

### Discourse by Rev. Elmer Ward Cole on Memorial Day at Hutchinson, Kas.

You have invited me here today to help you properly celebrate this greatest of all days. There is a day in the religious calendar called "All Saints' Day" but this pales into insignificance when compared with this day set apart to commemorate the heroism of a band of men who died because of their conviction for a principle. I am not come to you today to explain the mysteries of war, of pain, or of death, however, the mystery of death is no denser than that which enmeshes life. The bow which the butter cup or golden rod makes to the young months of springtime punctuates as perplexing a puzzle as does the pang tugging at our hearts when we stand at the bier of a giant oak, hero of many a gallant resistance, laid low by the arch enemy—furious hurricane.

Memorial Day has an attraction shared by none other of religious suggestive ceremonials, there is even a significance in the choice of months. No wire spun crowns or crosses interpret our feelings. The fresh fragrance of flowers brings greeting of a grateful posterity to the regiments that garbison our cemetery. This Memorial Day, redolent with the breath of roses, syllables a message altogether different from that heralded by All Saints' Day in the bleak November. It vocalizes an appeal to the men and women who have harvested, because the silent army and their sorrowing comrades have sown seeds amidst the flood of trees, to see to it that the fruitage of those four terrible years of dire conflict is not frittered away or shamed by our neglect. The story of the valor of the brigades now bivouacking beneath yonder greenward is as fresh today as it was when it, with the impressiveness of the recent occurrence, found its first rhapsodist. The reason for this perennial charm in the thrilling tale is self-evident. In other wars there has been courage worth recording and feats that were glorious with the masterful strategy of a great captain, but never was there another war waged for the possession of a principle so important to all the world as was the price of that fraternal dissension in memory of which we are today gathered. Our nation leaped into self-conscious existence when Appamattox mustered out the million soldiers who had exchanged the plow and the pen for the musket and the saber. Forty-five years have rapidly sped since the first note of the bugle called you into four years of service, severe and terrible action. Often during that four years the reveille awoke you from your slumbers, weary and half starved, to face the duties and dangers of another day. You went into that day, not knowing what it would bring fourth, but you went trusting in God as the Father of all light and the protector of those who fought for liberty. You were contending for preservation of your country and the perpetuity of those principles of government which make equal rights for each individual member of the body politic. You went faithfully, courageously, and loyally to answer the great call of a conviction for principle. That has made you stand out as the greatest heroes of the world's history. I can now hear the steady tread of the three hundred thousand that answered the call with the words, "We are coming Father Abraham, three hundred thousand strong." Your answer to that great call for service has gone down into the pages of history as the most heroic thing the world has ever known. Long after every battle-scarred veteran that is here today has answered that last great roll call, and laid down to sleep with his fathers, the principle for which he fought will still live. Such patriotism was never known before, nor has it ever since

been known. Hence, we believe that this day should be observed by the aged, and by the youth, and by the child. Every citizen of this great country of ours, whether he be in the germ or of the matured product, ought to be taught what this patriotism has done for America. The child of today cannot know too much of the history of freedom. When we have learned the history of our blessed America, the greatest land that God's sun ever shown upon, this day will not be observed as a day of pleasure hunting, but as a day of meditation upon those principles for which this great flag stands. Every child ought to know from memory the history of the siege of Vicksburg, the battle of Bull Run, Chicamauga, Lookout Mountain, Missionary Ridge, Gettysburg, as well as to have the biography of Lincoln, and Grant and Sherman and Sheridan and many others, at their tongues' end. Every boy and girl of fifteen should know the names and places which have made American bravery famous throughout the world and which will cause it to blaze in splendor forever in the highest constellation of human achievements. Such a course of education in history can never be a loss, it will make the American citizen anxious instead of indifferent as to the management and the progress of the nation. It will save America from monopoly and Caesarism from anarchy and from centralization and dissolution, from cowardly diplomacy and contemptible stinginess, from avarice and vice, from ambitious wealth and contended poverty. It will help to promote philanthropy, benevolence and generosity, yes, it will help to establish a nation where perpetual happiness will reign supreme.

Comrades and friends, we live in a great country! And then the greatest of all, it is OUR country. This flag of stars and stripes, the ensign of our country, stands for three great principles, upon which our nation has been founded and its superstructure built. Some one has said that man is threefold, one side is God, on the second side is self, and one the third side the other self. So a nation that is built upon true principles, stands for God, man, and native land. Every progressive nation in the history of the world has been upon these three principles. Greece was a great nation. She struggled of God but failed to find Him. She left to the world art, and letters, but she failed to create and stimulate man. Rome outstretched her arms to Great Britain on the north, to the Atlantic on the west, to the equator on the south and to the wilderness of Asia on the east; she was the mistress of a great empire, but she had only ten thousand citizens within her border. Ten thousand men all that she had discovered. Is it any wonder that one failed? A machine gun will shoot but it takes patriotism to guide its bullets. Spain and Russia are living examples of this principle. They have failed because their soldiers were mere machines, fighting by force and not by the inspiration of a great and patriotic heart. The golden age for little Switzerland with its brilliant past, for brave little Holland and for glorious Old England, was when patriotism was at its best, and at its best, because she was fighting for this three-fold principle, God, man, and native land. Switzerland was the first to discover God and hence was the first to discover man and to give him freedom and liberty. What we need in this great country of ours is a revival of zeal for God, of ethics for humanity and of patriotism for native land. We love our country because we love God and our fellow men; these three great principles are so interlinked that you sever one and the chain is valueless. The privilege given to every citizen of every land to

cry out the exultant note "This is mine own, my native land." This is mine own, my native land." but oh, how much more does this mean of our blessed America! Do we have material wealth? Ah, but lift up your eyes and look upon our great lakes, our sparkling rivers, our beautiful waterfalls, our magnificent mountains, the most beautiful scenery the world knows; then our waving wheat fields, our vineyards and our orchards, our flocks and our herds, our million hills which reverberate with the bleat of sheep and the low of kine. Ah! what wealth! Do you know any that exceeds ours? Then our history exceeds the history of any other nation in heroism for principle, for God, for man, for native land. Look upon the scenes of Bunker Hill and Valley Forge. Webster's struggle for liberty and union; think of the victories of these men for the slaves, of our nation for the emigrant, of our schools for the children, of our hospitals for the sick, of our philanthropies for the poor, of our reforms for the criminal. Then of our halls of science, of our galleries of art, of our libraries and of our churches; is there one that stands not for God for man and for native land? If there is, let it pass at once into oblivion and let it be known no more. May this grand old flag, born in the storm of the Revolution, bathed in the blood of the Civil War, and sanctified by the unselfishness of the Spanish-American struggle, never cease to stand for the three-fold principle. When it ceases to stand for God, may He forsake us—and when it ceases to stand for a land of liberty to become all that any man may become, may it be torn from its mast and be trampled under the feet of an incoming nation who remember God and forget not His benefits.

As an American citizen just entering the prime of life, coming into existence ten years after the close of the Civil War, and knowing nothing from personal experience of the hardships that you endured, yet I defy any man to love you more and to admire your patriotism more than do I. If there is anything wrong in hero worship, I confess that in this field I am guilty. I admire a man and my highest conception of a man is that individual who died for his fellow creatures.

"That whether on the scaffold high,  
Or in the battle's van,  
The fittest place for man to die,  
Is where he dies for man."

I have enjoyed the reading of the biography of the heroes of the world's history, but in none of them is there that interest which we find in American history. I like to read of our heroes; the heroes of '76, the heroes of 1812, the heroes of '48 and the heroes of '61, the heroes of '98. How like beacon light in the world's history stands the character of Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, William McKinley, and that present heroic statesman that stands at the head of our government. I speak of our honored president, Theodore Roosevelt. And then as boys, how we studied the biography of General Marion, who along with his men, subsisted on sweet potatoes and of whom an English general said: "If this man loves the principle for which he is fighting, well enough to live on that kind of diet, we had as well return to England, for we can never conquer such men as that." Then with such men as Ulysses S. Grant, who perhaps has done more to give the school boy of this country determination and gift than any other hero of the world's history. And then John A. Logan, William T. Sherman, and the dauntless Phil Sheridan, and Fighting Joe Hooker, and others, yes, their name is legion, who fought for this great principle of freedom. Then I would not forget, no never, the high private in the rear ranks. The bravest man that God ever gave to the world, is the man who is

willing to fight where the captain puts him, satisfied to do what God wants him to do, in whatsoever place he wants him to be. Then I would not forget the women who fought the battles of poverty and misery and want in their homes. How anxiously they awaited every scrap of news and how carefully they scanned every list of names, trembling lest there might be among them the name of a father, or of a boy, or of a sweetheart, and in our eulogy today, those women deserve an equal share with the men.

But why did these men answer the call of "Father Abraham, three hundred strong" leave their homes, go forth not knowing whether they should go, or if ever they should return, leaving wives, mothers and sweethearts behind, to die, to bleed and suffer upon the field of battle? Was it for money? Say, friend, would a pitiful thirteen dollars a month and that very uncertain, induce you to leave your home, your family, your fireside, to live like these men lived? Was it for glory? What per cent of men in that large body of men who enlisted in the service ever received special mention in press or upon the pages of any history for their valor and bravery? Less than two per cent, if you please. No, it was not for glory they fought. Did they go for curiosity sake? If they did, it was soon satisfied. No, it was a principle for which they went, and for that principle they were willing to give and to hazard all they had. Incidentally, I want to ask you who have opposed the pensioning of the old soldiers, do you now envy him? Wasn't it worth it? The grandest sight that man ever beheld is the sight of an imperiled man standing true to a moral conviction, and such a sight was prominent when men were giving their lives for such a conviction. No one doubts for a moment that they had this conviction. The lives of such men have always been used as an incentive to patriotism. We admire the man who stands for a principle more than any other character in the world of action. For this reason, the worship of the world has always turned towards the moral hero. In Biblical lore the names of Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, stand out like mountain peaks in the range of Biblical heroes, because they refused in their college days to partake of wine and meat, because of the principle involved. Then as grown men holding official position in the kingdom of Babylon, another test was put upon them. They have secured places of power, but they have not forgotten the religious ideas of their boyhood. Luxury and the easy chair had no effect upon their principles. Now an idol is made in the image of the king and they are asked to bow before him, but to them a principle was at stake, the fiery furnace was before them, and they heard the king's dire alternative: "Worship the image or die in the furnace." They stood in their place and said like men "Our God is able to deliver us." They had never forgotten that loyalty to principle was the test of their religion.

What is such a conviction? A conviction is a belief that convinces the reason, determines the will and fires the heart. It is a matter that grips the whole soul. The man who has a conviction of principle is, and will be, a hero under what ever circumstances he is placed. It takes the heroism of a great conviction to keep alive and make effective a great principle. Principles are of God, convictions are of men. Slavery was always wrong, but it took a Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" to awaken the principle and to arouse men to the action of a great conviction. To be without conviction is to be the creature of circumstances, the plaything of excitement and the leaf of every breeze.

A court preacher preaching before James the Sixth of Scotland, took for his text "He that wavereth is like the wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed." Then the audience smiled in derision for they knew it described their feeble and vacillating monarch. The man who has failed to capture the spirit of a great conviction, has failed in the destiny that God has mapped out for him.

I came to you today with the message of "The Heroism of Principle" because I believe that the thing that made you heroes is the heroism of a principle. But you ask me, then why are all men heroes who fight because of a great conviction? Principle is the motive, conviction is the action. A man may have a conviction that a thing is right and yet that thing may be very wrong. He may be willing to fight for that conviction and yet there may be no great principle involved. The youth who fired the Alexandrian library had a conviction that he was removing one of the obstacles of progress. The Inquisition called itself an instrument of righteousness, called into action to crush out the destructive forces of its day. Paul was serving a conviction when he put the saints in prison, and let us, dear friends, today, credit the South for their honesty of intention, for they without doubt, had a conviction that they were right. They, along with us, now know that they were wrong.

It is not enough that we have convictions merely, but that we have a conviction of principle that is wise and just. When a vessel sails around the earth, we expect to change our conviction that the earth is square to the conviction that it is round. A bad prejudice is unfortunate, but a bad conviction is worse. There is only one foundation upon which we can build and judge our principles, and that foundation has proven itself to be the foundation of the Sermon on the Mount, laid down by the Great Prophet of Nazareth, the man of Galilee, the Son of God.

Loyalty to a principle is a costly experience. It cost John the Baptist, his head. Jesus—his crucifixion upon the cross. Peter—boiling in the cauldron of oil. The Apostle Paul—the severing of his head upon the block, hundreds of Christians their lives in the Roman arena and many a man his life during the Reformation. The number of men who have lost their lives fighting for liberty and freedom of humanity can only be counted by the million.

The reward of his loyalty and conviction to a true principle is sufficiently great that men are yet willing to give their lives for the perpetuity of a great principle. That soldier who said that "A live coward is worth a regiment of dead heroes," deserves to be branded as a great falsifier. One dead hero is worth a regiment of live cowards. This is true, first, last and all the time. Popularity is beautiful and every man has a right to carve it, but the man who would buy it at the sacrifice of principle, deserves to be branded as a criminal. Principle is more than popularity, popularity is superficial and principle is profound and eternal. The more costly a principle, the greater becomes the man's conviction of its righteousness. It matters not, however, how costly becomes our principles, we must never lower our standard of rectitude and helpfulness by reason of any fear. Principles are to be preserved, cost what such preservation may. In the true man is but one fear, and that fear, to do wrong. There was never a time in the history of our country, when we needed a strong conviction of principle as we need it today.

This country of ours is not in immediate danger of a conflict of arms, though great problems confront us. There are problems

today that are as great as was the problem of slavery. There were four million blacks who were crying out for freedom and today there are many times this number who are as truly in slavery as was the black man before our civil strife—some slaves to ignorance, some slaves to passion slaves to appetite, and slaves to that green eyed monster—the trust. In each and all of these problems is involved a great principle.

It is true that we in this day, conclude that principles are not as clearly defined as they were a half century ago. In part this accusation is just, a half century ago a wrong was a wrong, a sin, today we are finding a difficulty in distinguishing between right and wrong. Their colors seem to blend. This is a day in which the art of diplomacy has gained great foothold. It has become a part of our church life, it is taught in our public schools and practiced in the avenues of business. The father says to his son "Succeed, John, do it honestly if you can, but succeed." With this feeling in the atmosphere today we find it more difficult to cope with the problems of the day than we have ever done before, and because of this state of affairs, it is extremely necessary that we keep well in hand that strength of conviction of principle that characterized the man of half a century ago.

There is still extant a spirit of war. The form of courage which manifests itself in war, has supreme attraction for a great many people, old and the young. Witness the sale of books that have warlike courage for their theme. Zola's "Downfall," Tolstoy's "War and Peace," these and a number of others such books have had an immense sale and all because there is courage and bravery. There is no doubt in any of your minds that war is a relic of barbarism. We have always been taught that the millenium would only come when the swords shall be beaten into plowshares and man shall turn his genius into the avenues of peace and industrial progress.

We agree with that great general who said "War is hell." Man only needs to witness that this great statement is true. We hope as younger men that we shall never witness another great war on this continent. We are not now looking for war, but we do know that there is a courage needed today as badly as courage was needed in the '60's. It is still a courage for principle as much as it was a courage for principle in the time of the great war. We need a courage that will illuminate the day book of our commonplace affairs. Physical courage is a plant so native to our American soil that to root it out is harder than to root the weeds from out the farmer's field. The present day demands not a physical courage, but a courage of mind and heart that are perhaps as difficult. We need in this day, that splendid courage that can tear aside all veils and subterfuges and see the thing for what it really is—an then to spurn it from our pathway. Are there not times of peace when temptations come to you to sacrifice a great principle for your own selfish pleasure, and is it so hard to meet this crisis as it ever was to face the enemy with artillery and musketry? That temptation comes to young America today and if he accepts the reward of the tempter, he destroys himself and imperils his nation. There are many of our young American men that are facing the temptation of graft, the satisfaction of an appetite the gratifying of a passion, a selfish hunger and ambition for popularity, who little think that the safety of our institution depend upon their courage of conviction to stand by the principle of right in these hours of crisis. The supreme test of our courage and bravery is to face ones self and bid that solemn

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