

The Assistant Pastor

June, 1931

Can We Cope With Evil by Being Partners With It?

BY N. TJERNAGEL

Said sixteen-year-old Margie: "Oh, boy! I have just seen the thrillingest play. 'The villain that pursued her' got his just deserts all right, all right." "Not so bad," said Uncle Jonathan; "but tell me, girlie, what did you see all along before the finals came?" "Oh, I saw them do lots of exciting things — I am almost ashamed to tell you; and I can never forget it," said girlie.

1. THE MOVIE PLAY. Yes, there you have the crux of the matter, the exhibition so realistically pictured, with all its questionable detail, remained indelibly impressed on her mind. The producer had with unctuous mein arranged that his audience wallow through a goodly stretch of mire to witness how an unfortunate victim of worldly lust dragged herself to safety at the last moment. And the devil chuckled. He knew what most of those poor dupes who had been in attendance would soon dream about. And he also knew, as did his henchman, the money-getter, that, if these poor creatures' appetites were once roused to lust for such offerings, they would crave more and more — and still more.

It is greatly to be feared that one does not induce people to flee from seductive evils by vividly portraying them and then moralizing about the dangers of indulgence therein, as some think. This is the movie plan, tried and found wanting. It satisfies the yearnings of the flesh, leaves a dancing spectacle of worldly glamor before the eyes, and dulls the keenness of spiritual perception of what good is introduced. And, alas! it serves to bring that which is desired: crowds and gold. Uplifting films with a good beginning, happy continuance, and noble ending usually beg for audiences. Why? Largely because that which is warned against in Rom. 13, 14 is wanting. Should not we, as Christians, therefore discourage the former and encourage the latter? Good productions assuredly have their place.

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The Assistant Pastor

Published and edited by the pastor of the Jerico and Saude Lutheran churches affiliated with the Norwegian Synod of the Synodical Conference.

Church Directory

H. M. Tjernagel, Pastor

SAUDE

Trustees: Iver Ellingson, H. Larson, Theo. Vaala.
Treasurer: A. G. Vaala.
Secretary: John Natvig.
Ladies' Aid: Mrs. Iver Natvig, president; Mrs. Carl Miller, secretary; Mrs. Henry Borlaug, treasurer.
Cemetery Committee: Martin Borlaug, Muns Munson, Chris. Treider, Miss J. Ellingson, Mrs. C. O. Natvig.

JERICO

Trustees: Alvie O. Knutson, O. Firkenstad, Carl O. Knutson.
Treasurer: J. A. Robinson.
Secretary: Alfred N. Anderson.
Ladies' Aid: Mrs. J. A. Knutson, president; Mrs. C. O. Knutson, secretary; Mrs. A. N. Anderson, treasurer.

Standing Services

JERICO

First Sunday, Norwegian, 10:45 a. m.
Third Sunday, English, 10:45 a. m.
Saturday School every Saturday, 9:30 a. m.
Confirmation class, 2 p. m. Fridays.

SAUDE

Second Sunday, Norwegian, 10:45 a. m.
Fourth Sunday, English, 10:45 a. m.
Saturday School, 2 p. m.
Confirmation class, 9:30 a. m. Fridays.
Fifth Sunday by special announcement.

CLARA JOANNA, a daughter of Oscar Nystel and wife Ella, born April second, was baptized April thirtieth. Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Basteson, E. E. Nystel and Karen Christenson were the sponsors.

Aden J. Andersen, Harvey R. Roberson, Alice M. Johnson, Velma M. Mettner, and Edith N. Anderson were confirmed in the Jerico church on Sunday, May 17. A large number were in attendance at the services. In the evening of the same day unusually many communed. It was a big day. Surely someone, we hope many, were knit more closely and more firmly to their Savior. May the day always stand out as a blessed day to the confirmed.

May we be permitted to remind the subscribers to the Bethany College debt fund to pay their 1931 installment if they can. Saude pays to G. G. Vaala, Jerico to L. S. Roberson. Though the understanding is that the yearly payment should be made in April, I admit I have not paid mine yet, but hope to be able to do so very soon.

The Assistant Pastor will be given a vacation without pay during July and August, so do not look for him to make his monthly rounds until September.

The Saude Cemetery Committee has been kind enough to furnish the parsonage grounds with twenty-six flowering and pretty foliage shrubs. They are all starting nicely. Drop in and see how attractive and beautiful the place is going to be some day. Every one who says: "That's fine!" will get a cup of coffee and two doughnuts.

And now the annual Convention of our Synod is soon on, June 18-24. Let everyone realize that the work of the Synod is of importance to the work of the individual congregations composing it. A hermit can, it is true, exist, but who will say that he is living a natural and useful life? Neither can a congregation stand alone and thrive and be as useful as it should be. The very earliest New Testament congregations were united in a way similar to Synods of the present day. You who are at home remember the Convention in your prayers. And don't forget to urge your delegates to attend the entire meeting and to take active part in the proceedings.

We hope, too, that many will plan to spend Sunday the 21st with the convention at its services, and, incidentally, see our College grounds and buildings.

(Continued from front page)

2. CRIME NEWS. A gangling youngster sidles up to his father and chortles forth: "Say, Pa, listen here quick! This guy that I am readin' about killed an old woman and got away with her wad all right. Ain't he the slick one though to put over them bloomin' cops the way he did? Wish I had a gun; I'd fix him." He continues, "Here's another story about a booze-hound and an actress and two crooks. Wish I could have seen them actin' up." The father speaks: "Here, kid, let me read that. What you wastin' your time for porin' over such stuff? Go, get your books and do some studyin'." Pa settles himself comfortably in his easy-chair and reads and reads. After awhile he looks around and says, "Ma, you there?" Says ma: "Yes, Pa, I be," and with her attention fixed, pa goes on to tell in detail about the latest underworld horrors. Meanwhile the hopeful in the chimney-corner has his weather eye out for news. Pa continues: "It do beat all, Samantha, how them newspapers crave to publish all this rotten stuff, though interestin'." Ma assents. Pa now speaks up sternly and says: "Sonny, listen! Don't let me catch you readin' it no more." Says ma: "Why don't you leave off readin' it yourself, Ephraim?"

Aye, there's the rub. Many do not fancy denying *themselves* that which they recognize as detrimental to others. They take their refuge in preaching, but do not live up to their own precepts. Perhaps they mean to discourage wrong, but their method is surely at fault. Why expect your child to respect Daddy Ephraim, that hypocrite? Nor does he; and it is fairly safe to predict that he will go his sire one better when his hour comes.

3. JAZZ. "Cut out that jazz!" screams the mother after she has allowed her daughter to take egg-money and make a selection of new phonograph records. Why didn't she superintend that particular purchase herself? Her admonition, when it came, was misplaced as to time and opportunity to obtain the best results. It's the fool who tries out that which is known to be objectionable, missing meantime the opportunity to enjoy that which is recognized as good. The temptation to indulge in such untoward experiments should be fought. Those who realize this and are in authority should never overlook their individual share of responsibility and the duty devolving upon them.

4. **THE MAGAZINE.** A magazine sponsoring material and spiritual uplift frequently presents samples of striking pictures of bathing beauties, prize-fighters, beauty contestants, companionate-marriage couples, palmistry wizards, booze fiends, and such, with flaring captions and portrayals, overlooking meanwhile the inborn trait in human nature which inclines to gloat over such disclosures and yawn at the pious "Go-not-thou-and-do-like-wise" preachments that follow. It is, of course, necessary to give constant counsel against that which is wrong, but it is unwise to subject people to the lure of it, ostensibly to know good from evil, which, however, in the final analysis may easily tend to fashion its example *à la* Eve. One of the most prominent of our churchmen found, in his capacity of editor, a few years ago, that to make arresting portrayals of this or that evil, though warning strongly against such wrongs, drew much prurient curiosity, but failed to exert the desired effect. To draw pictures of unholy details of vice should be left out, without, however, discontinuing the use of proper testimony.

The newspapers often have a preaching column warning against sin and corruption, but contain also double-deck pages of news and pictures, including portrayals a plenty of the underworld. How many read the first, and who doesn't gobble the last? Those who happen to know may answer. Let each make his own deductions. It surely seems unwise for serious periodicals to make use of related methods.

It is well to keep the dirt out of our eyes as long as we can. There is more than enough of what is bad that we are obliged to see and cope with in real life without whetting our natural inclination for evil by dragging it by the hair out of its nest to examine it. Are we so sure that we can withstand its influence when given such familiar handling?

5. **BOOKS.** The professors in a certain religious academy recommended to their pupils a well-known book by a well-known author, in which stark tragedy occurs, immorality, unrighteousness, that cries to heaven, with glimpses of noble sentiment interwoven here and there. All the characters are unworthy, and the heroine, buffeted by fate and circumstances, is made to utter some truths, yet by reason of her better knowledge becomes the guiltiest one of all. These ill-advised teachers evidently think that the modicum of chastity and goodness introduced into this vortex of impurity will by contrast outweigh the other in the mind of the reader, thus making such a book beneficial. It is to be feared that the devil, too, thinks the matter of advantage — for him.

By reading good books only, we become better fortified to cope with evil than if we partly curtail such reading so as to con the mass of questionable literature which ever and anon presents itself. No, we need not rub elbows with the devil to combat him; the farther we remain away from him and his works, the better we may outwit him.

6. **PLAYS.** And so with plays with a taint of sala-

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ciousness, coarse humor, and even blasphemy, which all too often slip into church-basement programs. Some say: We must not be so goody-goody as not to dare play a sort of innocent make-believe with Old Adam, so as to lay bare his tail and make people think. Is it so innocent, after all? Anyway, it is a risky pastime. Better not flirt with the loathsome thing. It may whip someone around the ankle and send an agreeable voltage through the system that will sear the soul unto death. Let us quell the pestiferous spark as soon as possible. Its influence in any form is inimical to good.

The only safe and reliable way to prevail against wrong is to inculcate the truth without ceasing, for there is no conceivable evil that divine truth does not forestall; and it imbues its true adherents with a sense of aloofness, a distaste for it, thus fortifying them against sinful influences in whatever form they present themselves. When the Lord has taken us by the hand, He will lead us safely past all pitfalls; and it follows that it is quite unnecessary for us to thrust our noses into the reeking depths of these pitfalls to explore them.

The sewer-rats of literature burrow in the underground haunts of men and raise vile fumes, which infest countless homes and levy a heavy tribute of time and dollars. These prolific rodents claim that to expose evil is to do good, even though short on a remedy; but they forget that the mere knowledge thereof is really no preventative, and hence their manner of work is useless, if not dangerous. The more that evil is thus elaborated upon, the more it spreads. If, on the other hand, they would sow truths of sound material and spiritual value in the infested areas, they would furnish an antidote with a cure.

The Lord sat with publicans in order to get in touch with them to offer testimony, but it does not appear that it accorded with His holy purpose and sublime insight to uncover tempting pictures of worldliness, opining by any such means to turn the thoughts of men to its opposite—Himself. No, the Lord's way is different. We learn from His teachings that the narrow path looks away from the world. Every rung on the heavenly ladder reaches toward Him. And so with the true missionary: whether he fishes for me in muddy waters or in turgid pools, be it publicans or others, he draws about him the impervious habit of righteousness and remains undefiled. He never borrows polluted tackle to land his catch. His hook is baited with truth, and only truth.

It is true that Scripture shows up evil in glaring terms and figures, but can it be said that the Bible pictures it in a glamorous, attractive form, as if thus to make the truth speak more vividly and effectively? No, the Word does not tickle the flesh to rouse attention to its passage. It speaks to us direct through the Holy Spirit. Nor does human reason avail us; for only through a God-given faith can we come to Christ, our Redeemer. By constant, prayerful study of the life-giving Word we shall know as faithful believers how to acquit ourselves in dealing with all sin and iniquity.—Reprinted from the organ of the Lutheran Laymen's League.

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