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**VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER.**  
**IS THE MORAL SUPREMACY OF CHRISTENDOM IN  
DANGER?**

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**FROM THE "HIBBERT JOURNAL"**

IT has become the plain duty of Christendom to realize that her hold on the moral supremacy of the world is not so secure as many of us imagine. There is room, nay, opportunity, for a rival candidate. That the Christian ideal of moral excellence is splendid, even unsurpassed, no one doubts. But no less certain, no less striking, is the failure of the West to justify that ideal, both in national and private life. The sense of dissatisfaction which this failure has produced has entered deep into the moral consciousness of Christians all the world over; and if the impression has been deep in the case of those who profess and call themselves Christians, it has been yet deeper with the multitudes who have turned their backs on the Church. I rate this feeling among the greatest of the forces now moving the minds of men. Other things may create a louder noise, but this works revolutions. The question of theological standards is being merged into that of the moral, and we are being summoned, as never before, to find the correspondence between our professions and our lives. Such a state of things exposes Christendom to a rival challenge, and marks the fitting moment for another claimant to appear on the scene. If outside the pale of Christendom there should arise the example of a saner, nobler, more rational, more joyous, more humane, more self-controlled way of life than the West has so far achieved, the minds of men are prepared to greet its appearance as no act of [R3740 : page 83] presumption, but as a divine fulfilment of the urgent needs of mankind.

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If any reader of this paper should conclude from what has been said that I regard the rise of Japan as the most important event in religious history since the call of the Gentiles, he will so far correctly understand my drift.

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The contention is that a serious challenge to the moral hegemony of Christendom is not, *a priori*, impossible; that such a challenge has actually been offered; that Buddhism, represented for the moment by Japan, is even now in the field as a claimant for that position which the vast majority of Christians regard as the indisputable birthright of their own religion. What verdict history will finally pass upon this claim no one can tell, no one should try to tell. Enough for the present that the claim has arisen; that it lacks no element of seriousness; that it has been forced on the attention of the world in a fact-language which admits of no mistake.

The potentates of Europe will hereafter have reason to think twice before shaking their mailed fists in the face of the Far East. But not for her guns alone, nor the way she handles them, is Japan to be feared. *The "Yellow Peril" is an ethical phenomenon.* Far more significant than the efficiency of Japan in arms is the advent into the world's history of a people possessed of a disciplined will in combination with the highest order of intelligence. An observer has declared that the greatest brains in all the world are to be found at this moment in Japan. But a great brain is no guaranty of efficiency; isolated from other gifts, it may even become the ruin of its possessor. This, however, is not the case with Japan; her purpose and her intelligence are one. She has shown herself great not only in conceiving her end but in pursuing it. She has poured her energies into her ideals. Thus she rises up in possession of all

that we mean by *character*; and it is in the strength of character rather than in the strength of arms that she now challenges the world.

Praise of Japanese virtue is at this late hour admittedly superfluous. But none the less a prudent man will not cease to observe the facts, nor grow weary in his study of their meaning. He will be quick to notice that Japan has impressed Europe by qualities higher than those which pertain to martial valor. To very many persons – I think to the masses of the people – it appears that Japan in her hour of trial has shown a degree of calmness, moderation, self-restraint, and dignity which are strange to the working moral standards of Europe, and beyond what we have been accustomed to expect. Her armies and navies have taught the world many lessons in the making of war, and she has won an equal glory by showing how the people who **[R3740 : page 84]** stay at home should behave themselves while the war is being made. By what she has refrained from doing, no less than by what she has done, she deserves our respect. In no act of that appalling drama has she allowed herself to play to the gallery. She has not made a spectacle of her fight-for-life; she has encouraged no reporters to witness the shedding of heroic blood; but as though some terrible operation of surgery were in progress, she has repulsed the sightseer and locked the door. In all these respects she has not copied an example previously given, but set a new one to the civilized world.

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It will scarcely be doubted that the impression has gone very deep, and that great changes are bound to follow in many of our accepted ways of thought. The working classes of our own country in particular, never prone to rate too highly either the *bona-fides* of their religious instructors or the practical value of the instruction given, have undoubtedly found here a new

reason for distrusting the moral efficacy of the Christian religion. And not among the working classes only, but everywhere one may observe a growing readiness to compare the respective moral harvests of the East and the West, with the result that Western society sees with cleared vision the scantiness of the domestic crop and the general nakedness of the land. A new point has been given to the arrows of the sceptic: has he not indeed been provided with a new poison for his barbs? The astounding divorce between the ethical ideals of Christendom and its normal practice, the liberty of interpretation with which the first principles of Christian morality are misapplied to our social life; the freedom, amounting to effrontery, with which one thing is professed and the opposite practised; the disgraceful sophisms by which the Christian conscience is taught to be blind to its own faithlessness – these and many other truths of a like nature, once apprehended only by a small and neglected company, have during the last three years been revealed in their true colors to tens of thousands of persons who never thought of them before. Who can doubt that the crisis which has so long been in preparation for Christianity has been brought appreciably nearer by these things – so near, perhaps, as to be even now at the doors?

### **COMMUNISM AND THE BIBLE.**

"The relation of Christianity to Communism has become a question for thoughtful people to consider seriously, if they wish to preserve their intellectual candor and self-respect in adhering to the religion of Jesus." This statement is made by Prof. Henry Van Dyke in his new volume of "Essays in Application." The new type of communist, he says, is more insidious than the old, because, having "laid aside the red cap and put on the white cravat," he "discusses the problem of organization of society on ethical and religious grounds." The law of private ownership the communist denounces as "essentially immoral and irreligious,

because it protects and rewards a form of selfishness." He further claims that the "teachings of the Bible are against it, and that the Spirit of Jesus, who was really a great Socialist, is altogether in favor of common ownership." Entertaining the contention for the sake of its implied conclusion the writer states that:

"If property is theft, according to the teachings of Jesus, then the Church itself, like the Temple of old, has become a den of thieves. If the animus of the New Testament is distinctly communistic, then every honest Christian is bound either to give up his faith in the holy Scripture or to obey its doctrine, not only to the letter, but in the spirit, and to work with those who are seeking to establish a new order of society in which private possessions shall be unknown."

The writer admits two cases possible of citation to prove that the Bible has at least a partial leaning toward the communistic theory. They are the Hebrew Year of Jubilee, "which is used as an argument for the nationalization of the land;" and the example of the members of the early Church at Jerusalem who "were together and had all things in common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them all, as every man had need." Considering these two cases, however, Dr. Van Dyke asserts of the first that, "looking at the Year of Jubilee as a possible model for legislation in our times, we see that it was simply an iron-clad law of entail, more rigid than England has ever known;" and the early Church "was a fraternal stock company for mutual aid and protection." The Old Testament, he declares, holds out scanty encouragement to the advocates of Communism. The Gospels seem to contain even less. He writes:

"There was a man in Bethany named Lazarus, who had a house in which he sheltered the Christ whom the community had rejected. There was a man named Zaccheus, who was rich and who entertained Jesus at his own house. Is there any suggestion

that the Master disapproved of these property owners? There was a man named Joseph of Arimathaea, who had a garden and a new sepulcher in which he made a quiet resting-place for the body of him whom the people had despised and crucified. Was he a selfish robber?

"Christianity never would have found a foothold in the world, never would have survived the storms of early persecution, had it not been sheltered in its infancy by the rights of private property, which are founded in justice, and therefore are respected by all lovers of righteousness, Christian or heathen. It is difficult to see how the religion of Jesus could have sanctioned these rights more emphatically than by using them for its own most holy purpose."

More emphatically still the writer declares his belief in the antinomy that exists between the communistic creed and the doctrine of the Bible, and especially that assertion which declares that Christ was at heart a communist. He says:

"There is a fundamental and absolute difference between the doctrine of the Bible and the doctrine of Communism. The Bible tells me that I must deal my bread to the hungry; Communism tells the hungry that he may take it for himself. The Bible teaches that it is a sin to covet; Communism says that it is the new virtue which is to regenerate society."

– Literary Digest.

### **PALESTINE OPENED TO JEWS.**

Our readers are aware that for fourteen years the Sultan of Turkey has kept Palestine closed against the Jews. None of the Jewish race was allowed to become a resident: a limited number were granted visiting privileges of about 30 days and these were

sometimes renewed, but no Jewish settlers were accepted. Now, according to the cablegram below from the public press, all this is changed and Jews may establish themselves in Palestine or elsewhere throughout the Sultan's [R3741 : page 85] dominions. No doubt this will mean a great rush of Hebrews from Russian persecution to the Holy Land, and just at the opportune time – "in due time," as our motto for this year has it. We quote the cablegram: –

### **SULTAN OPENS PALESTINE TO JEWISH COLONISTS**

Constantinople, March 3. – The Sultan has opened the gates of Palestine to the wandering children of Israel, by signing an edict permitting them to establish themselves in any part of the Ottoman empire.

As a sign of protest against the cruel treatment of Russia toward the Jews, the Sultan ordered the officers at the different boundaries of the empire to allow the Jews entrance with or without passports.

The Russian Zionists sent a delegation to Turkey and Egypt to prepare everything for a systematic emigration from the Czar's empire into the new land of promise.

### **SIGNS OF DEPRAVITY IN COMING GENERATION.**

"Paris, France. – Sociologists and criminologists are greatly worried at the many signs of depravity in the growing-up generation. Crimes among children are increasing at an alarming rate, and that not only among the children of the slums of the great cities, brought up among demoralizing surroundings, but even among the children of smaller towns and villages. Since January last 15 murders have been committed by children less than 16 years of age, one more shocking than the other."

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It would be as unfair to blame all the increased and increasing depravity of children upon the modern Sunday School, as to blame all the increase of crime and immorality amongst the young people of our day to the Epworth League, the Baptist Young People's Union and the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor.

### **ON WHAT, THEN, SHOULD WE LAY THE BLAME?**

It would seem hard, too, to charge these things to the fact that our Methodist friends are boasting that they are building more than a Church every day. It would be equally unfair to charge the great increase of crime throughout Christendom to the efforts of any other denomination or to any people who outwardly teach and favor good morals.

Education surely opens the mind to greater opportunities for evil doing if the heart be unregenerate and wicked. But neither can we blame all on that which, rightly used, proves such a blessing to others.

If we should conclude that none of these influences should be faulted, we at least must agree that the dear people of God connected with all these who have hoped that they would prove *world-converting agencies* have every reason to feel disappointed and to look more closely to the Lord's Word to see how he proposes to bring in the Millennium. When human hopes, ingenuity and efforts frustrated, defeated, result in chaos and anarchy, then man's extremity is to be God's opportunity, the Scriptures assure us. While therefore doing what we severally can to offset evil with good let us trust in the Lord and wait patiently for his time and way.



## **RIFLE RANGE UNDER A CHURCH.**

The Rifle Club gospel is not confined to the elementary school and to secular education. When speaking lately at the men's meeting at Bloomsbury, Mr. Silas Hocking produced a photograph of a rifle range presented by the Mayor of Westminster, and arranged in the vaults under St. Martin's Church. "We are getting on," said Mr. Hocking. "We have the Gospel of Peace upstairs and the Gospel of War downstairs – the Crucifix in the chancel and the guns in the vaults below. The Church," he continued, "had surrendered to the spirit of the world." Christianity said: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." The modern spirit said: "Blessed are the warmakers, for they shall be called patriots and Big Englanders." John Bright said force was no remedy, but pompous little people who posed as politicians to-day seemed to think it was the only remedy. Conscription was universal serfdom in the interests of the autocrats. – Herald of Peace.

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