

The Downgrade to Sodom



INTERNATIONAL NEWS PHOTOS

SEX Orgy Lands Teen-Agers in Court. This headline met the eyes of the readers of a certain newspaper a few weeks ago. It was a sickening account of youthful delinquency. A group of more than thirty young people, including four minors, had been involved in "sex, drinking and vandalism" resulting from a two-night party held in a home in a central Ontario town. As a consequence of this spree \$2,700 damages were done in the home, from which the owners were absent, and forty-four charges were laid, ranging from theft to indecent assault.

This is but one sordid incident among thousands of crimes reported daily across the continent of North America. A black and ever-mounting wave of juvenile crime of every shade and magnitude, from broken windows to homicide, is surging across the land. So markedly serious has the situation become that one newspaper writer has likened it to an epidemic, calling it "the disease of destruction."

The chief of the U.S. Children's Bureau said some time ago that there are in the United States "an annual total of 1,000,000 juvenile delinquents and the number can be expected to increase to 1,500,000 annually within the next eight years."—*The Arsenal*, Nov., 1952.

One disquieting angle of this upswing of youthful misdemeanour is that

younger children are being involved today than ever before. The average age of offenders has dropped three years. For instance it is reported that juvenile burglars used to be sixteen or seventeen, now they are frequently thirteen to fifteen. Some were even ten to twelve.

"But boys will be boys," somebody may say, "and they are no worse today than they were fifty years ago."

That the youth of today are basically the same as those of fifty years ago we are willing to agree. And, given the same training, placed in the same environment, with approximately equal character building influences, would doubtless produce the same average type of individual. But that the crimes committed today are no worse than were committed fifty years ago, we are not prepared to agree. Were deliberate, cold-blooded murders by children and teenagers as common then as today? Did gangs of juvenile hoodlums hold shooting wars with each other, using lethal weapons? Did youthful gangsters, hardly old enough to drive the family car, amuse themselves by forcing other motorists off the road, and thrashing them with tire chains, as they did a short time ago in Texas? "The crimes committed [by youthful offenders] are becoming more violent and wanton," said *Newsweek*, commenting on these conditions.

If we might venture to offer a reason

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as to why our youth are committing more, and more serious offenses than did those of yesteryear, we would agree with many social officers, and say that it is to be found, at least in no small part, in the crime schools and crime textbooks so readily available today. Movies, television and radio, crime comics and delinquent parents all combine in training thousands of our embryoid men and women of tomorrow in methods of lawlessness and immorality.

As we ponder the implications of these facts we feel a ripple of something akin to fear. A fear of tomorrow when the crime-tutored boys and girls of today, many of them schooled from childhood in the dark techniques of law breaking, become men and women.

We are reminded of the foreboding last-day prophecy of the apostle Paul, penned some 1900 years ago to the young man, Timothy:

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13.

In the days of Sodom and Gomorrah both old and young were so wicked that it was not safe to walk the streets of those cities. Violence might descend upon you at any moment. In our day, we are on the road to similar conditions—a down grade to Sodom.

Our modern world is cursed with many innovations useful for scarcely another purpose than to hasten humanity to perdition. But perhaps the most effective agent of destruction is almost as old as sin itself. I refer to alcohol, the medium in which more crimes are generated than any other single thing.

We need to look only at our own country to see the increasing evils of this scourge. It has been estimated that in the year 1950 an amount "equal to more than one-half of all the money in circulation in Canada" passed through the tills of the liquor vendors. It would seem that if the rest of Canada kept pace with Ontario in the consumption of intoxicants for the year 1952, then an amount far and above half of the total currency of the nation was handled by the liquor establishments. Reports for 1952 indicate that Ontario spent \$18,000,000 more for alcohol in that year than for the previous year 1951. Comparable conditions prevail around the world.

But disturbing as these conditions are, looking deeper we see still more disturbing aspects of which these things are perhaps only symptoms. We are thinking of the strange atmosphere of indifference and indulgence in which such deeds are allowed to spawn and flourish. Perversion of public trust in past years brought storms of public protest. Today there is little more than a shake of the head and a shrug of the shoulders.

Writing of this indifferent attitude, one widely read religious commentator said: "The extent of crime . . . is shocking, . . . but worse than the wrongdoing itself is the change of view concerning it. Instead of frowning upon sin, too many people make light of it. Even the darkest crimes are often excused and condoned. Criminals are lauded as heroes, while the zealous citizen who bring them to justice are treated as heels and outcasts."

Turning hopefully to the world of religion we look for more reassuring signs, but few there are. True, there are more religious books being read, and we hear the word revival a little more often than we used to, but when we look for a real increase in the fruits of genuine Christianity, we are hard put to see it.

Paul, writing to the Philippian Christians said, "We, however, are free citizens of heaven, and we are waiting with longing expectation for the coming from heaven of a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." Philippians 3:20, Weymouth. But there seems to be little expectation of the advent in the attitude of the professed Christian world today. In a recent religious poll taken in the

United States by the *Catholic Digest*, it was found that forty-six per cent of the people were concerned about this life predominately. Thirty per cent "felt they were equally serious about both." Twenty-one per cent "thought" they were placing more emphasis on their preparation for the afterlife. On the surface none of these categories can be said to include "longing expectation" for Christ's coming spoken of by Paul.

Wherein lies the reason for this indifference to the future life. The late Dr. Gordon A. Sisco, of the United Church of Canada, seemed to have held the pulpit somewhat responsible. Commenting on the results of the poll he said, "It is my judgment that a responsible view of life after death and a process by which persons may be redeemed in realms beyond this is not an underlying theme of the United States and Canadian Protestant pulpit today. Ministers of flourishing denominations touch upon it at Easter and then proceed with a contemporary kind of preaching. . . . We need a hope far 'beyond history' which will strengthen us ethically for the struggles within history."

We must agree with Dr. Sisco. The church without a doctrine of "beyond history" is an institution without any reason for being. The whole object of its existence is to point men in the hopelessness of sin to "that blessed hope and glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And as we look at the forces at work within our society, which are more and more rapidly tearing away at the pillars which have upheld our civilization in the past, we realize that that Blessed Culmination of history cannot be far off. For civilization is tottering, and, should the delay be long, it will come crashing down upon us in one final, fatal catastrophe.

And so, while the weakening pillars of time still remain we direct our readers, as we shall continue to do as long as our presses roll, to the One who can save in these black, uncertain days. We point those who ponder our words "beyond history" when "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever." Revelation 11:15.