

Among the intriguing characteristics of the day in which we live is the increasingly widespread interest in prophecy. The startling

events of the 6 day war nearly a year^{ago} in Israel stirred up the imagination of many people who otherwise would not ^{have} given a second glance to things religious. The war even went so far as to cause some Israelis to become interested in their own O.T. prophecies. My wife and I were there the week before the war broke out, and during the course of the summer we invited 3 different groups of friends and neighbors to see our slides of that trip. Some of these people we had never met before--my wife simply telephoned the invitation. Now you know full well that just a hundred or so slides can put the severest kind of strain on the best of friendships, so strangers would have good reason to decline such an invitation. But not one did.

A friend of mine called his stockbroker the day the war broke out and told him to buy, buy, buy--tho the market was sinking badly on the war news. But my friend said quite calmly that he was sure Israel would win and the market would rebound--both of which ^{thru it} did happen shortly. Now do you know, the broker asked. The Bible says so, replied my friend. After it was all over,

my friend had an eager audience of one stockbroker who wanted to know about Bible prophecy.

Even Jean Dixon on a more popular scale has a wider and wider hearing, tho I notice that her prophecies are growing more general and much less specific than they used to be. Perhaps she is trying to improve her .500 batting average with vagueness.

But in the best of circles her prophecies are discussed and, I'm afraid, half-believed. As a matter of fact you may even have caught yourself stealing a furtive glance at the daily horoscope in the newspaper and wondering how it would turn out in your case that day!

Since prophecy is such an "in" subject and since you young people stand on the threshold of the largely unknown and exciting experiences of life, I'm ~~am~~ going to dare to be a prophet today and outline some things that are coming and indicate what you ought to do about them in relation to your own reactions and lives.

Wm

One of the things that is certain to characterise the days of your lives is apostasy, and I mean apostasy in the church. As a matter of fact this is the chief characteristic that is on the horizon of the future for the organized church, and some of it will creep into the local church~~s~~of which you will be members.

What is apostasy? The word simply means departure. To apostasise

is to depart from something. Such departure can be from either the Word of God (as in Lk 8:13), or from Xn doctrine (as in 1 T^{im} 4:1) or from the living God (as in Heb. 3:12). Since apostates in the NT appear to be unsaved people the persons who have made some sort of profession, however shallow, a def of apos would be this? a departure from truth which was professed to have been accepted tho not actually accepted. I do not bel, therefore, that a truly born again Xn can be an apostate; tho he can contribute to apostasy by tolerating or participating in the characteristics of apostates. You will notice that in the 3 passages of Scrip just cited, the context is a situation of knowledge, not ignorance, of the truth, and in 2 of the passages the warnings are given to those who belonged to local churches. Certainly the writer to the Heb beld that apostasy was a very real danger for some of his readers who were professing church members.

When will apostasy characterize the organized church? The answer is, Always. ^{Yestday, today, tomorrow} Beyond any question, apostasy is both present and future in the church, and that is why I can confidently say that this is one of the features of life that you will face. Apostates like Hymenaeus and Alexander and Demas lived at the same time as Paul. Some were even partaking of the Lord's Supper in ^{the} churches to which Jude wrote. The apostle John mentioned antichrists who

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were actually fellowshipping with some of the churches of Asia Minor in his day. But the NT predicts that apostasy will continue right to the last days reaching a climax in the great apostasy of the tribulation days. So you may expect in your lifetimes to see increasing apostasy; for every day that we live brings us that much nearer to the end.

What are the teachings of apostasy? 1st a denial of the doctrine of the trinity. In John's day this denial was focused on the relation bet the 1st and 2nd Persons of the Trinity tho today the HS too figures in the denial. Any non-trinitarian teaching (whether defective in relatn to the Father, Son or Spirit) is apostate teaching. Need I remind you that the Unitarian church alone in the US claims 164,474 members.

Second, there is a denial of the reality of the incarnation of X. This may be either a denial of the deity of X or it may be, as it was in J^ohn's day, a denial of the true humanity of X. Why is this so significant? Simply bec the God-man, full deity and true humanity is essential to the work of sal. If the Savior was not truly a man he could not save for He could not have died. If, on the other hand, He was not truly God, His death would have been to no avail. The Savior must be a God-man, and this denial by apostates strikes at the very heart of our Xn faith. Third, in apostasy there is a denial of the doctrine of the return of X. In 2 Pet 3 the

reason for this is laid to an acceptance of the principle of uniformitarianism, which is the idea that since everything has been going along in the same manner for centuries past, it always will go on the same without any direct divine intervention. Now these are the doctrines of apostasy. Be on guard that you do not condone any such teaching. Who me, you say. Yes you, for altho you may never actually deny these truths you may do so practically. For instance, if you really bel in the true humanity of X it will affect your living. Quote 1 Jn 2:6. If you really bel in the 2nd coming of K that will also change your outlook on the daily routine of life. And if your living is not affected, one can only conclude that you have accepted to some measure at least, the teachings of apostasy. Quality living is demonstrated by allegiance to X, never by departing from X. And this will be increasingly difficult and increasing nec as we head toward THE apostasy of the tribulation days. Will you follow the trend or buck the tide?

Ansebold trend which I am confident will grow and develop in your lifetimes is the trend toward lawlessness. Defection in doctrine always brings with it a decline in morals. No passage in the Bible more vividly describes this than 2 Tim. 3:1-5. In it are listed 18 characteristics of the hard times of the last days, and they

are bold and brazen ones. Notice just the ones that manifest lawlessness--blasphemy-lawlessness against God, disobedient to parents-lawlessness in the family, without natural affection-lawlessness against one's own body, trucebreakers-lawlessness with others, without self-control, fierce or literally untamed, despisers of those that are good, heady which means headstrong and reckless, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. It goes without saying that the headlines of our newspapers today are shouting these characteristics^{as} exhibited in many parts of the world. No country, no class, no institution, no city seems exempt from the rampant lawlessness of our day. Even law abiding people are beginning to say, What's the use? I'll get what I can when I can in this vast struggle for power.

~~Even evangelical Xnty, I am sorry to say, is not without its spirit of lawlessness~~

I can think of no better situation into which a dictator could more easily move than into the lawless one of 1968. I wonder how many of you saw the TV specials this past winter on the Rise and Fall of the 3rd Reich. The pieces of that picture should never have fit together. An unknown fanatic who was disliked and distrusted by almost everyone except his small band of followers.

An intelligent, civilized and cultured people who should have seen what was happening. A democratic government that should have prevented ^{such} a takeover. No, the pieces would not have fit together except for one ingredient which was present in the situation, and that ingredient was lawlessness. In the wake of lawlessness Hitler was swept to power. The impossible, ^{happened} and the lawless situation was replaced by ^{the lawless} a dictatorial lawless one. I have had 2 exp in the past 2 months which prove to me that no form of government is a guarantee against lawlessness. At Easter time I was in Pa station in NYC. Signs thruout the concourse reminded me of the lawlessness that has swept our own cities in this democracy. They said--

Two weeks ago I was in Haiti where under a dictatorship a man was shot down on one of the principal downtown streets at high noon. There stood the assassins slapping each other on the back, congratulating themselves that they had gotten their man. Need we speak of France, Germany, Japan, ^{China} all of which have been the scene of riots. Lawlessness is worldwide and the world is ripe for a take over by someone who will promise to bring order, even by the use of force, out of this chaos. And such a one will arise--to be sure after the church has gone to meet the Lord in the air--and he is called in God's Word the Lawless One (2 Thess 2:8). History will repeat itself, only this time on a much larger scale.

But what concerns me today with this audience is that even evangelical Xnty is not without its spirit of lawlessness. Revolt against authority has permeated our Xn homes and schools. The loosening of almost all restraints on conduct in the name of practicing Xn liberty characterizes too many Xn's lives. Discipline is a lost cause even in our schools and churches, for if one doesn't agree with the standards or practices of one ^{group} he can easily find a welcome somewhere else, and he'll probably be made a deacon or student body leader at that! Legalism is ~~so~~ wrongly defined as the presence of any kind of restriction or law. If the imposition of law is legalism, I ~~have~~ ^{must} remind you that God is a legalist. Legalism is my bad attitude toward the law of Christ which is the law (and it's called that) under which Xns are to live today. And the essence of the law of X is not a libertine lack of restrictions, but in the words of Paul, by love serve one another. Beware, graduates and all, that the lawlessness of the age which is sure to increase does not affect your walk with God and your service among the people of God. Quality living is lawful living, and sin is lawlessness. Will you follow the trend or buck the tide? There will be a third trend you will see developing your lifetimes and that is the trend toward increased interest in religion even

to the accompaniment of the display of miraculous signs and wonders. In a passage we have already referred to Paul reminds us that in the last days men will have a form of godliness, not ungodliness, but without ^{the power} the true power of God. In the last days too doctrines of demons will be widespread, and having just been ^{to} the capital of demonism at least in the Western Hemisphere I ^{could not even begin to} cannot put limitations on Satan's works even in these days. In the tribulation days-toward which this is all heading-the lawless one will work with power and signs and lying wonders, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness. What is the antidote for this? Is there anything that can match Satan's godliness and the righteousness of his ministers? The antidote is within your very beings if you belong to the Lord, and it is Bible godliness as a display of the righteousness of X which has been freely given to you by His grace. Anything less than this plays right into Satan's deceiving hands. You and I are his opposition, for he cannot gainsay a godly life. Now I do not speak of great feats of ^{faith} godliness, for most of you will not have the opportunity to perform such. I speak of godliness in the routine of life--in the home, in your work, in your community, in your church. Neither do I speak of great and spectacular displays

of power in miraculous signs and wonders. I speak of the wonder of answered prayer-answers to those little, personal but very basic requests of life. I speak of the wonder of a life changed here and there ^{by your witness & influence} as you go thru life-~~a life that you influenced for X~~. I speak of the miracle of a changed character-your character as it becomes more and more like our Lord's. I speak of the wonder of walking with God in the routines as well as in the crises of life. In short, I speak of the miracle of the indwelling X living in and through ^{my} life. This is the antedote to all the deception which Satan will increasingly promote as we near the end of the age. Quality living is godly living, and godly living that displays the power of God in the routines of life, ^{and} in the rather limited spheres of most of our lives. Will you follow the trend toward powerlessness or will you buck the tide with your godly life?

^{Allow} Suffer me one final word. We hear alot today about making the message of the Bible relevant to our times, and as a result there is a good deal of loose thinking about what is the real relevance of the Bible to today's world. ^{This is anchored} Recently Dr. Charles Malik, one-time Pres. of the UN Gen Assembly said this about the relevance of the Bible. "Far from catering to our changing whims, the relevance of the Bible is precisely its unwavering and disturbing demands on our life. It is relevant by showing us how our life is shamelessly irrelevant to it."

By this criterion, what I have reminded you of today has been most relevant, for I have sought to remind you of some of the unwavering and disturbing demands of God's holy Word. Will you heed, then, and give allegiance wholeheartedly to the living God in the face of growing apostasy? Will you gladly live under obedience to the law of Christ in all of its detail tho all men around you, including those in the church, give place to lawlessness? And will you show in all the activities of life, powerful godliness in the face of the powerless counterfeit all around us? May God help all of us to do so, and particularly the men and women of this graduating class.