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The Capture of Jerusalem.

(Rev. CANON HEENEY, Winnipeg, Man.)

The following sermon was preached in St. Luke's Church, Winnipeg, on Sunday, December 16th, but is especially suited to the Easter Season.

"The Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation."—Psalm 132:13.

As a military accomplishment the fall of Jerusalem has been variously estimated. The "New York Sun" says: "The strategic value of Jerusalem is not significant. With the control that it gives over the Judean hills, it places in the hands of the Allies the key to Galilee. It permits the penetration of the country to the north, the acquisition of Mt. Carmel, Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee."

Major General Maurice, director of military operations at the British War Office, views it in the larger light of the Egyptian-Sinai-Palestine campaign as a whole—and says, "The great achievement from a military point of view is not the defeat of the Turks, but the conquest of the Sinai Desert. The troops who fought at Jaza drank water pumped from Egypt through a pipe line extended as the army advanced across the arid waste, and the supplies were carried over a broad-gauge railway, laid for that purpose clear across the 150 miles of the Sinai desert, which has defeated almost everybody that tried to conquer Egypt for centuries." Here, therefore, for the time being at least, and we hope for ever, the ambition of the Turks and the Huns, to cut the Suez Canal, the main artery of Britain's life between the homeland and her Indian Empire. For this military victory, let us devoutly say, "God be praised."

Perhaps this is a fitting point in my address at which to mention a fact which should exalt the soul of every Briton, while yet it steadies him with a sense of added responsibility: the fall of Jerusalem brings the last of the Bible Lands under the protection and guidance of the British Empire. Egypt, the land of Abraham's sojournings, of Joseph's exile, of his brothers' visit for corn and reconciliation, of Israel's bondage for hundreds of years; Egypt, the birth-place of the infant Moses, the scene of his young manhood and education, the battlefield of his and God's historic fight with the powers of oppression and cruelty—Egypt is British.

Sinai, the wilderness through which Moses led the liberated rabble by the help of God for forty years—is British.

Mesopotamia, where Babylon and Nineveh flourished; the land of the conquerors, Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar; the lands wherein the walls of Jerusalem wept in their captivity—

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tivity and longed for their return to Zion—Mesopotamia is British. And now Palestine itself.

These are the countries in which the Bible was produced, and everyone of them has made its contribution of thought, feeling, colour, words and actions to the pages of the Old Testament or the New.

I do not know what Britons as a whole prize in the way of honour, but to me this is the most glorious, and at the same time, the most sobering fact in the annals of the British Empire. And not only so, but the distinction is peculiar to Britain in the history of the world. Perhaps it has a cause; I think it has. The people of the British Isles, more than those of any of the older nations, might be properly described as "the people of the Book." It was in an effort to give a worthy rendering of the Scriptures that England produced the chief monument of her own literature. More than any Church, ancient or modern, the established Church of England is the Church of the Book. And the British and Foreign Bible Society provides and sends forth the Scriptures in over four hundred languages to the nations of the earth. And was it not an honoured Queen of Britain who, when asked by an Indian chieftain, the secret of England's greatness, handed him a copy of the New Testament, saying as she did so, "Here is the secret of England's greatness?" To-day, with souls stirred to the depth, we celebrate the coming of the last of Bible lands under the control and direction of the British people. Here is a reward from the hands of God Himself, and at the same time, a trust more sacred than words can tell for the nations and races of the earth.

By way of contrast and warning may I not allude to the action, the ambition and the fate of Germany in this regard. Was it not her ambition to hold sway in Bible lands, Palestine, Mesopotamia and Egypt? All the world knows that it was; to wit, we have the Kaiser's visit to the East; and the Baghdad railway; and the alliance of Turkey; and the scheme for the conquest of Egypt. Yes, it was her ambition to hold sway over these ancient and fertile lands.

Is it not significant, therefore, that this honor has been denied a people who have shredded the Bible during the past fifty years and sapped it of its meaning; who have not only broken its law, but trampled its precepts under foot; who have done violence to and for Him, Who personified Divine love and truth and righteousness substituted in the minds and affections of the German people, men who call Christ a weakling, and preached the doctrine of blood and iron. Is it not significant, I say, that they have missed their goal in Baghdad, in Jerusalem, in Egypt, though they have sacrificed everything for its attainment, though they have said: "Might will carry us to the goal; right may be disregarded for the present"—though they have said, "We will first be enthroned by power, and then right may sit at our royal feet."

The people who have done violence to the Bible and its teaching are not to be entrusted with the guardianship of Bible lands.

Let me now touch upon another aspect of the matter—the effect of the fall of Jerusalem on the prestige of the nations concerned, namely, Turkey, Britain and Germany.

We need not spend much time over its effect on Turkey as a separate power; for our purpose, it and Germany may go together as they do in the war. All the world is now aware that the Empire of the Sultan is but the Empire of the Kaiser, masquerading as an independent ally. All the world knows that the harlot Empire of the Bosphorus has sold herself to her money masters and war lords of Berlin. Great Britain gave notice to Turkey that the day she entered the war on the side of the Central Powers, she would place the seal of fate on her own destiny. She made her choice; at the present hour she is paying the price—even the semblance of nationhood is fading from her dominions. Moreover, the leadership of the Mos-

lem world has been wrested from her keeping. "In June, 1916, Turkish prestige was given a staggering blow by the successful revolt of the Sherief of Mecca, when the Moslem Holy of Holies was torn away from the Caliphate." Thus with Mecca looking to Britain for protection; with Jerusalem gone to Britain; with Baghdad gone, the prestige of Constantinople and of Berlin has suffered another shock through Asia Minor and the whole region between the Bosphorus and the Persian Gulf.

On the other hand, with Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia and India under the inspiration and control of Great Britain, she is the largest and most influential Moslem power in the world. British prestige is mightily enhanced with the Moslem world at her back.

But the wonderful event which we celebrate to-day before the Throne of God with another race and another ancient religion to the side and support of Britain and her Allies. For the Jew is concerned in the fall of Jerusalem. The Hebrew has been called "the race of the wandering foot." They have no homeland. It is two thousand five hundred years since there was a Jewish native land; yet they remain Hebrew, they remain Jewish. There is nothing like this in human records. Their history is a history of dispersions, captivities, and restorations. To-day they are more numerous than ever, more Jewish than ever, more widely scattered among all the other races of the world than ever.

What are they pondering over at this moment, those children of Abraham, spread abroad like the stars of heaven, numerous as the sand on the sea shore for multitude, yet indestructible in their characteristics and in their faith? Why, to-day they are like one awakening from a slumber, one to whom a dream has come true. Their hopes cherished through the centuries bid fair to take shape before their eyes. Jerusalem has been wrested from the Turk; Palestine is free. "Palestine, the land of your fathers' sepulchres, is within your grasp, O Israel. Awake, O Sons of Jacob of every land, the flag of freedom is once more on the battlements of Zion!" But what flag is it? "Look again, ye Jews, dispersed among the nations—it is the flag of Britain, whose statesmen said but the other day, 'His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.' Thus it comes to pass that the capture of Jerusalem is the winning of the whole Jewish race to the side of Britain. She becomes the hope of this scattered race, the object of Jewish prayers, and the recipient of Jewish support and influence."

But the winning of the Jews has a deeper meaning. Do you not suppose that Hebrew children, Hebrew women, yes, and hard-headed business men among them will look upon, and study, and scrutinize and ponder over that flag which now they love as none other? And will it not dawn upon thousands of these bright Jewish minds, that it is in reality a Jewish flag, that its distinctive symbol is the cross on which the greatest of the Hebrew prophets was put to death two thousand years ago, outside the very city on whose walls and towers it floats to-day in triumph?

Why, behold a wonderful thing, the two mightiest of the old religions are looking to Jesus Christ. Millions, hundreds of millions of Mohammedans crying, "Allah! Allah!" Millions, tens of millions of Jews calling on "Jehovah," find in Britain, the Empire of all its ideas of purity and kindness; the open Bible and the Cross, their friend and trusted companion, guarding their sacred place, acknowledging their rights, respecting their aspirations. Moslems who have trampled upon His cross, and Jews who once despised and rejected Him, whose dying upon it has made it famous and the symbol of love Divine and human, re-

joice to-day in its protection and its freedom.

Is it not worth much thought on our part that the Holy City has come into our keeping just at this time? Britain is about to experience on her western front the supreme test of her will, strength and endurance. Jerusalem comes to us therefore as a kind of assurance from God that He is with us still, and at the same time as a definition, as a setting forth of our national and allied goal. But what does Jerusalem stand for, what is her special significance among the cities of the world? I answer, Jerusalem stands for spiritual empire—may, more, for the enduring character of spiritual empire.

This is something which the Jews as a people failed to see; it was clear, however, to the prophets, clearer still to Jesus. Jerusalem is alone in this distinction, in this standing for spiritual empire, and the permanence of it. Call up the names of the great cities of old—Babylon, Nineveh, Rome—they stood, each of them in turn, for world empire. Have they remained, these ancient centres of world dominion? They have not. Babylon and Nineveh are but grass-covered mounds in a land of devastation; Rome has clung to a show of her ancient greatness only through her association with the enduring Kingdom of Christ. Jerusalem was never the centre of world power; for a little time she was the capital city of a little nation, but that passed and the Jews brought destruction upon themselves and their city when they sought world empire like Babylon, Nineveh and Rome. It is Jerusalem's glory to be the spiritual capital of the world, and even after centuries of grinding under the heel of despotism, she is that spiritual capital to-day.

But why do I say that Jerusalem has that spiritual empire at the present time? Because I recall what happened yesterday (Saturday). Yesterday, throughout every land, the Jews were at worship; they read the law of Moses and the prophets, the law that came forth from Sinai and the prophets who spoke in Jerusalem. I say that she is the spiritual mistress of the world because of the spectacle which meets the eye of my imagination at this hour; this Sunday morning, throughout Canada and the Empire, and all the nations, I see men and women at prayer in the buildings which stand for the Christian Church; I see them reading from the law and the prophets and the gospels, all of which came forth from Zion to spiritualize the world. I say Jerusalem stands out for spiritual empire among the cities of all time, on this account also that Jesus taught in her Temple courts, and on the sides of the hills which stand round about her; Jesus was crucified outside her northern Gate; Jesus rose from the dead in the Garden beyond her confines—thus becoming the spiritual hope of all men for this life and that which is to come.

And so I conclude that Jerusalem comes to us standing for spiritual empire in this greatest moment of our own Empire's history to define, to set forth the real purpose of our own existence in world affairs. On the western front the real Armageddon is breaking. Britons at home, Britons abroad, the goal of your Empire is not only to possess the city of Jerusalem but to perpetuate her spiritual empire. To your knees, O sons of freedom, and pray—then to your trenches and fight.

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