

PREPARING FOR THE "IMAGE OF THE BEAST."

A Jewish Rabbi in New York--Dr. Silverman --in his discourse of Sunday, April 3rd, made a suggestion which seems likely to meet with a hearty response from moral and religious people generally. He proposes a *Board of Morals* to which, as a part of the government, he would favor giving a general supervision of the conduct and teachings of all public assemblages (theaters, lectures, churches, etc.), books, magazines, newspapers, art exhibitions, etc.

We cannot doubt the sincerity of his motives in propounding such a scheme. He and others probably fail to see that while his scheme would indeed be useful in restraining vice, it would put an immense power into the hands of majorities by which the liberties of minorities on various subjects would soon be interfered with, and adjudged *subversive of public peace and morals*. For instance, any book or magazine opposed to sectarianism (as are *Millennial Dawn* and the *Watch Tower*) would come under the ban of the majority who consider that opposition to the sects is opposition to God, and hence contrary to public moral welfare.

However, we fully expect from the teachings of the Bible that such ideas will make considerable progress and ultimately be carried out in connection with a general federation or league of all the principal denominations of Protestant Christians, which will find Roman Catholicism its aider and abettor in all such efforts to restrain all liberty of thought under the name and guise of *moral* reform.

We subjoin an extract from the discourse in question:--

"The ethical ideal underlying Judaism has become the basis of all modern religions, and to-day both Christian and Jewish churches are earnestly enlisted in the cause of the *moral conversion* of the masses.

"The masses have been neglected too long. There is such a seething hot-bed of vice, crime, and all manner of corruption that we almost despair of a remedy. This true religion, with its prayer and preaching, with Bible and song, is peculiarly adapted for influencing the moral sentiment, but the moral sentiment of whom? Of those only who willingly go to the church, who are already morally trained up to the point at which they are susceptible of higher development. But what becomes of the masses outside of the church, who cannot be brought within range of the preacher's voice? How can they be morally influenced? There is no doubt that the pulpit, as regards moral reforms on a large scale, is helpless without the aid of the Government.

"Dr. Parkhurst has demonstrated the fact that the Government does not feel obligated to come to the aid of the pulpit, in carrying out its attempts at moral reform, and that the men in authority will only proceed to act in a case of indisputable civil action. We believed that all along, but now it is demonstrated.

"We have no particular grievance in this regard against the men in authority. It is not they that are entirely wrong in this instance, but the principle by which they are guided. We are brought squarely before the issue that many office holders, politicians and statesmen hold, that the Government is only a civil and not also a moral power. We submit that this view of government is extremely narrow and unstatesmanlike. James Bryce, in his 'American Commonwealth,' has taken the trouble to emphasize this peculiar defect of the Americans. 'The State,' says Bryce, 'is not to them, as to Germans and Frenchmen and even to English thinkers, an ideal *moral* power, charged with *the duty of forming the characters and guiding the lives* of its

subjects. It is more like a commercial company, or perhaps a huge municipality created for the management of certain business, in which all who reside within its bounds are interested, levying contributions and expending them in this business of common interest, but for the most part leaving the shareholders to themselves.'

"In accordance with this view the duties of the government may be summed up as follows:

"*First.*--The protection of its borders, commerce, honor and property.

"*Second.*--The administration of its laws and economy.

"*Third.*--The development of its resources and prosperity.

"*Fourth.*--The education of all its people in keeping with its idea as a secular institution.

"*Fifth.*--The protection of personal liberty and life.

"But is that all? Has the Government no higher object or higher duty? Is it more important to have a strong and rich nation than a moral one? I have no hesitation in maintaining, and I believe you will agree with me, that the morals of a free people are equally, if not more, important than their education, health, parks, bridges, commerce, speedway, etc. In a monarchy the stability of society and of the Government is maintained by the threat of a large standing army: in a republic, by the virtuous manhood of the people.

"The only recourse for the pulpit thus far has been to resort to a number of private societies for the prevention of crime and cruelty and for the prevention of the dissemination of obscene literature. But all such societies, and even a dozen more of them, would be inefficient, because they do not represent a scientific, systematic, and absolutely authoritative treatment of public morals.

"The evils which we desire to combat are so great that we need State institutions and State [R1400 : page 141] moneys for the purpose. Just as there is a Board for Public Works, a Board of Public Education, a Board of Public Health, so we need a *Board of Public Morals*, whose duties shall be to study the moral needs of the masses, to suggest proper legislation, to have the authority necessary for the protection of public morality, and for the creation of such *means* as will develop it. This board should be non-partisan, appointed by the Supreme Court of the State, and should consist of men of unquestioned integrity, who have made the study of practical morality a specialty, of men from both the clergy and the lay ranks. Without going into the details of such an institution, I submit that this is one of the practical ways in which the State could deal with public morals.

"There are many directions in which such a board could at once act. The crying need of the hour is the regulation of vice. Let such a board or commission undertake to study this intricate and perplexing question. Another much mooted question is the instruction of unsectarian morals in the public schools. There can be no doubt that such instruction is desirable, but it must be wholly unsectarian. By that I mean it must be entirely disassociated from religious teaching or practice. The elements of morality are honesty, chastity, cleanliness, industry, frugality, *unity of thought and speech*, truthfulness, etc. The Church could privately supplement the public moral instruction.

"The Board of Public Morals should also be empowered to exercise a sort of moral censorship over the press, the stage, literature, and advertisements.

"I believe the time is now when the Church is ready to concede that it cannot alone influence the masses morally, and that the cause of religion will be advanced if the State will undertake non-sectarian work in the field of ethics."

Mr. Talmage says:--"I was opposed to overhauling the old creed at all, but now that it has been lifted up, and its imperfections set up in the sight of the world, I say overboard with it, and make a new creed. There are to-day in our denomination five hundred men who could make a better one. I could make a better one myself."