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Bryan on Religion



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“To stay put, to stand pat, to stick
in the mud—such is the sin of
trying to remain stationary.”

Bryan on Religion

*Delivered Before the
Independent Religious
Society, Orchestra
Hall, Michigan Ave.
& Adams St., Chicago,
Sunday at 11 A. M.*



By
M. M. MANGASARIAN

I have recently been examining all the known superstitions of the world and do not find in our particular superstition one redeeming feature; they are all founded on fables and mythologies.

—Thomas Jefferson.

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Bryan on Religion

For the past ten years or more, Mr. Bryan has been *talking* to the American people.

He has traveled the length and breadth of the American continent, and has also visited the populous cities of Europe and Asia, addressing audiences everywhere. As a rule he talks on politics, economics and morality. Recently, however, he has added a new subject to his *repertoire*—religion.

Mr. Bryan enjoys the reputation of being an orator. But it is not how Mr. Bryan says a thing, but what he says that we are at present interested in. And our interest in what he says is heightened by the prominence he enjoys, and the popularity he commands in this day and generation.

We became acquainted with Mr. Bryan's religion by reading his *brochure*, "Letters Addressed to a Chinese Official." We have also carefully perused the full reports of his recent talks before various religious gatherings in this country. In these speeches, as also in the above mentioned work, Mr. Bryan announces himself as a champion of orthodox Christianity. This in itself is significant enough, but it is when Mr. Bryan attempts to reason about it that he becomes really amusing.

The nature of the arguments which Mr. Bryan advances, and the conclusions he wishes to reach show, in the first place, the mental equipment of a representative American of these times, and, in the second place, they illustrate the baneful influence of the popular religion upon the reasoning faculties of the average Christian.

"It is a terrible thing," says Victor Hugo, "to have once been a priest." It is almost as dangerous to have received one's training from a clergyman. The pupil of the church

schools is brought up in a cramped and cramping atmosphere. He is not taught to inquire or to reason, but to believe. To doubt is represented as a crime, and every effort is made to *convert* him or her before the mind has matured—in childhood. Intolerance toward non-Christian faiths and peoples is one of the earliest prejudices which clerical education seeks to implant in children. Mr. Bryan has not outgrown the intellectual twist of his early religious training. And while we are willing to make allowances for a man whose education has unfitted him for clear, consistent reasoning, we have no charity for the education itself, for it is of the nature of an *uneducation*, its greatest success being the intellectual invalid.

The educational method in vogue among the churches encourages disrespect for evidence. It reverses accepted rules of honest reasoning. It is a training in the sterile art of dodging and dogmatizing. In lieu of truths courting the severest tests, the pupils are equipped with a loose vocabulary of words, words, words, and again words. They are taught how not to think logically or daringly. Sydney Smith hit the right nail on the head, and hit it hard, when he said that the distinguishing characteristic of a sermon is its "decent debility." It hazards nothing, it is a tedious essay of evasions, assumptions and commonplaces.

The following is a good illustration :

M. Bryan was at the recent Peace Congress in New York City. He usually sat on the platform in Carnegie Hall. The speaker at one of the afternoon sessions was Sir Robert Ball, of England, a scientist of international reputation—a distinguished astronomer and philosopher. Sir Robert Ball argued that the doctrine of Darwin supported the cause of peace, because war brought about the survival of the weak instead of the strong. The best, youngest, bravest and most patriotic go to the field and die, while the sick and the weak remain at home to propagate their kind. Sir Robert made one of the most telling scientific pleas in favor of peace, said a correspondent of the press who was present at the meeting. But Mr. Bryan deliberately interrupted this meeting by rising to his

feet, and asking for permission from the chairman to enter a protest against Sir Robert Ball's address. The chairman granted the desired permission, Mr. Bryan walked to the edge of the platform and said that he was surprised to hear anyone base an argument for universal peace on the doctrine that man had descended from the monkey. "The divinity of man," said Mr. Bryan, was the sure foundation upon which to build the Temple of Peace.

The introduction of the words "monkey" and "divinity" into the discussion not only furnishes an example of what might be called an oratorical trick, but it also shows Mr. Bryan, in thus appealing to the prejudices, and bidding for the applause of the many, to be entirely indifferent to the evidence for or against the doctrine of evolution. He knows that the majority of church people do not like the doctrine, and that is enough. Is he not, then, a good illustration of the method of the dogmatist who, fearing the second, sober thought of the thinking few, resorts to the maneuvers of the demagogue to capture the unthinking many? "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" screamed the street mobs, but that did not make Diana great. Neither does Mr. Bryan's cry of "monkey" make Darwinism untrue. To answer a scientist by calling him a monkey, and to capture the crowd by telling them they are "divine"—is this about the best that a representative graduate of the church schools can do?

Speaking in Washington recently, Mr. Bryan said: "Some believe in the theory of evolution.—I am not yet convinced that the monkey is any part of my family tree." But he added. "If other people prefer to find their ancestors in that direction, I would not object, for if a man has not the right to choose his ancestors, what right has he?" At this, of course, there was laughter, and the theory of evolution was thus demolished by a jest. Mr. Bryan makes it to appear that the question of man's ancestry is to be decided by a popular vote. He speaks of people preferring or not preferring a certain kind of ancestry, but is the truth of evolution subject to our whims? We may say, we prefer to believe that this continent of America

was first settled by a race of heavenly beings instead of by cruel and gold hunting Spaniards. Can our wishes alter the facts of history? If Bryan wishes to disprove the accepted theory of evolution, he must give us more than mere declamation. You are familiar with the answer which Huxley gave to Bishop Wilberforce of London, who asked Huxley whether he was related by his grandfather's or his grandmother's side to an ape. Huxley's reply to the frivolous bishop was complete and crushing:

"I have asserted, and I repeat, that a man has no reason to be ashamed of having an ape for his grandfather. If there were an ancestor whom I should feel shame in recalling, it would be a man, a man of versatile and reckless intellect, who, not content with an equivocal success in his own sphere of activity, plunges into scientific questions with which he has no real acquaintance, only to obscure them by an aimless rhetoric, and distract the attention of his hearers from the real point at issue by eloquent digressions and skilled appeal to religious prejudice."

In the address which Bryan delivered before the Young Men's Christian Association of Springfield, we read the following: "When I was a young man I wrote to Robert G. Ingersoll for his views on God and immortality," and all that he found in the answer sent to him was: "I do not say that there is no God; I simply say I do not know. I do not say there is no life beyond the grave; I do not know." Quoting these words of Ingersoll, Bryan continues: "How can a man take from a human heart his belief in immortality and put into its place the cold and cheerless doctrine, 'I do not know'? . . . I am as sure" concludes Mr. Bryan, "that man will live again as that he lives today"?

We have here another illustration of that *un*education into which the churches take care to train their converts. Observe the air of assurance and the bravado to which people resort when they have a weak case to defend. When Mr. Bryan says: "I am as sure that man will live again as that he lives today," he does not tell the truth. Not that consciously he tells a false-

hood, but such has been his training that he cannot distinguish between what he knows and what he does not know.

In the nature of things it is impossible to be as sure that a man will live again as that he lives today. We can see, handle and talk to the living, openly, freely and in broad daylight; we cannot do the same with the dead. If there were any overwhelming proofs that men live again after death, the question would not have been disputed all these centuries. We never try to argue whether or not men live today, and if the other life is equally certain, why is it forever under discussion? The mere fact that men are trying to prove another life is evidence that it stands in need of being proved, which means that it is not as yet proved.

We recommend to Mr. Bryan these words of Confucius—to whom, as we shall see presently, he fails to show justice: “When you know a thing, to hold that you know it, and when you do not know a thing, to hold that you do not know it—this is knowledge.”

And which attitude of mind is the nobler—Mr. Ingersoll’s, who distinguishes scrupulously between the things he knows and the things he does not know—who can say, modestly and truthfully, “I do not know,” or Mr. Bryan’s, who says glibly and dogmatically that he is “as sure that a man will live again as that he lives today”?

There was a time when Mr. Bryan did not possess this assurance, for he says: “I passed through a period of doubt and scepticism when I was in college.” At that time, evidently, he was not “as sure that a man will live again as that he lives today.” How, then, did he arrive at his present assurance? What are the proofs which made a life beyond the grave which he once doubted as certain as the present life which no man ever for a moment doubted? The probabilities are that Bryan’s college “period of doubt and scepticism” is as insubstantial as his present assurance or certainty. The Young Men’s Christian Association was surely fortunate in securing the services of a man who once was a sceptic and a doubter but who is now a firm believer.

But a better idea of the mentality of the one-time candidate for the presidency can be had by reading his defense of miracles. The other day a Chicago preacher speaking at the Great Northern Theatre on "Jonah and the Man-Swallowing Fish," complained that the scientists tried to put restraints upon God's power to work wonders. "These scientists," he exclaimed, snapping his words with much irritation—"these scientists who can almost do what God did, will not allow God to do more than they can do!" I can fancy the Deity praying to be delivered from such defenders. Mr. Bryan is even more entertaining when he expatiates on the subject of miracles. "If God is the creator, then we will not put limits to his power to cause a miracle," says the Nebraska statesman. Yes—"if!" That little word "if" stands quite in the way. To beg the question is not to prove it. Darwin has given his proofs for believing in evolution instead of *creation* out of nothing, which would make all other miracles look very easy. Mr. Bryan gives no reasons for believing in a creator other than to quote from an anonymous and much disputed document, called "Genesis." *If* this "Genesis" is inspired, *if* it is infallible, *if* the facts of nature corroborate the "Genesis" statement, *if* the theory of evolution has been shown to be untrue—*if* all these "ifs" are granted, then Mr. Bryan will have no difficulty in proving his point.

But though Mr. Bryan is sure God can work miracles—Protestant miracles, not the Catholic or the Mohammedan—he is not sure that he ever has. Here is an interesting sentence:

The difficult part of that question is that some people think they know so much about God, his purposes and his affairs and his methods that they assume to say what God would or would not do. The older I grow the less disposed I am to speak positively in the negative; for I have found it so difficult to decide certainly what God wants done today that I am not presumptuous enough to look back over the ages and tell what God wanted at some time in the distant past.

Does not Mr. Bryan believe in the Bible? And does not the Bible tell us what God has done in the distant past, and what

he shall do in the distant future? Is not this a clear instance of evasion? Bryan quotes the Bible as the word of God to prove a creator, who, if a creator, ought to have no limits put to his power to work miracles, and with that Bible filled with miracles open before him, he says he cannot tell whether or not God has ever worked miracles. He has barely finished this remarkable utterance when he pronounces another even more remarkable: "I have seen so many things about me more mysterious than any miracle that I am not willing to allow a miracle to stand between me and the Christian religion." If a premium were offered for the most paradoxical sentence ever penned, I am sure Mr. Bryan would win it. He says he has seen many things "more mysterious than a miracle." What, for instance? Are not the words mystery and miracle synonymous? Does he mean that he has seen so many things more miraculous than a miracle or more mysterious than a mystery? A miracle is something we do not understand—it is a mystery, hence, miracle and mystery mean the same thing, and to talk of anything being more mysterious than a miracle is to furnish a good instance of the ability of the clerically trained men to say nothing and to keep on saying it.

It is true that the origin of life, the birth of a child—death—and even the trembling blade of grass, are mysteries or miracles, in the sense that we are not able to fully explain how or why these things happen. But to suggest that the raising of the dead by Jesus or his virgin-birth is no more miraculous than the blossoming of the seed in the ground or the birth of a child from human parents, is a piece of intellectual legerdemain which satisfies only the uneducated. If the Bible miracles are no more miraculous than the every-day events of life, then it is not true that Jesus worked miracles, any more than a farmer does who raises a crop. But there is really no comparison between the two sets of phenomena, because those of nature are permanent and orderly, while those of the Koran or the Bible have no historical foundation, cannot be repeated today, and they contradict the universal expe-

rience of man. It is a pity Mr. Bryan cannot find the time to read David Hume's masterly treatment of the subject of miracles.

But no sooner has Mr. Bryan declared the miraculousness of certain phenomena, he proceeds to say that they are not miraculous at all. "Is it impossible," he asks, "that a crowd should be fed with a few loaves and fishes?" He does not, then, think such a performance impossible. "Every spring," he continues, "vegetation comes up and not a few thousands but millions are fed from the products of the soil." Could there be a better example of sophistry than this? What relation is there between Jesus taking a few loaves and fishes, and in an instant multiplying them so that not only thousands of hungry people are fed, but a larger quantity is left over and thrown away—and between the ploughing and sowing of the field by the farmer for his corn or wheat which takes months to ripen—which is harvested, sent to the mill, and is baked and used as bread in fixed quantities? Can the farmer multiply his one acre into a hundred, or his one bushel into a thousand, or his one loaf into a million? Moreover, will Bryan allow the same illustration to prove the miracles of Buddha and other religious teachers, or does it only prove the miracles of Jesus? And this is the Mr. Bryan who claims to be a disciple of the great Jefferson, the rationalist, one of whose sayings I quoted a few Sundays ago: "I have recently been examining all the known superstitions of the world, and do not find in our particular superstition one redeeming feature; they are all founded on fables and mythologies."

But it is in his attempt to convert China to his creed that Mr. Bryan becomes apostolic in faith and fervor.

Some few years ago, a pamphlet appeared in England, entitled *Letters from John Chinaman*, which called attention to certain defects in Occidental civilization, and gave reasons which, in the writer's opinion, justified the Chinese to think that they were more civilized than either the Europeans or the Americans. The first impression was that the work was

that of an educated Chinaman, thoroughly conversant with Western life and thought. It has since been announced that the author of the little book is an Englishman, Mr. G. L. Dickinson. Mr. Bryan did not find this out, however, until after he had written his answer. A perusal of this answer shows that Bryan's visit to the various countries of the world has not broadened his sympathies, nor opened his mind to those truths that are larger than any sect or religion. In discussing his effort to induce the Chinese to become Christians, I am not going to criticise Mr. Bryan's motives. Whether he is sincere, or whether he is bidding for the popular vote, is no concern of mine. I prefer to believe that he is sincere. My subject is not Bryan's character, but Bryan's religion.

To prove to John Chinaman that he must exchange Confucius for Christ, Mr. Bryan commits the same unpardonable blunder that so many other apologists of Christianity have made. There are certain stereotyped objections to which the orthodox resort when they find their list of arguments exhausted. One of these is the everlasting: "You give nothing in place of what you take away." It seems that you cannot take any error away without giving another in its place. A man will give up Catholicism for Protestantism, or Protestantism for Christian Science, or that for Dowieism—because he is always getting something in place of what he discards; but you will have great difficulty to induce him to give them all up, unless you can offer him some new kind of superstition. But what does a doctor give in place of the cancer he cuts from the body? What did Lincoln give to the slave owners when he took away their slaves? Am I robbing a man because I prevail upon him to throw away his counterfeit money?

Another of these stereotyped objections is: "You are negative, and not positive." This is Bryan's criticism of Confucius. How tyrannical is the sway of certain words and phrases upon the popular mind? An artificial appetite for chaff has been created, so that even when one is dis-

coursing on the beauty and glory of health, freedom, truth, progress—the cry still is, “But we want the chaff we have been brought up on, or a new kind of chaff equally dry and bloodless!”

It was a painful surprise to us to see in Mr. Bryan’s argument for the conversion of China the following:

Tsze-Kung asked, “Is there not one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one’s life?” Confucius replied: “Is not reciprocity such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.” Christ taught, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” These two precepts have sometimes been confused, and Confucius has even been credited with forestalling the Golden Rule. But there is a world of difference between the two doctrines. “Do not” states the negative side and is good as far as it goes. The man who obeys Confucius will do no harm, and that is something; the harmless man stands upon a higher plane than the man who injures others. But “Do” is the positive form of the rule, and the man who does good is vastly superior to the merely harmless man.

Is not this pitiable? If Confucius offered the Golden Rule six hundred years before Christ in the negative form, Isocrates and Plato gave it in its positive form. “May I do to others as I would that others should do to me,”* said the great Plato, centuries before Jesus was born. Why did not Mr. Bryan remember this? Is it possible that there is in our country an educated man who can really believe that the Greek, the Roman, the Egyptian or the Babylonian world lived for thousands of years without ever rising to the thought of neighborliness until Jesus came to announce it?

And is not all this talk about Confucius being negative the merest rhetoric? Are not all the Ten Commandments written by God himself, who certainly is not in any way second to Christ—all in the negative? “Thou shalt not” refers to acts *not* to be done—it is merely negative.

Did not Jesus also express one of his most characteristic commandments in the negative? “Resist not evil.” Does not Mr. Bryan know what even the most ordinary man

**Jowett Trans. V.*—483. P.

knows, that the form in which a thought is expressed is really no part of the thought? The form is to the idea or the meaning what the shell is to the kernel. What does a man mean when he says "Be not false"? It is only another way of saying, "Be truthful." Only a trifler and a haggler would insist that there was a world of difference between these two forms of expressing the same idea. "Do not be a coward" is another way of saying, "Be brave." "Do not steal" means, "Respect your neighbor's rights." Sometimes it is more impressive to throw one's thought in the positive and sometimes in the negative form. It is all a matter of emphasis and suitableness. Jesus must be in dire need of support when his defenders try to elevate a mere grammatical difference between Confucius and Jesus into an insignia of divinity for the latter. Lacking any forcible arguments to prove the infinite superiority of Jesus, and chagrined to find that a heathen, six hundred years before, had announced the "Golden Rule," which makes Jesus' thought second-hand, they seek comfort in rhetorical construction of sentences, and pharisaical niceties of expression. Nothing shows better the weakness of a cause and the desperation of its agents than their recourse to such fictitious and fantastic argumentation.

And after all, between Jesus, a God, and Confucius, a "heathen" man, there is not even the grammatical difference which Bryan imagines. When the Chinese philosopher was asked for a word which shall express a universal rule of conduct, he answered: "Is not Reciprocity such a word?" Whether expressed in one form or another, the idea embodied in the glorious word Reciprocity is decidedly positive, and Mr. Bryan tries in vain to rob the distinguished Chinaman of the honor of having given clear and forcible expression—six hundred years before Christ—to one of the most universal truths, a truth older than both Confucius and Jesus!

Had Mr. Bryan taken the pains to familiarize himself with the researches of Oriental scholarship he would not have laid such stress upon a difference between Confucius and Jesus, which, as the following from Professor James Legge,

of the University of Oxford, and one of the foremost students of Chinese Language and Literature shows, exists only in Mr. Bryan's fancy: "His words then showed that the rule (the Golden Rule) had for him not only a negative form, but also a positive form." Again, Professor Legge declares that the Chinese from other lessons that Confucius left them "understand it (the Golden Rule), not only as a negative, but also as a positive rule." (1)

Finally, it is regrettable that Mr. Bryan had not acquainted himself with the teaching of Lao-Tsze, the great countryman of Confucius, who said, "Return good for evil." (2) But now that Mr. Bryan has been enlightened will he have the goodness to recall his argument about "negative" and "positive"—an argument unworthy of a man of Bryan's opportunities to know better, and which would be tolerated only in an intellectual cripple?

Proceeding, Mr. Bryan, as is usual with amateur defenders of Christianity, claims all the virtues for Jesus, leaving only the crumbs for sages of other lands.

To show the superiority of Jesus to Confucius, Mr. Bryan argues as follows: "I will contend that one who follows Christ afar off, with limping step and many a fall, may live a nobler life than the perfect disciple of Confucius." Is not this another way of saying that even an imperfect Christian is better than a perfect Chinaman? But a Christian's boast is no more convincing than a Chinaman's would be. Where is the evidence that even a crippled Christian "may live a nobler life than the perfect disciple of Confucius?" Has not Mr. Bryan read the lives of the popes whom more than one-half of Christendom accepts as the vicars of Christ? In what sense did these first-class Christians live a nobler life than the scrupulous and stoic followers of the philosopher of China?

Continuing, Mr. Bryan cites the passages which represent Jesus as counselling love and forgiveness: "Ye have heard

(1.) *The Religions of China*. James Legge. Pages 138-260.

(2) *The Religions of China*. James Legge. Page 143.

that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy, but I say unto you, love your enemies." The commandment "Love one another" is also quoted as original with Jesus. Now, if Mr. Bryan will take the time to read his Bible carefully he will find in the Book of Leviticus, xix. chapter and 18th verse, word for word the "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," which he thinks was first uttered by Jesus. Jesus, then, was only repeating what had already been announced, and the commandment to love one's enemies has its parallel in Buddhism. To overcome injury with kindness is one of the fundamentals of the religion which has made five hundred millions of converts. But whether it was Jesus or Buddha who first expressed this thought, it is generally admitted that it has only a sentimental value. When Christians of opposing sects shall begin to love one another, then it will be time for them to talk about loving also "one's enemies." "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" are the words of Jesus to his enemies on the last day. To send one's enemies to hell is a strange way of loving them. Nor is it fair to quote these words of Jesus: "Ye have heard that it has been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy, but I say unto you love your enemies," without asking—Who said that we must hate our enemies? Mr. Bryan is not justified in quoting this passage against Confucius, for the great Chinese teacher never commanded hatred of one's enemies. What he said was: "Recompense injury with justice." And is not that a nobler ideal? To treat evil as one would the good is to do the latter an irreparable injustice. Ethics is the appreciation of moral values. To offer the same reward to the vicious and the virtuous alike would be a sort of nihilism. Is not Bryan really blinded by his rhetoric when he claims "infinite superiority" for Christianity because it teaches indifference to the stern behest of Justice? But again we ask: Which great teacher taught hatred of one's enemies? Was it Buddha? Was it Socrates? Was it Zoroaster? If it was Moses, was he not the mouthpiece of God? And when Mr.

Bryan quotes the reported prayer of Jesus on the cross for his murderers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," he neglects to ask whether it was ever answered. Was it an honest prayer? Did Jesus mean to take his murderers to heaven with him. Were not his enemies punished on earth with war and famine, and in the next world menaced with eternal damnation? Socrates died with no such dramatic utterance on his lips. The martyrdom of Socrates is historical; the crucifixion of Jesus and his prayer for his assassins possess all the characteristics of a stage performance. Thus the element of artificiality which is so conspicuous in the Gospel settings is reproduced in the reasoning of Mr. Bryan. Let the reader examine carefully the following which the Nebraskan has borrowed from the Rev. C. E. Jefferson of New York, and incorporated it into the text of his book against Confucius:

Christ in history! There is a fact—face it. According to the New Testament, Jesus walked along the shores of a little sea known as the Sea of Galilee. And there He called Peter and Andrew and James and John and several others to be His followers, and they left all and followed Him. After they had followed Him they revered Him, and later on adored and worshipped Him. He left them on their faces, each man saying, "My Lord and my God!" All that is in the New Testament.

But put the New Testament away. Time passes; history widens; an unseen Presence walks up and down the shores of a larger sea—the sea called the Mediterranean—and this unseen Presence calls men to follow him. Tertullian, Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Francis of Assisi, Thomas a Kempis, Savonarola, John Huss, Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin—another twelve—and these all followed Him and cast themselves at His feet, saying, "In the words of the earlier twelve, "My Lord and my God!"

Time passes; history advances; humanity lives its life around the circle of a larger sea—the Atlantic Ocean. An unseen Presence walks up and down the shores calling men to follow Him. He calls John Knox, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Charles Spurgeon, Henry Parry Liddon, Joseph Parker, Jonathan Edwards, Horace Bushnell, Henry Ward

Beecher, Richard Saltus Storrs, Phillips Brooks, Dwight L. Moody—another twelve—and these leave all and follow Him. We find them on their faces, each one saying, "My Lord and my God!"

Time passes; history is widening; humanity is building its civilization round a still wider sea—we call it the Pacific Ocean. An unknown Presence moves up and down the shores calling men to follow Him, and they are doing it. Another company of twelve is forming. And what took place in Palestine nineteen centuries ago is taking place again in our own day and under our own eyes.

Is it possible that Mr. Bryan cannot see how forced and fictitious the above argument is? Does he not know that the number "twelve" is a pure invention in all the four instances quoted? The real number of the apostles of Jesus was not "twelve." Judas having been ousted, there remained only eleven, to which two new names were added, that of Mathias and Paul, bringing the number up to thirteen. "The twelve apostles" then is a mere tradition. Mr. Bryan secures his set of "twelves" by bunching together men like Tertullian and John Calvin, Luther and Augustine, who would have burned one another as heretics. And in order to stop at the magic number "twelve," he omits other equally distinguished names of Christian teachers of the same period—Jerome, Origen, Irenaeus, Papias, Clement of Alexandria, Swedenborg, Theodore Beza and numerous others. The same artificial arrangement appears in his next group of "twelve," headed by John Knox—the names of Baxter, Chambers, Robertson, Newman Hall, Sydney Smith, Dean Stanley, Canon Farrar, Finney, Talmadge, Lorimer, Channing, Ballou and Bellows are left out in order to preserve the cabalistic "twelve." And the remark that "another company of twelve is forming on the Pacific Coast" will be made good by some future Bryan who will resort to similar tactics of picking and pruning to make up his list. Of what service to any cause can such literalism be? Alas, for the cause that needs such manipulation to maintain its prestige! What would happen to Christianity if it were to be deprived of the number "twelve"?

Nor is Mr. Bryan's knowledge of the Bible very accurate. The Bishop of London calls Sir Oliver Lodge "an amateurish theologian"; the author of "Letters to a Chinese Official" answers to the same description. In reply to the criticism that Jesus was more interested in the world to come than in the one that now is, Bryan offers the following:

If you think that Christ occupied the time of His disciples in discussing the beauties of heaven to the neglect of things connected with the present life, you should reread the Scriptures; you will discover that the Master seldom referred to the future life, but continually emphasized the relations which exist between man and man. He pointed out the dangers which beset life and the temptations to which all are liable, and He fortified the individual at every point for his combat with the evil in the world. No other teacher has evinced such a perfect knowledge of human nature or so analyzed it.

There is, indeed, little doubt that Christ encouraged "the neglect of things connected with the present life." What, for instance, did Jesus say against the human slavery of his day,—against the cruel subjection of woman, the madness of war, or the iniquity of political despotism? Is there any warm defence in the Gospels of the ever glorious principle of liberty of conscience? Will Mr. Bryan quote a text from Jesus in favor of religious tolerance? Did he counsel love of one's parents or children? Did he not, on the contrary, say that if a man did not *hate* his father and mother, his wife or husband, his sister and brother for his name's sake, he was not worthy to be called his disciple? And on the questions of education, labor, humanity to animals, intellectual honesty, art, poetry, music—Jesus threw absolutely no light. Whenever a practical question was pressed upon his consideration, he generally answered it by evasion.

The glorification of Jesus has always appeared to us unnecessary—if he was a divinity. Grant that Jesus is a God, and all praise of his virtues becomes superfluous. Why try to prove that Jesus, a God, was wiser or better than Confucius, a man and a "heathen"? If Jesus was kind and all-knowing,

could he have been anything else, being a God? To condescend to compare one's God with a Chinaman is, to say the least, extraordinary. Is it possible that Mr. Bryan thinks that Jesus needs his defence against the rival claims of a mere human? The truth is that Mr. Bryan realizes on what a slender thread hangs the reputation of his "divine" teacher. Only about two or three years of the public or private life of Jesus are spread before the world, and to compare his three years with the seventy years of Confucius—to compare the public career of an unmarried youth who assumed neither the responsibilities of a family or those of citizenship—who held no public office, and who died before age and experience had put to the test the dreams of youth—to compare this fragment of a life with the broad and rounded career of a man like Confucius or Socrates, who entered into all the relations of life and is therefore more exposed to criticism and attack than Jesus with his three brief years, is to resort to what Emerson calls "nauseating exaggeration of the person of Jesus." And Mr. Bryan's lines which we herewith submit for perusal justly expose him to Emerson's sharp criticism:

If I were to attempt to prove the divinity of Christ, instead of beginning with mystery or miracle or the theory of atonement, I should simply tell you the story of his life and how he lived and what he said and did and how he died, and then I would ask you to explain by any other theory than that he was divine. Reared in a carpenter's shop, having no access to the wisdom of the other races and people, he yet, when about 30 years of age, gave to the world a code of morality the like of which the world had never seen before, the like of which the world has never seen since.

Only a partisan could write thus. Why all this, we inquire again, if Jesus is "divine"? And is Mr. Bryan truthful when he says that at the age of thirty Jesus "gave to the world a code of morality the like of which the world had never seen before"? We invite Mr. Bryan to make good this exaggerated claim. Which of the moral teachings or rules of Jesus was not known in the world before his birth? Even the "love your enemies," as we have seen, is later than the

“Return good for evil” of Lao-Tsze, and the “If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty give him water to drink” of the Book of Proverbs. What, then, shall we think of a teacher whose influence upon his disciples is to make them morally callous, careless of evidence and altogether indifferent to the truth?

In conclusion, when our representative American boasts that the average man in China “does not approach in mental strength, moral stamina or high conception of life the product of Christian civilization,” he again shows his inability to reason impartially. If the alleged mental and moral superiority of the average Englishman or American over the Chinaman is due to Christianity, why is not the average American negro, who is also a Christian, superior to the average Hindoo or Chinaman? Why is not the Bulgarian, the Roumanian, the Abyssinian, the modern Greek, the Armenian, the Syrian and the Kopt, who are all Christians—and have been Christians for nearly twenty centuries—as advanced politically and ethically as the modern heathen Japanese? Evidently, then, Christianity is not enough to account for the standing of a nation. Did not Christian Russia go down before Japan?

But let us accept Mr. Bryan’s challenge and see if his claim of the mental and moral superiority of the average Christian over the average Confucian can stand the strain of evidence. Is the average Catholic with his beads, bones, relics, holy water and fear of hell superior, mentally, to the ancestor worshiper of China? Is Mr. Bryan himself, with his dogmas of incarnation, the virgin-birth, total depravity, a personal devil, the resurrection of the flesh, the Trinity, etc., very much in advance of the yellow man with his primitive beliefs?

In regard to the alleged *moral* superiority of the average Christian, we beg to inform Mr. Bryan that only the other day, a first-class daily published in New York City plead guilty of having for years published a column of indecent *personals*—making money by encouraging vice and crime. Compare Christian Chicago or New York with heathen Peking.

Is life or a woman's person safer in our great cities than in those of China or Japan? Are there more burglaries, drunkenness and murder among the followers of Confucius than among those of Jesus? Would not a little modesty on the part of people whose daily papers are filled with the proceedings of the trial of Thaw—a member of the Presbyterian church, and of Orchard—brought up in a Christian Sunday school, and now a "convert," be more becoming?

Finally, compare Mr. Bryan's sectarianism with the beautiful breadth of Goethe's reflections on the "average Chinaman." "These people," said Goethe to Eckermann, speaking of the Chinese, "these people think, act and feel much in the same way as ourselves, and one soon feels one's self to be on a level with them, only that among them things take place in a clearer, more decent and orderly fashion. It is through strict moderation that the Chinese Empire has been preserved through thousands of years and will subsist for the future." (1)

To the same effect and in the same sweet spirit of justice are the words of the brave Diderot: "Apropos of the Chinese, do you know that with them nobility ascends, and descends never? It is the children who ennoble their ancestors, and not the ancestors the children. And upon my word that is most sensible. We are greater poets, greater philosophers, greater orators, greater architects, greater astronomers, greater geometers, than these good people, but they understand better than we the science of good sense and virtue."

The blush of shame must be deep upon the sectarian who would blacken the rest of the world to help on his own creed—who would pull down other saviors of man to exalt his own—as he reads the following gracious words of the Japanese *Bushido*: "Our work, we take it, is this: To battle for the right and uphold the good, and to help make the world fair and clean, so that none may ever have cause to regret that Japan has at last taken her rightful place among the nations of the world."

(1) *Eckermann's Conversations, Etc.* Entry for January 31, 1827.

Oh, an end to sectarianism, to blinding, degrading prejudice! An end to *my* creed, and to *thine*! An end to priests, heathen or Christian, who keep nations and peoples apart! There is only one Truth, one Beauty, one Goodness! And these three make One Humanity!

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