



TWO TIDES OF EMIGRATION

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An address delivered by Mr. Harold St. John at the Chicago Conference on Thanksgiving Day, 1928.

Nearly four centuries ago, two tides of emigration began to flow from the shores of Europe towards the two Americas, North and South. The first, starting from Italy, Spain, and the Mediterranean basin, was chief-tained by the proudest chivalry of the Old World, including such names as Hernando Cortes, Francesco Pizarro, Christopher Columbus, and a hundred more.

The second was made up of honest Hollanders, weavers, of Huguenot stock, and of stern-faced English Puritans; not one amongst its leaders has ever won for himself any conspicuous place upon the scrolls of this world's fame.

Each of these streams reached the shores of America and settled there; from that time onward their descendants have worked out their destinies on that continent.

The writer of these lines has had the privilege of spending some ten years in the North and South, and is thus in a position to summarize, from personal observation, some of the results of these experiments in colonization.

A traveller landing at Rio de Janeiro or Buenos Aires or any of the large sea-coast cities finds himself in an atmosphere of infidelity and abysmal moral corruption; he sees, on every hand, the open sale of justice, the degradation of home life, and impossible commercial conditions. If he penetrates into the interior he is surrounded by backward and decaying races of semi-Indian blood, cursed by superstition and controlled by the vulgar magic practised by the officials of the Roman Church.

It is a matter for thanksgiving, that owing to contact with the more civilized races of Northern Europe and of the States, conditions are beginning to improve, but the foregoing is a moderate statement of what has obtained from Panama to Cape Horn during the last four hundred years.

When I land at Montreal or New York I meet the most progressive peoples in the world and mingle with men of clear sighted intelligence, elevated standards of morality; from the Mexican border up to Hudson's Bay there is universal religious freedom; and in Canada, the King's Justice, and in the States, Federal Law, are seated upon a stable throne.

When we investigate the reason or reasons for these sharp and patent contrasts, we must at once dismiss any claim that the men of Plymouth Rock were braver, better, or wiser than their brethren on the banks of the Orinoco; to such an idea the records of the times give a firm and flat denial.

The deep-rooted and obvious differences between North and South America do not exist because of any special virtue or capacity, present or absent, amongst their respective inhabitants; the whole matter is simply a question of the luggage which they took with them. The followers of Cortes carried rosaries and relics, the bones of dead saints and the blessing of living Popes; they bore Papal indulgences and manuals of devotion, in fact, all the stock-in-trade of a fallen Church and a persecuting creed. The Pilgrim Fathers brought to America and read and revered the living and life-giving Word of God; the language of their leader, John Robinson, uttered as he and his companions embarked at Delft deserves to be graven in letters of gold.

The great Puritan said: "Sirs, I charge you before God and the elect angels that you follow me no further than I have followed Christ, and I beseech you to remember that fresh light is ever breaking from the oracles of God."

These two bands have sown their seed, and today the harvest lies before us, clear and inescapable in its witness.

In South America, centuries of cruelty, superstition, and moral darkness have shadowed the continent of the Christless Cross. In North America, enlightenment and prosperity have blessed both Canada and the States in exact proportion as their sons have based their beliefs upon an open Bible: the remaining country which completes the continent, the land of Mexico, groans beneath the tyranny of Rome, and has never had the Scriptures, hence her present misery.

Turning now to the three passages read, we notice first that each was written by a priest: Jeremiah and Ezekiel sprang from the stock of Aaron, while John the beloved had received "the mighty ordination of the pierced Hands" and was a priest by special creation of the Risen Lord. (Rev. I. 6: 13, 17.)

Then we see that all three deal with the subject of "eating the Word of God."

1. At Anathoth, the young prophet-priest Jeremiah, scorned and rejected by his people, walking as a lamb going to its doom, found the word and ate it, so that it became the joy and rejoicing of his heart. (Jer. XI:19, XV:10, 16.)

2. Beside the canal Chebar, blinded by the glory of the Man seated upon the sapphire throne, Ezekiel saw a hand extended from the midst of the terrible crystal and from

the center of the amber spot: from that hand a roll was stretched forth and a voice from heaven told him: "Son of man, hear what I say unto thee. be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house; open thy mouth and eat that I give thee." (Ezek.1:22, 27, 2:9.) The servant opens his mouth, is caused to eat the roll, and finds that it is as honey for sweetness: from that starting point begins his ministry of shadow and sunshine, of gloom and of glory.

3. In the third case, we must pass from Palestine and Babylon to an island in the Aegean Sea, and there John the exile sees a mighty angel descending from the sky holding in his hand a little book.

This vision demands a few words of explanation. There can be no question that, although the glory is veiled under an angelic form, it is the One Who was once made "a little lower than the angels" and Who has "inherited a more excellent name than they" who is in view.

The four marks given simply force us to recognize that this is Christ the Lord of glory, and not a mere creature.

First, He is arrayed with a cloud, the familiar sign of the divine presence from the days of Moses onwards: then a rainbow rests upon His head as the symbol of the grace of the gospel based upon Calvary; John has already seen that rainbow upon the head of Him that sat upon the throne (Chap. IV.) so that he will not mistake Who it is. We notice that it is only a bow and that no arrow is seen, because that was discharged once and forever on the day when "the archers sorely grieved him and shot at him." (Gen. XLIX, 23; Job XVI, 13; VI, 4.) The face of the Mighty One is "as the sun" and must have carried the mind of John back to the day when he had seen the Lord on the Holy Mount; this detail is recorded by Matthew alone. Finally, His feet are like pillars of fire, as if reminding us that it is He who led His people like a flock through the wilderness, dividing the waters before them and sheltering them behind the pillar of fire and the cloud. (Isa. LXIII, 11-14.)

On reaching the earth the Angel plants His right foot upon the sea, thus claiming the restless nations as His inheritance, (Ps. II, 8 and Rev. XVII, 15.) and sets His left upon the land, and so asserts His right to reign over Palestine, the glory of all lands. After this, he roars like a lion, proclaiming that no one shall turn Him aside from His purpose (Prov. XXX, 30.), and after seven thunders have uttered their voices, John is told to approach and to take the book which lay open in the Angel's hand.

As he moves to obey he is warned that the reading or eating of the roll will make his belly bitter, but that it will be in his mouth as sweet as honey. The first effect of the truth is always sweetness and enjoyment, but as we learn that it isolates and separates us from the world's way and society, it becomes bitter enough in actual experience, and furthermore, since it reveals God's

judgment upon others, we are driven to prophecy over many peoples and nations and tongues and Kings. (Rev. X, II. R. V.) Such is the majestic setting of the divine bestowal, and from the parable we turn to its deep and serious meaning, as witnessing to the worth of the heavenly gift itself.

Three points suggest themselves to my mind:

The history of the "little book"

The first reference in Scripture to a written revelation carries us back to Ex. XVII, 14, where Jehovah commands Moses, after the defeat of Amalek, "to write this for a memorial in a book." From that moment began its recorded growth, a living treasure lying up on the threshold of the temple of Time; first written on the stones by Moses, engraved on plaster by Joshua, and later still, inscribed on parchment papyrus and vellum. In its earliest form it was given in Hebrew, then Chaldee and Greek, and finally was translated into Latin, where it lay embalmed in a dead language for centuries, until at last, by songs of Caedmon and by the laborious scholarship of the Venerable Bede, the ice of prejudice melted, and it was set free from its prison cell.

From the seventh to the seventeenth centuries version after version was poured forth from pen and press until in 1611 our Authorized Version, with its incomparable felicities of phrase, saw the light. Since these days, the long series has been crowned by two noble and accurate monuments of modern scholarship and piety: first, the Revised Version (of England and America) and then the New Translation by J. N. Darby, perhaps the greatest constructive theologian who has arisen since the Apostle Paul. Both of these bear the date of 1881, and the latter has certain great advantages over the former.

First, all the divine names found in the Hebrew text are carefully distinguished, and for the first time the English reader can weigh the respective meanings of El Eloah, Elohim, etc.

Secondly, in the New Testament, the rival authorities for each disputed reading are given in a footnote, so that the simplest Christian has the material for forming his own judgment as to the validity or probable accuracy of any change made in the translation.

Thirdly, there is an introduction to the Bible as a whole, giving the gist of the essential message of each book in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures; this is a feature that no preacher can afford to overlook.

Reverting to our own Authorized Version, a work which is not likely to be supplanted, nor to wane in its power, it may be of interest if I quote some words spoken by my beloved Sovereign, King George the Fifth, in connection with the celebrations held in the Albert Hall, London, to commemorate the three hundredth anniversary of the King James Bible. His Majesty's speech included the following paragraph.

"This glorious and memorable achievement, coming like a broad beam of light across the darkness, has freely given to the whole English-speaking people the right and the power to search but for themselves the truths and consolations of our faith.

During three hundred years the multiplying millions of the Anglo-Saxon races, spreading ever more widely over the surface of the globe, have turned in hours of need to the grand simplicities of the Authorized Version, and have drawn upon its inexhaustible springs of wisdom, courage, and joy."

The influence of the "little book"

Under this heading I propose to consider to what extent the Bible has interwoven itself into the fabric of the life of the nations of Northern Europe and America, in contrast with the moral and ethical condition of races which are oppressed by Roman tyranny or pagan darkness.

The history of a nation is focussed in its cities, and its civic activities are expressed in its buildings; of these latter there are four distinct kinds within a modern city.

First, the homes or centers of domestic life; then, the stores or shops of commerce; after these, the halls of intellect (such as schools, universities, and places of entertainment) and finally, buildings which connect us with what is spiritual or religious, as for instance, churches, hospitals, and cemeteries.

The visitor to a great city first passes through suburbs, consisting of long lines of private dwellings, structures usually modest and humble, and in these, men, women, and children live, eat, and sleep. In lands unlit by Holy Scripture, such as India, China, and the Congo, family life is darkly shadowed by fear and superstition; little children are flung into the Ganges, aged parents are exposed to the terrors of the jungle and the jackal, whilst a wife is simply a tool or toy to be sold for drink or divorced at the slightest pretext; according to the Koran, a badly cooked meal would be a sufficient reason for dismissing a wife. If we mount the steps of a Christian home, we find the husband and wife standing side by side in the regal beauty of a true and God-fearing union; he in humble joy, she in the sacred radiance of life's purest bliss. At their feet lies a cradle, and if we ask how it is that the wife's position is secure and that the child's life and welfare are protected, the answer will be that the sharp sword of the Word of God has safeguarded the sanctity of the home and has ensured the permanence of Christian marriage. Penetrating further towards the center of the city we find the emblems of commerce: stores, factories, offices, and warehouses. In South American lands, trade is a tissue of fraud and misrepresentation, which begins at the dockside in the Customs and continues until the article has crossed the

trader's counter. In America or England, business rests upon broad foundations, based upon mutual confidence and secure standards of credit. The Word has said that a false balance is an abomination to Jehovah, and wherever its sentence has reached, there men have bowed to it, and commercial security and prosperity have followed.

Here and there in the city we notice certain structures dedicated to the intellectual or mental life of the citizens. There are town halls, theatres, concert halls, lecture rooms and senates; after making every allowance for obvious defects, we can thank God that in our country the nation's pleasures and leisured pursuits are infinitely cleaner and more sober than those which disfigure areas outside the influence of an open Bible. It is to "the broad beam of light" flung upon the moral and mental darkness of the Middle Ages that we owe the dignity of modern government, the relative purity of our pleasures, and the patient power of the teacher's trade.

Lastly, there are the centers and symbols of religion and compassion: the hospital, preaching places, the orphanages, and "God's acres." Each of these serves to put our minds with Eternity.

Again we admit the confusion of our theological strifes and heresies, but let us imagine the blank pall of fear which would descend upon us if we banished the Bible from our pulpits and if we could no longer say, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," as we stand beside our open graves!

If such were the case, our preachers would become mere moralists, our Ministry descend to pre-Reformation darkness, and our grave yards would become swamps of stagnant woe and unrelieved gloom.

This is the briefest summary of the weight and significance of "the Gift," and there only remains for us to consider whether we are willing, like Ezekiel and his fellows, to "eat the roll" or not.

For my own part, I am convinced that unless the living Word is once more restored to its high pre-eminence and set upon its proper pedestal of reverence and authority, we shall simply produce in the next few years a generation of men and women without moral standards or spiritual perceptions.

Our only safety lies in binding our souls to a crusade having for its aim the recovery of our rapidly diminishing inheritance, and this can only be achieved by the ceaseless preaching and teachings of the oracles of God in the power of the Holy Ghost.

With this end in view we must read the Bible in our homes lest our children cease to fear God or to obey us; lest we open the flood-gates of lawless thinking which will undermine married love, destroy parental control, and turn all our prosperity to ashes, whether that be expressed in terms of things material or spiritual. We must en-

throne the sovereign Word in our business houses, or else we shall be found adopting the merciless, deceitful and relentless maxims which so often degrade modern commerce.

In the lower orders of Nature, wolves, rats and crocodiles live by laws of supply and demand, but the men who are signed by the Cross of Christ must be governed by kindlier motives and higher standards.

The Book must shed its grateful shadow over the intellectual and spiritual centers of our nation, we may well pray God to bring the Bible back from its exile from many of our schools, and that it may be lifted from the dust and dishonor of the Modernism of our Universities; we must carry it into our hospitals, and proclaim it from our pulpits as those who believe that its presence is Salvation and its absence is death.

Finally, the Word must supremely control our Assemblies; there is grave peril lest by the abuse of the hymn book, the Bible should be ousted from its central place.

To this end, let elder brethren arrange from time to time that definite meetings shall be held in which Scripture shall be unfolded book by book, and where the doctrines of our faith shall be carefully expounded by competent teachers.

In the Library of the City of Paris there is preserved a picture sketched upon the margin of a priceless manuscript written on parchment.

It represents the Council of Constantinople, which met in the year 381 A. D. and was occupied with certain heresies as to the procession of the Holy Ghost, and the will of Jesus Christ.

In the foreground hundreds of clergy are seen; at the back is a semi-circle of seats thronged with bishops and higher prelates, and in the center stands the Emperor Theodosius beside a throne.

On that throne there is nothing but a roll of Holy Scripture, set there as a silent witness to the supremacy of the Word and to the faith of the Council that nothing but the Book must decide the doctrine and the duty of the Church.

Said the Angel "Eat the Book." Let us obey!