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THE CHALLENGE OF INTOLERANCE

ADDRESS

by

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at the

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For many of the human family, the period we live in is one of heartbreak and tragedy. Helplessly, the humble, unknown thousands whose only wants are bread and peace, see their homelands overrun by invading armies, their homes and fields ravaged by the lightning strokes of war. Life for them is a nightmare of destruction and hate, too horrible to be believed, if it were not that the harsh facts lie before their eyes.

In such an era, earnest efforts on the other side of the ledger--endeavors to find and to build homes for the homeless and oppressed--must come to all men of good will as a source of cheer and encouragement. I am grateful for the opportunity to visit with you who are engaged in such a movement.

To one like myself who was brought up from early childhood to read and revere the Bible as the Book of books, Palestine is not simply a distant country, nor are the people who first made it the Holy Land, simply another race. The Land of the Book and the People of the Book are peculiarly part of the religious heritage of civilized men.

And so it is that your efforts to help build a sanctuary for the harried and homeless of the Jewish people have a mighty appeal to those of us of other faiths and races who still find refuge, when the world about us seems the darkest, in the spiritual teachings of the humble prophets who dwelt in Zion and in Galilee many centuries ago.

We recall that America itself came into being at the hands of harried and homeless people, searching for the blessings of peace and freedom. Remembering their great struggle, we sympathize the more with this effort of yours to create in Palestine a haven of refuge and a center of culture where your kith and kin, free from oppression and persecution, can find life and peace in the land of their forefathers.

The particular tasks which you have set for yourselves are necessitated, and at the same time complicated, by external events. We are living through a dark and emergent period in the world's history. Unquestionably it is a period of transition and change, although the exact nature of the transition and change is something that few of us know enough to understand or are wise enough to foretell.

Men and women every where are haunted by a feeling of insecurity, of helplessness to protect the things they cherish most. And yet, while their present state is so unhappy, they also have a fear of change, and of the unforeseeable and unknowable consequences of change. They fear that change, instead of bringing them greater security, will take away the things they want most to keep.

We live, therefore, amid the clash of social and economic forces which at times become motivated more by passion and fear than by reason and knowledge. The forces of discontent, mistaking change for progress, attack what is good as well as what is bad in the established order of things. To achieve change for the sake of change and the aggrandizement of their own power they would trample over other men's religion and other men's freedom to think and say what they believe. On the other hand, forces, fearing change or having a vested interest against change, blindly defend what is bad as well as what is good in the established order of things. To prevent change and to stop the stars in their courses, they would deny other men political liberty and economic opportunity, and would crush all efforts to appeal to reason or even to God.

The forces of enlightenment today are not those which resist all change or the forces which favor any change. They are, instead, the forces which seek to achieve, in time, such improvements in the established order of things as may be necessary to protect in a moving world the gains which civilized men through centuries of struggle have acquired.

That, essentially, is the aim of the forces of enlightenment, the forces of religion and true conservatism, without regard to political partisanship, in this country and other countries where the lamps of reason have not been extinguished.

But in large sections of the world where the lamps of reason have gone out or have flickered low, the enlightened effort to improve the lot of all men has given way to a resurgence of bigotry and intolerance as cruel and as barbarous as history has ever recorded. And today, as in the olden time, it is the Jewish people--homeless and so the least able to defend themselves--who have suffered first and suffered the hardest. Once again, they have served as the most readily available scapegoats for those who accept force as their gospel and find virtue in refusing to be guided by the laws of reason or the laws of God.

But the world will make a grave mistake if from these facts it concludes that the revival of intolerance is primarily or peculiarly a Jewish problem. For already it is apparent that the Jews are serving not merely as a scapegoat but as a smoke-screen to conceal more aggressive designs of power-mad men. Already those who started out and who continue to bait the Jews are baiting Protestants and Catholics whenever they find that they have the force to succeed and that the loot makes their effort worth while. The worship of force is not only anti-Jewish, it is anti-Christian, it is a

revelt against reason and God.

This is not a lesson for Europe alone, or simply for lands other than our own. It is a lesson that Americans, also, need to learn and to carry with them through life as an inseparable part of their citizenship.

For the virus of anti-Semitism has made itself felt here as well as abroad.

The purveyors of hatred, the provokers of division and strife, the swaggering apostles of force and violence, are methodically and with premeditation laboring to bring to the United States the same conditions of group hatred and civil war that have destroyed the peace of Europe. Treacherously, they camouflage their true nature by representing themselves to the unwary as defenders of God, America, and the Constitution. Unscrupulously, they stir up riots in the city streets, they intimidate peaceful citizens, they invade meetings, and they peddle as truth the malicious lies which people of their ilk have invented to blacken those whom they hate.

Some of this professional hate-mongering, government can and will combat through the laws of the land. But in the main, American democracy must look for its defense to the wisdom of the people and their determination not to be led on the paths that have taken other peoples to communism and fascism.

Not guns nor battle ships will ultimately preserve democracy, but the devotion of a people who have the good sense to realize that intolerance is no respecter of persons-- that once unleashed it has no regard for religion or race or economic status, or least of all, for that dignity of the individual which lies at the basis of our civilization. Democracy in America will be saved if, as a people, we are wise enough to know that if we do not respect other's faiths, the day may come when other men will not respect our faiths.

The refugee problem is not a problem of or for any one race or religion, it is a challenge to civilized man the world over. In helping to give your people or any people a chance to live a free life in a free country, we are helping to do our part to preserve justice and liberty in a civilized world. We are not merely relieving suffering and distress, we are helping to preserve for ourselves and our posterity those ideas and spiritual values without which life would be a barren and brutish thing.

There are some things in this era of transition on which we all cannot agree--some matters of national policy about which there are bound to be honest differences of opinion.

But there is one question of policy that should not and must not divide us. Should it eventually do so, the end of American democracy will not be far behind.

That policy is the creed of tolerance which for a century and a half has sustained civil liberty and representative government in this land.

There is no hope for us in turning away from that policy. And those who preach that we will prosper by doing so preach a black and destructive doctrine. They preach a doctrine that is the betrayal of everything that the Fathers of the Republic hoped and planned for. They preach a philosophy that can bring nothing but hate and misery and ruin to this nation which has become great only through harmony and mutual faith among those who built it.

America was not built by anti-Semitism, or anti-Protestantism, or hatred for the Catholics, or by the fantastic doctrines of racial superiority that are practiced elsewhere. America was built to greatness by a partnership of men and women who represent every race and nationality that inhabits the globe. The good things of life that you and I enjoy we owe not to Catholics alone, or Jews alone, or Englishmen or Irish alone -- we do not owe them to Aryans or non-Aryans alone, or to white or black alone -- we owe them to all God's children of every color and nation and creed -- to all God's children whom He loves each alike with that same love which "passeth all understanding."

What folly, what awful tragedy, what disloyalty, to talk of dissolving that God-inspired partnership now when democracy needs it most!

America's mission is not the propagation of hate. Our mission is that of helping to prove that only in peace and brotherhood will men find happiness on this earth. Our mission is to show that by reasonable and peaceful means, men of different natures can build a common security in which justice and liberty are denied to none.

To those who ask if we are worthy of such an errand, let us give the answer of a nation united in its friendship for those who are oppressed, disdainful of any who would take away from us the matchless blessing of our friendship for each other.