

# WORLD DOMINION

The World Dominion Movement advocates Informed Continuous Co-ordinated Evangelism to reach everyone at home and abroad. Its basis is belief in the Deity and Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the World's Only Saviour, and in the Final Authority of Holy Scripture.

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# Facing the Real Facts in Japan

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

WITH few exceptions, missionaries in Japan have received the most kindly treatment from the Japanese people and their Government. They have not only been unmolested as they have carried on their missionary work, but on many occasions have even enjoyed the hearty co-operation of the authorities. The foreigner has always experienced full protection of life and property under a system of law and order which is in many ways most admirable, in spite of features which seem oppressive to an American. The Japanese people have invariably secured the affections of foreign Christian workers, so that an anti-Japanese missionary is comparatively unknown.

Long and intimate contact with all classes of people has given the missionary an inner understanding of the various social and economic problems of the Japanese. It is a well known fact that the vast majority of the people are living precariously near the border line of bare subsistence, and the foreign resident can have only the most heartfelt sympathy for every effort put forth for the amelioration of these conditions. Every missionary has rejoiced in at least the partial triumph of Christian ideals in some phases of Japan's economic and social life.

Some missionaries and Christian workers have sought to present Japan's economic plight to the Western world, and have even depicted it as part justification for the ever-increasing disposition to annex the territory of other nations. Militaristic aggression has been justified on the ground that Japan was but following in the footsteps of Western nations from whom she learned her military methods. It has even been intimated that a 'worthy demonstration of Christian economics' on the part of so-called Christian nations would readily convince Japan of the validity of the principles of Christ. There are however, many missionaries who have come to doubt whether the end justifies the means in Japan's case, and it

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is questionable whether the end is a worthy one. Although the annexation of Formosa and Korea seemed justified in some ways, it is increasingly a question as to whether this has worked out even for the economic benefit of the Formosans and Koreans. Grave misgivings ensued when Manchuria was seized by the Japanese army and now that the programme of annexation, by instituting puppet régimes, has been extended to China, the silence of the average missionary is significant. Indeed some have been informed that if they cannot approve of the war they must keep silent. Now that the situation has become so serious as to present the most ominous perils to the missionary enterprise, as well as to the Christian Church in Japan, it is high time that at least one missionary should screw up his courage to 'grasp nettles' and point out some of the incontrovertible facts of the present crisis.

All save the most superficial observers of world affairs will readily recognize that we have come upon days when the spirit of anti-Christ is asserting itself in unmistakable ways. It is manifested in the dual conception of the divine ruler and the divine State. The recently consummated alliance between Italy, Germany and Japan is being justified in the last-named country on the ground that these lands partake of the same spirit. Whatever other characteristics they may have in common, it will be admitted that the conception of the totalitarian divine State with a divine ruler is at the heart of the thinking of these three countries. Another significant fact is that the Japanese Government has come to terms with the Vatican and it is being noised abroad that the Roman Catholic Church will soon be the only recognized form of Christianity in that country. All that is happening in Japan must be interpreted in the light of these facts.

The idea of the divinity of the ruler and State is no new conception in Japan. Indeed one man of high standing in Japan asserted that the Fascist nations had borrowed this philosophy from the Japanese. While all intelligent persons know that such conceptions were common in the ancient world, Japan is perhaps the only modern nation

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where the idea has persisted. While contact with Western nations, and the impact of new thought, more or less tempered this conception in the minds of many of the intelligentsia, the majority of the people have grown up with the strong conviction that they are a unique nation and that the Emperor is absolute in his divine being, and one only to be spoken of as the 'Heavenly King.' The army and the navy have ever regarded themselves as the chief guardians of the inviolability of the Emperor, and the divine claims of the imperial family have always been most actively promoted by military men. Unlike other nations, the army is not regarded as the servant of the Government, but rather as the servant of the Emperor : it is in no sense subject to the civil authorities, but occupies a position between the ruler and any Government which happens to be in power. Thus no Government can speak with authority regarding the activities of the army, which does as it pleases, being controlled only by what it considers to be the best interests of the Imperial Throne. As the chief purpose of the army is to glorify the Emperor, the vocation of the soldier is idealized in a manner which is unique in the world.

The President of a Japanese University, when discussing the problems of the nations of the world, asserted that the era of peace and righteousness could only be ushered in when the peoples of the world were united in giving their lives for the enhancement of the prosperity and glory of the Imperial Throne of Japan. The present activities of the army in Asia are described as a righteous crusade, which aims at the pacification of China and other lands by delivering them from the scourge of Communism and ushering in a rule of justice. Japan's mission is to save the nations, and the chief instrument of this beneficent purpose is the army. In stating that the co-operation of China and other nations is desired by Japan, the meaning is that they shall submit themselves to the rule of the divine Emperor, whose Japanese servants are the special recipients of divine power to administer the affairs of others. Perhaps this is one reason why the offices of so-called

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autonomous Governments, brought into being by Japanese military conquest, are invariably packed with 'the Seed of the Sun,' or Japanese office-holders.

As the peoples of the world can only find their greatest happiness and true destiny through proper glorification of the eternal Throne of Japan, it naturally follows that shrines are erected in all dependent countries where proper worship may be offered to the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, and her imperial descendents. The Japanese Government has interpreted that these shrines are not religious, but something above religion, while in actual practice they are treated as religious objects. Much of the language used in reference to them is parallel to that of Christian scholars who both deny that Christianity is a religion, and assert that Christ is a superlative Being and not to be compared with the world's religious leaders.

Doubtless there are Government officials who are sincere when they insist that the State Shinto Shrines are not religious, and are intended simply to foster the spirit of reverence for the nation's builders and cultivate patriotism, but the fact remains that the military leaders of the nation, who now control the affairs of the country, are definitely promoting the worship of the Sun Goddess as well as that of emperors and national heroes of the past. All this is being done in connection with a movement to mobilize the spiritual resources of the nation for a great crusade to pacify the whole Far East. Repeated commands have gone forth from the Government authorities directing various organizations, such as schools and churches, as well as individuals and households, to go to the shrines and there do obeisance and offer prayer for victory.

The enforcement of the regulations intended to promote spiritual mobilization has not merely been the concern of the civil authorities, for the *gendarmérie* has been far more active than the police. Again and again *gendarmes* have shown themselves to be most intolerant of any suggestion that the beings enshrined were less than deity. The military, too, have been quite as intolerant of the activity of the small number of liberals, who are desperately

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trying to salvage the little that remains of genuine democratic constitutional Government in Japan. Among others, a number of university professors, who were critical of the militarists, have been arrested or forced out of their positions. The militarists have also forced through the Diet a new mobilization law, which aims to put the nation and all its resources under military control at any time that the authorities desire.

Perhaps the best summary of Christian sentiment on the shrine question appeared in the report of the proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the National Christian Council of Japan. It was recognized on this occasion that 'the matter of paying homage at the State Shinto Shrines is becoming a test of patriotism for every Japanese citizen. . . . Where there is any hesitation to do obeisance at these shrines coercive measures are sometimes resorted to.' It was further brought out that while 'the Government has insisted for many years and still adheres to the interpretation that State Shinto Shrines are not religious . . . the ritual employed at these shrines includes features which are distinctly religious. The priests who serve at these shrines offer prayers and perform other religious acts. Many educational institutions take their pupils to these shrines for the express purpose of fostering their religious sentiments. The masses look upon these shrines as religious and visit them for the purpose of worship.'

In spite, however, of the full admission of the religious character of the shrines, the opinion of Christian leaders in Japan was that 'Christians should accept the Government's interpretation that these shrines are not religious and help to make that interpretation known and understood in their own circles and among the people at large.' Many of the Christian ministers have made, therefore, a heroic effort to impart to their congregations a philosophy which will enable them to do obeisance at the shrines and keep their conscience void of offence. Not a few believers, however, have been unable to comprehend the subtle reasoning which has given their pastors 'rest of soul'; nor have the *gendarmérie* been able to comprehend

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the accepted Christian position, and they have been asking the preachers a number of pointed questions. To the question 'Do you regard the Emperor as God?' various answers have been given, such as: "He is the incarnation of God." "Yes, he is God." "He is inviolable in his person," and so on. One Christian minister even stated that there are four members in the Godhead: the Trinity and the Emperor, but he gained nothing, as he was arrested and charged with having shown disrespect to his Majesty. Some have tried to make a kind of Old Testament out of the Shinto mythology and to identify the Jehovah of the Old Testament with the Sun Goddess or her original ancestor. Others hold to a kind of Janano-Israelism which would regard the Japanese as descendents of the Israelites and the army as God's chosen instrument for chastising the apostate nations.

A prominent Christian university professor teaches that, while Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the soul, the Emperor is the saviour of the nations of this world. The *gendarmérie* have taken exception from time to time to expressions in sermons or religious articles which implied that Jesus Christ was in some sense the King of kings as far as the nations of the world were concerned. The Government has recently appointed specific times when all subjects must bow either towards the Imperial palace or toward the Grand Shrine of the Sun Goddess and the other Imperial ancestors at Ise. Some ministers then argued that while the latter was not permissible, to bow toward the palace was not a religious act. The authorities, however, have now ruled that these two acts are identical, as the *Kashikodokoro* of the palace is the same as the Grand Shrine; this is, of course, true, as the Emperor performs most of his functions, as the High Priest of the nation, in front of the *Kashikodokoro*. The *gendarmérie* are now submitting a list of significant questions to representative ministers, which, freely translated, read as follows:—

1. Who is this God of Christianity?
2. What is your opinion of the 800 myriads of gods of Japan?

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3. What is the difference between the Emperor of Japan and your God ?
4. What is the difference between a foreign ruler and your God ?
5. What is the relation between the Bible and Imperial Edicts ?
6. What is the difference between Imperial Commands and the Commands of Christ ?
7. What is your opinion of ancestor worship and shrine worship ?
8. What is your opinion of the ancestors of the Emperor ?
9. What is the ultimate goal of your religion ?
10. What is your idea of religious freedom ?
11. Why do you regard worship at Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines as superstition ?
12. What is the difference between the Christian spirit and the spirit of Japan ?

It is a matter of thanksgiving that at least some of those who have replied to these questions have made it the occasion of witnessing to Christian truth. There are reasons for believing that the purpose of these questions is to find out just how far Christians are likely to go in resisting the effort to unite the nation in support of State Shinto. The conviction seems to be that whatever endangers shrine-worship imperils the State. One who refuses to worship the deities of the State Shinto Shrines is regarded as disloyal, anti-Japanese and even as a traitor. The circulation of Kanamori's 'Three Hour Sermon,' long used as a tract, is now prohibited because of its anti-idolatry teachings.

Perhaps the large number of Christian leaders consider that the present promotion of State Shinto is but a passing phase, and so feel that the Christian Church should avoid a frontal clash with the authorities on this question. Every effort has been made to conform to various instructions regarding attendance at the shrines, bowing toward sanctuaries, offering prayers and so on. Discussion of the propriety of these acts for Christians has been discouraged in the churches. Indeed, the writer knows of occasions when the exposition of Scripture on the subject of idolatry



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was frowned upon and called a dangerous proceeding. It would appear now that, when it comes to participation in the activities of State Shinto, the present Government will not be content with any halfway measures. It is being asserted that 'no foreign religion can enter Japan without undergoing essential modification by Shintoism.' Buddhism did not gain tolerance without compromise and Christianity must do likewise if it is to survive. One very prominent layman and former Christian educationalist, in fact, believes that ancestor-worship must be incorporated in Christianity, and holds that this is the great contribution which the East has to offer to the West. The recognition of ancestor-worship by the Christian Church would, of course, remove the chief difficulty from the minds of those who would refrain from shrine worship. Another prominent Christian leader, while recognizing the natural antagonism between the religion of ultra-nationalistic and militaristic Japanism and Christianity, advocates participation in the ancestor worship which is at the basis of the shrine system ; while at the same time concentrating on evangelism and refraining from attacking Japanism. Can there be, however, a genuine evangelism which is not based upon the exclusive Lordship of Jesus Christ ?

Even the advocates of Japanism realize the true issue. The editor of one of the two largest papers in Japan called attention to the fact that Christianity had its Absolute, even Jesus Christ, while Japanism held that the Emperor was the only Absolute. He then raised the question as to whether the time had not come to put a stop to Christian propaganda on this account. The advocates of Japanism, fully realizing this issue, constantly ask such questions as : 'Who is greater, the Emperor or Christ ?' . . . 'Do you not regard the Emperor as God ?' and so on. If Christian history means anything at all, there can be no compromise here. Circumstances will inevitably present the Church of Christ with a clean-cut issue, and the decision will have to be made.

Liberalism and democracy are now practically dead issues in Japan. Ultra-nationalistic militarism is in the

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saddle and the country has submitted to a régime of extreme control of all phases of the national life, economic, social, religious and educational. The people are being constantly bombarded with propaganda by the press, the radio and all other possible channels. Nothing in the way of criticism or that is unfavourable to the Government or the army is tolerated. The war in China is not presented as one of conquest and exploitation, but rather as a holy crusade to rid that land of unjust rulers, red Communists and inaugurate there a régime of peace, righteousness and prosperity. When a pastor was given an eye-witness account of the slaughter, looting and unmentionable violence which characterized the capture of Nanking, he could not believe it and simply asserted that those guilty were Chinese dressed as Japanese soldiers who spoke Japanese very well, or possibly Koreans.

According to the newspapers the Japanese army sheathed its bayonets and was welcomed to Nanking by thousands of joy-mad Chinese who threw themselves in gratitude at the feet of the gentle and kind Japanese soldiers who immediately began to bind up the wounded, give food to the hungry and otherwise comfort those who had been the victims of the devilish régime of Chiang Kai-shek.

Even Christian ministers have come to believe that Japan has a divine commission to pacify the world and regard the army as the chief instrument for this purpose. A very orthodox minister, in a sermon, stated his conviction that it would be necessary to pacify Asia through India. Willard Price's article which appeared in the *New Republic* and then in the January issue of *Reader's Digest*, entitled 'Japan's Divine Mission,' was quite in accord with the facts. The alliance with the Fascist nations is constantly being celebrated and the resources of the empire are being mobilized for undertakings abroad which will require years to complete. The very fact that divine sanction is given to Japanese conquests makes the problem all the more serious.

If Japan's conquests continue, the question immediately

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arises as to the possible effect upon Christian missionary work. Will Japanese rule further or hinder the cause of the Gospel? The answer to this question is quite clear for, already, we have had abundant opportunity to observe the working out of the policy of the present ultra-nationalistic Government in such dependencies as Korea and Formosa, and also to some extent in Manchukuo, which is under the same type of puppet régime as will probably be instituted in various parts of China.

The Christian world is already quite familiar with the fact that Christian education is only being tolerated so long as there is complete submission to the system of shrine worship. In Formosa the Government is forcing all households to erect *taiima* or symbols of the Grand Shrine of Ise, and the religious nature of these is shown by the fact that they are displacing other god-shelves. Japanese newspapers have given wide publicity to the idea that China's degeneration was due to her neglect of ancestor worship. Thus the military authorities are already taking steps to restore Confucianism and ancestor worship, and Shinto shrines are being erected in China. In other words, unless the ultra-nationalistic militarists of Japan meet with such reverses as to discredit them utterly in the eyes of the people who now adore them, it is most likely that they will hinder rather than help the various missionary undertakings which are now being carried on in the conquered portions of China; and the same applies to Japan proper and her dependencies. In fact, it would appear that the Christian schools in Japan proper are to be treated much as were those in Korea and Formosa. When one large Christian college was recently forced to eliminate all mention of Christian principles as a basis of education in its school constitution, and henceforth base its educational programme solely upon the sacrosanct Imperial Rescript, which finds its sanctions in Shinto mythology, the statement was made that 'two hundred other Christian schools would have to follow suit.'

Recently a rather large company of Christian workers in Japan, in view of the very serious situation which has

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come to pass in the Japanese Empire, were gathered for several days to engage in united supplication and intercession. Great liberty in prayer was vouchsafed and God gave a new vision of Himself as sovereign over the affairs of the nations, and of the rapid culmination of His gracious plans for His people. With this assurance came a new sense of perfect rest in Him and new confidence and expectation of great things to come. It was made very clear that the supreme need in these days is for intercession, that Satan may not be able to hinder the progress of the Gospel; that workers and all Christians may have tact and wisdom in these difficult days; that the Christian Church may be enabled to stand uncompromisingly for her Lord, and that believers may be given boldness to make an effective witness when they stand before the authorities; that those who are suffering persecution may be sustained and delivered; that hostilities in the Far East may cease and that there may be a righteous peace; that God's highest and best plan for these nations may be realized and that a great revival may sweep the Church throughout the whole world.

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A Chinese instinctively mistrusts force. When a Chinese does fight, he fights soberly with grim determination. War is an inevitable evil. He tries his best to prevent it. If he fails, he accepts his fate and fights. Hence the even temper of the Chinese in the present war.

Music has hitherto probably been rather an individual pastime in China: of the kind of songs that everyone can sing, China had few, and the Nationalist army of 1926 marched from Canton singing rather drearily, 'Down with the Powers! Down with the Powers!', but now the troops are singing stirring ditties like:

' Arise, arise,  
Take our heart's blood to build the New Wall of China,  
Workers, farmers, soldiers, students,  
United to save our land.  
Leave the office, fields, factory, study,  
To the van of the army of freedom.'

There is no humour, there is not much hate and bitterness, but there is a stirring call to selfless sacrifice and national duty.—

*From a leaflet from China.*