

University of Notre Dame

Religious Bulletin

March 20, 1931

"And the Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail Against It."

The Scripps-Howard interests are the latest to join in the hue and cry against the Catholic Church. Perhaps they do not realize it; perhaps they feel that their word of protest is needed to save civilization from the tyranny of the Great Despot on the banks of the Tiber. But whatever the motive, Catholics would do well to bear in mind that the Scripps-Howard papers have offended grievously on two occasions this year. In the Indianapolis Times of January 15 we find a syndicated editorial, "The Pope as Sociologist," directed against the Encyclical on Marriage; the March 2 issue of the same paper carries another, entitled, "Page Diogenes," on Catholic intolerance of error. Both editorials are offensive.

It matters not that in the first editorial the objections to traditional Catholic morals are put into the mouth of modern "science," as represented by Dr. Ogburn (who did the Barnes publicity clowning for the American Association for the Advancement of Science at the recent Cleveland meeting). The thirteen-year-old-minded reader of the Scripps-Howard newspaper will gather the impression that the Pope is out-moded, seizing upon the statement that the "exponents of modern knowledge and experience would..... question the easy assurance with which the Pope assumes to know and interpret divine judgments on marriage or any other question." And there would be more front-page material for the Scripps-Howard papers were the reader to act upon the following statement: "As sin literally is very wilful disobedience of the expressed commands of God, the modern social philosophers would hold logically that the whole conception of sin is ruled out of the picture of modern thought. If one can not know God's will, he can not well know what is sin. One knowingly may commit criminal acts, defined by man, but hardly sinful ones known only to God."

In substance the editorial contrasts Catholic teaching and modern paganism in the field of marriage; the one is made to appear the arbitrary dictum of self-constituted spiritual authority, the other, the reasonable conclusion from man's "trial-and-error methods of conquering the problems of physical existence and social life." It doges the real issue, which is the basis of the Holy Father's authority to speak the mind of God. True historical science establishes with moral certitude the fact of revelation and the commission which the Son of God gave to the Church which He established on earth to save souls. Pseudo-science (not true science at all) ignores those claims and would make white mice of men and women in a world-wide laboratory of loose morals. History doesn't count - either in establishing the truth of the divine commission to the Church, or in proving that degeneration and the collapse of civilization will follow from the proposed immoralities -- as they have in the past from similar situations.

The second editorial, "Page Diogenes," is more offensive than the first, and displays greater ignorance. The implication in the title is that the Catholic Church has at last produced one honest man. Dr. Sheen, in a sermon in St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York, stated the fundamental truth that the Catholic Church is always and of necessity intolerant of error. The editor displays his ignorance by greeting it as something new, and his offensiveness by calling Diogenes to witness. May the possessor of the truth ever be tolerant of error. He may be kind to those in error, but he must never compromise truth by granting error a right to existence. The editor offends further by damning apologists "who seek to give the impression that the Catholic Church has been the great sponsor and custodian of secular learning, that it has always fought the battles of sound scientific research..." Were the editor to read Dr. Walsh, instead of condemning him unheard, he would learn much that he needs to know before he essays to instruct the hoi polloi in the ways of religion and science. Catholics meanwhile may rest assured in the words of Christ: "The gates of hell shall not prevail."

PRAYERS: Deceased relatives of Bro. Camillus, Jerry Andrea, and Bart Lies; a deceased friend; three special intentions.