

CORRESPONDENCE

Port Maitland, N. S.

Dear Highway:

Another year has come and gone in our ministry and another pastorate has been closed. We thank the Lord for the privilege that has been ours of labouring with this dear people of this circuit. We have found some of the best people on this field we have ever laboured with and our getting through to take up work elsewhere was not an easy one. We saw some added to one or all of the churches each year while there. We thank all the good people of the circuit who stood by us all the way through. We were glad to see all budgets raised during our last year there and two thousand dollars to good. Also glad to see new pews installed in Port Maitland Church and a beautiful electric organ installed in the Sandford Church. We want to thank all those who had a part in all three of the churches in presenting us with so much money to defray the expenses incurred in connection with Mrs. Mullen's being in Hospital and also thank those outside of our own churches who sent us gifts of money to help defray expenses. We also want to thank the people of Sandford and Port Maitland for the farewell that was given and the nice purse presented. May God bless the richly in the future as their new pastor comes to take up his duties among them.

We are now open for evangelistic work and will go anywhere in any church, asking only the privilege of preaching full salvation and that those calling us do their best with free will offerings, The Mullen Trio.

We would like to see a few more revivals like we've seen in the past. We covet your prayers.

Yours for souls,
H. S. & MRS. MULLEN,
Havelock, Digby Co., N. S.

A DROWSY CHURCH IN A DAZED WORLD

"Then he came to the disciples and said, Are you still sleeping?" (Matthew 26:45, R. S. V.)
Paul S. Rees, D. D.

To begin with, let us acknowledge that this is a dazed world in which we are living. That night when Jesus Christ was lying prostrate beneath the moon-silvered olive trees in Gethsemane, Jerusalem was a city of confused counsels and seething turmoil. There were the Pharisees, determined at all costs that nothing should break the hard mould into which their religious life had frozen. There were the Sadducees, who represented the rich and the comfortable, who were skeptical of anything supernatural in religion, who wanted nothing to interfere with their gospel of worldly success. There were the Romans, with their pagan contempt for religion in general and their pagan reliance upon political and military power to solve all problems. And there were the indifferent crowds made up of society's rank-and-filers, with few, if any, convictions of their own, just waiting for the next thing to happen. About the only thing they all agreed on was that Jesus Christ was not a very important or necessary person to have around. A few were for Him; more were against Him; most just did not care.

The differences between that situation and the one in which the world finds itself today are not very great if it is our significant atti-

tudes toward life that we have in mind. We have our Pharisees. We have our Sadducees. We have our pagans. And we have our unconcerned masses with their ideas and emotions made up for them on the mammoth assembly line of the modern movie, radio, and press. And what a dither we are in!

The world is dazed, for example, by its own contradictions: the contradiction between its talk of peace and its preparation for war, the contradiction between its ideals of democracy and undemocratic inequalities and injustices, the contradiction between its scientific inventiveness and its scientific destructiveness.

The world is dazed by its physical and social disintegrations: the break-up of marriage and family life, the appalling rise in alcoholism, the increasing debauchery of the tastes and inclinations of the people who seek some sort of pleasure-escape from the intolerable burdens of life.

The world is dazed by its disillusionments and frustrations: Orientals are disillusioned about the help they can count on from the Western democracies; peoples who formerly marched under the banners of Hitler and Mussolini are disillusioned about all human leadership; and throngs of people, particularly younger people in America and Britain, are disillusioned about the ultimate effectiveness of war in preserving freedom and democracy.

Speaking of disillusionments, Dr. E. G. Homrighausen, after travelling for months in European countries, says that most Americans do not realize how "de-Christianized" are the people of Europe, particularly the young people. They feel that everything is futile—dictatorships, republics, politics, religion, Marshall plan, everything—“They sit in a vacuum,” says Homrighausen. “They just look for the inevitable collapse of the rest of the world.”

The world, moreover, is dazed by the gigantic threat to its future which springs from the use of atomic power.

II

My second comment is that in this dazed world the Church is drowsy. We are following the example of those first disciples when they were at their worst rather than at their best. Religious formalism and conventionality were unfriendly to Jesus but the disciples were asleep to it. Stubbornness, proud unbelief and a worldly mind were hostile to Jesus, but the disciples were asleep. Rome, with her cynical disregard for spiritual values, was getting ready to lay a calloused hand upon Christ and supervise His execution, but the disciples were asleep. Peter himself in two or three hours would disown his Master, but even he was asleep, so that, according to the Mark account, Jesus singled him out for special reproach, saying “Simon, sleepest thou?”

If I am asked for my reason for feeling that the Church of today is tragically dull and drowsy, I offer a triple reply.

1. For one thing, its drowsiness is indicated by its failure to grow as it should. John would have to be a very dull boy indeed if he failed to see that those friends of Jesus, with heads nodding, and eyelids closed, and limbs immobilized, were winning no converts to their Master. Sleeping “Christians” never win souls! Always without exception, a stagnant, unaggressive Church will be found to be a sleeping Church.

In 1946 the first fifty Protestant churches in the United States, considered from the point of view of size, reported a total membership

of 43,413,226. One year later they reported a total of 44,571,486. That means that it took forty-three people a total of twelve months to add one single communicant to our Protestant church rolls. Two large bodies, with membership numbering over a million and a half each had to report fewer members in 1947 than they had in 1946. Let no one imagine for a moment that I think such statistics as these tell the whole story of a church's life. There are times when I quite appreciate the mood that Disraeli was in when he thundered: “There are three kinds of lies—lies, damnable lies, and statistics.” Perhaps the finest thing that could happen to some of our groups would be to get rid of the “dead timber.” But the point is that if they put their membership rolls through the wringer and began afresh with vital people witnessing vigorously for Jesus Christ, they would have at least an increase to report the following year.

Besides, what we add to our membership rolls is valueless unless we are at the same time bringing people into such living and life-changing fellowship with Christ that He, by His Holy Spirit, is adding them to His own militant body.

2. In addition to its failure to grow as it should, there is a second symptom of the current drowsiness of the Church; its failure to grapple with the basic hungers and problems of the souls of men. The most widespread and subtle blasphemy of our times is not communism, though what I shall now say applies to communism up to the hilt. This terrible sacrilege of which I speak is that of going ahead with a hundred schemes for bringing about peace and good will and justice and economic health without giving God any real place in our plans and without realizing that their success is impossible unless we have revolutionized men and women whose selfishness has been put to rout by the incoming of Christ's love.

Jesus taught the Church to deal realistically with sin. He taught His disciples to reckon with the power of Satan. He led His followers in a sober recognition that the forces of anti-Christ are real and cunning and persistent. Paul caught the truth of all this when he wrote to the Ephesians: “For ours is not a conflict with mere flesh and blood, but with despots, the empires, the forces that control and govern this dark world—the spiritual hosts of evil arrayed against us in the heavenly warfare” (Weymouth, Ephesians 6:12).

It is this terrific moral realism, this consciousness of coming to grips with the inner powers of evil by which the souls of men are held in chains, that one misses in the Church today. I am afraid that in its present state the Church reminds us more of an invalid under an electric blanket than it does a crusader with fire in his heart and flame in his eye, going out to bruise the devil's knuckles and smash the devil's strongholds.

Dr. Stanley High, prominent journalist and churchman, has lately become “fed up” on the “pink tea” type of church that has no solid message and no saving ministry. His burning words were so startling that Time Magazine gave them almost a page. “The Church Has Failed Me,” is Stanley High's complaint. His article reads like a bill of indictment. Here are some samples:

“The church has failed to tell me that I am a sinner.”

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