

Sermon to Commemorate Alliance of the United States of America and Great Britain

Preached in Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal, by Rev. H. Symonds, D.D., July 7th, 1918.

Ephraim shall not envy Judah: and Judah shall not vex Ephraim—ISAIAH, 11-13.

EPHRAIM and Judah were nations of a common stock, had the same Bible, worshipped the same God. Ephraim was the northern part of the land of Palestine, Judah was the southern. They had separated from each other and fought against each other. The peculiar jealousies that spring up between different countries of the same race, petty very often, but annoying and tending to foster bad feeling, existed between them, deplored by the greater and more generous souls such as Isaiah, but cultivated by the smaller souls among them.

It is to this condition of things that Isaiah refers in my text. I want you to note the context in which it stands. The passage has been read for our lesson this morning. The great prophet of Judah, a large-hearted, large-minded, large-souled man is portraying the glorious future that awaits the earth when men have a true knowledge and realization of what God and true religion are. Amongst many glorious consequences of such a knowledge is that the old enmities, and vexations and jealousies between Ephraim and Judah shall cease, and friendliness, concord and mutual aid shall take their place. The prophet does not say that they will become politically one, but that "Ephraim shall not envy Judah; and Judah shall not vex Ephraim."

The words seem to me appropriate for such an occasion as that which is in our minds to-day. Here in this English Cathedral, which dates from only a very few years after the American War of Independence, we are celebrating the alliance of the United States and Great Britain,—of Ephraim and Judah may I not say,—for the amelioration of the world by the crushing of an almost crazy pride, for the punishment of innumerable perfidies and wrongs, and for the establishment of public right, of equal justice, and of the freedom of the peoples for self-development. There are many souls to-day who find help to endure the frightful losses and sufferings of the time, by the thought that a definite issue has been made, our own aims and purposes are clearly understood, and that out of this apparent welter of destruction and bloodshed, a fairer world shall emerge. Whether this shall be so or not largely depends upon the future relations of the British and American Commonwealths. We celebrate to-day their cordial alliance, their union for common aims, and the spirit of light and liberty, and goodwill which binds them together for the blessing of the world.

I.

In the earlier stages of the war there were some who thought the United States was slow to support what was to us a sacred cause. I think they did not quite realize the extraordinary difficulties in the way of such a country coming in. Its population so diverse in its elements, many millions disposed to the side of our enemies, many millions more, far from the scenes of warfare, more or less indifferent. A powerful pacifist sentiment, too, existed. Such things rendered it a task of almost unexampled difficulty to unify the nation in favor of the cause sufficiently to en-

able it to enter the war with effect. For we must bear in mind that had a premature declaration of war been made, it might have proved disastrous instead of serviceable, to the cause. The issue had to be made clear, and an unquestionable *casus belli* found before the nation could be welded into the necessary unity of spirit and purpose. It was not, let us remember, a case of converting the Americans of British descent, but the millions of Americans of all sorts of descent, and the vast population of the Middle West, who could not realize the war, save as something in which they were not very greatly concerned. We may feel very sure the Germans realized these difficulties. The great and fatal mistake they made was that they believed those difficulties to be insuperable, and they acted on that faith. Of all the political blunders Germany has made, history will record this as perhaps the greatest of all. The act of the German government in declaring her intention to destroy American shipping in certain zones, so far from embarrassing or frightening America, as it was intended to do, cleared the atmosphere of doubt as to the real nature of Germany, and greatly eased the task of President Wilson.

The President to-day may be taken as the exponent of the mind of America. He stands revealed before the world as a strong man with a sound mind, speaking for all that is best in Democracy, without the slightest taint of that mawkish sentimentality which sometimes spoils the utterances of good people. Nevertheless, he is an idealist, by which I mean his words and acts are ultimately guided by a desire to promote the cause of right, and the welfare of the world, and not by any lesser motive of selfish aggrandizement. I could not of my own knowledge venture further than this in speaking of his policy, but you will permit me to present you with that view of the man and his mind which is set forth by one of England's foremost literary men, Mr. L. P. Jacks, the editor of the *Hilbert Journal*. He is reviewing in the English paper "Land and Water" Mr. Wilson's speeches on the war, and here is Mr. Jacks's understanding of the mind of the President as therein revealed:—

"The germinating idea of Mr. Wilson's policy is that America, because of her . . . vast potentialities, is a *servant* among the nations and not a *master*. There at once you have the fundamental antagonism between the American mind at its best, and the German. "It is a noble conception," continues Mr. Jacks, "and peculiarly fitted to inspire a young and mighty people with a vision of its destiny, and so to mark out for it in the centuries to come a line of development different from, and I think higher than any which the other States of the world have so far pursued."

President Wilson is the first statesman to make the conception of national service to the world operative, as "a guiding principle of international politics."

Mr. Jacks gathers from the President's speeches that "from the very first the question uppermost in the President's mind has been this: 'In what way, by what policy, by what action, can America best serve the nations involved in the struggle and through them mankind at large?' If the reader will take these

speeches as a connected whole, he will have before him the Odyssey of the President's mind. They indicate the successive stages through which he passed in his efforts to find an answer to the question: How can the United States in the world crisis that has now arisen, most effectively serve mankind? By remaining neutral the President believed that the United States could render most help not only in hastening the advent of peace, but in giving to peace, whenever it should come, the form most conducive to the just interests of all concerned. He believed—and rightly believed—that impartiality would confer upon America rights and powers as a peace maker both during the conflict and afterwards; and he saw, further, that a peace-making nation was the world's greatest need at the time. Then, through no will of his own, but by the direct action of Germany, the right to be neutral, the power to be impartial, was taken from him. The consequence was that the first form of his answer was necessarily abandoned as no longer applicable to the circumstances, and another had to be sought. Only one was possible. If America was to serve all nations she must make war on the Power which was striving to make all nations serve itself. Thus, by what I again venture to call dramatic necessity, we are carried stage by stage from the moment when the President declared 'there is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight,' to the last sentence of his speech the other day: 'There is, therefore, but one response possible from us; force, force to the utmost, force without stint or limit, the righteous and triumphant force which shall make right the law of the world and cast every selfish domination down into the dust.' Thus was Wilson the peace-maker turned into Wilson the War-maker. The 'divinity that shapes our ends,' is clearly accountable for the transition, and the world may rejoice that it found in the President an instrument amenable to its guidance. He stands out to-day as the foremost interpreter of the international mind."

II.

In all this expression of democratic conviction, I find nothing that is in conflict with the best sentiment of Great Britain and Canada. I do not think any utterance of President Wilson's more nobly expresses the aim of this war than Mr. Asquith's notable words at the very beginning of the war. But what is needed is a clear understanding of it such as Mr. Jacks gives in the passages I have quoted, and then its hearty endorsement. It is true, as it seems to me, that the United States is still in a position of great advantage as a leader, a position superior to that of all others. The interests of Great Britain in Europe, Africa and Asia are very numerous and complicated. The interests of the United States are comparatively simple. What, for example, is to be done with German colonies after the war, is a question which excites very varied feelings in the British mind. The American can approach it with a more detached mind. President Wilson said to members of the Associated Press in 1915: "We do not want anything that does not belong to us," and then significantly added: "Is not a nation in that position free to serve other nations?" It behoves us all to weigh carefully and impartially and without any petty jealousies, every word which falls from the lips of the responsible speakers of the United States.

For this great and glorious alliance will be of equal value to the world after the war as it is now. Our minds are set on winning the war. That is in the forefront of our thought and purpose. But behind that purpose, only waiting for the moment that shall liberate it, is the ardent desire of all good people that a