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Great Britain's part
in the world war

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Great Britain's Part in the World War

A SERMON



Preached in Trinity Church, New York

BY THE RECTOR

William T. Manning, S. T. D.

on the

Fourth Anniversary of
Great Britain's Entrance
into the War

Sunday, August 4th, 1918

Printed by Request

Great Britain's Part in the World War.

"This day shall be unto you for a memorial."

Exodus XII. 14.

This is not a day of rejoicing. That will come later when we meet, as we shall meet in due time, to offer up our thanksgivings for peace restored, and assured, by overwhelming victory for the right. That day may still be long in coming. But as there is a just God in heaven it is certain to come, and the good news now reaching us from the front leads us to hope that it may arrive more quickly than it would be safe or wise for us to anticipate.

But though not a day for rejoicing, this fourth of August is one of the greatest days of the world's history. It is a day which all who love right and freedom will keep ever in remembrance. It is the day on which a mighty people—a people linked to us by ties nearer than any other—heard the call of honour, and of duty, and answered it without stopping to count the cost.

On this day four years ago Great Britain met the challenge that was flung at her, and threw all the power of her vast empire into the fight for liberty and civilization. We all know now what would have happened if Britain had hesitated, or held back. The whole world knows what Britain has done in these four fateful years. The Prussian enemy has borne sincere testimony to Britain's part in the struggle, by the special hatred with which he has honoured her. That hatred is the truest tribute that Britain could have received, and it is one which America seems now privileged to share with her.

We Americans recognize and pay honour without stint to the splendid deeds of all our allies in this war. We

stand in reverence before the sublime heroism of noble France; before the supreme courage and sacrifice of the martyr nation, Belgium; before the valor and the great achievements of dauntless Italy; before the sufferings of brave, unconquerable Serbia. But the debt that we, and all who love freedom, owe to the British Empire, is one that holds its own great place in the world's gratitude, and that can never be repaid nor forgotten. What words can express the debt that we, and the world, owe at this moment, and have owed during these four years to the British Fleet, keeping its ceaseless watch for all of us in the grey North Sea?

From the first week of the war Britain has poured out her treasure and her blood without limit in the cause that is common to us all. It is Britain's blockade that has held the German Fleet captive in the safety of the harbour from which it has scarcely dared to emerge. It is Britain's ships that have cleared the seas of every German vessel, save only the undersea pirates who war on women and children and shoot defenseless sailors in their boats; and these foul craft are now largely controlled, thank God, with the aid which our own gallant Navy is proud to render. It is British transports that have carried across the ocean sixty per cent. of the army of our noble boys now in France, where they have made such a glorious beginning, and have brought such unshakable confidence to our war-worn allies. It is British destroyers which have helped in large part to convoy these transports in safety. It is the men of Britain who came voluntarily from all parts of the earth to fight for freedom beneath her flag, and to form the greatest volunteer army the world has ever seen. It is Britain, a million of whose brave sons lie to-day in soldiers' graves, and whose casualties during the great drive of last March numbered forty thousand or more each separate week.

Like ourselves, when the German assault came, Britain had no army for aggressive war. She was as unprepared on land as we were. She did not expect nor desire war, nor believe that it could come in this age. She had far less time to prepare for the great ordeal than we have had. For her own preservation and for the preservation of freedom, she was forced to leap into the breach all unarmed as she was. Without Great Britain's aid, France would have been beaten down and overcome. It was she and France together who held the monster at bay. It was Britain's action which gave us Americans time, and allowed us to enter the struggle under conditions far better than those which she herself had faced. And let us never forget the honour that is justly and distinctively due to England. It was England, the mother land, who made the great decision which saved honour and good faith among nations from utter wreck and discredit. If England had faltered, or failed, the history of this war would have been a history of shame, and the outlook for mankind would have been darkened for centuries to come. But England did not hesitate. She upheld the highest standard of right and justice. She saved the very foundations of good faith among nations. We thank God this day that England did not fail to do her duty.

With good reason, gladly, and with our whole hearts, we join in commemorating the day of Britain's entrance into the war. We acknowledge the great debt that we owe to the British Navy, to those intrepid sailors whom our French brethren have recently called "the unseen and silent conquerors" of Germany on the sea, and we honour no less the splendid services of the equally heroic men of her merchant marine. We pay to-day our tribute to the officers and men, heroes all, of that first Expeditionary Force who went forward instantly against un-

numbered odds to certain death; who made the retreat from Mons one of the most glorious pages in all military history, who bore their splendid part in the first great battle of the Marne, who will bear forever the immortal name of "Britain's contemptible little army."

We pay our tribute equally to the vast army of free men which has followed that first little force and which shares to the full its tradition and its spirit; that army of seven million men fighting on every front throughout the world; that army, a marvel in its creation, which we associate with the name of Kitchener, and also with the name of Douglas Haig.

We pay our tribute to the five million British women who are giving themselves in this conflict with devotion and heroism equal to that of their men.

On this solemn anniversary we offer to Great Britain our pledge of appreciation, of comradeship, and of brotherhood. We send this message to her King, to her Government, and to the men and women of her great free Empire.

1. We give honour beyond measure, admiration without reserve, to your whole people for the part that you have played in these four years. In your great deeds, in the marvellous courage with which you have met the test, we feel a special pride, for you are not only our brethren in arms, we are bound to you by other and still deeper ties. We thank God that our men are now fighting beside you and our brethren of France. They will be with you in ever increasing numbers until the stern task is completed. We shall give our whole life and power as a people to this struggle. Never in any war that we have fought have our people been so united, so determined, so wholly certain of the righteousness of their cause as in this war.

2. The American people will never listen to any proposal to end this war except by complete and decisive victory on the battle-field. We want the little group of unreasoning Pacifists in Great Britain to know that their views will find no support from the United States, and that their suggestions of peace by negotiation with the Prussian power arouse in us only moral disgust. We do not understand men who talk of bartering with the power which holds Belgium captive, which still has its brutal, merciless hand on France, which holds Russia in its treacherous toils, and whose avowed object is to subjugate the world. We are not going to barter with Germany. With Britain, and our other allies, we are going to dictate to Germany the terms of a just peace, and we are going to compel her, hereafter, to keep the peace. The man who is willing to listen to any compromise in this struggle, the man who feels no burning indignation and wrath against the crimes and outrages that Germany has committed, and is still to-day committing, that man, whoever he may be, is one who has suffered some strange weakening of his moral sense and of his manhood.

The teaching of these Pacifists is disregard of justice and treason to mankind. It is not advocacy of peace, it is betrayal of peace and encouragement of war. We will hear of no peace by negotiation with a power which respects no treaty and regards no law in heaven or on earth. As President Wilson has said, so long as Germany is controlled by her present rulers no nation on earth can take her word. We want peace. This is our one and only desire. But we know that until the Prussian Military power is broken there can be no peace. No real lover of peace, no man who cares at all for justice, can want an inconclusive ending to this war. Because we want peace we will listen to no word of peace with an undefeated and unrepentant Prussia.

To the American people the ending of this war by decisive victory is a matter of determined resolve and of deep religious conviction.

3. It is the hope, the prayer, and the firm purpose of us Americans, that out of this great struggle shall come a league and brotherhood of nations that shall maintain justice, and preserve peace. The sure basis and foundation for this is full fellowship among the English speaking peoples throughout the world. And already the war has brought this fellowship to pass. The old Anti-British feeling which had place among us in this land is gone, we hope, forever. It is not now even tolerated among us. It was fostered by some elements of our population, and during the days of our neutrality it was eagerly exploited by the German propagandists. But like the rest of their propaganda it failed to influence us. To-day it is branded among us as it deserves. Every loyal American to-day is, and must be, loyal to all our allies. And the war has made us glory as never before in our close ties with Britain,—the tie of a common language, the tie of common principles and ideals, the tie of a common heritage of liberty, the tie still, in large degree, of stock and of blood.

The fellowship and brotherhood of the English speaking peoples does not need to be artificially created, nor arranged by treaty; it exists as a fact, and, please God, it will ever endure. This fellowship has no selfish aim nor purpose. It will seek no sordid advantage for itself, but only the common good of all. It will be the guarantee of right and freedom to men everywhere. It is the basis, already prepared, for a true world-brotherhood, including all freedom-loving peoples, whatever tongue they speak. We hope that this true brotherhood of nations will be the great result of the war, and its greatest compensation.

In it there will be place for all. There will be place in it even for Germany herself, later on, when she has fully learned her lesson, when she has evacuated Belgium, restored Alsace-Lorraine to France, made reparation and restitution so far as possible for the great wrongs that she has committed, and renounced forever her monstrous schemes of world domination.

This is the vision that we have before us—the brotherhood not only of the English speaking peoples, but of all the nations of the world. And Great Britain and all our allies share this vision with us. To it we have now consecrated ourselves completely. We know that this purpose has the blessing and approval of Almighty God, for it means the fuller coming in this world of the Kingdom of His Son. Side by side with Britain, and with all our allies, we shall strive, and pray, and fight with our whole might that it may be realized.



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