

A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan

William Jennings Bryan is a famous American statesman and political figure, a beautiful speaker, and an experienced lawyer. He was deeply religious and sufficiently conservative man, what did not prevent him from bringing a lot of interesting and significant events in the history of the United States of America. The time of his fame was at the beginning of the twentieth century. One of the main achievements in the political arena of Bryan was the transformation of the Democratic Party from strictly conservative to the one, which became focused on the protection of farmers, ethnic and religious minorities, and the white collars - the emerging new middle class of America. The book "A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan" by Michael Kazin is a great detailed story of this notable person's life. Thus, this paper reveals the chapter ten, eleven, and twelve of Kazin's book, that tell about the last years of Bryan's life, from 1913 till his death, and describes the most interesting parts to understand and learn William's history.

Chapter 10: Moralism at State, 1913-1915

On March 1913, the Democratic Party wins another presidential election, and Woodrow Wilson becomes the new 28th President of the United States. Wilson appoints William J. Bryan as the Secretary of State. It was surprising that Wilson chose him; he was young and without needed experience. However, the precedent was in his favor, in addition to the fact that he supported Wilson in the election, he had traveled the world widely, and many people wanted him to be appointed. During his post, Bryan stood for political and economic expansion of the US in Latin America. He was a convinced Christian and argued against the war. So, before the start of World War I, Bryan put forward the idea of resolving all international conflicts through arbitration. He was the first to advocate putting all disputes on the table (Kazin, 2007). He was confident that well-meaning Christians could transform the world into polite and even brotherly place (Kazin, 2007). In the summer, the first treaty was

signed by El Salvador, and then by all major countries, except Germany and Austria-Hungary; generally there were 28 countries. However, old antagonists from the eastern newspapers started to follow Bryan's every step. Moreover, the interventions of the USA in Mexico and Caribbean violated his quasi-pacifist convictions.

Bryan's troubles started from upper class coming to Washington. He was slovenly, for which he constantly succumbed to criticism. He also made several mistakes for what was criticized even more. Bryan hired mostly his South and West Democratic adherents and announced that he will be taking offs to speak at Chautauqua assemblies. Although, he was absent only seven days during all the year, George Harvey counted Bryan's unpaid speeches as Chautauqua and told that he was absent every one day of four. President Wilson did not join all the critics and supported Bryan.

The harm done to William did not prevent him from doing his job (Kazin, 2007). In the spring of 1913, the constitutional changes that Bryan was advocating since the 1890s - the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Amendments were ratified. He also achieved the reducing of tariffs, the transfer of bank regulation to the government, and the establishment of the Federal Trade Commission. However, when Wilson's administration was making the most shameful decision they had ever made - the increasing of restrictions on blacks in the South – Bryan, who thought that there had to be a social equality, did not say a word.

Bryan and Wilson were peacefully configured to guide the Caribbean basin to the democratic future. However, they had little passion with the messy details of local politics or cultures (Kazin, 2007). Bryan thought that people there would welcome American advice, and when they started to resist, he prescribed a dose of military force to change their minds. Bryan also made mistakes by intervening in Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico.

When the World War I started, William insisted that the United States of America should be neutral. He was trying to keep the peace between the nations. However, on May 7,

1915, a huge passenger liner Lusitania was torpedoed, where 128 people were the citizens of the US. Bryan realized that all his attempts to maintain peace had failed. Later, Wilson sent a protest to Germany saying that they would think a little bit better of it. So, Bryan decided to leave his post as the Secretary of State. He had a feeling that he could favor the US more outside the office. Bryan's resignation caused the fall of his political career (Kazin, 2007).

Chapter 11: Moralist in Retreat, 1916-1919

After the resignation, William Jennings Bryan had neither plans nor desire to return to the office; he just wanted to spend the rest of his days taking care of his wife and lecturing about the moral truths of Christianity. So, in 1916, Bryan and his wife moved to Miami where they had earlier built the Villa Serena. They opened Villa Serena every Friday afternoon for tourists to chat over tea. He revived the Man's Club and headed a fund-raising drive for the YMCA. He also taught an outdoor Bible class (Kazin, 2007).

At that time, Woodrow Wilson started to advocate preparedness for the war. He asked Congress to fund a hundred new warships and expand the army to four hundred thousand men (Kazin, 2007). Bryan turned his oratory to the antiwar effort. He was convinced that brothers killed brothers, and the world had gone mad (Kazin, 2007). William faced the dilemma: he did not want to destroy personal relations with Wilson, he enjoyed his company, but he did not sustain and told that the president wanted to drag America into the war. However, at the same time, he praised Wilson for signing laws to aid labor and increase the income tax (Kazin, 2007).

However, later Germany backed down promising to visit and search civilian vessels before ruining them. Wilson began to propagandize the peace again, giving ability to the Democratic Party to reconcile disputes and hold their convention. It was a precursor of the League of Nations. Then, Bryan had a speech at the Democratic convention, which was discussed in the press widely. Wilson requested Bryan's aid in the difficult campaign of

reelection (Kazin, 2007). Soon, Wilson gained a majority of votes. However, on February 1917, the German government announced that their submarines would not further restrict their mortal operations. Wilson wanted to continue his peace direction, but his request was rejected. Bryan was standing forward the peace again, but was criticized from all the sides. One Republican representative even induced the press to stop reporting on Bryan's unpatriotic oratories and to imprison him. Later on April, Woodrow Wilson asked for the declaration of war against Germany and was supported by 373 to 500 votes. The president asked William to use his oratory talent and sell the war to people, but he was telling the citizens to keep food and was criticizing those who wanted to earn on the war.

The situation in the world gave Bryan ability to advance the prohibitionist and the women's suffrage movements. Bryan also could promote the dry law. Many thought of him as a leader of the moral forces in the US.

At the end of the war, Wilson did not permit William to participate in the peace conference, so was skeptic toward president's plans for the future of the world and the League of Nations, in particular. However, Bryan was for the League of Nations as it proposed the substituting reason for force. Later, a lot of people began proposing radical changes, and William Bryan came up with the "Constructive Program" directed to the possession of railroads by the government and the ability of voters to decide whether to declare war or not.

Chapter 12: Save the Children, 1920-1925

At the beginning of the 1920s, Bryan became interested in the system of education in schools and, particularly, in the teaching of evolution. He was concerned by the fact that many of the students at the end of education became not religious and denied any Christian doctrine. Moreover, the entire faculty and many scholars of the country were unbelievers. Therefore, W. Bryan decided to embark on struggle against such hypocrisy. Bryan worked so furiously because he felt the approaching of his death. Moreover, doctors found more than 1%

of sugar in Bryan's urine. His wife was also in bad condition, and he tried to help her as much as he could.

At that time, Ku Klux Klan that gained a lot of members by promoting fear of militant Catholics, blacks, and Jewish was reborn. Bryan was promoting such ideas as nationalized roads and sexual equality. So, inadvertently, he gained a support of this organization, recognized as terrorist. However, though he did not sanction their cruelty, he, being a politician, did not condemn them.

Meanwhile, in 1920, during the election process, the Democratic Party appointed James Cox as a candidate for President and Franklin Roosevelt as a candidate for Vice President. However, the Republican Party won due to the majority of votes. In 1924, during the election process, the Democratic Party appointed John Davis as a candidate for President and Charles Bryan (brother) as a candidate for Vice President. However, William's party lost. Moreover, he lost political influence because a lot of people from the party turned against him.

In 1925 in Tennessee, the trial of a school teacher John Thomas Scopes was conducted. He was accused of illegally teaching Darwinism. Such fundamental principles as academic freedom and independence of the schools from the Church appeared at stake. In the trial, there clashed two directions - modernism and fundamentalism. William Bryan, who was asked by Baptist pastor William Riley, assisted against Scopes. The lawyer was Clarence Darrow. Speeches in the court had not made the desired effect, which made Bryan feel extremely disheartening. Despite the fact that the court issued a verdict in favor of the accused party, Bryan could not recover from the excitement and tension of the last days, and five days later, on July 26, 1925, he died.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to sum up that in 1913, William Bryan becomes the Secretary of State. Before the start of World War I, he put forward the idea of resolving all international conflicts through arbitration. The Bryan's antiwar speech conflicted with the US position opposing to German policy. In 1915, in connection with this situation in the presidential administration, Bryan was forced to resign from his post as Secretary of State. After resignation, William he devotes all his time to work on social reforms, containing questions about the women's suffrage and the resolution of problems associated with the dry law. In the 1920s, along with the public-political activity, Bryan turned out to be a leader of the crusade in defense of the religion against attacks from scientific thinking. Bryan actively promoted his ideas across the country and openly mocked on the theory of evolution and on its followers. In 1925, a famous trial over school teacher John Scopes, who was accused of illegally teaching Darwinism, took place. After winning the trial, on July 26, 1925 William Jennings Bryan died.