

The King's Highway

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

And an Highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness—Isa. 35-8

VOL. XXXII.

MONCTON, N. B., AUG. 15, 1935

NO. 2

THE SIGN OF THE TIMES

By Rev. W. Edmund Smith

We must confess that we see many bad signs in these times. Society has suffered a great moral slump since the war. Lawlessness abounds and the church is not at all militant. Many see signs of the "Coming of Christ" to reign, and for the cup of iniquity, to them, seems to be full.

Yet as a student of sacred and profane history I must insist that there have been far worse times than these in the past centuries. When I see what God's people had to endure even a little more than a hundred years ago, I must confess that I am glad to live today. While the tide of Christianity today seems to be ebbing, yet we have seen marvelous gains in moral and spiritual values that register themselves in social and spiritual conditions that maintain even today. Let us look a moment at some of our assets.

First, the child: Infant mortality has decreased to such an extent that the average length of life has been increased about fifteen years. Only a few years ago in England and America children were compelled to labor in mines, in factories and in the field for twelve and fourteen hours a day for a mere pittance. There were no laws governing their attendance at school. Today school doors swing open wide and they are compelled to go to school till fourteen years of age.

Second: Woman—When Jesus came woman was enslaved and was largely the creature of man's whim. The immortality of Rome was unspeakable. While today woman is inclined to run her liberty into license, yet Christianity has emancipated her from her former bondage. She stands as a helpmate beside her husband. She exercises her franchise at the polls and finds a place in many vocations. Christianity has done everything for woman.

Third: The Sick and the Afflicted: When Jesus came there were no hospitals for the afflicted and the sick. The lepers and the blind and maimed roamed about as scabs on society. Today thousands of beautiful hospitals are open to even the poorest. Medical skill restores a multitude to health. There are homes for the blind, homes for the incurable of all kinds—the lepers even. There are homes for the aged women, the aged men, the aged veterans. Is not this a by-product of Christianity? Do you find such things in heathen lands? They have all come since the advent of Jesus. Once they let the poor die or sent them to the poorhouse. Today they get pensions and relief.

Fourth: The Criminal: Even in Wesley's time there were many offences that were punishable with death. A little girl was hanged for stealing a bit of ribbon from her employer, and a mother was hanged for stealing a loaf of bread to feed her hungry children. Men who were honest at heart were

dragged to loathsome prisons and rotted there for debts they couldn't pay, and often those debts were small. John Wesley's father, an Anglican clergyman, was put in prison several times for inability to pay his debts promptly.

Only a hundred years ago or less the juvenile offender was herded in pens with the vilest criminals, male and female. The prison in Wesley's day reeked with filth and moral pollution. There was little hope of reformation in such cases.

Today we see in our land many reform institutions for young men and women who have committed minor offences. They are given an opportunity to learn a good trade and many come out to make good. We may be too lenient today but thank God the awful condition that maintained in penal institutions of a hundred years ago are no more. I call this an asset. The lunatic in Christ's day wandered in the highways and the graveyards. Today more than seventy per cent. of the mentally afflicted are restored through the remedial agencies of our great sanatoriums. I call this an asset for Christianity.

Fifth: Politics: We say politics are rotten today. Well look at Walpole's time in England. He maintained himself in power for years by corruption of the most flagrant kind. When I was a boy men were bought like sheep at the door of the election booth in Canada. Election day was a time of drunken revelry. In Wesley's day great statesmen went out publicly to the theatre with their mistresses and had not a blush of shame. Compare such men with Baldwin, George, Hoover or Bennett of today. Has not Christianity made moral standards high amongst our public men?

Sixth: Slavery: Only a little more than a hundred years ago England was in the slave trade. She sent her crews to Africa where they seized all the able-bodied men and women and healthy children they could reach. Resistance was met with death. Villages were burned and the poor victims piled into the holds of vessels to be carried to England and America. These were men and women for whom Christ died. John Newton engaged in this trade even after his conversion, and George Whitfield had slaves on his plantation in Virginia. Twenty per cent. of all the slaves died before they reached the block of the auctioneer. The poor creatures were bred like cattle and sheep and treated worse. Today, thank God, all this is changed all over the world.

Piracy too has been swept from the seas.

A little over seventy years ago there were about a million slaves in America. Today we have about thirteen million of colored people who enjoy a good measure of liberty. Millions of these worship Jesus. A multitude of these are found prosperous in comfortable and even elegant homes.

Many of these shine in law, medicine, divin-

ity, education, journalism—every walk of life—and this all in about seventy years.

I call this an asset for Christianity.

Seventh: Religious Liberty for All: Something over three hundred years ago William Tyndall translated the Bible into English. He was compelled to go to the Continent to carry on the work. He got the Bible back into England by smuggling it over in bales of hay. If you lived in England at that time and dared have a copy of the Bible in your possession, your doors might be suddenly smashed and soldiers rush in and you dragged to prison or to the stake for the crime of reading the Scriptures. Tyndall was burned for his crime of translating the Bible. Wesley says that a reliable investigator declares that forty-five millions of people perished through the intolerance of Rome. What if you had lived in those days? It would have looked like the last times. Think what the Methodists suffered a little more than a hundred years ago! Their property was destroyed, their person assaulted and their character vilified simply because they were seeking to do the will of God. Who is being butchered or greatly persecuted today for the faith?

But some will say: When I was a boy the church was more spiritual and people were more devout. Were they? When I was a boy the Methodist Church in our community made tables and had a tea meeting right in the edifice and in one corner they had a booth where they sold ginger pop and cigars along with their candy, etc. The way some denominations paid their preachers and built their churches in those days was largely by basket socials, tea meetings, where they had everything from shooting at old Peggy to a raffle for a quilt. I never heard of holiness in those days and when we did hear of the Holiness people they were painted in awful colors. Today there are holiness bands and churches all over the land, and hundreds of thousands of copies of holiness literature are distributed every week. There are several thousand young men and women in holiness colleges. There is a great band of holiness missionaries in the field. None of these things existed when I was a boy. It has all taken place or largely in the last fifty years. I call this an asset for Christianity.

Look at missions! In 1798 William Carey had to steal his way into India. There was not a single Christian there and the British East India Company was exploiting that land for their selfish ends. There were no Christians in China, Korea, Japan, Africa or the Islands of the sea. Today there are millions in China who are true to the faith. Africa is thrown open to the light and slavery for its inhabitants is no more. John R. Mott said that he found at least 200,000 spirit-filled Christians in Korea who could re-Christianize the world if all the others were to lose the faith. Fiji Islands and the Hebrides, once the hot-bed of

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