

University of Notre Dame  
Religious Bulletin  
February 13, 1932.

-----  
The Paganizing Public Press.

We are indebted to The Pittsburgh Catholic for the full text of an excellent address delivered recently before the Catholic Forum of Pittsburgh, by Jerome B. Keller, on "Catholics and the Press." We regret that lack of space prevents us from reprinting the address in full; we are glad to be able to give you a few salient paragraphs.

After contrasting Catholic culture and secular culture, and showing that they are by their nature irreconcilable - no matter how much good will there may be between the proponents of both - he goes on to show how the secular press is the mirror of this worldly culture which menaces Catholicism and Catholic institutions. He says:

"The modern journal of repute strives always to reflect what it conceives to be the best in popular thought - in popular thought, mark you. And precisely because current popular thought has its roots in a culture which is the offspring of an illicit union between education divorced from religion, on the one hand, and humanism begotten of materialistic self-love on the other, the Catholic reader must, perforce, take his daily news in a pagan melange, news more or less highly seasoned with anti-Catholic philosophy.

"Now, is this circumstance a matter for our concern? I think it is. We may as well recognize the fact at once that all too many of our correlative Catholics are prone to content themselves with the daily paper as the sum total of their literary endeavors. This is deplorable, certainly; but, while one fervently longs for the day when every Catholic home, however humble, will be the regular recipient of its diocesan newspaper, one may not blink the fact that only a small fraction of our Catholic population now avails itself of these untainted news purveyors. And when we compare the poisoning influence of the secular news sheet, exerted daily, with the mere weekly-applied antidote of attendance at Mass where a corrective sermon may or may not be heard, we more clearly sense the immediate need for remedial action in the matter.

"Here it is understood, of course, that the too common practice of educating children in secular schools - albeit, a frequently unavoidable one - is a fruitful source of dereliction. But who will deny that the daily grist of news events served in the pagan style - of wit and humor more than tinged with irreverence, even blasphemy - of meretricious articles tricked out in plausible garb and labeled 'serious' - of cheap serial fiction which inferentially extols both materialism and atheism - who will deny that, in the absence of antidotes in kind, these are among the chief causes of loss of faith on the part of Catholics?"

The point is well made. We see it every day - even here, in a Catholic university, where every source of correct information is available, students take the word of the secular press on every point on which they have not already a bulwark of contrary information. Some students do not, of course; some - most - but still too few - are gifted with that Catholic instinct which detects error intuitively and goes at once to true sources to justify the intuition. The others let the error sink in, and unless something later jars them loose from it, they go out of here half-pagan Catholics.

Following Pope Pius XI's encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, Mr. Keller appeals to lay apostles to correct wrong attitudes of the press on questions of faith and morals. Catholic college men should be foremost in this work, since theirs is the most favorable training for this work. If they feel that it is useless to try to convert non-Catholics through the vox populi of the daily press, at least they can stop some of the leakage of Catholics who lose their faith insensibly by infiltration with agnostic culture in newspapers.