

Catholic Courier

VOL. VIII APRIL 2, 1936 No. 14

Official Newspaper of the Diocese of Rochester With the Approbation of the Most Reverend Archbishop Edward Mooney, Bishop of Rochester.

MEMBER CATHOLIC PRESS ASSOCIATION SUBSCRIBER TO N.C.W.C. NEWS SERVICE

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MEMBER OF CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Subscription rates: 12 months in advance, postage prepaid, five cents. Foreign, \$3.00 per year. In advance subscribers prefer not to have their subscription interrupted in case they fail to remit before expiration. It is therefore assumed that continuance in receipt unless discontinuance is ordered either by letter or by return of the paper.

National Advertising Representative: Callahan, List of Catholic Newspapers (George J. Callahan), 61 Chambers Street, New York City

Entered as second-class matter in the Postoffice at Rochester, N. Y., on September 15, 1910, under Postoffice No. 2347.

Published by CATHOLIC COURIER and JOURNAL, Inc. 50 Chestnut St., Rochester, N. Y. Courier Established 1929—Journal Established 1889

Editorials

"TOBACCO ROAD"

"Tobacco Road" has come and gone. Here's what the dramatic critics of the Rochester daily newspapers had to say about it.

"Squeamish people who demand their theatre in the Pollyanna mode will save themselves unpleasant moments and a dark brown after-taste by staying home from 'Tobacco Road,'" said one local dramatic critic.

"If the stage ought to present actual human life in its various phases, from the sublime to the depths—and we believe it must—then 'Tobacco Road' has a rightful place on it... There is dirt in 'Tobacco Road,' but it belongs... The play undoubtedly puts too much stress on the degenerate traits of its people. This is, to a degree, reprehensible showmanship. And it is decidedly profane, though this is in keeping," writes the Democrat and Chronicle art critic.

"Indeed, it is in the very fact that the appalling conditions dealt with in the play are understood to be true that there lies the excuse for the production of 'Tobacco Road,'" states a third critic.

"If this play were written to exploit the sensuality and the immorality of the Lester family, and if that were its obvious purpose, and if the action and conversation of the play were directed to that end it would be immoral and society would have the right not only to censor it but to forbid its public production," comments Rochester Rabbi.

The above four comments sufficiently sum up local newspaper criticism of the play "Tobacco Road."

Each criticism, at least by implication, indicates the indecency and profanity of the play as a whole. There is no attempt to hide it or gloss over it. At the same time, each critic takes considerable pains to justify an economic, sociological and dramatic grounds the grossly blatant "sexiness" of the play.

If a play is such that its press notices need to be touched up with "nice" adjectives, that columns of publicity space are needed to justify its existence, that its indecent and immoral scenes need to be excused on some grounds or other, then that play is not a fit vehicle for decent-minded people to witness.

Tobacco Road is supposed to be a grim tragedy, stark and terrible in its reality. The producers tell us that there is nothing funny about Tobacco Road; it is a grim, savage commentary on life in the back country of the South.

As a matter of fact, the play was not accepted as such, at least in Rochester. The hilarity of the audience stamped it as a farce rather than a tragedy. The rapid succession of sexy wisecracks and its immoral atmosphere makes the play what it actually is, a dirty, foul production. No rheumatic excuse can justify its existence. No asthmatic reason hauled in by the coat-tails can justify its obscenity. Moreover, the Governor of the scene of the play protests that it is not true to facts and that it libels the people it pretends to portray.

A play may not be written to exploit sensuality and immorality. But if it actually does exploit sensuality and immorality, it is a dirty play. There simply isn't any comeback to that. Either a play is dirty or it isn't dirty. If it is dirty, no excuse can justify it.

We agree that the "stage ought to present actual human life in its various phases, from the sublime to the depths"—to a certain extent. The adult treatment of adult problems to be presented to adults is one thing. Deliberately to pander to the sexiest element in a community by making a vulgar, dirty, obscene as possible, is another thing. And to mention another point: the realistic portrayal of the depths of human life differs radically from a photographic reproduction.

It is quite possible to present a "grim, unflinching commentary on life in the back country of the South" without making the theme a perversion, without dragging in every line of the play, and without a constant repetition of vulgar, vulgar and obscene.

To say that it is not possible to present a "grim, unflinching commentary on the artistic dramatists" is to say that it is not possible to present a "grim, unflinching commentary on the artistic dramatists."

Science, real scientists, are deserving of the highest praise. Their lives are on the whole lives of sacrifice. They willingly consecrate themselves on the altar of truth, and, in the final analysis, God is Truth itself.

it, no matter what kind of glasses you wear, it is still dirt. Sensible people shy away from physical dirt. It breeds physical disease. Sensible people, too, shy away from moral dirt. They realize that it breeds moral disease. As no human being ever develops physically to the point where he is immune to all physical disease, so also with regard to moral disease. You may wrap up poison in pink cellophane, but it is still poison. You may dress immorality up in satines and silver slippers, but it is still immorality. You may excuse obscenity on economic, sociological or artistic grounds, but it doesn't affect the nature of the thing.

There is no room on the stage or screen for the gutter-variety of filth. The public does not want it. Even if they did want it, it would not be a valid reason to give it to them.

When the "intellectuals" of the stage and screen come to the point where it is no longer possible to produce anything but immorality and obscenity, the time is ripe to introduce them to the clean, decent, noble-minded element of the country. The majority of the people in the country do not live in the gutter, physically, mentally or morally. They do not care to see the gutter portrayed on the stage and screen. They have no objection to the portrayal of crime, love or life if it is respectably treated. And it can be respectably treated. A glance at the outstanding screen successes of the past year proves this point beyond controversy.

The CATHOLIC COURIER is not in favor of a federal bureaucratic censorship of the stage and screen. It disclaims any confidence in such a board of censors. But it decidedly does favor the censorship of an enlightened public opinion. Tobacco Road is a play that should have been closed after the first ten minutes of the first act.

POLITICAL CAMOUFLAGE

A recent Associated Press dispatch informed the citizens of the United States that the National Revolutionary Mexican government has decided to permit the reopening of many hundreds of Roman Catholic churches.

The dispatch added: "Thus Mexico's Roman Catholics—who number 16,000,000 of Mexico's 18,000,000 inhabitants—will be able to practice their religion again."

President Lazaro Cardenas' grandiloquent gesture in ordering the reopening of Catholic churches is deserving of a politician's "gold medal," if there is such a thing.

The Churches are open, wide open. But priests may not officiate in them. Mexicans may enter the Churches to stare at the paintings of Diego Rivera which have been substituted for the Stations of the Cross. They may sit quietly down in a pew and read the Mexican bible, officially known as Karl Marx's handbook. But they will look in vain for a priest, for the Real Presence, for an altar, for the ordinary, birthmark of an ecclesiastical structure.

The Churches have been reopened to the public, but since the Churches, at least a great many of them, are now socio-economic meeting halls, they would be far better off closed.

As a neat bit of political camouflage this latest move of the National Revolutionary Party ranks high.

THE MEDDLERS

The first few months of this year have seen their full quota of pseudo-scientific propagandists out to pick a fight with organized religion. They are the gentry who insist on scratching in religion's backyard, seeking to uncover bones that will conclusively prove that science and revelation are irreconcilable.

They have been told that ninety-five percent of their "scientific facts" and theories are of no concern to religion. Science can keep it on its own horse to suit itself. If science wants to drop its ashes on the parlor rug, or put its feet on the new coffee table, it is science's affair. Religion does not care one way or another. Nor does religion get all wrought up and wring its hands when science advertises as factual that which is mere theory. Religion knows that science itself will soon realize that the "fact" isn't a scientific fact at all or, for that matter, any old kind of a fact.

The one thing religion does object to, and objects very strenuously, is when science swaggers into a religious house and begins to trample with the way it is kept.

The business of science is to observe phenomena and to express the constant sequence of phenomena in the form of laws. The business of religion is to take care of man's soul. Religion has neither the intention nor the desire to enter science's domain. At the same time it asks science to stay in its own yard and not meddle in something it knows nothing about.

Religion isn't jealous of science's achievements. It is greatly pleased with its discoveries. Scientific discoveries add to man's knowledge of the truth. And religion knows that the way of truth is the way to God.

In a certain sense it is amusing, yet at the same time exasperating to hear pseudo-scientists state dogmatically that science and revelation have been divorced in such wise that there can be no possible reconciliation.

These camp-followers of science know nothing at all about religion and very little about science. By far the greater number of genuine scientists have been firm believers in revelation. The two Bacons, Copernicus, Kepler, Kircher, Newton, Harvey; Ampere; Volta, Mendel, Lord Kelvin, Descartes, Clarke-Maxwell, Faraday, Pasteur—but a few who occur to the mind at once.

Science, real scientists, are deserving of the highest praise. Their lives are on the whole lives of sacrifice. They willingly consecrate themselves on the altar of truth, and, in the final analysis, God is Truth itself.

Current Comment

When we read about profits, passions and ambitions, about the expanding universe, about Man Planck's quantum theory about endocrine glands and ductless mechanisms, and the thousand and one things we are willing to concede that we are ignorant of.

It is quite all right for the average man to say that the ignorance of the average man is pitiful. We all recognize the fact. It is just that we don't like to have others try to impress it on us.

Yet, we still maintain, and rightfully so, that there are a few things we do know and a few we are capable of knowing.

One of the things of which we are ignorant people draw the line is this: We don't want anyone, anyone at all, to try to impress on us the patently absurd error that the "God we worship is an impersonal being" or that "matter is not intelligent."

Francis Lyster Jordon, C.S.B. member of the board of education of the Mother Church First Church of the Most Holy Spirit, speaking last week at the Masonic Temple auditorium, stated and attempted to prove that "God can not be a personal Being."

A short time ago, Miss Margaret Morrison of Chicago, also a member of the board of education, introduced to her Rochester audience the quixotic idea that matter is mental ignorance.

It may be due to our ignorance that we adhere firmly to the fact that God is a personal Being. Humbly to worship a "force" or a "power," or some other impersonal onanism is just a little bit too suggestive of a Hindu who has failed to find favor in our eyes.

Either God is or He isn't. If He is He is a personal Being. If He isn't any God. The notion that God is a "force" or a "power" is a thoroughly ignominious one.

Those of us who are capable of recognizing why and how we are in the discomfort caused by a spirit injury, know full well that matter is not mental ignorance. It is a mental ignorance that makes us while every now and again. It is the good old material leg of iron that is the center of our being against the inclemency of the weather or repating us for a bit of over-exercise in which we foolishly indulged.

To care for the properties of a spiritual being is imprudent. When we put on our left shoe in the morning, we know we are not putting it on a "spirit," but a very material left foot. Trying to force our feet into the bedroom wall we quickly realize that neither the foot nor the wall are spiritual substances. The reason for our failure is that both are very material.

Ignorance we have, but it is not a lack of knowledge. It is a lack of reality. It is not a lack of ability to know, but a lack of desire to know.

When matter is ignorant as to deny the existence of matter. Matter then becomes the lack of something or other.

To us we ignorant people to say: "My arm, my leg, my head, my eyes are matter, but they aren't a lack of anything. They are matter, and they are real."

Science says that they are pure spirits, as absurd as pure spirits can not be seen or felt. If matter is mental ignorance, it follows that nothing exists. The scientist in the laboratory really isn't there at all, he is merely a mental construct of the laboratory. The scientist is experimenting with his own mind, not with the matter he is studying.

We ignorant people can never hope to rise to the heights of a denial of the existence of matter. We must be content with our own senses and minds as they are. At the same time we feel that we have the better part of the bargain. We face facts, we know them. In this way we keep sane and out of balance which enables us to map out our lives in the very very material world in which we live.

Views of Others

OLD-FASHIONED The Catholic Church is the fittest family with every variety of human thought and combat. She has heard and repeated long ago all the sophistries and all the monotonous reasoning and all the assumptions of materialism.

Christ her founder. She has seen all sorts of open and secret rebellion against the moral law. She has heard every possible proposal of substitutes for religion has listened bravely to every possible misanthropic denunciation of her.

Christ her founder. She has seen hundreds of attempts to fail or to invent a code of moral law or a philosophy of life, which she had like the place of hers. She has seen hundreds of men and women, some dishonest, set up religions which, each in its own way, were thought by numbers of persons, certain to displace the religion she preached and taught.

The Church has a long memory, an experience as old as humanity, and long thoughts. For these reasons, she is not and old-fashioned by every intellectual greenhorn who can write a book, and make it sell, without being able to put into it more than the very faint and spume of intellectual accomplishment. (Brooklyn Tablet)

STRANGE BUT TRUE Catholic Facts But Little Known

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Illustrations and text for 'The Fontana di Trevi' and 'Hospital Coaches'. The Fontana di Trevi is described as the largest and most celebrated of the fountains of Rome, erected by Pope Clement XIII in 1735. Hospital Coaches are described as having been used by the French Railways to carry sick pilgrims to Lourdes. The Modernist style of Architecture is described as being incorporated in the newly-built Catholic Church at Amblec, on the island of Anglesey off Wales.

THE LIBRARY SIGN POST

WOMEN LETTER TO MR. GEORGE L. DAVID... The Catholic Church is the fittest family with every variety of human thought and combat. She has heard and repeated long ago all the sophistries and all the monotonous reasoning and all the assumptions of materialism.

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The Diocesan Library... The Diocesan Library is a new and original project. It is a contribution to the Diocesan Press that reports the activities and no extra financial outlay of the new Diocesan Library.

Spiritual Thoughts

Work is a blessing in the life of the Christian. It is a way of expressing our love for God and our neighbor. It is a way of serving God and our neighbor.

QUESTION BOX

Q-What is meant by a "missing link" between man and the animal? A-Generally speaking, the missing link is a hypothetical creature that is supposed to be a link between the human and the animal. It is a creature that is supposed to have the characteristics of both man and the animal.