

Vengeance Belongs to the Lord

"Man is but a foundling in the cosmos, abandoned by the forces that created him. Un-parented, unassisted and undirected by omniscient or benevolent authority, he must fend for himself, and with the aid of his own limited intelligence find his way about in an indifferent universe." (Carl L. Becker)

This idea is the sad pattern that determines the character and much of the direction of modern thinking. The mess of things produced by such pessimistic philosophies reminds me of the words of Aristophanes: "Whirl is king, having deposed Zeus." We see a lack of direction and hear the voices of many modern prophets telling us where to look for salvation.

The outspoken Herbert Marcuse, who is so influential with university students, advocates social change brought about not by the democratic process but by extra-democratic rebellion. Why don't people who live in this corrupt society do something about it?

Marcuse's answer is, They can't. We must free ourselves. He has become the spokesman for the activist proponents of the hate generation, those who specialize in dropping bombs and kidnappings.

Unfortunately, violence seems to become more and more the way to settle an argument to solve a social problem or to remove unjust conditions.

One of the most outspoken of this violent set is of course Abbie Hoffman. One sample from Hoffman's Woodstock Nation should be sufficient to illustrate this point:

"When I appear in the Chicago courtroom, I want to be tried not because I support the National Liberation Front which I do but because I have long hair. Not because I support the Black Liberation Movement, but because I smoke dope, Not because I am against the capitalist system, but because I think property eats. Not because I believe in student power, but because schools should be destroyed. . . . not because I am trying to organize the working class, but because I think kids should kill their parents."

In the world of men we find arrogance and pride. Our daily press is full of records of crime, injustice and violence. We live in a rough and tough world in which people have outlined their own norms for behaviour. If you hit I will hit you back.

Life is so hard. Business is business. If you are softhearted you'll never make a dollar. If you don't look after yourself nobody else will.

The man of the world believes that the most likely to survive is the aggressive, the ruthless, the go-getting, the hard-fisted, the self-assertive man. This twentieth

century has seen some of the most militant attempts ever made to create a master race.

Millions have been destroyed for an evil philosophy. We are even hearing of a theology of revolution.

A minister in Tanzania said in a sermon: "The kingdom of God comes by violence, and violent men take it by force." Another proclaimed: "Should all means be exhausted in the struggle for basic human rights and dignity, violence may be the only method left to effect change."

Yet Jesus Christ still speaks to our generation the beatitude: "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." Anyone who regards this meekness of Jesus is likely to be dismissed as a dreamer and unrealist. Our civilized society has very little patience with a meek man.

"A fairly accurate description of the human race," writes Dr. A.W. Tozer in *The Pursuit of God*," might be furnished one unacquainted with it by taking the Beatitudes, turning them wrong side out and saying, 'Here is your human race.' For the exact opposite of the virtues in the Beatitudes are the very qualities which distinguish human life and conduct."

Violence has never accomplished anything. Let us try the Christian virtue of meekness in our age which has seen so little of it.

A meek man is ready to leave everything in the hands of the living God, and especially so if he feels he is suffering unjustly. He learns to say with the apostle Paul that his policy must be this: "Vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord."

God will look after his affairs. In the meantime, the meek man is to pray for his enemies, bless those who curse him, to keep on treating with kindness people who stepped on him and grieved him.

If the church today wants to make more of an impact, God's secret weapon should be used, the weapon of overcoming evil with good. "If your enemy is hungry," says the Bible, "give him something to eat. If he is thirsty give him something to drink. For if you act in this way, you will heap burning coals upon his head."

Stop being conquered by evil, but keep on conquering evil with good." Not Herbert Marcuse or Abbie Hoffman shall have the last word, but Jesus Christ. It is He who said: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." And Jesus always keeps His promises.

Johan D. Tangelder
May, 1974