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Article Summary: Bryan opposed imperialism in the era of the Spanish-American War, citing the Jeffersonian ideal of expansion into contiguous, sparsely populated areas. Later, when he was Secretary of State, however, he supported intervention in Central America and the Caribbean, yielding to the contradictory impulse to enforce political conformity in the New World

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Photographs / Images: Bryan speaking; Bryan signing the conciliation treaties with representatives of Great Britain, France and China, September 15, 1914

## BRYAN, ANTI-IMPERIALISM AND MISSIONARY DIPLOMACY

BY PAOLO E. COLETTA

THE study of Bryan's career as an anti-imperialist and missionary diplomat falls into two parts. The first includes his relationship to the war with Spain, the Treaty of Paris, and subsequent attempts to obtain freedom for the Philippines. The second includes his tenure as Secretary of State, when his conciliation treaties and his attempt to preclude America's involvement in the Great War marked him as an evangelist of world peace. Paradoxically, however, the erstwhile anti-imperialist simultaneously used the principles of Roosevelt's Big Stick and Taft's Dollar Diplomacy to extend American power into Central America and the Caribbean.

Bryan originally opposed America's going to war in 1898 because he believed it more important to settle domestic questions unresolved since 1896 than to free the Cubans. By March 1898, however, Spain's inhuman treatment of the Cubans—"cruelties which are a disgrace to barbarism"—

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convinced him of the correctness of President McKinley's interventionist position. "War is a terrible thing, and cannot be defended except as a means to an end," he said, "but war is the only means left when counsel and persuasion fail and reason and diplomacy prove of no avail." In the last resort, when the oppressor is deaf to the voice of reason, he added, governments must use force. Now, therefore, Bryan stood ready "to support the administration in any action necessary for the protection of the honor and welfare of the nation." A patriot, he was no longer Bryan of Nebraska but Bryan of America. Believing it his "duty" to serve his nation in time of peril as well as of peace, he volunteered, as a private. When McKinley procrastinated in accepting his offer, he raised a volunteer regiment, was elected its colonel, and valiantly led it into battle against the diseases of Florida encampments.

Bryan prayed that a war undertaken in the name of humanity not degenerate into one of conquest. He was unhappy with McKinley's demands for the Philippines and personally told the President that he would not remain in an army used to extend the possessions of the United States. When his resignation was accepted, two days after the signing of the Treaty of Paris, he came out clearly against expansion. He would, first, ratify the treaty in order to end the war, thereby detaching the Philippines from Spain and attaching them to the United States, and then grant the Philippines independence by congressional resolution.

Bryan opposed imperialism on historical, constitutional, humanitarian, economic, and religious grounds rather than for partisan political purposes. He believed in the Jeffersonian type of expansion, into contiguous and unpopulated or sparsely peopled areas, not into distant lands inhabited by unassimilable natives. By acquiring the Philippines, the United States abandoned the Monroe Doctrine and would enmesh itself in the controversies of Europe and of Asia. He denied that the Constitution permitted the acquisition of lands that could not become states and of persons who could not become citizens; a republic could have

no subjects without destroying the democratic principle that government derives its power from the consent of the governed. He disdained the expansionists' argument, so well phrased in Kipling's poem, "The White Man's Burden," that Americans were moved by compassion for the Filipino as a person. Rather than a profitable market, he envisaged the Philippines as providing gain only for government contractors, shippers, and manufacturers of caskets for dead American soldiers. And he found McKinley's "religious duty" argument pitifully weak, saying, "When the desire to steal becomes uncontrollable in an individual he is declared to be a kleptomaniac and is sent to an asylum; when the desire to grab land becomes uncontrollable in a nation we are told that the 'currents of destiny are flowing through the hearts of men' and that the American people are entering upon their manifest mission." Moreover the saying "Preach the gospel to every creature" does not have a "Gatling gun attachment."

As Bryan saw it, the mission of the United States was to liberate those in bondage, not to shackle the free. Paraphrasing Lincoln, he said that the nation could not endure "half-republic and half-colony—half free and half vassal." He denied that the elections of 1898 were a mandate on imperialism and supported a resolution by Senator Augustus O. Bacon of Georgia that would, once a stable government had been established therein, grant the Philippines independence.

He did support ratifying the Treaty of Paris, but on the assumption that a separate decision on Philippine independence would be soon forthcoming.

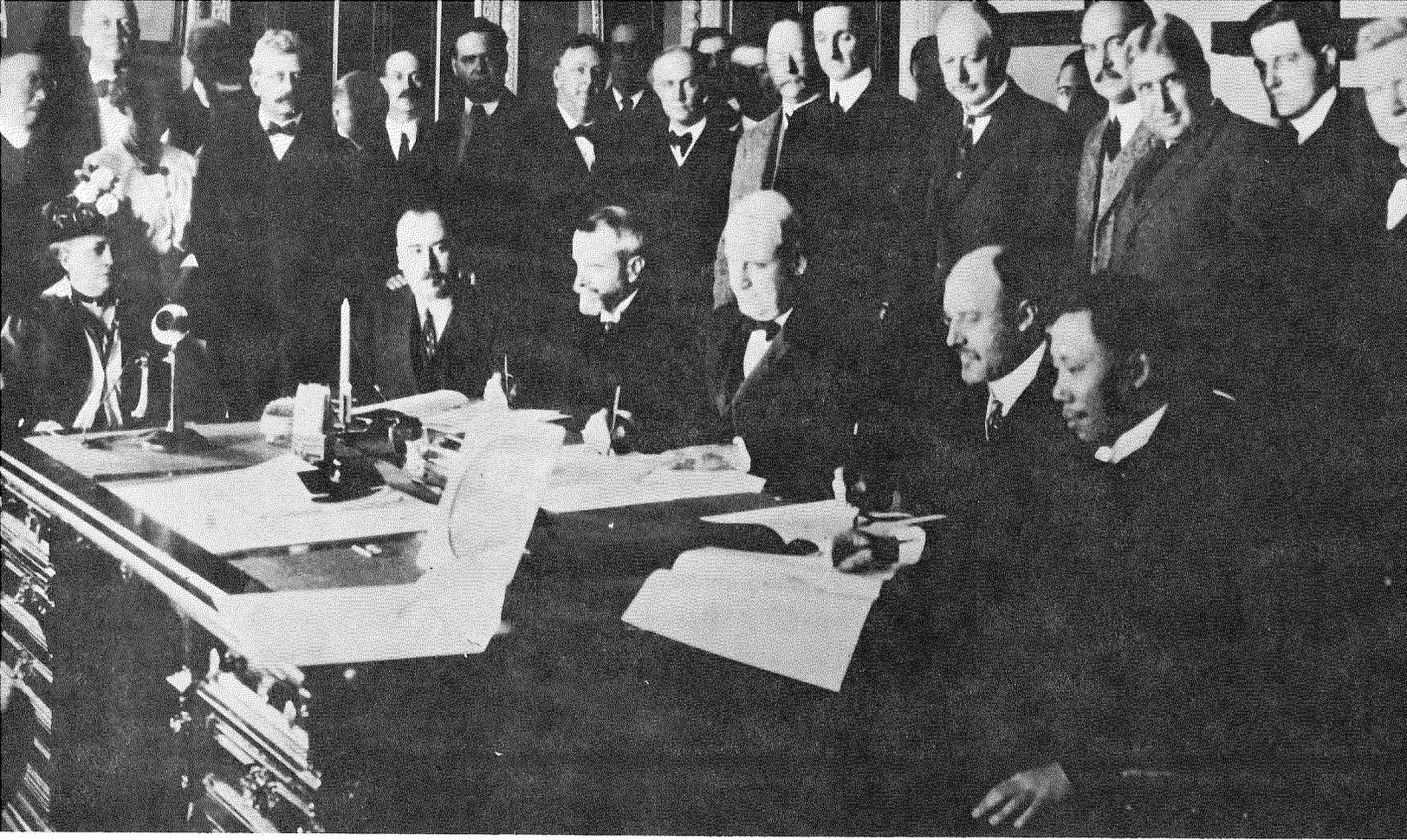
Bryan's tactics in handling the Philippine treaty simply backfired. Rather than ratifying the treaty and also resolving upon Philippine independence, the Senate merely ratified the treaty and thus acquired the Islands. Second, Bryan had not been thoroughly consistent in his anti-imperialist argument. He said that we could reserve harbor and coaling stations in the Philippines as the price for serv-

ices rendered; moreover, he had no objection to recovering the twenty millions paid to Spain for her civil public works in the Philippines as the price for Philippine freedom if the sum were not considered a contribution to the cause of liberty. And his idea of establishing a vague protectorate in which free Filipinos would be guaranteed protection against foreign nations by the United States vitiated his attachment to an isolationist foreign policy. More important, according to his opponents, was the impracticality of his suggestion, for freedom could not coexist with protection, and the United States could not assume responsibility without some sort of equivalent repayment. Apparently he was trying to be an anti-imperialist, to make the Filipinos acknowledge American aid to them in some material way, and to shoulder a portion of the White Man's Burden all at the same time.

The conclusion that Bryan demanded the ratification of the treaty in order to obtain a new "paramount" issue in 1900 is simply incorrect. He was a man of peace, one deeply fed by faith in Christian ethics and individualistic democracy. Unaware that McKinley had not exhausted diplomatic means of getting Spain to free Cuba, he had blessed America's going to war in the name of self-determination for an underdog. Nonetheless he had unequivocally declared his opposition to imperialism at a very early date; and he certainly would have opposed ratification if he had sincerely believed that ratification would impel the United States on a career of imperialism that would have completely negated his own moral outlook. He could have prevented ratification and the acquisition of the Philippines, and had he been a mere politician he should have opposed ratification because McKinley demanded it. The fact is that he did not need or want a new issue. He had issues enough, and he defied those Democrats who demanded that he make expansion another. He was wise enough to see that he could not enter the lists in 1900 with a party divided on a popular issue, and he fervently hoped that ratification would settle forever the question of im-



William J. Bryan speaking.  
(A characteristic pose after making a telling point)



Signing the Conciliation Treaties with Representatives of  
Great Britain, France and China, September 15, 1914

perialism and leave him free to campaign in 1900 on the issues left unsettled since 1896. Not until the Kansas City convention did he acquiesce in making expansion "paramount" and silver subsidiary. That he would have refused to run at all had not "16 to 1" been restated explicitly in the platform sufficiently attests to his devotion to his first love, silver.<sup>1</sup>

Although defeated in the elections of 1900, Bryan continued to agitate against imperialism and in favor of Philippine independence for the next twenty-five years. The American people tired of imperialism by 1902, but the Republican administrations to 1913 perforce upheld McKinley's handiwork. It was at Bryan's insistence that a Philippine independence plank appeared in each Democratic platform during his lifetime. He also spoke frequently against imperialism, British as well as American, as at the 1906 meeting of the Interparliamentary Union in London, and again in his Madison Square Garden address, upon returning from a tour of the world. In 1908 he sponsored freedom while his opponent, Taft, the first Philippine civil governor, did not believe the Islanders would be ready for independence for several generations, and in a tour of Latin America in 1910 he commiserated with the natives as victims of Yankee economic imperialism and demanded that better qualified American representatives be sent to them. His record as an anti-imperialist from 1898 to 1913 was therefore fairly consistent.

Feeling that the Democrats would win in 1912, Bryan began as early as January 1911 to try to obtain places for men sympathetic to Philippine independence on the Ways and Means Committee, which acted as the Committee on Committees for the Democrats, and on the Insular Affairs committees.<sup>2</sup> He also sought to influence various senators and the major presidential candidates to favor independ-

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<sup>1</sup> The foregoing is condensed from the writer's "Bryan, McKinley, and the Treaty of Paris," *Pacific Historical Review*, XXVI (May 1957), 131-146.

<sup>2</sup> Bryan to Louis F. Post, January 4, 11, 1911, Louis F. Post Papers, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress.

ence. When Wilson wavered on independence during the summer of 1911, he asked him to reread and to endorse the Philippine independence planks in the Democratic platforms of 1900, 1904, and 1908<sup>3</sup> and it was largely at his insistence that the Baltimore platform demanded "an immediate declaration of the nation's purpose to recognize the independence of the Islands as soon as a stable government can be established." Survivors of the old anti-imperialist crusade of 1898 urged him forward toward complete independence, as did nationalist-minded native leaders,<sup>4</sup> but he remained happy with Wilson's stated purpose to give the natives a majority on both the controlling commission and their legislature. He wrote Wilson: "It is a great joy to me, Mr. President, to have this country committed to independence—it has been on my heart for 15 years."<sup>5</sup> The actual changes in the Philippine government were worked out by agencies other than the Department of State, so that Bryan had little to do with preparing the Filipinos for independence. But it was he who suggested that Francis Burton Harrison, who favored independence, replace William Cameron Forbes, who did not, as governor general,<sup>6</sup> and he threw his full support behind the Jones bill.<sup>7</sup> Thus Bryan's original stand of 1898 was vindicated as Wilson brought the Philippines a long step toward independence.

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Bryan had severely criticized Republican foreign policy from 1898 to 1913—McKinley's imperialism, Roosevelt's Big Stick, and Taft's Dollar Diplomacy. He was especially

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<sup>3</sup> James Kerney, *The Political Education of Woodrow Wilson* (New York, 1926), p. 165.

<sup>4</sup> Mark A. DeWolfe Howe, *Portrait of an Independent: Moorfield Storey, 1845-1929* (Boston, 1932), p. 275; Emilio Aguinaldo to Bryan, November 15, 1912, Bryan to Aguinaldo, January 2, 1913, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress; Manuel Quezon in *El Ideal* (Manila), trans. in *New York Times*, November 6, 1912.

<sup>5</sup> Letter of October 9, 1913, Woodrow Wilson Papers, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress.

<sup>6</sup> Bryan to Woodrow Wilson, August 16, 1913, Wilson Papers.

<sup>7</sup> See Roy Curry Watson, "Woodrow Wilson and Philippine Policy," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLI (December 1954), 435-452.

bitter against the Platt Amendment and the decisions of the Insular Cases.<sup>8</sup> To Wilson's objective, as stated in his inaugural address, of conducting a moral contest against evil, Bryan was firmly devoted. Deeply religious, intensely patriotic, familiar with many of the world's peoples, and supremely endowed with the "human touch," Bryan brought to the Department of State ideals long cherished. His appointment was hailed by men of peace. "I am glad," Brand Whitlock wrote him, "that at last there is a man in that position whose belief in democracy and love for humanity are such that under his leadership we may expect our diplomacy to accomplish high results in doing away with war and the spirit of war and—is it too much to hope?—an approach to universal peace."<sup>9</sup> When asked what his foreign policy would be, Bryan replied that it would be based on anti-imperialism and international peace.<sup>10</sup> To these basic ingredients he added a belief in democracy as the best possible form of government and the mission of regenerating other governments. He would have the United States furnish such an example of good government, moral dealing, and pacific progress that other nations would voluntarily desire to follow its model; it was his duty to spread the ideal of democracy, which he defined as practical Christianity, to other lands. Finally, his belief in self-determination as the basis of the government of states was matched by his commitment to cooperation as a major principle to be followed by nations in their international relations.

A condition upon which Bryan accepted the Secretaryship of State was that he be given a free hand in negotiating treaties of conciliation. These provided that all international disputes, including those touching national honor, be submitted to an impartial commission. Although the parties were not bound by the decision, the year that transpired during the investigation would cool hot tempers and afford time for the creation of a world opinion favorable

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<sup>8</sup> *Commoner*, March 15, May 17, June 7, 1901.

<sup>9</sup> Letter of March 6, 1913, Allan Nevins, ed., *The Letters and Journal of Brand Whitlock* (2 vols., New York, 1936), 1, 160.

<sup>10</sup> *New York Times*, April 7, 1913.

to amicable settlement. Wilson approved, for like Bryan he abhorred war. The ratification of thirty treaties in one year remains an unprecedented achievement, and Wilson gave it a prominent place in his first annual message.<sup>11</sup>

Bryan's penchant for the peaceful settlement of disputes is well illustrated by his relations with Colombia. For ten years the United States had rejected Bogota's invitations to arbitrate the differences arising out of the Panama Revolution of 1903. After consulting Wilson, Bryan suggested direct negotiations and proposed payment of twenty millions as "proper reparation for the losses, both moral and material, suffered by the Republic of Colombia. . . ."<sup>12</sup> Colombia parried with a treaty draft containing an apology by the United States. The wording of the clause expressing regret rather than apology was submitted by Colombia; it was rewritten by Bryan and by request put into final form by Wilson. Bryan bent over backwards on all terms except the indemnity, which he nevertheless raised to 25 millions, and signed the treaty on April 6, 1914. He argued before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the United States would merely pay Colombia for having exercised the right of international eminent domain since 1903, and wrote for public consumption a note approved by Wilson to the effect that the United States could be generous rather than merely just in settling disputes, thereby gaining the friendship of Latin America.<sup>13</sup> The Senate was so occupied late in 1914 and 1915 that neither Bryan nor his successor, Lansing, could get it to act upon the treaty. It was denounced by Roosevelt as "payment of belated blackmail" and blocked by his friends in the Senate. Not until 1921, with Roosevelt dead two years, did the Senate approve the payment of Twenty-five millions, but without

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<sup>11</sup> William Jennings Bryan, "The Thirty Treaties," May 1, 1925, Bryan Papers; Walter F. Murphy, "The Bryan Cooling Off Treaties" (Unpublished Mss., courtesy Walter F. Murphy); William Jennings Bryan and Mary Baird Bryan, *The Memoirs of William Jennings Bryan* (Philadelphia, 1925), pp. 383-394.

<sup>12</sup> Bryan to the American Minister, September 29, 1913, State Department File No. 711.21/191.

<sup>13</sup> *New York Times*, July 13, 1914.

regret or apology. Possible oil concessions in Colombia probably helped the United States in 1921, to acknowledge wrongdoing in 1903, an admission Bryan was willing to make in 1913.

Bryan exemplified two interpretations of the phrase "missionary diplomacy." In one sense, he sought to send only Christian ambassadors abroad, as to China, and used diplomacy to protect missionaries and church missions abroad, as in China and Mexico. Attention here centers upon a second definition of missionary diplomacy, as "an ambition to do justly, to advance the cause of international peace, and to give to other peoples the blessings of democracy and Christianity."<sup>14</sup> In keeping with this definition, his desire to "give to other peoples the blessings of democracy and Christianity" led Bryan to use diplomatic methods which violated his generous professions and resulted in intervention in the internal and foreign affairs of Mexico and of several other nations in Central America and in the Caribbean.

In supporting Wilson on nonrecognition of the Huerta regime, Bryan opposed both the professional advisers of his department and the American ambassador to Mexico, Henry Lane Wilson. His best advice, which Wilson rejected, was to add a new corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, namely: The United States must be prepared "to assert with equal emphasis its unwillingness to have an American republic exploited by the commercial interests of our own or any other country through a government resting on force." Here he restated his fear of the evil of foreign influences in the Americas and offered as a cure the domination of the whole of Latin America by the United States. This cure was directly opposed to the lectures about fraternity, justice, and peace he had delivered in Latin America

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<sup>14</sup> Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, 1910-1917* (New York, 1954), p. 82.

in 1910.<sup>15</sup> Like President Wilson, Bryan sought for Mexico a constitutional and popular government sincerely devoted to the social betterment of its masses, opposed military intervention and the acquisition of territory by conquest—but he lacked specific ideas for handling Mexico. When Ambassador Page in London asked him what plan Wilson would follow after forcing Huerta out, he could only say that Wilson meant to lift the arms embargo and seek settlement by continued civil war.<sup>16</sup>

By supporting Wilson in trying to put Mexico on the road to popular democratic government, Bryan had failed to remind him that the traditional policy of the United States was to recognize *de facto* governments capable of preserving internal order and of performing their international duties. Nor was Bryan any more aware than Wilson of the anti-foreign sentiment animating *all* factions in Mexico, nor of the fear therein that the economic and political penetration of Mexico by the United States would be followed by cultural and religious absorption. The novelty of the Wilson-Bryan proceedings lay in its morality, in its insistence that foreign relationships be based not upon material interests but upon a spiritual union, upon mutual understanding and mutual service.<sup>17</sup> But in trying to aid Mexico, Wilson and Bryan intervened in the foreign affairs of a neighbor, created a new test for recognition by insisting that a government be based upon free elections and the consent of the governed and, by supporting Madero

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<sup>15</sup> Declaration of Policy with Regard to Latin America, March 12, 1913, State Department File No. 710.11/102a; Memorandum to Wilson, October 24, 1913, Copy in Bryan Papers, Bryan to Wilson, October 28, 1913, January 15, 1914, *ibid.*, Bryan to Chargee [Nelson] O'Shaughnessy, November 24, 1913, State Department File No. 812.00/11443d; Bryan to Page, January 29, 1914, State Department File No. 812.00/10712. See also John Lind to Bryan, September 11, 1913, and Elvidero Villaron, President of Bolivia, to Bryan, April 2, 1913, Bryan Papers.

<sup>16</sup> Ray S. Baker, *Woodrow Wilson, Life and Letters* (Garden City, N. Y., 1927-1939) 3rd; David F. Houston, *Eight Years with Wilson's Cabinet, 1913-1920* (2 vols., Garden City, New York, 1926), I, 114-116; Robert E. Quirk, *The Mexican Revolution, 1914-1915* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1961), p. 45.

<sup>17</sup> Baker, *Wilson*, IV, 283; Declaration of Policy with Regard to Latin America.

and Carranza, who were strongly anti-clerical, incurred the enmity of the Catholic hierarchy of the United States. They had proved the validity of the historical truism that American foreign policy has generally failed when it has not faced geopolitical reality, when elaborate theorizing has replaced response to a practical need.

When Wilson acted as his own Secretary of State, as on the Mexican and Panama tolls questions, Bryan submitted to his views, and Wilson gave him fulsome praise as a man of "justice . . . sincerity . . . transparent integrity, [and] Christian principle . . . who deserve[s] not only our confidence but our affectionate admiration."<sup>18</sup>

In routine matters, particularly the miscellaneous Caribbean problems, Wilson gave Bryan largely a free hand. Bryan originally intended to treat the small nations of Central America and of the Caribbean generously and kindly. "The golden rule is just as useful in international affairs as it is among neighbors," he declared, and he pledged his support to Wilson's idea of "bring[ing] international dealing into harmony with the universal conscience."<sup>19</sup> He meant to follow Wilson's doctrines of nonintervention, recognition of the equality of the states of the Western Hemisphere, and opposition to the use of force and of Dollar Diplomacy. As a beginning, he removed from service Americans more interested in representing corporate investments than in carrying out Department policy in Latin America. However, he substituted "deserving Democrats,"<sup>20</sup> with the result that it became a case of the blind leading the blind.<sup>21</sup> At the same time he agreed with Wilson's statement that cooperating with the Latin American states was possible only "when supported at every turn by the orderly processes of just government based upon law, not upon

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<sup>18</sup> Wilson to W. L. Marbury, February 5, 1914, in *ibid.*, IV, 407.

<sup>19</sup> New York World, April 20, 1913.

<sup>20</sup> See especially Bryan to Walker W. Vick, August 20, 1913, and Bryan to Wilson, September 25, 1913, Baker, *Wilson*, IV, 40, 41; Harley Notter, *The Origins of the Foreign Policy of Woodrow Wilson* (Baltimore, 1937), pp. 244-245.

<sup>21</sup> Arthur S. Link, *Wilson: The Struggle for Neutrality* (Princeton, N. J., 1960), p. 499.

arbitrary or irregular force."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the Division of Latin American Affairs, upon which he depended heavily, was traditional, realistic, and devoted to the well-established precedent of governmental protection of American capital abroad. From the marriage of the Golden Rule and *Realpolitik* issued a fusion—a continuation of the traditional policy and a distinct acceleration in American penetration of the Caribbean.<sup>23</sup>

The ardor with which Bryan interfered in the internal affairs of the southern nations in order to teach them democracy soon put the Taft-Knox administration to shame and vitiated his own record as an anti-imperialist. Thus John Bassett Moore later asserted that Bryan was "a very patriotic man," "a man of strong conviction," one who "bent his knee to no foreign power," but also "one of the greatest imperialists I ever knew."<sup>24</sup>

Prime examples of Bryan's switch from anti-imperialism to neo-imperialism are his dealings with Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti, for Cuba knuckled before his firm directives to live up to the Platt Amendment, and he maintained a steady supervision over Panama. His attitude is well summarized in a letter he wrote Wilson on May 26, 1913 and in a statement issued on August 12, 1913. "It is pathetic," he told the President, "to see Nicaragua struggling in the grip of oppressive financial agreements. . . . We see in these transactions a perfect picture of dollar diplomacy. The financiers charge excessive rates on the ground that they must be paid for the *risk* that they take and as soon as they collect their pay for that risk, they then proceed to demand of the respective government that the *risk* shall be *eliminated* by governmental coercion. No won-

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<sup>22</sup> Declaration of Policy with Regard to Latin America, Copy in Bryan Papers, with marginalia.

<sup>23</sup> Selig Adler, "Bryan and Wilsonian Caribbean Penetration," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XX (May 1940), 203.

<sup>24</sup> Letters to Harlow B. Grove, February 14, 1935 and Thomas Lomax Hunter, April 22, 1936, John Bassett Moore Papers, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress. Nevertheless, in 1898 Moore had favored a protectorate for the Philippines rather than independence. Moore to Alleyn Ireland, April 19, 1905, *ibid.*

der the people of these little republics are aroused to revolution by what they regard as a sacrifice of their interests."<sup>25</sup>

Progress is being made in the substitution of a system more in harmony with our nation's traditions and ideals [than Dollar Diplomacy]. It is believed that the new policy will open the door of Central and South America to enterprise from the United States. The policy of the present administration is to so scrutinize the conduct of Americans, and so safeguard the rights of the Latin-American republics, that each American enterprise will become a seed from which other enterprises will be developed, rather than the harvesting of a completed crop. The United States, while it has protected the countries to the South of us from political domination at the hands of European powers, has not lived fully up to its opportunities in the renderings of assistance to these countries which have a right to look to us for such help as can be properly extended.<sup>26</sup>

To prevent private American bankers from exploiting Central America Bryan suggested that the United States itself become a "modern good Samaritan" and lend money in exchange for bonds. The bankers could not then call for forcible measures to collect their debts; financial stability would promote political stability, stimulate the growth of public education and of democracy, remove cause for European intervention, uphold the Monroe Doctrine, and protect the Panama Canal. As he put it, "we would soon be in a position to exert a controlling influence through the benefit we would thus be able to bring to them without any risk of loss."<sup>27</sup> Such was his naivete that he did not see that the fulfillment of his desire to help these countries would have made them American protectorates.

Then Bryan told Wilson and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the Bryan-Chamorro treaty would stabilize the Nicaraguan government and preserve American influence therein. The Senate opposed further inter-

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<sup>25</sup> Wilson Papers. The extent of American influence in Nicaragua is described in Isaac J. Cox, *Nicaragua and the United States, 1909-1927* (World Peace Foundation Pamphlets, x, No. 7, Boston, 1927), p. 716.

<sup>26</sup> "Mr. Bryan Tells of State Problems," August 12, 1913, Bryan Papers.

<sup>27</sup> Bryan to Wilson, February 21, May 24, June 2, July 17, 31, August 3, 6, 1914, *ibid.*

ference in Nicaragua, and while Wilson admitted that stability was desirable, he resisted the evangelistic appeal because of the startling political implications—what he called the “novel and radical proposition of government loans”<sup>28</sup>—and Bryan fell back to the Knox Dollar Diplomacy line of helping to secure but not to guarantee private investments and supporting governments maintained, as in Nicaragua and San Domingo, by the force of American arms.

For one often criticized as a mere theorist, Bryan revealed himself quite practical when, in the Bryan-Chamorro treaty, he brought under the exclusive control of the United States the only other feasible canal route and also acquired sites for naval bases from which to protect American proprietary rights in Nicaragua and also the Panama Canal itself.<sup>29</sup> Bryan rather than Wilson devised the Nicaraguan program, with Wilson exercising general guidance and “an occasional veto over [his] frolicking in financial puddles.”<sup>30</sup>

A practical approach also characterized Bryan's dealings with the Dominican Republic. Time and again he asserted the displeasure of the United States with “pernicious” revolutionary activity and interference with the collection of customs by interests unfriendly to her; time and again he stressed the need for free elections and free speech on the American model. He warned Minister James M. Sullivan that he must leave no doubt on two important points: “First, that we can have no sympathy with those who seek to seize the power of government to advance their own personal interests or ambition; and, second, that the test of a republican form of government is to be found in its responsiveness to the will of the people, its just powers being derived from the consent of the governed.” He did not look for miracles in achieving perfection; he meant

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<sup>28</sup> Wilson to Bryan, March 20, 1914, *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> See Bryan to Wilson, September 30, 1914, January 12, 1915, Wilson to Bryan, October 1, 1914, Bryan Papers; Adler, “Bryan and Wilsonian Caribbean Penetration,” pp. 213-218.

<sup>30</sup> Wilfrid Hardy Callcott, *The Caribbean Policy of the United States, 1890-1920* (Baltimore, 1942), pp. 315-317.

merely to be a true friend, one willing to give disinterested advice.<sup>31</sup>

Continued revolution led Bryan to the inevitable conclusion that only American intervention could restore order. To prevent anarchy he threatened to withhold the Roosevelt treaty share of customs from any unconstitutional regime, said he would refuse to recognize such a regime, had American commissioners supervise the elections of 1914, and asserted that he would support the new government by troops if necessary. When the Jimenez administration was threatened by revolution early in 1915, Bryan took the position that "the election having been held and a Government chosen by the people having been established, no more revolutions will be permitted." He backed his words up with naval forces, and Lansing continued his policy.<sup>32</sup>

With respect to Haiti, where in 1914 both France and Germany demanded permission to share in any foreign administration of the customs, Bryan sought some alternative to the use of force. To the American minister he wrote: "Capital will not flow into Haiti except upon exorbitant terms and for speculative profits unless there is an assurance of peace and orderly government . . . Our obligations to the American people require that we shall give all legitimate assistance to American investors in Haiti, but we are under obligations just as binding to protect Haiti from injustice and exploitation at the hands of Americans."<sup>33</sup> To critics like Callcott this statement appears a direct contradiction of his earlier policy position that it would not be honest for a government to guarantee investments that were originally made and charged for as risky undertak-

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<sup>31</sup> Bryan to [Minister James M.] Sullivan, September 9, 1913, State Department File No. 839.00/912a.

<sup>32</sup> Bryan to the American Consul at Santiago de Cuba, September 12, 1913, State Department File No. 839.00/872 and 872c; Bryan to Sullivan, January 12, 1915, State Department File No. 839.00/1660a; Bryan to Wilson, November 20, 1913, April 14, 1914, Wilson Papers; Dana G. Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Area* (Boston, 1934), p. 115.

<sup>33</sup> Bryan to Minister [A. Bailly-] Blanchard, December 19, 1914, State Department File No. 838.00/1065.

ings and is made to appear as a reversion to the policy of Taft and Knox.<sup>34</sup> More recent scholarship, like Link's, finds it an eloquent statement of American policy.<sup>35</sup> At least Bryan *balanced* the protection of the rights of Haiti with those of the United States rather than insisting upon American rights alone.

Nevertheless, to forestall European influence along America's shores, Bryan suggested and Wilson adopted a plan of financial supervision for Haiti similar to that in force in the Dominican Republic. Then, to prevent the acquisition by Germany of a naval base at Mole St. Nicholas, he proposed a treaty whereby the United States would obtain the site. "I am satisfied," he wrote Wilson, "that it will be of great value to us and even if it were not . . . it is worth while to take it out of the market so that no other nation will attempt to secure a foothold there,"<sup>36</sup> and Wilson backed him to the hilt in declaring that Europe must not intervene and that the United States would guard the Caribbean states "whenever they need a friend and champion."<sup>37</sup>

There is no doubt that Bryan's actions in Central America and in the Caribbean were taken out of regard for the welfare of the natives, to do good to them despite themselves, to suppress "their sovereign right of suicide."<sup>38</sup> Nor is there doubt that the natives did not understand

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<sup>34</sup> Callcott, *Caribbean Policy of the United States*, p. 342.

<sup>35</sup> Link, *Wilson: The Struggle for Neutrality*, pp. 526-527.

<sup>36</sup> Bryan to Wilson, June 14, 1913, Wilson Papers. On April 20, 1913 Bryan suggested to Wilson that a possible European lease of the Mole could be circumvented by having the United States purchase a twenty-mile strip of land "so as to give us not only the harbor but enough land around it to safeguard the harbor from land attack." *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Dexter Perkins, *Hands Off: A History of the Monroe Doctrine* (Boston, 1941), pp. 263-264.

<sup>38</sup> Samuel F. Bemis, *Latin American Policy of the United States* (New York, 1943), pp. 190-191.

American democracy, nor like it, nor want it, and in fact could not live by American ways.<sup>39</sup>

In Nicaragua Bryan had retreated from the Good Samaritan to the Taft type of Dollar Diplomacy; in Haiti he used the Roosevelt treaty with the Dominican Republic as a model for an arrangement whereby the United States could intervene when public disorder required, but he rejected a Haitian plan for American recognition and money in return for special economic concessions.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the Lansing treaty with Haiti contained articles which made Haiti a formal protectorate of the United States.<sup>41</sup> The distinct expansion of the American policy of Caribbean control by military intervention followed Bryan's resignation by six months, but in Santo Domingo he was the connecting link between the 1907 receivership treaty and the 1916 military dictatorship, while in Haiti he laid the foundation of American intervention. Nevertheless, he seems to have suffered no qualms of conscience concerning subsequent events in Nicaragua, Santo Domingo, or Haiti for his ten remaining years of life.<sup>42</sup>

A firm believer in the republican form of government, and a friend to China since his visit of 1906, Bryan advised Wilson to recognize the new Chinese Republic; on May 2, 1913 the United States was the first great power to do so. As in Mexico, however, his objective of supporting a democratic revolt against oppression and privilege was doomed to failure, and by the end of the year he acknowledged the great difficulty of fostering liberal political progress in lands of differing cultures. Overruling his department advisers, Bryan advised Wilson to withdraw government sup-

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<sup>39</sup> Louis J. Halle, *Dream and Reality: Aspects of American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1959), p. 157; Dexter Perkins, *The United States and the Caribbean* (Cambridge, Mass., 1947), pp. 143, 144; William Franklin Sands, in collaboration with Joseph M. Lalley, *Our Jungle Diplomacy* (Chapel Hill, 1944), p. 31.

<sup>40</sup> Minister Blanchard to Bryan, December 14, 1914, State Department File No. 838.00/1063; Bryan to Minister Blanchard, December 19, 1914, State Department File No. 838.00/1065.

<sup>41</sup> *U. S. Statutes at Large XXXIX*, pt. ii, pp. 44-51.

<sup>42</sup> Adler, "Bryan and Wilsonian Caribbean Penetration," 226.

port from the consortium's reorganization loan to President Yuan Shi-Kai, for he believed its terms were harsh and endangered the sovereignty of the Chinese government. This Wilson did publicly, a week after his dramatic announcement of his Latin American policy, because he found it "to touch very nearly the administrative independence of China itself,"<sup>43</sup> and thus scrapped Dollar Diplomacy in China—at least temporarily. Bryan directed "strict non-interference" by American diplomatic officials in China when revolutionary disturbances occurred in the summer of 1913 and assumed the attitude that, although "American enterprise should have opportunity everywhere abroad to compete for contractual favors on the same footing as any foreign competitors," the government was "not the endorser of the American competition and . . . [was] not an accountable party to the undertaking."<sup>44</sup> Thus Bryan's Latin American and China policy were originally quite the same. However, in handling the Twenty One Demands Bryan faced reality and recognized Japan's "special and close relations, political as well as economic," with several provinces of China. But he would maintain America's interests in China, asserting that the United States "cannot recognize any agreement or undertaking . . . between the Governments of Japan and China, impairing the treaty rights of the United States and its citizens in China, the political or territorial integrity of the Republic of China, or the international policy relative to China commonly known as the open door policy."<sup>45</sup> The proposition gained its greatest fame when discovered by Secretary Stimson and transformed by him in 1932 into the famous nonrecognition doctrine.

An advocate of states rights, Bryan was a nationalist during the Philippine Insurrection and during the trying

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<sup>43</sup> A. W. Griswold, *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States* (New York, 1938), pp. 172-173.

<sup>44</sup> Bryan to the American Charge [E. T. Williams], September 11, 1913, State Department File No. 893.51/1457.

<sup>45</sup> Identical notes of May 11, 1915 to Tokyo and Peking, Department of State File No. 793.94/351 a-b.

period in 1913 when California sought to exclude the Japanese from owning agricultural lands. In the matter of the Philippines he generated and consistently followed Democratic policy seeking their freedom. An honest and sincere man, he was not above expressing regret to an injured party, albeit in the case of Colombia such regret was easy to extend when the sinners had been Republicans. With respect to Japan's Twenty One Demands, his honesty was perhaps too transparent, for he admitted that Japan's propinquity gave her special privileges in China. But he may have had in mind that the proximity of the United States to Central America and the Caribbean also gave the United States special rights therein. For the rest, Bryan as Secretary of State cannot be characterized as either a great success or an abject failure.<sup>46</sup> Part of the reason for his lack of success was his own unpreparedness for his position and his occasional bad appointments. Since he resigned in June 1915 it is difficult to assess his influence completely. It may be concluded, however, that both he and Wilson withstood powerful forces in the United States that wished them to intervene in Mexico to protect American rights and property. He turned deaf ears to suggestions that they simply annex Mexico; sought to avoid war when the drift to war would have been easy and popular; agreed to consult other American republics in shaping their Mexican policy; unwittingly contributed to the success of a regime devoted to the social progress of the Mexican people rather than to the exploitation of Mexican resources by foreign capital; and persisted that their sole objective was to be of constructive service to a neighbor. The sincerity of their good intentions caused the rest of Latin America to trust rather than fear them and only temporarily impeded the progress of genuine Pan Americanism.<sup>47</sup> Never-

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<sup>46</sup> The latest evaluation at this writing is that by Richard Chalker, "William Jennings Bryan (1913-1915), in Norman A. Graebner, ed., *An Uncertain Tradition: American Secretaries of State in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1961), pp. 79-100.

<sup>47</sup> Callcott, *Caribbean Policy of the United States*, p. 310; William Phillips, *Ventures in Diplomacy* (Boston, 1952), p. 61; J. Fred Rippy, *The United States and Mexico* (New York, 1926), p. 335.

theless, "A set of worthy attitudes is no substitute for coherent policy. Nor is self-righteousness an adequate substitute for technical ability in devising plans and directing staff work."<sup>48</sup> Dictating the form of government another state should have is an impossible ideal. Even the unwillingness or inability of a confessedly corrupt native government to resist reformation does not excuse America's violation of the sovereignty of any state. If the morality of our diplomacy dictates that we assume the role of judge in international affairs, we must then defend to the utmost the side we believe morally just. The result is a fight until the evil side is completely destroyed, or a total victory concept involving perhaps the use of force.<sup>49</sup>

To Bryan, as to his immediate predecessors and successors in the Department of State, American suzerainty, if not outright sovereignty, over the countries strategically related to the isthmian canal seemed historically inescapable.<sup>50</sup> Bryan reflected the ambiguity still evident in our Latin American policy, "the constant straining to bring a difficult reality into conformity with an insistent legend." The legend is that of an inter-American community bound together by a New World ideology. We love the Latins when they conform to the ideology but are impatient and paternalistic when they resent being civilized from the outside, when they resist being made over in the American image. It is this impulse to enforce conformity that leads to intervention even though such intervention runs counter to the long professed conviction that imperialism is incompatible with the standards of American democracy and the knowledge that genuinely democratic institutions cannot be imposed from the outside but must evolve out of a desire by the people for popular rule. For both Bryan and Wilson it can be said that they were men "with noble motives be-

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<sup>48</sup> Howard F. Cline, *The United States and Mexico* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), p. 162.

<sup>49</sup> George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950* (Chicago, 1951), p. 87.

<sup>50</sup> Perkins, *The United States and the Caribbean*, pp. 125-128, 130-131, 134.

ing lured on by their own good intentions and sometimes by foolish or interested advisers, being influenced by subtle pressures and subconscious motivations that they did not recognize, and finally being trapped by events that they could not control. In short, it is a tale of what happened when evangelists of democracy set out to teach other peoples how to elect good leaders and govern themselves well."<sup>51</sup>

The countries of Central America and of the Caribbean were "disturbing neighbors," as William Phillips called them, and President Taft remarked that their leaders were not "Sunday School superintendents." Faced by the reality that the Latins had not been purged of their fondness for revolution and lawlessness, nor cured of their endemic financial weakness, Bryan had reacted in a paternalistic manner, yet as a national idealist, like Wilson, Andrew Carnegie, and David Starr Jordan, rather than as a national egoist, like Theodore Roosevelt, Mahan, Lodge, and Beveridge. The security of the United States was not being endangered. Its position as the supreme power in the New World was not being challenged seriously by an American or European state. Nor was the United States seeking to expand economically to the South. But Bryan was hypersensitive to violations of the Monroe Doctrine. Probably the best answer to why Bryan offered "realistic" solutions to problems south of the border was a moral one—his compassionate drive to aid the peoples involved. As noted above, however, the panacea of constitutional democratic government did not fit the verities of the Latin temperament. Finally, it may be suggested that Bryan's idea that the United States government rather than private capital furnish credit to needy states to bolster their economies and promote political and social stability was the forerunner of our modern dollar diplomacy.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Link, Wilson: *The Struggle for Neutrality*, p. 496.

<sup>52</sup> Ten days after resigning, Bryan explained his government credit plan to the Uruguayan delegation to the Pan American Financial Conference of 1915, but made it clear that he was not speaking for the administration.