

## Christianity in Revolutionary Times

Everywhere I hear the sound of marching, charging feet, boy  
Cause summer's here and the time is right for fighting in the street, boy." (Rolling  
Stones, Street Fighting Man.)

The times in which we live are revolutionary. Student uprisings in the U.S., the protest marches are common news items. Students occupy academic institutions, disrupt lectures and radicals threaten to topple the government. Riots and demonstrations are signs of a sick society. The debate for social change is taken to the streets and has moved out of the academic spheres. This spirit of rebellion can neither be ignored nor brushed aside as results of world tensions. So far the revolution has been limited mainly to the student world, but we see signs that it is spilling over to other sectors of society. Where are the young revolutionaries heading? What do they want? They feel boxed in. They see a world with secular and phony values, and they feel intensely the wrongs of our times. They rebel, but have no alternative to offer. "There is a tragedy inherent in revolutionary thought and action today, in the spirit of our age. They are in revolt against forces that are unjustifiable, against a world which is dehumanizing, a system that on many points is wrong, but... they have no alternative. Their own world view is basically the same as the one that is responsible for the world they are revolting against."

The actions of the rebellious students have a been a long time in the making. They can be traced back to the rise of rationalism, and the spirit of the French revolution. Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot were united in a common goal; the movement for a better society and the destruction of traditional Christianity. They developed the religion of humanity.

Only man's voice is to be heard. Man must refuse to accept revelation from God. There is no one out there to speak. Why try to listen? Let man begin to find all the answers for his problems on the basis of his reason. Diderot anticipated the problems of the twentieth century when he wrote in 1771: "The first attack against religion has been violent and unmeasured. `Once men have in some manner assaulted the barriers of religion they cannot be stopped.'" So man has become no more than a machine, a part of the "plastic society." If man is no more than a machine and God is dead then there are no answers to anything. There is nobody home in the universe. There is nobody to respond to. And if people believe themselves to be machines they can be expected to be treated like machines. Man is no longer a person.

I believe that historic Christianity is the only answer for our revolutionary secular times. This historic Christianity is more than Jesus saves. Indeed, He saves, but not only the soul like a branch out of a burning fire. He is able to redeem us, really and truly, as the whole man. The gospel is for the here and the now and the hereafter. The revolutionaries of our times don't know where they are going. They are out to destroy. But I am reminded of an ancient prophet who was told to be a revolutionary. The Lord said to Jeremiah: "See I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, TO BUILD, AND TO PLANT." Jeremiah had to proclaim Biblical justice. We too must speak prophetically. We

must hunger and thirst for righteousness and not just defend the established order of the day. Our protest must be in love and not through violence. "Protest in love is just another way of: saying that we should always hunger and thirst for righteousness. This means that we shall never compromise, never accept the status quo because that is the easiest thing to do or seems inevitable. For Jesus told us to watch that we do not try to gain the world at the expense of our true selves."

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July, 1972