

WHEN THE WORLD IS ON FIRE

And Other Evangelistic Messages

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CHAPTER TWO

Go Back, America

No one can consider the history of the United States without realizing that we have been blessed of GOD in an extraordinary way.

This nation of ours is the only nation in recorded history which has never had to sue an enemy for peace. Never except of its own free will has it given up one inch of territory to another nation. During its 180 years of existence, while the world has witnessed tremendous upheavals - political, economical, and industrial - in every other great nation on earth, this government has not undergone one major change.

Despite all the faults of our country, the foundation that was laid in our early years - the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the system of checks and balances which characterize the various branches of our government that were introduced by our founding fathers - remains the same. Surely those men who launched the Ship of State two centuries ago were led of GOD! They built far better than they knew.

I think of my own experience in coming to this country from Russia. Having only the equivalent of one year in high school, I found myself at a total loss because of my lack of knowledge of the English language. But the opportunity to learn was open. For me, from that time on, it was a headlong race to get an education. First it was grade school, then preparatory school, then university, then law school - I was filled with an insatiable desire for knowledge. And yet it was not so much for the sake of knowledge as it was "to get ahead." I was living for myself. There was no time for games or vacations - only time for study. And it came rather hard, though teachers helped me. Uniformly kind and patient, they were veritable mines of information. To me, America was a seven days' wonder.

I thought to myself, how did America differ from the old country? Was it in its tremendous land area? But Russia was larger by far, being nearly four million square miles larger than this country. What made it so different? Could it be its resources, its natural wealth, salubrious climate, rainfall, mighty rivers, great lakes, mountains of iron, layers upon layers of coal, gold, silver, flowing rivers of oil? But Russia was rich beyond dreams in all these.

Was it mechanical skill, inventive genius, a land girdled with lines of commerce, belted with giant industries? But then there was Germany. Germany had the best steel, the best glass, the best precision instruments, plastics, synthetics before we had them, and later on guided missiles! Americans traveled to Germany to polish off their know-how. Surely, I thought, there must be

some other reason for the greatness of this golden land.

Then came my own personal conversion to CHRIST, a spiritual upheaval in which my whole outlook changed. Time was taken for reanalysis, restudy, re-evaluation of crammed-in knowledge - so much of it second hand. Then I knew.

What caused these thirteen colonies, in a little over four lifetimes, to achieve such titanic growth? It was this: America was founded on the Atlantic seaboard by men, women, families who sought *lebenstraum* - living room - not so much for their bodies as for their souls, not to discover the Fountain of Youth, but to gain the privilege of worshipping the Most High GOD in freedom and in truth.

Those stalwart people, saturated with the Word of GOD, recognized the lordship of Jehovah. There was a conviction in their souls that the purpose of man was "to glorify GOD and to enjoy Him forever." With all due respect to the Plymouth Rock, the stone on which America was founded was the Bible.

Christianity, the Book, the Church, prayers, sermons, the salvation of souls, the dedicated lives of Christian believers, meant everything to these early American colonists. Meeting houses were built almost as rapidly as homes. Yet one thing more was needed - a trained ministry. Then those God-fearing ones grouped together, sacrificed their meager funds and started universities like Harvard and Princeton and Yale - for the purpose of training men for the Christian ministry.

Today, unfortunately for us, the Dewey humanist philosophy has taken over our educational system. But in the beginning it was not so.

Schools, colleges, universities, technical institutes, far flung across the length and breadth of our republic - these, under GOD, are the factors which, more than other contributory advantages, are responsible for the achievements of our land. Atheists could not have done this kind of a job. They never have. Agnostics could never have accomplished this. They never have. Liberals, modernists, rationalists have never even attempted it. Instead, termite fashion, they have crept into our institutions, befouling the nests where they were nursed, undermining the glorious privileges and opportunities which were bequeathed to them.

It was not education alone, to be sure, that helped to make this nation what it is. It was education rooted in GOD, in CHRIST, in the Bible, in the Church, in the tenets of Christianity, that brought growth, greatness, and glory to this favored land. What else? How else? What other single reason can be found that has made this western democracy what it is today?

We Christians have nothing to be ashamed of when we face the industrialists, the military leaders, the statesmen, the politicians, the educators, who so glibly arrogate to themselves the plaudits of the world for making America great. They came into the picture later, much later. They built an a foundation already laid in the dedicated, patriotic, self-denying sacrifices of the pioneers who brought CHRIST with them to that rocky Atlantic seaboard.

All honor to them! By the side of the statues, the busts, the portraits of the Hancocks, the Madisons, and the Adamses, we place those of the Jonathan Edwardses, the Roger Williamses, and the David Brainerds.

All praise to the Whigs, the Federalists, the Democrats, and the Republicans. But do not forget the Puritans, the Baptists, the Presbyterians, and the Methodists. They also served, and served well, and the record is written for all to see. Probably more than any others they kept the Ship of State on an even keel.

What is the picture today? Today America is in the greatest danger of its history, not only from the outside, but from the inside. Patriotism has cheapened. Moral standards have degenerated. The almighty dollar is worshiped. Christianity, the Bible, GOD and His CHRIST have been legalized out of our schools. The fear of GOD is ridiculed, painted over, explained away by a pseudo-psycho-religious Pollyanna philosophy that out-Coues Coue.

GOD is being limned as the cosmic Errand Boy. The Bible is presented as a book of auto-suggestion texts, affirmations of which will surely bring health, wealth, happiness. Even in evangelical circles people are being told that "getting right with GOD" and "paying your tithe" will make anyone rich. Yet how many we know, tithe-givers for many years, who have never even come close to being wealthy!

America is in danger - serious danger. Standards in the business world, in politics, in education, in science, in arts and (GOD save the mark!) in religion are not GOD's standards. The test of success today would seem to be a good position, a fine home, money in the bank, the best restaurants, sirloin steaks, and expensive suits.

The Cadillac is supplanting the Cross as the sign of rightness with GOD, the symbol of having GOD as your "silent Partner." Paul is not in tune with the times in his cry that he "**may know... the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.**" Weakly we profess our love for the Lord JESUS CHRIST, our concern for the souls of men. As someone has said with stinging aptness, "We are suffering in comfort."

And yet, in spite of these things, do not sell America short.

America is still possessed of an unbounded zest for living, an enthusiasm, a responsiveness to challenge, an eagerness for adventure, a heroic abandon. Put the old time appeal back into Christianity! Make it not a fire insurance policy to guarantee safety from hell, but a battle to the death against Apollyon and the forces of the pit! Then see what happens!

The same boys who, glib talking and zoot-suited, seemed without a serious care or thought in the world, three times in less than two generations - in Flanders Fields, at Iwo Jima, Tarawa, Bataan, the Battle of the Bulge, Heartbreak Ridge - offered their lives "to make the world safe for democracy," and to purchase the four freedoms. These boys loved not their lives to the death to guarantee a place in the sun for what? For tiny Korea, situated half way around the world from Broadway!

Do not sell America short. Yes, tidal waves of dollars are being spent in drink, tobacco, cosmetics, sports, entertainments, and we lament. But recall that our land is putting more money into the hands of the Son of GOD in local church work, in missionary offerings, in the propagation of the Gospel, than any generation has ever done in all the glorious history of

Christian sacrifice.

Do not sell America short. Our seminaries, Bible schools, Christian universities and colleges see more students enrolling with every passing year, multitudes of them training for the work of the Lord. And there would be even more were there more room, more endowments, more opportunities for those whose hearts burn within them with the desire to go all out for the Lord, but who are limited by economic needs or family responsibilities.

Do not sell America short. Those five lads, hardly grown into young manhood, who took their splendid lives in their hands and offered them to the Lord and the service of their fellow men and were martyred by the Auca Indians, compare favorably with any of the commemorated dead in all the annals of Christian witness. There was no outside compulsion upon them. There was burning in them the holy double constraint of a passion for JESUS CHRIST and an equally wholehearted compassion for those who walk in the outer darkness of sin's night.

Do not sell America short. Think of those five heroes, some of whom left behind their young wives and their precious babes with whom they had hardly become acquainted. Follow those young widows now. Did they mourn? Of course! Were they sad? Of course! Were they lonely? Of course! Did they have some misgiving as to the shadowy future? Of course! But see them, heads held high, tears held back, courage undaunted, pleading with the Christian world to have compassion for those benighted savage killers.

Then see several of them going right back to the Blood stained sands where their husbands gave up their lives to carry on the work! Surely once again the Blood of the martyrs will prove to be the seed of the Church.

GOD will not abandon us. What we need is not fear, but fervor; not the counsel of cowardice, but the consecration of courage; not attitudes or actions of weakness, but advance and attack of war - all-out war - for CHRIST and His kingdom.

My fellow Christians, America is worth praying for, paying for, preaching for, living for, dying for. What our men and boys have done in the carnage of Bloody battle to protect mundane, temporary things, it is ours to do in even nobler sacrificial devotion for the Prince of Peace, for the souls of those for whose eternal welfare He paid so heavy a price.

II Chronicles 7:14 is still in the Book: "**If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.**"

There is no room or reason for despair, but a calling rather for a new devotion, a higher dedication to bring America back to the pierced feet of the CHRIST.

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