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IS THE TONE OF THE SECULAR PRESS OF TO-DAY DAMAGING TO MORALS? IF SO, WHAT IS THE REMEDY?

REV. J. A. STAFFORD.

This is a question of some moment, and upon its correct solution and proper answer may depend, for weal or woe, many issues of vital import. This question of inquiry should not be lightly esteemed, nor idly passed. It were itself a moral wrong to answer it rashly or flippantly. The affirmative of this proposition would be a serious charge—too serious to make if it be not true.

Without controversy, great is the influence of the press. It is a fact known and read of all men that the press fuses and moulds public opinion. It is a fact that no idea or sentiment ever flourished in the face of a united press. Take any principle, however holy, just and good, and array all the press against it, and you kill it outright. Again, take any principle, however unjust and vicious, and let the press defend it, and it becomes the belief of the people.

Such is its power "to make the worse appear the better reason." This great power for good and evil incurs a commensurate responsibility. The great Teacher said, "Woe unto that man by whom the offense cometh. It were better for that man that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea." It is not only true in religion, it is also true in the domain of society and government. Woe unto that agency that corrupts the hearts and minds of men. To deliberately make that which may be a savor of life into a savor of death, is a crime against God and humanity. The press can bring light and health to the home circle or business mart; can inspire safe moral impulses, and help to warm them into virtuous deeds amidst the activities of life; or it can stealthily insinuate moral virus, supplant virtue, condone and stimulate wrong, and corrupt the fountain-head of motive and act—putting all things morally out of joint.

The question is, which does the secular press do most of? I do not believe in the total depravity of the secular press. I do believe, however, in the total depravity of some of it, and in that some of it posing as moral sheets. The truth is, that a great many secular papers are not run in the interest of public morals, and therefore pay little or no attention to that at all. They make a business of the accumulation and conservation of private cash, rather than the conservation of public morals. Right here is the fountain of all their sins of omission and commission. If it paid more into their tills to be always clean and moral, they would unquestionably adopt that policy. If you remonstrate with a paper about certain news items, and as to its form and make-up, the reply comes that it is its own business to give the news without reference to its moral qualities, and in a form most attractive to the greatest number of readers. They tell you furthermore that it is the business of the clergy and the religious press to take care of the morals of the country. It is easy for anybody to understand the true inwardness of this kind of talk. They do not stop to explain how it is that they have not so much interest in the morals of the country as anybody else.

Let us lay hands upon one of our great dailies and see what is in it. You notice a few lines of brief matter-of-fact statement that a church has been repainted, that a new schoolhouse has been completed at A, and at B the congregation are expecting the services of Parson D. You learn all this and more like it in a one-third column of space. By the side of this you find a column and a half describing in glowing terms of sensational intent a Sunday base ball match game which was largely attended and enthusiastically enjoyed. It does not pause to remind its readers that such things on Sunday ought to be discouraged; that they are a source of much evil, full of sin. It is too busy with another full column detailing how Bill Jones "pounded, beat up and disgraced" Tom Smith in a prize fight for a purse of a thousand dollars. No pause for moralizing. Oh, no. That might have a tendency to check such practices to the hurt of the business of the news monger. Besides, this issue must tell the people all about the last ball fight in Mexico.

Sometimes we are challenged to estimate the great good the secular papers do in comparison with the evil chargeable to them. Of course the doing more good than harm is better than the reverse, but such a plea comes with poor grace from any man claiming to be a nineteenth century philanthropist. That our reputable journals sow good seed no one will deny, but who will plead from that the right to sow some bad seed? Whether there is any money made by sowing these tares or not, does not alter the moral status of the sowing. There are three drowning men and one drowning sheep. A boatman going to the rescue can save his sheep and two men, or he can save three men and lose his sheep. He decides to save his sheep and two of the men: require the moral status of the boatman. Referred for solution to the secular press. Furthermore, it is a matter of regret that the "crimes and

casualties" column of some of our dailies contain hurtful matter, hurtfully told. There is sometimes too much detail and retail, so much so the object almost appears to be to exhibit crime and show how it is committed. Happily the "scavenger column" seems to be disappearing from most of the press. But yet there is room for improvement. It is said that there is a great demand for such news and such manner of its retail. But it is an unhealthy demand, and one created and kept alive by such methods. It is like the demand for strong drink. Besides, it does not make a thing morally right and healthful because there is a demand for it. It is a painful fact that many forms of sin and evil find an echo in the human heart, which would not respond but for the outward voice of suggestion first heard from without. It is folly to talk of teaching the youth to condemn vice by putting it before their eyes. It is a reckless and disastrous method of education. It were worse than vanity to sing: "Vice is a monster of frightful mien; to be hated needs but to be seen," unless we throw the emphasis on the "But seen too oft, familiar with its face, we first endure, then pity, then embrace." I cannot doubt but that thousands of crimes have been committed that would not have been but for crime's brilliant treatment in the newspapers. I have read descriptions that did fairly give vivid with fame and make damnation shine with renown. The effect of such is to inspire the criminally inclined and spur the sides of their intent.

In conclusion, I have no railing accusation so bring against the secular press. It has many noble representatives, and future generations shall call them blessed. But many specimens there be whose god is financial success, and who are willing to pander to the depraved tastes and appetites of men as long as there is money in it. Would God they would always magnify their high calling, in that they would never use their great power amiss. The remedy for this state of things is the peaceable agitation of these questions by the pulpit and press, that peace may have her victories no less renowned than war.

BONHAM, TEXAS.

THE SECULAR PRESS.

N. B. SLIGH.

Not long since I noticed in the Sunday daily edition of a Texas newspaper a notice of a base ball game that was to be played that afternoon, and the paper advised every one to go and see the game. If the advice was observed, and the people went, they put money in the pockets of the violators of the Sabbath day, defied the laws of the State and the Christian sentiment of the land. It is said that this is a Christian country, but we do and permit some things, sometimes, that would seem to negative this statement. My purpose, however, in this article is to point out the influence for good or for evil now being exerted by the secular press of the State. Newspapers say that they are the conservators of the peace, that their mission, primarily, however, is to make money for their publishers; and this is true, and they will confess it if you pin them down for a direct answer.

When I state that the daily papers are in the habit of publishing disgusting and unclean happenings, and that I conceal such issues of the paper from my family, it discloses the fact that such papers are not taking that high standard necessary for the elevation and lifting up of the rising generation to higher, better and purer life. Disgusting details of crime in all its horrid features are brought to the doors of the home, to the detriment of our daughters and sons. Why do respectable so-called papers pursue this course? Answer: to make money. They say the people demand it; that issues of the paper containing sensational reports sell readily and in large quantities. Thus knowingly they cater to depraved tastes, and the fact that they must one day answer for it does not alter the fact that the sin of lowering the morals of the people is at their doors.

It appears impossible to get the current news of the day necessary to the successful conduct of our every-day affairs unless we take the daily papers, and we appear to be helpless! You may ask what is the remedy? My reply is, convert the editor and the publisher and the owner of the paper! Let the light of Jesus Christ shine in their hearts, and the tone of their editorials will change, and they will refuse to prostitute their papers to the service of the devil. This world is Christ's and he must and will rule it, but we must wait patiently for his will to be done.

WACO, TEXAS.

THE HOLY SPIRIT—SATAN IN JOB.

JEAN PAUL.

1. The Holy Spirit mediates between man and God, even as Christ mediates between God and man. Both are intercessors, though operating in different fields. The Holy Spirit has to do with man. He stands at the heart's door and knocks, soliciting admittance. He entreats, urges the sinner to consent to an immediate reconciliation with God. The

converted he helps in their infirmities, enabling them to hold truly filial relation to the Heavenly Father.

2. Many resist the Holy Spirit. The Jews of old were guilty of this suicidal practice (Acts vii:51). The Holy Spirit brings light; but this sinners abhor. For obvious reasons they love darkness rather than light. They abstain from reading the Holy Scriptures and from attendance on public worship, because this abstinence prevents subsequent heart-burning.

3. Quenching the Spirit is of frequent occurrence. Kindling the flame of celestial fire in the hearts of men is the proper employment of the Holy One. But this fire is often extinguished. Satan, as chief of fiends, supplied with excellent apparatus, soon vanquishes the incipient conflagration. Worldliness, sensuality and sinful habits are the water for Satan's monster hose. During a prairie fire farmers plow deep furrows around their property. With the fresh clouds of earth they fight the encroaching flames. Our sins are the clouds, devils the farm hands in quenching the spirit.

4. Christians often grieve the Holy Spirit. Friends give friends. One man is filled with anger, rage. The Christian and God are friends. We grieve the Holy Spirit by insufficiently availing ourselves of the means of grace, by our lack of spiritual growth and maturity, by our indolence as workmen in his vineyard.

5. The sin against the Holy Ghost is not a difficult definition. It can be committed only by parties who have been born of God and are spiritual. They know from experience that the Holy Spirit is a blessed verity. They enjoyed his witness, seal and comfort. Now they deny him—willfully lie, declaring that their supposed conversion was but the outcome of hallucination, the effervescence of a morbid imagination; in short, that the pretended regeneration was a myth. Denying what they experimentally know to be true in regard to the Holy Spirit, is the damnable sin against that Spirit.

6. Spiritual reprobation places man beyond the pale of salvation. Hearts obdurate, minds blinded by obstinate persistence in unbelief and sin, notwithstanding protracted wooing of the Holy Spirit, that Spirit finally ceases to strive for the heart's occupancy. For the reprobate the blackness of darkness is reserved forever. Once stately mansions, the home of God; now crumbling ruins, the habitation of owls from the nether world.

1. The Book of Job constitutes an inspired, but nevertheless dramatic and edifying. Vindicating the justice of God in ordaining or permitting misfortune to overtake even the good, indicating that there was ulterior beneficent design, the poet reveals in a picturesque profusion of highly embellished portraits of scenery, persons and facts.

2. The government of God is compared to royal courts on earth. The king requires reports from his chief subalterns. The chiefs of the military, the navy, the ministry, police, sometimes even the chief of detectives, present their report. In presenting Satan on the scene of his spiritual drama, the poet makes him appear as chief of detectives. This is poetic imagery. God is aware of and permits the execution of Satan's diabolical designs; but, certainly, he would never tolerate the arch-dead in his and in his children's presence.

3. As poetic embellishment, we must consider Satan's attempt to charge God with ignorance, intimating that he was presumably not aware of Job's selfish motives in walking uprightly before the Lord. In surrendering Job to Satan's diabolical treatment, the said embellishment would almost make it appear that God had been successfully duped and had fallen into the wily intriguer's trap. I'm led to think of mothers who attire their beautiful children so very profusely with beautiful garments and ornaments that the natural beauty of the children is almost overshadowed.

4. When Satan takes Job in hand embellishment ceases. Satan begets epidemics of thought, opinion, sentiment and design. The Sabians and Chaldeans alike were impelled by him to invade Job's domain and rob him of his numerous herds. Very often public opinion is the offspring of the god of this world. What is denominated patriotic unanimity, leading to fearful carnage and devastation, well—can it be of God?

5. The atmospheric revolutions and evolutions are subject to Satan's control. He calms storms, foments hurricanes, directs the zig zag course of tornadoes. Mansions, villages, cities are swept away by a storm engineered by Satan. God may and may not interpose. Here the home of Job's first born is wrecked by a storm directed by Satan. The patriarch's children lie buried beneath the chaotic mass of debris.

6. Scientists search eagerly for the microbes, the germs, which operate as centres of infection, creating pestilence. What are they? Where are they? Are they in the air which we inhale, in the water which we drink, in the food we

eat? Satan knows. He superintending, by infection or contagion, Job was stricken with leprosy.

NEW ORLEANS, LA.

CALIFORNIA LETTER.

V. B.

Having for various and sundry reasons determined to return to the land of the Lone Star, we bade adieu to San Diego on a bright October morning, and I must confess I felt quite sad as I saw the blue waters of the bay, the tall masts of the shipping, fair Coronado, and the Crescent City itself fade out of sight.

In the four months of my residence here I had formed many pleasant acquaintances, and I believe made some true friends, and had renewed old friendship with friends of other days. My stay had been very pleasant in some particulars, especially so as regards my church life. I had been most cordially received by the pastor and by the people, and they were kind enough to express much regret that my stay was so short. The ladies had worked pleasantly together in getting their little church in perfect order to accommodate the conference that was soon to convene there, these things now would soon be only pleasant memories, but I shall always cherish sweet memories, kind thoughts and good wishes for all the membership of Keener Chapel. May the dove of peace ever brood over their little church.

Then I was leaving my only sister here; this, too, saddened me very much, for I had learned only too well how true these words are, "For who can tell when once we part when we shall meet again?" Less than one year ago in Kansas City I had parted with my beloved older sister, who had been both mother and sister to me, and who was the bond that kept us united as a family. I said goodbye with the hope and expectation of seeing her again in a few months, at farthest. Alas for me! when we did meet she was so racked with pain and tortured by disease that she never knew I was near her, nor heeded the agonizing pleas to stay with us a little longer; and now she has been quietly sleeping for five months in one of the most beautiful of the "silent cities," never heeding the din of that rushing, roaring city, nor the sad and bitter grief of those she loved so well. So I felt it might and most probably would be in this parting that we had clasped hands for the last time on earth. "Oh, may we meet beyond the river, where the surges cease to roll!"

We boarded the cars of the new railroad called the Los Angeles Short Line. It runs for the most part of the way quite close to the sea, so that it was quite a good while before we lost sight of the white caps, or ceased to hear the music of the billows' roar. This road runs through several pretty villages—Ocean Side, Del Mar, etc., summer, or rather health resorts overlooking the ocean. We at last turn from the seashore and enter a lovely valley. Near the entrance stands one of the loveliest of great towns. The location is beautiful, and so is the name—"San Juan-by-the-Sea," but there are only the depot and a few small houses there as yet.

Here, looking back from the car windows, we had our last view of the grand old Pacific, with its ever restless billows that seemed to break in a grand anthem of farewell upon its pebbly shores. We saw here a number of quite large olive trees. These indicated that at some time this had been one of the Spanish settlements, for wherever the priests established themselves they planted these trees. A few miles further up the valley we come to the famous San Juan Capistrano Mission. It is said to have been one of the largest of all the California missions, and was built over one hundred years ago. There seems to have been a regular chain of these missions along the coast, sometimes hundreds of miles apart, extending from San Francisco to San Diego. This one, with all its surrounding walls, was built of adobe and covered with the peculiar tiling to be seen on all these old Spanish buildings. This tiling looks like a common two-gallon earthenware jar cut in two lengthwise, the round side placed upwards.

I have seen it stated that this building was destroyed by an earthquake in 1812, some fifty persons losing their lives. It was again rebuilt, but is now in ruins. Parts of the walls are still standing, and I suppose, from appearances, enough of the old chapel to afford a place of worship for the few Mexicans that still live in their little huts close to the fallen church. I have seen a number of these old missions on this coast, and I am always filled with wonder and admiration at the courage and the perseverance of these priests. Coming here, where there were no people but the Indians, and they of the wild and roving nature of their race, it is wonderful how they could induce them to work enough to build even these adobe buildings, and some of them have some pretensions to architectural beauty. I always feel a desire to converse with the few people that are left around these old places and learn something of the legends and

romance connected with them. No one who has read Mrs. Jackson's (H. H.) fascinating and realistic romance of Ramona can help but imagine that there must be a goodly amount of romance attached to all these old missions and their surrounding ranches. Leaving this place, we passed on through one of the largest ranches on the coast, said to contain 30,000 acres, and is the property of a Spanish gentleman. Here in early days innumerable herds of cattle and flocks of sheep roamed through these meadow-like lands. This valley is called Santa Anna, and is one of the loveliest and most fertile in the State. Here near the roadside I saw small streams of running water—for the first time in this whole summer. The San Diego river, though a good-sized stream in winter, is perfectly dry in summer, and it is the same with all other streams in that part of the State. It is a common saying here that the bottom of the rivers are on top, and it is literally true. I have seen persons dig down a foot or two in these apparently dry streams and obtain water enough to fill an ordinary bucket. The water supply for the city of San Diego and Coronado is found by digging a chain of wells from fifteen to eighteen feet deep in the bed of the river, where an abundant supply of clear water is obtained. From these wells it is forced by steam power into the tall water tower upon a mountain top, and from there distributed all over the city, miles away. Along this short line there are very nice new depots at most of the towns. We passed through orange and lemon groves; saw groves of the English walnut and large fields of the beautiful green alfalfa. There are a number of thriving towns here, and I saw many real handsome residences surrounded by beautiful shade and fruit trees. Our way lay through the village of Santa Anna. Here a delegation of Presbyterian ministers came aboard, en route to attend the Presbytery at Los Angeles. To our great surprise we recognized one of these ministers and his wife as old acquaintances, Rev. Dr. Fackler, formerly of St. Joe, Mo., once in Dallas for several months, now the pastor in charge in Santa Anna. It had been over a dozen years since we had met, so there was much to hear and tell. We had had a very pleasant surprise a few weeks before this in meeting at the hotel in San Diego another old ministerial friend that we had not seen or heard of for years, Rev. Mr. Daniels, formerly the pastor of the Congregational Church in Dallas. He has a ranch near the town of De Luz, where he preaches, has all the comforts of life around him and seems to be quite happy and contented. His face still bears the gentle, patient, Christian character that all who knew him will remember. Time has touched him lightly. We passed through several vineyards, and at a distance saw some of the large wineries. At 2 o'clock in the afternoon we reached Los Angeles. After dining at the Nadeau Hotel we drove around over the city and were charmed with the many handsome buildings and beautiful homes embowered in trees and flowers. Here they have an abundant supply of water. They have three waterworks and consequently an abundant supply for all purposes. The parks, lawns and flower-beds were in a state of luxuriant growth. The hedges that surround the grounds of the most of these elegant homes is the Monterey cypress. It is a beautiful bright evergreen, and can be shaped into any design one may desire without detriment to the plant. We called on a young lady we had known in Dallas ever since her childhood, Miss Winnie Terry. We found her at the residence of her uncle, Mr. John Bryan, whose home is one of the loveliest ones we saw—in the midst of a large orange orchard, with a carriage-way leading up to the very door, surrounded on all sides by all the beautiful flowers this land is famed for; but, alas! though an Eden in appearance, the angel of death had entered this lovely home and called away from earth the devoted wife and mother and left a cloud of sorrow resting on a home that otherwise was almost perfect.

There was quite a stir on the streets of the city, and the sound of the hammer was heard on every hand. We met several old friends from Dallas, and all were enthusiastic in praises of their fair city, and all seemed to be well satisfied; and, in fact, we were so well pleased that had we stayed much longer, we might not have returned to our own empire State. From Los Angeles our trip was quite monotonous—nothing to be seen but the sandy desert and the far-off mountains, with an occasional mirage to vary the scene. At Yuma a number of Indians came around the cars to sell little trinkets. We found it extremely hot on the desert and at El Paso. We found upon reaching the latter place that our train would be detained about an hour; so a number of us concluded to make a short visit to old Mexico. We took the street cars and soon found ourselves over the line that separates the two republics—that line being the Rio Grande, that is now a little, narrow, shallow stream, but sometimes it is quite a large stream. We had visited this place (Paso del Norte) upon a former excursion, so was not sur-

prised at the meagerness of the sights. We entered some of their shops and purchased some little articles, and in one we saw a real handsome young Mexican woman, fashionably dressed, in the act of purchasing a pistol. She laughed merrily when she saw our curiosity and surprise at the odd sight of a woman purchasing firearms. From this place we saw nothing to vary the monotony of mesquite groves till we began to pass the western towns of San Angelo, Baird, Abilene and Fort Worth. We were nearing the end of our journey, drawing near our old home from which we had gone out, intending and expecting to make a new home in the border-land of the far west. Why we returned I have already stated.

And now, as our journey of hundreds and thousands of miles is well nigh over, I feel a renewed sense of obligation to our Heavenly Father, whose kind care has been over us and about us all the time, and devoutly thankful that he has not suffered any accident or misfortune of any kind to befall us, and to thank him for the pleasant memories of new friends, pleasant acquaintances and associations found on the far-off Pacific slope. The slowing up of the train indicated that we were crossing the familiar waters of the Trinity, and soon the gleam of the electric lights and the confusing babble of tongues at the depot assured us that really and truly we were "home again," in the city of Dallas, and thus ends the story of one summer in California, written by an ordinary observer for the ordinary reader—not for the critic's eye.

NOTES FROM LAMPASAS DISTRICT.

REV. W. T. MELCORN.

I am in the midst of my fourth round on Brownwood District. I am glad to say peace and harmony prevail throughout our bounds. The pastors in charge of the circuits, missions and stations are in good spirits. Though our receipts are small up to date on salary, we rejoice in the hope of our reward on high, in heaven. We have heard the shouts of victory upon every part of our field. Many have been converted to God and added to the church. The membership has been greatly revived. I hope by the final steward's meeting, preparatory to conference, every charge may meet its obligation to the preacher and the collections ordered by the conference. Permit me to say, in this short letter, our work is rising under Divine guidance and the faithful efforts of each pastor. I was rejoiced to behold the church building in Brownwood. You remember the corner stone was laid during this year. The work has been steadily advancing under the zealous efforts of Rev. J. R. Nelson, pastor, who has given close attention to this important enterprise—"this Herculean task." You would join me in saying, it is a wonderful work, if you could see it and view the surroundings. This house is of modern architecture, drafted by one J. D. Price, Philadelphia. It is built of the best brick—with rock foundation, well laid by the best workmen—eighty-four feet long and fifty-four feet wide, with lecture room separated from main audience room with folding doors. The house will be well ventilated, having five memorial windows, two windows twelve by twenty feet each. The windows to be finished with enameled glass, with border of cathedral glass. The above described house is one story. The house will be closed in soon, and we expect the final finish next year. We are occupying it now—held our fourth quarterly meeting. We felt at home. Our people have been wandering around until now. The school is united; the congregation is united. Every one seems to feel we are at home at last. My prayer to God is, may every town and county appointment in our district have a house in which to worship God, and enjoy the peculiar meetings of our beloved Methodism. Pray for us.

COMANCHE, TEXAS.

THE DISCOVERY: The discovery is announced of another asteroid by Dr. Palisa, at Vienna. This makes 383 minor planets that have been found since 1801 moving within the solar system. These tiny globes, many of which have diameters of only a few miles, can generally be seen only in powerful telescopes. But, despite their smallness, the asteroids are important for astronomical purposes. Some of them approach the earth much nearer than the distance from the earth to the sun, and near enough to have their distance measured. Consequently astronomers hope eventually to utilize them for determining more accurately than has ever yet been done, by observing Venus and Mars, the true distance between our planet and the sun. Dr. Palisa has rivaled Dr. Peters, the American astronomer, in ferreting out these diminutive planetoids.

THE Christian Standard: In Harper's Bazar we read this: "What you want, Beth-zar," said a colored preacher, waving his arms wildly to emphasize his words—"what you want is sanctification! Get sanctification, if you don't get nothing else!" "Sanctification" may not be a dictionary word. We have not consulted the dictionary to see. Among us boys it meant something of the nature of "mother wit"—of good common sense. Now, we agree with the aforesaid colored preacher in thinking that a judicious admixture of sanctity and gumption—in brief, sanctification—is a most excellent thing. The lack of it has done much harm. Oh for sanctified common sense in doctrine, in exhortation, in testimony, in life! Sanctification is a very good and expressive word indeed. Pass it along where it may happen to be abundantly needed.

