

In dealing with prophecy, we liberals emphasize forthtelling and leave foretelling to the various sorts of primitives. E.g., Frank Ford (THE COMING FOOD CRISIS, Chosen/82) claims to be a new Joseph, who's storing up (and selling!) food for when (jacket) "the grocery stores are empty." Harald Bredesen in the Intro. says "God has made F.F. like one of the sons of Issachar (1Chron.12.32), who 'had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.'"

1. But I am appalled at clergy, many of them liberals, who "know what Israel ought to do" vis-a-vis the Middle East. E.g., it ought to stay the hell out of Lebanon. And also what "Israel" in the metaphorical sense ought to do: it ought to organize against particular weapons, just now nuclear weaponry. I am appalled at the ignorant arrogance (is all arrogance ignorant?). How do we American Christian ordained leaders know what the State of Israel should do? And how do we know the socio-dynamics of military deterrence? Do we have some revelation that clarifies the iffiness of interior politics, the triggers in the minds of power?

2. I knew intimately the European-British-American peace-movement before Hitler, and am convinced Hitler was convinced that that movement was so immobilizing of his opposition that he was free to expand (Ruhr, Anschluss, Blitzkrieg): clearly, that movement did more harm than good. Will our present peace-movement (anti-nuke) prove out to have done more harm than good? Nobody knows, so maybe we should be centering our attention elsewhere. Like, where our Lord centered his: "Your kingdom come...."

3. In the 1960s, some of us clergy, including me, were highly politicized vis-a-vis race, and I do not regret it. We gave Sen. Dirksen (the swing senator) and LBJ, nightmares, and got the '64-'65-'66 civil-rights legislation which lifted the hypocrisy of racist legislation off our books and (to some extent) off our hearts. Along with a lot of other radicals in national-church offices, I got fired. (Yes, I have lived in a glass house, and now I'm throwing stones.)

4. Reinhold Niebuhr warned us against simple-minded, single-issue politicizations of the gospel (now, "liberation theology," the anti-nuke movement, etc.), but it is so hard to resist the temptation! I, who was preaching politics in the pulpit, was with him one time when he condemned this practice--to my astonishment, but not to my repentance. ...One of the pains of growing old is to see the young'uns repeating one's mistakes and sins. The young'uns, and some of one's contemporaries. How is an old one to cry out, with any effect? How are the old ones to be drawn into the Dialog Toward the Future? That dialog goes on mainly within institutional dynamics, from which the retired are excluded.

5. All foretelling, religious and political, is straight-line; but life is crooked-line: human decision-making, group and individual, is as protean as a beanbag chair. So all foretelling is phantasmal and rhetorical (even the ESP type). To see Scripture's ambivalence on "prophet," read your concordance on that word. Yet the earliest of the writing prophets says (Amos 3.7 GNB) "The Sovereign LORD never does anything without revealing his plan to his servants, the prophets." The prophet's personal piety and courage and moral sensitivity are thought (including by me) to make him/her a better-than-average foreteller no matter his/her success-rate, and this presumed-assumed power is an essential in the panoply of the prophet's authority.

6. Face-to-face with the abysmal literalistic horrors of "The 700 Club," I proclaim, against prophets of doom and bliss, a prophetic modesty.