

Rudyard Kipling's "Recessional"

Queen Victoria's 60-year anniversary was in 1897, and in the midst of the celebrations, Rudyard Kipling composed a very somber poem that was a warning against pride and boasting in the greatness of the British Empire. At the time, it covered 13 million square miles and a quarter of the world's population, extending from England to Canada, the Caribbean, about a third of the African continent, all of India, large portions of southeast Asia, all of Australia and New Zealand, and more. That explains the saying that "the sun never sets on the British Empire". Now the empire is no more. All that is left is the United Kingdom, consisting of England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Even that is now threatened, with the rest of Europe, by the invasion of Muslim "immigrants".

Why is it called "Recessional"? A recessional is what is played in church, wedding, or a graduation at the conclusion of the service. The poem was a warning that the empire was approaching its end.

What of the United States? We have had, and still have distant territories, but our "empire" was never of the nature of the British. Still, many of the warnings in "Recessional" would apply to us also. All empires and major city-states have fallen, sometimes in a single day. We have been blessed by God from the beginning, and yet more and more seem determined to purge God, religion, and even basic morality from all public life.

God of Our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle line,
Beneath whose awful hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine –
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget – Lest we forget.

Britain and USA historically "Christian"

Dan. 2:37-38; 4:28-37

Dt. 6:10-12

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The Captains and the Kings depart:
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget – Lest we forget.

Ps. 51:17; Isa. 57:15; Mic. 6:8

Far-called our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget – Lest we forget.

Zeph. 2:13-15
Dt. 4:29-31

If drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the Law –
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget – Lest we forget.

Ex. 5:2; 1 S. 17:44; Isa. 36-37
("savage" tribes)

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard,
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding calls not Thee to guard,
For frantic boast and foolish word –
Thy mercy on Thy people, Lord!

Isa. 31:1-3
(rifles, cannons, grenades, ...)
We are dust, grass
Ps. 127:1