



History Teaches Us to Hope: Reflections on the Civil War and Southern History

Charles P. Roland

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Before his death in 1870, Robert E. Lee penned a letter to Col. Charles Marshall in which he argued that we must cast our eyes backward in times of turmoil and change, concluding that "it is history that teaches us to hope." Charles Pierce Roland, one of the nation's most distinguished and respected historians, has done exactly that, devoting his career to examining the South's tumultuous path in the years preceding and following the Civil War. *History Teaches Us to Hope: Reflections on the Civil War and Southern History* is an unprecedented compilation of works by the man the volume editor John David Smith calls a "dogged researcher, gifted stylist, and keen interpreter of historical questions." Throughout his career, Roland has published groundbreaking books, including *The Confederacy* (1960), *The Improbable Era: The South since World War II* (1976), and *An American Iliad: The Story of the Civil War* (1991). In addition, he has garnered acclaim for two biographical studies of Civil War leaders: *Albert Sidney Johnston* (1964), a life of the top field general in the Confederate army, and *Reflections on Lee* (1995), a revisionist assessment of a great but frequently misunderstood general. The first section of *History Teaches Us to Hope*, "The Man, The Soldier, The Historian," offers personal reflections by Roland and features his famous "GI Charlie" speech, "A Citizen Soldier Recalls World War II." Civil War-related writings appear in the following two sections, which include Roland's theories on the true causes of the war and four previously unpublished articles on Civil War leadership. The final section brings together Roland's writings on the evolution of southern history and identity, outlining his views on the persistence of a distinct southern culture and his belief in its durability. *History Teaches Us to Hope* is essential reading for those who desire a complete understanding of the Civil War and southern history. It offers a fascinating portrait of an extraordinary historian.

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