

ORATION

FOR

INTER-SOCIETY CONTEST,

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY.

History is the story of past events. It deals with the individuals, it deals with the masses. It delves into all the ramifications of a nation's life; it surveys the whole. It deciphers the prevailing spirit of an age, and presents to posterity its true likeness.

It is one thing to make a simple record of the events transpiring in a nation's life; it is another thing to explain the causes which have shaped the events of national history. He who does the former work is a mere scribe; he who performs the latter task is a philosopher. The former looks only at effects; the latter is only satisfied with tracing an event to its cause. The earnest seeker after truth wants not simply facts, but reasons. He wants history, but he demands more—the philosophy of history.

He who would unravel the tangled threads of human history must get hold of the right end. He who does not observe the struggle of humanity to regain its lost likeness to the Divine, will find history an unanswerable riddle. No more surely does the seed germinate into blossom and fruitage, or the chrysalis burst into a life that lifts it above the clouds, than man struggles from the curse of Eden back into the likeness of his God, when, full-crowned and sceptered, he shall subdue the earth and have dominion. There is an order and plan in man's march from the lowest to the highest. Made a "little lower than the angels," he is not to remain so. The Creator has a plan for his most highly endowed of earthly creatures; in other words, there is a *Providence* in human history. *This* is the key which unlocks the mystery. The philosophy of history is the using of this key. History is more than the mere record of human events. It is the blaze-marks by which may be traced the pathway of an exiled race back to its rightful throne, led by a Divine and fatherly hand.

It shall be our brief task to glance down the pathway of the ages, and recount, in merest outline, the progress made by the human race.

There are three clearly defined epochs, three periods of marked importance in the regeneration of our race. Man's first commun-

ion with his God marks the origin of history. The *word* there imparted was to be a lamp to his feet to brighten his pathway, until the Christian church, the second epoch, should be inaugurated. The *word* and the *power*, these two, mutually supporting each other, permeated society, culminating in that glorious *light* which the world afterwards received.

In the first epoch man had the *word* and the word was from God. That first revelation has come down to posterity. Man is conscious of his relations to his Creator. He is aware that he bears the stamp of royalty upon his brow, that he has been fashioned in the likeness and image of his God. But man is fallen, Eden is no longer his, and the intellectual splendor and moral eminence which were his have been lost. Henceforth the world shall be sunk in darkness and sin. Henceforth the light and radiance of Divine glory shall be withdrawn from the race, until the fullness of time shall have come and the promised Messiah shall have been given for the redemption and enthronement of mankind.

Among the nations of antiquity religious feeling found expression in manifold ways. Enthusiasm and moral excellence were not dependent upon martial glory and heroism; they were not the outgrowth of chivalry; otherwise the Persians, strong in character, indomitable in courage, would have been the medium for the transmission of Divine revelation; they were not dependent upon a knowledge of nature with all her mysteries, upon science with her profundity of research; otherwise the Egyptians would have gained pre-eminence; but the only path for unveiling the glories of the eternal world and the only one eminently salutary for mankind was that of patience and perseverance. Hence it was not the Persians, strong and mighty; it was not the Egyptians, deep and penetrative; but it was that politically insignificant, almost unknown Jewish nation, which was singled out as the agency of transmission, the exponents and torch-bearers of primitive revelation to all succeeding ages.

The thunderings of Sinai attract us, and behold, a Jewish theocracy is established. Judaism is to be the gulf stream of civilization. Upon its bosom are to be safely borne the institutions of Divine origin. Through all the heathenism and barbarism of the ages the sacred traditions are to be zealously preserved. Step by step, the race is precipitated into sin and immorality. The impenetrable gloom of moral darkness envelops the earth, but ever and anon shine forth a few bright stars, the mighty men of old, warning, with prophetic voice, a sin-cursed world. These pro-

phetic sayings stir the masses. Down the aisles of the generations, we behold the flaming torch of revelation, growing brighter and brighter, higher and higher, until in all its effulgent glory it shines in noon-day splendor over Judea, making twilight dawn in even heathen lands. A Messiah has been promised, a Saviour is to come. The world is being aroused from its lethargy, and as the fullness of time draws near, the nations of the earth prepare to hail their king. God, by Jewish prophets, has weaved for His Christ a garment of prophetic light.

Asia is monarch of all. The Persian dynasty rules in the might of its power. With surprising alertness she extends her tentacles over the adjoining peoples, but as a mighty conflagration soon wastes itself and disappears, so was it with Persia; and in darkness and heathenism we behold the last vestiges of the throne and empire of the once great king. By the hand of Alexander, God has crushed the dynasties of ancient Asia.

But look, across the waves! Athens becomes the birth-place and nursery of ^(the world) art, science and literature. She is the seat of culture, and when her sun has reached the zenith of its ^(existence) we gladly echo and re-echo her praises in joyful tones, for she has risen so supremely beautiful that her temples, her shrines, her works of art in their exquisite beauty and perfection have not been equaled in all history. Her language is the most perfect and expressive of all the babbling tongues of earth. The language of Greece has become the language of the civilized world. Even the old Jewish scriptures are translated into this language, which is more widely known in Palestine than the Hebrew tongue itself. God, by the genius of the Greeks, has cast a beautiful and universal medium for the message of His Son.

But, "westward the course of empire takes its way." Athens, the centre of culture, gives way to Rome, the centre of power. By her unwavering fortitude, by her unceasing activity, by her indefatigable perseverance, Rome has reached the highest pinnacle of temporal supremacy. Her legions have gone out into all the earth. By the power of the Roman empire, God has tramped a highway for the going forth of the messengers of His Son.

The prophets have prepared Judea, Alexander has removed the power of Asia, Greece has cast a beautiful medium for the words, and Rome has opened a highway for the feet of Him who is to guide a prodigal race back to its birth-right and its God. What period in all the world's history more advantageous for the coming of the new factor in the civilization of mankind! Who

will say that Providence is not in history! Who will thoughtfully affirm that through accident the world was prepared for the reception of this new kingdom of love! Greece and Rome existed but for Jerusalem! Culture and power were to be the instruments for the carrying out of the Hebrew hope!

The second great epoch in history occurs in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. There the apostles received their commission; there the Christian church was established and the *power* given through whose instrumentality the world was to be reclaimed. Pentecost was the beginning of a new era in human history. A new force appears destined to vitalize every avenue of life. Christian love, the animating power of the church, has come. The marvelous ascendancy of the church is not to be wondered at. Unlike Judaism, it was not narrowed by local ties; unlike Stoicism, it was not locked up in cold, passionless creeds; unlike the Egyptian religions, it presented to the world a pure, noble system of ethics. The gospel of the Nazarene is the living fountain of civilization, the repository of never-ending blessings to mankind. It forces its way through every portal, touching with transforming power every department of individual and national life.

The world was wrapt in the embrace of paganism; Christianity appeared like a bright glowing star in a firmament of sunless superstition. From its intrinsic nature it was speedily disseminated abroad. In the midst of unparalleled and indescribable persecutions, in the midst of untold hardships, even in spite of the real, though not apparent, drawback due to its alliance with the Roman state, this new force leavened all society and transformed the world in matters of morals and eternal hope.

After a while, upon the deserts of Arabia, a flaming sword appears. Urged on by myriads of votaries, it spreads over Asia, down into Egypt, across into Europe, and is now knocking at the very gates of Spain. But its vital force is spent. The Saracenic invasion is doomed, for marshalling her legions, Christianity, led by the incomparable Charles Martel, strikes her death-blow, and Mohammedanism with all the grandeur of its iconoclasm, soon ceases to be an invigorating and conquering power in the civilized world.

The supremacy of Rome was fast waning. Political dissolution had been effected. The Eternal City, drunk with the blood of nations, was tottering to its political grave. Infatuated by the lust of worldly eminence, the papacy accomplished the union of temporal and spiritual power, and gained the mastery over a world

shrouded by a midnight of blackest ignorance. But the beginning of the end had come. In the dispensation of Providence her mission as an agency in the regeneration of mankind had been fulfilled, for, lo! from the sun-kissed highlands of the north, pouring down upon the expiring mistress of the world, came those bold, intrepid warriors, burning with ardent love for liberty and law, and bringing to the gates of civilization many new factors to be incorporated into the body politic. The natural moral condition of the early Germans was eminently exalted, while her usages and customs were supremely susceptible to the harmonizing temper of Christianity, singularly more so than the despotic and licentious government of Rome.

However, following the advancing thousands in their journey through the oncoming years, we see the hand of Providence shaping the affairs of men. We trace the paths along which the world is to move and behold the preparation which the world is receiving for freedom from the yoke of the papacy. The mechanical world is on fire with energy. Individual judgment and freedom of thought are presenting to the world inventions of inestimable value and usefulness; inventions which, joined to the moral and intellectual influences at that time predominating, led to that grand climax, the reformation.

The exile of the Popes to Avignon marks the downfall of the papacy. The revival of learning, the rapid rise of modern languages, the restoration of the Greek, and the marvelous achievements upon the sea, fed the oncoming current destined to engulf the sinister influences disseminated by Rome.

Human opinions are ever changing. The idolized theories and thoughts of one age may appear exceedingly fallacious to a succeeding one. New ideas are the evolution of old ones; they are linked with the past, are in accord with the present, and contain the germs of the future. The beliefs and doctrines of the papacy had of necessity undergone material variations. The illiteracy of the masses was fast giving way under the strong intellectual impetus which the world received. The church felt its life blood ebbing away. It made a determined effort to regain its supremacy, but, alas! too late. The doctrine of its infallibility had been blasted. Enraged at its ill-success it prepared for a final struggle. Persecution fell on all sides, untold misery was undergone, the wrath of the church was unrelenting; and yet, notwithstanding the unabated furor with which the onsets of the church were made, notwithstanding the indescribable sufferings borne by countless thousands,

the current swelled and swelled, until, as a mighty ocean, bearing upon its crested waves liberty, freedom of thought, and freedom of the press, the Reformation flooded the world.

Not in vain had been the martyrdom of Huss and Jerome; not in vain had been the superhuman efforts of Luther and Wycliffe, Calvin and Melancthon; not in vain had been the matchless oratory of Savonarola. What a glorious work! What a fruitful mission! Working its way through the years the *word* and *power* have reached fruition and we behold the *light*, the third epoch in history. The *word*, the *power*, and the *light*. *Truth, Love and Liberty*, these three mutually unfolding and developing into each other present the true purport of history. We see a purpose, a plan—the *philosophy of history*!

The human mind clad in its verdant activity, and exulting in its regained freedom, has come forth from under the pall of darkness and superstition which had enveloped it. Wonderful were the achievements wrought! Wonderful the heights to which the mind climbed! With imperial majesty it walked the corridors of the sky, viewing the glories of the firmament, finding deeply imbedded in the dome of heaven myriads of stellar worlds, and remarking the symmetry and perfection of untold worlds, circling in their orbits in the outer depths!

The whole intellectual world has sprung forward with new life and light. The crusades are ended, that amazing conflict between two civilizations, rich in heroic exploits, displaying a chivalry full of honor and loyalty, and presenting to us a knight-hood worthy the most careful study. Early doomed to failure, nothing daunting, they long maintained a constant struggle with the East, but it sounded the death-knell of feudalism; for the iron grip with which it held society bound and helpless was perceptibly loosened, and in its stead were sown the seeds of popular institutions which were destined to play so important a part in the development of Europe.

Organization is the necessary condition of progress. Feudalism and the church were the bitterest opponents. National unity could alone have come through the crusades, for it united the masses in the one common cause of humanity. The confluence of the eastern and western worlds has been productive of inestimable value to succeeding ages. The impetus given to the mind at the dawning of the light has animated every avenue of life. The world has been electrified by its energy. As an expression of the mind's marvelous power, we find it in the possession of

that great document which bound England together by common national interests and a common national sympathy. Magna Charta, whose very name is emblematic of liberty, the solid foundation rock upon which has been reared the glorious statue of liberty, stands as a lasting monument to the heroism and patriotism which the mind, rejuvenated, instilled into a great nation's heart, causing it to throb in unison and directing it toward the achievement of those inalienable rights which have since blessed our race.

But, listen! from the placid waters of the Rhine across the continent to the glorious isles of the sea, swells a mighty chorus. It is not the Marseillaise; it is not the weird peans of barbarisms; but it is the mighty anthems of the free, singing to the world the melodious strains of protestantism. The yoke of catholicism has been rejected, and protestantism is in the ascendancy.

Up and down the highways of earth plods a weary wanderer, seeking aid at all the courts of Europe, Tired, discouraged, Spain is again importuned and success crowns his efforts. America, the heir of all the ages, is presented as the glorious fruition of his mission. And how providential it was! Catholicism, infuriated at the loss of its prey, prepares to crush out this new factor which has entered the world. The rack, the flame, all manner of persecution is endured for conscience sake. Many suffered martyrdom, glorying in the light which had come; many, exiled from home, roamed as strangers in a strange land; and many, oh! how many, following the beacon light of liberty, found a haven of rest upon the ice-bound coasts of New England! There has been but one Mayflower in history; there has been but one Plymouth Rock; and he indeed is blind, who, looking down from the watch-tower of the centuries, does not behold the marvelous manifestations of Providence in opening up at this very opportune time this western habitation for the pilgrims of earth who seek the purest freedom and the highest life.

Liberty is the consummate gift of the ages. It is peculiarly Anglo-Saxon, for ever since it emerged from the wilds of Germany it has been a conquering power. Magna Charta, the Bill of Rights, and our own glorious Constitution, the three great documents in history, have been the medium of many of Heaven's choicest blessings to mankind. Here upon this new battle-field is to be fought this conflict of the ages; here the mission of the Anglo-Saxon is to be wrought out; and in Faneuil Hall,

Hamilton in Faneuil Hall?

through the wonderful oratory and magnetism of Hamilton, the highest hopes of our fore-fathers were achieved.

Man was made to rule. Society to perpetuate itself must work out the Divine plan. Supremacy comes alone to freemen, and the coronation of our fathers manifests to the world the dawn of the true method of the development of human society. A hand, unseen by mortal eye, has been so shaping the affairs of the world as to secure a slow but decisive progress. The *days* of history have been man's; the *ages* have been the Christ's, and to him belongs the glory of these conquests of right over might; of order over anarchy; of liberty over tyranny; of cosmos over chaos. Peace does not yet brood over all waters. There is still much marching and countermarching, and no army can march without raising the dust. The very commotion of our own day, filling so many with alarm, is only evidence of life. Be not affrighted with the uprisings of our times. All Europe is in commotion; serious questions confront us here at home; the pot is merely boiling. Stagnation means death. Commotion means life. Man is coming to the top. The old ideal was the State at the top, man at the bottom. He who reads history aright will see that the Divine plan is the impeachment of the king, and the enthronement of the people. The Nazarene is the world's emancipator. He comes to unshackle the race from sin, and lead man in triumph to his throne of power. By way of Sinai with its laws, and Calvary with its love, He is leading the race back to Eden. Would you know the philosophy of history? The influence of the *Divine Man* will give you clew. He is the Key-Stone which locks the arch that springs from the earthly Eden to the Paradise of God.

Definition.

What constitutes History.

" " " Philosophy of History.

Providence in History.

Three epochs in history. Word, Power, Light.

1. WORD.

Forms of religion in the world.

Hebrews- chosen medium of revelation.

Jewish Theocracy.

Picture of world preceding Christ.

Judea, Asia, Greece, Rome.

2. POWER.

Christian Church.

Degeneracy of Rome.

Invasion from north.

New qualities incorporated.

3. LIGHT.

Reformation.

Fruition of Word and Power in Light.

Philosophy of History.

Crusades and Feudalism.

Magna Charta.

Rise of Protestantism.

Columbus, America.

Resume. Christ the Key-stone of History.