

Merton on Nonviolence

The Nonviolent Alternative ("Blessed Are the Meek: The Christian Roots of Nonviolence"):

"Nonviolence is perhaps the most exacting of all forms of struggle, not only because it demands first of all that one be ready to suffer evil and even face the threat of death without violent retaliation, but because it excludes mere transient self-interest from its consideration."

"Christian nonviolence is not built on a presupposed division, but on the basic unity of man....for the healing and reconciliation of man with himself, man the person and man the human family."

"For the Christian, the basis of nonviolence is the Gospel message of salvation for *all men* and of the Kingdom of God to which *all* are summoned."

"Christian nonviolence and meekness imply a particular understanding of the power of human poverty and powerlessness when they are united with the invisible strength of Christ."

"Nonviolence seeks only...the common good of *man*."

"Power always protects the good of some at the expense of all others. Only love can attain and preserve the good of all."

"You cannot love with offensive weapons in your hands."

"A test of our sincerity in the practice of nonviolence is this: are we willing to *learn something from the adversary?*.....Are we willing to admit that he is not totally inhumane, wrong, unreasonable, cruel, etc?"

"Nonviolence has great power, provided that it really witnesses to truth and not just to self-righteousness."

"The Christian knows that there are radically sound possibilities in every man, and he believes that love and grace always have the power to bring out those possibilities at the most unexpected moments."

"The key to nonviolence is the willingness of the nonviolent resister to suffer a certain amount of accidental evil in order to bring about a change of mind in the oppressor and awaken him to personal openness and to dialogue."

Seeds of Destruction ("A Tribute to Gandhi"):

"...I remember arguing about Gandhi in my school dormitory...I insisted that Gandhi was right, that India was, with perfect justice, demanding that the British withdraw peacefully and go home; that the millions of people who live in India had a perfect right to run their own country. Such sentiments were of course beyond comprehension. How could Gandhi be right when he was *odd*? And how could I be right if I was on the side of someone who had the wrong kind of skin, and left altogether too much of it exposed?"

"...Gandhi not only understood the ethic of the Gospel as well, if not in some ways better, than many Christians, but he is one of the very few men of our time who applied Gospel principles to the problems of a political and social existence in such a way that his approach to these problems was *inseparably* religious and political at the same time."

"Gandhi's....politics rested on a thoroughly religious interpretation of reality, of life, and of man's place in the world."

"Political action therefore was not a means to acquire security and strength for one's self and one's party, but a means of witnessing to the truth and the reality of the cosmic structure by making one's own proper contribution to the order willed by God. One could thus preserve one's integrity and peace, being detached from results (which are in the hands of God) and being free from the inner violence the comes from division and untruth..."

"Gandhi made this unconditional devotion to truth the mainspring of his social action."

"Gandhi's religio-political action was based on an ancient metaphysic of man, a philosophical wisdom which is common to Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity: that "truth is the inner law of our being."

"He recognized the impossibility of being a peaceful and nonviolent man if one submits passively to the insatiable requirements of a society maddened by overstimulation and obsessed with the demons of noise, voyeurism and speed."

"Gandhi was indisputably sincere and right in his moral commitment to the law of love and truth. A Christian can do nothing greater than follow his own conscience with a fidelity comparable to that which Gandhi obeyed what he believed to be the voice of God."