

WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN, "IMPERIALISM" (8 AUGUST 1900)

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Abstract: This paper explores how William Jennings Bryan's "Imperialism" address of August 8, 1900 typified the Progressive Era's faith in the people and crafted a narrative of American exceptionalism. Built upon memories of America's illustrious past, Bryan's speech expressed confidence in the ability of an enlightened citizenry to govern itself in the United States and the Philippines. This faith in the people and in republican principles reflects a central tenet of progressivism that resonates still today.

Key Words: William Jennings Bryan, Imperialism, Philippines, Progressivism, Spanish-American War

"The Peerless Leader." "A Godly Hero." "The Great Commoner." "Missionary Isolationist." "Champion of Democracy."<sup>1</sup> These titles reflect the perceptions of contemporaries and biographers of William Jennings Bryan. Those who have written about Bryan have noted his consistency on important issues, his commitment to causes, and his faith in the common people. Pressing for an array of reforms in the early 1900s, he was a leader among the progressives. According to Malcolm Sillars, Bryan "anticipated the Progressives,"<sup>2</sup> relying on the reason and judgment of informed citizens to help guide the nation. As Bryan outlined the role that the United States might serve in the world, he grounded his arguments in a progressive faith in the American people and their ability to self-govern. He firmly believed that the American people were exceptional; their history and government, accordingly, stood as a model for other nations to emulate.

The roots of this belief in America's exceptionalism can be traced back to the Puritan tradition. In 1630, John Winthrop reminded his Puritan audience of their God-given responsibility: "We shall be as a city on a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us."<sup>3</sup> The world was watching, as Winthrop argued, to see if their experiment in moral government would succeed or fail. The constitutional ratification debates also advanced this idea. In the first *Federalist*, Alexander Hamilton argued that the world was observing the nation's experiment in collective self-government, and it was up to the American people to prove its viability.<sup>4</sup> This notion remained visible in the nation's discourse over the next two centuries.

As the United States transitioned into the twentieth century, the outcome of the Spanish-American War provided new ground for the extension of American exceptionalism. The war ended with the controversial Treaty of Paris, which granted the United States control over the former Spanish colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines.<sup>5</sup> This war-time victory sparked a spirited debate over imperialism and America's role in the world. A leading opponent of imperialism was William Jennings Bryan, who won the Democratic presidential

nomination in 1900 and vowed to make the election a referendum on American foreign policy. Bryan's August 8th acceptance address reflected the Progressive Era's faith in an enlightened citizenry, as he cast the American people as preeminently moral and determined to do the right thing in the Philippines. Bryan called for a moral response to imperialism, consonant with America's past and its republican principles, as he urged support for the Democratic platform, the establishment of self-government in the Philippines, and his own election as the next president of the United States. His platform, Bryan insisted, was the only means of sustaining a morally upright America and ensuring the right of government by consent both at home and abroad.

### *The Progressive Era*

A strong faith in an active and deliberating public epitomized the progressivism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Progressive Era peaked during the initial decades of the twentieth century and entailed a push for a wide spectrum of political and social reforms.<sup>6</sup> Although significant progress was made during this period, such advancements often came at great human expense.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the frontier provided the young nation with ample room for growth; the nation's population, businesses, and farms saw major expansion during this period. Thomas Jefferson, in his First Inaugural Address, proclaimed that the United States had "room enough for our descendants to the thousandth and thousandth generation."<sup>8</sup> From the Civil War to 1900 in particular, agriculture and industry expanded, more land was cultivated, railroads were built, new factories were established, and the nation's cities grew rapidly.<sup>9</sup> This progress inspired confidence in the abilities of the American people and their republican system of government.

At the same time, however, there was little governmental regulation of this material growth; factory workers and farmers came to suffer the negative side effects of such unconstrained expansion. Across the nation the disparity in wealth between workers and big business owners widened. Farmers struggled with overwhelming debt, and more and more factory workers lived in squalor. In municipal and national politics, corruption was rampant.<sup>10</sup> In response to all these problems, there arose a movement of progressive reformers determined to bring about the governmental and social change necessary to meet these new challenges.

There was no single progressive agenda; reformers embracing the progressive title championed a broad range of political initiatives. Within this diverse group, there were conflicting political opinions on both domestic and international issues that defied the traditional two-party system. Theodore Roosevelt is perhaps the most recognizable progressive of the early 1900s. Yet his chief political opponents, Woodrow Wilson and William Jennings Bryan, also campaigned as progressives. John Milton Cooper has distinguished among the foreign policy positions taken by these three progressives, which ranged from Roosevelt's internationalism to the more isolationist stance of Bryan, with Wilson falling somewhere in between the two.<sup>11</sup> The clashing opinions of Roosevelt, Wilson, and Bryan highlight what Richard Hofstadter has described as the progressives' lack of cohesion on policy.<sup>12</sup> Despite such disagreements, however, the progressives united in their attitude toward the people. Hofstadter emphasized how the progressive spirit was marked by a certain optimism and faith

in the people: "But the dominant note is one of confidence, of faith that no problem is too difficult to be overcome by the proper mobilization of energy and intelligence in the citizenry."<sup>13</sup> Similarly, J. Michael Hogan has emphasized the deliberative spirit of those who identified with progressivism, concluding: "Above all else, [progressives] looked for answers in a revitalized public sphere. Progressives had faith that a democratic public, properly educated and deliberating freely, provided the best hope for the future of the American democracy."<sup>14</sup> While Progressives differed on a variety of issues, including trusts, tariffs, labor, and governmental reform, they were unified in their calls for a "revivification of democracy."<sup>15</sup>

Bryan strove to implement the progressive agenda both at home and abroad. Particularly early on in his career, Bryan fought for the policies that would advance progressive principles on the domestic front. He believed in "the direct primary, the direct election of United States Senators, the initiative and referendum, [and] woman suffrage."<sup>16</sup> Bryan also revered the principles of Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and Abraham Lincoln, steadfastly arguing for the people's "right to a voice in government" and defending their "capacity for self-government."<sup>17</sup> These beliefs carried into Bryan's understanding of the nation's role in the world, particularly his views on the Philippines. Within his own country, these principles and his everyday comportment helped to earn him a reputation as the people's candidate, "The Great Commoner."<sup>18</sup>

#### *William Jennings Bryan: The Great Commoner*

William Jennings Bryan, born on March 19, 1860, developed this progressive faith in self-government as he grew up in Salem, Illinois, watching his father participate in the politics of the region.<sup>19</sup> His father, Silas Bryan, was an Illinois state senator and later a circuit judge. The elder Bryan was a staunch Democrat and held steadfastly to the party and principles of President Andrew Jackson. Traveling with his father to political rallies heightened the young Bryan's interest in government.<sup>20</sup>

Bryan's education taught him the skills needed for active engagement in politics. His mother handled his early education, relying on the moral guidance of the popular *McGuffey Reader*, as well as the Bible to provide the foundation of his curriculum.<sup>21</sup> From his own accounts, Bryan delivered his first speeches to his mother as he stood on the kitchen table to recite his lessons.<sup>22</sup> Bryan's education outside the home began at the age of ten when he started attending Salem's public school. He later went on to Whipple Academy and Illinois College in the small town of Jacksonville.<sup>23</sup> While there, Bryan received a classical education, which included courses in Latin, Greek, and rhetoric.<sup>24</sup> Upon graduating as valedictorian of Illinois College, he moved to Chicago to finish his education at Union Law School.<sup>25</sup> He became familiar with the plight of America's small town farmers throughout his childhood in Salem and Jacksonville; during law school in Chicago he came into direct contact with urban poverty, industrial tensions, and political corruption.<sup>26</sup>

Bryan's memoirs highlight how hard he worked to become a good speaker.<sup>27</sup> The family's doctor reinforced this point, recalling that "Will" began giving "little talks" to his friends at the age of four.<sup>28</sup> At school Bryan was a member of the debate team and competed in declamation and oratorical contests.<sup>29</sup> His early public speaking received little notice; Bryan did not even place during his first speaking contest. The following year, though, he achieved third

place, and during his senior year at Illinois College, he earned the privilege of representing the school in an intercollegiate oratorical competition.<sup>30</sup> School contests were intermixed with Bryan's political activities, for even while in school he campaigned for local Democratic candidates. After delivering one such speech in 1880, Bryan sought out his mother's opinion of his performance. With honesty and directness, she replied, "Well there were a few good places in it--where you might have stopped!"<sup>31</sup> Bryan's renown as an orator thus came only on the heels of some early setbacks, but with persistence, he continually improved upon his skills.

Bryan continued to hone his speaking abilities in court and on the campaign trail in the years that followed. Upon receiving his law degree, Bryan set up his legal practice in Jacksonville. In 1887, though, Bryan moved his family and his practice to Lincoln, Nebraska, seeking greater career opportunities.<sup>32</sup> This move did not go unrewarded, for he quickly met with success in Nebraska politics. By this time, he also had become a more accomplished orator. After speaking in northwestern Nebraska to an enthusiastic audience, Bryan later recounted telling his wife, "I have had a strange experience. Last night I found that I have power over the audience. I could move them as I chose. I have more than usual power as a speaker. I know it. God grant that I may use it wisely."<sup>33</sup>

This reflection on his own speaking ability later rang true as he achieved success as both a politician and a traveling speaker. In 1890, Bryan's public speaking skills helped him to win election to the U.S. House of Representatives in his early twenties, and he quickly made his mark upon Congress. Still an unknown freshman representative from Nebraska, Bryan took the floor in 1892 to defend a Democratic tariff proposal. He impressed congressmen from both parties after speaking for two and a half hours. As a *New York Times* reporter noted, "Everybody tonight is talking about Bryan's speech . . . His voice is clear and strong, his language plain, but not lacking in grace. He uses illustrations effectively and he employs humor and sarcasm with admirable facility."<sup>34</sup> William Jennings Bryan gained the attention of his fellow politicians in Washington, D.C. and four years later, at the age of thirty-six, another speech catapulted the young man from Nebraska into the national spotlight.

At the start of the Democratic National Convention in 1896, there was no clear presidential nominee. Bryan was, at best, a dark horse candidate. The incumbent administration of Democrat Grover Cleveland had met with economic disaster when the depression of 1893 hit the nation. Farmers had grown increasingly dependent on bank loans during the later half of the nineteenth century. Low crop prices and high railroad freight charges, coupled with the economic effects of the depression, left many farmers bankrupt and bitter. As party leaders attempted to articulate an appropriate platform for the 1896 race, they faced division particularly over the issue of the gold standard versus the free coinage of silver. Bryan delivered the final remarks in this debate, arguing for the free coinage of silver in his now famous "Cross of Gold" speech, which met with some thirty minutes of applause and demonstrations. Many commentators assert that this address secured the party's nomination for Bryan.<sup>35</sup> On the fifth ballot taken at this divided convention, Bryan became one of the youngest presidential nominees in U.S. history.<sup>36</sup>

The Democratic National Convention concluded on July 11, and Bryan took his case to the nation. Between the end of the convention and the election on November 3, Bryan logged 18,009 miles on four campaign trips.<sup>37</sup> He was the first presidential candidate to stump personally in such campaign speaking tours; formerly candidates relied on supporters to

canvass the nation on their behalf.<sup>38</sup> Bryan, though, spoke in twenty-six states and more than 250 cities, delivering more than 3,000 speeches to an estimated five million people.<sup>39</sup> During these tours, Bryan delivered up to thirty-six speeches in a single day,<sup>40</sup> often from the back of a railroad car. In spite of these efforts, however, the 1896 election went to the former governor of Ohio, William McKinley, who received a popular vote total of 7,107,822 to Bryan's 6,511,073.<sup>41</sup>

Defeat in 1896 did not quell Bryan's political ambition. Less than six months after the election, Bryan and his wife, Mary Baird Bryan, collected and published *The First Battle*, a commentary on the 1896 campaign, featuring many of the speeches that he delivered. Within the first two months it sold 200,000 copies,<sup>42</sup> and Bryan began preparing for another run at the White House. By 1900, the economy had improved and issues surrounding the Spanish-American War had moved to the forefront of the national agenda. The election of 1900 would thus focus not on free silver but on the issue of imperialism.

### *Imperialism and the Spanish-American War*

On April 25, 1898, the United States entered the Spanish-American War, and on August 12, 1898, the war ended with the United States now an imperial power.<sup>43</sup> Although it lasted only 113 days, the Spanish-American War raised new questions regarding America's destiny, duty, and identity as a nation. The United States had declared war with Spain on behalf of the Cuban people, but the end of the war forced the American people to reflect on their own interests and role within the world.

At the beginning of the Cuban revolution in February 1895, the troubles of that island nation did not gain widespread attention in the United States.<sup>44</sup> Accounts of the Spanish oppression of the Cuban people, sprinkled with the sensationalistic reports of yellow journalism, made their way into mainstream U.S. newspapers by the late 1890s.<sup>45</sup> The citizens of the United States consequently rallied behind the Cubans in their fight for freedom, and the McKinley administration took the side of Cuba in talks with Spain. Two events in February 1898 complicated these diplomatic negotiations: the de Lome letter and the *U.S.S. Maine*. The de Lome letter, written by a Spanish minister at the embassy in Washington, D.C. to a Cuban official, criticized McKinley. The letter created tension when it was intercepted and published in the *New York Journal*.<sup>46</sup> Then, on February 15, 1898, an explosion onboard the *U.S.S. Maine* caused it to sink in Havana Harbor, killing two hundred U.S. sailors. With no clear evidence of the cause of the explosion, many journalists nevertheless immediately accused Spain.<sup>47</sup> President McKinley at first urged Americans to suspend judgment until an investigation of the incident could be completed. As tensions continued to mount in the ensuing months, however, diplomatic efforts were soon abandoned. Two months later, on April 11, President McKinley asked Congress to give him the authority to intervene in the Cuban situation. By the end of the month, the United States was at war with Spain.<sup>48</sup>

Elected officials tried to establish policies to guide the conduct and aftermath of the war. In April, Congress adopted the Teller Amendment, which outlined U.S. motives toward Cuba; as the Amendment stated, the United States planned to "leave the government and control of the Island to its people."<sup>49</sup> This declaration prohibited the annexation of Cuba upon the conclusion of the war.<sup>50</sup> A similar measure, introduced by Senator Augustus Bacon (D-GA),

sought to place the Filipinos, who also remained under Spanish control, on the same track to independence.<sup>51</sup> Bryan, among others, supported this resolution, but it failed to pass Congress.<sup>52</sup> The country's intentions toward Cuba were defined, but Congress failed to establish a similar policy for the Philippines upon the end of the war.

Bryan's approach to the war shifted over time. Dubbed the "Boy Orator of the Platte," Bryan lived most of his life in the Midwest, and like most farmers and small town residents from that region, he was largely an isolationist before the war.<sup>53</sup> Yet as the situation in Cuba intensified, Bryan supported his political opponent, President McKinley, as he led the country into war. When he delivered speeches during this period, Bryan at times waved an American flag in one hand and a Cuban flag in the other.<sup>54</sup> Newspaper articles and congressional reports detailed Spanish cruelties, including their policy of *reconcentrado*, which forced the Cubans into concentration camp-like conditions.<sup>55</sup> These practices resulted in the deaths of thousands of Cubans.<sup>56</sup> In light of such atrocities, Bryan argued that "Humanity demands that we shall act."<sup>57</sup> A stalwart progressive, Bryan was nevertheless ready to fight. When Congress declared war, Bryan even wrote to McKinley and offered his military services. McKinley ignored the offer,<sup>58</sup> but Bryan enlisted as a private in the Nebraskan National Guard. Nebraska's Governor Silas Holcomb appointed him colonel of the Third Regiment. The regiment was sent to Florida and fought insects, snakes, and disease but no foreign troops. During his time in the Guard, Bryan curtailed his political speaking, developing what he called "military lockjaw."<sup>59</sup> With few exceptions, Bryan did not speak out publicly until the day after the Treaty of Paris was signed on December 10, 1898.

Victory in the Spanish-American War was won with a minimum of U.S. lives lost, and lasting less than eight months, it enjoyed widespread popular support. The justification for going to war had been popularly couched in humanitarian concerns.<sup>60</sup> John Hay, future Secretary of State, reflected a common sentiment of the time when he referred to the conflict as "a splendid little war."<sup>61</sup>

Yet other aspects of the policies associated with the war met with greater resistance. With American attention focused on Cuba, the news of Admiral George Dewey's naval victory in Manila Bay on May 1, 1898, surprised the nation. Elected officials and the general public knew little about the Philippines and the situation in the distant Asian islands. This victory against the Spanish fleet initiated a controversy over the terms of the Treaty of Paris, particularly the Philippine question. The Treaty of Paris gave Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Guam to the United States and included the Philippines for \$20 million. Many in the United States embraced the expansion of American territory. Others within the Senate voted against the treaty because of the inclusion of the Philippines. A third group, which included Bryan, pushed for the ratification of the Treaty of Paris, with the understanding that the United States would later grant the Filipinos their independence through a new treaty. Bryan, confident that he could persuade the American people to his view, thus initially sided with the imperialists.

Bryan welcomed the debate over the Treaty of Paris in the Senate, for he believed that it would provide an opportunity to educate the American people about the Philippines. During this debate, however, violence erupted in the islands; Filipinos, intent on independence, revolted against their new American rulers. Those favoring the treaty and U.S. expansion into the Pacific blamed Bryan and other vocal opponents of overseas expansion for sowing the seeds of discontent that led to this violence.<sup>62</sup> Regardless, the treaty gained the two-thirds

majority needed to win ratification in the Senate. The debate over the U.S. role in the Philippines, though, was far from resolved.

#### The Internationalist Argument

The contest over the Philippines between internationalists and anti-imperialists intensified.<sup>63</sup> Influenced by Darwinism and theories of evolution, the internationalists developed their case for overseas expansion with arguments regarding commerce, foreign relations, race, and national responsibility.<sup>64</sup> Drawing on the theme of manifest destiny, they claimed that it was the duty of the U.S. government to extend the boundaries of democracy.<sup>65</sup> The contiguous continental expansion in the United States had come to a halt,<sup>66</sup> and internationalists claimed that expansion to the Philippines and similar outlying areas provided the next logical step.<sup>67</sup> They reasoned that it was now time for the United States to assume its rightful place as a leader in the world, if not the next great empire.

There were many powerful voices within the internationalist ranks. Such leaders included U.S. Senators Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA), Albert Beveridge (R-IN), Mark Hanna (R-OH), and Nelson W. Aldrich (R-RI).<sup>68</sup> In an address to an assembly of ministers, President McKinley defended America's course in the Philippines. He did not want the Philippines, he stated, but God "dropped them into our lap."<sup>69</sup> Left with no other choice, he implied, the United States reluctantly became an imperial power. Once the Philippines were in American possession, McKinley reasoned, they could not be returned to their former colonial master or left alone to be preyed upon by other countries. Furthering his rationale, McKinley also argued that the Filipinos, unlike the American people, were not yet equipped for self-government: "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."<sup>70</sup> McKinley, voicing a common internationalist argument, contended that the expansion of the country was ordained by God. Alongside President McKinley, Senator Albert Beveridge was a key voice in this debate. On September 16, 1898, he delivered his famous "March of the Flag" address, in which he tracked the progression of the American flag westward. Beveridge argued that such expansion was part of God's plan for the United States:

We cannot fly from our world duties; it is ours to execute the purpose of a fate that has driven us to be greater than our small intentions. We cannot retreat from any soil where Providence has unfurled our banner; it is ours to save that soil for liberty and civilization. For liberty and civilization and God's promises fulfilled, the flag must henceforth be the symbol and the sign to all mankind.<sup>71</sup>

Stopping the march of the flag as it was hoisted over Manila, the expansionists argued, would constitute abandoning the responsibilities given to the nation by God. America was not merely an exceptional country, but a country with God-given duties. This progress was not only the nation's duty but its destiny.

#### The Anti-Imperialist Argument

This internationalist vision, set out by the likes of McKinley, Beveridge, and Lodge, did not go uncontested. Organized anti-imperialist efforts began congealing in the wake of Admiral Dewey's victory in Manila Bay. A June 15, 1898, meeting at Boston's Faneuil Hall eventually led

to the formation of the Anti-Imperialist League, which served as a prototype for other such leagues and organizations.<sup>72</sup> By mid-1899, this League boasted thirty thousand members, and other leagues had formed across the nation, including the Central Anti-Imperialist League, the Anti-Imperialist League of New York, and the American League of Philadelphia. These organizations distributed leaflets, published broadsides, lobbied members of Congress, and launched chain letters to protest the course of U.S. foreign policy.<sup>73</sup>

Leaders of many of the nineteenth-century's reform movements converged to fight the growth of imperialism, including social welfare workers, civil service reformers, prohibitionists, and defenders of Indian rights.<sup>74</sup> In 1899, Bryan published an anthology of speeches and articles, *Republic or Empire: The Philippine Question*, which boasted works by such noted and varied figures as steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, labor leader Samuel Gompers, and veteran Republican Senator George F. Hoar from Massachusetts. The fight against imperialism even attracted the support of a number of Bryan's former political opponents, including Gold Democrats and Republicans.<sup>75</sup>

As the anti-imperialist leagues fought against the annexation of the Philippines, their members relied on key abstract principles from such U.S. historical documents as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, Washington's Farewell Address, and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address to buttress their anti-imperialist contentions.<sup>76</sup> Their 1899 Platform stated, for example, that:

We regret that it has become necessary in the land of Washington and Lincoln to reaffirm that all men, of whatever race or color, are entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We maintain that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. We insist that the subjugation of any people is "criminal aggression" and open disloyalty to the distinctive principles of our Government.<sup>77</sup>

The League looked to the country's founding fathers and founding documents to defend "liberty," "the spirit of 1776," and "the foundation of the Republic," for they believed that the policy of imperialism lay in gross contradiction to the nation's fundamental principles.<sup>78</sup> Other anti-imperialists argued that it was impossible for the Philippines to become a legitimately held or productive part of the United States because the climate of the Philippines did not allow for a prosperous white civilization or democracy.<sup>79</sup> The racial differences between Americans and Filipinos, it was argued, would muddy relations.<sup>80</sup> Ultimately, though, anti-imperialists charged that the United States could not sustain the principles of liberty and citizenship if it held the Filipinos as colonial subjects and refused to recognize their rights.<sup>81</sup>

This debate over imperialism, which was touched off by the Treaty of Paris, fed into the discourse of the 1900 presidential election. At the 1900 Democratic National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri, the Philippine question provoked an animated response from the audience. Benjamin Tillman (D-SC) delivered the report of the Committee of Platforms and Resolutions. After denouncing the Republican's handling of relations with Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines, he read: "But the burning issue of imperialism growing out of the Spanish war involves the very existence of the Republic and the destruction of our free institutions. We regard it as the paramount issue of the campaign." Eighteen minutes of applause, flag waving, and the unfurling of banners followed this declaration. For the 1900 election, imperialism



represented the most pressing exigence, with the Democratic platform declaring that "no nation can long endure half republic and half empire."<sup>82</sup> Bryan accepted the platform and the Democratic presidential nomination; he began his campaign in Indianapolis, Indiana, on August 8, 1900.

### *Bryan's Acceptance Speech of 1900*

As William Jennings Bryan accepted his party's nomination for the presidency, he faced an overflowing crowd. A *New York Times* reporter described the packed audience in the following terms: "a hand once down could not be raised, and once raised could not be lowered."<sup>83</sup> Addressing the fifty thousand people assembled to hear his acceptance speech, Bryan explained that he would read his remarks because he sought to accurately address "that larger constituency which we reach through the newspapers" (1).<sup>84</sup> Having sent an advance copy of his speech to the press,<sup>85</sup> Bryan wanted to stick to the copy of his speech that the people of the nation would read, for he aimed to "speak to all throughout the land" (1). He sought to accurately lay the imperialism issue before the American people, squarely aligning his campaign with progressive values from the outset. Throughout the speech, Bryan continued to integrate this progressive approach, using it to marshal public support for his position, to craft his case for the Democratic Party and Philippine independence, and to secure his election as the nation's 26th president.

Throughout the speech, Bryan polarized the election to highlight his platform as the correct course for the nation. Bryan heaped charges on the Republican Party, cautioning that, "Republicans who gloried in our independence when the nation was less powerful now look with favor upon a foreign alliance; Republicans who three years ago condemned 'forcible annexation' as immoral and even criminal are now sure that it is both immoral and criminal to oppose forcible annexation" (9). Although the Republican Party had once been the party of Lincoln, Bryan asserted, the party's current leadership continued to give "new evidence of their abandonment of the earlier ideals of their party and of their complete subserviency to pecuniary considerations" (12). By casting the Republican platform as anathema to the nation's ideals, Bryan polarized the country's options. The Democrats were poised to confront anyone who would "trespass upon the rights of another" (7), whereas the Republican Party had bowed to the "politically and financially powerful" (8). For citizens going to the polls, the vote had become a choice between either a republic or an empire.<sup>86</sup> As he progressed, Bryan continued to center his argument on the implications of the upcoming election, the role of the American people, and the nation's character.

Bryan approached his audience as empowered actors, capable of processing and weighing even complex arguments. Thus, he pressed his listeners to process the information and complete his argument by posing rhetorical questions. Bryan probed: "What is our title to the Philippine Islands?...Did we purchase the people?...Were they thrown in with the land?" (55) "Is he [the Filipino] to be a citizen or a subject?" (44) "Is the sunlight of full citizenship to be enjoyed by the people of the United States, and the twilight of semi-citizenship endured by the people of Porto Rico, while the thick darkness of perpetual vassalage covers the Philippines?" (52) Convinced of the moral wisdom of the American citizenry, Bryan depended upon his audience to complete these arguments.

Furthermore, Bryan called upon the people to decide the future of the nation with their votes. With faith in the U.S. system of self-government, Bryan "submitted" the Democratic platform "with confidence to the American people" (106). He derided the view of some Republicans who insisted that the nation rested in "the hands of destiny," claiming instead that like Washington, he believed that the "destiny of this Republic" rested "in the hands of its own people" (110).<sup>87</sup> The nation's citizens could shape and mold the future of the country and the world. According to Bryan, it was each citizen's duty to be engaged: "Each individual has his own idea of the nation's mission, and he owes it to his country as well as to himself to contribute as best he may to the fulfillment of that mission" (110). The United States had a role to play, and citizens were morally obligated to weigh in on the national debate. So that the people might make an educated decision, Bryan initiated his campaign by first speaking to the concerns of voters.

Early on in the speech, Bryan addressed the charges publicly lodged against him as the Democratic candidate. A group of anti-imperialists pointed to Bryan's support of the Treaty of Paris as proof that he could not be trusted to champion their cause. Some called him a political opportunist. Others alleged that he was not dedicated to anti-imperialism.<sup>88</sup> President Grover Cleveland cautioned, "How certain can you be that he [Bryan] would save you from imperialism? What did he do towards that end when the treaty of peace was before the Senate and how do you know what such an acrobat would do on that question if his personal ambition was in the balance?"<sup>89</sup> Acknowledging these criticisms, Bryan moved to explain himself and to allay such fears and suspicions. His support of the treaty revolved around his progressive faith in the people; he clarified: "I thought it safer to trust the American people to give independence to the Filipinos than to trust the accomplishment of that purpose to diplomacy with an unfriendly nation" (17). Indeed, Bryan contended that ratifying the Treaty allowed the United States "to deal with the Filipinos according to American principles" (20). Such principles, Bryan argued, necessitated that the Filipinos be offered a path to self-government under the Bacon Resolution: "If the Bacon resolution had been adopted by the senate and carried out by the president... it would have taken the question of imperialism out of politics and left the American people free to deal with their domestic problems. But the resolution was defeated by the vote of the republican vice-president" (21). Continuing to defend his own record, Bryan charged that Republican policies, not the Treaty of Paris, touched off the violence in the Philippines. He argued that although "republican speakers and republican editors" might attempt to place blame elsewhere, it was but "a cowardly evasion of responsibility" to deny the Republicans' own role in inspiring the insurrection (22). Having confronted the accusations laid against him, Bryan then moved to identify for the American people the fallacies in the imperialists' arguments.

Bryan presented the arguments used to defend imperialism, then refuted each in detail. A contemporary of Bryan's praised his message for its clarity, noting, "I like the speech in every particular, and congratulate you on presenting the subject in such a clear comprehensive manner, so that every reader can understand it."<sup>90</sup> His case was accessible and straightforward as he progressed one-by-one through the arguments offered in defense of imperialism.

To start, Bryan addressed the Republican argument for a bigger U.S. role in the Philippines and international politics: "We must improve the present opportunity to become a world power and enter into international politics" (78). To counter this argument, Bryan drew

on themes of American exceptionalism, which positioned the country as a beacon for the world from its very formation. He boasted, "Because our Declaration of Independence was promulgated others have been promulgated. Because the patriots of 1776 fought for liberty others have fought for it. Because our constitution was adopted other constitutions have been adopted" (83). In other words, it was neither expansion nor imperialism that made the country the envy of the world, but rather "the onward march" of the American principle of self-government (84). "For ten decades," Bryan argued, the United States had been "the most potent influence in the world. Not only has it been a world power, but it has done more to affect the politics of the human race than all the other nations of the world combined" (83). Within this narrative of exceptionalism, Bryan touted American democracy, asserting: "The growth of the principle of self-government, planted on American soil, has been the overshadowing political fact of the nineteenth century" (84). Imperialism only threatened this legacy, and Bryan refused to "exchange the glory of this republic for the glory of all the empires that have risen and fallen since time began" (84). The United States had an illustrious history and was already a world power, he reasoned. The crucial decision placed before the American people, then, was whether that heritage would be continued or abandoned for the pursuit of empire.

Bryan also articulated and then disputed the commercial argument for imperialism against the backdrop of the nation's moral history. According to Bryan, the "pecuniary argument" for imperialism held that "our commercial interests in the Philippine islands and in the Orient make it necessary for us to hold the islands permanently" (79). Bryan's counterargument highlighted Benjamin Franklin's advice during the American Revolution, when Franklin denied "the theory that war can be rightly waged for pecuniary advantage" (87). Making the case for his party, Bryan then contrasted this reasoning with the opposition's. The Republican arguments that coupled trade, expansion, and force, Bryan unwaveringly condemned as "sordid" (88) and "unrighteous" (90). He followed up this moral denunciation of Republican policy with support for his own position. He insisted: "The Democratic party is in favor of the expansion of trade. It would extend our trade by every legitimate and peaceful means; but it is not willing to make merchandise of human blood" (89). This accusation echoed his opening critique of the Republican Party wherein he charged them with "substitut[ing] the worship of mammon for the protection of the rights of man" (3). As he countered this second argument in favor of imperialism, Bryan continued to align himself and the Democratic Party with the legacy of Franklin, the Revolution, and the memory of an upright, moral U.S. foreign policy. Consequently, he framed the upcoming election as a choice between right and wrong.

Having cast the issue of imperialism as a moral question for the American people, Bryan turned to refute the religious justifications offered in support of imperialism. Some defended imperialism, Bryan asserted, by making the case that "the spread of the Christian religion will be facilitated by a colonial policy" (80). He referred to this approach as the "'gun-powder gospel'" (97). He also gave voice to an argument used by President McKinley and others that "Providence delivered the Filipinos into our hands for their good and our glory" (98).<sup>91</sup> To refute these claims, Bryan turned to the Bible, observing that the "command 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature' has no Gatling gun attachment." Such forcible Christianity, he warned, threatened religion even back home, for "If there is poison in the blood of the hand it will ultimately reach the heart." If the nation were to wage war to convert people

to Christianity, Bryan continued, that militant doctrine would "sooner or later be transplanted upon American soil" (99). Instead, Bryan beckoned his audience to compare the "swaggering, bullying, brutal doctrine of imperialism" with the Bible's calls to love one's neighbor and the Golden Rule (101). Alongside these biblical appeals, Bryan predicted that imperialism would make American missionaries unwelcome throughout the world. Only by disavowing imperialism and conquest could Americans claim to be "citizens of a nation which respects the rights of the citizens of other nations as carefully as it protects the rights of its own citizens" and ensure a warm welcome for Christian missionaries abroad (103). In effect, Bryan reasoned, the United States had to disavow the Republican Party and their policy of imperialism if it hoped to maintain its image as the "Shining City on a Hill."

The final argument in support of imperialism was that there was no honorable way to retreat or disengage from the Philippines. As before, Bryan confronted this position with historical precedent and an elevation of the central progressive principle of self-government. He noted that in the case of Cuba an honorable alternative was found: "We won a naval victory at Santiago, but that did not compel us to hold Cuba" (104). In the same way, the United States need not "exercise perpetual sovereignty" over the Philippines. Bryan continued to counter such arguments with a rhetoric of morality: "Better a thousand times that our flag in the Orient give way to a flag representing the idea of self-government than that the flag of this republic should become the flag of empire" (105). As an alternative to empire, Bryan presented the Democratic platform as an "easy, honest, honorable solution of the Philippine question" (106). That plan involved establishing a stable government in the Philippine islands, granting them their independence, and providing them with protection from "outside interference" until they could stand on their own (103).

Drawing on Washington and other patriotic heroes, William Jennings Bryan promulgated a narrative of a righteous American heritage in framing his policy for the Philippines as a moral choice in the upcoming election. Throughout his speech, Bryan identified with the illustrious history of the nation and talked about the lofty values passed down to the people by the founders. He frequently drew upon Lincoln to insist upon the value of "the man before the dollar" (4), to support the need for a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people" (5), and to defend "the right to criticize a President" even during a war (10). To justify his acceptance of the contentious Treaty of Paris, Bryan cited Lincoln's question: "Can aliens make treaties easier than friends can make laws?" (18) Beyond Lincoln, Bryan also marshaled the memory of other American heroes, including Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, Henry Clay, and Daniel Webster. Of Franklin, Bryan noted, his "learning, wisdom and virtue are a part of the priceless legacy bequeathed to us from the revolutionary days" (61). This legacy constituted a moral inheritance for the people of the United States, and it demanded their active, moral participation in deciding the course of the nation.

Like the imperialists, Bryan invoked the language of American exceptionalism; he too held up the United States as a beacon for other nations. For him, however, the U.S. example was to encourage "all who are denied a voice in their own government" (24) to "protest" and "resist" tyranny (23). He credited Patrick Henry with inspiring Filipino independence, for "When he uttered that passionate appeal, 'Give me liberty or give me death,' he expressed a sentiment which still echoes in the hearts of men" (24). Similarly, Bryan took up Henry Clay's defense of

the God-given desire for self-government, reasserting Clay's argument that, "Self-government is the natural government of man" (68). Thus, Bryan used the words of prominent figures--Federalists and Anti-Federalists, Republicans and Democrats--to emphasize his themes of liberty, self-determination, and self-government. Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin justified Bryan's progressive commitment to American ideals over commercial interests, liberty and freedom over subservience and slavery.

In crafting a narrative of the nation's history and aligning himself with the heroes of that narrative, Bryan's vision for the Philippines became the only moral option for voters. He framed this decision for citizens:

The young man upon reaching his majority can do what he pleases. He can disregard the teachings of his parents; he can trample upon all that he has been taught to consider sacred; he can disobey the laws of the state, the laws of society and the laws of God. He can stamp failure upon his life and make his very existence a curse to his fellow men and he can bring his father and mother in sorrow to the grave; but he cannot annul the sentence, "The wages of sin is death" (72).

For Bryan, the Filipino crisis was not only a question of living up to the nation's moral inheritance, but also of assuring the future of the republic. Having reached maturity, the nation's citizens had to choose their future course in the upcoming election.

The moral language of Bryan's address capitalized on common understandings of Judeo-Christian religious values. With loaded language, Bryan noted that the nation had to choose between "the omnipotent weapon of truth" and "the weapons of physical warfare" (84). Bryan's use of "God terms" such as "truth," "justice," "evil," and "right and wrong" furthered these religious connotations. Ever "the Godly hero," as historian Michael Kazin has described Bryan, he drew upon these traditional Judeo-Christian religious standards to construct and place his calls for self-government within a moral framework for the 1900 election. Indeed, "It was God himself," Bryan argued, "who placed in every human heart the love of liberty" (26). By these moves, Bryan aligned himself with the nation's moral and patriotic ideals, concluding, "It shall be my constant ambition and my controlling purpose to aid in realizing the high ideals of those whose wisdom and courage and sacrifices brought the republic into existence" (111).

Carrying on the ideals of the founders and presenting a moral choice for voters, Bryan continued to hold onto progressive principles, pushing for liberty and government by consent. He trumpeted: "The destiny of the republican form of government was deeply, if not finally, staked on the experiment entrusted to the American people" (109). With faith in the ability of the Filipinos to govern themselves, Bryan put extending that experiment to others on a moral plane, casting it as a choice between right and wrong, a choice dictated by the nation's exceptional history. William Jennings Bryan could "conceive of a national destiny surpassing the glories of the present and past" (112), yet all that depended on the choice made by the American people. The Democratic platform, Bryan believed, pointed to the only choice that would allow the American people to continue their democratic traditions and maintain their own liberty.

Bryan's speech met with enthusiastic approval from the assembled crowd. Upon rising to deliver his speech, Bryan faced an excited audience; a reporter from Indianapolis

commented, "Cheer upon cheer greeted him at every telling period."<sup>92</sup> Although he read the majority of his acceptance speech, Bryan delivered the peroration from memory, and this conclusion also met with "tumultuous and prolonged" demonstrations from the audience.<sup>93</sup> Clearly, he had chosen the right words for the audience of Democrats who had once again nominated him. Those sentiments, however, apparently were not shared by the majority of Americans.

### *The Legacy of the Speech*

Despite the enthusiastic response of his immediate audience, Bryan's 1900 acceptance speech--and the campaign it launched--ultimately fell short of the Democratic candidate's ultimate goal. The American people rejected Bryan's vision for America; he lost the election by a landslide, with William McKinley beating him by an even greater margin than he had in the 1896 election.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, Bryan's vision of independence for the Philippines was not to be realized, at least not right away. The Filipinos had to wait another forty-six years before the United States recognized their independence as a sovereign nation.<sup>95</sup>

Bryan, however, continued to be a prominent progressive voice. In 1908, he again ran for president on the Democratic ticket, taking as his campaign slogan the question, "Shall the people rule?"<sup>96</sup> As in 1896 and 1900, he lost the election, but he continued to play an important role in American politics over the next decade. As a speaker on the Chautauqua circuit, through his paper *The Commoner*, and from his position as Secretary of State under President Woodrow Wilson, Bryan remained an influential voice of mainstream populism and progressive political principles. Before his death in 1925, he also campaigned for prohibition and woman suffrage and gained national attention for opposing the theory of evolution in the Scopes trial of 1925.

Bryan was not successful in changing U.S. policy toward the Philippines, but his arguments still resonate today. Most recently, heated disputes over the role of the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan have resurrected claims of U.S. exceptionalism, as advocates of U.S. involvement in the Middle East continue to argue that the United States has a unique obligation to promote democracy around the world. At the same time, others worry that U.S. interventionism threatens the core principles underlying U.S. exceptionalism, both political and religious. In a speech delivered on October 8, 2002, for example, Congressman Ron Paul (R-TX) worried that the impending invasion of Iraq might be seen as inconsistent with a "Christian definition of what a just war is all about."<sup>97</sup> Emphasizing political rather than religious concerns, then-Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) likewise worried that the invasion of Iraq was inconsistent with American principles, although he worried more about America's reputation as a champion of freedom and democracy. "America's standing in the world is a precious resource not easily rebuilt," Obama warned, and the invasion of Iraq and four years of war threatened to "erode the good standing and moral authority that took our country generations to build."<sup>98</sup> For Paul and Obama, as for Bryan, American exceptionalism was grounded in the nation's principles, not its power, and those principles were threatened by unjust military interventions abroad.

In the twenty-first century, as in 1900, appeals to American exceptionalism call upon the public to decide whether foreign wars are consistent with the nation's past and its core principles. Bryan built his arguments upon an implicit faith in the ability of the American people to recognize that imperialism was inconsistent with American political and religious ideals. His

interpretation of American exceptionalism may have failed at the ballot box, but his campaign engaged the public in an important debate over U.S. foreign policy and reaffirmed the active role of the people in deciding America's role in the world. Today's debates over American foreign policy no longer involve questions about colonial annexations or the expansion of America's frontiers, but they do involve difficult questions and place a heavy responsibility on the people of the United States. The model republic that Bryan envisioned required an active, informed citizenry, a citizenry interested and engaged in questions about America's proper role in the world. Today's difficult foreign policy issues demand no less.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Paxton Hibben and Charles A. Beard, *A Peerless Leader: William Jennings Bryan* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1929); Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006); Paolo E. Coletta, *William Jennings Bryan: Political Evangelist 1860-1908* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 152; Kendrick A. Clements, *William Jennings Bryan: Missionary Isolationist* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982); and LeRoy Ashby, *William Jennings Bryan: Champion of Democracy* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> Malcolm O. Sillars, "William Jennings Bryan: The Jeffersonian Liberal as Progressive," in *Rhetoric and Reform in the Progressive Era*, ed. J. Michael Hogan (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2003), 186.

<sup>3</sup> John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," in *American Rhetorical Discourse*, ed. Ronald E. Reid and James F. Klumpp, 3rd ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2005), 36.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Hamilton wrote, "It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force." See "Federalist No. 1," *Library of Congress*, [http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed\\_01.html](http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_01.html) (accessed on December 20, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> The terms of the Treaty of Paris ceded Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Guam to the United States, and it included the Philippines for \$20 million.

<sup>6</sup> Scholars debate the precise dates of the Progressive Era, but most locate it somewhere between 1890 and 1920. See J. Michael Hogan, ed., "Introduction," in *Rhetoric and Reform in the Progressive Era* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2003), x; and Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), xi, 28.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Hofstadter, "Introduction: The Meaning of the Progressive Movement," in *The Progressive Movement 1900-1915*, ed. Richard Hofstadter (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1963), 2.

<sup>8</sup> See a published version of Jefferson's speech in Stephen Howard Browne, *Jefferson's Call for Nationhood* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), xv.

<sup>9</sup> The 1890 Census reported that between 1880 and 1890, the nation's cities grew by 60.46 percent. See "Social Statistics of Cities, 1890" in *Report on Social Statistics of Cities in the United States at the Eleventh Census 1890*, Department of the Interior (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1895), 1; and Hofstadter, "Introduction," 1-2.

<sup>10</sup> See Hofstadter, "Introduction," 2; and Lincoln Steffens, *Shame of the Cities* (New York: Sagamore Press, 1957).

<sup>11</sup> John Milton Cooper Jr., "Progressives and American Foreign Policy: A Reconsideration," *Mid-America; An Historical Review* 51 (1969): 276.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 5; and Hofstadter, "Introduction," 3.

<sup>13</sup> Hofstadter, "Introduction," 5.

<sup>14</sup> Hogan, "Introduction," x.

<sup>15</sup> Hofstadter, "Introduction," 5.

<sup>16</sup> Robert W. Cherny, *A Righteous Cause: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 186.

<sup>17</sup> William Jennings Bryan, "An Inquiry Answered," *The Commoner* 1 (October 25, 1901), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Coletta, *William Jennings Bryan*, 152.

<sup>19</sup> William Jennings Bryan, *The First Battle: A Story of the Campaign of 1896* (Chicago, IL: W.B. Conkey Co., 1896), 36; and David D. Anderson, *William Jennings Bryan* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1981), 20.

<sup>20</sup> Cherny, *A Righteous Cause*, 11, 18.

<sup>21</sup> The lessons within the *McGuffey Reader* highlighted the value of honesty, instructed in religious doctrine, and encouraged patriotism. See D.A. Sanders, "Social Ideas in McGuffey Readers," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 5 (1941): 579-589.

<sup>22</sup> Bryan, *The First Battle*, 37.

<sup>23</sup> Kazin, *A Godly Hero*, 8.

<sup>24</sup> Cherny, *A Righteous Cause*, 18.

<sup>25</sup> Ashby, *William Jennings Bryan*, 9.

<sup>26</sup> Coletta, *William Jennings Bryan*, 25.

<sup>27</sup> William Jennings Bryan and Mary Baird Bryan, *The Memoirs of William Jennings Bryan* (Philadelphia, PA: United Publishers of America, 1925), 87; and Kazin, *A Godly Hero*, 12.

<sup>28</sup> Kazin, *A Godly Hero*, 10.

<sup>29</sup> Cherny, *A Righteous Cause*, 18-19.

<sup>30</sup> Bryan, *Memoirs*, 85, 88.

<sup>31</sup> As quoted in Coletta, *William Jennings Bryan*, 16.

<sup>32</sup> Louis W. Koenig, *Bryan: A Political Biography of William Jennings Bryan* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), 52.



<sup>33</sup> As quoted in Bryan, *Memoirs*, 248-249.

<sup>34</sup> "Tariff-Reform Champion: Nebraska Furnishes A Fine Democratic Fighter," *New York Times*, March 17, 1892, 5.

<sup>35</sup> See: Cherny, *A Righteous Cause*, 60-61; Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The Democratic Experience* (New York: Random House, 1973), 466; and Coletta, *William Jennings Bryan*, 147.

<sup>36</sup> Bryan, *The First Battle*, 219.

<sup>37</sup> Bryan, *The First Battle*, 604.

<sup>38</sup> Kathleen E. Kendall, *Communication in the Presidential Primaries: Candidates and the Media, 1912-2000* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2000), 55.

<sup>39</sup> Cherny, *A Righteous Cause*, 66.

<sup>40</sup> Coletta, *William Jennings Bryan*, 174.

<sup>41</sup> Genevieve Forbes Herrick and John Origen Herrick, *The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (Chicago, IL: Buxton Publishing House, 1925), 150.

<sup>42</sup> Coletta, *William Jennings Bryan*, 213.

<sup>43</sup> Paul W. Glad, *The Trumpet Soundeth: William Jennings Bryan and His Democracy 1896-1912* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1960), 68.

<sup>44</sup> Clements, *William Jennings Bryan*, 25.

<sup>45</sup> Marcus M. Wilkerson, *Public Opinion and the Spanish-American War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1932).

<sup>46</sup> Leonard Schlup, "Imperialist Dissenter: William B. Bate and the Battle Against Territorial Acquisitions, 1898-1900," *Southern Studies* 6 (1995): 66. In the letter, Spanish Minister Enrique Dupuy de Lôme wrote, "McKinley is, weak and catering to the rabble, and, besides, a low politician, who desires to leave a door open to me, and to stand well with the jingoes of his party." As quoted in "De Lome on the President: Spanish Minister Alleged to have Insulted Mr. McKinley in a Letter to Senor Canalejas," *New York Times*, February 9, 1898, 1.

<sup>47</sup> Later the explosion proved to be an accident. See Kazin, *A Godly Hero*, 86.

<sup>48</sup> Coletta, *William Jennings Bryan*, 222.

<sup>49</sup> *Teller Amendment*, 55th Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* 31, no. 4 (April 16, 1898), 3954.

<sup>50</sup> Indeed, in President McKinley's "War Message" to Congress he noted, "I speak not of forcible annexation, for that cannot be thought of. That, by our code of morality, would be criminal aggression." William McKinley, "The Message That Means War," *San Francisco Call*, April 12, 1898, 3.

<sup>51</sup> Bacon's Resolution stated, "That the United States has not waged the Spanish war for acquisition of territory . . . It is not the purpose of the United States to maintain permanent dominion over them or to incorporate the inhabitants thereof as citizens of the United States, or to hold such inhabitants as vassals." As reported in "Philippines in the Senate: Bacon and Tillman Offer Resolutions Providing that the Islands be Given to the Filipinos," *New York Times*, Dec. 19, 1899, 8.

<sup>52</sup> Coletta, *William Jennings Bryan*, 235.

<sup>53</sup> Clements, *William Jennings Bryan*, 23.

<sup>54</sup> Coletta, *William Jennings Bryan*, 221.

<sup>55</sup> Wilkerson reported the variety of requirements placed upon the Cubans. He noted, "There was to be no traveling without passes, the commercial establishments of the island were to be at the disposal of the commanders, and the population was to be completely under the control of the military department." Wilkerson, *Public Opinion*, 30. Also see *Crucible of Empire*, Video Recording, directed by Daniel A. Miller (Alexandria, VA: PBS Home Video, 1999).

<sup>56</sup> While some newspaper correspondents estimated that nearly 300,000 died of starvation, Wilkerson estimates the number of deaths from the policy of reconcentrado was around 93,851. Wilkerson, *Public Opinion*, 40. See also Miller, *Crucible of Empire*.

<sup>57</sup> As quoted in *World-Herald* interview with Bryan, Box 50, File 9, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>58</sup> Twelve days after receiving Bryan's offer, McKinley offered a reply that "asked merely for what branch of the service Bryan considered himself best qualified." See Koenig, *Bryan: A Political Biography*, 274.

<sup>59</sup> Clements, *William Jennings Bryan*, 30.

<sup>60</sup> Around the nation these humanitarian calls were made. Although McKinley's message to Congress on war first delineated the problem of Cuba as economic, when he turned to justify intervention in Cuba he first noted the humanitarian reasons that supported action. He argued, "The grounds for such intervention may be briefly summarized as follows: First--In the cause of humanity and to put an end to the barbarities, bloodshed, starvation and horrible miseries now existing there, and which the parties to the conflict are either unable or unwilling to stop or mitigate." Senator Rawlins similarly called for war in light of the United States' "duty to neighboring people and to humanity." A report of the Senate's proceedings in *The Evening Times* echoed this same notion: "The right of intervention is a legitimate one, because, however important may be the rights of sovereignty and independence, there is one thing of still greater importance, and that is the law of humanity and human society, which ought not to be outraged." See McKinley, "The Message That Means War," 3; "Senate Committee's Report: Spain Given Notice to Quit Cuban Waters," *The Evening Times*, April 13, 1898, 1; and "Rawlins for War. The Senator from Utah Offers a Radical Resolution," *St. Paul Globe*, March 30, 1898, 1.

<sup>61</sup> As quoted in Schlup, "Imperialist Dissenter," 67.

<sup>62</sup> Coletta, *William Jennings Bryan*, 235.

<sup>63</sup> The modern nuances of the term *imperialism* blur the examination of this historical debate. Recognizing this point, Tompkins defined imperialism at the turn of the century as "the actual political domination of one people by another." See E. Berkeley Tompkins, *Anti-Imperialism in the United States: The Great Debate, 1890-1920* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), 2.

<sup>64</sup> Tompkins, *Anti-Imperialism*, 5.

<sup>65</sup> The idea that the United States' had a duty to expand can be traced all the way back to the nation's Puritan roots, but the phrase, "manifest destiny," was first used by John L. O'Sullivan in 1845. See Charles L. Sanford, ed., *Manifest Destiny and the Imperialism Question* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 1974); and John L. O'Sullivan, "Annexation," *The United States Democratic Review* 27 (July-August 1845): 5-10, online at Making of America (accessed on December 19, 2008).

<sup>66</sup> The 1890 Census stated, "Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement, but at present the unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line. In the discussion of its extent and its westward movement it can not, therefore, any longer have a place in the census reports." See Robert P. Porter, Henry Gannett, and William C. Hunt, "Progress of the Nation: 1790-1890" in *Report on Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census 1890*, Department of the Interior (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1895), xxxiv.

<sup>67</sup> Albert Beveridge, "The March of the Flag," *Voices of Democracy: The U.S. Oratory Project*, <http://www.voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/internet/Beveridgetxt.xml> (accessed April 4, 2009).

<sup>68</sup> Paolo E. Coletta, "Bryan, McKinley, and the Treaty of Paris," *Pacific Historical Review* 26 (1957): 131-146.

<sup>69</sup> McKinley gave this description to a group of Methodist ministers assembled at the White House. See James Rusling, "Interview with President William McKinley," *The Christian Advocate* (January 22, 1903): 17; and Charles S. Olcott, *William McKinley* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), II, 109-111.

<sup>70</sup> Rusling, "Interview with President William McKinley," 17.

<sup>71</sup> Beveridge, "The March of the Flag," 31.

<sup>72</sup> Tompkins, *Anti-Imperialism*, 126, 128; and Clements, *William Jennings Bryan*, 32.

<sup>73</sup> Fred H. Harrington, "The Anti-Imperialist Movement in the United States 1898-1900," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 22 (1935): 223; and Tompkins, *Anti-Imperialism*, 131-134.

<sup>74</sup> Harrington, "The Anti-Imperialist Movement," 217; and Christopher Lasch, "The Anti-Imperialists, the Philippines, and the Inequality of Man," *Journal of Southern History* 24 (1958): 330.

<sup>75</sup> Republican Senators George F. Hoar, Henry M. Teller, and George F. Edmunds all wrote pieces for inclusion in Bryan's anthology against imperialism. Essays by Carl Schurz and John G. Carlisle, who both opposed Bryan in the 1896 election because of his stance on the free coinage of silver, also appeared in the same book. See William Jennings Bryan, ed., *Republic or Empire: The Philippine Question* (Chicago, IL: The Independence Company, 1899).

<sup>76</sup> Harrington, "The Anti-Imperialist Movement," 211.

<sup>77</sup> As quoted in "The Anti-Imperialist Conference," *The Outlook*, October 28, 1899, 472.

<sup>78</sup> Frederic Bancroft, ed., *Speeches, Correspondence, and Political Papers of Carl Schurz* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), 6:77-79; and Tompkins, *Anti-Imperialism*, 2.

<sup>79</sup> Lasch, "The Anti-Imperialists," 328; Many of the anti-imperialists founded their reasoning upon arguments centered on race. An analysis of these arguments can be found in Christopher Lasch, "The Anti-Imperialists, the Philippines, and the Inequality of Man," and Willard H. Smith, "William Jennings Bryan and Racism." See Willard H. Smith, "William Jennings Bryan and Racism," *Journal of Negro History* 54 (1969): 127-149.

<sup>80</sup> Lasch, "The Anti-Imperialists," 324.

<sup>81</sup> Adlai E. Stevenson, "A Republic Can Have No Subjects," in *Republic or Empire: The Philippine Question*, ed. William Jennings Bryan (Chicago, IL: The Independence Company, 1899), 259.

<sup>82</sup> *Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention Held in Kansas City, MO., July 4th, 5th and 6th, 1900* (Chicago, IL: McLellan Printing Co., 1900), 114-121.

<sup>83</sup> "BRYAN AND STEVENSON FORMALLY NOTIFIED; Ceremony at Indianapolis to Complete Nominations. BOTH READ THEIR SPEECHES Large Crowd in Attendance--Regarded as the Formal Opening of Democratic Campaign," *New York Times*, August 9, 1900, 1.

<sup>84</sup> All references to Bryan's "Imperialism" speech will be identified by the paragraph numbers that correspond to the text of the speech accompanying this essay.

<sup>85</sup> O.J. Smith to William Jennings Bryan, 10 August 1900, Box 25, File 1900 Aug. 1-11, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>86</sup> Leading up to the 1900 election, Bryan edited a volume entitled *Republic or Empire*. In his nomination acceptance speech, he briefly nodded to his continuing espousal of this dichotomy as he warned that the "flag of this republic" threatened to give way to "the flag of an empire" (105).

<sup>87</sup> Upon achieving victory in the Spanish-American War, many within the United States were taken by the arguments of "manifest destiny" and "the logic of events" offered by the likes of McKinley and Beveridge. See Coletta, "Bryan," 131.

<sup>88</sup> "SAYS BRYAN IS THE FATHER OF IMPERIALISM; Ex-Minister Denby Charges He Created the 'Bogy' to Fight It. HE COMES OUT FOR MCKINLEY Bryan Responsible for Peace Treaty--No 'Paramount Issue' if Tagalos Quit Fighting," *New York Times*, August 27, 1900, 3; and E. Berkeley Tompkins, "Scylla and Charybdis: The Anti-Imperialist Dilemma in the Election of 1900," *Pacific Historical Review* 36 (1967): 144.

<sup>89</sup> Quoted in Glad, *The Trumpet Soundeth*, 74.

<sup>90</sup> P.S. Bennett to William Jennings Bryan, Box 25, File 1900 August 1-11, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>91</sup> Olcott, *William McKinley*, 109-111.

<sup>92</sup> "'Nation's Life and Honor at Stake. Imperialism the Poison Which Will Destroy Liberty and Independence,' Says Bryan and Stevenson," *Boston Globe*, August 9, 1900, 4.

<sup>93</sup> "Bryan and Stevenson," 1.

<sup>94</sup> In the 1900 election Bryan received 6,358,133 votes to McKinley's 7,207,923 votes. See Herrick and Herrick, *The Life of William Jennings Bryan*, 195.

<sup>95</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Philippines," *CIA World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rp.html>.

<sup>96</sup> Coletta, *William Jennings Bryan*, 390.

<sup>97</sup> Congressional Record 107<sup>th</sup> Congress (2001-2002), "Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002--(House of Representatives – October 08, 2002)," Thomas, [http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getpage.cgi?position=all&page=H7204&dbname=2002\\_record](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getpage.cgi?position=all&page=H7204&dbname=2002_record) (accessed November 5, 2010).

<sup>98</sup> Congressional Record 110<sup>th</sup> Congress (2007-2008), "Congressional Budget for the United States Government for Fiscal Year 2008 -- (Senate – March 21, 2007)," Thomas, <http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getpage.cgi?dbname=2007record&page=S3457&position=all> (accessed November 5, 2010).