

A Cleric Comments

(Editor's Note: To get a theologian's opinion of the GAZETTE editorial on the Tom Allen Mission, Rev. Carman Riggs, minister of Edgewood United Church, was asked to comment.)

In your editorial two weeks ago, "A Comment On The Mission", you paid a fine tribute to Rev. Tom Allen, the Scottish minister who held a Preaching Mission at the Halifax Forum and a University Mission at Dalhousie.

It was good to have Tom Allen in our midst. He came to Halifax with the credentials of a thoughtful, sober, converted man; seized with a sense of mission to pass on to others what he himself has experienced in a changed life. This he did and did well in the context of situations entirely different — the evangelistic services at the Forum and the lectures and counselling and interview sessions at Dalhousie.

Your editorial also showed fine discernment in recognizing that at the heart of evangelism is the problem of decision and commitment. However, you dismissed as "resting almost totally upon emotionalism", Mr. Allan's call for decision in the evangelistic services at the Forum. As a "participant-observer" in the mission, I would like to record some of my impressions.

I think we have to keep in mind the purpose of the mission at the Forum. In his opening message Mr. Allan said the purpose was "to lead people to the place where Christ transforms their lives". To achieve this end the message he would declare "would have Christ at its centre"; "would meet the needs of men"; and "would demand a decision".

Mr. Allan's first appeal was to mind. His preaching was marked by intellectual integrity and genuine sincerity. In the actual appeal at the end of the sermon, Mr. Allan consistently pointed out that the decision had to be made by the individual in his own mind. He was "to make an inward covenant with God". Christian commitment is primarily an inner and holy matter and such a decision is based on an understanding of what God has done for us in Christ. This decision, Mr. Allan, emphasized had to be made by the individual — right where he sat, in the quiet of his own mind.

Emotion also has its place in decision — one must not only be convinced in his mind, but also in his heart. No intelligent person desires to take emotion out of life. Life would be dull in the extreme if we could succeed in removing deep feeling from human

personality. Imagine a young man proposing marriage to a girl — having carefully explained to her first that he has no feelings for her. One cannot deny that there have been dangers in emotionalism. But that does not cut out emotion. The late W. E. Sangster wrote: "The man who screams at a football or baseball game but is disturbed when he hears a sinner weeping at the foot of the Cross, and murmurs something about 'the dangers of emotionalism' hardly merits intelligent respect".

But basically decision refers to a decisive act of the will: A person who decides takes a definite stand. In line with this, Mr. Allan warned that Christian living does not end with coming forward. "Coming forward is but the first step", he declared. "Discipleship is costly, it is the total commitment of all you have and are to his service". It is total living — not just feeling and thinking. It must involve thinking and feeling and willing and acting — persisting. There is a growth in Christian experience — we are to live out the relevance of the Christian faith for the whole life of man.

Why, then, did Mr. Allan ask people to come forward? To make a witness — "an outward symbol of the inward covenant". This would serve to strengthen their decision and by their witness they would make an impact upon others for good. Mr. Allan's appeal was very carefully phrased. The vital aspects of a true decision were safeguarded. The appeal was not unduly pressed — but carried out, I thought, in a fitting manner and all To The Glory of God.

America in decline

by A. St. G. Abbott

"Three out of four American high-school pupils can't figure beyond elementary sums and at least half are semi-literate. They are able to read comics but hardly able (and quite unaccustomed) to read and understand a long paragraph in a serious book." This interesting statement came before my eyes over the weekend, and what particularly intrigued me was the nationality of the author. He is American, one Edgar A. Mowrer and the quotation I have used above comes from his recently published book, "A Good Time To Be Alive."

Mr. Mowrer, casting a critical eye over "God's own country", goes on to depict a complacent, self-satisfied, bored community where the principal social virtue is to be "just folks". He claims that the ordinary American today is not as well educated as he was fifty years ago. The system tends to pull back the bright child and push forward the dull one. Schools are not concerned as much over educational ability as producing citizens who are "good mixers" and who "fit in" with a mediocre society.

Tendency to Oversimplification

Turning to world affairs, Mr. Mowrer sees his countrymen as tending to over simplify everything, this no doubt as a result of their meagre intellectual attainments. Roosevelt, victim of this tendency, thought he could make a deal with "Uncle Joe" (Stalin) at the expense of his allies (principally Britain). He made the deal, as Yalta will forever testify, but who in the end was "dealt with"?

I raise my metaphorical hat to Mr. Mowrer. Clearly he has both perception and courage. Speaking with a West Indian friend the other day (in a marathon session of coffee-shop Pole-

mics), I mentioned in the course of the argument that the American worker happened to be the most productive in the world.

"Yes," he replied "and also the most self-satisfied and ignorant." Surprised by his vehemence and feeling, I made inquiries into his knowledge of the subject, as distinct from his opinions. It was impressive. He had worked in a number of occupations over a wide area of the United States, and could genuinely claim a broad contact with American workers. This is not to imply that his strictures are warranted, any more than Mr. Mowrer's. I mentioned both merely to orient the reader (and perhaps to soften

him up a bit) for what is to follow.

Render Unto Caesar

America today has lost her bearings morally and politically. In a recent broadcast, Pope John XXIII reminded the world that the most powerful of all weapons is prayer. Instead of praying, however, American children are taught in the morning to salute the U.S. flag and repeat the oath of allegiance to the United States — putting the claims of Caesar before God. Is the society which has produced the highest divorce rate and the greatest incidence of domestic crime in the world really fitted to make morally sound political decisions? While morality is, of course, a relative matter, one might expect a nation to act more or less in accordance with its own moral precepts. This America consistently fails to do.

In supporting the use of violence to suppress (and indeed obliterate) the peaceable, multi-racial regime in Katanga, the U.S. government defied Christian ethics. At the same time she assisted in denying to this area the right to self-determination. In supporting the Rump Government of Formosa against that of China for admission to the U.N., America defies reality and the wishes of the majority. In building an air-base in Indonesia and a naval base on Ambouia Island (off the coast of Dutch New Guinea), the American government is competing with Russia to supply military potential to Indonesia, with the predictable result of an invasion of New Guinea.

Judged Hypocritical

Now if America were to be judged by an objective and impartial observer on the evidence of these (and many similar actions), she would be seen as a non-Christian, hypocritical, blindly unrealistic country determined on committing suicide by assisting her enemies.

Being just such an observer myself, this is precisely how I do see America today. And I will make a confident prediction on the strength of my observations. American society, as presently composed and oriented, has but a short while to live. It is, after all, a society avidly pursuing Mammon, the emphasis being on profit, gadgets, and keeping up with the Jones'. Real values and a worthwhile way of life now being largely absent, it can only be a matter of time before the top-heavy economy comes crashing down through all the crazily elaborate credit structure, and the amazed citizenry will find itself naked without a fig-leaf of moral fibre to comfort it.

What comforts this writer, however, is the knowledge that nothing of any value will have been lost in the collapse. On the contrary, the world may benefit from the demise of such an order. Christianity, above all, will stand to benefit, since it will no longer need to accommodate the ethics of a decadent society, or to compromise with the philosophy of "Maximization of profits."

All students are invited to submit poems, short stories, humorous quotes or any other material of interest to the students, to the Features Department at any time.

Would You?

If in all the world there were but two,
And all the world were good and true,
And you knew that nobody knew . . . Would You?

If you dreamed of pyjamas blue,
And two strong arms encircling you,
And then awoke and found it true . . . Would You?

If all the world were good and right,
And I stayed with you half the night,
And finally turning out the light . . . Would You?

If you and I were in a certain place,
Sleeping together face to face,
With only between us a bit of lace . . . Would You . . .
Say Goodnight?

by I. Wood



**"But, I tell you, there is no powder room.
What do you think this is, TCA?"**

*Next time she will choose TCA and enjoy the comfort of the DC-8 jet,
Vanguard or Viscount. Fast, luxurious and economical, too.*

Montreal to New York \$44
Economy Return Fare



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