



There is so much bad in the best of us
That it doesn't behoove any of us
To talk about the rest of us.

THE MISSING LINE OF THE MOTTO

There is a great deal of truth in these three lines of a motto that hangs on many walls. But what about the motto's first line, not quoted above. It is: *There is so much good in the worst of us.* Is this true? Is it true that there is a spark of good, a bit of God, in everybody? Many people believe there is. Many people believe that human nature is almost divine. It is a very complimentary thought; it is a thought that makes people feel good; but is it true?

What about Hitler and Hirohito, for example? The proponents of the modern theology may be willing to grant that these two along with a few of their subordinates are exceptions to the general rule. Of course this modern theological view was not supposed to have any exceptions; all men were supposed to have a spark of divinity. But maybe it could be admitted that a

few men are so cracked that the spark flew out the crack.

But here is a sobering thought. The German people, at least before 1914, were a civilized, cultured, highly educated people. And in spite of this fact, Hitler has made beasts out of—not a few subordinates—but out of millions. How is it that so large a part of the nation became so vile so suddenly?

There are two ways of looking at human nature. The modern way is to conceive man as about to sprout wings and play on harps of gold. A few minor social maladjustments hold him back a little. Another way is to conceive man with a terrible tendency to evil. The fear of government, the fear of other men, the fear of failure, and the unperceived restraining power of the Holy Spirit, prevent men from becoming as bad as they might be. But when the government becomes evil, when violence is encouraged

and rewarded, when there seems to be a chance of success on a world-wide scale, then the basest of passions are given full sway. To murder one man is not worth the risk; to murder millions is a surer way to success.

There is so much bad in the best of us. Let us not deceive ourselves in pride and think that we are better than they. One taint of nature makes the whole world kin. There has been cruelty and violence since the dawn of history. Given the requisite conditions, would not our evil likewise burst its restraints? And the reason is that "*the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked*" (Jer. 17:9).

Man's only hope lies in a change of heart; and only by the supernatural grace of God can man's heart be changed. Jesus said, "*Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again*" (John 3:7).

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