



Senate speeches on US rule in the Philippines Albert J. Beveridge and George F. Hoar (1900)

As part of the peace treaty that ended the Spanish-American War, the United States gained possession of the Philippines, which had been a Spanish colony since the 1500s. Filipinos quickly launched a war of independence against the US occupation; anti-imperialists in the United States sympathized with the Filipino struggle. After touring the Philippines to observe the conflict firsthand, newly elected US senator Albert Beveridge, from Indiana, gave a speech before the Senate in which he argued that Filipinos were racially unfit for self-government and that the United States should continue to rule the islands. Beveridge's speech was immediately countered by anti-imperialist George Hoar, who was then a four-term senator from Massachusetts. Beveridge and Hoar were both white, Republican, and Protestant—Beveridge a Methodist, Hoar a Unitarian. The United States continued to rule the Philippines until granting the islands independence in 1946.

Presented here are excerpts from Beveridge's speech opposing Filipino independence (which was Beveridge's very first speech to the Senate), followed by the opening of Hoar's rebuttal. The "Mr. President" to whom Beveridge and Hoar direct their speeches is the Senate's president pro tempore. Note how each speech appeals, in different ways, to religion.

Mr. BEVERIDGE: [...] Mr. President, the times call for candor. The Philippines are ours forever: "territory belonging to the United States," as the Constitution calls them. And just beyond the Philippines are China's illimitable markets. We will not retreat from either. We will not repudiate our duty in the archipelago. We will not abandon our opportunity in the Orient. We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race, trustee, under God, of the civilization of the world. And we will move forward to our work, not howling out regrets like slaves whipped to their burdens, but with gratitude for a task worthy of our strength and [with] thanksgiving to Almighty God that he has marked us as his chosen people, henceforth to lead in the regeneration of the world. [...]

Our largest trade henceforth must be with Asia. The Pacific is our ocean. More and more, Europe will manufacture the most it needs, secure from its colonies the most it consumes. Where shall we turn for consumers of our surplus? Geography answers the question. China is our natural consumer. She is nearer to us than to England, Germany, or Russia, the commercial powers of the present and the future. They have moved nearer to China by securing permanent bases on her borders. The Philippines give us a base at the door of all the East.

[...T]he Pacific is the ocean of the commerce of the future. Most future wars will be conflicts for commerce. The power that rules the Pacific, therefore, is the power that rules the world. And with the Philippines, that power is and will forever be the American republic. [...] And yet American statesmen plan to surrender this commercial throne of the Orient, where Providence and our soldiers' lives have placed us. When history comes to write the story of that suggested treason to American supremacy and therefore to the spread of American civilization, let her in mercy write that those who so proposed were merely blind and nothing more. [...]

It will be hard for Americans who have not studied them to understand the people [of the Philippines]. They are a barbarous race, modified by three centuries of contact with a decadent

race. The Filipino is the South Sea Malay, put through a process of three hundred years of superstition in religion; dishonesty in dealing; disorder in habits of industry; and cruelty, caprice, and corruption in government. [...]

They are not capable of self-government. How could they be? They are not of a self-governing race. They are Orientals, Malays, instructed by Spaniards in the latter's worst estate. [...] What magic will anyone employ to dissolve in their minds and characters those impressions of governors and governed which three centuries of misrule has created? What alchemy will change the Oriental quality of their blood and set the self-governing currents of the American pouring through their Malay veins? How shall they, in the twinkling of an eye, be exalted to the heights of self-governing peoples which required a thousand years for us to reach, Anglo-Saxon though we are? [...] Savage blood, Oriental blood, Malay blood, Spanish example—are these the elements of self-government? [...]

Mr. President, self-government and internal development have been the dominant notes of our first century; administration and the development of other lands will be the dominant notes of our second century. And administration is as high and holy a function as self-government, just as the care of a trust estate is as sacred an obligation as the management of our own concerns. Cain was the first to violate the divine law of human society which makes of us our brother's keeper.

[...T]his question is deeper than any question of party politics; deeper than any question of the isolated policy of our country, even; deeper even than any question of constitutional power. It is elemental. It is racial. God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No! He has made us the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns. He has given us the spirit of progress to overwhelm the forces of reaction throughout the earth. He has made us adepts in government [so] that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples. Were it not for such a force as this, the world would relapse into barbarism and night. And of all our race, he has marked the American people as his chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America, and it holds for us all the profit, all the glory, all the happiness possible to man. We are trustees of the world's progress, guardians of its righteous peace. The judgment of the Master is upon us: "Ye have been faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over many things." [...]

And so, Senators, with reverent hearts, where dwells the fear of God, the American people move forward to the future of their hope and the doing of his work.

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Mr. HOAR: Mr. President, I have listened, delighted—as have, I suppose, all the members of the Senate—to the eloquence of my honorable friend from Indiana. I am glad to welcome to the public service his enthusiasm, his patriotism, his silver speech, and the earnestness and the courage with which he has devoted himself to a discharge of his duty to the Republic as he conceives it. Yet, Mr. President, as I heard his eloquent description of wealth and glory and commerce and trade, I listened in vain for those words which the American people have been wont to take upon their lips in every solemn crisis of their history. I heard much calculated to excite the imagination of the youth seeking wealth or the youth charmed by the dream of empire.

But the words *right, justice, duty, freedom* were absent, my friend must permit me to say, from that eloquent speech. I could think, as this brave young republic of ours listened to what he had to say, of but one occurrence:

Then the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.

And the devil said unto him, “All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”

Then saith Jesus unto him, “Get thee behind me, Satan.”

Source: Albert J. Beveridge and George F. Hoar, speaking on SR 53, 56th Cong., 1st sess., January 9, 1900, *Congressional Record* 33, pt. 1:704-712, <https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1900/01/09/senate-section>. Public domain.

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Throughout both speeches, punctuation is emended in line with modern conventions. Words used as words, which are capitalized and printed in roman type in the *Congressional Record*, are converted here to lowercase and italics. The capitalizing of the divine epithets *Providence* and *Master* replicates the *Congressional Record*, but divine and christological pronouns are converted to lowercase (which is how they appear in the King James Bible, Hoar’s source for the narrative of Jesus’s temptation). The word *republic* has also been converted to lowercase. *Oriental* is consistently capitalized here though inconsistently so in the source.

These edited excerpts from Beveridge’s and Hoar’s speeches are intended for **teaching** purposes only. For **research** purposes, you should consult, quote, and cite the source publication listed above.



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