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GENERAL

P2 / Carter

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

August 14, 1980

Dear Mr. Palmer:

On behalf of President Carter, thank you for your recent letter and a copy of the sermon entitled "The Mission of America." Your continued support is appreciated.

With best regards,

Sincerely,



Susan S. Clough  
Personal Secretary/Assistant  
to the President

x  
Mr. R. Martin Palmer, Jr.  
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FYI, in the event you are interested in reading  
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R. MARTIN PALMER, JR.

ATTORNEY AT LAW

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*Susan  
Acknowledged  
J*

August 1, 1980

The Honorable President Jimmy Carter  
The White House  
Washington, D.C.

Dear President Carter:

At this time of questioning of our nation's resolve and indecision on the part of our electorate and even some misguided members of Congress, you are to be congratulated for keeping you wagon hitched to the guiding star of the lofty ideals upon which this nation under God was founded.

May I respectfully proffer that in the upcoming election what our nation needs most is not a debate over the usual partisan issues but a challenge to unity and going forward with your vision and purpose for this ship of state.

For your edification, I am taking the liberty of enclosing a copy of a sermon entitled "The Mission of America" delivered by Reverend Jefferey Newlin of the First Presbyterian Church of Hagerstown on the fourth of July.

Very sincerely and respectfully,

*R. Martin Palmer, Jr.*

R. Martin Palmer, Jr.

rmp:ldc

Enclosure

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for Preservation Purposes**

Heavenly Father

On this occasion of our nation's birthday, we give thanks to you for the nation we love so much. We give thanks for the countless freedoms we enjoy, and for our forefathers & foremothers, who shed their blood that we might enjoy them. We give thanks for our beautiful resources which enable us to live comfortably, and for the ~~beauty~~ <sup>created wonders</sup> of our nation, which enable us to live in beautiful surroundings.

Most of all we give thanks for the principles on which this nation was built, principles which we know are sacred to you, "liberty & justice for all." It's only too obvious that we often fall short of these ideals - dear father - but we pray that we might be humbled by our failures & inspired once again to live by them.

Lad God, we are a nation of refugees, so it is natural for us to pray for our kind. We pray for the Cubans, the Cambodians, and the Vietnamese who have left their countries for freedom's sake & pray that you will guide them safely to a new country. We're proud that our nation is welcomed so many of them & pray that you will continue to use us as a home for ~~the~~ <sup>presented</sup> "the tired, the poor, & the huddled masses yearning to be free."

We pray for the moral and spiritual life of our nation. We've become gluttoned on our affluence and success and have forgotten our need for you - Lad God, simply us - the Church of this land - to proclaim your Gospel and to call people to the only foundation for peace.

Finally, we pray for the world. That the terrible inequalities between poor & rich might be corrected without war; that true freedom might flourish in all nations; and that a spirit of interdependence + need might triumph over the threat of nuclear extinction.

No Lad's Prayer  
Amen

# "THE MISSION OF AMERICA"

by Jeffrey Newlin

July 6, 1980

Scripture Lessons: James 2:1-13  
Luke 12:16 -23

God said to Abraham, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves."

With this promise came the birth of a great nation - the Kingdom of Israel. With this promise also came the birth of another great nation, our own nation - for there was no doubt in the minds of our early Puritan settlers that they were called to a new wilderness to be a new Israel, to be a holy experiment for the benefit of the world.

Governor Winthrop, ~~aboard the Arbella as it prepared to~~  
~~approach the Massachusetts Bay Colony~~ drawing up a covenant for the Massachusetts Bay Colony aboard the Arbella wrote, "We shall find that the God of Israel is among us. For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us." ~~And even~~ From the beginning, Americans <sup>whether they were particularly religious or not</sup> assumed that they had a mission to the world. ~~Sometimes this mission was conceived of as being a beacon of liberty.~~ This Mission could take two forms. There was the mission which saw itself primarily <sup>as an example</sup> as a beacon of liberty ~~to the world, an example~~

which would awake desires in the people of other nations to be free as well, and there was the mission which took more direct <sup>& aggressive</sup> action in liberating the oppressed. The first type of mission trusted that the power of our example alone would, as John Adams wrote, guarantee "the illumination of the ignorant and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind over all the earth." ~~Until the glorious day when freedom spread to all the nations, the United States would continue as an "assylum for the oppressed," drawing to herself the tired, the poor, the huddled masses yearning to be free.~~

The second type of mission was no less idealistic. ~~It was foreshadowed in Thomas Jefferson's purchase of Louisiana, and it~~ <sup>It</sup> found expression in Andrew Jackson's determination to "extend the area of freedom." It characterized much of the thinking behind the foreign mission of our churches and it was reflected in President McKinley's decision to annex the Philippines. In President McKinley's words, "There was nothing left for us to do but to take them all and to educate the Filipinos and uplift and civilize and Christianize them and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow men for whom Christ also died."

America was born out of this idealism, it flourished under it - this call to serve the other nations of the world. But where has that idealism gone today?

Our confidence in our our ability to model government to other nations has been shaken by the shame we feel for Watergate and other political scandal; by our drop in productivity, the fall of our currency, and by the spectre of continued racial strife <sup>in our cities.</sup> And the wind has really been taken out of our sails in terms of our liberation efforts on behalf of other countries. We thought

we were serving them; but they've accused us of serving nobody but ourselves. "You aren't our servants", they say, "You're our masters. You're more concerned with stable markets for your business and industry - which enables you to dominate us and rob our wealth from us - than you are with the spread of true freedom."

I believe that most Americans would like to think that they're benevolent toward the nations of the world. They'd like to think that they're admired and appreciated. That's why it's come as a hard blow to our egos to learn that in most of the countries of t is world we are distained as oppressors and not, <sup>acclaimed as</sup> liberators.

We've been humiliated; by Vietnam, by Iran, by third world countries which are wary of our <sup>so-called</sup> benign intentions, and by the aloofness of our own allies. We've been humiliated - and humiliation isn't something we're used to bearing. The question is; what are we going to do with that humiliation? I'm sorry to say that I see a movement of stubbornness and defiance in much of our country, "If they think that can push us around, we'll show them. We'll build up our arsenals until no one can touch us. We'll dominate the world economy to make sure no Arab or South American or African robs us of our standard of living.

If this defiance becomes our response to the humiliation we feel we might as well say bye-bye to the idealism of freedom and service on which this nation was built. "We were naive, that's all. World politics is <sup>solely</sup> ~~all~~ a matter of cold power - you've got to assume it and mercilessly exert it to keep from being destroyed."

But I wonder if there might not be a better response to our humiliation; one which reappropriates our ideals of liberty and service instead of one which rejects them. I wonder if it still

might be possible to speak of "the Mission of America."

In the past, when we said the "Mission of America," we meant something like, "God is on our side, and we are God's special agent in communicating his will to the ignorant nations and in exercising his punishment on the evil nations. That kind of jingoism sounds pretty hollow today. We realize that if God is on our side we aren't always on His <sup>side</sup>. We need somebody to remind us what his will is and somebody to take us down a peg or two from time to time. Does this <sup>realization</sup> mean that we no longer have a mission? I think not.

Good Protestant theology has always insisted that every man and woman in the world has a vocation and mission to fulfill. They don't have to be a priest or a prophet - they can be a butcher, a baker, or a candlestick maker. If we had read our Bibles we would have realized the same thing about the nations. God is the father of every nation and has a vocation for every nation to play in the establishment of liberty and equality. We simply are not the only nation with God on our side, we aren't the only nation with a divine mission to fulfill.

But having said that, we must also say that "from those who have been given much, much will be demanded," and in any method of accounting, the United States has been given much by God. We inherited the finest learning and idealism of Western civilization, a foundation of devotion and sacrifice from grateful immigrants, and have been given a land as rich as any in natural resources. We have flourished as one nation under God. But if we are to make the claim of standing under God, as our Pledge of Allegiance asserts, we must stand under his judgement as well as under his blessing.

We must learn the lesson which Israel has had to learn again and again in its history. Topol says in "The Fiddler on the Roof," "Lord, I know we're your chosen people, but couldn't you choose someone else for awhile?" Sorry Topol, sorry the United States, blessing and advantage always carries responsibility with it. You can't stand under God's shower of blessings unless you're also prepared to stand under his judgement. ~~Just like the Paul Israel is~~ ~~Gospel from today, you~~ ~~with a bowl full of food, if you're prepared to stand under God's judgement, you can't be destroyed~~ Personally, I'm glad that America has stood under God's judgement for awhile. I'm glad that we've been humbled. It's about time that we realize that we aren't a nation of pure white knights, with everybody else wearing black armor. Dwight Morrow has said, "We judge other nations by their actions and our own by our ideals." Well we can't get away with that anymore, for the record is clear that our own ideals have been perverted in our actions. Just take, for example, the irony that America, the great champion of freedom, has propped up dictatorships in third world countries for years and has now earned the reputation of being an enemy of freedom by the people of those lands.

We were due for the lesson that our nation may be under God, but it is not divine. ~~It's~~ <sup>Our</sup> people and government are soaked with greed and ambition, just like the people and government of every other nation. The sooner we learn this the sooner we will become true patriots, who owe ~~their~~ <sup>our</sup> first allegiance not to our country, but to the ideals of freedom and equality on which our country was founded, and who love our country ~~so much~~ so much just because it dares to stand for something greater than ~~our~~ <sup>our</sup> own privilege and prestige.

G.K. Chesterton prayed on behalf of his country, "The walls of gold entomb us. The swords of scorn divide; Take not thy

thunder from us, but take away our pride." That's a fitting prayer for the Christians of this country as well, and let's hope that through the judgement and humiliation we've recently experienced that God will deliver us from our grandiosity and pride without robbing us of his moral thunder.

We've been judged, but that doesn't mean the Mission of America is desolate. I hope and pray that it means that the Mission of America will continue on a <sup>mature</sup> plane - on a ~~more~~ humble and cooperative plane <sup>which</sup> ~~even~~ its <sup>pride</sup> pride and superiority prevented it from assuming.

What might that mission be, in the years that are ahead? ~~Well~~, I think that we can begin where our founding fathers and mothers began: we are a nation set on a hill. We are a laboratory for democracy and capitalism in the world, and nations are looking to us to see just how ~~to~~ ~~run~~ democracy and capitalism work. They're also looking to Russia to see how the alternative system works; and they'll choose the one which appears most responsive to their ideals.

We do injustice to the power of communism if we don't recognize that there is a strong idealism built into it, an idealism which is as strong in its own way as "freedom" is for us. The idealism of Marxism (which, by the way, has deep Biblical roots), is equality and fairness. "Freedom" is no great virtue <sup>They say</sup> if its only freedom for the rich; if it's only a pretty word to justify the right which the rich and powerful have to keep all the wealth and power of the society.

Freedom means a whole lot more than the right to public assembly, freedom of worship and freedom of speech; any poor person

knows that - freedom means having food on the table, having a job, having a decent house and a decent neighborhood.

The United States is a nation set on a hill, and we are going to be judged by the other nations of the world whether we are only concerned with freedom for the rich, or whether we're concerned with freedom for the poor as well. ~~Now I don't pretend to have all the answers~~ Our first task is to get our own house in order; to courageously and creatively rethink our whole welfare program so that it gives jobs and dignity as well as dollars, so that it creates motivation and incentive and hope for the future instead of a spiral of despair from one generation to the next.

Now I'm not as naive as to think that government programs will solve all of our problems. The humiliation of America is a judgement not only on our government, but on our churches and synagogues. When <sup>individual citizens</sup> ~~people~~ have no standards of honesty in their personal lives; when parents are more concerned that their children get <sup>good</sup> grades ~~instead of~~ integrity, facts <sup>than</sup> ~~instead of~~ values, success <sup>than</sup> ~~instead of~~ worth; ~~when egotism and selfishness is sanctioned by the society so that the only reason for charity is to get a deduction on your income tax~~ as freedom, as "doing your own thing," ~~than it's not surprising that~~ when freedom is defined by most people as "doing your own thing," a polite expression for egotism and selfishness - than it's not a surprise that our government has lost its moral and spiritual moorings. Materialism is an ugly cancer which has cut deep into our society, and the onus is on us - the churches and synagogues - to call our people to a higher level of living; a level of principles and sacrifice, of justice and mercy.

The Mission of America requires that we get our own house in order first. We attend to our own injustices before we ~~are~~