

# "OUR COUNTRY 'TIS of GOD"

SERMON PREACHED BY REV. R. CALVIN DOBSON, D. D., IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, JULY FOURTH, NINETEEN FIFTEEN

Isa. 43:21 "This people I have formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise."  
Isa. 35:1 "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

## "MY COUNTRY 'TIS OF THEE"

There is no surer incentive to greatness and power than that which springs out of the conviction that God has ordained and that God decrees. With this assurance of Divine Right kings have ruled over unwilling subjects and have developed power out of weakness. Believing that they were sent of God and were doing His will, individuals have accomplished the apparently impossible, and the strength of one has been as that of ten. To believe that you are on God's side, and that He is on your side, that He has placed you where you are, and called you to the work in which you are engaged is the greatest possible source of strength. And with such a conviction individuals rise to heroic heights and carve a career of greatness and achievement out of adamant.

This conviction too is the greatest possible national asset. As long as ancient Israel was true to her religious ideals, and the people believed that they were the chosen people of God there was no nation or people that could stand in their path. As long as they truthfully could say "The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge," they need not fear what men could say or do. Because God was on their side they were great; they were invincible. But when once they became recreant to the trust and unfaithful to their exalted ideals, and, like the nations about them, lost both the vision and the path of right and justice the nation crumbled and fell.

And in this, ancient Israel is only an ensample of what has befallen other nations. No truth of history stands out with greater prominence than this one; so that they who run may read. And if any nation today loses its exalted ideals and becomes a ruin, as have the long list of those that have perished whose former glory is now marked by desolate ruins, it will not be because it has not been forewarned "line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little;" but because of its own willful or shortsighted folly in allowing itself to be carried away from its moorings, by the carnal forces that destroy men and nations.

Now every civilized nation has believed that it was ordained of God, and that its task was God-appointed. And if it had good reason for that conviction, it has succeeded so long as it was true to its highest ideals.

It will be helpful for us today, on our nation's greatest day, which celebrates our birth and independence, to consider some of the reasons for believing that we are a product of the unfolding of God's plan, and that God has given us a work to do; and we have a right to paraphrase our hymn "America" so that it reads:—

"My country 'tis of Thee,  
Great God, our King."

In forming our appraisement let us begin at the bottom of the ladder and gradually ascend until we get at least a glimpse of the Canaan of opportunity and destiny that lays before us.

I. Certainly we can say, as must every other people, that the hand of the Creator laid the material foundation for our greatness and usefulness. When we consider our physical area and wealth and natural beauty and resources, we are tempted to say with the Psalmist of old, "God hath not dealt so with any nation." If we recognize the truth stated by Paul on Mars Hill that "God hath determined the times and boundaries of nations" and their habitations, certainly we must acknowledge that in His infinite goodness He hath wonderfully blessed us above the nations of the earth.

In 1776 we numbered 13 states or colonies, with an area of 908,000 square miles. Today our lands extend over almost 4,000,000 square miles; a greater area than the total area of all Europe, and 7 per cent of the land of the whole globe. With the constant stream of humanity emigrating to this country we are not disturbed by the crowded and congested conditions that perplex the old countries. For whatever may be our ideas of immigration, one thing is sure we have ample room for those that are coming, and can give them plenty of work to do so far as the bigness of the field to be developed is concerned. They are needed to tear up the raw prairies and mountains, to irrigate the thirsty plains and deserts and to cover them with flocks and herds and towns and villages and factories and schools and stores and churches and universities.

And, as for population, our growth is as remarkable. The census of 1790 gave us 3,000,000. Today we number 100,000,000, while it is estimated that we have ample room for 300,000,000 without crowding. Our land area is so vast that you could place Great Britain, Ireland, Norway, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Montenegro, Austria-Hungary, Serbia, Greece, Switzerland, Italy, Japan and China in the United States and have Alaska, with her area of 590,884 square miles, Hawaii and Porto Rico, left over. While the population of the above named countries is 739,000,000 to our 100,000,000, or over seven times as great.

And as for waterways, we have an ocean on the east, and another on the west, while on the south Uncle Sam has joined the two together in happy wedlock by the most wonderful waterway in all the world; while on our north, in the great chain of lakes,

it is said that we have four-fifths of all the fresh water of the globe; and still the wealth and extent of all our riverways have not yet been computed.

And when we estimate our national wealth the same stupendous vastness greets us. Two years ago the following comparative table of the national wealth of the nations was given: Russia \$35,000,000,000; France \$50,000,000,000; Germany \$60,000,000,000; England \$75,000,000,000; America \$120,000,000,000.

We produce 22 per cent of the wheat grown in the world; we raise 25 per cent of the cattle. We mine 30 per cent of the gold, 33 per cent of the silver, 34 per cent of the coal, 35 per cent of the iron, 40 per cent of the steel, 52 per cent of the petroleum, 54 per cent of the copper. We raise 75 per cent of the cotton and 84 per cent of the corn of the world. While in the fiscal year just closing our exports exceeded our imports by \$1,000,000,000.

In agriculture and in manufacturing God hath blessed us above all the nations of the earth. Measured by our material resources and possibilities certainly we must say that our country "Tis of Thee," "Great God our King, from Whom cometh every good and perfect gift."

II. Again our country is God's country because in a peculiar sense He not only laid the material foundations of it, but He peopled it in a most peculiar way. No student of history can question for a single moment the hand of God in the settlement of this land of ours. For, as truly as Israel went out of the land of Egypt in quest of Canaan, under the guidance of Almighty, so surely did our forefathers come to these shores as impelled and directed by the Spirit of the most High. Not only did they come here in quest of religious liberty where they might worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience, but this nation was founded in a peculiar way with a religious motive. The historian tells us that every enterprise of the Pilgrims began with God. On the very title page of historic Americanism is indelibly written, "In the beginning, God." When the first colony was organized it was clearly stated that it was for the "glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith." And in the early days of our republic this religious heritage from the religious seekers that first came to these shores from the old world, was perpetuated in the splendid stock that followed them. The Puritans in New England, the Dutch in New York, the Quakers in Pennsylvania, the Huguenots in the Carolinas, brought with them the faith of the fathers, a faith in the immediate presence of God with each individual; the conception of a God Who dwells in the hearts of men; a God Who dwells in His present Church; a God Who dwells in public affairs; an over-ruling God Who is shaping and moulding all these to accomplish His will.

This does not mean repudiation of all authority in State or Church or in Creeds; but it does mean a repudiation of all pretense of authority in State or Church ancient or modern, when it puts the voice of man in the place of the voice of God, Who speaks in the hearts of His children.

This religious conception of liberty, as emphasized by the Puritans, naturally found its way into the political life of this young nation. The Puritan found his ideal of government in the Old Testament, and he tried to realize it in America. And his conception was this: That every man may go up into Mount Sinai and talk with God. Every man has ears to hear the divine voice, and a heart to feel His presence; and any system of philosophy or religion or politics that opposed this found the Puritan its enemy. He had faith in human "government of the people and by the people and for the people" because he had faith in man as the child of God. And every man had the right to go up into the mount and speak with God and bring down to his fellow men the laws of God; and this religious type, of God-centered government he tried to make modern in a practical way. And this he planted in America. The end sought was individual liberty through government; and the means was the development of each man as a child of God, capable of self-government and control. We should never forget this exceedingly rich birthright from our forefathers, this heritage of a Christian nation. And let us by all manner of means safe-guard it.

III. And not only did the hand of God lay the material foundations, and people our country in such a remarkable way, but it seems that He also decreed the racial foundations of it in a peculiar way. Some of our citizens believe in a restricted immigration, others in an unlimited immigration; but all of us must believe in the immigrant if we believe in ourselves. For we are all immigrants unless we are Indians.

In 1860 our foreign born population was 13 per cent. In 1900 it was 13 1/2 per cent. In 1910 it was 14 1/2 per cent. A growth in 110 years of only 1 1/2 per cent.

The immigration peril is as much in the relation of the citizen to the immigrant as in the immigrant himself. A foreigner not yet naturalized wrote home to his friends "America is a great country. They not only allow you to vote, but pay you for voting." It is not so much the immigrant as our relationship with the immigrant that constitutes the "peril." And that we have been constituting a national peril in this regard is shown by the development and education of the children of the immigrant for which the nation is responsible. We are told that the children of the immigrant furnish 70 per cent of the illiterates, 75

per cent of the criminals and 65 per cent of the saloon keepers of our country. Is America showing the immigrant how to become a good citizen? A little Polish girl in a Bible School in Baltimore was asked the question "Where was Jesus born?" and her answer was "Bethlehem." But to the question "Where was He crucified?" she replied "In Baltimore." And perhaps she was correct, in a sense.

In these days of agitation, when so much is being said about the immigrant, we are apt to get the idea that we have a greater variety of foreign and foreign speaking people in this land than ever before. But we are told that in 1664 there were 18 languages spoken on Manhattan island, a greater variety than is found there today. So while the problem has assumed larger proportions, it has not become much more complex than before the days of our national independence. The task so well begun by our forefathers in giving us "Independence Day" we must complete in Americanizing the independent. Our racial foundations, have been laid broad and strong from the very beginning; and we believe that they have been so ordained and established by God our founder and builder; and it is for us to build a national structure of these various mosaics from the old world that shall unite the strength and virtues of the many and include the vices and weaknesses of none. And this is a great task indeed. And the present international crisis is calling our attention afresh to its greatness and its difficulties; and reminds us again of the oft repeated statement of the historian that "More nations have gone to pieces on the rock of homogeneity than on the sea of mingled blood." So, in our greatness lies our possible peril also.

IV. This brings us to note this further source of greatness: that God seems to have selected America to exemplify the possible application of His own law of homogeneity as stated by Paul: "God hath made of one blood all nations of men that dwell upon the face of the earth." We have in the great American Melting Pot a laboratory test of our fitness and ability to demonstrate that fact to the world. And while we may boast of our physical vastness and wealth, and of our cosmopolitan population, we must not forget our intimate relation to all races and nations of the world. And while we may boast of our Independence and self-sufficiency, yet let us remember that God has so organized the world-body-politic that no part of it is absolutely self-sufficing. The earth is one, but God hath divided it up into zones, and to each zone He has given its own peculiar gifts, but each zone is dependent upon the other. To the Arctic he has given fur and coal; to the tropics, sugar and spices; and to the temperate, grains and fruits. And all these zones are bound together by ocean channels making isolation impossible. And no nation liveth to itself, any more than one part of the human body is independent of other parts. The world is a great physical, social, moral, political, religious organism and no part thereof can say to the other part "I have no need of thee;" and when it attempts to do so stagnation and death are inevitable. Let any nation build a Chinese wall around itself and stagnation, atrophy, death are inevitable. But when the wall is torn down and its people are privileged to mingle and intermingle with other nations then the infusion of new life gives it strength, and its institutions grow and bear fruit.

Only a short while ago a statesman in Canada urged that Canada build a protective wall about herself, and shut out the other nations and become self-sufficing. But that statesman did not realize what stagnation, atrophy, death are inevitable. But when the wall is torn down and its people are privileged to mingle and intermingle with other nations then the infusion of new life gives it strength, and its institutions grow and bear fruit.

This is not only true of a nation commercially, but mentally and socially and religiously as well. In the realm of civilization God has given to each people its own wealth for interchange with other nations and if they do not share them with one another, they will become of nonuse. It has been for one nation to contribute art, another philosophy, another culture, another science, another democracy, another colonization, another self-government; and even in our own fair republic the various sections are not independent of one another. The North depends on the South for its cotton; and the south depends on the North for its corn and wheat. England gave us the locomotive, France the loom, Germany the Roentgen Ray, Italy wireless telegraphy; and there is no nation that has not contributed to us some gift that is vital to our daily life and civilization. And this consideration today, when we are reminded of our national independence on "Independence or Americanization Day" should lessen provincialism, smite national egotism, and in a measure soften and subdue our Independence. For when the nations and peoples of the earth, with all of their much vaunted independence, recognize this great national world-wide, strife and hatred and jealousy and war will cease, and the peoples of all climes and races will dwell together in brotherhood and love.

With this thought in mind we cannot speak of the European War as if it were totally foreign to us. We cannot lift up our eyes and look across the ocean and behold our brethren of other nations and families locked in the death grapple, and say that it is their affair and we have no part or parcel in it. Our business men have already found out that we have a part in it, and that when Europe suffers America must suffer also. It is our war, in part; and we must suf-

fer as a consequence of it. America and Americans have a responsibility in that great conflict, and it is for us in these days of stress that try men and nations, to be serious minded and careful of speech and act lest we add to the terrible catastrophe, and lest we spoil our chance of bringing that conflict to an end, when once and for all time the death knell of war may be sounded.

Some one has said that "our rulers are like men working in a powder magazine and a building stored with explosives; and the duty of the hour is careful thinking and studied silence." It is said that an idle word brought an avalanche down upon the Valley of Zermatt in Switzerland and ground a village to powder. For three days and nights the snow fell, heavy with moisture. When the fourth day was past the doors to the houses were closed and the windows darkened. Up in the mountain in a chalet was a boy caught in the storm. In his distress he went out on the mountain and cried aloud. Unconsciously the vibration shook the boughs of the trees which were overlaid with snow; and, falling, the snow carried the mass of snow from the lower limbs of the tree, and this in turn started a drift slipping which continued to gather momentum and weight until the great avalanche rolled down the mountain side and with the stroke of an earthquake it ground the village to destruction.

The need of the hour is confidence in the men who lead us in this world crisis, and prayers with faith that they will be led aright. And that when the time comes for action that their action will represent the thought and confidence of a hundred million citizens whose chief concern is to bring about universal peace and brotherhood among men, and nations, so that the ideal civilization may be realized.

And our position among the warring nations is a unique one, because we in a measure are free from the temptations that have led them into this awful conflict. One of the greatest factors working toward disunion and strife among nations, is land hunger usually based on a congested population. When Shakespeare completed Hamlet, Queen Elizabeth ruled over 5,000,000 people. Today King George governs 45,000,000. Germany's growth has been no less striking. One historian thinks that Martin Luther addressed scarcely more than 1,000,000 folk. Today the Kaiser rules over 68,000,000. Russia has 180,000,000.

Guyot tells us that most of the territory of Europe, Asia and Africa, Australia and New Zealand is swamp, mountain or desert land, leaving only 11,000,000 square miles of farming land. The pressure of population is disturbing Europe. Threatened by famine and cramped for expansion, rulers are becoming anxious. Once nations went to war because of political antagonism; now commercial rivalry seems to be responsible for the great conflict.

But let us hope that this war will so emphasize the folly of war that nations will henceforth beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks and realize once and for all that commerce has never been and never can be expanded by the sword. Ancient Rome tried it in vain. Her armies destroyed Carthage and carried her men and women to Italy as slaves, cut down their vineyards and orchards and destroyed her houses and fields. But when Carthage was destroyed Rome had to close her factories because there were no merchants from Carthage to buy her goods, and the Romans began to want for food because there were no rich harvests from Carthaginian fields and ships. So Rome turned hungry eyes toward Jerusalem, Ephesus and Athens and looted their temples and carried away their treasures and spoiled their granaries; but from that hour Rome began to fall, until the day that ruled by the sword perished by the sword. No nation can prosper by making its competitor suffer.

It is a law of human nature and of God, and no man nor nation can revoke it. The history of the nations emphasize it in a most remarkable way. Brotherly love, revealed in friendly co-operation and not in strife, is the law of nations just as it is the great law of God for individuals. And this law of love and truth never falleth.

Let us thank God today that we are not tempted as are the nations of Europe to fly to arms to make room for our population and commercial expansion; but praise Him in that he has made wide our fields and locked up undreamed of wealth and possibilities in this fair land of ours, both for ourselves and those who come to us from afar. And with gratitude for what He hath done for us, may we pray and work most earnestly that He may hasten the day of peace, among our brethren across the sea, and in some way use us, unless he has a more worthy instrument, that the great carnage may cease; and that out of it all there may come a blessing to those that remain when the war is over.

For no matter how terrible may be the tempest and how dark the cloud, God and Justice are equal to the emergency; and no clash of arms can thwart the purposes of Him Who makes all things work together for good to them that love God. And possibly this convulsion for Europe will do for her what the earthquake did for the people of Greece—cracked the rocks and exposed the silver veins that gave them the wealth with which they built Athens with her arts and literature and liberty and law. So may Europe find in the wreckage, after the war is over, the unperishable gold out of which to build an indestructible Temple to the Everlasting Prince of Peace, whose unfailing gifts are Life, Liberty and Happiness, both now and forever.

Highland Park  
Theatre  
Elaine  
The Sky  
Cinema  
Russell  
Surveyor  
Mason  
Muzik  
Steffen  
Douglas  
Arnsward  
Rampau