

LOUD LIES

If our generation were to fashion for itself a coat-of-arms, it would be appropriate to weave a huge question mark into it as the central motive. Ours is a confused and bewildered generation. We are not so sure of our charts - nor the accuracy of our compass - as was a past generation. Losing sight of great objective standards it is hard to get our bearings!

On a clear night a man - temporarily lost - who knows even a little about the stars, can spot the North Star. From it he can direct his steps in the way he should go. But for our generation the night is not so clear. Ground fog blocks our vision and we have lost contact with the North Star of the spirit.

Living in such a day, the prayer of the man who wrote the 35th Psalm is pertinent to our need. In the 17th verse of this psalm we find this petition: "Save me from their LOUD LIES, O Thou Eternal." The translation is Dr. Moffatt's. Its value lies in the fact that the wording is more specific than that which we find in the authorized King James Version, where the Psalmist says: Rescue my soul from their destruction, O Lord." That is too general. What was it that was destroying the soul of the Psalmist? Specifically, it was UNTRUTH - untruth, loudly and lustily proclaimed. "Save me from their LOUD LIES, O Thou Eternal."

What were these loud lies? We are not told in detail. The Psalmist however does tell us "malicious" accusers come forward, charging me with crimes I know naught of." His accusers had repaid his good with evil, rendering him "all forlorn". The Psalmist had even prayed for his accusers, but they had not prayed for him. Instead, they had assaulted him "with cruel, cutting charges, of which I knew nothing; railing at me unceasingly, reviling, mocking me, gnashing at me with their teeth." He likens his accusers to beasts and ends by saying, "Save my unhappy life from human lions." He was deeply wounded, in his soul, by untruth. "Save me - from LOUD LIES!"

Rather than trying to reconstruct in our imagination those trumped up "crimes" and those cutting, but false, "charges", it is enough to note that here was a man whose very soul was in danger of destruction because of the atmosphere of falsehood that engulfed him.

A minister can not listen to the stories that unfold in pastoral conferences without recalling the number of people he knows who have been torn and twisted, bruised and battered by lies. Some of these lies have been lustily proclaimed; some were whispered maliciously and were accompanied by the raising of eyebrows!

Great public servants whose high motives have been misinterpreted and whose private lives have been falsely attacked, can certainly feel a kinship with the Psalmist. Last Wednesday our nation celebrated Lincoln's Birthday. No national leader in our entire history is paid the homage that we give to Lincoln today. But when he

lived the story was very different. No President was ever attacked, reviled and lampooned as was Lincoln. This prayer of the Psalmist's must have risen frequently to the lips of that lonely, misunderstood figure in the White House during the dark days of the Civil War.

More recently - in a dramatic hearing that cast a spell of solemnity over the joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy - a man spoke up and gave his "credo" in words that will take their place among the great speeches of our age. He had been accused by "loud lies"! On February 4th, in Washington, Mr. David Lilienthal faced the Committee which must confirm his appointment as Chairman of the Commission on Atomic Energy. For more than an hour a certain Senator - known for his animosity toward Lilienthal - badgered him relentlessly about Communism, about his long administration of the T.V.A., and the origin of his aged parents. When he was rebuked by the Senator for not carrying some miscellaneous TVA statistics in his head, he launched into an affirmation of his beliefs, saying, "This I do carry in my head, Senator. My convictions are not so much concerned with what I am against, as what I am for; and that excludes a lot of things automatically. Traditionally, Democracy has been an affirmative doctrine rather than merely a negative one." He then went on to say, "I believe, and I do so conceive the Constitution of the United States to rest upon - as does religion - the fundamental proposition of the INTEGRITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL; and that all Government and all private institutions must be designed to PROMOTE and DEFEND the integrity and the dignity of the individual; that that is the essential meaning of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, as it is essentially the meaning of religion."

He further stated that he deeply opposed any form of government that exalts the State above the importance of men, and which places arbitrary power over men. He placed Communism and the Russian Government in this category which he condemned. He was ready to sacrifice the high office to which the President had appointed him, if by so doing he could preserve the American ideal against irresponsible charges of witch-hunters! "The belief that the individual comes first, that all men are children of God and their personalities are therefore sacred, carries with it," he said, "a great belief in civil liberties and their protection, and a repugnance to any one who would steal from a human being that which is most precious to him - his good name."

Loud lies had been bandied about by the Senator, and when the truth was spoken, the feeling of all good citizens was expressed by the then Senator McMahon of Connecticut, who broke the hush with these words: "I want to congratulate you on that statement, and in my opinion you are a very real American."

Untruth is nothing new. But in our age a prayer for deliverance from it is more pertinent than when the Psalmist lived. In the Psalmist's day, the worst thing a man could do with an untruth was to shout it at the top of his lungs. It would reach the ears of all who could hear him. There were limits to the distance of human speech in those days. Now, all that has changed. A man can stand before a microphone, utter a lie, and his voice is carried literally around the world! In the days when all newspapers were local affairs, an editorial that con-

tained a false idea did relatively little damage. All that has changed. Today a writer can utter a lie in a syndicated article and hundreds of chain newspapers will bring that lie to tens of thousands of breakfast tables. The average weekly attendance at motion picture shows soars high up into the millions. Let some picture give a totally false view of life, showing indecent clothed as smartness; infidelity as the expected; and intemperance as the usual - and you are not harming a few hundred young people; instead, millions of young people will go out from thousands of theatres with scenes of "LOUD LIES" playing upon their imagination, and stirring their emotions.

High pressure modern advertising covers the entire nation. It is an entirely different story than the "handbill" posted on the Town bulletin board in a past era. Probably the loudest lies today are the liquor advertisements - so cleverly worded, so subtle in their appeal. The "big seven" distillery corporations in our country spend 33 million a year in advertising their wares! A statement recently released from the Federal Council of Churches deplored "the effect which the advertising of alcoholic beverages is destined to have, especially upon the MIND OF YOUTH, through its unwarranted and false claims in which it aims to invest the use of alcohol with prestige and desirability." You know the line adopted - "Drink and be a man of distinction"; "drink and enjoy gracious living." These firms would never dare tell the entire result of using their products. They make a plea for "moderation" - but they know that thousands can not exercise moderation in the use of their stuff. The sot in the gutter - the chronic alcoholic with his business and his home slipping away from him - the adult with sexual inhibitions released by alcohol - the irresponsibility of the tipsy driver - all this would strike a sour note in the symphony of praise for liquor as the lightener of our sorrow; the brightener of our joy; and the token and indispensable ingredient of "gracious living". You won't find liquor ads. in the newspapers of the Frank Gannett chain; none in LOOK magazine; none in the Curtis publications which give us the SATURDAY EVENING POST, THE LADIES HOME JOURNAL and the COUNTRY GENTLEMAN. In this respect they are to be congratulated, for they save their readers from "LOUD LIES".

Today, lies travel further and swifter than ever before, touching more people and using every subtle device known to modern psychology. There are other lies, however, less obvious but even more dangerous because they filter down into the depths of our consciousness and affect our attitude toward the things of the spirit. If we are not saved from these lies, faith falters; social vision fades; the sources of inner renewal dry up and become as barren wells. Let us look at two of these lies:

1. It is a lie to think that the individual counts for little and can contribute even less to the solution of our complicated social problems.

Multitudes of people today are overcome by a sense of personal futility. They haul up the white flag of surrender, saying, "It is too much for us!" This feeling of worthlessness is expressed in comments like "Well, what can I do about it? I can't make my vote count; can't make my voice heard; can't register my protest - so why try? You can't make headway against strong tides and stiff winds!"

That's a lie - a stupid, dangerous lie! Every social problem is basically a personal problem before it becomes entwined in society. In the long run everything good and bad in the world depends on the QUALITY OF INDIVIDUALS. You can't erect a cathedral out of loose sandstone, and you can't erect a decent social order - or international order - out of INDECENT people. Dr. A. E. Wiggam, writing on social questions, said: "If hope and courage go out of the lives of common men, it is ALL UP with social and political civilization." To stress the importance of the individual is no "pep talk" to bolster our morale. It is a basic fact. Every individual is more than an individual. He is an individual plus the attitudes he expresses towards others and the ideas he stands for.

Make a list of every conceivable problem our post-war generation faces - juvenile delinquency - the breakdown of family life - racial tension - the social results of drink - economic conflict - social and religious prejudice - international tensions. Enlarge this list a hundred-fold if you will. Look at these problems, then look at yourself, your attitudes, the ideas you stand for. When you are honest you must accept this fact: Right now, today, every person in this church, every member of our radio congregation finds himself in one of two places. By what he is - what he stands for - he is either a part of the solution to these problems- OR, he still remains a part of the general problem, aggravating and accentuating it!

Juvenile delinquency will never be solved until some adults cease being contributing factors to it and move over to become a part of the answer. You are either a part of the answer to the drink problem, or a part of the problem! So it is with racial discrimination, or with social prejudices that would tear apart the fabric of our society. World problems get back to individuals. The excellent editorial in the Thursday edition of the PORTLAND PRESS HERALD - written by a member of this church - points out that with the nations ready to go to work on Atomic Control, some of our senators are willing to throw over the whole commission, as they side with a Democratic reactionary against our President's appointment of the Chairman. By their own admission our two Senators have joined in the outcry. Men still "play politics" - when atom bombs and their use are at stake!

The individual counts; in the long run he counts most. What we are and what we stand for IS ALL-IMPORTANT. Dr. Fosdick, with his ability to put the matter succinctly, says: "A slender wire can carry a strong current; a small window can let in a lot of light; and an ORDINARY MAN can stand for ideas on which THE WORLD'S SALVATION DEPENDS."

II. It is a lie that what I believe and what I do is my own private business.

This lie has spread far and wide within our society, because we have lost sight of objective standards. The ground fog has blocked our vision of the North Star of the spirit. We have gone off on an intellectual debauch of rank and stupid individualism! Jabbering about every man doing as he pleases, as long as it strikes his individual fancy, our age presents a sorry spectacle that borders on social anarchy! We talk about OUR PRIVILEGES, and remain silent about OUR DUTIES. We clutch at our PRIVATE GAINS and let go of our SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

We have lost sight of the fact that the MORAL LAW is something objectively and eternally here in this world. Great standards of RIGHT and WRONG have broken down until many assume that no longer are some things everlastingly right and other things forever wrong. Morality has become a matter of as-you-like-it; an affair of getting your pleasure where-and-when you want it; an assumption of what you can get away with without being caught!

What you believe and what you do is MOST CERTAINLY NOT your own private business. It is also partly your family's business - your city's business - and the business of your nation and the world! Assume, for example, that you thought the whole idea of gravitation was a silly notion. You would have nothing to do with it, hence you decide as a builder to erect an elevator shaft without any downward checks. The law would see to it that your ideas of gravitation did not remain your private business. You didn't fashion the pull of gravity. It was here long before the doctor announced your birth! So, in a world where GOD RULES, there are other facts which ante-date your birth. What we do is not our own business; what we do MUST conform to the MORAL LAW that has been given us by the MORAL NATURE OF THE CREATOR!

God's business has been revealed in Christ, who desires ABUNDANT LIFE for all. When we do anything which thwarts and prevents abundant living for others, we are blocking God's business. Get this fact straight: Because God is God - and not man - His business will eventually triumph. He is no God of unfinished business. He will keep everlastingly at it - prodding, warning, punishing men if need be - until they seek the TRUTH and experience deliverance from the snare of LOUD LIES!

Lev. 19: 1-2 and 11-18
I Cor. 12; 12-31

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