

# Who Can Stop the Trends?

By Evangelist George Smith, in the  
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Watch out for trends! Backsliding is a process; compromise in its most devastating form is progressive; great apostasies start high and end low. History has proven this.

A trend is defined as "an inclination in a certain direction." Such an inclination always precedes a radical departure from any principle. Holiness does not fall into the ditch suddenly. None of our young people's groups is immune to the devil's subtle beckonings by which he hopes to persuade them to accept the tendencies that are causing twentieth century Christianity to side-step the reproach of the Cross while trying to retain its benefits. But we dare not side-step the words to the Hebrews: "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city but we seek one to come." This creeping paralysis of convenient Christianity can be detected by certain basic trends. To mention three, there are the trends toward style, toward superficiality, toward survival.

## Style

Paul's and Peter's exhortations to modesty, sobriety and simplicity in Christian attire and appearance seem either to have been written for a different generation of Christians or we must plead guilty to having traded off our identity as "pilgrims and strangers on the earth" for the more convenient status of fellow travelers with Hollywood. We imitate Hollywood's looks while shunning its lusts.

Let's face the music. Not too long ago, our saved young people had real convictions about the latest fads and fashions, jeweled decorations, penciled eyebrows and artificial lips. But the trend is on to accept the invasion of "style" as a necessary part of this present age; it has become simply "a matter of conscience" (with not too much of even that), and anyone who dares hold to the line and cry out against it is branded as legalistic or old-fashioned. Going is the pilgrim spirit, passing is the "simplicity that is in Christ," disappearing is that wholesome quality which makes Christianity distinct from churchianity, and disappearing with them is the power of the Holy Spirit from our midst. Argue for the need of "adjustment" to the times in order to "win people to something attractive" if you will, but where is the daring repudiation of carnal fashion which characterized us even as recently as ten years ago? The trend is definitely on, and only men and women of conviction and consecration will stem the tide that is leading us into world-conformity and "stylish" Christianity.

## Superficiality

Another earthward trend of today is that state or quality of being shallow, of lacking depth. It is simply the tendency that is coming upon the church to interchange the word fun with the word joy in describing the basic emotional quality in Christianity. But there is a vast difference between the two. When Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you . . . that your joy might be full," he referred to the hazards and the heroics of the Christ-life. Paul had not in mind the trifles of mere "fun" when he said, "I take pleasure in

infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake." He whose joy and pleasure is made of this kind of stuff is a hard fellow to locate these days, and in order to win people to something which "satisfies" we are obliged to insist that the only experiential difference between Christianity and the rest of the world is that it is just a cleaner way to have a good time. But the challenge is gone because we are afraid people will not accept the rugged element in the gospel. Hence, today's youth are being lost to the stringencies of Communism and the persecutions which accompany the fanatical street corner allegiance to Russellism. Even the diets and routines of the athletic training table present a greater incentive to "dig in." "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come;" but the proclivities of present-day fundamentalism are sweeping us toward superficial sanctity and clowning Christianity.

## Mere Survival

Young men, what are your objectives in life? To have a good job, a home, a substantial income, opportunities for advancement in a secular world, a late model car, a television set and all the little gadgets and conveniences of 1953? Young women, where are the "keepers at home" God spoke to Paul about? You will find them in stores and offices, earning money to supplement their husband's income, many of them with absolutely no higher motive than "Well, we can buy all the nicer 'things' this way." Such is the scheme of life today. Is it yours? How then do you differ from any unregenerate worldling in things eternal? If these are your ambitions, your sights are too low, and if these are your accomplishments, you have settled for a discount. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." Millions perish; they need your money and your time and your prayers.

"Young men shall see visions," cried the prophet. Where are these young men—and women? There is a shortage, a tragic lack of missionaries, evangelists and gospel preachers, children's workers and pioneers. We are not insisting that every saved young person is called to duty in the pulpit or on the mission field, but many are missing who should be there! The very fact that Communism has won half the world in less than half a century and the Church has only a relative handful of converts is indicative of the fact that, among other things, our youth are keeping themselves out of hearing range of the Holy Ghost while millions perish. The fields are white to harvest, the laborers few.

"But I don't feel called," is the popular defense. Ah, could it be in many such cases that our talented, healthy, energetic young folks have gotten their spiritual ears closed to the voice of God by the insatiable quest for survival in a materialistic world? Are their ears so close to earth they cannot receive heavenly language? Are their eyes so blinded by the props on the stage of life that they cannot see spiritual death hovering over the human race like a vulture over a dying beast? Everywhere are Christian young people: in offices, in sales jobs, in insurance, behind counters—yes, just about anywhere people pursue plenty,

# Walking with God

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"Enoch walked with God" (Gen. 5:24). "Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:9). "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8).

To walk with God, what a delightful experience for any man! And what a joy to know it may be ours! Our position in life may be very ordinary, our circumstances even embarrassing, our ability below average; yet we may walk with God. We may be far removed from people of kindred spirit, from men and women of "like precious faith," feeling, perhaps, that no earthly friend has any particular interest in us; yet we may walk with God.

Walking with God cannot be learned in a day. We must first learn His stride; then walking with Him becomes comparatively easy and the road over which we travel inexpressibly delightful. Of course, He chooses the route and this assures us of wonderful scenery, for He is a lover of all that is beautiful, and since He has gone over the same road in the long ago, we may be assured that if there are any danger spots or stretches requiring extreme carefulness, He will not fail to acquaint us with them.

Walking with God suggests a steady every day going forward in the path of holiness. This is what tests a man's character. It is not what we are when the footlights are playing upon us, but the life we live when apparently alone that counts.

Walking with God here is a sure cure for loneliness. Who could be lonely in His company? Then, there is no danger of being thrown into a panic, for He cannot be taken by surprise. Long before the morning stars sang together or the sons of God shouted for joy, He had prepared Himself to meet every possible emergency. If there are lions in the way all will be well; we need fear no evil with God beside us.

We cannot tell what the future holds for us. Storm clouds are certainly gathering and many things give evidence that a great world crisis, and perhaps, catastrophe, is fast approaching. Yet all who are in stride with God, walking with Him and trusting in His might, will have strength as their days; and where they had grace to walk, there will be more grace to stand when that day comes, and to rightly anticipate Enoch's experience.

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but are there not some who will be willing to let go and sell out, move out, start out, go out, all out, in the few fleeting years left to the Church to get men and heathen to God? But you are successful where you are, you say? Fine! You are the one God is looking for! Is His work for leftovers who cannot do anything else? God wants and deserves the best. Oh, perish, fond ambitions! Oh, fade, earthly joys! Jesus is calling, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

Style, superficiality, survival. Trivialities, you say? But trivialities establish trends, and trends precede tragedies. And the trend is on! This retreat from the narrow way has almost become a gallop. And who can stop it? Well, who do you think?