most important results.” Jomini, 131. Concentrating on Cemetery Hill, the salient point in the Union fishhook would certainly have followed that directive.

313 See his disappointment in the results of his very first series of battles, which had been spectacularly successful insofar as the point was to get the Union Army away from Richmond. “Under ordinary circumstances the Federal Army should have been destroyed,” Battle Report on Seven Days dated March 6, 1863, 11-2 OR 497.
“demonstration” Ewell was then supposed to make, one thing was clear. They were to keep their eyes open and pounce on any opportunity that presented itself, as (if it be thought he was being a little overoptimistic and hands off about the thing) Ewell had brilliantly done the day before, when he had seen just such an opportunity, disregarded orders not to bring on a general battle, and had succeeded wonderfully. Lee later had doubts about Ewell’s decisiveness but that was as a result of the whole three days battle; it was easy enough on the night of the first or the morning of the second to assume that Ewell might have acted wisely in not being too precipitous in trying to take a key hill with part of his forces badly beaten up, part disorganized by victory and needing reordering, and part just coming up. Whether or not Ewell had acted wrongly in not pursuing his advantage on the night of the first (and the evidence was as yet too scanty to be sure of that), he had acted rightly once on that first day, and there was every expectation he would do it again.
Chapter 6. The Great Opportunity

Meanwhile, as all of this was going on, Major General Daniel Sickles of the Union Third Corps was getting nervous. And, actually (however suspect his actions in operating on that nervousness), with good reason. Of course, the field has changed and it is impossible to be sure that any vantage point on the modern field presents the same thing to the eye that it did in 1863 (particularly as to foliage and, less so, to fences). But it can still be seen today that at Sickles’ point on Cemetery Ridge, it was hardly a ridge at all. As Barlow had, Sickles began to covet some high ground way out in his front. And like Barlow he wanted it despite the obscenity it would make of his line. He had not been allowed to take similar high ground at Chancellorsville; the Confederates had put artillery there, and the experience had not been a pleasant one. And, as Sickles was the only non-West Pointer among the corps commanders, a crony of dismissed General Hooker, it would have taken a far less suspicious nature than you had to have had to have lived like Dan Sickles lived and survived, to not suspect that this lousy ground had been assigned to you on purpose. He part complained to Meade about his lot and part plotted to go off somewhere better to acquire glory. Meade ignored him. Neither seemed to want to have anything to do with the other, and neither seemed to have said flat out what he was thinking. Sickles decided to go get that high ground, as he later candidly confessed (candidly for him, with Sickles, even candidness had an element of deception in it) knowing he was violating his orders. His later claim that he knew that Meade was unsure and timid and wanted to retreat, but that he (Dan Sickles) somehow knew that Gettysburg was going to be a great victory, so he precipitated the battle and thereby saved the country, is almost entirely balderdash, but that Sickles was in a bad position and that
Meade was ignoring his problems (not to mention his entire left) and pooh-poohing his concerns was true enough.314

The new position was too large for the number of troops that Sickles had to cover, was open on both flanks, left a huge gap between Sickles and the rest of the army, did not extend to the Round Tops, and was characterized by a glaring salient in the middle. The deficiencies of the position were summarized by Lt. Col. Charles H. Morgan, Maj. Gen. Winfield S. Hancock’s inspector general and Chief of Staff:

The line he took up was a good one of itself, but bore no relation to the general line of battle. His right flank was nearly a mile in front of the Second corps, and his left was still more unprotected. To have made the general line conform to his position, had time and circumstances permitted would have required nearly double the number of men necessary for the line determined upon by General Meade.315

Sickles’ move would provide Lee an opportunity to do on the field of Gettysburg that which it has sometimes been assumed too easily could only be done elsewhere, to hit the enemy in “detail.” And that enemy, as the units which were rushed to the fight to attempt to retrieve the situation, would not be defending well prepared field fortifications but arriving at the scene of the emergency and attacking as they got there. Even the line assumed by Sickles that so unnerved McLaws by its unexpected appearance had only recently been occupied, and while the Third Corps was defending, it was defending a line it had just gotten to.

Harman, while acknowledging that Sickles did not quite do as ordered, believes that Sickles’ movement had seriously deranged (quite by accident) Lee’s plan by

314 For a short discussion of Sickles and his problems, over which a Caspian Sea of ink was to be spilled, see William Glenn Robertson, “The Peach Orchard Revisited: Daniel E. Sickles and the Third Corps on July 2, 1863” in The Second Day at Gettysburg (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1993), 33-56.
marching a whole corps to ground that Lee originally believed was unoccupied and could be his for the taking.\textsuperscript{316} But, as Coddington says:

As time went on Confederate critics became more and more incensed over what they charged was Longstreet’s serious dereleiction of duty in delaying his attack. They played the tantalizing game of “If.” “If he had attacked at sunrise, midmorning, at noon, or at any time except when he did, there would have occurred all sorts of rosy results. It so happens that Longstreet could not have hit the Union left flank at a more inopportune moment for Meade. The timing of Sickles’ move to a new position compounded the inherent defects in the line Sickles had chosen for his Third Corps. Before his men could dig in and Meade could shift the Fifth Corps from right to left, Longstreet opened his attack. From then on the Confederates held the initiative and maintained it until the last phases of the engagement.\textsuperscript{317}

Earlier, in describing the fighting as it had developed on the southern half of the field, Coddington commented, “Thus whether by luck or good generalship, or a combination of both, Longstreet had turned the delay in McLaws’ advance and the repulse of Hood’s men into an advantage which threatened seven Union brigades with the disaster of a double envelopment.”\textsuperscript{318}

Longstreet declared it “the best three hours’ fighting ever done by any troops on any battle-field.” He alleged that his “hardly thirteen thousand men, encountered during that three and a half hours of bloody work not less than sixty-five thousand of the Federals.”\textsuperscript{319} Backing off a little (as much as Longstreet could back off, which wasn’t much), he asserted, “It has never been claimed that we met this immense force of sixty-five thousand men at one time; nor has it been claimed that each and every of them burnt powder in our faces.”\textsuperscript{320} Alexander’s calculation is about 40,000.\textsuperscript{321}

\textsuperscript{316} Harman, 50-55.  
\textsuperscript{317} Coddington, 445-446.  
\textsuperscript{318} Ibid., 406.  
\textsuperscript{321} Alexander, \textit{Military Memoirs}, 393.
The details of this fighting can be found in Pfanz’s *Second Day*. No one has
studied the details of the fighting at Gettysburg as intensively as he has. Although I will
dare to disagree with him on some matters as to planning, with regard to details he is the
leading modern expert on who shot at whom where (if not when, as, given the sources
and the unsynchronized timepieces, nobody can do that precisely) and I follow him
completely. In an attempt to summarize briefly, the battle on the Southern end of the
field on July 2, 1863, started with Hood’s division attacking Houck’s Ridge over Devil’s
Den and Little Round Top. McLaws’ divison’s attack followed in the vicinity of Rose’s
farm, the area that the contemporaries knew as the stony hill, which is now known as the
Loop, the Wheatfield, and eventually the salient that had been created by Sickles at the
Peach Orchard. Some of Hill’s brigades would later attack further north toward
Cemetery Ridge. Union reinforcements were rushed to the Rose’s Farm/Stony
Hill/Wheatfield area, and the whole position eventually collapsed when both the Union
troops south in the general vicinity of the Wheatfield and further North along the
Emmitsburg Road were flanked by a thrust down what is presently known as the
Wheatfield Road, by two brigades of McLaws’ (Wofford’s and Barksdale’s). Union
reinforcements were also sent to Little Round Top, the battle for which was somewhat
separate (See maps 3, 4, and 5).

However many men Longstreet’s assault fought, he fought them, as Lee desired,
in detail. First, there was the Third Corps, recently arrived, and spread out over a front
too big for it. The next reinforcements consisted of two brigades sent to Sickles as
reinforcements, and two brigades sent to Little Round Top. Then a division of four
brigades from the Second Corps rushed to fight in the Wheatfield. The final reinforcements that actually entered battle were the two brigades of the Regulars.

Also sent were Crawford’s division of Pennsylvania reserves and part of the Twelfth Corps, as well as at least one regiment of the sixth Corps. These troops arrived after the Confederates were pulling back and did not become heavily engaged. In summary:

Stage 1--The Third Corps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corps</th>
<th>Engaged</th>
<th>Killed</th>
<th>Wounded</th>
<th>Cap/Missing</th>
<th>Pct. Cas.</th>
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<tr>
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<td>593</td>
<td>3029</td>
<td>589</td>
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<tr>
<td>1--Birney</td>
<td>5094</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>1384</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>39.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1--Graham</td>
<td>1516</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>48.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>2--Ward</td>
<td>2186</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3--DeTrobiand</td>
<td>1388</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2--Humphreys</td>
<td>4924</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>1562</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1--Carr</td>
<td>1718</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>46.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2--Brewster</td>
<td>1837</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>73</td>
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<td>3--Burling</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>78</td>
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Stage 2--Fifth Corps Reinforcements

To the Wheatfield and environs

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<th>Cap/Missing</th>
<th>Pct. Cas.</th>
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<td>12</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1--Tilton</td>
<td>1423</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>121</td>
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</table>

To Little Round Top:

<table>
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<th>Corps</th>
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<th>Cap/Missing</th>
<th>Pct. Cas.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barnes</td>
<td>1336</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3--Vincent</td>
<td>1504</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.3</td>
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Stage 3--Second Corps Reinforcements to the Wheatfield

<table>
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<th>Wounded</th>
<th>Cap/Missing</th>
<th>Pct. Cas.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caldwell</td>
<td>3320</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>38.4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Stage 4--The Final Reinforcements to the Wheatfield-The Regulars

2--Ayres
1--Day 1557 46 318 18 24.5
2--Burbank 954 78 342 27 46.9

Accordingly, the Third Corps consisted of 10,674 men. They were reinforced by two small brigades, totaling 2,088, while 2,840 Union men rushed to Little Round Top. The next reinforcement was to the Wheat Field of 3,320 and the final one to the Wheatfield of 2,511. The total is 21,466. They arrived in increments whereby they were probably always eventually outnumbered (exactly what Lee had wanted to do). It is difficult to tell because not all of the Confederate forces attacked at the same time, and, as each new reinforcement arrived, the Confederate attacking force, of course, had become somewhat smaller, as was inevitable. Fighting the enemy in detail was better than fighting him all at once but it was not without its price.

The whole idea was to get the Army of the Potomac somewhere where it could be defeated in portions. It had been gotten somewhere where it could be defeated in portions and a goodly part of it had been. The battle hadn’t gone perfectly. No battle ever does. But significant progress had been made. Perhaps the units driven off were not quite as destroyed as the Confederates thought they were. But if the judicious Alexander after a lapse of forty years thought that 40,000 of the enemy had been engaged and defeated, it is unlikely that anybody on the spot thought it had been much less.

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See Tables 2 and 4. The ultimate source, of course is John W. Busey & David G. Martin, *Regimental Strengths and Losses at Gettysburg*, Fourth Ed (Hightstown, N.J.: Longstreet House, 2005). The numbers are division umbers at the margin and brigade numbers once indented. The total for Sickles’ Third Corps is included because the whole corps was deployed at the same time.
Had the number been as high as Longstreet maintained (even as modified downward by Alexander), the thesis that Lee had had a piece of great good fortune by being able to attack these reinforcements would be a whole lot stronger. However, the point is that none of these troops, whether the Third Corps or the subsequent reinforcements, were fought on the famous fishhook line except for the Union forces on Little Round Top (and they had just gotten there). Given that Lee has been greatly criticized for attacking what Alexander called (with emphasis) the Union’s “wonderful” position, it should be kept in mind that almost none of the fighting done by Longstreet’s corps on July 2, 1863, was done against that line. Bowden and Ward include a table of the Union units engaged on the first two days of the battle and list those units as shattered, normal, or intact.\(^323\) They list sixteen brigades as shattered. I might quibble from the casualties listed above, whether Day’s brigade of Regulars was shattered, and two of the brigades listed as shattered were 11\(^{th}\) Corps brigades on Cemetery Hill (see below), who, if they were shattered, were supposed to have already been shattered the day before. Although the casualties would indicate that Tilton and Sweitzer’s brigades may not have been so badly cut up as all that, they certainly had joined in the general exodus from the area. About the other eleven brigades (the whole Third Corps, Caldwell’s Division, and Burbank’s Brigade of regulars), there can be no doubt that, if not completely shattered, they had been beaten and beaten badly.\(^324\)

As noted above, the entire position fell when it was outflanked after the collapse of one side of the Peace Orchard salient. The collapse of the position (at least Sickles’ forward line) happened in much the same way as the attack of Early’s division had begun.

\(^323\) Bowden & Ward, 361-363.
\(^324\) Pfanz comments that ten brigades had been “shattered,” Second Day, 302.
the rout of the First Corps on July 1. A frontal assault (by Barksdale’s brigade) was combined with an attack on the weakest portion of the salient (the southern half along the Wheatfield Road) held only by artillery. In addition, Wofford’s brigade was looming off to their left.

“Wofford’s brigade’s impact was on morale. It was a fresh, disciplined body of men that intimidated the battered and disorganized Federals in the Peach Orchard, in the stony hill area, in Trostle’s Woods, and in the Wheatfield. Its appearance gave new life to Kershaw’s and Semmes’s men on the right, and its advance carried them in its wake.”325

If the purpose was to debunk Longstreet (which seems rather superfluous after so many have labored so mightily to do so over so many years) it might be noted that the northernmost division of the Third Corps had been attacked by Anderson’s division (at least parts of it) of Hill’s corps. The northernmost division of the Third Corps (Humphrey’s) had to retreat because they were flanked (by Longstreet’s corps to be sure). This division lost numerous casualties in making a fighting retreat, which the Confederates interpreted as breaking through numerous successive lines, and this division might have denied that it had been “shattered.”326 The attackers in the direct front of Humphreys were Wilcox’s and Lang’s Brigades of Anderson’s division of Hill’s corps. However, Hill’s corps did not destroy the units it engaged further up on Cemetery Hill (except for small portions of it, such as the First Minnesota, which made a near suicidal attack on Wilcox’s brigade, which succeeded in turning back that brigade’s advance (or at least halting until other reinforcements came along) at frightful cost.327 The brigade of Ransom Wright (the only other brigade of Hill’s that would attack that day) was believed by its Commander to have made it all the way to Cemetery Ridge but destroyed no Union

325 Ibid., 323-333, quote is from 328.
326 Ibid., 368-372.
327 Ibid., 410-414.
units (and took quite a beating itself; See Table 1). Coddington is very skeptical about Wright’s claim, and the description of where his attack had wound up bears little resemblance to the area he was in. Pfanz seems to accept Wright’s claim though he does mention how little resemblance Wright’s description has to the area he was allegedly in and notes Hancock’s skepticism that they got that far.

The next brigade after Wright’s was Posey’s, but Posey’s brigade had been engaged in all-day skirmishing over some farm buildings halfway between the lines and couldn’t be gotten together for an attack. Next in line was Mahone’s brigade, and Mahone did not move at all. That was the end of Anderson’s division, and the next division on the line was Pender’s. Pender sensed something was wrong and was galloping off to his right to see what the hold-up was when he suffered what was to be a fatal wound. His senior brigadier, Lane, was left in charge and, not knowing quite what he was supposed to do (but see below), he did nothing. Heth claimed that Lee had told him, "I shall ever believe if General Pender had remained on his horse half an hour longer we would have carried the enemy's position. After Pender fell the command of his division devolved on an officer unknown to the division; hence the failure of Pickett's receiving the support of this division." This statement aroused Lane’s dander and he replied heatedly that, as Pender had fallen on the second, lasting another half an hour would hardly have been of much assistance on the third. If Heth is not just making this

328 Coddington, 421-422.
329 Wright’s report refers to “the crest of the heights, which were lined with artillery, supported by a strong body of infantry, under protection of a stone fence,” “a rocky gorge on the eastern slope of the height,” and “a high ledge of rocks, thickly covered with stunted undergrowth.” 27-2 OR 623-624.
331 Bowden & Ward, 340.
332 Heth letter, 4 SHSP 154.
333 Letter of James H. Lane dated October 20, 1877, 5 SHSP 38 (1877)
up out of whole cloth, he perhaps confused a reference to the second with another to the third. In any event, Pender’s division did not move.

This according to Bowden and Ward was where the echelon attack of the first failed. By the logic of an echelon attack, when one unit fails, the rest along the line also fail, because the needed movement to their right (in this case, depending upon the plan, the attack could of course be going in the other direction) to get them going does not occur. Yet each of Hill’s units that did not attack, did not attack for a specific reason, Posey’s because the brigade was off skirmishing and couldn’t be gotten together for an attack, Pender’s division because Pender was down. Mahone’s failure to move even after a courier, upon receiving the information that Mahone was staying where he was because Anderson had ordered him to, informed him that he was just from Anderson and Anderson now ordered him to move, must rank with why Longstreet’s column didn’t take Alexander’s shortcut and why Geary wandered off in the wrong direction off the battlefield (see below) as one of the unsolvable riddles of Gettysburg. Bowden and Ward are as mystified as anybody over the deeper reasons, but add the eminently practical secondary reason that he didn’t move because Anderson didn’t get himself over there in person and make him move, nor did Hill rouse himself to cause this to happen.334 Thus, the failure on Hill’s left required several factors, incompetence on the part of a number of officers as well as extremely bad luck. I will argue that one of the reasons that Confederate units may not have moved to the attack was that they were told to move when they saw a good opportunity and their units being already rather chewed up, they were less apt to find one than might have been usual. However, where Mahone’s brigade is concerned, I have just not a clue. Maybe somebody did order him to stay in reserve.

334 Bowden & Ward, 340-341.
In any event, he did not move. That had not been the plan. My argument that all of the bad things that happened to the Confederates were not due to the mistakes of individual officers does not mean that none of them were.\footnote{For discussions of Mahone’s puzzling refusal to move, see, in addition to Bowden & Ward, Coddington, 421; Pfanz, Second Day, 386-387. Coddington believes that Mahone had somehow gotten the idea that he had to stay to support some artillery.}

The Union units on Little Round Top were still in fairly good condition, and Hill’s corps had not been able to add appreciably to the toll of defeated and perhaps “shattered” units. However, all in all (as Confederates would ever after claim\footnote{See Taylor’s huffy denial that Gettysburg had been a defeat after all because there were battles on two other days than the third and the Confederates had won them, General Lee, 211. It should be noted that the Union commanders did not at all share Taylor’s evaluation of the second day’s fighting, being fairly pleased at the results. See Pfanz, Second Day, 423-424.}) they had done pretty well.

Add to these events the decisive defeat of the First and Eleventh Corps on July 1, 1863, and it certainly appeared to Lee (and to Lee’s army) that at least half the Union Army had been met and defeated, sometimes disastrously so. If you are trying to destroy an army that outnumbers you (and the Confederates believed both then and later that it outnumbered them more than it did), managing to pick off so many different parts of it in succession (and outside of prepared positions) was doing fairly well.

More Union troops, as noted above, would arrive, but they (as the casualties indicate; See Table 2) were hardly engaged. By then the attack had lost its impetus and other units would have to deal with them at some later time. Defeating successive units in detail does take a toll on the units doing the defeating.\footnote{Two of the most “successful” brigades on the Second (Barksdale’s and Wright’s) had among the highest casualties. See Table 1.} Bowden and Ward imply that Barksdale’s brigade’s attack was one of those instances where the attacking force took
fewer casualties. They believe that Barksdale’s instinct to continue to attack was the correct one, and defend Lee’s entire offensive strategy on the basis of the greater damage that can be inflicted by attacking forces with superior discipline and élan. Yet the Barksdale attack (with Wofford looming) hit in precisely the right place (as had Early’s the day before). Perhaps élan will provide victories under certain circumstances. Yet this does not seem one of those times. In any event, after Barksdale’s brigade crashed through the Union line, they still had a long way to go and by the end of their “success” they were as beat up as any unit in the whole army with the possible exception of the Union First Corps.

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338 Bowden & Ward, 311-314.
Chapter 7. Ewell, Night, and Cemetery Hill and Culp Hill

In the course of this study, I have found myself more and more interested in the portion of the battle on the Northern side of the field for precisely the reasons for which I had previously felt very little curiosity. The reason was that the battle around Culp’s Hill and Cemetery Hill seemed to have little to do with the rest of the battle. In fact, Harry Pfanz was able to isolate that part of the battle for its own book. 339 Was the separateness of this battle by accident or design? Did Robert E. Lee either approve or allow to happen through negligence or inattention Richard Ewell’s conducting a separate and private war with portions of the Union Army while the other two corps dealt with the rest of it? Robert E. Lee was frequently quoted as attributing to the loss of the battle (when he wasn’t blaming the cavalry) to a want of “concert of action” or the failure of the corps commanders to cooperate. 340 Is it likely that he was entirely pleased with one whole corps seemingly marching to a different drummer?

With all due skepticism about a second-hand account revealed after Lee was dead (and found in Marshall’s papers), this is what Colonel Allen had to say about Lee’s comments on the Battle of Gettysburg:

[V]ictory would have been won if he could have gotten one simultaneous attack on the whole line. This he tried his uttermost to effect for three days and failed. Ewell he could not get to act with decision. Rodes, Early, Johnson attacked and were hurt in detail Longstreet, Hill, etc. could not be gotten to act in concert. 341

Was it only on the first that Lee thought Ewell had failed to act with decision? Lee mentions Rodes’ attack (which was on the first). Early, in fact, had attacked on the first, yet he also attacked on the second (but not on the third). Johnson attacked on both

339 Pfanz, Culp's Hill & Cemetery Hil.
340 The phrase “concert of action” appears as early as the reports, January __, 1864 report, 27-2 OR 320.
341 Marshall, Allen Memorandum, 250.
the second and the third. Lee’s displeasure does seem to extend over the entire course of the battle.

We have seen what Hill and his corps were doing when the portion that was present of Longstreet’s corps attacked (and what Bowden and Ward think of it). What was Ewell’s corps doing in the meantime? As it turns out, nothing much. As with Hill, who had caught some heat from the traditional critics for bringing on the battle and was rather given a pass thereafter, Ewell’s failure to continue to attack on the evening of the first pretty much constituted the sum of traditional criticism, and his actions for the remainder of the battle seem to have escaped much serious scrutiny (perhaps that Early was the chief of the traditional critics had a lot to do with that). What there was of criticism for the remainder of the battle rather centered on Rodes (as we shall see). However, it seems that, like Hill, Ewell had been paradoxically criticized for what he did that was not wrong, or at least eminently understandable, and left alone for what he did that was seriously debatable. Other than Alexander’s pointing out that, after it was decided to leave the Corps out where it arguably could do little good\textsuperscript{342} (which can be seen as as much of a criticism of Lee as Ewell) his explanations are taken rather at face value.

When Longstreet attacked (whenever that happened to occur), Ewell’s orders were to “demonstrate.” As it happened, although Longstreet’s guns opened about 4:00 (Ewell says 5:00), no attack could be organized on the Union right until after dark.

Ewell’s report states the following:

Early in the morning, I received a communication from the commanding general, the tenor of which was that he intended the main attack to be made by the First Corps, on our right, and wished me, as soon as their guns opened, to

\textsuperscript{342} Alexander, \textit{Military Memoirs}, 386.
make a diversion in their favor, to be converted into a real attack if an opportunity offered.

I made the necessary preparations, and about 5 p.m., when General Longstreet's guns opened, General Johnson commenced a heavy cannonade from Andrews' battalion and [Archibald] Graham's battery, the whole under Major [J. W.] Latimer, against the Cemetery Hill.

After an hour's firing, finding that his guns were overpowered by the greater number and superior position of the enemy's batteries, Major Latimer withdrew all but one battery, which he kept to repel any infantry advance . . .

Immediately after the artillery firing ceased, which was just before sundown, General Johnson ordered forward his division to attack the wooded hill in his front, and about dusk the attack was made. The enemy were found strongly intrenched on the side of a very steep mountain, beyond a creek with steep banks, only passable here and there. Brig. Gen. J. M. Jones was wounded soon after the attack began, and his brigade, which was on the right with Nicholls' (Louisiana) brigade (under Colonel Williams), was forced back, but Steuart, on the left, took part of the enemy's breastworks, and held them till ordered out at noon next day.

As soon as information reached him that Johnson's attack had commenced, General Early, who held the center of my corps, moved Hays' and Hoke's brigades forward against the Cemetery Hill. Charging over a hill into a ravine, they broke a line of the enemy's infantry posted behind a stone wall, and advanced up the steep face of all other hill, over two lines of breastworks. These brigades captured several batteries of artillery and held them until, finding that no attack was made on the right, and that heavy masses of the enemy were advancing against their front and flank, they reluctantly fell back, bringing away 75 to 100 prisoners and four stand of captured colors. Major-General Rodes did not advance, for reasons given in in his report.

Before beginning my advance, I had sent a staff officer to the division of the Third Corps, on my right, which proved to be General Pender's, to find out what they were to do. He reported the division under command of General Lane, who succeeded Pender, wounded, and who sent word back that the only orders he had received from General Pender were that he was to attack if a favorable opportunity presented. I then wrote to him (it being too late to communicate with the corps commander) that I was about attacking with my corps, and requested that he would co-operate. To this I received no answer, nor do I believe that any advance was made. The want of co-operation on the right made it more difficult for Rodes' division to attack, though, had it been otherwise, I have every reason to believe, from the eminent success attending
the assault of Hays and Avery, that the enemy's lines would have been carried.\textsuperscript{343}

The above report contains numerous items of interest. First, Ewell looked upon his assignment as making a “diversion,” not a demonstration, and to do so as soon as he heard Longstreet’s guns. Despite claiming that the necessary preparations had been made, he has the artillery fire (from what was a greatly inferior position against a greater number of guns, as he admits) for an hour, and only then does Johnson advance. This is just before sundown. Even if Longstreet had started his attack at 5 rather than 4, this still leaves two and a half hours until sundown. Either Ewell didn’t start as quickly as he claimed, the artillery fight lasted longer than an hour, or Johnson’s preparations to attack required some time (which could have been done simultaneously with the artillery firing). If Longstreet’s guns opened at 4, it somehow took Johnson three and a half hours to attack. Longstreet, with his greater distance to travel and the countermarch, hardly took much more time that.

But only when Johnson attacks (it is now about dark) does Early attack. Meanwhile, before beginning his advance (when? Just before? Hours before?) Ewell conceives the notion that he might be wise to coordinate with the division on his right, which turns out to be Pender’s. He finds Lane in charge (which means it is already late in the day because Pender fell near the end of the attack of Hill’s corps). Lane doesn’t agree to attack, though he had been admonished to “attack if a favorable opportunity presented itself.” Therefore (by implication, we will hear from Rodes below), since Lane does not attack, Rodes does not attack (actually, Rodes’ division is busily getting itself in position to attack, having spent the whole day not moving a step closer to the Union

\textsuperscript{343} Ewell Report, 27-2 OR 446-447.
troops than they began the day). The “advantages” gained on Cemetery Hill are lost and therefore (again by implication) the battle was lost.

This is poppycock, not to use a stronger word. Times are deliberately fudged and it is quite obvious that Ewell has read his orders to make a “diversion” when Longstreet attacked to mean to start thinking about how you might go about doing that when Longstreet attacked. He was only to make a real attack “if opportunity offered.” Was this opportunity provided by his artillery getting overwhelmed by Union artillery? No opportunity presented itself when Ewell finally attacked that was any better than any opportunity that had existed at the start. He attacked without a favorable opportunity. He attacked because he realized that General Lee had been disappointed in his failure to attack the day before (Bowden & Ward paint Lee’s comment to the braintrust of Ewell’s corps that “they had not or could not press their advantage of the day before” as virtually a screaming reproach, given the code language of Southern gentleman). He knew he was supposed to look for an opportunity, but seeing none, he attacked anyway, just after delaying until it was already too late to do any good.

Early’s explanation is the following:

I will now notice some statements by Colonels Allan and Taylor in regard to the fighting on the 2d. The former says:

"Longstreet's attack on the Federal left on the 2d was delayed beyond the expected time, and was not promptly seconded by Hill and Ewell when made. Ewell's divisions were not made to act in concert -- Johnson, Early, Rodes attacking in succession."

His third condition for a successful result is thus stated:

Third. Had Ewell made his attack in the afternoon of the 2d at the same time as Longstreet, instead of later, and then not 'piecemeal,' so that Early was beaten back before Rodes was ready to support him."

344 Bowden & Ward, 254.
Colonel Allan should have been a little more circumspect in his statement and discriminating in his comments. In the paragraph of his report immediately following what I have before quoted, Ewell says:

"Early in the morning (2d) I received a communication from the General commanding, the tenor of which was that he intended the main attack to be made by the First corps, on our right, and wished me as soon as their guns opened to make a diversion in their favor, to be converted into a real attack if an opportunity offered."

This is in accord with General Lee's own statement, except that he calls it "a simultaneous demonstration." Now, Colonel Allan ought to know that neither Rodes, Johnson, nor myself, from the nature of the ground, could move from our positions to the front without making a real attack, and then the whole should have gone forward. This was not contemplated by General Lee. The only mode of making a demonstration on our flank was to open a heavy artillery fire, and hold the troops in readiness to advance when the opportunity spoken of arrived. That was done.\[345\]

This may be true, but, if so, it seems hard to believe that Lee had been offered this interpretation and was content with it. Had Lee been aware of how "simultaneous" the attack on the left could be, he presumably would have urged them to do better than that. He would almost certainly have said that he expected them to advance to the attack, and, if this was entirely impossible, he might have had to rethink the whole thing. Lee clearly expected earlier action from Ewell than he got. His plan on the second day was for everybody to be available to move if opportunity offered. Ewell eventually thought that opportunity offered well enough to convert the demonstration into a real attack. As Bowden and Ward point out, much of the Twelfth Corps that was defending Culp’s Hill had moved off to the left or, in Geary’s Division’s case, off into the woods.\[346\] But Ewell

\[345\] Early Review, 4 SHSP 276-277
\[346\] Bowden & Ward, 341. This was a minor factor in the battle, but it certainly amounted to another incredible piece of luck for the Confederates. After some confusion over whether part or all of the Twelfth Corps was supposed to march off to the left, Geary, with two brigades of his division, unaccountably, marched off into the woods, in the exact opposite direction of where at least 100,000 men were shooting at each other (and, one would think, creating some noise in the process). This is one of the mysteries of Gettysburg that cannot be explored here, but, I suspect that, along with why Longstreet and McLaws stayed on the road and wouldn’t take Alexander’s shortcut, it may be a mystery totally incapable of solution. On Geary’s odd march off the Battlefield, see Pfanz. Culp’s Hill & Cemetery Hill, 200-204.
didn’t know that. What did he know when he attacked that he hadn’t known earlier?

Nothing. He wasn’t supposed to start to get ready to attack when he heard Longstreet’s guns, he was supposed to attack then. He had had all day to get ready, to have any communication with Hill or Pender that he thought appropriate to coordinate the attack (which apparently only occurred to him when the sun had almost set).

Lee’s reports tended to be based on what did happen rather than what was supposed to have happened. With regard to the second, he says:

General Ewell was instructed to make a simultaneous demonstration upon the enemy's right, to be converted into a real attack should opportunity offer. . . As soon as the engagement began on our right, General Johnson opened with his artillery, and about two hours later advanced up the hill next to Cemetery Hill with three brigades, the fourth being detained by a demonstration on his left. Soon afterward, General Early attacked Cemetery Hill with two brigades, supported by a third, the fourth having been previously detached. The enemy had greatly increased by earthworks the strength of the positions assailed by Johnson and Early.

The troops of the former moved steadily up the steep and rugged ascent, under a heavy fire, driving the enemy into his intrenchments, part of which was carried by Steuart's brigade, and a number of prisoners taken. The contest was continued to a late hour, but without further advantage. On Cemetery Hill, the attack by Early's leading brigades--those of Hays and Hoke, under Colonel [I. E.] Avery--was made with vigor. Two lines of the enemy's infantry were dislodged from the cover of some stone and board fences on the side of the ascent, and driven back into the works on the crest, into which our troops forced their way, and seized several pieces of artillery.

A heavy force advanced against their right, which was without support, and they were compelled to retire, bringing with them about 100 prisoners and four stand of colors. General Ewell had directed General Rodes to attack in concert with Early, covering his right, and had requested Brigadier-General Lane, then commanding Pender's division, to co-operate on the right of Rodes. When the time to attack arrived, General Rodes, not having his troops in position, was unprepared to co-operate with General Early, and before he could get in readiness the latter had been obliged to retire for want of the expected support on his right. General Lane was prepared to give the assistance required of him,
and so informed General Rodes, but the latter deemed it useless to advance after the failure of Early's attack.\textsuperscript{347}

The explanation of why Rodes did not attack is contained in Rodes’ report, which states:

All of the above continues to support the supposition that everybody was supposed to attack (at least on the second) and, if they did not do so, an explanation is sought.

At this point, it should be noted that the troops who ran screaming up East Cemetery Hill were once more the poor ill-starred Eleventh Corps. As a result of this, Bowden and Ward list two brigades of the Eleventh Brigade as “shattered.”\textsuperscript{348} However, the only reinforcements that were sent that enabled the Eleventh Corps to hold the hill was Carroll’s Brigade of the Third Division of the Second Corps, the so-called Gibraltar Brigade.\textsuperscript{349} And not even the whole brigade was sent, one regiment, the 8\textsuperscript{th} Ohio, having been left where it had been skirmishing over on the west side of the hill and would participate in the repelling of Pickett’s charge the next day. Although, as noted above, the Gibraltar Brigade believed ever afterwards that they had won the battle and the war that day, it seems hard to believe that one brigade, under a thousand men intact and missing a regiment at that, could have retrieved the disaster without at least a little help from the much despised Eleventh Corps. And hadn’t the Eleventh Corps units that were “shattered” already been shattered the day before? Whatever “shattered” can be considered to mean, it apparently doesn’t mean that you can cease to worry about them entirely.

\textsuperscript{347} Lee report of January \_\_\_, 1864, 27-2 OR 318-319.
\textsuperscript{348} Bowden & Ward, 363.
\textsuperscript{349} The name had been given them by General William M. French for their exploits at the Sunken Lane at Antietam. Nancy M. Baxter, \textit{Gallant Fourteenth: The Story of an Indiana Civil War Regiment} (Indianapolis: Guild Press of Indiana, 1991), 100.
Prior to the famous “Pickett’s charge” of the next day, the fighting in what had become (through no intention of anybody, certainly not General’s Lee) almost an entirely separate battle, flared up again. Ewell’s report continues:

I was ordered to renew my attack at daylight Friday morning, and as Johnson’s position was the only one affording hopes of doing this to advantage, he was re-enforced by Smith’s brigade, of Early’s division, and Daniel’s and Rodes’ (old) brigades, of Rodes’ division.  

There is no reason given; it is just stated. Johnson’s position was the one in front of Culp’s Hill, which was the position least affording hopes of successful attack on the field. The night of the Second, it was successfully defended by one brigade. That brigade’s success was undoubtedly assisted by the fact that, by the time the attack had been organized and pushed up the rocky, woody sides of Culp’s Hill, it was dark, and it was impossible to tell just how few troops remained in the Twelfth Corps entrenchments. The next morning, the whole Corps was back. As the casualties of the Twelfth Corps (and Johnson’s division) listed on Tables 1 through 4 indicate, there was no more forlorn hope on that field of forlorn hopes than that any amount of force available to Ewell was going to make any impression on Culp’s Hill.

Ewell apparently believed that Culp’s Hill “controlled” Cemetery Hill. What he is actually saying is not that there was really much hope of taking Culp’s Hill but that, without taking Culp’s Hill, there was no chance of taking Cemetery Hill. What he has done is convinced his Commanding Officer to leave his entire Corps out here where

350 Ewell Report, 27-2 OR 447.
nothing useful could be accomplished, and rather than admit that there was nothing useful to be accomplished out there, he has attacked.352

Did Culp’s Hill “control” Cemetery Hill? Well, as the excerpts above relating to Cemetery Hill indicate, even though there was certainly no indication that Johnson was getting anywhere on Culp’s Hill (despite his capture of empty entrenchments), they still could have stayed had Rodes or Pender attacked on their right. Culp’s Hill was no more “key” to the battlefield than Barlow’s Knoll, the elevated area around the Peach Orchard, or Little Round Top. Ewell found himself out away from the rest of the army, Lee wanted him to attack and Culp’s Hill seemed like the highest ground around so an obvious point to attack. The frequent references to attacking “if” a favorable opportunity offered seem like Southern Gentlemanish for “when” a favorable opportunity offered. They were supposed to await the best moment and then attack. The people on the northern end of the field, both Ewell’s corps and Pender’s division (now commanded, after Pender’s fall, by the senior brigadier) were having trouble figuring out when that was. Pender might not have known it either, but his thinking was closer to Lee’s. The answer to the question of when to attack was always as soon as possible. There was nothing unique about the fact that Longstreet’s attack was supposed to be made as early as possible. That was how it was always supposed to go.

According to Ewell, what happened next was the following:

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352 I realize that here and in what follows I am being a little tough on Ewell. I do not seek to criticize him, merely understand him. Ewell, in his highly responsible position of Corps commander, was expected to come up with a good idea and he came up empty. This was not the first time that had happened to anybody and it would not be the last, and Ewell’s failure to do so does not suggest some sort of flaw in his character. The modern worship of success and demonizing of failure tends to conclude that the winning side deserved to win and the losing side deserved to lose because of some sort of strength of character in the former and defect of character in the latter. This, of course, is always a possibility but somebody has to win and somebody has to lose and sometimes that happens without there having to have been some sort of hidden moral or character flaw revealed in anybody.
Just before the time fixed for General Johnson to advance, the enemy attacked him, to regain the works captured by Steuart the evening before. They were repulsed with very heavy loss, and he attacked in turn, pushing the enemy almost to the top of the mountain, where the precipitous nature of the hill and an abatis of logs and stones, with a very heavy work on the crest of the hill, stopped his farther advance.

Half an hour after Johnson attacked, and when too late to recall him, I received notice that Longstreet would not attack until 10 o'clock; but, as it turned out, his attack was delayed till after 2 o'clock.\footnote{Lee report of January \_\_, 1864, 27-2 OR 354.}

Lee’s report says with regard to the continuation of the Culp’s Hill Battle on the third:

The general plan was unchanged. Longstreet, re-enforced by Pickett's three brigades, which arrived near the battle-field during the afternoon of the 2d, was ordered to attack the next morning, and General Ewoll was directed to assail the enemy's right at the same time. The latter, during the night, re-enforced General Johnson with two brigades from Rodes' and one from Early's division.

General Longstreet's dispositions were not completed as early as was expected, but before notice could be sent to General Ewoll, General Johnson had already become engaged, and it was too late to recall him. The enemy attempted to recover the works taken the preceding evening, but was repulsed, and General Johnson attacked in turn.

After a gallant and prolonged struggle, in which the enemy was forced to abandon part of his intrenchments, General Johnson found himself unable to carry the strongly fortified crest of the hill. The projected attack on the enemy's left not having been made, he was enabled to hold his right with a force largely superior to that of General Johnson, and finally to threaten his flank and rear, rendering it necessary for him to retire to his original position about 1 p.m.\footnote{Ewell report, 27-2 OR 447.}

In Lee’s report there is nothing about any decision which might have been made that only Culp’s Hill was suitable for attack on that end of the field and that only Johnson could attack on the third. Lee seems to accept that, once Johnson was “engaged,” there was no possibility of recalling him. But then he turns to the usual recounting of the battle as it actually occurred, and how “gallant and prolonged” it was. There is no discussion of
whether once the battle started, it had to continue as long and as stubbornly as it did and as a result, Ewell’s whole corps was entirely prevented from cooperating in later attack of the third. After the recounting of the gallant and prolonged struggle, Ewell falls out of the story entirely.

As Lee made a practice of reporting what his officers had done without any suggestion that they might perhaps have done something quite different to advantage, it does not necessarily follow that all of Ewell’s assumptions were correct. However, seemingly no one has questioned this. Culp’s Hill was the only place to attack; once the Union attacked in that vicinity, there was no choice but to continue attacking and that, as a necessary corollary, nothing further could be expected from an entire corps, one third of the army, is accepted without question. Yet there is no good reason to believe that all these assumptions are true.

Johnson having been repulsed (Henry Pfanz suggests it was well before 1 o’clock), the activities on this side of the field subsided. However long it persisted, that it persisted as long as it did was a source of puzzlement to the other side. According to Brig. Gen. Alpheus S. Williams, “The wonder is that the rebels persisted so long in an attempt that the first half hour must have told them was useless.”

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355 For Lee’s methods with regard to reports, see Marshall, 181. “He declined to embody in his report anything that might seem to cast the blame for the result upon others, and in answer to my appeal to allow some statements which I deemed material to remain in the report, he said he disliked in such communications to say aught to the prejudice of others.”
356 Pfanz, Culp’s Hill & Cemetery Hill, 310-327. In Battles and Leaders, George S. Green, the Brigadier in charge of the one brigade that had stayed on Culp’s Hill on the night of the second, declares the attack was over by 10 a.m., “The Breastworks at Culp’s Hill-II), 317.
357 Bachelder Papers, Vol. 1, Letter from Brig. Gen Alpheus S. Williams dated November 10, 1865, 221. Williams commanded the First Division of the Twelfth Corps, though, during the battle, as Slocum, the Corps Commander, believed he was still acting as commander of the right “wing,” he was theoretically in charge of the whole Twelfth Corps.
The battle was to continue on the fields to the South. When “Pickett’s Charge” is considered, it will be necessary to consider Tom Carhart’s theory mentioned above that Stuart was supposed to be a major element in the attack of the third. However, it just didn’t come off so there was never any mention of it anywhere.\footnote{Carhart, 244-247.} This is not quite using the absolute silence about something as evidence it had occurred (frequently found in conspiracy theories) but ferreting something out from other evidence and accounting for the silence. Perhaps Carhart is correct about Stuart but has not carried the idea far enough. General Lee’s reports are a rather shaky source of evidence that something was attempted and didn’t come off or that what had happened (duly reported with appropriate commendations about the gallantry displayed) was what had been supposed to happen. Ewell reported what he had done. Lee duly reported it in turn. If he hadn’t been particularly happy about it, his report would be the last place to look for it.
Chapter 8. Pickett’s charge

The last act (apart from a tragic Union cavalry charge in the far South of the field that did not contribute to the outcome of the battle) of the three-day struggle is well known. Pickett’s division, which had been the last Confederate infantry unit to arrive on the field and had not yet fought, in concert with Heth’s division now commanded by Pettigrew and two brigades of Pender’s division under Isaac Trimble, charged the Union center and was repulsed.

There is some debate (as, since this involves Longstreet, is to be expected) over what orders Lee gave to his corps commanders the night before. In any event, when morning came, Longstreet was once more involved in preparations for a further move to the right.\(^\text{359}\) Again, Lee expressed his total disinterest in such an enterprise and announced his intention to attack at the center of the Union position. Then followed the famous colloquy (reported by Longstreet alone but generally accepted to have occurred) in which Longstreet said to Lee:

General, I have been a soldier all my life. I have been with soldiers engaged in flights by couples, by squads, companies, regiments, divisions, and armies, and should know, as well as any one, what soldiers can do. It is my opinion that no fifteen thousand men ever arrayed for battle can take that position.\(^\text{360}\)

Part of the plan was the massive artillery bombardment prior to the actual infantry charge. Bowden and Ward argue that the bombardment was atypical in that it was directed against infantry as opposed to counter-battery fire and argue that this was an unfortunate choice.\(^\text{361}\) I acknowledge that there has been little mention of the artillery to this point in the thesis. It, of course, was always there (like skirmishing) and sometimes


\(^{361}\) Bowden & Ward, 479-481.
had an effect on the fighting. The Confederates lacked decent artillery positions to attack Culp’s Hill,\textsuperscript{362} and Little Round Top did not provide for good artillery positions, which made it less desirable as a “Gibraltar.” In fact, Sickles lusted after the Peach Orchard because it would provide good artillery positions.

Alexander was in charge of the bombardment and Longstreet sent him a note which Alexander read (probably correctly) as transferring the responsibility as to when to unleash the infantry (if not even “if” to unleash the infantry). According to Alexander:

And now I received a sudden shock. A courier brought me a note from gen. Longstreet which read as follows:

Colonel. If the artillery fire does not have the effect to drive off the enemy, or greatly demoralize him, so as to make our efforts pretty certain, I would prefer that you should not advise Gen. Pickett to make the charge. I shall rely a great deal on your good judgement to determine the matter & shall expect you to let gen. Pickett know when the moment offers.

That presented the whole business to me in a new light. It was no longer Gen. Lee’s inspiration that was the way to whip the battle, but my cold judgment to be founded on what I was going to see.\textsuperscript{363}

Now, with the matter seen in a “different light” than if he was merely confidently executing Lee’s plans, he struggled to get the decision point on the charge back to where it belonged, on Longstreet. Acting upon his new knowledge that the efficacy of the bombardment was an essential part of the plan, Alexander lengthened the barrage with the attendant greater expenditure of ammunition.\textsuperscript{364}

The artillery barrage presents some puzzling questions. In his first response to Longstreet’s apparent desire to put the onus of ordering the attack upon him, Alexander included:

\textsuperscript{362} See Pfanz, \textit{Culp’s Hill and Cemetery Hill}, 169-170
\textsuperscript{363} Alexander, \textit{Fighting for the Confederacy}, 254.
\textsuperscript{364} Alexander, \textit{Ibid.}, 258-259.
If, as I infer from your note, there is any alternative to this attack it should be carefully considered before opening our fire, for it will take all the artillery ammunition we have left to test this one thoroughly, & if the result is unfavorable we will have none left for another effort. 365

Finally, he gave Pickett the word that, if he was going, it was time to go.

Longstreet could only nod his head. Informed by Alexander that the ammunition was low, Longstreet wanted to stop the charge until the ammunition could be replenished. Alexander told him that it would take too long, “even if we had it.” 366 Then Longstreet said:

I don’t want to make this attack—I believe it will fail—I do not see how it can succeed—I would not make it even now, but that Gen. Lee has ordered & expects it. 367

Alexander believed that, even then, Longstreet would have called the whole thing off if he had the least encouragement and tried to avoid giving him any. 368 The charge marched off into history.

General Lee noted in his report that the undersupply of ammunition was not reported to him. 369 Already in the first note, Alexander suggested that they might run out of ammunition to Longstreet, yet Longstreet, who should have been looking for an excuse to call the whole thing off, did not seem to catch the point because he appeared surprised to learn it just a little while later. Did no one in the army know how much artillery ammunition they had and how long a bombardment they could unleash and still have enough to support the charge? Apparently not.

365 Alexander, Ibid., 254-255.
366 Alexander, Ibid., 261.
367 Ibid.
368 Ibid.
369 Lee January __, 1864 report, 27-2 OR 351.
Preparing for a charge with a massive artillery bombardment was a relatively new thing, and Lee certainly cannot be blamed for expecting more of it than it could actually produce. The Commanders in the First World War prepared for attacks with massive artillery bombardments only to be surprised time and again by how many of the enemy had seemingly survived the bombardment. As late as World War II, the British had expectations for casualties from aerial bombardment that turned out to be highly overpessimistic. In light of what has followed, the bombardment prior to assault strategy has perhaps been too little appreciated for how relatively innovative it was. The Battle of Solferino in 1859 had been a true meeting engagement, the battle having been fought and over on the same day as the initial surprise meeting. The battle may have been won by an artillery barrage and a frontal attack, though the artillery barrage seems to have been a rather ad hoc affair, ordered after the Village of Solferino had been taken and a further height needed to be taken, not an integral and pre-calculated part of the plan, as would the massive preliminary bombardments of World War I. With the battle being over the same day it started, there was little time for pondering and planning, unlike at Gettysburg, which, while it may have been a meeting engagement on the first day, was continued deliberately after time to reflect and plan. 370 Many more would try a massive artillery bombardment (after Lee) even though the results were almost always disappointing.

According to John D. Imboden, Brigadier General and commander of the cavalry force that accompanied the Confederate troops from Gettysburg, he was summoned to General Lee on the night of the third. Lee, of course, was busy, and he had to wait. It was after midnight, and thus July 4, before Lee was able to see him. And then Lee said,

according to Imboden “after having straightened up to his full height. . . with more
animation and excitement of manner than I had ever seen in him before. . . in a voice
tremulous with emotion:

I never saw troops behave magnificently than Pickett’s division of Virginians did
to-day in that grand charge upon the enemy. And if they had been supported as
they were to have been,--But for some reason not yet fully explained to me, were
not—we would have held that the position and the day would have been ours. 371

Though Imboden was to be criticized for making out the retreat as far more
harrowing than it had actually been, no one seems to have doubted this statement. Who
were the mysterious supports that had failed to appear? There are many candidates.

Before we get to the various candidates for who might have been these mysterious
“supports,” it perhaps should be briefly considered whether any supports would have
mattered. It has generally been assumed that the attack that was to come down to history
as “Pickett’s charge” or the “High Water Mark of the Confederacy” was doomed from
the beginning, that, however many supports came, (as Longstreet said) “No fifteen
thousand men ever arrayed for battle could take that position.” 372 The “position”
(particularly if it was the famous “copse of trees” as opposed to Cemetery Hill, about
which, see below) was certainly no worse than several the Army of Northern Virginia
had attacked and, in fact, were even in the process of attacking. 373 Little Round Top was
arguably a harder position to attack, and nobody has ever criticized the Confederates for
trying to take it. In fact, it is sometimes argued they should have given it more effort.

372 Longstreet, From Manassas to Appomattox, 386-387.
373 See letter of Colonel William Allan dated April 26, 1877, 4 SHSP 80. “General Lee did not consider
the Federal position at Gettysburg stronger than many others that army had occupied; and the
testimony of Butterfield and others shows that General Meade did not rate it highly. The notion of its
great strength has grown up since the battle.”
The Culp’s Hill position of the Union (in fact, the only position on the field that the defending Union forces had significantly improved with field fortifications) was even more impossible, as the casualties in the tables with regard to the Union troops that defended it and the Confederates that attacked it should show. If it was necessary to take Culp’s Hill before taking Cemetery Hill and it was necessary to take Cemetery Hill to win the battle, clearly the Confederates should have just packed it in and gone home (or at least elsewhere) because Culp’s Hill was not about to be taken with the forces that the two sides had devoted to the battle there). 374

Was the charge a forlorn hope from the beginning, as Longstreet apparently thought? This is the position taken by John Michael Priest in *Into the Fight: Pickett’s Charge at Gettysburg*. 375 His interpretation of the charge, though akin to the traditional interpretation in this aspect deviates from the traditional story in that he believes that many of the attackers, including Pickett’s men as well as those from Hill’s corps on the left, either because wounded in the counter-bombardment, weakened by the heat, or just becoming faint-hearted, were fleeing to the rear when the charge had barely begun. He places Longstreet’s comment to Fremantle that the charge had failed even prior to the final collision, induced by streams of Pickett’s men already on the way back to Cemetery Ridge. 376

Perhaps not unnaturally. It was a nasty business. But was it that much nastier than many attacks that had been tried before? The surprising thing about this charge (and

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374 Alexander was highly critical of leaving Ewell’s corps where it was, believing nothing of use could be accomplished there. See *Fighting for the Confederacy*, 280-281.
376 Priest, 105. Stewart places the comment in the same context but without particular reference to streams of Pickett’s men hurrying back, 194-195.
almost any other) is not that some men weakened but that many others did not. Bowden and Ward note that Priest’s conclusions are sometimes “unwarranted” and must be used “with caution,” apparently reacting badly to the images of droves of the Army of Northern Virginia fleeing to the rear when the charge had barely started.377

In all of this it must be kept in mind that not every soldier performed heroically in every fight.

During the war a consensus existed that in many regiments about half the men did most of the real fighting. The rest were known, in Civil War slang, as skulkers, sneaks, beats, stragglers, or coffee-coolers. They ‘Played off’ (shirked) or played sick when battle loomed. They seemed to melt away when the lead started flying, to reappear next day with tight smiles and stories about having been separated from the regiment in the confusion. . .

Even the best regiments contained their quote of sneaks ‘Strange how many men we have on the rolls and how few we can get into a fight,’ wrote a captain in the 1st Connecticut cavalry.” 378

Accordingly, while at any given point, it may seem that this division or brigade or regiment had this many men and they assaulted (or were assaulted by) this division, brigade, or regiment with this many men, the truth may have been far different, and ultimately irrecoverable because virtually every eye-witness reports his own steadfastness and, depending upon how distasteful he finds such comments, that this or that man or unit was not steadfast. It was awfully easy to get lost (whether intentionally or by accident) on a Civil War battlefield. A Commander who is relying upon the superior discipline or morale of his own troops over and above the enemy’s (as Lee, and not without good reason, apparently was) might be forgiven if his expectations prove to be erroneous, resulting in a nasty reverse. However, while there is certainly evidence that this may

377 Bowden & Ward, fn 126, 490.
have happened in Pickett’s charge, duly reported by Priest, there is hardly conclusive evidence that this happened in the course of Pickett’s charge any more than any other place or that the rank and file evidenced their opinions of the wisdom of the undertaking by voting with their feet. It is certainly possible but by no means proven. The traditional accounts (from both sides) stress the persistence of the Confederate effort (of course, each had reason to do so). The reality may have been far different. We cannot know. That Lee, in formulating his plans should have anticipated it (at least with the three brigades who had not yet been in the battle) is to ask the superhuman of him.

The difference between the position attacked by Pickett’s charge and the other positions was (as is perhaps overly obvious from a visit to the field) the long approach. No force could ever begin to cross that stretch against modern weapons (which is, in fact, why wars are not fought the way they were fought in the 1860s any more). It is possible to walk across the field in about twenty minutes (and many are always seen doing it, sometimes trading observations as to the time consumed), though, of course, keeping units together required several stops for dressing the lines and the like and the actual transit of the field is supposed by Priest to have taken forty-five minutes.\(^{379}\) Stewart suggests it may have been quicker, reporting a private of the 9\(^{th}\) Virginia noting a time of crossing of nineteen minutes.\(^{380}\) Union artillery was dropping the Confederates as they came every step of the way. And, of course, given the length of the approach, if potential

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\(^{379}\) Priest heads his chapter about the actual traversing of the field “2:00 p.m. through 2:45 p.m.,” 86-110. The times of the two main accounts (Stewart’s and Priest’s) are different by about an hour as Stewart, despite the testimony of the man who was actually in charge of the bombardment (Alexander) that it lasted for fifty minutes to an hour, accepts the traditional one hour forty-five minute to two-hour period, Stewart, 159, while Priest takes Alexander’s word for it, Priest, 189-198. I tend to agree with Priest because it would seem that Alexander, if anybody, would know, particularly as he had rather had the authority for just how long the barrage would continue foisted upon him. While the actual duration of the bombardment is, of course, important, as is every historical detail, for the strategy of the charge it is ultimately unimportant. A long bombardment was followed by a relatively long approach and a relatively short crisis.

\(^{380}\) Stewart, 204.
supports waited to see how things were going before even starting to follow up (which, as is detailed below, most of them did), they could never get there in time. If some of the people who had the decision in their hands to send supports (or the one person that had the greatest authority) were skeptical about the whole enterprise, wouldn’t that lower the likelihood that any supports would be committed in time to be of any use?

Yet, some of the first wave did get there. And, by all accounts, they were not immediately overwhelmed. Eventually, they were, but they had gotten there, and others could have gotten there too, particularly if they came from different directions and divided the attention of the Union defenders (and had started off on time). The Union troops involved in repelling the charge certainly did not think that the result was as foregone a conclusion as now seem to be assumed. 381 Whether Harman is correct that the plan was unchanged or the traditional view is correct that Lee calculated that the wings had been strengthened, making the center weak, it is a fact that the Third, Fifth, and Sixth Corps were way to the south on the field and the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps (and part of the First) were on Culp’s and Cemetery Hills. Only the Second Corps and part of the First (which had already been reduced to a shadow of its former self by the battle of the first) were involved in repelling the charge. Jomini notes that:

If the enemy’s forces are in detachments, or are too much extended, the decisive point is his center; for by piercing that, his forces will be more divided, their weakness increased, and the fractions may be crushed separately. 382

381 See Letter of Brig. Gen. Alexander S. Webb to his wife July 6, 1863, Bachelder Papers, vol 1, 17-19, “When they were over the fence the Army of the Potomac was nearer being whipped than it was at any other time of the battle.” In Hunt’s endless argument with Hancock over whether the artillery should have fired or not (eventually won, I guess, by Hunt, who outlived Hancock and got to tell his side in Battles & Leaders), he mentions in a letter to Bachelder dated January 8, 1866, the “great loss of life” occasioned by the enemy reaching the Union lines.
382 Jomini, 65.
Wright, who had claimed he had made it to Cemetery Ridge the day before, had told Alexander that the problem was not getting there, but staying there, because “the whole infernal Yankee army is there in a bunch.” It’s a great line, but totally untrue. Such bunch as there was was hardly the whole Union Army but, for the most part just the Second Corps (supported on the second by reformed elements of the Third and on the third by elements of the First). The usual lines about Lee charging the whole Union Army, 50,000 or 65,000 (or 1,000,000) strong with just 13,000 men are hyperbole, as the bulk of the Union Army, despite their interior lines, was no closer than the possible supports to the Confederate charge. There are scattered suggestions that captured rebels were amazed at how few Union men had actually been there at the point of attack.

Further, usually overlooked is Wright’s additional comment in the version of Wright’s comments in Alexander’s Military Memoirs (in which he leaves out the “infernal”): “The trouble is not in going there. I went there with my brigade yesterday. There is a place where you can get breath and re-form.” So perhaps the approach was not as long and as open as it now appears (the fields of the charge have since been actively farmed and the contours may not remain the same, so that, if Wright was correct about a place to stop and get breath, it may no longer be apparent).

To the extent I am arguing that the charge, even as made, was not hopeless, it is not saying that it was a day at the beach. It wasn’t, as everybody knew. But neither was repelling it as it should have been, if, as has usually been argued, it was as hopeless as it

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383 Alexander, Fighting for the Confederacy, 255.
384 See Letter of Lt. Samuel B. McIntyre to C.D. MacDougall dated June 27, 1890, Bachelder Papers, Vol. 3, 1744-1745. This letter was written in the course of a nasty little dispute between the 12th New Jersey and the 111th New York over the 12th’s complaint that the New Yorkers were trying to put a monument on “their” part of the battle line (which, the 12th New Jersey, with Bachelder’s support, apparently won), so may be suspect. However, given the strength of the troops who were actually there (whether the 111th was as close to the front as it claimed or not) it is not implausible.
385 Alexander, Military Memoirs, 421-422.
has been portrayed. The casualty figures in the Second Corps certainly indicate that it was not.

Here enters, and with a vengeance, “contingency.” The Union seems also to have had a bit of luck, which seemed like bad luck at first, but ultimately wound up to be good luck, in the point where the charge actually hit. Although, as summarized by Harmon, there is a modern train of thought that the actual target was Ziegler’s Grove, at the extreme north end of Cemetery Ridge right in front of Cemetery Hill, as opposed to the famed copse of trees, the “High-Water Mark,” further South, the copse of trees is, in fact, wherever they were aiming, where they got. This point, which could hardly have been known by the Confederates, was defended by a mere three regiments, one of which (the 71st Pennsylvania) ran, and one of which (the 72nd Pennsylvania) refused to advance from the rear. To either side, the defense was stronger. On the left, Brockenrough’s brigade hardly advanced beyond Long Lane, and on the right, Kemper’s brigade crowded in towards the center. What resulted was that the attack, not just of Pickett’s men but of a goodly number of Pettigrew’s, was funneled into the small weak point in the center, but when they got there, brigade and regimental cohesion was almost entirely lost. This resulted in a double envelopment and an unintentional Cannae. The retreat of the center at Cannae was planned, but this one certainly wasn’t as the despair of Webb at

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387 Stewart, 206-211, 222-233.
388 Stewart, 193.
389 Stewart, 204-205. Whether this was by design, as suggested by Harman, or due to confusion, as Stewart thought, the fact is that they did go left.
390 Cannae tends to be used in writings on military history as shorthand for a double envelopment. For a description of the actual Battle of Cannae in 216 B.C., see J. F. C. Fuller, A Military History of the Western World: From the Earliest Times to the Battle of Lepanto (Paperback, n.c.: Minerva Press, 1967).
seeing his men run indicates. However, though there is no evidence that any member of the 71st Pennsylvania was ever to so argue, nothing could have served the Union cause better than having the Confederates, desperate at this point for something resembling a plan, seeing a Union regiment take to its heels. They followed and were caught in a rapidly-closing trap. For comparison, at no point in the Civil War was a line as shattered and broken as at the Battle of the Crater, but the troops who filled the crater, who were last minute replacements for the ones (colored troops, who were removed from the duty, so that, if the attack was a dismal failure, no one could accuse the union of valuing the colored troops so little that they sent them on impossible missions to get slaughtered) did not know what to do, did not fan out, and were eventually slaughtered. As the Confederates entered the sack without unit cohesion, instead of fanning out against the flanks as they were supposed to do (this, after all, is the point of trying to penetrate a line) they were either too few in number or too badly disorganized to do so and stayed bunched where they were. The result was slaughter.

Which might not have happened had the units bearing down on Pickett’s men from the left and the right had been otherwise occupied.

So who could those others be who might have gotten there, those supports that to Lee’s consternation did not appear? This consternation would be rather inexplicable if the only troops that were supposed to participate in the day’s events had been those specifically chosen and who clearly did participate.

391 See letter of Webb in Bachelder Papers, Vol 1, 19, “When my men fell back I almost wished to get killed, I was almost disgraced” and Stewart, 213-214 and 279. Even after having years of hindsight, I have found no one who claims to have done this on purpose.
392 For the Crater, see Weigley, 340.
The first suggestion as to who they might have been is contained in Lee’s statement itself. According to Imboden, only Pickett’s division “behave(d) magnificently.” Was the reference only to the other two divisions and did Lee think they had let Pickett (and the whole confederacy) down? The very name by which the affair has come down to history, Pickett’s charge, seems to already discount the other two divisions, and gave rise to much controversy, as the supporters of the other troops strenuously objected that they had been there and they had fought “magnificently” too.

The parochial Virginia press had been the first to report the story and that is how the action came to be named Pickett’s charge. The other participants in the charge, outraged by the suggestions that they had been “green” troops who had broken and left Pickett in the lurch (indeed, had they been “green” before July 1, when they had already fought, which, in fact, most had not been, they certainly weren’t “green” after it) waged an ultimately unsuccessful war against history, sometimes resorting to aspersions against Pickett’s men that rivaled in intensity and untruthfulness the accusations that Longstreet tended to hurl against his adversaries.393 Of course, by the time Imboden wrote, the name was “Pickett’s” charge. When Lee spoke on July 4, 1863, it was not yet so named.

393 See Carol Reardon, Pickett’s Charge in History and Memory (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), particularly 55-83, 131-153. In the movie Gettysburg, there is a brief acknowledgement that somebody other than the cream of “Old Virginia” might have been involved in the charge but the emphasis is on descendants of Presidents and other scions of the nobility of the Old Dominion. Volume 5 of the Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War is usually cited, as I have done above, for the comments made about Hill on the eve of the battle, yet the volume is full of North Carolina testimony on “Pickett’s charge” (though it is never called that), and the resentment felt by the North Carolina troops over Pickett’s men having captured the sole attention of history is evident. See, for instance, S. A. Ashe, “The Pettigrew-Pickett Charge,” 137-160. The North Carolina troops (and this is put in italics “Suffered greater losses, advanced the farthest and remained the longest,” 159. William M. Robbins, “Longstreet’s Assault at Gettysburg,” 101-112. “Correspondents of the press of Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy, where they had the ear of the world, reported that the failure of Longstreet’s assault and our defeat at Gettysburg was chargeable to Pettigrew’s and Trimble’s men. This is a great mistake and a bitter wrong.” No article on the charge lacks such laments. The only one who even includes Pickett in his title places Pettigrew first and Pickett second.
Perhaps Imboden improved upon Lee’s words in accordance with what was rapidly becoming the accepted version of the story.

That the “supports” that had failed were Pettigrew and Trimble’s men was one of the earliest suggestions.

Our line, much shattered, still kept up the advance until within about 20 paces of the wall, when, for a moment, it recoiled under the terrific fire that poured into our ranks both from their batteries and from their sheltered infantry. At this moment, General Kemper came up on the right and General Armistead in rear, when the three lines, joining in concert, rushed forward with unyielding determination and an apparent spirit of laudable rivalry to plant the Southern banner on the walls of the enemy. His strongest and last line was instantly gained; the Confederate battle-flag waved over his defenses, and the fighting over the wall became hand to hand, and of the most desperate character; but more than half having already fallen, our line was found too weak to rout the enemy. We hoped for a support on the left (which had started simultaneously with ourselves), out hoped in vain.  

The blood feud referred to above notwithstanding, there might have been other candidates.

Pickett apparently expected supports that did not appear, but who, particularly, they might have been must remain forever unclear. His report was suppressed and apparently all copies destroyed. A passage similar to that found in the report was deleted from one of the letters purportedly written by Pickett to his wife, LaSalle Corbell Pickett, during the war.  

When considering Pickett’s words, the usual problem that he might be mistaken or not telling the truth is compounded by the additional problem that we can never be sure the words have not been deftly edited (or even made up out of whole cloth)

394 Report of Maj. Charles S. Peyton, Nineteenth Virginia Infantry, commanding Garnett's brigade, Pickett's division, 27-2 OR 386. This and similar suggestions are cited in Reardon, Pickett’s Charge in History and Memory, 26-27 and 32-34.

by his surviving widow. There is some suggestion (indeed, more than suggestion, practically proof) that Pickett and Lee did not get along and Mrs. Pickett carefully kept “her soldier’s” sentiments within the mainstream of the Lost Cause. Any suggestion that Pickett had ever said anything ill of General Lee would presumably be excised.

That having been said, in one of the letters appears the interesting statement that “I had been assured by Alexander that General Lee had ordered that every brigade in his command was to charge Cemetery Hill; so I had no fear of not being supported. Alexander also assured me of the report of his artillery, which would move ahead of my division in the advance. He told me that he had borrowed seven twelve-pound howitzers from Pendleton, Lee’s Chief of Artillery, which he had put in reserve to accompany me.”

In fact, the line about the borrowed howitzers is corroborated by Alexander (though Pickett may have gotten the number wrong). There is also partial corroboration in Alexander’s (much later) statement that he had heard a “rumor” that the whole army was to charge the cemetery. Perhaps Alexander had been more definite to buck Pickett up, maybe Pickett heard wrong, maybe Pickett elevated a “rumor” to an assurance in his own mind. It is impossible to tell. But it does seem that Pickett expected

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396 See Gary Gallagher, “A Widow and Her Soldier: LaSalle Corbell Pickett as the Author of George E. Pickett’s Civil War Letters” in Lee and His Generals in War and Memory, 227-242.
398 Soldier of the South, July 1863 letter, 69. Alexander himself reported in different writings both seven and nine as the number of missing howitzers. In his letter published in 4 SHSP 103, he says there were seven (the number in the purported Pickett letter). It is at least a mite suspicious that the number used was the one found in Alexander’s earliest published comment on the matter. In Fighting for the Confederacy, the number is nine, 247-249. Priest concludes there were eight. Priest, 182-183. It should be noted that Walter Harrison, in Pickett’s Men: a fragment of war history (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1870), a volume it is believed (and with fairly good reason) that LaSalle Pickett used in concocting the letters, in the description of the charge, 90-101, does not mention the howitzers or the promise that the whole army would charge.
399 Alexander, Fighting for the Confederacy, 249.
400 Ibid., 255.
considerably more support than the other “poor fellows” assigned to the charge (though Pickett in his letter refers to them as “two brigades which were to have followed me,” not six brigades on his left. He notes that “The two brigades which were to have followed me had, poor fellows, been seriously engaged in the fights of the two previous days. Both of their commanding officers had been killed, and while they had been replaced by gallant, competent officers, these new leaders were unknown to the men.”

While this sentiment might be thought inconsistent with the possibility that Pickett’s report did assail these supports, it remains possible that Mrs. Pickett had no idea who he assailed in his report and just improved the verisimilitude of the letters by claiming to delete something that was equivalent with cheery in comprehensibility that the people he actually attacked were, in fact, the poor fellows for whom she had just quoted him expressing such sympathy. That Pickett’s suppressed report did not attack the other divisions in the charge cannot be assumed, but it can neither be assumed that whatever attacks he made was limited to them.

He also complains about the lack of the seven guns but it is hard to believe that he thought seven guns would have made the difference. No, Pickett may not have been just looking to the two brigades or more that started out to the left, as Peyton had been. He may have been wondering where the rest of the army was. As inexpertly as LaSalle Pickett may have translated Walter Harrison at this point, the references to the whole army and the howitzers are not found in Harrison and she must have got them

401 Again, if there is really anything of what Pickett said or thought actually surviving in the purported letters. The new commanders and the previous days’ fighting of the “supports” are mentioned in Harrison. They are placed behind as supports (which, in Harrison’s considered opinion, though he disclaims any intention to speak ill of them, failed miserably). Harrison, 98-100. He refers to them as two “lines” and two “divisions.” If LaSalle Pickett got this part of her letter from Harrison, she seems to have confused the two lines or divisions of supports with the two brigades of Pickett’s own division not present at Gettysburg.
somewhere. It is hard to escape the conclusion that, whether in a letter or otherwise, at some point Pickett must have mentioned these things.

Part of Longsteet’s war with virtually every other surviving Confederate officer was whether he was supposed to advance McLaw’s and Hood’s divisions along with Pickett’s. Harman, incidentally, believes that they were. Walter Taylor, in a letter to the Southern Historical Society, states as follows:

Longstreet was then visited by General Lee, and they conferred as to the mode of attack. It was determined to adhere to the plan of attack by Longstreet; and to strengthen him for the movement, he was to be reinforced by Heth's division and two brigades of Pender's, of Hill's corps. These with his three divisions, were to attack. Longstreet made his dispositions and General Lee went to our centre to observe movements. The attack was not made as designed. Pickett's division, Heth's division, and two brigades of Pender's division advanced. Hood and McLaws were not moved forward. There were nine divisions in the army; seven were quiet while two assailed the fortified line of the enemy. A.P. Hill had orders to be prepared to assist Longstreet further if necessary. Anderson, who commanded one of Hill's divisions, was in readiness to respond to Longstreet's call, made his dispositions to advance, but General Longstreet told him it was of no use -- the attack had failed.

Had Hood and McLaws followed or supported Picket, and Pettigrew and Anderson have been advanced, the design of the Commanding General would have been carried out -- the world would not be so at a loss to understand what was designed by throwing forward, unsupported, against the enemy's stronghold, so small a portion of our army.

Long quotes this account and chimes in that he was there and heard the same thing, evidently never having found a charge against Longstreet that he didn’t love, stating:

The author can add his testimony to that of Colonel Taylor. The original intention of General Lee was that Pickett’s attack should be supported by the divisions of McLaws and Hood, and General Longstreet was so ordered. This order was

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402 Harman, 71.
403 Memorandum of Walter H. Taylor 4 SHSP 84-85.
given verbally by General Lee in the presence of Colonel Long and Major Venable of his staff and other officers of the army.”

Marshall, perhaps too obsessed with Stuart, and the one, after all, who wrote the original draft of Lee’s report, does not specifically comment on this controversy except perhaps in an oblique manner.

Longstreet triumphantly cites Lee’s report for the fact that he had been given permission to hold those divisions back as if that ended the matter. First, had Lee not been happy with something Longstreet had done or not done, the last place to look for such unhappiness would have been in one of Lee’s reports. What Lee’s report does say with regard to this matter is the following:

General Longstreet was delayed by a force occupying the high, rocky hills on the enemy's extreme left, from which his troops could be attacked in reverse as they advanced. His operations had been embarrassed the day previous by the same cause, and he now deemed it necessary to defend his flank and rear with the divisions of Hood and McLaws. He was, therefore, re-enforced by Heth's division and two brigades of Pender's, to the command of which Major-General Trimble was assigned. General Hill was directed to hold his line with the rest of his command, afford General Longstreet further assistance, if required, and avail himself of any success that might be gained.

Keep in mind for a little later the line about Hill being directed to “afford General Longstreet further assistance, if required, and avail himself of any success that might be gained” and note the uncharacteristic use of the active voice with regard to who deemed it necessary to defend the flank and rear with the division of Hood and McLaws. Parsing the prose of Southern gentlemen can begin to seem like Kremlinology after a while, but characteristic of Lee’s (or Marshall’s) style in these reports is the passive voice or the equivalent.

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404 Long, 294. In a footnote, he adds the concurrence of Venable.
405 Longstreet, Manassas to Appomattox, 397.
The result of this day's operations induced the belief that, with proper concert of action, and with the increased support that the positions gained on the right would enable the artillery to render the assaulting columns, we should ultimately succeed, and it was accordingly determined to continue the attack.\footnote{Lee January 
\_\_, 1864 Report, 27-2 \textit{OR} 319.}

Induced the belief in whom? Obviously Lee. But he does not say (or Marshall does not say) “I” believed. Perhaps it was thought (and here I use the passive voice because I mean everybody who was involved in evolving the form of these things) that the use of “I” would have been egotistical, that everybody would know who it was that thought whatever important thoughts the Army of Northern Virginia might collectively have. Yet Lee (or Marshall, on his behalf) does not ascribe the belief that BOTH McLaws’ and Hood’s FULL divisions were needed to guard the right to the anonymous brain trust of the Army of Northern Virginia. They make it clear that this was Longstreet’s belief and make no comment as to whether anybody else agreed with him.

Support for the proposition that other elements of Longstreet’s corps were supposed to be available at least in support is found in an incident recorded in McLaws’ account. Major Johnson, the staff office who had conducted the reconnaissance the day before, complimented McLaws on how fine his division was controlled, assuming, until McLaws set him right that, they had attacked and been repulsed.\footnote{McLaws, “Gettysburg,” 7 \textit{SHSP} 88.} In Longstreet’s own account in \textit{Manassas to Appomattox}, where he apparently let his guard drop in his excited description of the “hopeless charge” includes the line that McLaws and Hood’s division “were ordered to move to closer lines for the enemy on their front, to spring to the charge as soon as the breach at the center could be made.”\footnote{Longstreet, \textit{Manassas to Appomattox}, 393. McLaws mentions no readiness to “spring to the charge” or that he had any idea they were supposed to play any role at all, in support or otherwise, 7 \textit{SHSP} 79.}
Interesting in view of Longstreet’s frequent complaints that he was unsupported is the suggestion that he could have “called” upon Anderson. Could not Hill or Anderson have sent somebody without awaiting Longstreet’s call? They rightly disparage Longstreet’s preposterous claim that he was being led by Johnson and could not overrule Johnson’s “command” of the march to the right (a claim that even Longstreet’s most ardent defenders find hard to swallow) yet succumb to much the same arguments themselves. Nobody could move without Longstreet’s order? An odd happenstance, if true, and entirely discordant with everything we know about how Lee’s army was managed. Bowden and Ward argue that Longstreet was in tactical command of two thirds of the army and should have called on supports from Anderson’s division.\(^410\)

With regard to Anderson’s division, Anderson himself says as follows:

[T]roops of General Longstreet's corps were advanced to the assault of the enemy's center. I received orders to hold my division in readiness to move up in support, if it should become necessary. The same success at first, and the same repulse, attended this assault as that made by my division on the preceding evening. The troops advanced gallantly under a galling and destructive storm of missiles of every description: gained the first ridge; were unable to hold it; gave way, and fell back, their support giving way at the same time.

Wilcox's and Perry's brigades had been moved forward, so as to be in position to render assistance, or to take advantage of any success gained by the assaulting column, and, at what I supposed to be the proper time, I was about to move forward Wright's and Posey's Brigades, when Lieutenant-General Longstreet directed me to stop the movement, adding that it was useless, and would only involve unnecessary loss, the assault having failed.\(^411\)

Through all this (and as he had on the second) A. P. Hill seemed to be doing precisely nothing other than occasionally keeping Lee company. He was, in fact, in command of a corps, though after the first of July, he seems rather to fall out of the story, cooling his heels in the middle while Ewell on the left and Longstreet on the right lead

\(^{410}\) Bowden & Ward, 437.
their corps forward in various unrelated attacks. There is the story, found in a rather late *Southern Historical Society Paper*, that Hill had begged to send in his whole corps, but Lee had insisted that they were the only reserve and had to be retained in place for that purpose.\(^{412}\) The story seems somewhat questionable. Talcott was an aide to Hill and is specifically referring to a suggestion in an earlier *SHSP* paper that Hill had been “idle.”

There was no evidence that, as the commanders hastily tried to paste together some sort of defense if the Union had immediately counterattacked after the repulse of the charge, anybody thought to say, “Well, why don’t we just call on Hill? He has been standing ready in case of just this sort of thing.” Hill, it seems, whether because Longstreet had been given authority of his whole corps, or some other reason such as his recurring illness,\(^{413}\) was a spectator only to Pickett’s charge. This does not necessarily mean that Lee planned it that way.

For some reason only two of the brigades of Pender’s division were added to the attacking column along with Heth’s division (now commanded by Pettigrew because Heth had been wounded). There will be a little more about those other brigades below.

Of course, contrary evidence to any suggestion that Lee intended all sorts of troops that did not join in the charge is the famous quote from Longstreet about how he’d been a soldier all his life and knew what soldiers could do and that no 15,000 men ever arrayed for battle could take that position. Why did Lee not rejoin with not 15,000, 25,000, and that’s just the first assault? The whole army is ready to rush to your support. Longstreet states dismissively that Lee was “impatient of listening and tired of talking,” which, given what grief Longstreet himself testifies he had been giving Lee for three

\(^{412}\) T.M. R. Talcott, 41 *SHSP* 40 (1916).

\(^{413}\) “General Hill now came up and told me he had been very unwell all day, and in fact he looks very delicate,” Fremantle, 260.
days, is perhaps not surprising. Could Lee have let such an assertion stand if it was clearly incorrect? Sorrell does not mention the conversation at the appropriate point.\textsuperscript{414} The evidence for it comes exclusively from Longstreet. Alexander quotes it from Longstreet’s book.\textsuperscript{415} So maybe Lee was just sick and tired of listening to Longstreet (or sick and tired of putting up with Longstreet, who, by his own admission, had been scouting around the right flank again the morning of the third) or maybe Longstreet made it up. Perhaps far more likely is that Longstreet provides an account of the exchange carefully edited by selective memory and long resentment so that if Lee had, in fact, had anything remotely reasonable to say for himself, it would be immaterial to the substance of the story.

As we have noted, it is Harman’s position that the “plan was unchanged” language applies to a general plan to take Cemetery Hill, pursued through all three days of the battle. He is certainly correct, as noted above, with regard to the original intent on July 2, 1863. Regardless of how correct he is on why and whether due to subordinates’ misunderstanding of orders and how contrary to Lee’s intentions (as they may have been modified) the fighting on the second is, he is quite possibly correct about the target on the third. He quotes numerous early references to the attack as being directed on the cemetery.\textsuperscript{416} By 1907, when Alexander published \textit{Military Memoirs}, he is complaining that the problem with the attack was that it was not directed at Cemetery Hill.\textsuperscript{417} The reason for this, argues Harman, is that by 1907, the consensus was that the famed “copse

\textsuperscript{414} Sorrell, 161-162.
\textsuperscript{415} Alexander, \textit{Military Memoirs}, 416.
\textsuperscript{417} Harman, 17; Alexander, \textit{Military Memoirs}, 388.
of trees” (which, in fact, was where the charge wound up), was the aiming point. This he attributes to the work of John Bachelder, who had determined that the “copse of trees” was the aiming point and the “High Water Mark of the Confederacy,” basing his conclusions on the research of Kathy Georg, who had determined that the actual aiming point was Ziegler’s Grove, at the Northernmost point of Cemetery Ridge and directly on the route to Cemetery Hill.\footnote{418} There are references to the “salient” they are to attack. Harman argues that there was a salient formed by the separation between the Second Corps line and the Eleventh Corps line on Cemetery Hill.\footnote{419} The point of attacking a salient, however, is to come in on both sides, as Early as had done on July 1 (actually the Eleventh Corps line on the 1\textsuperscript{st} was worse than a salient, as there was only the one side in the air without the other side) and as Barksdale had done on the Second. Cemetery Hill, even without the gap between the Second and Eleventh Corps (which may not have been visible from the Confederate line) was a salient. The “Angle,” as Harman argues, and I believe correctly, even if the Confederates were aware of it, was not militarily significant.\footnote{420} If Ziegler’s Grove was, in fact, the target, rather than the point the attack actually hit further south, the troops available further northward (particularly the portions of Pender’s division and the remainder of Rodes’ division posted along the “sunken road,” what is now Long Lane) appear as more logical supports than they otherwise would be.

So, what of Ewell’s corps? As noted above, it has been surprisingly accepted that Ewell’s Corps’ participation in the great charge was eternally precluded by the morning attack. The Union had, in fact, attacked first, but their aims were limited: to recover the

\footnote{418} Harman, 87-90.  \footnote{419} Harman, 99.  \footnote{420} Harman, 98-99.
trenches that had been lost in the morning. It was not a general attack. Nothing about the union attack required Ewell to keep plugging away at impregnable positions for hours, well after the effort must have seemed without purpose. Which, as noted above, puzzled Williams. Harman makes the suggestion that he kept attacking because he was hoping to hang on until Longstreet’s attack finally came.\footnote{Harman, 120.}

Ewell, as mentioned above, appears to have been mesmerized, as had Barlow and Sickles on the other side before him, by the high ground. He seemed convinced that Cemetery Hill could not be taken without taking Culp’s Hill first, but there is no reason for his assumption to continue to go unquestioned. The proposition that Cemetery Hill could not be taken without first holding Culp’s Hill was never put to the test. Early’s division had tried on the night of the second and, at least to their own satisfaction, believed they had almost succeeded, despite the fact that the attacks on Culp’s Hill had not succeeded in taking the hill.

Johnson’s division had been reinforced with elements of the other two divisions, but a substantial portion of both Rodes’ division and Early’s division remained available to their division commanders. Early’s men had been deployed in the town.\footnote{Early Report, 27-2 OR 471.} Yet Rodes’ division remained where it had been. If Harmon is right, and what was being attacked was the “salient,” which many Confederates, such as Alexander and Pickett seemed to believe the objective, not the famous copse of trees (which Harmon points out was perhaps only a copse of bushes at the time), what is the point in attacking a salient only from one side? Early’s division could have attacked from the southeast of

\footnote{Harman, 120.}
\footnote{Early Report, 27-2 OR 471.}
Gettysburg, where it had attacked from the night before, and Rodes’ division could have made the attack from the southwest of Gettysburg, which it had not made the day before.

Rodes’ report had been mentioned above as containing his explanation for why he hadn’t attacked on the night of the second (basically, by the time he was ready, the battle was over). More interesting to me is his description of what he was supposed to do on the third:

But instead of falling back to the original line, I caused the front line to assume a strong position in the plain to the right of the town, along the hollow of an old roadbed. This position was much nearer the enemy, was clear of the town, and was one from which I could readily attack without confusion. The second line was placed in the position originally held by the first. Everything was gotten ready to attack at daylight; but a short time after assuming this new position, I was ordered to send without delay all the troops I could spare without destroying my ability to hold my position, to re-enforce Major-General Johnson. As my front line was much more strongly posted than my second, and was fully competent to hold the position, and as the re-enforcements had to be in position before daylight, I was compelled to send to General Johnson the troops of my second line, i.e., the brigades of Daniel and O’Neal (excepting the Fifth Alabama). .

On the 3d, my orders were general, and the same as those of the day before, and accordingly, when the heavy cannonade indicated that another attack was made from the right wing of our army, we were on the lookout for another favorable opportunity to co-operate. When the sound of musketry was heard, it became apparent that the enemy in our front was much excited. The favorable opportunity seemed to me close at hand. I sent word to Lieutenant-General Ewell by Major [H. A.] Whiting, of my staff, that in a few moments I should attack, and immediately had my handful of men, under Doles, Iverson, and Ramseur, prepared for the onset; but in less than five minutes after Major Whiting’s departure, before the troops on my immediate right had made any advance or showed any preparation therefor, and just as the order forward was about to be given to my line, it was announced, and was apparent to me, that the attack had already failed. 423

Note that the orders were “general, and the same as those of the day before.”424

The day before there was no question that Rodes was supposed to attack. However, he’d had to move to a favorable position to begin the attack and thus arrived too late. So he

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424 Harman also notes this, 101-102.
stayed there, awaiting an opportunity to attack the next day. This time he’d be ready.

But the troops on his right did not move.

The troops on the right were from Pender’s division. On the morning of the third, when two of Pender’s brigades were put in the attacking column, two of his brigades remained on Long Lane (hidden behind a subdivision today but right out in the middle of the field of Pickett’s charge in 1863). The report for Pender’s division was made by Maj. Joseph A. Engelhard, Assistant Adjutant-General. He says:

The command of the division devolved upon General Lane, who, upon being informed by Lieutenant-General Ewell that he would move upon the enemy's position at dark, ordered the brigades of General Thomas and Colonel Perrin forward to the road occupied by the skirmishers, so as to protect the right flank of General Rodes' division, supporting these two brigades with his own, commanded by Col. C. M. Avery, Thirty-third North Carolina, and Scales', commanded by Col. W. L. J. Lowrance, Thirty-fourth North Carolina, who, although wounded on the 1st, had reported for duty. The night attack was subsequently abandoned, but these two brigades (Thomas' and Perrin's) remained in their advanced position during the night and the next day, keeping up a continuous and heavy skirmish with the enemy, compelling his advance to remain close under the batteries of Cemetery Hill, the brigades of Lane and Scales forming a second line.\[425\]

There appears to have been some movement the evening before unknown to Ewell or Rodes. More importantly, for the present purposes, like Rodes, they stayed where they were. So along with Wilcox and Perry’s brigade who have come down to history rather as the “official” supports, we have Rodes’ division standing ready to support on an advanced line, two brigades of Pender’s division (Perrin’s and Thomas), and two more brigades of Anderson’s division (Wright’s and Posey’s). Even Longstreet,

\[425\] Engelhard Report, dated November 4, 1863, 27-2 OR 659. As noted in Table 3, this skirmishing appears to have been heavy indeed. Thomas’ brigade lost over a hundred captured or missing. It seems highly unlikely they would have sustained such losses in captured and missing skirmishing. There is no proof on the matter but it seems to be likely that some of the men on this line joined the charge.
in the excitement of writing down his account of the battle in his book, forgot himself enough to allude to McLaw’s and Hood’s divisions moving forward.

Meanwhile, where was Early’s division, that faced the part of Cemetery Hill manned (with the addition of Carroll’s Brigade, which had been left there in support) by the twice-routed Eleventh Corps?:

Before light on the morning of the 3d, I ordered Hays’ and Hoke’s brigades (the latter now under the command of Colonel [A. C.] Godwin, of the Fifty-seventh North Carolina Regiment) to the rear, and subsequently formed them in line in the town on the same street formerly occupied by Hays. Gordon being left to occupy the position which was occupied by these brigades on the previous day. In these positions these three brigades remained during the day, and did not again participate in the attack, but they were exposed during the time to the fire of sharpshooters and an occasional fire from the enemy's artillery on the hills.426

Even had it been determined that Hayes’ and Avery’s brigades had had enough fighting and more could not be expected of them (though they had only been fighting the “worst” troops in the Union Army), Gordon’s brigade was available.

Then, of course, as Carhart argues, there was Stuart. Though Stuart’s defender, Nesbitt argues that the ground behind Cemetery Ridge (and the Union Army) was unsuitable for an attack,427 it is certainly true that Lee was a student of military history and was familiar with Jomini and Napoleon’s battles. Carhart’s theory neatly explains what we would have to conclude was a fourth unfathomable mystery about Gettysburg; why Stuart, who is supposed to be sneaking around in the enemy’s rear, suddenly decides to fire off a number of cannon shots in miscellaneous directions, thereby announcing to all the world where he was? Carhart’s explanation, that it was a signal, seems about the

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426 Early report, August 22, 1863, 27-2 OR 471.
427 Nesbitt, 96.
only possible one besides that Stuart, after riding and fighting too many days with too little sleep, had suddenly gone off his head.\footnote{Carhart, 177-178, 205-208. However, there may be some evidence for the “off his head” theory (due to too much hard riding and too little sleep). See Emory M. Thomas, “Eggs, Aldie, Shepherdstown and J.E.B. Stuart in The Gettysburg Nobody Knows.”}

Carhart argues that Lee first intended to model the assault on the Napoleonic battle of Castiglione (in which, incidentally, Napoleon managed to tempt his Austrian opponent forward, which is something nobody ever managed to tempt Meade to do).\footnote{Carhart, 177-178, 205-208.} It depended on a simultaneous attack by Longstreet on the Union left and Ewell at Culp’s Hill (for which reason, the forces against Culp’s Hill were reinforced, Carhart says certainly on Lee’s orders, though there is no evidence for this).\footnote{Ibid., 162-163.} Stuart was then to break in from the rear. When Lee found that Longstreet inexplicably was again plotting to move his forces around the Union left flank, the morning attack could not come off. Therefore, he tried to stop Ewell, but it was already too late. Yet Lee still told him to stop and wait for Longstreet’s assault.\footnote{Ibid., 169.} The sign for Ewell to attack would be when Stuart broke through the rear (now modified to be the rear center to mimic Austerlitz as opposed to Castiglione).\footnote{Ibid., 176.} Stuart didn’t, so Ewell didn’t attack. Longstreet, having been a royal pain for three days now, was told none of this (which one would think it might have made it awful hard for Longstreet to cooperate in the attack, as Carhart alleges he was supposed to do, because he didn’t know what was planned and thus wouldn’t know what to look for to cooperate with).\footnote{Ibid., 174.} The matter was not only passed over in silence as

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\item \footnote{Carhart, 177-178, 205-208. However, there may be some evidence for the “off his head” theory (due to too much hard riding and too little sleep). See Emory M. Thomas, “Eggs, Aldie, Shepherdstown and J.E.B. Stuart in The Gettysburg Nobody Knows.”}
\item \footnote{Carhart, 156-159.}
\item \footnote{Ibid., 162-163.}
\item \footnote{Ibid., 169.}
\item \footnote{Ibid., 176.}
\item \footnote{Ibid., 174.}
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Lee generally did with any failure, but reports from cavalry commanders were actually suppressed.\textsuperscript{434}

Although it is clear that Stuart was in the rear of the Union Army for some reason other than scouting and protecting flanks, all this seems rather overelaborate. Civil War cavalry was not Napoleonic cavalry, which included heavy lancers useful as shock troops nor was Civil War infantry Napoleonic infantry. And Civil War Units were so organized that they were too maneuverable to be destroyed from the rear.\textsuperscript{435} There does not seem to be any example of infantry so discomfited by a cavalry charge that their organization disintegrated and they headed for the hills. Nor do I think that the urgent priority given to taking Culp’s Hill was Lee's. The command from Lee to Ewell to break off the combat and wait for Longstreet allegedly came from Ewell’s report, yet the cited passage only says:

Half an hour after Johnson attacked, and when too late to recall him, I received notice that Longstreet would not attack until 10 o'clock; but, as it turned out, his attack was delayed till after 2 o'clock. In Johnson's attack, the enemy abandoned a portion of their works in disorder, and, as they ran across an open space to another work, were exposed to the fire of Daniel's brigade at 60 or 70 yards. Our men were at this time under no fire of consequence. Their aim was accurate, and General Daniel thinks that he killed here in half an hour more than in all the rest of his fighting. Repeated reports from the cavalry on our left that the enemy were moving heavy columns of infantry to turn General Johnson's left, at last caused him about 1 p.m. to evacuate the works already gained. These reports reached me also, and I sent Capt. G. C. Brown, of my staff, with a party of cavalry to the left, to investigate them, who found them to be without foundation, and General Johnson finally took up a position about 300 yards in rear of the works he had abandoned, which he held, under a cross-fire of artillery and exposed to the enemy's sharpshooters, until dark. At night my corps fell back, as ordered, to the

\textsuperscript{434} Ibid., 241-247.
\textsuperscript{435} Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 18-19. While I do not prescribe completely with Hattaway and Jones on their views as to the indestructibility of Civil War armies (nor, as seems clear, did Lee, and although he may have been wrong, I think his views are entitled to at least a little attention), I do agree that Civil War infantry was unlikely to disintegrate by a sudden attack from cavalry, however much such cavalry may screech.
range of hills west of the town, taken by us on Wednesday, where we remained unmolested during July 4.\textsuperscript{436}

Ewell’s paragraph does not give any indication that he desisted in his attack to wait for Longstreet to attack or that Lee had told him to do anything of the kind and implies considerable success in what (as the casualties listed on the tables indicate) was a useless and unsuccessful exercise. Ewell shows no awareness of any master plan and it seems just the usual claim that the men fought magnificently and gave much more than they got, which appears in all Civil War battle reports, however far from the truth they may be.

As for the reports being suppressed, Carhart bases this on the fact that there were more Union reports than Confederate. In fact, Confederate reports were often lost in the chaos of the end of the war.

Stuart was certainly up to something back there and it was not scouting or protecting the flanks. The flanks were nowhere near the east cavalry field where Stuart fought on July 3, 1863. That there was some idea of his swooping down on the rear of a confused retreating enemy is obvious, but that it was really thought that a cavalry attack could set off the rout and that other units were held in check awaiting that attack seems hard to believe. Of course, Stuart had a role in the plan for victory, but it hardly seems likely that it was the central one and that Custer saved the Union (any more than that the 20\textsuperscript{th} Maine or Carroll’s Brigade saved the Union).

Alexander, of course, ponders the question. Suggesting that, at the least, there were five brigades of supports, he concludes that had Hill not had some authority over those brigades, he would have been entirely “overslaughed.” He continues:

\textsuperscript{436} Ewell report, 27-2 OR 447-448.
Now whose duty was it to start those five brigades to Pickett’s support? It may have been Wilcox & Anderson, or it may have been Hill, or it may have been Longstreet, or it may have been Gen. Lee himself. I will not pretend to say, but I will designate whoever had that duty as X, for short, in this discussion. And I assert that X should have started every man of his supports before Pickett’s division had advanced two hundred yards.”

After some discussion, he concludes (invoking what was to be a consistent criticism of his as to how the war was conducted, the lack of adequate staff officers) “I believe that nobody was directly designated to launch Anderson’s division to Pickett’s support, & Wilcox was left to judge for himself. Alexander was probably correct when he concluded, after mature consideration, that the theoretical X did not exist.

Stewart notes that there were ten brigades ready to support the nine brigades in the attack. Noah Trudeau, in a recent retelling of the story, specifically designates eleven brigades as part of a specifically intended second wave. It is doubtful that the sources support such formally designated “second wave,” but that every one of the brigades he notes was supposed to be ready to act if it appeared advisable seems without doubt.

Who were the missing supports? Everybody. Or at least somebody. The orders were general: when you see an opportunity to pitch in, do so. Lee had confidence in his men and their commanders. No one was specifically ordered to go in as supports (except perhaps for Wilcox and Perry who may well have gone down in history as the only “supports” because they were the only ones unfortunate enough to go forward). Many of the other units were further forward than the units in the main attack when the main

437 Alexander, Fighting for the Confederacy, 281.
438 Ibid., 283.
439 Stewart, 86.
attack started. To support the attack, however, they had to be moving forward already. It was too late to start to get ready to support the attack when the attack was already at crisis point. Bowden and Ward blame Longstreet for this and say that the primary error that Lee made in the course of the action was that, as Longstreet was obviously not enthusiastic (to say the least) about the plan, Lee should have removed the charge from his control and handled it himself. But if his other corps, division, and brigade commanders were unwilling to leap into the fray unless Longstreet specifically called upon them to do so, the battle was already lost. It did not occur to Lee to check out that everybody was aware that this was the big moment and that they should be primed to move. This was the Army of Northern Virginia.

But nobody moved. Everybody was waiting for somebody else to go first. Rodes, perhaps, suggests the reason (unintentionally), he did not attack (and maybe this reason applies to the day before as well). He started to get ready to attack with “his handful of men.” Maybe he refers to the fact that two of his brigades had been sent off to aid Johnson’s attack, but he mentions three brigades, and three brigades are not a handful unless they have been pretty badly handled.

Nobody moved to the charge that had not been specifically ordered to go forward in the first wave of the attack. Of those holding back, all had been severely handled in attacks on the first or the second. All of their commanders who would have seen opportunities leaping out all over the place had their men been fresh and unfought were suddenly waiting a little too long to decide that maybe there was something they could do here to pitch in.

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441 Bowden & Ward, 505-506.
Lee had succeeded in fighting the enemy in detail. But when it came time to deliver the final blow, too many of his units that had succeeded in those victories were unavailable to support the blow. A fresh Army of Northern Virginia would have taken that hill. Reduced as it was by the two days of desperate resistance put up by the Army of the Potomac, it just wasn’t in them.

And what of Longstreet? For all I have said of the unfair and nasty disposition he developed towards his former colleagues, and his unsettling tendency to go overboard on blaming the loss of the war on anybody who offended him (such as his unreasonable and ill-tempered effort to strike back at Pendleton over the nine howitzers, which really was rather a small thing), it is impossible not to have some sympathy for his situation. He had been put in an impossible position. He had been ordered to make a charge which he perhaps wrongly but perfectly sincerely thought was going to fail. So what could he do? Refuse? He toyed with the idea, though he tried to put the onus on Alexander. Setting aside for the moment the selfish consideration of having been put by a superior in a no-win situation in which he would either be proved wrong (if the charge worked) or blamed for its failure rather than being seen as prescient if it didn’t, he was put in a situation where whatever he did it would be wrong. This horrible charge, that he genuinely believed was a horrible idea, would (if it had a prayer) have to be supported. But would that not just increase the carnage? He was stuck with sending the first phase. Was he obligated to send more lambs to the slaughter?

So he tried to split the baby, and unlike in the bible story, he, unfortunately, genuinely and truly did. He obeyed his orders. He sent the charge, but, convinced as he was of the futility of the whole thing, he was too reluctant to get anybody more involved
than he absolutely had to, and so may have denied the crucial supports that might have (though he didn’t think so) made the difference. Could he have just taken the position that it wasn’t his idea, and however horrible it wound up being, it wasn’t his fault, and those supports (like the first wave) were just going to have to be sacrificed? Not and really feel very good about himself. So he made the charge, stepping back from the brink of calling it off because those were his orders. But he went no further than his orders compelled him.

By attempting to require Alexander to wait until the whole thing was “pretty certain” before sending the infantry, he may have prolonged the artillery bombardment longer than it otherwise would have continued, exhausting the ammunition and making artillery support of the charge impossible. He may have held back on supports too long. Trying to split the difference between not making the charge at all (which he in his own conscience thought the right thing to do) and doing it completely and wholeheartedly (which was what he was ordered to do), he wound up presiding over an impossible middle ground that produced the debacle without the chance of success.

He was genuinely opposed to the charge, that seems clear. And as the years passed and his resentment grew, I think he imported back in his mind far more opposition to the attack of the second day than he had felt at the time. Sure, he opposed it, but not as vehemently as he opposed the charge of the third. It may have started out as a disinclination to attack with only two divisions of his corps (and, at first, a brigade of one of those divisions short, which he managed to get involved by stalling) and coalesced in his more and more resentful mind with his more raging opposition to the charge of the third.
Of course, it certainly can be argued that Longstreet may have had an inflated idea of his own military genius, as exemplified by his absurd yet apparently sincere belief that Lee’s generic “younger and abler” man was him (see below). Would it have been praiseworthy for him to have developed a sudden case of modesty, and figuring that, although he thought the charge would be a disaster, Lee, of course, felt differently? Should he have reasoned that Lee might have been right and proceeded to get thousands of men slaughtered on the grounds that it would have been presumptuous on his part to feel so positive that he was right that slaughter was what they were walking into? Longstreet seems to have lacked the modesty that would have caused this particular angle to torture him, but it is definitely far from certain that it would have been any better if he had had it.

In view of all of this, Bowden and Ward are probably right that Lee should not have left Longstreet in charge of the fatal charge. But who else did he have? Here Lee had finally achieved what he’d been looking for the whole war, a chance to administer a really significant defeat to the Union Army. It hadn’t worked out perfectly but they’d gotten some breaks. Continue and this might actually be it. And his most experienced corps commander suddenly had gone mental on him? Even if Lee’s mind ran in the proper channels to have been able to understand that, it is expecting an unreasonable amount of clairvoyance on his part to have expected him to take over the tactical direction of the charge himself. Later (in the 1864 campaigns) he would but that, of course, was after Gettysburg and what happened to him there. In view of what had gone before, there was no reason for him to assume it might be necessary. And was he supposed to tend the horses and sweep the floor as well?
True enough, all these conflicts resolved into some pretty contemptible behavior on Longstreet’s part over the years, but some of his “victims” (such as Early) were no paragons themselves. Yet, having been ordered to do what he conscientiously believed was not just the wrong thing, but a potentially disastrous thing, how could anybody manage to keep faith with both sides, as it were (his orders and his conscience), and do it right? Yes, Longstreet failed and his failures contributed mightily to the failure of the charge, yet, in his position, it is hard to believe that anybody could have done much better.
Chapter 9. Lee looks back

Of necessity, some of what Lee said in the years after the battle have been mentioned at appropriate points. Now it is time to consider what Lee thought about the battle in hindsight, whether he thought the whole thing had been a mistake, and what, if anything, he would have done differently.

There seems no evidence that Lee ever concluded that going on the offensive at all had been wrong. Even if the quotes attributed to him by Longstreet, that he should have followed Longstreet’s advice, are correct, they can certainly be read to refer only to Pickett’s charge.

As for Lee’s first “magnificent” taking of all the blame as Pickett’s men returned, I think it amounts to nothing (or, at least, nothing with regard to serious regret upon reflection about how he had ordered the battle fought). The men had been defeated. A counterattack might be imminent. They needed bucking up. It was the best thing possible for Lee to have said and therefore, he said it. No conclusions can be reached from it.

We have already noted Lee’s conclusions on the battle as set forth in the memorandum of Colonel Allen. The letter to McDonald referenced in that memo states as follows:

Its loss was occasioned by a combination of circumstances. It was commenced in the absence of correct intelligence. It was continued in the effort to overcome the difficulties by which we were surrounded, and it would have been gained could one determined and united blow have been delivered by our whole line.442

Along with the element of “concert of action” and a “united blow” there appears in Lee’s later reported comments and correspondence the element that he had been

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442 Letter to Wm M. McDonald dated April 18, 1868, contained in Jones, Personal Reminiscences, 286-287.
overconfident and thought his men could do anything. “The army has labored hard, endured much & behaved nobly. It has accomplished all that could be reasonably expected. It ought not to have been expected to have performed impossibilities or to have fulfilled the expectations of the thoughtless and unreasonable.”

“The army did all it could. I fear I required of it impossibilities. But it responded to the call nobly and cheerfully, and though it did not win a victory, it conquered a success.”

Further, there is the conversation recorded by Heth, in which General Lee had stated: "General Lee," says Major Seddon, "then rose from his seat, and with an emphatic gesture said, 'and sir, we did whip them at Gettysburg, and it will be seen for the next six months that that army will be as quiet as a sucking dove.'"

Lee was clearly not happy with the results of Gettysburg, he had wished to win a great victory. However, the campaign did remove the action from Virginia, supplies were gathered, and the Union Army was nearly as quiet as a sucking dove for more than six months (so, for that matter, was the Confederate army). That Lee realized that he did not achieve his larger goals while in Pennsylvania does not mean that he did not console himself with the fact that they had achieved some of the more limited ones.

Longstreet claimed that Lee had admitted to him frequently that he had erred at Gettysburg. The first occasion on which Longstreet attempted to prove this was a letter to the New Orleans Republican. This is discussed (with characteristic vitriol) in the Southern History Society Papers:

In a communication, over his signature, in the New Orleans Republican of the 27th of February, 1876, General Longstreet, referring to his letter to his uncle, said:

443 Lee letter to his wife, July 26, 1863, Wartime Papers of R. E. Lee, No. 532, 560.
444 Lee letter to Miss Margaret Stuart, dated July 26, 1863, Wartime Papers of R. E. Lee, No. 533, 561.
445 Heth letter, 4 SHSP 154-155.
"His Longstreet's letter was published owing to its corroborative and sympathetic relations to one of General R.E. Lee written two weeks later. The publication was made following the publication of General F. Lee's, so that the facts might be known and noted in their proper connection, not in attack or defence of any one."

The letter of General Lee here referred to is the one to the President from which the foregoing extract is made, and the only part of it to which Longstreet's could bear the remotest "corroborative and sympathetic relations" is the passage given - - that is, Longstreet's letter was corroborative of the opinion that a younger and abler leader for the army could have been obtained, and sympathetic with it in pointing out who that leader should have been -- to wit: General James Longstreet.

Accompanying the publication of the letter to his uncle, General Longstreet gave the following extract from a letter to him from General Lee, dated, as alleged, in January, 1864:

"Had I taken your advice at Gettysburg instead of pursuing the course I did, how different all things might have been."

A letter from General Fitz Lee appeared in the public prints very shortly thereafter, and, in that letter, he spoke in very complimentary terms of General Longstreet, but expressed a desire that the whole of General Lee's letter, from which the brief extract was given, should be published.446

We will get to the letter about the "younger and abler" man in due course. At this point it is only necessary to comment that the battle, in fact, had been lost. Accordingly, it is not unlikely that Lee had pondered what might have been had he done something different. However, there is nothing inconsistent with the view that Lee was only referring to the charge of the third and might have come to the conclusion that the opportunity to deal the Union Army a decisive blow was already too compromised by the previous days’ efforts, and that it might have been better to back off for the time being and take another shot later (as had been done after Antietam).

Longstreet only briefly alludes to this letter in From Manassas to Appomattox, following the “It is all my fault” line with the statement “A letter from Colonel W.M.

446 Early, “Reply to General Longstreet’s Second Paper,” 5 SHSP 272-273 (1878)
Owen assures me that he repeated this remark at a roadside fire of the Washington Artillery on the 5th of July. A letter from General Lee during the winter of 1863-1864 repeated it in substance. He does not requote the letter (perhaps a rare instance of something approaching wisdom in Longstreet’s polemics). “It is all my fault,” a throwaway line to encourage the troops is hardly “I should have done what General Longstreet told me.”

Longstreet then proceeds to quote a succession of letters from a Colonel T.J. Goree of Texas, a fellow named Erasmus Taylor, and an anonymous (at least unnamed by Longstreet) contributor to Blackwood’s Magazine. These three sources state (or Longstreet claims they state):

Another important circumstance, which I distinctly remember, was in the winter of 1863-1864, when you spent me from East Tennessee to Orange Court-House with some dispatches to General Lee. Upon my arrival there, General Lee asked me into his tent, where he was alone, with two or three Northern papers on the table. He remarked that he had been reading the Northern reports of the battle of Gettysburg; that he had become satisfied from reading those reports that if he had permitted you to carry out your plan, instead of making the attack on Cemetery Hill, he would have been successful.

“In East Tennessee, during the winter of 1863-1864, you called me into your quarters, and asked me to read a letter just received from General Lee in which he used the following words” “Oh, general, had I but followed your advice, instead of pursuing the course I did, how different all would have been!” (the italics in both cases are in From Manassas to Appomattox, and presumably added by Longstreet).

The man, unnamed by Longstreet, without any indication how he happened to be in General Lee’s presence and to have heard these things, quoted Lee:

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447 Longstreet, From Manassas to Appomattox, 399-400.
448 He apparently refers to an article by Francis Lawley found in Gallagher, Lee the Soldier, 75-94. The part quoted by Longstreet is on 92. Lawley does not state his source for Lee’s sentiments. Perhaps it was Longstreet, making the whole thing rather circular in that Longstreet may well be quoting himself.
449 Longstreet, Manassas to Appomattox, 400, allegedly from Goree. Note the reference to the attack being on Cemetery Hill.
450 Ibid, 400, allegedly from Taylor. This is the letter mentioned just above and which Longstreet could not produce for Fitz Lee.
“If, said he, on many occasions, I had taken General Longstreet’s advice on the eve of the second day of the battle of Gettysburg, and filed off the left corps of my army behind the right corps, in the direction of Washington and Baltimore along the Emmitsburg Road, the Confederates would to-day be a free people. 451

This bit of blather, if not quite occasioning the tendency to regard Longstreet as the anti-Christ exhibited by Jubal Early or Robert Krick, does tend towards producing a certain lack of patience with his pronouncements. The writer is not named (nor is it explained how he might have had any knowledge about Lee or Gettysburg). It is stated that it was from Blackwood’s Magazine, and then footnoted Eclectic Magazine. But most glaring is the fact that, however Longstreet’s advice is interpreted, from the night of the first to the morning of the third, there is no suggestion that marching off on the Emmitsburg Road, which led to the southwest, would somehow threaten Washington and Baltimore, which were to the southeast.

However, even if Lee said all these things (let us gently declare it merely as “not proven,”)452 there is not a particle of evidence in any of them that Lee regretted his attack of the second. What Longstreet was up to on the morning of the third was planning a tactical movement around the left flank, no grand strategic motion to threaten Washington and Baltimore. Distilling all of this into “You were right all along” shows a tendency towards believing what you want to believe and need to have always been right about everything that borders on the pathological (perhaps “borders” might again be considered being gentle).

451 Ibid., 400-401.
452 That being said, I must note that I am inclined to believe him that Lee said these things or things very similar (though perhaps not as similar as Longstreet managed to convince himself they had been). It is my impression that Early was fully capable of making things up that would sound more convincing through their very moderation, but Longstreet does not seem to have possessed that ability. I suspect that had the less subtle Longstreet made up the quotes there would have been more in them that specifically referred to the attacks of the second.
His son, Robert E. Lee, Jr., quotes Cassius Lee, a cousin of Robert E. Lee’s, who claimed Lee had said:

He thought that if Jackson had been at Gettysburg the (sic) would have gained a victory, ‘for’ said he, ‘Jackson would have held the heights which Ewell took on the first day.’ He said that Ewell was a fine officer, but would never take the responsibility of exceeding his orders, and having been ordered to Gettysburg, he would not go farther and hold the heights beyond the town.\textsuperscript{453}

If this is not garbled, it would seem to indicate that Lee had started to lose some of his faculties, which abundant evidence indicates, despite his ill health, he never did unless at the very very end. Ewell took no heights on the first day. If there is reference to heights on the second day, it could only indicate Cemetery Hill of the empty trenches on Culp’s Hill, neither of which were eventually held for reasons unrelated to Ewell’s efforts to hold them (perhaps too great efforts in the case of Culp’s Hill). Ewell wasn’t specifically ordered to Gettysburg, but was specifically ordered to take Cemetery Hill, if practicable, and, if he feared not to follow his orders, an assault most assuredly would’ve been made on Cemetery Hill the first night. It is likely that Cassius Lee misunderstood and that whatever reference he was garbling was a reference to taking, not holding, the heights and referred to Cemetery Hill on the first day of the battle. However, it is hard to have any firm confidence that this is, in fact, what Lee said.

More interesting to me (and generally dismissed as occasioned by the same noble, self-sacrificing motives as Lee’s declaration on the field of battle and meaning nothing else) are Lee’s statements in his letters to President Davis concerning his possible resignation. Here is where the reference to a younger, abler man appears (without, I might add, which at this point should hardly be considered surprising, a whiff of a

\textsuperscript{453} Lee, Jr., \textit{Recollections of General Robert E. Lee}, 416-117.
suggestion that the hypothetical younger man referenced was Longstreet). The first letter in the series, commenting upon some newspaper accounts that Lee believes to have been erroneous, is relatively unapologetic.

No blame can be attached to the army for its failure to accomplish what was projected by me, nor should it be censured for the unreasonable expectations of the public. I am alone to blame, in perhaps expecting too much of its prowess & valour. It however in my opinion achieved only the guidance of the Most High a general success, though it did not win a victory. I thought at the time that the latter was practicable. I still think if all things could have worked together it would have been accomplished. But with the knowledge I then had, & in the circumstances I was then placed, I do not know what better course I could have pursued. With my present knowledge, & could I have foreseen that the attack on the last day would have failed to drive the enemy from his position, I should certainly have tried some other course.454

In view of this letter, whatever comments Lee may have made to Longstreet appear in a totally different light.

Davis’ reply, though gentle enough, perhaps suggested to Lee that the President was hinting about his removal. Thereafter follows the letter of August 8, 1863, quoted by Taylor.

I know how prone to censure and how ready to blame others for the non-fulfillment of our expectations. This is unbecoming in a generous people, and I grieve to see its expression. The general remedy for the want of success in a military commander is his removal. This is natural, and in many instances proper. For no matter what may be the ability of the officer, if he loses the confidence of his troops disaster must sooner of later ensue.

I have been prompted by these reflections more than once since my return from Pennsylvania to propose to Your Excellency the propriety of selecting another commander for this army. I have seen and heard of expressions of discontent in the public journals at the result of the expedition. I do not know how far this feeling extends in the army. My brother officers have been too kind to report it, and so far the troops have been too generous to exhibit it. It is fair, however, to suppose that it does exist, and success is so necessary to us that nothing should be risked to secure it. I therefore, in all sincerity, request Your Excellency to take measures to supply my place. I do this with the more earnestness because no one is more aware than myself of my inability for the duties of my position. I cannot

454 Letter from Lee to Davis dated July 31, 1863, Wartime Papers of R. E. Lee, No. 536, 565.
even accomplish what I myself desire. How can I fulfill the expectations of others? In addition, I sensibly feel the growing failure of my bodily strength. I have not yet recovered from the attack I experienced last spring. I am becoming more and more incapable of exertion, and am thus prevented from making the personal supervision of the operations in the field which I feel to be necessary. I am so dull that in making use of the eyes of others I am frequently misled. Everything, therefore, points to the advantages to be derived, from a new commander, and I the more anxiously urge the matter upon your Excellency from my belief that a younger and abler man than myself can readily be obtained.\footnote{Letter from Lee to Davis dated August 8, 1863, \textit{Wartime Papers of R. E. Lee}, No., 589-590. Also quoted in Taylor, 219-220.}

Davis, quite aware that there was nobody even remotely suitable, refused to accept the resignation. Lee replied:

I confess I am disappointed at your determination, but since you have so directed, I shall not continue the subject, but beg that whenever in your opinion the public service will be advanced, no matter from what cause, that you will act upon the application before you. I am as willing to serve now as at the beginning in any capacity and at any post where I can do good. The lower the position, the more suitable to my ability, and the more agreeable to my feelings.\footnote{Letter from Lee to Davis dated August 22, 1863, \textit{Wartime Papers of R. E. Lee}, No. 547, 593.}

I think Lee realized he erred, but only indirectly did he believe he had erred in ordering Pickett’s charge. In fact, it might be useful, just for the sake of argument, to take precisely what he said a little more seriously. When he referred to a younger and abler man, he almost certainly didn’t mean, as Longstreet appeared to think, Longstreet, yet he was fifty-six years old, had heart trouble (and maybe diarrhea). Living in tents and traipsing around the Pennsylvania countryside could not have been the most pleasant pastime for a man his age even in the best of health (which, apparently Lee was not, as he would only live for another seven years to the hardly ripe old age of sixty-three and probably already had the heart condition that would eventually kill him). At the least, he was tired. He had relied upon his subordinate commanders to do what was appropriate and hadn’t seen the necessity for (or perhaps been too tired to) hector them to make sure
that they stayed on the lookout for appropriate opportunities. It had never occurred to him that nobody, nobody, would see a reasonable chance to pitch in when Pickett’s charge occurred, that only those with specific orders to do so would participate. Perhaps this was precipitated by his lack of knowledge about how badly his men had been beat up in the first few days, and maybe he realized that if he’d been more on the ball, he could have seen that.\footnote{There is some evidence that Lee saw how beat up some of the units that were to take part in the charge were and was disturbed by it, Stewart, 108, citing W.H. Swallow, “The Third Day at Gettysburg,” in 4 Southern Bivouac 562, 565. See also J.B. Smith, “The Charge of Pickett, Pettigrew, and Trimble,” Battles and Leaders, 355.} That two divisions that had suffered serious casualties on the first were included in the first wave of Pickett’s charge (apparently because, alone of all the divisions, except Rodes’) and along with Pickett, they had not fought on the second. Anderson’s division had, just not Posey’s (essentially) and Mahone’s (completely) brigades. Nobody attacked on the second that had fought on the first (except Early’s division that had arguably had the easiest time of it of the four divisions engaged on the first) and nobody attacked on the third that had fought on the second (except Johnson’s division against far-off Culp’s Hill).

Lee is quoted by General Heth as saying to him::

“After it is all over, as stupid a fellow as I am can see the mistakes that were made”; adding, "I notice, however, my mistakes are never told me until it is too late, and you, and all my officers, know that I am always ready and anxious to have their suggestions." \footnote{Heth Letter, 4 SHSP 160.}

If what he was alluding to was the fact that the number of men in the attacking column could never have captured that position, he is being particularly unfair, if, in fact, Longstreet did acquaint him with the possibility as he claims. But perhaps he was referring to his inability to keep his eyes on everything and being dependent on the “eyes
of others” and being physically incapable of “making the personal supervision of the operations” he deemed necessary that he mentioned in his letter to Davis. The silent plaint being, Why didn’t you tell me the condition of your units? No, everybody was fine, everybody was full of spirit, everybody was raring to go. Were they?

By the time of these letters, Lee already knew that the one chance was gone and the war was probably lost. He did not despair (it would be against his religion, both Christianity and his personal religion of duty, to do so) and continued to fight on, realizing that it would be presumptuous to assume an unerring precognition of the Almighty’s purposes. Nolan is almost certainly wrong that his was his duty to throw in the towel when he knew it was over.459 Had he resigned and been replaced, the replacement, particularly if Joseph Johnston was the replacement, would have certainly done the Confederacy the service of avoiding much death and destruction by losing far more quickly—a service it is unrealistic to suppose would have been fully appreciated in the South at the time or after.

No, where there’s life, there’s hope. A Christian does his duty and trusts in God. Something might still turn up. There were elections scheduled for the next year in the North, the battles had not yet been fought, some Union general could yet blunder a major army to destruction. These things were possible.

But Lee knew not likely. He had seen his shot and taken it. Not to take Cemetery Hill on the night of the first, after having virtually destroyed two corps of the Union Army to the uniform rejoicing of the South. Not to add another “w” to the won-lost column and provide a masterpiece that would be studied and applauded for centuries. But, if not to completely annihilate (though that was his hope), at least severely cripple

459 Nolan, 115-133.
and humiliate a Union Army fighting in strong position on Union soil. And he had missed, whether due to his fault or others, or just because the Army of the Potomac fought bravely and well. There would be no convincing victory over a Union Army in the country dangerously close to Philadelphia, Washington, and Baltimore. Attrition would be left to its work. Though he would labor to prevent it, and by all account, brilliantly, in the weeks and months after Gettysburg, Lee knew what that meant.

The War was lost in the west. That is the prevailing wisdom and I do not dispute that. Given the available resources and enough time, it was almost inevitable that it would be. The only thing that could have prevented it would have been the war ending before there had been enough time. It is impossible to tell whether a smashing victory by the Army of Northern Virginia in Pennsylvania would have ended the war. But though it may have been, as Jubal Early expressed it, “a forlorn hope,” it was a hope and the only one. Maintain a system of aristocratic control and a slave-labor system from the hills? Retreat and retreat until starving armies (and populations) had no choice but to surrender as the enemy roamed unchecked through their countryside destroying their crops and their railroads?

I have never understood how it can be considered to elevate a combatant by denigrating his opponent.\textsuperscript{460} For its size and the level of technology of the time, the Army of Northern Virginia may have been the greatest army that ever fought. It came to Pennsylvania not for supplies or to win another fruitless victory but to win the war. And the Army of the Potomac beat it. That certainly does not make the Army of the Potomac

\textsuperscript{460} See the comments of Lt. Norman H. Camp, commenting on the controversy over marking the Confederate battle lines at Gettysburg, \textit{Bachelder Papers}, Vol. 3, 1683 “The more we honor the bravery of our adversary, the greater our glory in having conquered him.”
the greatest army that ever marched, but it is no small thing. After all these years, perhaps it is time to recognize it.
APPENDIX:

DID ANY OF IT MATTER?

All of the above having been said, there remains the question of whether any of it mattered. There is considerable very informed opinion that it did not. This view would hold that the Confederacy was defeated in the west or by gradual failures both of logistics and management (or even resolution) that eventually took their inevitable toll. There is a lengthy footnote concerning the non-significance of Gettysburg in *How the North Won* by Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones.461

To begin, they disagree that Lee had such lofty goals as I described, commenting that:

Individuals as different as Lincoln and Beauregard realized Lee was conducting a raid not a penetration, which threatened Northern cities. Lincoln perceived it as a Union opportunity and Lee and Davis soberly evaluated it in the light of its objective, to disrupt an expected Union offensive and to help supply Lee’s army. Less knowledgeable contemporaries and subsequent writers have often endowed the campaign and, particularly, the battle with far greater significance.462

At the risk of being considered such a “less knowledgeable” writer, I beg to differ. It might also be acknowledged that the “less knowledgeable” included many, if not the overwhelming majority, of those who would provide the bodies and the resources for the two competing enterprises and who would ultimately decide whether they would be continued or abandoned.

Hattaway and Jones proceed, as was probably necessary, by means of analogies. They invoke Lee’s other victories and some Union ones and note that “Always the defeated army found safety in retreat.”463 They acknowledge the few instances when

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461 Hattaway & Jones, fn 91, 419-422.
462 Ibid., 419.
463 Ibid.
battle actually successfully destroyed a defeated army, noting Richmond, Kentucky, and Nashville, while arguing that each of these instances was a situation vastly different from Gettysburg. I would go further than they do in distinguishing Nashville, in that it came at the end of the war, and was the result of the Confederate Commander (Hood) not knowing what else to do than make hopeless attacks, and by that point, there probably wasn’t much else he could do.

Various foreign parallels are invoked, such as the nearly annihilating victory of Louis XIV’s enemies at Blenheim, the loss of Vienna and Berlin during the Napoleonic Wars and the Seven Years’ War, respectively, and they point out that, with the war lost and Paris imperiled, the French “intensified their military efforts” rather than give up disspiritedly. None of these instances is remotely comparable.

They most decidedly do not bring up what had (in the Western history of Europe and nations founded by European immigrants, which, of course, at the time was considered the only “real” history) been the last war, the Italian War of 1859, or what was to be the next war, the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, both of which were, in essence, decided by single battles, one of which (Solferino in 1859) wasn’t even that overwhelming a victory. For whatever reason, the losers of those battles were willing to offer a deal that the winners were willing to accept. The losers, in each case, were the poster children for losers in the nineteenth century, the Austrians. Accordingly, it might be argued there can be no meaningful comparison between Austria-Hungary, whose leaders were attempting to maintain an obsolete multinational empire in the age of nationalism, and the United States of America, the wave of the future. But history is rough on losers and seems to have rather taken the collective view that the Austrians
were just doomed and should have been good sports about it. In recent times, in light of
the Yugoslavian succession wars, it has perhaps become less unfashionable to notice that
the Serbs, after all, were terrorists. The principle of ethnically based nation-states was
just as anathema to the Hapsburg Empire\footnote{Danubian Empire? It is always tough to figure out what to call them until, as a fairly direct result of the 1866 war, in 1867, the place became Austria-Hungary). Any nomenclature seems either pedantic or inaccurate.} as that the loser of an election (even if
representative of a near unanimous view in a relatively contiguous area of the country)
could fail to accept the result was to the Union in 1861. Carried to its logical extent (as in
fact it has), there would be nothing left of the Empire, as Northerners feared there would
be nothing left of the American union, if dissenting areas were periodically allowed to set
up on their own. This is why India is so pig-headed about Kashmir. Let one bunch set
up as independent (however just that particular result may seem in a particular instance)
and pretty soon everybody will be doing it.

Hattaway and Jones refer to a result adverse to the Union as a fundamental shift in
the balance of power that would have been fought to the death.\footnote{Ibid, 420.} The replacement of
Austria by Prussia (and a mere four years later by Imperial Germany) as the dominant
power in Germany was just as fundamental a shift in the balance of power, so the
statement, “If a fundamental shift in the balance of power is perceived as the issue,
battles do not end wars” has at least an Austrian exception, because when Prussia and
Austria met in 1866, the Battle of Konigsgratz certainly ended that war.

To begin with, the American Civil War was almost \textit{sui generis}, and almost by
definition, no foreign comparisons are possible. Civil Wars throughout history have
fallen into two broad categories: those between sections of a nation (usually with one
section desiring liberation from the other) and those fought over ideological reasons. The American Civil War was both, two sections with two differing ideologies fighting for both reasons.

And, most importantly, the United States was a democracy, an imperfect one, to be sure (as it still is) but nevertheless a democracy. While Frederick the Great or the Emperor Francis I could perhaps regard philosophically the loss of their capitals and plot to recover them, such equanimity is not available to an American administration. If Louis XIV wanted to stay the course, by God, the French were going to stay the course. The American Civil War was a monumentally political war. A former Speaker of the House of Representatives (Nathanial Banks) demanded and received a generalship and spent the war leading troops with increasing incompetence. If the matter of sex (and perhaps Democratness) appears to be the reason that it is hard to picture Nancy Pelosi doing the same, try to picture Newt Gingrich traipsing through the countryside, sleeping in tents and the like, at the head of his Army. It is so much part of the Civil War picture that it is easy to forget just how ridiculous it really was.

The American people are regarded as having an undue aversion to battle casualties and a reluctance to “stay the course.” I believe this is rather unfair, in that 1) An aversion to casualties can hardly be considered pathological, and 2) The “courses” that Americans have seem reluctant to “stay” were by no means undeserving of criticism. There was a tendency among the American military, when reflecting upon the Vietnam War, to conclude that the major problem was that the people had not been properly imbued with the purpose and importance of the undertaking and that, in the future, all
efforts should be made to make sure they stayed on board.\textsuperscript{466} To me this is rather getting the matter backward, because what is needed to definitively mobilize the people behind a course of action is not necessarily better salesmanship but having the enterprise be a sensible one in the first place. Both the Union in the Civil War and the United States in World War II, though never put to the extreme tests of the Russians or the Chinese in World War II (neither of whom appears to have had much choice, even if they were disinclined to “stay the course”), managed to mobilize the will necessary to succeed.

There is much impatience evidenced in the “The Real War had nothing to do with gigantic set piece battles in the east” school with the ignorance of the general public which, knowing nothing of military affairs, wanted just to fight it out in one great big battle. Substantial parts of the public (and their representative politicians in Congress) believed that courage and enthusiasm (and correct politics) were all that would be needed. This was the typical republican belief that nothing requires any particular expertise and that anybody with a little common sense could do what professionals do (strangely, while this tends to apply to the military, lawyers, and politicians, and, to a certain extent to fixing your own car or your own plumbing, few seem to favor amateur surgeons). The “ignorant” public wanted to “fight it out” and “get it over.” There seems a recurrent fantasy among the uninformed that it would be a good idea to just “get it over” one way or another.

Well, there is certainly an awful lot of folk wisdom in the desire to “get it over.” It would be one thing to get out of the way and let military professionals do their job if they were self-sufficient to do it without getting anybody else involved. But the military professionals (at least in the Civil War) were involving hundreds of thousands of sons,

fathers, husbands, and brothers in an enterprise they were quite prepared to let go on for years in order to get it done right. While our present military seems to aspire to leaving people’s sons, fathers, husbands, and brothers out of it when they wish to “stay the course” in a long, complicated, questionable enterprise, the fact of the matter is that very few of the professionals in an all-volunteer army are officers. It is no accident that both the great folk heroine of the present Iraq war and the symbolic demoness are both from West Virginia. These people are certainly no less real, regular people’s sons, fathers, husbands, and brothers (and now, in what I guess must be considered progress, their daughters, mothers, wives, and sisters) than the rawest citizen recruit of the Civil War or World War II.

Leaving it to the professionals to take as long as they, in their professional opinions, think it is going to take (unassailable by ignorant laypeople) was as unacceptable in 1861 as it is today. That ignorant public is who they were fighting for and who they had to answer to. There is frequent reference in Civil War literature to the military professionals’ (McClellan is the most egregious but Sherman, in his way, was worse) disgust with the wretched politicians they had to endure and criticism of their inability to see the reality that in a political war they had to pay attention to the politicians. That those politicians were not just the riffraff that the corrupt nineteenth century descendant of the once-existing (when?) republic of the virtuous and the public-spirited) but spoke truly and (even today) sometimes eloquently for the interests of the people that they represented, who were not just useful cannon fodder, seems to have been little appreciated at the time and little more appreciated in today’s “military reality” critics of the Eastern theatre.
There are two elements to convincing the broad spectrum of people to stay the course. First, the enterprise has to be seen to be a sensible one, and, second, the people in charge have to seem to know what they’re doing. Note I said “seem.” In this case, appearances are important as, if not more important than, the reality.

And this, it seems to me, is the rock on which all of the “It wouldn’t have made any difference, Grant was at the time (almost to the day) winning the war at Vicksburg” arguments flounder. They assume that, since objectively, the North would hardly have been doomed even after an annihilating defeat at Gettysburg, the people of the North would have seen it that way. All indications are that popular conceptions during the war were hardly as reason-based as all that. To see this, it is only necessary to read the varying pronouncements of the “mercurial” (and this adjective tends to proceed his name like a Homeric epithet) Horace Greeley, who was always a supporter of “On to Richmond!” in good times and a supplicant for saving the bleeding country when things were not going so well.467

Hattaway and Jones regard with equanimity the possibility of an undefeated Confederate Army loose in Eastern Pennsylvania. They pointed out that McClellan was always available to revitalize a demoralized Army of the Potomac (assuming there was anything left of it) and that Grant, having just taken Vicksburg, was, of course, not doing anything in particular at the time. Washington and Baltimore could be supplied by sea, and Lee, if he could take Washington (which he probably couldn’t), couldn’t have held it.468

467 For representative Greeley quotes (there is usually a suitable one for any occasion) see McPherson, 334, 347, 403, 762.
468 Hattaway & Jones, 421.
Russell E. Weigley, in his *A Great Civil War*, recognizes the importance of the Eastern theatre. He also tended to be critical of Lee’s attempt at grand Napoleonic triumphs (though, if, in fact, a Napoleonic triumph of a very much lesser sort by a very much lesser Napoleon such as Solferino would’ve done, Lee was hardly reaching too high). Weigley, in fairness, does admit:

On the other hand, if not Lee’s strategy, then what strategy could have won for the Confederacy? Criticism of Lee should not evade the painfulness of his and the Confederacy’s strategic dilemma, that a defensive strategy was all too likely to multiply the advantages of the Union by allowing it to concentrate men and material at places of its choosing, and that consequently to stand on the defensive was even less promising than Lee’s offensive strategy.\(^{469}\)

Jefferson Davis eventually was to invoke the Napoleon in Russia analogy. As Grant sourly noted, the Confederacy as a whole was a little short on snow for that.\(^{470}\) The Prussians and the Germans wrestled with this problem for centuries, solved their problem as did Lee, and, though perhaps ultimately it may be considered to have been unsuccessful, it must be admitted that they had a pretty good run before their luck finally ran out.

By any objective measure, the Vietnamese Tet Offensive was a shattering defeat for the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong.\(^{471}\) Yet, subjectively, it may well have won them the war. Going to the same country (though an earlier war), there was nothing about Dienbienphu that destroyed the French capacity to hold on to Vietnam (assuming there had ever been one in the first place). There were many Frenchmen left, they had

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\(^{469}\) Weigley, 256.

\(^{470}\) Porter, 313.

\(^{471}\) Summers, 183-184.
ships and airplanes (and would’ve gotten massive American aid). So, what’s one defeat? Plenty. The French people were sick of the whole thing and that was that.\textsuperscript{472}

It cannot be said too often that the North had to conquer a vast area with extensive resources and population (though inferior to their own). The Confederacy had the simpler, if not easier, task of just getting the North to give up. As the Confederates saw it, they were defending home and family, and they were at a loss to figure out what, if anything, was motivating the North. If they lost, they lost everything. If the North lost, they could just go home with said homes (and families) intact. They saw themselves as innocents, invaded by a barbaric conqueror with vast resources and nefarious purposes. The Union had the honor of the flag.

Thus, the North was presented with a battle that not only could be won if enough effort was expended, but a war that had to appear to be worth the price to win it. It is sometimes forgotten nowadays because of the immense moral blot of slavery, that the rights and the wrongs of the thing did not seem so self-evident at the time. To many Southerners, the thought that the Union had any right on their side would have been inexplicable. Constitutionally, the whole mess might have been a wash. True, there was no specific Constitutional right to secede. However, on the flip side, there was no specific Constitutional provision for compelling seceded states to return to the Union by force of arms. The lawyerly Lincoln analogized it to a contract, which, of course, cannot be altered by one side unilaterally. Of course, as he didn’t point out, the law enforces

\textsuperscript{472} To the extent it is necessary to respond to the inevitable “Oh, well, that’s just the French,” it should be noted that the very concept of élan is French and it was their “strategy” for fighting World War I, a good fifty years after the American Civil War should have definitively proved that élan could not overcome everything. After the way the French troops were managed in World War I, a robust offensive spirit might well be considered a mark not of courage but of stupidity. The same thing, I might add, might be said of the Italians, whose good sense in the face of idiotic commanders has resulted in their military reputation having had the dubious honor of being mocked even by the French.
breaches of contract by awarding monetary damages. It does not sanction raising armies to compel the breaching party to fulfill its side of the bargain.

Then, of course, there was the gut feeling on the part of the North, particularly the Republicans, that the essence of democracy is that the losing side in a fair election does not start shooting. Lincoln frequently said something along those lines, and it is the bedrock behind “The Government of the people, by the people, and for the people” of the Gettysburg address. If it is argued that the South (as it always maintained) was maneuvered into shooting, the idea can be supplemented by the principle that the losing side is not allowed to take its marbles and go home, otherwise, there would be no end to it, as each election reduces the union by 49%.

But, of course, this was not a case like the present American polarization with its seeming eternal division between blue and red states, few of which ever change hands. One might start by noting that this eternal condition appears to date back only to 2000, and will only remain eternal as long as it does (like the eternal Democratic control of Congress, despite the conservative tilt of the country and the frequent election of Republican Presidents, which was eternal until it wasn’t any more). The difference between the present situation and that obtaining on the eve of the Civil War, despite the amusing similarity between the borders of the old Confederacy and the borders of the block of red states (perhaps only amusing to those leaning blue, because very few of the most hardened red staters have much favorable to say about slavery any more, at least within the hearing of outsiders), is that there are varying proportions of blues in the red states and reds in the blue states and some of the major ones, such as Ohio and Florida, are in fact battlegrounds between the two, split almost as fifty-fifty as the country.
This was not the case in 1860. Lincoln was not on the ballot in the Southern states. Breckenridge was not a serious contender in the North. It was not a case where majorities favored one party in some places and the other in other places, even where the strongholds of the respective parties were relatively contiguous. So, winning or losing in a fair and contested election shaded (and not so imperceptibly) into questions of self-determination. The South argued that the right of self-determination is the fundamental right of free government and that they should be allowed to select their own form of government. It is true enough that such self-determination was conditional upon the disenfranchisement of a large proportion of the population, the slaves, who, it was not felt entered into the equation because they were hardly human. As “democracies” and democratic republics go, the percentage of the people who were allowed into the political class in the Confederacy was as high or higher than most. That the right of participation and being considered fully human was based on “race,” a concept increasingly scientifically suspect, is not as unique as it might on first blush appear (for instance, see the Austrian empire, where electoral majorities were constantly engineered on behalf of the “Peoples of State,” the Germans, the Hungarians, and in some areas, the Italians and the Poles).

We may appear to have gotten rather far afield. But all of the above is necessary to indicate that the North did not feel (at least with anything like unanimity) that it was engaged on an Apocalyptic struggle between good and evil that could not be shirked. Very few Northerners had any higher opinion of African Americans than the Southerners did, and many of the anti-slavery people themselves were anti-slavery hardly through any great sympathy to the suffering slaves but because of the risk that slavery (and African
Americans in general) posed to hardworking but poor white folks. The struggle was begun as a fight for the Union and only gradually eased its way into a fight to end slavery (as the South has never tired of pointing out), and this evolution was not without its critics. War for Union (except as emotionalized as avenging the insult to the flag) seems almost by definition as opposed to the concept of self-determination. You don’t want to be united to us? Well, tough.

Lest I be considered a neo-confederate (an accusation that should be at least partially fended off by my gentle (?) digs at our brethren from the red states), let me go on to say (as a necessary flip side to the “did it all matter?” discussion) that I do not believe that any independence won by the South could have been maintained. If it had been maintained, it would have had to have been maintained at a price in human suffering that would have been monumental. I will not attempt to compare its scale against the price in human suffering that was extracted from the most innocent and undeserving of victims, the ex-slaves, by the maintenance of the reunited republic. In the face of despair at ever being able to force a more equitable stance on the reluctant reunited fellow countrymen, the expedient was adopted of rather forgetting the whole thing for a century or so.

Lincoln compared disunion to a breach of contract.\footnote{Lincoln’s First Inaugural Address} It would have been rather more like a divorce. And it was a divorce that would have required not the relatively simple (though it can still be immensely acrimonious) division of the property, such as Federal forts and munitions, but deciding what to do with the children, the territories. Had the erring sisters been allowed to go in peace (at least at first), or had the North given up and acquiesced in independence, there still remained the question of the
territories (the position on slavery within which was the campaign issue of the
Republicans upon which the South choked and which precipitated, if it can hardly say to
have caused, secession). The Wild West would have been even wilder than it was if
every settlement in the open lands of more than three people was open to commandeering
in the interests either of the United States or the Confederate States. To bleeding Kansas
(not a happy precedent when contemplating this sort of thing) would be added bleeding
Colorado, bleeding Wyoming, bleeding Arizona, etc., etc.

And, of course, there was slavery, and the Mississippi River. The new goal for
fleeing slaves would have been a whole lot closer than it had been. It is possible yet
hardly likely that slavery would have persisted in a few states remaining in the Union.
But it would seem clear that if Massachusetts could hardly be induced to return escaped
slaves to the South when the Southern states had been in the union, it seems unlikely that
anybody would have tried very hard to make them do so under the new conditions. More
slaves would have been tempted to try the escape (enough had tried when the route was
longer). And, of course, there would have been the abolitionists, endlessly agitating, and
perhaps undertaking subversive missions to the land of the infidel to bring out escaping
slaves. The South would no doubt have complained about such goings on. The North
(particularly if smarting from a recent defeat, won seemingly only due to the
incompetence of those who had unfortunately been temporarily in charge of the North’s
destinies) would likely have told the South to go to hell. The South then might have said
that the North could then kiss its access to the mouth of the Mississippi good-by.

There no doubt would have been a party in the North that felt that the peace had
been a betrayal (might one say a “stab in the back”?). American war protestors tend to
forget that the people tend to forget in the years following a war with which they had been become thoroughly disgusted that they had been, in fact, thoroughly disgusted, and start blaming the people they have convinced themselves talked them into “surrender.” One might well reflect on the wonders such attitudes wrought in Germany in the twenties and thirties.

They would have gone at it again. If the disunion had persisted to the dawn of World War I (the happy reunion depicted in the fictional treatment, If the South Had Won the Civil War, after the two nations and Independent Texas had fought on the same side during both World Wars, is, of course, a possibility, but I consider it a damned slim one), each European coalition would have enlisted a side. A trench line reaching from the Chesapeake to the San Francisco Bay would not have been a happy place.

Of course, in many ways, it all came down to slavery. The South protested vociferously that the whole thing had been about self-determination, not slavery (to which the Lost Causers happily added the caveat that the South would have no doubt soon abolished slavery in any case, a thorough fairytale). The South was sick of the North telling it what to do and believed in what they considered their God-given right to self-determination to go their own way. However, the thing that the South objected to the North telling them what to do about was slavery. It is hard to imagine 600,000 dead over tariffs. Yet each side had a point from its own point of view. The North certainly treated slavery with kid gloves in the early stages of its struggle for Union. That the South

474 See Mac Kinlay Kantor, If the South Had Won the Civil War (New York: Bantam, 1961).
475 For a thorough raking over of the various components of the lost-cause myth (admittedly by an author who had rather a habit of raking over things Confederate), see Alan T. Nolan, “One: The Anatomy of a Myth” in Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan, Eds., The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 11-34. For the proposition that the South would have voluntarily given up slavery in a more humane and efficacious way, see particularly 21.
thought it was fighting for self-determination and that slavery had nothing to do with it is perhaps technically true. In essence, the fight was about slavery. Yet I see how the Southerners could have believed otherwise.

Of course, history has given its verdict on slavery. Constitutional niceties are lost in the overwhelming moral imperative that clearly existed for slavery to be done away with some way, some how. That is not the issue here. The issue here is that the North was not necessarily on the relentless moral crusade that we today think they should have been on. That the slaves would suffer if they threw in the towel bothered them not a whit.

So, back to the point. Let us posit that Lee had succeeded in a smashing victory on Northern soil in Gettysburg. It would be an interesting exercise in historical fiction to attempt to reconstruct what Horace Greeley might have said on such an occasion. The North had sent army after army, well equipped and organized, and incompetent (or treasonous) generals chosen by an unbearably incompetent administration had managed to get beaten time and again. All the Southerners wanted was (they said) to be left alone. There might have been some quibbles over Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri (and, admittedly, Maryland might have been a deal breaker). But a victorious Confederacy could have afforded to be (relatively) magnanimous. After all, the right of secession having been vindicated by force of arms, there was always the possibility that, allowed to choose, the absent slave states (if there were any more Northern slave states, and probably even then, without Delaware) might choose the more natural connection (they had always believed that Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland had not chosen the Union, but been coerced). They could perhaps afford to wait.
Would the Union after such a reverse, like ancient Rome building fleet after fleet although all earlier ones had been sunk by Carthage, have girded its loins and sent yet another hundred thousand man army into the teeth of destruction? The South never wanted to conquer the North (that would have rather defeated the purpose, wouldn’t it, as the trends of population and industry that were overwhelming them would have continued apace?) Perhaps, but I rather think not. No doubt we would then read as many histories about the ambivalence of the North as we now read about the ambivalence of the South. Just let them go and go on about our lives? It would have been tempting. I do not think the North would have been able to resist the temptation. It is always easier to give up than to persevere, unless the price for giving up is seen as too ghastly. What ghastly fate awaited the North? As I have pointed out above, the ghastly fate of regular bouts with what would become the traditional enemy, but I doubt that, given all the assurances that the victorious and relieved South would no doubt be pouring forth, that would have been much considered.

Wars are fought out on the battlefield and in the mills and factories. But they are also fought out in the minds of people. There never was any doubt that the North would prevail, if it was willing to pay the price. On that level, the inevitability thesis of Shelby Foote\textsuperscript{476} was correct. But wars are not fought out on computers, as McNamara apparently learned to his cost. The Union was on the verge of giving up, even after Gettysburg, and even after the army of Lee had been pinned into the trenches and victory, given enough time, was inevitable, as recognized even by Lincoln in his famous

\textsuperscript{476} Expressed as a talking head in the Ken Burns’ Civil War PBS Series. See Gallagher, The Confederate War, 5.
memorandum during the 1864 Presidential campaign before the taking of Atlanta and the successful valley campaign of Sheridan changed everything.

Robert E. Lee knew that he was fighting for what we would today call “hearts and minds.” And he certainly knew (and frequently alluded to) what the “natural military consequences” of the disparity of numbers were. So the only way out was not to give the North enough time. This could be achieved by carefully husbanding resources and making the time the North had to endure longer and longer. But as Lee saw, the Union could lose a hundred battles around Richmond, provided, the armies could, in Hattaway and Jones’ words, “Find safety in retreat and still thereafter offer resistance.” But the Confederacy could only lose once.

The option other than hanging on as long as they could and hoping the time would become too long for the North was to shorten the time the North was willing to struggle on. A major victory (particularly with the enemy Army annihilated, but even without that, because annihilated armies were very rare during the Civil War) on Northern soil might not have done the trick but it seemed a lot more likely to do it than anything else on offer. Such a victory would be an apparent revelation of shocking incompetence either on the part of the Northern military command or the administration that had sent it. Added to it would have been the prospect of losing at least part of Pennsylvania, at least for a time (if not more, and the people were always terrified that things well beyond the logistical capacities of their enemies might happen).

I confess (as I have already) that the War was lost by the Confederacy in the West. Perhaps it was inevitable, given time, resources, and determination, that it would be. But only if by the time all those things happened, there was still a war to be won.

477 Hattaway & Jones, 419.
That the American people would have sucked it up and let the same nincompoops that had managed to receive so many defeats at the hands of a half-starved and outnumbered army (or an army superhuman because steeled by the martial qualities and prepared by the pre-war conspiracy of the Southern aristocracy, it matters not) take another try, and another, at the cost of who knows how many tens of thousands of lives, I find a little hard to believe. I would like to believe that, dedicated to the principles of the Democratic Republic, in which the losing party is not supposed to take up arms or pick up its marbles and go home, rejuvenated by the crusade against the great moral evil of slavery, the Northern people would have soldiered on, all the time shouting the battle cry of freedom.

But I do not.
Note on Sources for Maps and Tables

The base map is to be found at www.nps.gov/archive/gett/getteducation

bcast04/04activities/gettmap.htm. I have drawn the maps using the information provided by the sources (and the maps found therein), particularly from Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign, a Study in Command* (New York: Charles Schribner’s Sons, 1968; Reprint, Dayton: Morningside Books, 1979; Touchstone Books, Simon & Schuster, 1997) and the works of Harry W. Pfanz, including *Culp's Hill & Cemetery Hill* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); *Gettysburg: The Second Day* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987) and *Gettysburg, The First Day* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). The maps are intended to show the points illustrated and are greatly simplified, it being intended to create something halfway between the detailed, brigade by brigade or even regiment by regiment maps in the books cited above and Jomini’s odd geometric diagrams.

The maps are:

Map One-Gettysburg Area in 1863

Map Two-July 1, 1863 Ewell attack

Map Three-July 2, 1863 as it was supposed to be

Map Four-July 2, 1863 as it was

Map Five-The Breakthrough Attack of Wofford’s and Barksdale’s Brigades

Map Six-Pickett’s charge as it was

Map Seven-Pickett’s charge as it was supposed to be

Map Eight-Portion of Battlefield covered by Modern town NW of Cemetery Hill
The source for the casualty tables is John W. Busey & David G. Martin, *Regimental Strengths and Losses at Gettysburg*, Fourth Ed (Hightstown, N.J.: Longstreet House, 2005). Confederate casualties were conceded to be, of necessity, incomplete, because the records of the defeated party were, of course, in some disarray at the end of the war. The figure of 28,063 (3,903 killed, 18,735 wounded, 5,425 captured) is found in Thomas L. Livermore, *Numbers & Losses in the Civil War in America: 1861-1865* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957), 103 and is almost certainly too high. The most painstaking modern accounting is that found in John W. Busey and David G. Martin, *Regimental Strengths and Losses at Gettysburg*, 4th ed. Hightstown, N.J.: Longstreet House, 2005). The Union losses (3,155 killed, 14,531 missing, and 5,369 missing and captured), as recalculated differ little from the 1889 revision found in the Official records (3155 killed, 14,529 wounded and 5365 missing) and other calculations (Busey & Martin, 123-125). Confederate losses as recalculated (with the admonition that they are completer than earlier estimates, but still cannot be considered entirely complete) are 4,708 killed, 12,693 wounded, and 5830 missing and captured (Busey & Martin, 257-261). Part of the reason that the number killed exceeds even Livermore’s figures while the wounded are greatly reduced results in part from including those who had died from wounds by the end of the year. Busey & Martin’s Confederate figures are based on many sources but seem to rely most heavily on Robert E. Krick, *The Gettysburg Death Roster: The Confederate Dead at Gettysburg*, 3d ed. (Dayton, Ohio: Press of Morningside Bookshop, 1993).
The tables are much simplified and include only infantry brigades. I have eliminated artillery and headquarters staff and the like, so the figures for the brigades do not add up to the totals for the divisions, and the totals for the divisions do not add up to the totals for a corps. The number listed next to corps, division, or brigade is the page in Busey & Martin where the numbers are to be found. The Brigades in Tables 3 and 4 are arranged as I have placed them (i.e., the numbers are Busey & Martin’s, but the interpretation (and errors that might be therein) are my own.

What is intended with the tables, as with the maps, is to get some very rough idea of who was engaged where and how the fight went. Some units were not “engaged” (most of the Union Sixth Corps, for instance). That does not mean they were not there (and did not suffer casualties). The battlefield was a dangerous place for troops even if not involved in any of the major engagements. There was constant skirmishing and artillery going on all over the place. Mahone’s brigade famously did not engage but the figures will show that they were hardly out of harm’s way. Subdividing it more (as for instance, taking out the Little Round Top units from the general southern fight of the second day) would create more complexity, as that would necessitate breaking up at least some brigades by regiments. While Law’s brigade fought at Little Round Top, only part of Robertson’s brigade did, and Robertson’s statements as to the nature of his problem are included in the thesis. Only one regiment of Weeds’ brigade was heavily engaged. Most of the Second Corps units that met the northernmost elements of the July 2 attack took most of their casualties July 3. That, of course, is not true of the First Minnesota (Second Corps, Second Division, First Brigade, Harrow).
When Carroll’s brigade ran off to save the poor eleventh corps on Cemetery Hill (and I am considerably skeptical about just how single-handedly they saved them), the 8th Ohio was left behind to participate in the repelling of Pickett’s charge. That regiment sustained casualties of 48.8%, while the rest of the brigade off on Cemetery Hill had casualties of only around 15%. Yet I have steadfastly resisted splitting brigades further. The idea is to simplify at the expense of precise accuracy. I do not doubt that Lockwood’s brigade suffered casualties off on the left, yet even with those casualties the casualties in the Twelfth Corps, even including any such casualties, graphically show, particularly when contrasted with the Confederate casualties, how forlorn any hope of taking Culp’s Hill was.

Table 1-Confederate Numbers Engaged and Casualties by Infantry Brigades
Table 2-Union Numbers Engaged and Casualties by Infantry Brigades
Table 3-Confederate Numbers Engaged and Casualties by Segments of the Battle
Table 4-Union Numbers Engaged and Casualties by Segments of the Battle.
Map One-Gettysburg Area in 1863
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Map Four—July 2, 1863 as it was
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Map Six-Pickett’s charge as it was
Map Seven-Pickett’s charge as it was supposed to be
Map Eight-Portion of Battlefield covered by Modern town NW of Cemetery Hill
TABLE 1

ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

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<th>Division</th>
<th>Engaged</th>
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<th>Wounded</th>
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First Day N of Town and July 2 attack on Cemetery Hill
Early’s Division-Ewell’s Corps

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*Do not seem to ever have been heavily engaged, yet took significant casualties. In fact, what Thomas’ Brigade was up to for the three days puzzles me. Thomas’ report only mentions “heavy skirmishing,” 27-2 OR 668 and Bowden & Ward periodically castigate Hill (and even Lee) for not using Thomas’ brigade in various situations, 169, 176, 503, yet Posey’s brigade which was involved in two days of heavy skirmishing over the Bliss Buildings took half the percentage of casualties. Apparently, more could have been said of Thomas’ brigade than was.
**“PICKETT’S” CHAR..**

**CHARGE ONLY**

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**July 2 attack & Support for Pickett’s charge**

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**First Day West of Town & Pickett’s Charge**

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**Culp’s Hill-Second Night, Third Morning**

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**First Day West of Town & Culp’s Hill July 3**

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**Culp’s Hill-Only Morning of July 3**

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**Essentially Unengaged for three days**

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**Relatively lightly engaged on first, majority of casualties from Pickett’s charge**
**TABLE 4**

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Late Arriving Aid—Involved in Repulse of Longstreet’s July 2 attack

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Culp’s Hill

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</tbody>
</table>
Repelling Pickett’s Charge

Reynolds-First Corps-125
   3-Doubleday-126
      3-Stannard-127  1950  45  274  32  18.0

Hancock-Second Corps-127
   2-Gibbon-129  3588  334  1202  101  45.9
      1-Harrow-129##  1346  147  573  48  57.1
      2-Webb-129##  1224  114  338  39  40.1
      3-Hall-129  922  81  282  14  40.9

   3-Hays-129
      2-Smyth-130  1069  59  275  26  33.7
      3-Willard-130##  1508  139  542  33  47.3

Essentially Unengaged

Sedgwick-Sixth Corps-136
   1-Wright-136  4378  1  17  0  0.4
   2-Howe-137  3731  2  12  2  0.4

*Deployed to right at end of Culp’s Hill battle
**Sent to aid repulse on left on night of second but took few casualties there.
#Fought on Evening of Second as well as morning of the third
##Also involved in repelling the attack of the second, primarily Hill’s units in the
northern portion of that attack.
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Additional Source

Selecting either the category of primary source or secondary source for the following would require a determination that the evidence does not really support. It is probably a composite of both, and what belongs to which is ultimately irrecoverable.
