

Christmas Thoughts

THE MOUNT OF BEAUTITUDES

There is nothing to determine just where the Sermon on the Mount was delivered, but because the Horns of Hattin have been associated with that wonderful discourse, I was anxious to visit the place. There is no road leading to this eminence and the bridle paths can scarcely be followed. The ground is covered by boulders and broken stones, half concealed by grass and thistles and flowers. The guide stepped over a large snake before we had gone far, and as it was of a very poisonous variety, he felt that he had had a narrow escape. From a distance the top of the hill is saddle-shaped, and the two horns have given it its name, but on the top there is a large circular basin, probably two hundred yards in diameter, and the rim of this basin was once walled and a citadel built there.

The view from this mount is one of the most beautiful I have ever seen. To the north, Hermon rises in grandeur, his summit covered with snow; the intervening space is filled with hills except in the immediate foreground where the sea of Galilee sparkles in the sun. At the foot of the mount stretches a verdant valley, and from the valley a defile runs down to the sea. This opening gives a view of the shore where Capernaum and Bethsaida are supposed to have stood, and one of the roads from the sea to Nazareth follows the stream which flows through this defile. On the opposite side of the Mount, Tabor can be seen, and beyond, the hills of Samaria. There is inspiration in this commingling of hill and vale and sea and sky.

Whether, as a matter of fact, Christ, "seeing the multitude," ascended to this place, I know not, but it furnishes an environment fit for the sublime code of morality presented in the Sermon on the Mount. No other philosophy has ever touched so high a point or presented so noble a conception of human life. In its purity of heart is made the test, mercy is enjoined, humility emphasized, forgiveness commanded and love made the law of action. In that Sermon He pointed out the beginnings of evil, rebuked those who allow themselves to be engrossed by the care of the body and gave to the world a brief, simple and incomparable prayer which the Christian world repeats in unison.

If in other places He relieved those whose sufferings came through the infirmities of the flesh, He here offered a balm for the healing of the nations.

(From Mr. Bryan's letter on Galilee.)

THE DOCTRINES OF THE NAZARENE

The tokens of love and affection exchanged during the Christmas season are small when compared with the great gift brought to humanity by the meek and lowly Nazarene in whose honor Christmas day is observed.

To the Christian, Jesus came as an unspeakable gift, His face illumined by a divine radiance, His life surrendered in fulfillment of a divine plan, His resurrection fixing in the firmament a star of hope that shall never be dimmed. But even those outside of the church, as well as its members, share in the benefit which humanity has received from the example and teachings of the Man of Galilee.

In a letter written to a friend, Thomas Jefferson analyzed the doctrines of Christ as they relate to man's conduct toward his fellows, saying:

"His moral doctrines, relating to kindred and friends, were more pure and perfect than those of the most correct of the philosophers, and greatly more so than those of the Jews; and they went far beyond both in inculcating universal philanthropy, not only to kindred and friends, to neighbors and countrymen, but to all mankind, gathering all into one family, under the bonds of love, charity, peace, common wants and common aids. A development of this head will evince the peculiar superiority of the system of Jesus over all others. The precepts of philosophy and of the Hebrew code laid hold of action only. He pushed his scrutinies into the heart of man; created his tribunal in the region of his thought, and purified the waters at the fountain head."

Those who accept Jesus as the Son of God and worship Him as such, can attribute the marvelous spread of His gospel to a supernatural force behind it; those, however, who dispute His divinity must find in the doctrines themselves an explanation of their increasing hold upon the human heart. No language that can be employed by pen, no words that can be spoken

by the tongue, can exaggerate the influence which Christ's philosophy has already exerted upon the race, or estimate its future power.

Between the doctrine of might and the doctrine of right; between the principle that propagates itself by the sword and the principle that grows through the persuasive influence of its own intrinsic merit; between the grasping, over-reaching spirit that enthrones self and sacrifices all else to its own advantage and the generous, manly recognition of the rights of others; between a measure of greatness that estimates a man by what he has absorbed from society and that which estimates men worthy in proportion as they do service and diffuse blessings—these differences surpass comprehension.

If Jesus had left nothing but the Parables, His name would have been imperishable in literature; if He had bequeathed to posterity nothing but the simplicity of his speech and the irresistible logic of His argument, He would have had a permanent place among the orators of the world; if He had given to the world nothing but the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," enforced as it was by His own example, this one gift would have been sufficient to outweigh all the wealth of all the world; if He had left no record but the Sermon on the Mount, it alone would have made His natal day worthy of perpetual celebration—but all these added to the matchless majesty of a perfect life and the inspiring influence of an all-pervading love, are turning the eyes of an ever-increasing number to the path that He trod from the manger to the cross.

Love was the dominating force of His life, and love is today the overmastering impulse whose ebb and flow mark the retreat and advance of civilization. And love, too, sanctifies the Christmas gift. With it the merest trifle swells into an object of importance; without it the most expensive present dwindles into insignificance. Love is the alchemy which invests with priceless value all that it touches—the magic wand that converts the humblest cottage into a palace and gives to earth's pilgrims a glimpse of paradise.

(From an editorial by Mr. Bryan in The Commoner.)

MIRACLES

Miracle of miracles is man! Most helpless of all God's creatures in infancy; most powerful when fully developed, and interesting always. Led in youth by the parent's hand, he becomes during maturity the staff of those who led him, and in age he is again helpless and must look for assistance to his children and his children's children. He is ever both instructor and pupil, teaching while he is being taught, daily exerting an influence while he receives impressions from his environment, and carrying through life a power to help and harm, little less than infinite.

What incalculable space between a statue, however flawless the marble, however faultless the workmanship, and a human being "afire with the passion of eternity!" If the statue can not, like a human being, bring the gray hairs of a parent "in sorrow to the grave," or devastate a nation, or with murderous hand extinguish the vital spark in a fellow-being, neither can it, like a human being, minister to suffering mankind, nor scatter gladness "O'er a smiling land," nor yet claim the blessing promised in the Sermon on the Mount. Only to man, made in the divine likeness, is given the awful power to choose between measureless success and immeasurable woe.

(From Mr. Bryan's address entitled "Man," delivered at commencement day exercises, Nebraska State University, June 15, 1905.)

SERVICE

That which is told in story by the ancient philosopher is set forth in the form of an injunction by the Master, for when His disciples asked who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, He answered: "Let him who would be chiefest among you be the servant of all." Thus, if we seek authority from history—whether profane or sacred—we find that he is the greatest who does the most good. This is the law from which there is no appeal—a law confirmed by all experience, a law proved by the inscriptions upon the monuments reared by grateful hands to those whom the world calls great.

And what an opportunity for service this age presents! If I had my choice of all the ages in which to live, I would choose the present above all others. The ocean steamer and the railway train bring all the corners of the earth

close together, while the telegraph—wire and wireless—gives wings to the news and makes the events of each day known in every land during the following night. The printing press has popularized knowledge and made it possible for each one who desires it to possess a key to the libraries of the world. Invention has multiplied the strength of the human arm and brought within the reach of the masses comforts which, until recently, even wealth could not buy. The word "neighborhood" no longer describes a community; that "all ye are brethren" can be more readily comprehended than ever before. It is easier for one to distribute blessings to the world today than it was a few centuries ago to be helpful to the residents of a single valley. A good example set anywhere can be seen everywhere, so intimate has become the relation between man and man.

And yet with the wonderful spread of knowledge and the marvelous range of achievement, there is vast work to be done. Conscience has not kept pace with commerce, nor has moral growth increased with the growth of wealth. The extremes of society have been driven farther and farther apart, and the chord of sympathy between rich and poor is greatly strained. Destitution and squalor lurk in the shadow of palaces, and great law-breakers vie with petty thieves in ignoring the statutes of the state. The instrumentalities of government are being used for public plunder, and those who make fortunes through legislation employ a tithe of their winnings for the corruption of the sources of public opinion. Not only is a bribe dangled before the eyes of the indigent voter, but those who profit through the control of the government do not hesitate to subsidize newspapers and to scatter their hush money wherever a protest can be silenced.

The opportunity is here, and the field inviting.

(Address by Mr. Bryan entitled "Man," delivered at the commencement day exercises, Nebraska State University, June 15, 1905.)

FORCE

Is it the desire of any simply to make our flag feared? Let us rather make it loved by every human being. Instead of having people bow before it, let us have them turn their faces toward it and thank God that there is one flag that stands for human rights and for the doctrine of self-government everywhere. There are some who say that we must now have the largest navy in the world in order to terrorize other nations and make them respect us. But if we make our navy the largest in the world, other nations will increase their navies because we have increased ours, and then we will have to increase ours again because they will have increased theirs, and they will have to increase theirs again because we have increased ours—and there is no limit to this rivalry but the limit of the people to bear the burdens of taxation.

There is a better, a safer and a less expensive plan. Instead of trying to make our navy the largest in the world, let us try to make our government the best government on earth. Instead of trying to make our flag float everywhere, let us make it stand for justice wherever it floats—for justice between man and man, for justice between nation and nation, and for humanity always. And then the people of the world will learn to know and to revere that flag, because it will be their protection as well as ours. And then if any king raises his hand against our flag, the oppressed people of his own land will rise up and say to him, "Hands off. That flag stands for our rights as well as the rights of the American people." It is possible to make our flag represent such an ideal. We shall not fulfill our great mission, we shall not live up to our high duty, unless we present to the world the highest ideals in individual life, in domestic life, in business life, in professional life, in political life—and the highest national ideal, that the world has ever known.

(From Mr. Bryan's lecture entitled "Value of an Ideal.")

THE GREATER MAN AND NATION

I visited the Tower of London today and saw upon the wall a strange figure. It was made of swords, ramrods, and bayonets, and was fashioned into the form of a flower. Someone had put a card on it and aptly named it the passion flower—and it has been too often the international flower. But the world has made progress. No longer do ambition and avarice furnish a sufficient excuse for war. The world has made progress, and today you can not justify blood-