



The Peril of the Republic of the United States of America

Ph.D., Percy T. Magan

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In 1899, after having ousted the Spanish from their oppressive colonial rule over the Philippine Islands, as well as Cuba, the United States annexed the Philippines and began military suppression of the independence movement led by Emilio Aguinaldo. The U.S. replicated the very brutalities that had been cited as reason for war against Spain, including forcible removal of Filipino civilians into re-concentration camps, and use of torture in interrogations. The combat took the lives of over 4,000 Americans, 16,000 Filipino combatants and at least 20,000 civilians. Against this background, the prominent educator Percy T. Magan wrote “The Peril of the Republic of the United States of America.” A remarkable piece of Adventist anti-imperialist literature, Magan’s book decried the forcible annexation of the Philippines as “national apostasy.” In this embrace of imperialism, America was abandoning the “new order of things” and reverting to the militarism and oppression characteristic of the old world. In his book, Magan addressed the repressive impact of imperialism on American liberty, the incompatibility of a military establishment with republican government, and the influence of prophetic belief over political action. Magan did not foresee an aroused citizenry effecting a lasting transformation of the American political order. The demise of liberty was inevitable as a turbulent prelude to Christ himself returning to sweep aside all earthly powers and establish his own eternal kingdom of love and justice. Magan saw his work as similar to that of biblical prophets sent to warn kings and nations about the consequences of departure from the divine intention. He believed, “ambassadors of Jesus Christ” should make their voices heard “in the courts and congresses of human powers of earthly governments,” and called upon citizens of the coming kingdom of God to be true to principles “in things national as well as personal” and to “work for right principles while it is day.” Like other Adventists of his era, Magan did not hesitate to apply his apocalyptic world view to government foreign policy, and, in so doing, held the government to its own highest standards of benevolence and human rights.

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