



⁴³ When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. ⁴⁴ Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. ⁴⁵ Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation. (Matt 12:43-45)

We have all, no doubt, heard the term, “An idle mind is the devil’s workshop.” That adage probably is a re-wording of a quote of St. Jerome: “*fac et aliquid operis, ut semper te diabolus inveniat occupatum.*” It is a proven fact, and not subject to question. One might argue, “But God gave us a day of rest (sabbath).” True, but there is a great difference in rest and idleness. Rest from our labors is a privilege granted by God to the laborer; but idleness is not rest. Idleness is doing nothing when we should be doing SOMETHING! Idle hands will not remain so for very long. They will find something to do which satisfies and unholy itch brought on by the corresponding idleness of the mind. A chest full of gold cannot be added to; but an empty chest can be easily filled with stones and rubble.

In the parable of Jesus, read in our introductory text from St. Matthew, we discover that we are totally incapable of cleaning and maintaining a clean soul. We may, by sheer will power, ride our souls of a bad habit – or cease doing some habitual sin – but, by and by, our souls being emptied of those one-among-many-other sins, a vacuum is formed in our hearts that must be filled. A vacuum always demands filling. So that old sin which we believed we had vanquished gathers seven of his buddies and returns to fill that vacuum which has f=grown desperate for satisfaction. *Ce la vie!* Such is the life of man without Christ. Man cannot clean his own soul – only the Holy Ghost can perform that miracle – and only the Holy Ghost can stand sentinel at the Gate of the Heart to protect from intrusion of devils and maintain the soul in a state of righteousness.

God, indeed, created man in His own image and likeness in Eden; but Satan came along and marred that image. He superficially stamped his own likeness on the soul of man which became infected with that incurable blood disease of sin. Though our spirits may be strong, the lure of the flesh is stronger and will always overcome the spirit unless that spirit is fortified, protected, and imbued with the power of the Holy Ghost!

One of my favorite old Russian writers has said: “*If the devil does not exist, and man has therefore created him, he has created him in his own image and likeness.*” ~ Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Of course, the opposite case is true. The devil has made us to become like himself by appealing to our lusts, our pride, and ignorance. Those who are not of the elect of God resemble the devil in their ways and thoughts – not because they created him like themselves – but because they have opted for his nature through the natural inclinations of the nature of humanity.

One of the most destructive devils that come to abide in the heart is that of a

malicious tongue. It spews about vitriol and gossip without distinction or restraint. It has often been a murderer of innocents whose lives were destroyed by that malicious demon of the tongue. Many souls have been sold into slavery, or execution, by the lying tongue. The greater damage is the unseen and subtle undermining of those of character whose dignity and honor are demeaned in hushed tones and lurid comments unheard by their victim. In discussing the evil of treason itself, Marcus Tullius Cicero addressed the hidden evil of a malicious tongue and made it a type of treason:

A nation can survive its fools, and even the ambitious. But it cannot survive treason from within. An enemy at the gates is less formidable, for he is known and he carries his banners openly. But the traitor moves among those within the gate freely, his sly whispers rustling through all the alleys, heard in the very halls of government itself. For the traitor appears not traitor; he speaks in the accent that is familiar to his victims, and he wears their face and their garments, and he appeals to the baseness that lies deep in the hearts of all men. He rots the soul of a nation; he works secretly and unknown in the night to undermine the pillars of a city; he infects the body politic so that it can no longer resist. A murderer is less to be feared. (Cicero – 106-44 BC)

What is gossip if it is not treason against the person and character of another? It may even begin with a compliment: “You know, that Mrs. Holbrook is a kind and loving lady in many ways, but, sadly, she is a strumpet!” The justification for the praise may be proved, but for the latter insult, no justification may be offered. The damage is done, and the mischievous seed sown.

The tongue may be a source of beauty and comfort if exercised in love and consideration of another. It may relate the Words of the Gospel of Christ to men who had never heard them uttered. It may give a final assurance to a venerable soul at the moment of death that God stands at the ready to receive their souls into His Paradise and Bliss. But the same fountain that overflows with kind remarks may, in some cases, become a poisoned geyser of hate and lies. Now, with the Christian heart, this is not possible for out of the mouth and through the tongue emerges the treasures of that heart. If that treasure is Christ, it will not brook the dirty waters of deceit and gossip. See what the Apostle James says of the tongue:

1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. 2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. 3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. 4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. 7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: 8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. 11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? 12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. (James 3:1-12)

To my brothers and sisters who read these lines, I wish to express my total lack of ability to measure up to the truth and beauty expressed by James above. However, we labor with unwashed hands; but the fact that our hands are unwashed does not add or detract from the precious treasure of truth we may bear. If it be the Gospel of Christ, it is the burden we bear that glorifies our labors and not the condition of our hands. Though

our hands be washed seven times in a surgical bath, if the burden is one of lies, gossip, and deceit, it is accursed and unholy.

The idle mind is begging to be filled. It does not look to the *"Hills from whence cometh my help"* but rather to the gutters of the unlit street. It will raise some hateful specter into which it will turn to reality, and that reality is the consummation of the sinful imagination. Even if our sinful imaginations are not manifested in an outward act of sin, it is the stain on the heart and soul that makes our filthy rags a refuse and a disgust to the holiness of God.

No woman would desire a husband whose imagination is fixed upon adultery and idleness. It would be better to remain unwed than to have such a husband. By the same token, what man would desire a wife whose character is so contrary to that of Proverbs 31:10-31 that she is carried about with endless gossip and rumor, and neglects her duties as a wife and mother.

Though there is far more to be said on this subject, I have arrived at Page Three. Further 'quill-pushing' might contribute to an idle mind on the part of the reader. (* __~)