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Woodrow Wilson: An Appreciation, 1919.

LECTURE BY RABBI ABBA H. SILVER ON  
"WOODROW WILSON--AN APPRECIATION",  
AT THE TEMPLE, EAST 55th STREET AND  
CENTRAL AVENUE, CLEVELAND, OHIO,  
SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 13, 1919.

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This is ~~not~~ an occasion appropriate in <sup>no</sup> ~~any~~ special sense for a discussion of Woodrow Wilson. This moment does not mark his anniversary or the consummation of his efforts or the end of his labors. Mr. Wilson at this moment is still in the midst of his greatest adventure, the success of which is still very uncertain. It may be that President Wilson will return from Paris a disillusioned and a disappointed man, and it may be that we and the future generations will share his disillusionment and his disappointment. It is perhaps because of this very uncertainty of the success of his life's effort and mission that I am prompted to devote this hour to an appreciative study of the man. And also perhaps because of the growing host of his enemies, of the constant opposition that he is called upon to face abroad, and the constant heckling that he is compelled to encounter from the political incorrigibles here at home, am I tempted to point out this morning the real worth, character and high purpose of the man Wilson.



It is one of the sad anomalies of life that the men who are most hated during their days on earth are the ones who are most beloved after death. Society has the habit of meeting its great men and its leaders with animus this side of the grave and with flowers the other side of the grave. It seems as though society is determined to make the lives of its great men as miserable as it possibly can, and to kill them off as fast as it possibly can in order that their martyrdom may serve for the edification and the training of future generations. A great man must be shot before he is canonized. The men who wept forty days when Moses died and were unconsolable were the very men who wished to stone him during his life because he had deprived them of the flesh pots of Egypt.

Now, this fact is especially true in the domain of politics. The vehemence and the narrowness of partisan politics is almost unlimited. The irresponsible attack upon and criticism of public men in America is notorious. I think that is one reason why men of a high class of intelligence, who have a sense of personal dignity hesitate a great deal before entering the arena of politics. Not every man is willing to pass through the mire of political muck in order to gain ultimate fame. It is positively astounding to note the utter disregard of the most elementary standards of decency and courtesy which characterizes political conflicts and struggles in America. Of course after the man who is the target



for all this mud slinging dies, all these strident notes suddenly become paeans of praise.

We find this to be so in the life of Abraham Lincoln. At this moment Abraham Lincoln is surrounded with a halo of tradition, his life has assumed all the grace and the charm of a legend. We speak of him with the refinement of reverent indirectness. But in his day, in the heat and the stress and the fury of a momentous struggle, in which he played the great role, Abraham Lincoln was the storm center of the vilest kind of political animosity. One shudders when one reads the pages of history and is able to see the veritable miasma of the political poison that was let loose in his day, the morbid exudations of putrid politics. Sometime ago I came across some of the things that were said of Abraham Lincoln during the second campaign for his re-election. The Honorable S. S. Cox has this to say of Abraham Lincoln: "He has deluged the country with blood, created a debt of four thousand million dollars and sacrificed two million of human lives. At the November election we will damn him with eternal infamy. Even Jefferson Davis is no greater enemy of the constitution." The Honorable W. W. O'Brien, of Peoria, has this to say--mind you, these are Northerners, not men of the South; these are not his political enemies in the South, and this is during the war--"We want to try Lincoln as Charles the First, of England, was tried,



and if found guilty, we will carry out the law." The Honorable John Fuller, of Michigan, has this to say: "Are you willing to follow in the footsteps of Abraham Lincoln, the perjured wretch who has violated the oath he took before high heaven to support the constitution and preserve the liberties of the people?" And Mr. Stambaugh, of Ohio, says in one of the political pamphlets issued during that campaign, "You might search hell over and find none worse than Abraham Lincoln." Mr. Chauncey Burr, of New York, editor of "The Old Guard", says this, "Argument is useless. We have patiently waited for a change, and the wonder is that men carry out the orders of the gorilla tyrant who has usurped the presidential chair." Mr. Henry Clay Dean, of Iowa, says this, "The American people are ruled by felons. With all his vast armies Lincoln has failed, failed, failed. And still the monster usurper wants more victims for his slaughter pens. I blush that such a felon should occupy the highest gift of the people. Perjury and larceny are written all over him. Ever since the usurper, traitor and tyrant has occupied the presidential chair the Republican Party has shouted war to the knife and the knife to the hilt. Blood has flowed in torrents and yet the thirst of the old monster is not quenched. His cry is ever for more blood."

I could go down quite a list of this. The point I am endeavoring to make is that the man of calm judgment who



is not prejudiced or carried off his feet by partisan politics should beware of the unconfined and unreasoned criticism that is launched against any man in political office, and Mr. Wilson is gradually becoming the center of an ever-growing literature, if you can call it such, of diatribe, denunciation and defamation.

There are three classes of men that are beginning to attack Mr. Wilson openly and unreservedly. The first, of course, consists of his political enemies, men who prostitute politics for the sake of personal aggrandizement, men who see nothing in America but political parties and political issues, who see America divided into two classes--those who are in and those who are out of political office. The ins are to be damned if you happen to be on the out, and the outs are to be damned if you happen to be among the ins. Of these much need not be said; they belie themselves. The second group of men consist of the conservative or the reactionary element of America, who are afraid of the dynamics of Mr. Wilson's personality and Mr. Wilson's ideals, men who call him visionary, altruist, idealist, as though these nomenclatures would damn a man--the men who have learned little or nothing from this great struggle, the men who are interested in restoration but not in reconstruction, the men who do not wish to follow Mr. Wilson in his world transfiguring ideals, who fear him because of his liberalism. That group is found not only in America but in Europe as well. The third group of



men are the radicals, the extremists.

Mr. Wilson is not a visionary and not an unbridled enthusiast, because he is first and foremost a statesman who deals with realities: he knows that perfection is impossible and unattainable, that men must learn to yield at one point in order to advance at another point, to compromise in order to gain an ultimate objective. The extremists who believe that the world can be transformed into one absolute and glorious perfection in the briefest moment of time just by willing it see in Mr. Wilson a reactionary. They fail to realize that he is one among many, that he is struggling to harmonize the conflicting ~~personal~~ ambitions of fifty races and peoples, that he is endeavoring, to the best of his ability, to bring opposites to meet, that he must pay due deference to traditional animosities, to traditional prejudices to traditional ambitions of peoples and classes and races, that he is not toying with the new world and not making things to suit his own fancy, that he is trying to mould an almost unwieldy mass of crude matter and whip it into a form of greater beauty. These men are impatient and intolerant, and so Mr. Wilson becomes the object of their pet aversion because forsooth he is not a radical.

Now, I am not a partisan, and I do not have to defend Mr. Wilson's every act, but I am sufficiently enthusiastic about the great men of America ~~that I am~~ <sup>that I am to be</sup> ready to defend this great man in his great acts and



in his great ambitions.

I maintain that Mr. Wilson has a decided claim upon posterity, that Mr. Wilson's position in history is assured because of four things. Even if his present mission is not entirely successful--and I believe that it will not be entirely successful--(I am not that much of a novice in politics or diplomacy to believe that the great charter of international rights which Mr. Wilson enunciated in his fourteen principles will receive the absolute unquestioning sanction of all the nations of Europe this year)--even if these fourteen points which summarize the mission and the destiny of the man Wilson, are not entirely corporealized in laws and institutions, I still maintain that Mr. Wilson will have a claim upon the attention of history because of the things which he has already achieved.

First of all I maintain that Mr. Wilson's course of action since the beginning of the great war has been sound, consistent and wise. When the war broke out, when the issues of the struggle were still undefined, when everyone believed that it was a struggle of empires, a struggle between governments for selfish purposes, President Wilson advised his countrymen to remain neutral in thought and in speech, and justly so. He said, "My thought is of America. I am speaking, I feel sure, the earnest wish and purpose of every thoughtful American that this great country, which is, of course, the first in our thoughts



and in our hearts, should show herself in this time of peculiar trial a Nation fit beyond others to exhibit the fine poise of undisturbed judgment, the dignity of self control, the efficiency of dispassionate action; a Nation that neither sits in judgment upon others nor is disturbed in her own counsels and which keeps herself fit and free to do what is honest and disinterested and truly serviceable for the peace of the world."

In the course of a few months the war developed and Mr. Wilson saw, as many of his countrymen saw, that America may become of great service to humanity by offering itself as the medium through which peace may ultimately come about. He saw in America the great champion of human peace, the great arbiter among the nations, and so in his address to Congress four months later, Mr. Wilson said, "We are, indeed, a true friend to all the nations of the world, because we threaten none, covet the possessions of none, desire the overthrow of none. Our friendship can be accepted and is accepted without reservation, because it is offered in a spirit and for a purpose which no one need ever question or suspect. Therein lies our greatness. We are the champions of peace and of concord. And we should be very jealous of this distinction which we have sought to earn. Just now we should be particularly jealous of it, because it is our dearest present hope that this character and reputation may presently, in God's providence,



bring us an opportunity such as has seldom been vouchsafed any nation, the opportunity to counsel and obtain peace in the world and reconciliation and a healing settlement of many a matter that has cooled and interrupted the friendship of nations." I believe that the American people at the time shared this conviction, that all prayed for this great opportunity to serve the world.

However, soon thereafter, in February, 1915, Germany began <sup>her</sup> ~~its~~ submarine campaign. The United States protested the violation of international law and the inhumanity of the campaign. Then followed the sinking of the Lusitania. Mr. Wilson came to see slowly and gradually the sort of government he was dealing with; he came to see that sooner or later there will be great friction between the government of Germany and that of the United States, and so he warned Germany. In one of his addresses delivered toward the end of 1915, he said: "So that the very uncalculating, unpremeditated, one might almost say accidental, course of affairs may touch us to the quick at any moment, and I want you to realize that, standing in the midst of these difficulties, I feel that I am charged with a double duty of the utmost difficulty. In the first place, I know that you are depending upon me to keep this nation out of the war. So far I have done so, and I pledge you my word that, God helping me, I will if it is possible. But you have laid another duty upon me. You have bidden me to see



that nothing stains or impairs the honor of the United States, and that is a matter not within my control; that depends upon what others do, not upon what the Government of the United States does. Therefore, there may at any moment come a time when I cannot preserve the honor and the peace of the United States."

It is true that Mr. Wilson did not precipitately lead us into war with Germany. Neither did Mr. Lincoln lead us into war with the South. I recall a statement of Mr. Lincoln at a time when the temper of the people was at the boiling point, in which he said, "My countrymen, one and all, think calmly and well upon this whole subject. Nothing valuable can be lost by taking time. If there be an object to hurry any of you in hot haste to a step which you would never take deliberately, that object will be frustrated by taking time, but no good object can be frustrated by it."

I believe that Mr. Wilson followed in the spirit of Mr. Lincoln when he moved slowly and deliberately before he led this great nation into war. Moreover, he had to change the temper of the people. It was not enough for Mr. Wilson to make up his mind that the United States ought to declare war on Germany; it was up to him as the chief magistrate to convince the people of the United States to think likewise. And the people moved slowly and its mind was made up very, very deliberately. Toward the end of 1916, Mr. Wilson made another appeal to all the belligerents to state upon what terms they



would entertain the project of peace. He received replies from both the belligerent parties, and in that famous address of his of January 22nd, 1917, Mr. Wilson made his greatest move to bring about peace. In spite of the fact that at that very time we were in a terrible entanglement over the submarine question with Germany, he moved for peace; he strove for it until the last moment. The address of January 22nd was inspired by a conviction that Germany was ready to entertain peace, that Germany was willing to abide by international law. Nine days after that, on January 31st, Germany suddenly announced the most complete, unrestricted submarine campaign in the history of the war. Something transpired in Germany during those fateful nine days. The militarist class took control of the situation, took hold of the reins of government, and Wilson was brought face to face with the issue. Four days later, on February 3rd, Mr. Wilson severed diplomatic relations with Germany and gave the German ambassador his passports. Even at that moment when diplomatic relations with Germany were broken, Mr. Wilson said: "We do not desire any hostile conflict with the Imperial German Government. We are the sincere friends of the German people and earnestly desire to remain at peace with the Government which speaks for them. We shall not believe that they are hostile to us unless and until we are obliged to believe it; and we purpose nothing more than the reasonable defense of the undoubted rights of



of our people. We wish to serve no selfish ends. We seek merely to stand true alike in thought and in action to the immemorial principles of our people which I sought to express in my address to the Senate only two weeks ago,--seek merely to vindicate our right to liberty and justice and an unmolested life. These are the bases of peace, not war. God grant we may not be challenged to defend them by acts of wilful injustice on the part of the Government of Germany!"

But when Germany continued <sup>her</sup> ~~its~~ dastardly crimes against civilization, Mr. Wilson urged Congress to declare war, and in his famous call to war he said: "Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable where the peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its peoples and the menace to that peace and freedom lies in the existence of autocratic governments backed by organized force which is controlled wholly by their will, not by the will of their people. We have seen the last of neutrality in such circumstances. We are at the beginning of an age in which it will be insisted that the same standards of conduct and of responsibility for wrong done shall be observed among nations and their governments that are observed among the individual citizens of civilized states." And when once President Wilson made up his mind that the only logical course was war, it was war to the finish. When that appeal of the Pope came counselling peace, in August of 1917, Mr. Wilson said that the time was still ~~not~~ripe, the moment



was immature for peace. He would not make peace on any terms with German autocracy, and one of his last and most eloquent statements in the war was his reply to the German challenge: "Force to the utmost until victory is won!"

In his history of the United States, speaking of Abraham Lincoln's policy during the war, Mr. Wilson said this: "Abraham Lincoln sought to follow a course of policy in which firmness and conciliation should be equally prominent, and in which he could carry the plain people of the country with him. Abraham Lincoln was not afraid to take the initiative, but he would not take it rashly or too soon. He knew the mettle and temper of the people who had put him in charge of the government." And I believe that every word of it may be justly said of the policy of Woodrow Wilson during the war. It was deliberate. It was consistent. It was logical. And every step was backed by the consent, the wholehearted consent of the plain people of the United States.

I believe that his first claim to greatness is his policy and conduct before and during the war, and his second claim to greatness was his contribution to the war.

Mr. Wilson gave the moral definition of the great struggle. Mr. Wilson made articulate that new stirring, that new longing, that undefined, chaotic craving of the souls of myriads of people that were weltering in the blood of



the war, that something which was struggling for expression, that something which when embodied into a creed, into a definite phrase would symbolize and summarize those ideals that were being born out of the agonies and suffering of millions of people. Mr. Wilson with a spiritual dexterity and a phenomenal intellectual acumen, caught that new stirring, that new spiritual sap that was creeping through the lives of men, and gave it a local habitation and a name by fixing it into a sacred creed and calling it "The struggle of humanity for greater democracy." Up to the moment that Mr. Wilson came into the arena of European politics the war had not expressed its soul. Mr. Wilson with remarkable intellectual dispatch cut his way through all the externalities and the incidentals of the war and focused the attention of the world upon the elemental and basic issues involved in it. He consecrated the struggle by discovering its clear issues, its clear object.

That is Mr. Wilson's contribution to the ideology of the war. He spiritualized it with the gift of imagination and poetry and statesmanship. That is his second claim to greatness.

His third claim was his gift to humanity. Mr. Wilson clearly defined what the submerged races of the world were hoping for--self-determination and



freedom, their right to live their own life. The powers <sup>had</sup> ~~that be~~ sought to keep this motive out of the war entirely. The diplomats of the old school, the wise owls of yesterday that croaked in the night, sought to suppress these volcanic eruptions of the racial and national passions that were here and there finding vent in the great struggle. Mr. Wilson knew and Mr. Wilson divined the struggle as one for the rights of peoples, great and small, for the sovereignty of every cultural unit in Europe.

The full appreciation of this fact enabled Mr. Wilson to reinterpret the idea of a league of nations. The league of nations is not an idea new to Mr. Wilson. Mr. Wilson never claimed authorship or originality for it. But Mr. Wilson added something tremendously significant to the idea of the league of nations. Before the war people spoke of a league of nations, meaning thereby that the nations as they existed at that time should come together and agree to arbitrate their differences, thereby insuring peace in Europe. But Mr. Wilson knew that there could be no peace as long as the claims and aspirations of the smaller nationalities of Europe remained unsatisfied. You could not have a league of nations one half of which was autocratic, and the other half democratic. You could not have peace as Abraham Lincoln said-- in a nation one half slave and one half free. It was



an artificial notion. A league to enforce peace on the status quo before the war was unsound fundamentally.

The contribution of Mr. Wilson's to the idea of the league of nations was the primary need for the democratization of the world. Satisfy the cravings of every people that is justly entitled to a control of its own destiny, rectify the ancient wrongs, heal the ancient festering wounds of peoples, and then having established confidence among peoples, and friendship, you will be in a position to found an abiding and serviceable league of nations. That is Mr. Wilson's contribution to humanity, and that is another act of his life that will insure him a place in the rank of the immortals.

The last contribution of Mr. Wilson's was his contribution to America. No one has so beautifully and so comprehensively defined the destiny of America as has Mr. Wilson, and no one has succeeded in making the American people so conscious of themselves, of their greatness, of their universal obligations as has Mr. Wilson. In his address on the meaning of Liberty, Mr. Wilson said: "My dream is that as the years go on and the world knows more and more of America it will also drink at these fountains of youth and renewal; that it also will turn to America for those moral inspirations which lie at the basis of all freedom; that the world will never fear America unless it feels that it is engaged in some enterprise



which is inconsistent with the rights of humanity; and that America will come into the full light of the day when all shall know that she puts human rights above all other rights, and that her flag is the flag not only of America but of humanity. What other great people has devoted itself to this exalted ideal? To what other nation in the world can all eyes look for an instant sympathy that thrills the whole body politic when men anywhere are fighting for their rights? I do not know that there will ever be a declaration of independence and of grievances for mankind, but I believe that (and that is significant, it was said in 1914) if any such document is ever drawn it will be drawn in the spirit of the American Declaration of Independence, and that America has lifted high the light which will shine unto all generations and guide the feet of mankind to the goal of justice and liberty and peace. "America for the world! "Americans for big America," said Mr. Wilson in his speech of acceptance--"Americans for big America," not for a provincial, tyrannical, easily irritated America, not for an America that is suspicious of the world, not for an America that endeavors to confine itself in a narrow shell of isolation, fearing to meet the world and face the responsibilities of the new day but Americans for a big America! America that would be the prophet, the leader, the guide, the inspiration of the whole world! That is the America that Mr. Wilson has preached to the American people.



These are Mr. Wilson's claims to greatness.

I know that some of his policies went awry, and I know that much in him some may criticize, but I do know that fairness and honest judgment lead us to realize that in Mr. Wilson America and humanity, in an hour of crisis, when nations were weighed in the balance,--America and humanity found a champion, a genius of political statescraft, a prophet of a new day. His work can never be undone; America will never become small again, and humanity will never again lose the light that he held before its tear-dimmed eyes. Humanity may not obtain its desired wishes this year or next year, but they cannot permanently be denied; for an ideal, once it has become vital, once it has become intelligible to the minds and the hearts of millions of people, cannot be permanently denied. The war has been <sup>saved</sup> ~~waved~~ for humanity through the intellectual contributions, the imaginative and poetic gifts of the man--Wilson.

We may be justly proud of him, not because he is Mr. Wilson, but because he is an American, because Mr. Wilson, after all, is the product of American life. No other nation could have produced a Wilson just as no other nation could have produced a Lincoln. He is peculiarly the endowment, the product, the sum total of all that is finest in American life, and in exalting and praising him we are praising the man not only, we are also praising America, that voiced itself and found itself in the



mind and the soul of one of its children in the hour of need.

It seems to be an act of providence that whenever America faces the night, whenever trials beset it, whenever it has lost its way in the world, some great soul appears on the horizon and brings up a light of guidance. That is an inspiration and a holy testimony as to the wholesomeness, the soundness, the divinity of democracy.

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Sermon 6

LECTURE BY RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER  
ON "WOODROW WILSON \* AN APPRECIATION"  
AT THE TEMPLE, EAST 55th St. & Central  
SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 13th,,1919

This is an occasion appropriate in no special sense for a discussion of Woodrow Wilson. This moment does not mark his anniversary or the consummation of his efforts or the end of his labors. Mr. Wilson at this moment is still in the midst of his greatest adventure, the success of which is still very uncertain. It may be that President Wilson will return from Paris a disillusioned and a disappointed man, and it may be that we and the future generations will share his disillusionment and his disappointment. It is perhaps because of this very uncertainty of the success of his life's effort and mission that I am prompted to devote this hour to an appreciative study of the man. And also perhaps because of the growing host of his enemies, of the constant opposition that he is called upon to face abroad, and the constant heckling that he is compelled to encounter from the political incorrigibles here at home, am I tempted to point out this morning the real worth, character and high purpose of the man Wilson.

It is one of the sad anomalies of life that the men who are most hated during their days on earth are the ones who are most beloved after death. Society has the habit of meeting its great men and its leaders with animus this side of the grave and with flowers the other side of the grave. It seems as though society is determined to make the lives of its great men as miserable as it possibly can, and to kill them off as fast as it possibly can in order that their martyrdom may serve for the edification and the training of future generations. A great



man must be shot before he is canonized. The men who wept forty days when Moses dies and were unconsolable where the very men who wished to stone him during his life because he had deprived them of the flesh pots of Egypt.

Now, this fact is especially true in the domain of politics. The vehemence and the narrowness of partisan politics is almost unlimited. The irresponsible attack upon and criticism of public men in America is notorious. I think that is one reason why men of a high class of intelligence, who have a sense of personal dignity hesitate a great deal before entering the arena of politics. Not every man is willing to pass through the mire of political mud in order to gain ultimate fame. It is positively astounding to note the utter disregard of the most elementary standards of decency and courtesy which characterizes political conflicts and struggles in America. Of course after the man who is the target for all this mud slinging dies, all these strident notes suddenly become paeans of praise.

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First of all I maintain that Mr. Wilson's course of action since the beginning of the great war has been sound, consistent and wise. When the war broke out, when the issues of the struggle were still undefined, when everyone believed that it was a struggle of empires, a struggle between governments for selfish purposes, President Wilson advised his countrymen to remain neutral in thought and in speech, and justly so. He said, "My thought is of America. I am speaking, I feel sure, the earnest wish and purpose of every thoughtful American that this great country, which is, of course, the first in our thoughts and in our hearts, should show herself in this time of peculiar trial a Nation fit beyond others to exhibit the fine poise of undisturbed judgment, the dignity of self control, the efficiency of dispassionate action; a Nation that neither sits in judgment upon others nor is disturbed in her own counsels and which keeps herself fit and free to do what is honest and disinterested and truly serviceable for the peace of the world."

In the course of a few months the war developed and Mr. Wilson saw, as many of his countrymen saw, that America may become of great service to humanity by offering itself as the



medium through which peace may ultimately come about. He saw in America the great champion of human peace, the great arbiter among the nations, and so in his address to Congress four months later, Mr. Wilson said, "We are, indeed, a true friend to all the nations of the world, because we threaten none, covet the possessions of none, desire the overthrow of none. Our friendship can be accepted and is accepted without reservation, because it is offered in a spirit and for a purpose which no one need ever question or suspect. Therein lies our greatness. We are the champions of peace and of concord. And we should be very jealous of this distinction which we have sought to earn. Just now we should be particularly jealous of it, because it is our dearest present hope that this character and reputation may presently, in God's providence, bring us an opportunity such as has seldom been vouchsafed any nation, the opportunity to counsel and obtain peace in the world and reconciliation and a healing settlement of many a matter that has cooled and interrupted the friendship of nations." I believe that the American people at the time shared this conviction, that all prayed for this great opportunity to serve the world.

However, soon thereafter, in February, 1915, Germany began her submarine campaign. The United States protested the violation of international law and the inhumanity of the campaign. Then followed the sinking of the Lusitania. Mr. Wilson came to see slowly and gradually the sort of government he was dealing with; he came to see that sooner or later there will be great friction between the government of Germany and that of the United States and so he warned Germany. In one of his addresses delivered toward the end of 1915, he said: "So that the very uncalculating, unpremeditated, one might almost say accidental, course of affairs



may touch us to the quick at any moment, and I want you to realize that, standing in the midst of these difficulties, I feel that I am charged with a double duty of the utmost difficulty. In the first place, I know that you are depending upon me to keep this nation out of the war. So far I have done so, and I pledge you my word that, God helping me, I will if it is possible. But you have laid another duty upon me. You have bidden me to see that nothing stains or impairs the honor of the United States, and that is a matter not within my control; that depends upon what others do, not upon what the Government of the United States does. Therefore, there may at any moment come a time when I cannot preserve the honor and the peace of the United States."

It is true that Mr. Wilson did not precipitately lead us into war with Germany. Neither did Mr. Lincoln lead us into war with the South. I recall a statement of Mr. Lincoln at a time when the temper of the people was at the boiling point, in which he said, "My countrymen, one and all, think calmly and well upon this whole subject. Nothing valuable can be lost by taking time. If there be an object to hurry any of you in hot haste to a step which you would never take deliberately, that object will be frustrated by taking time, but no good object can be frustrated by it."

I believe that Mr. Wilson followed in the spirit of Mr. Lincoln when he moved slowly and deliberately before he led this great nation into war. Moreover, he had to change the temper of the people. It was not enough for Mr. Wilson to make up his mind that the United States ought to declare war on Germany; it was up to him as the chief magistrate to convince the people of the United States to think likewise. And the people moved slowly and its mind was made up very, very deliberately. Toward the end of 1916, Mr.



Wilson made another appeal to all the belligerents to state upon what terms they would entertain the project of peace. He received replies from both the belligerent parties, and in that famous address of his of January 22d, 1917, Mr. Wilson made his greatest move to bring about peace. In spite of the fact that at that very time we were in a terrible entanglement over the submarine question with Germany, he moved for peace; he strove for it until the last moment. The address of January 22d was inspired by a conviction that Germany was ready to entertain peace, that Germany was willing to abide by international law. Nine days after that, on January 31st, Germany suddenly announced the most complete, unrestricted submarine campaign in the history of the war. Something transpired in Germany during those fateful nine days. The militarist class took control of the situation, took hold of the reins of government, and Wilson was brought face to face with the issue. Four days later, on Feb. 3d, Mr. Wilson severed diplomatic relations with Germany and gave the German ambassador his passports. Even at that moment when diplomatic relations with Germany were broken, Mr. Wilson said: "We do not desire any hostile conflict with the Imperial German Government. We are the sincere friends of the German people and earnestly desire to remain at peace with the Government which speaks for them. We shall not believe that they are hostile to us unless and until we are obliged to believe it; and we purpose nothing more than the reasonable defense of the undoubted rights of our people. We wish to serve no selfish ends. We seek merely to stand true alike in thought and in action to the immemorial principles of our people which I sought to express in my address to the Senate only two weeks ago - seek merely to vindicate our right to liberty and justice and an unmolested life. These are the bases of peace, not war. God grant we may not be challenged to defend them by acts of wilful injustice on the part of the Government of Germany!"



But when Germany continued her dastardly crimes against civilization, Mr. Wilson urged Congress to declare war, and in his famous call to war he said: "Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable where the peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its peoples and the menace to that peace and freedom lies in the existence of autocratic governments backed by organized force which is controlled wholly by their will, not by the will of their people. We have seen the last of neutrality in such circumstances. We are at the beginning of an age in which it will be insisted that the same standards of conduct and of responsibility for wrong done shall be observed among the individual citizens of civilized states." And when once President Wilson made up his mind that the only logical course was war, it was war to the finish. When that appeal of the Pope came counselling peace, in August of 1917, Mr. Wilson said that the time was still not ripe, the moment was immature for peace. He would not make peace on any terms with German autocracy, and one of his last and most eloquent statements in the war was his reply to the German challenge: "Force to the utmost until victory is won!"

In his history of the United States, speaking of Abraham Lincoln's policy during the war, Mr. Wilson said this: "Abraham Lincoln sought to follow a course of policy in which firmness and conciliation should be equally prominent, and in which he could carry the plain people of the country with him. Abraham Lincoln was not afraid to take the initiative, but he would not take it rashly or too soon. He knew the mettle and temper of the people who had put him in charge of the government." And I believe that every word of it may be justly said of the policy of Woodrow Wilson during the war. It was deliberate. It was consistent. It was logical. And every step was backed by the consent, the wholehearted consent of the plain people of the United States.



I believe that his first claim to greatness is his policy and conduct before and during the war, and his second claim to greatness was his contribution to the war.

Mr. Wilson gave the moral definition of the great struggle. Mr. Wilson made articulate that new stirring, that new longing, that undefined, chaotic craving of the souls of myriads of people that were weltering in the blood of the war, that something which was struggling for expression, that something which when embodied into a creed, into a definite phrase would symbolize and summarize those ideals that were being born out of the agonies and suffering of millions of people. Mr. Wilson with a spiritual dexterity and a phenomenal intellectual acumen, caught that new stirring, that new spiritual sap that was creeping through the lives of men, and gave it a local habitation and a name by fixing it into a sacred creed and calling it "The struggle of humanity for greater democracy." Up to the moment that Mr. Wilson came into the arena of European politics the war had not expressed its soul. Mr. Wilson with remarkable intellectual dispatch cut his way through all the externalities and the incidentals of the war and focused the attention of the world upon the elemental and basic issues involved in it. He consecrated the struggle by discovering its clear issues, its clear object.

That is Mr. Wilson's contribution to the ideology of the war. He spiritualized it with the gift of imagination and poetry and statesmanship. That is his second claim to greatness.

His third claim was his gift to humanity. Mr. Wilson clearly defined what the submerged races of the world were hoping for - self-determination and freedom, their right to live their own life. The powers had sought to keep this motive out of the war entirely.



The diplomats of the old school, the wise owls of yesterday that croaked in the night, sought to suppress these volcanic eruptions of the racial and national passions that were here and there finding vent in the great struggle. Mr. Wilson knew and Mr. Wilson divined the struggle as one for the rights of peoples, great and small, for the sovereignty of every cultural unit in Europe.

The full appreciation of this fact enabled Mr. Wilson to reinterpret the idea of a league of nations. The league of nations is not an idea new to Mr. Wilson. Mr. Wilson never claimed authorship or originality for it. But Mr. Wilson added something tremendously significant to the idea of the league of nations. Before the war people spoke of a league of nations, meaning thereby that the nations as they existed at that time should come together and agree to arbitrate their differences, thereby insuring peace in Europe. But Mr. Wilson knew that there could be no peace as long as the claims and aspirations of the smaller nationalities of Europe remained unsatisfied. You could not have a league of nations one half of which was autocratic, and the other half democratic. You could not have peace as Abraham Lincoln said - in a nation one half slave and one half free. It was an artificial notion. A league to enforce peace on the status quo before the war was unsound fundamentally.

The contribution of Mr. Wilson's to the idea of the league of nations was the primary need for the democratization of the world. Satisfy the cravings of every people that is justly entitled to a control of its own destiny, rectify the ancient wrongs, heal the ancient festering wounds of peoples, and then having established confidence among peoples, and friendship, you will be in a position to found an abiding and serviceable league of nations. That is Mr. Wilson's contribution to humanity, and that is another act of his life, that will insure him a place in the rank of the immortals.



The last contribution of Mr. Wilson's was his contribution to America. No one has so beautifully and so comprehensively defined the destiny of America as has Mr. Wilson, and no one has succeeded in making the American people so conscious of themselves, of their greatness, of their universal obligations as has Mr. Wilson. In his address on the meaning of Liberty, Mr. Wilson said: "My dream is that as the years go on and the world knows more and more of America it will also drink at these fountains of youth and renewal; that it also will turn to America for those moral inspirations which lie at the basis of all freedom; that the world will never fear America unless it feels that it is engaged in some enterprise which is inconsistent with the rights of humanity; and that America will come into the full light of the day when all shall know that she puts human rights above all other rights, and that her flag is the flag not only of America but of humanity. What other great people has devoted itself to this exalted ideal? To what other nation in the world can all eyes look for an instant sympathy that thrills the whole body politic when men anywhere are fighting for their rights? I do not know that there will ever be a declaration of independence and of grievances for mankind, but I believe that (and that is significant, it was said in 1914) if any such document is ever drawn it will be drawn in the spirit of the American Declaration of Independence, and that America has lifted high the light which will shine unto all generations and guide the feet of mankind to the goal of justice and liberty and peace." America for the world! "Americans for big America," said Mr. Wilson in his speech of acceptance - "Americans for big America," not for a provincial, tyrannical, easily irritated America, not for an America that is suspicious of the world, not for an America that endeavors to confine



itself in a narrow shell of isolation, fearing to meet the world and face the responsibilities of the new day but Americans for a big America! America that would be the prophet, the leader, the guide, the inspiration of the whole world! That is the America that Mr. Wilson has preached to the American people.

These are Mr. Wilson's claims to greatness. I know that some of his policies went awry, and I know that much in him some may criticize, but I do know that fairness and honest judgment lead us to realize that in Mr. Wilson, America and humanity in an hour of crisis, when nations were weighed in the balance, America and humanity found a champion, a genius of political statescraft, a prophet of a new day. His work can never be undone; America will never become small again, and humanity will never again lose the light that he held before its tear-dimmed eyes. Humanity may not obtain its desired wishes this year or next year, but they cannot permanently be denied; for an ideal once it has become vital, once it has become intelligible to the minds and the hearts of millions of people, cannot be permanently denied. The war has been saved for humanity through the intellectual contributions, the imaginative and poetic gifts of the man-Wilson.

We may be justly proud of him, not because he is Mr. Wilson, but because he is an American, because Mr. Wilson, after all, is the product of American life. No other nation could have produced a Wilson just as no other nation could have produced a Lincoln. He is peculiarly the endowment, the product, the sum total of all that is finest in American life, and in exalting and praising him we are praising the man not only, we are also praising America, that voiced itself and found itself in the mind and soul of one of its children in the hour of need.



It seems to be an act of providence that whenever America faces the night, whenever trials beset it, whenever it has lost its way in the world, some great soul appears on the horizon and brings up a light of guidance. That is an inspiration and a holy testimony to the wholesomeness, the soundness, the divinity of democracy.

