



Japan the Beautiful

Block Prints
by
LOWELL L. BALCOM

FUJIYAMA



THE THREE LANTERNS

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Christianity and Liberty

A Challenge to the "Modern Mind"



Drawings by Lloyd Coe

by J. GRESHAM MACHEN

WHEN I WAS honored by an invitation to contribute an article to THE FORUM, it could only be because the Editor is broad-minded enough to accord a hearing to a humble representative of a very unpopular cause. To be an adherent to-day of that religion of supernatural redemption which has always hitherto been known as Christianity, and to be at all in earnest about the logical consequences of that conviction, is to stand sharply at variance not only with the world at large but also with the forces which dominate most of the larger Protestant churches.

Whatever may be thought of such an unpopular position as that, it can hardly be any unworthy motives of self-interest that lead a man to take it. It is not easy to stand against the whole current of an age, and the sacrifice which is involved in doing so is far from light. Why, then, do we adherents of the religion of the Bible insist on being so peculiar? Why do we resist in such perverse fashion the pronouncements of the "modern mind"?

Perhaps, for one thing, it is because we do not think so highly as some persons do of the modern mind — of the modern mind and of the modern world which it has produced.

It is not the incidental defects of the modern world of which I am thinking just now. Those incidental defects are surely plain enough even to the most enthusiastic disciple of modernity.

I suppose my experience is similar to the experience of a good many men. When I was a

student in Germany in 1905–1906, the argument from modern authority seemed to me to be a very powerful argument against the supernaturalistic Christianity in which I had been brought up. I was living in an environment where that Christianity had long been abandoned, where it was scarcely regarded even as being worthy of debate. It was a very stimulating environment indeed, dominated by men whom I admired then, and whom I still admire. And the world in general might have seemed to a superficial observer to be getting along very well without Christ. It was a fine, comfortable world — that godless European world prior to 1914. And as for anything like another European war, that seemed to be about as well within the bounds of possibility as that the knights should don their armor and set their lances again in rest. The international bankers obviously would prevent anything so absurd. But we discovered our mistake. Our comfortable utilitarian world proved to be not so comfortable after all.

In some directions, indeed, there was advance, even in warfare, over conditions that had prevailed before. Antiseptic surgery no doubt had accomplished much. But in other directions there was a marked decline. The notion of the nation in arms — that redoubtable product of the French Revolution — was carried out to something approaching its logical result. Even more logical and even more damnable, no doubt, will be its results in the next war.