

Merton on the Invitation to Nonviolence

Welcome

Opening Prayer:

“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.” Amen! – Thoughts in Solitude

Agenda:

7:00	Welcome, Prayer, Objectives and Introductions
7:20	Conference 1: Who Was Thomas Merton – His Life and The Spirituality that drew him to Nonviolence
7:40	Conference 2: Gandhian Nonviolence
8:00	Break
8:10	Conference 3: Christian Nonviolence
8:30	Conference 4: Effectiveness and challenges of Nonviolence, closing discussion
8:55	Closing Prayer

Objectives:

Nonviolence is fundamentally a profoundly Spiritual and Transformative way of being!

"Another of the major strengths of the nonviolent weapon is its strange power to transform and transmute the individuals who subordinate themselves to its disciplines, investing them with a cause that is larger than themselves. They become, for the first time, somebody, and they have, for the first time, the courage to be free."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

We will see that it was Merton's dedication to living and the insights he gained through his ever-deepening Christian Contemplative vocation that opened him up to understand and embrace Nonviolence as a Christian Spiritual path.

As he re-engaged the world, he saw Nonviolence as the means of seeking to restore Justice, Truth and Wholeness of the human family (body of Christ)!

Reference: Six Principles of Kingian Nonviolence:

1. **Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.**
(Active resistance to evil that is aggressive spiritually, mentally, emotionally.)
2. **Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding.**
(Goal: Redemption/Reconciliation. Purpose: Creating the Beloved Community.)
3. **Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice not people.**
(Recognizes that evildoers are also victims of the evil system.)

4. Nonviolence holds that **suffering can educate and transform.**
(Unearned suffering is redemptive and transformative.)
5. Nonviolence chooses **love instead of hate.**
(Nonviolence resists violence of the spirit as well as the body.)
6. Nonviolence believes that the **universe is on the side of justice.**
(Nonviolence believes that God is a God of justice.)

Introductions:

Name, experience with Merton, Nonviolence and what you'd like to get out of the evening.

Background and some cautions:

Merton was a man of his times. We will encounter some words that might be difficult for some in his writings:

- Man/men
- Sin
- Evil, Satan
- Negro

Primary Merton sources used for this workshop:

- New Seeds of Contemplation (1961)
- Seeds of Destruction (1964)
- Gandhi on Non-Violence (1965)
- Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander (1966)
- Faith and Violence (1968)
- Love and Living (1979)
- Passion for Peace (1995)

Merton always pushed the envelope to open to deeper truth:

Nonviolence was never mentioned in Roman Catholicism at the time of Merton:

There would have been no reference to nonviolence in the moral theology textbooks of his day. For fifteen hundred years the attitude to the Catholic Church toward war was defined not by nonviolence but by the “just war” theory. – Thomas Merton an Introduction – pg 110

But Merton's drive was to be rooted in tradition but to go deeper:

Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander – pg 316:

For my own part I consider myself neither conservative nor an extreme progressive. I would like to think I am what Pope John (XXIII) was – a progressive with deep respect and love for tradition – in other words a progressive who wants to preserve a very clear and marked continuity with the past and not make silly and idealistic compromises with the present – yet to be completely open to the modern world while retaining the clearly defined, traditionally Catholic position.

Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, pg 323 – 324:

I think that, like most other converts, I faced the problem of the “religiousness” and came to terms with it. God was not for me a working hypothesis, to fill in gaps left open by a scientific world view. Nor was He a God enthroned somewhere in outer space. Nor did I ever feel any particular “need” for superficial religious routines merely to keep myself happy. I would even say that, like most modern men, I have not been much moved by the concept of “getting into heaven” after muddling through this present life. On the contrary, my conversion to Catholicism began with the realization of the presence of God in this present life, in the world and in myself, and that my task as a Christian is to live in full and vital awareness of this ground of my being and of the world’s being. Acts and forms of worship help one to do this, and the Church, with her liturgy and sacraments, gives us the essential means of grace. Yet God can work without these means if He so wills. When I entered the Church I came seeking God, the living God, and not just “the consolations of religion.”

No Man is and Island – Author’s Note and Prologue.

Leaving systems to others and renouncing the attempt to lay down universal principles which have been exposed by better men elsewhere, I only desire in this book to share with the reader my own reflections on certain aspects of the spiritual life. I consider that the spiritual life is the life of man’s real self, the life of that interior self whose flame is too often allowed to be smothered under the ashes of anxiety and futile concern. The spiritual life is oriented toward God, rather than toward the immediate satisfaction of the material needs of life, but it is not, for all that, a life of unreality or a life of dreams. On the contrary, without a life of the spirit, our whole existence becomes unsubstantial and illusory. The life of the spirit, by integrating us in the real order established by God, puts us in the fullest possible contact with reality – not as we imagine it, but as it really is. It does so by making us aware of our own real selves and placing them in the presence of God.

The meditations in this book are intended to be at the same time traditional and modern and my own. I do not intend to divorce myself at any point from Catholic tradition. But neither do I intend to accept points of that tradition

blindly and without understanding, and without making them really my own. For it seems to me that the first responsibility of a man of faith is to make his faith really part of his own life, not by rationalizing it but by living it... If there is a thread of unity running through them all, I should say it was the following idea: What every man looks for in life is his own salvation and the salvation of the men he lives with. By salvation I mean first of all the full discovery of who he himself really is. Then I mean something of the fulfillment of his own God-given powers, in the love of others and of God. I mean also the discovery that he cannot find himself in himself alone, but that he must find himself in and through others.

He realized that there was a striking difference between early followers of Jesus and Empire Christians:

Faith and Violence, pp 17-18:

Christian non-violence and meekness imply a particular understanding of the power of human poverty and powerlessness when they are united with the invisible strength of Christ... The early history of the Church, the record of the apostles and martyrs remains to testify to this inherent and mysterious dynamism of the ecclesial “event” ... Christian non-violence is rooted in this consciousness and this faith.

Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, pg 96:

Christianity overcame Pagan Rome by nonviolence. But when Christianity became the religion of the Empire, then the stoic and political virtues of the Empire began to supplant the original theological virtues of the first Christians. The heroism of the soldier supplanted the heroism of the martyr... the supreme sacrifice was to die fighting under the Christian emperor... Hence the strange paradox that certain spiritual and largely nonviolent ideologies which were in fact quite close to the Gospel were attacked and coerced in the name of Christ by the Christian soldier who was often no longer a Christian except in name: for he was violent, greedy, self-complacent, and supremely contemptuous of anything that was not a perfect reflection of himself.

Conference 1 – Who was Thomas Merton and the Spirituality that drew him to Nonviolence

- Born in France during World War 1 on January 31 1915, parents were Artists (mother Ruth Jenkins was an American Quaker and father Owen Merton was an Anglican from New Zealand.)
 - Baptized into the Anglican Church in England
 - No early formal training but sensed a deep spirituality in his father.
 - Has Feast Day on the Anglican Liturgical Calendar (Dec 10)
- Lost his family throughout his early years
 - Mother dies from cancer when he was 6 (1921). She was distant and demanding on Tom even when she was alive.
 - Father dies from brain tumor when he was 16 (1931).
 - Maternal Grandfather dies in 1936 and Maternal Grandmother dies in 1937.
 - Only Brother dies in World War II in 1943
 - His early childhood losses had a profound impact on him:
As an orphan, I went through the business of being passed from family to family, and being a “ward” and an “object of charitable concern,” etc. etc. I know how inhuman and frustrating that can be – being treated as a thing and not as a person. – The Hidden Ground of Love pg 605 (July 16, 1968).
 - His Friends, Trappist Community, Catholic Faith and the World became his family.
- Women were always a challenge, though he had a special devotion to the Virgin Mary, he didn't relate with women. He was popular and had lots of sexual encounters as a young man, and there is a rumor that he got a girl pregnant in London. It wasn't until age 51 (1966) and a monk that he briefly finds real love with a woman. Had a romance which included a physical component with a student nurse (reports of age vary 19 – mid-20's, about 30 years younger). Necessary to the full development of his capacity to love and to his human experience of loving and women.

- Lived in various places; little real stability in his youth. Lived variously in Long Island, France and England. Occasionally accompanied his father who traveled extensively pursuing a living as an artist.
- Following his father's death, he had tumultuous teen years / first year in college at Cambridge, beings to find stability attending Columbia.
 - Found support in a group of friends on the staff of the Columbia School Newspapers; they would become lifetime friends. Two professors became his life-long mentors, Mark Van Doren (a professor of English Literature) and Dan Walsh (professor of Philosophy).
 - Received B.A. in English in 1938 at Columbia and in 1939 he received his M.A. in literature.
- Finds Catholicism – and would remain firmly rooted in it throughout his life, he as a progressive with deep respect for continuity with the past but one who was always committed to understand and make his faith his own.

Certainly I find myself not the slightest inclination to “be” anything but “Catholic”. Any further question of other institutions, other organizations, appears to me to be totally ludicrous. I believe in the Church. I am in the place where Christ has put me. Amen. – Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander pg 251

- His reading turned more and more toward Catholicism (1937) and a pull toward God.
- He started attending Church and then formally asked to become a Catholic at Corpus Christi church where he was baptized on November 16, 1938.
- Felt a strong attraction to the Priesthood; applied but withdrew from the Franciscans in 1940.
- In September 1940, Merton began to teach English at St. Bonaventure College in Olean NY and lead a personally devout life.
- In the summer of 1941, spent 2 weeks volunteering at Catherine de Hueck's Friendship House in Harlem which had a profound impact on him.

- In April 1941 went to Our Lady of Gethsemani Monastery for a Holy Week Retreat, returned on December 10, 1941 and waited to be accepted into the Trappists

Merton needed an escape the World into God. Wanted to disappear into God:

So Brother Matthew locked the gate behind me and I was enclosed in the four walls of my new freedom. And it was appropriate that the beginning of freedom should be as it was. For **I entered a garden that was stripped and bare. The flowers that had been there last April were all gone. The sun was hidden behind low clouds and an icy wind was blowing over the grey grass and the concrete walks.** In a sense my freedom had already begun, for I minded none of these things. -- Seven Storey Mountain (December 10, 1941) pg 410

The (5) years since I entered Gethsemani have gone by life five weeks... At work – writing- I am doing a little better. I mean, I am less tied up in it, more peaceful and more detached. Taking one thing at a time and going over it slowly and patiently (if I can ever be said to do anything slowly and patiently) and forgetting about the other jobs that have to take their turn.... Meanwhile, **for myself, I have only one desire and that is the desire for solitude – to disappear into God, to be submerged in His peace, to be lost in the secret of His Face.** Sign of Jonas – December 13, 1946 – pg 17

- Obtains the habit of a choir-monk novice and given name of Mary Louis – February 21, 1941
- Takes Simple vows – March 19, 1944
- Finished the Seven Storey Mountain – October 1946 (age 31), published 1948
 - Listed on the New York Times bestseller list, by May 1949 100,000 copies were in print. He would often be pigeonholed and characterized by what he wrote in the Seven Storey Mountain.

It is sometime in June... In any case every day is the same for me because I have become very different from what I used to be. **The man who began this journal is dead, just as the man who finished The**

Seven Storey Mountain, when this journal began was also dead, and what is more the man who was the central figure in The Seven Storey Mountain was dead over and over. And now that all these men are dead, it is sufficient for me to say so on paper and I think I will have ended up forgetting them. Because writing down what The Seven Storey Mountain was about was sufficient to get it off my mind for good. -- Ongoing transformations and conversions - Sign of Jonas - June 13, 1951 (pg 328)

- Pronounces Solemn vows – March 19, 1947
- Ordained a priest on May 26, 1949 – a pinnacle experience

My priestly ordination was, I felt, the one great secret for which I had been born. Ten years before I was ordained, when I was in the world, and seemed to be one of the men in the world most unlikely to become a priest, I had suddenly realized that for me ordination to the priesthood was, in fact, a matter of life or death, heaven or hell... -- Ordination Sign of Jonas – part 4 To the Altar of God pg 181

- Develops Faith through trials of uncertainty and questions

Ordination is only the beginning of a journey, not its end. The beginning was easy and pleasant. But when summer was over the serious business of being a priest began... I found myself face to face with a mystery that was beginning to manifest itself in the depths of my soul and to move me with terror... -- Sign of Jonas – part 5 (pg 230)

- Assigned responsibility for others – initially make his struggles deeper
 - Master of Scholastics (Students for the Priesthood): 1951 - 1955
 - Master of Novices: 1955 – 1965
- Went through a major Dark Night period and emerged to re-engage the world with a deeper sense of Christian Contemplative/monastic vocation.
 - Became U.S. Citizen in 1951
 - Given use of wooden toolshed as a place of solitude – 1953

- Named it St Anne's
- Begins interest in the study of other Religions, especially interested in Zen in late 1950's
- Outreach to other faiths – on the heels of Vatican Council II
 - Deep interest in monastic renewal
- Visits with Buddhists in the US
 - Visit D.T. Suzuki – Zen Scholar at Columbia
 - Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hahn visits monastery and makes enormous impression on Merton (1966)
- Experiences mystical "epiphany" at the corner of 4th and Walnut.
 - Writing about Racism, Civil Rights, Nonviolence and Nuclear Weapons
 - Increased interest in Racial issues and pacifism (1961)
 - Involved with Catholic Peace groups in Opposition to Vietnam War (1965)
 - Letters to and visits from countless activists
 - Writing considered engaged Spirituality
 - Disallowed to write about certain issues involving peace so wrote Cold War letters to friends instead.
 - Some of his public wanted him to "remain the writer of the Seven Storey Mountain."
- Moved into Hermitage – August 1965
- Brief but intense romance with Marjorie, a 19-year old nurse in Louisville (1966)
 - Reaffirmed his monastic vows
 - Abbot treats it as a matter of fact: "He fell in love, these things happen".
 - Proved that he could love and be loved by a woman.

- Final Pilgrimage to the Far East to attend first Asian East-West Intermonastic Conference in Bangkok
 - Leaves Abbey on 9/10/1968
 - Visits India, Sri-Lanka (Ceylon) and Thailand
 - Addresses Calcutta Spiritual Summit Conference on 10/23/1968
 - Visits Dalai Lama – 11/4/1968, 11/6/1968
 - Dalai Lama writes of Merton: I could see he was a truly humble and deeply spiritual man. This was the first time that I had been struck by such a feeling of spirituality in anyone who professed Christianity... It was Merton who introduced me to the real meaning of the word "Christian."
 - Mystical Experience at Polonnaruwa – December 4, 1968
 - Addresses Intermonastic Conference and dies in Bangkok on 12/10/1968

His Christian Spiritual Worldview opened Merton up to Nonviolence

God's action in the world continues to offer hope:

Seven Storey Mountain – pg 142:

"People seem to think that it is in some way a proof that no merciful God exists, if we have so many wars. On the contrary consider how in spite of centuries of sin and greed and lust and cruelty and hatred and avarice and oppression and injustice, spawned and bred by the free wills of men, the human race can still recover, each time, and can still produce men and women who overcome evil with good, hatred with love, greed with charity, lust and cruelty with sanctity. How could all this be possible without the merciful love of God, pouring out His grace upon us? Can there be any doubt where wars come from and where peace comes from, when the children of this world, excluding God from their peace conferences, only manage to bring about greater and greater wars the more they talk about peace?"

A deep commitment to living the Truth:

No Man is an Island, Sincerity – pp 188 – 189:

We make ourselves real by telling the truth. Man can hardly forget that he needs to know the truth, for the instinct to know is too strong in us to be destroyed. But he can forget how badly he also needs to tell the truth. **We cannot know truth unless we ourselves are conformed to it.** **We must be true inside, true to ourselves, before we can know a truth that is outside us.** **But we make ourselves true inside by manifesting the truth as we see it...** What then is truth? **Truth, in things, is their reality.** **In our minds, it is the conformity of our knowledge with the things known.** **In other words, it is the conformity of our words to what we think.** **In our conduct, it is the conformity of our acts to what we are supposed to be.**

People live from their false selves (which is poor and requires mercy) but there is a deeper True Self we can discover and choose to live from:

New Seeds of Contemplation – Chapter 7:

People who know nothing of God and whose lives are centered on themselves, imagine that they can only find themselves by asserting their own desires and ambitions and appetites in a struggle with the rest of the world. They try to become real by imposing themselves on other people...cutting themselves off from other people and building a barrier of contrast and distinction between themselves and other men... I am all the more something because you are nothing. And thus I spend my life admiring the distance between you and me... The man who lives in division is living in death...

Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander - Fourth and Walnut experience (1958): pg 153 – 154:

In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world, the world of renunciation and supposed holiness. The whole illusion of a separate holy existence is a dream. Not that I question the reality of my vocation, or of my monastic life: but the conception of “separation from the world” that we have in the monastery too easily presents itself as a complete illusion: the illusion that by making vows we become a different species of being ... we are in the same world as everybody else, the world of the bomb, the world of race hatred, the world of technology, the world of mass media, big business, revolution, and all the rest. We take a different attitude to all these things, for we belong to God. Yet so does everybody else belong to God. We just happen to be conscious of it, and to make a profession out of this consciousness...

It is a glorious destiny to be a member of the human race, though it is a race dedicated to many absurdities and one which makes many terrible mistakes: yet, with all that, God Himself gloried in becoming a member of the human race...

I have the immense joy of being man, a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate. As if the sorrows and stupidities of the human condition could overwhelm me, now that I realize what we all are. And if only everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun.

... Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. If only they could all see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed...I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other. **But this cannot be seen, only believed and "understood" by a peculiar gift.**

... At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes of our lives, which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our own will. This little point of nothingness and of absolute poverty is the pure glory of God in us. It is so to speak His name written in us in our poverty, as our indigence, as our dependents, as our sonship. It is like a pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of heaven. It is in everybody, and if we could see it we would see these billions of points of light coming together in the face and blaze of a sun that would make all the darkness and cruelty of life vanish completely... I have no program for this seeing. It is only given. But the gate of heaven is everywhere.

New Seeds of Contemplation – Chapter 39:

The presence of God in His world as its Creator depends on no one but Him. His presence in the world as Man depends, in some measure, upon men... we are able to decide whether we ourselves, and that portion of the world which is ours, shall become aware of His presence, consecrated by it, and transfigured in its light... We have the choice of two identities: the external mask which seems to be real and which lives by a shadowy autonomy for the brief moment of earthly existence, and the hidden, inner person who seems to us to be nothing, but who can give himself eternally to the truth in whom he subsists. It is this inner self... that we live "in Christ."

Yet we must not deal in too negative a fashion even with the "external self." This self is not by nature evil, and the fact that it is unsubstantial is not to be imputed to it as some kind of crime. It is afflicted with metaphysical poverty:

but all that is poor deserves mercy... It is possible to speak of the exterior self as a mask... The mask that each man wears may well be a disguise not only for man's inner self but for God, wandering as a pilgrim and exile in His own creation. And indeed, if Christ became Man, it is because He wanted to be any man and every man. If we believe in the Incarnation of the Son of God, there should be no one on earth in whom we are not prepared to see, in mystery, the presence of Christ.

Christians are called to live their identity, discover the Gospel message in their time and be transformed to open up to our unity as a human family:

Faith and Violence - The Contemplative Life in the Modern World: pp 222 – 224:

The Christian is then not simply a man of goodwill, who commits himself to a certain set of beliefs... **Underlying Christianity is not simply a set of doctrines about God considered as dwelling remotely in heaven, and man struggling on earth, far from heaven, trying to appease a distant God by means of virtuous acts. On the contrary Christians themselves too often fail to realize that the infinite God is dwelling within them, so that He is in them and they are in Him. They remain unaware of the presence of the infinite source of being right in the midst of the world and of men. True Christian wisdom is therefore oriented to the experience of the divine Light which is present in the world, the Light in who all things are, and which is nevertheless unknown to the world because no mind can see or grasp its infinity.** “He was in the world and the world was made by Him and the world did not know Him. He came into His own and His own did not receive Him.” (John 1:10-11) **Contemplative wisdom is** then not simply an aesthetic extrapolation of certain intellectual or dogmatic principles, but a **living contact with the Infinite Source of all being, a contact not only of man and hearts, not only of “I and Thou”, but a transcendent union of consciousness in which man and God become according to the expression of St. Paul, “one spirit.”** ... The Cross signified that the sacrificial death ... is in fact the liberation of those who have renounced their exterior self in order to dedicate their lives to love and to truth. Christ is not simply an object of love and contemplation whom the Christian considers with devout attention. He is also “the way, the truth and the life” so that for the Christian to be “on the way” is to be “in

Christ” and to seek truth is to walk in the light of Christ. “For me to live,” says St. Paul, “is Christ. I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me.” ... One need not be a monk to turn this way. It is sufficient to be a Child of God, a human person. It is enough that one has in oneself the instinct for truth, the desire of that freedom from limitation and from servitude to external things which St. Paul calls the “servitude of corruption” and which, in fact, holds the whole world of man in bondage by passion, greed, the lust for sensation and for individual survival as though one could become rich enough, powerful enough and clever enough to cheat death. Unfortunately, this passion for unreality and for the impossible fills the world today with violence, hatred and indeed with a kind of insane and cunning fury which threatens our very existence.

Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, pg 122 - 124

“The time is fully come, and the Reign of God is at hand: repent and believe in the good news.” – Mark 1:15

The greatest temptation that assails Christians is that in effect, for most of us, the Gospel has ceased to be news. And if it is not news it is not Gospel: for the Gospel is the proclamation of something absolutely new, everlastingly new, not a message that was once new but is now two thousand years old. And yet for many of us the Gospel is precisely the announcement of something that is not new: The truths of the Gospel are old, deep-rooted, firmly established, unchanging and in some sense a refuge against all that is disturbing because it is new... The message of the Gospel when it was first preached was profoundly disturbing to those who wanted to cling to well-established religious patterns, the ancient and accepted ways, the ways that were not dangerous and which contain no surprises. Repentance is at the same time a complete renewal, a discovery, a new life, and a return to the old, to that which is before everything else that is old. But the old and the new meet in the metanoia, the inner change, that is accomplished by the hearing of God’s word and the keeping of it. ... The new is within the old because it is the perennial beginning of everything, and emerges from the old, transcending it, having no part in it, eternally renewing its own life. The Gospel is handed down from generation to generation, but it must reach each one of us brand new, or not at all. If it is merely “tradition” and not news, it has not been preached or not heard – it is not Gospel. Any word that comes from God is news! ... If there is not risk in

revelation, if there is no fear in it, if there is no challenge in it, if it is not a word which creates whole new worlds, and new beings, if it does not call into existence a new creature, or new self, then religion is dead and God is dead. Those for whom the Gospel is old, and old only, have killed it for the rest of men. The life of this Gospel is its newness... **What makes the Gospel news? The faith, which is created in us by God and which we hear it as news. The acceptance of faith, this new birth in the Spirit, opens up a new dimension in which all things are made new: eternity, time, our own self, the world around us... The Gospel is the news that, if I will, I can respond not in perfect freedom to the redemptive love of God for man in Christ, that I can now rise above the forces of necessity and evil in order to say “yes” to the mysterious action of Spirit that is transforming the world even in the midst of the violence and confusion and destruction that seem to proclaim His absence and His “death.”**

Love and Living – Rebirth and the New Man in Christianity, pg 192 – 202:

One of the most important and characteristic themes of Christianity is that of the renewal of the self, the “new creation” of the Christian “in Christ”. The all-too-familiar oversimplification of Christian belief, which makes it seem to be a formalistic method of gaining for oneself a place “in the other world” as a reward for good work and sufferings in the present life, obscures the real meaning of the Christian’s metanoia, his participation in the death and resurrection of Christ by baptism and the Eucharistic life of self-forgetfulness and fraternal love. This death to the “old self” and new life in the Spirit sent by Christ “from the Father” means not only a juridical salvation “in heaven” and “in the hereafter” but much more a new dimension of one’s present life, a transformation and renewal not only of the Christian as a person but of the community of believers, the brotherhood of those who have received “the Spirit of Christ” and live in “the grace of Christ.” This renewal of life cannot be understood if it is seen merely as a ritual affair, the result of certain formal, exterior acts (though to some Christians it means little more than this). Nor is it an emotional conversion followed by adherence to a set of new attitudes and convictions, based on this sense of inner liberation (though here again some Christians attach undue importance to somewhat superficial psychological experiences and seek to bring them about). In the theology of the New Testament, particularly that of Paul and John, the “new being” of the Christian,

his “new creation,” is the effect of an inner revolution which, in its ultimate and most radical significance, implies complete self-transcendence of the norms and attitudes of any given culture, any merely human society. This includes transcendence even of religious practices. The whole sense of Paul’s polemic with Judaism, a theology of grace... lies in the contention that **the Christian who has attained a radical experience of liberty “in the Spirit” is no longer “under the law.” ... he is bound by the higher law of love, which is his freedom itself, directed not merely to the fulfillment of his own will but rather to the transcendent and mysterious purposes of the Spirit: i.e. the good of all men.** **For all men are not seen as created, redeemed, and loved by God, and all are “one in Christ” in the sense that all are known to God as One Man, the universal Man, Christ, the Son of God.** ... The idea of “new birth” is at the very heart of **Christianity**, and has consequences of profound importance. If this if forgotten – as it so often is- then not only the individual Christian believer but also the Christian community and the society which has traditionally been regarded as Christian all become involved in inner contradictions which eventually lead to crisis. This in turn means that many will begin to experience their Christian life as an insoluble problem from which they either escape by disbelief or which they try to meet by some kind of emotionalism or doctrinaire rigidity. **Spiritual rebirth is the key to all of the higher religions... To be born again is not to become somebody else, but to become ourselves.... To be born again is to be born beyond egoism, beyond selfishness, beyond individuality, in Christ. To be born of flesh is to be born into the human race and to our society, with its fighting, its hatreds, its loves, its passions, its struggle, its appetites. To be born of the spirit is to be born into God (or the Kingdom of God) beyond hatred, beyond struggle, in peace, love, joy, self-effacement, service, gentleness, humility, strength.** How does this birth take place? By the water of baptism (which may well be a baptism of “desire,” that is to say, a spiritual awakening in which the spirit is “washed” and renewed in God) and by the coming of the Spirit which is, in Jesus’ words, as unpredictable and as unexpected as the wind... **At this point we must observe that the rebirth of which Christ speaks is not a single event but a continuous dynamic of inner renewal... birth in the Spirit happens many times in a man’s life, as he passes through successive stages of spiritual development.** A false and superficial view of Christianity assumes that it is enough to be baptized with water and to observe certain ethical and ritual prescriptions in order to guarantee

for oneself a happy life in the other world. But this is only a naïve view of Christianity. **True Christianity is growth in the life of the Spirit, a deepening of the new life, a continuous rebirth, in which the exterior and superficial life of the ego-self is discarded like an old snake skin and the mysterious, invisible self of the Spirit becomes more present and more active...The perfection of the new birth is reached when there is not more selfishness, there is only love.... To become completely transparent and allow Love to shine by itself is the maturity of the “New Man.”**

...The West has lived for thousands of years under the sign of the Titan, Prometheus, the fire stealer, the man of power who defies heaven in order to get what he himself desires. **The West has lived under the sight of will, the love of power, action and domination. Hence, Western Christianity has often been associated with a spiritual will-to-power and an instinct for organization and authority.** This has taken good forms, in devotions to works of education, healing the sick, building schools, order and organization in religion itself. **But even the good side of activism has tended toward an over-emphasis on will, on action, on conquest, on “getting things done,” and this in turn has resulted in a sort of religious restlessness, pragmatism, and the worship of visible results.** There is another essential aspect of Christianity: the interior, the silent, the contemplative, in which hidden wisdom is more important than practical organizational science, and in which love replaces the will to get visible results. **The New Man must not be a one-sided and aggressive activist: he must also have depth, he must be able to be silent, to listen to the secret voice of the Spirit. He must renounce his own will to dominate and let the Spirit act secretly in and through him.**

The result of a transformed life is an ability to express Genuine Love:

New Seeds of Contemplation – Chapter 9

Christ prayed that all men might become One as He was One with His Father, in the Unity of the Holy Spirit... we will discover not only that we love one another perfectly but that we are both living in Christ and Christ in us, and we are all One Christ. We will see that it is He Who loves in us.

... the more we are one with God the more we are united with one another...

The contemplative is not isolated in himself but liberated from his external and egotistic self by humility and purity of heart – therefore there is no longer any serious obstacle to simple and humble love of other men.

The more we are alone, the more we are together; and the more we are in society, the true society of charity, not of cities and crowds, the more we are alone with Him. For in my soul and in your soul I find the same Christ Who is our Life, and He finds Himself in our love, and together we all find Paradise, which is the sharing of His Love for His Father in the Person of Their Spirit.

We all become doors and windows through which God shines back into His own house. When the Love of God is in me, God is able to love you through me and you are able to love God through me.

He (God) is at once infinite solitude (one nature) and perfect society (Three Persons). One infinite Love in three subsistent relations. The One God... is a circle of relations in which His infinite reality, Love, is ever identical and ever renewed... always beginning and never ending...the One Love of the Three Persons is an infinitely rich giving of Itself which never ends and is never taken, but is always perfectly given, only received in order to be perfectly shared. It is because the Love of God does not terminate in one self-sufficient self that is capable of halting and absorbing it, that the Life and Happiness of God are absolutely infinite and perfectly inexhaustible. Therefore, in God there can be no selfishness... we will one day live entirely in God and in one another as the Persons of God live in One another.

Wisdom of the Desert pp 18-19:

Love in fact is the spiritual life, and without it all the other exercises of the spirit, however lofty, are emptied of content and become mere illusions... **Love**, of course, means something much more than mere sentiment, much more than token favours and perfunctory almsdeeds. **Love means an interior and spiritual identification with one's brother, so that he is not regarded as an "object" to "which" one "does good."** ... **Love takes one's neighbor as one's other self, and loves him with all the immense humility and discretion and reserve and reverence without which no one can presume to enter into the sanctuary of another's subjectivity.** From such love all authoritarian brutality, all exploitation,

domineering and condescension must necessarily be absent... **Love demands a complete inner transformation** – for without this we cannot possibly come to identify ourselves with our brother. **We have to become, in some sense, the person we love. And this involves a kind of death of our own being, our own self...** We seek any convenient excuse to break off and give up the difficult task...

Discussion:

1. What are the key themes you notice in these readings that could have attracted Merton to Nonviolence?
2. Do you notice anything inviting you or resonating with your understanding of Nonviolence?

Conference 2 - Merton on Gandhian Nonviolence

Merton had an early affinity to Ghandi

Seeds of Destruction - Defends Ghandi at Oakham Boarding School in 1930 (age 15) pp 222 – 223:

Yet I remember arguing about Gandhi in my school dormitory: chiefly against the football captain, then the head prefect... I insisted Gandhi was right, that India was, with perfect justice, demanding that the British withdraw peacefully and go home; that the millions of people who lived in India had a perfect right to run their country. Such sentiments were of course beyond comprehension. **How could Gandhi be right when he was so 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?** A counter argument was offered but it was not an argument. It was a basic and sweeping assumption that the people of India were political and moral infants, incapable of taking care of themselves, backward people, primitive, uncivilized, benighted, pagan, who could not survive without the English to do their thinking and planning for them. The British Raj was, in fact, a purely benevolent, civilizing enterprise for which the Indians were not suitably grateful... **Infuriated at the complacent idiocy of this argument, I tried to sleep but failed.**

He studied Gandhi's writings as a monk and wrote a book summarizing Gandhi's teaching.

Gandhi used two different terms for NonViolence, Ahimsa and Satyagraha

- a-himsa is non-injury. Hindi term based on the spiritual truth of the unity of all reality.
- Satyagraha is a term Gandhi coined. It means holding on to the truth. Truth-force or soul-force or love-force. Implies active non-violence. Those that followed Gandhi were called a satyagrahi, dedicated to the transformation of his own life, of his adversary, and of society by means of love.

The foundations of Nonviolence are Spiritual and innate to the human person which binds him to the rest of humanity:

Gandhi on Non-violence: Gandhi and the One-Eyed Giant: - pg 10

Non-violence was not simply a political tactic which was supremely useful and efficacious in liberating his people from foreign rule . . . **the spirit of non-violence sprang from an inner realization of spiritual unity in himself. The whole Gandhian concept of non-violent action . . . is incomprehensible if it is thought to be a means of achieving unity rather than as *the fruit of inner unity already achieved.***

Gandhi on Nonviolence: pg 11

... the spiritual or interior life is not an exclusively private affair. (In reality, the deepest and most authentic Western traditions are at one with those of the East on this point.) **The spiritual life of one person is simply the life of all manifesting itself in him.** While it is very necessary to emphasize the truth that as the person deepens his own thought in silence he enters into a deeper understanding of **and communion with the spirit of his entire people** (or of this Church), it is also important to remember that as he becomes engaged in the crucial struggles of his people in seeking justice and truth together with his brother, **he tends to liberate the truth in himself by seeking true liberty for all.**

Gandhi on Non-Violence: pg 14

Hence for Gandhi to speak, write, fast and exercise nonviolent resistance... was... to bear witness to the chief truth of Hinduism: “The belief that ALL life (not only human beings but all sentient beings) is one, i.e., all life coming from the One universal source, call it Allah, God or Parameshwara” Gandhi adds an interesting commentary on this. His immediate conclusion is one that is full of social and moral consequences: “Hinduism excludes all exploitation” ...

A disordered human condition that causes violence and requires spiritual courage:

Gandhi on Nonviolence: pg 57:

Gandhi firmly believes that non-violence is actually more natural to man than violence. His doctrine is built on this confidence in man's natural disposition to love. However, man finds himself deeply wounded, and his inmost dispositions are no longer fully true to themselves. In man's disordered condition, violence seems to be the very foundation of social order and is "enthroned as if it were an eternal law," so that man is called upon by society to reject love and enter into a mysterious "higher duty," presents as sacrificial and inscrutable, and demanded by the law of force. Hence the extraordinary difficulty of non-violence, which requires a supernatural courage only obtainable by prayer and spiritual discipline. This courage demands nothing short of the ability to face death with complete fearlessness and to suffer without retaliation. Such a program is meaningless and impossible, Gandhi thinks, without belief in God. In any case, violence is actually the expression of weakness and confusion. A weak man, inclined to violence, acts justly only by accident. It is the non-violent man (and by extension the non-violent society) which is consistently fair and just. Therefore, a truly free and just society must be constructed on a foundation of non-violence.

Violence corrupts, Nonviolence restores:

Gandhi on Nonviolence: pg 35:

***Ahimsa* (non-violence) is for Gandhi the basic law of our being. That is why it can be used as the most effective principle for social action, since it is in deep accord with the truth of man's nature and corresponds to his innate desire for peace, justice, order, freedom, and personal dignity. Since *himsa* (violence) degrades and corrupts man, to meet force with force and hatred with hatred only increases man's progressive degeneration. Non-violence, on the contrary, heals and restores man's nature while giving him a means to restore social order and justice. *Ahimsa* is not a policy for the seizure of power. It is a way of transforming power, effected freely and without compulsion by all concerned, because all have come to recognize it as right. Since *ahimsa* is man's nature itself, it can be learned by all....**

Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, pp 79-81:

Here is a statement of Gandhi that sums up clearly and concisely the whole doctrine of nonviolence: “The way of peace is the way of truth.” Truthfulness is even more important than peacefulness. Indeed, *lying is the mother of violence*. A truthful man cannot long remain violent. ... But a violent man cannot begin to look for the truth. To start with, he wants to rest assured that his enemy is violent, and that he himself is peaceful. For then his violence is justified. How can he face the desperate labor of coming to recognize the great evil that needs to be healed in himself? It is much easier to set things right by seeing one’s own evil incarnate in a scapegoat, and to destroy both the goat and the evil together.

Gandhi does not mean that everyone may expect to become nonviolent by wishing to do so. But that all who dimly realize their need for truth should seek it by the way of nonviolence, since there is really no other way. **They may not fully succeed. Their success will at least begin to attain the truth. Because of them there will be at least a little truth in the darkness of a violent world.** This idea of Gandhi cannot, however, be understood unless we remember his basic optimism about human nature. He believed that in the hidden depths of our being, depths which are too often completely sealed off from our conscious and immoral way of life, we are more truly nonviolent than violent. **He believed that love is more natural to us than hatred. That “truth is the law of our being.” If this were not so, then “lying” would not be the “mother of violence.” The lie brings violence and disorder into our nature itself. It divides us against ourselves, alienates us from ourselves, makes us enemies of ourselves, and of the truth that is in us. From this division hatred and violence arise. We hate others because we cannot stand the disorder, the intolerable division in ourselves. We are violent to others because we are already divided by the inner violence of our infidelity to our own truth. Hatred projects this division outside ourselves into society. This is not far from the traditional doctrine of the Fathers of the Church concerning original sin! Note of course that the doctrine of original sin, properly understood, is *optimistic*. It does not teach that man is by nature evil, but that evil in him is unnatural, a disorder, a sin. If evil, lying, and hatred were natural to man, all men would be perfectly at home, perfectly happy in evil. Perhaps a few seem to find contentment in an unnatural state of falsity, hatred and greed. They are not happy. Or if they are, they are unnatural.**

Gandhi on Nonviolence: pg 25:

The evils we suffer cannot be eliminated by a violent attack in which one sector of humanity flies at another in destructive fury. Our evils are common and the solution of them can only be common. But we are not ready to undertake this common task because we are not ourselves. Consequently, the first duty of every man is to return to his own “right mind” in order that society itself may be sane....

Living Nonviolence is transformative:

Gandhi on Nonviolence: pg 49:

True nonviolence not only implies the highest form of bravery; it is a kind of charismatic gift, a “creed” and a “passion” for which one sacrifices everything: it is a complete way of life, in which the *satyagrahi* is totally dedicated to the transformation of his own life, of his adversary, and of society by means of love. The non-violence of the weak is rather a policy of passive protest, or even a cloak for impotent hatred, which does not dare to use force. It is without love. It seeks to harm the adversary in ways that do not involve force, and it may resort to secret sabotage or even terrorism. Such conduct if not worthy of the name non-violence. It is demoralizing and destructive. To this false and cowardly non-violence, Gandhi says he would prefer an honest resort to force. Hence those who cannot practice a really dedicated non-violence should defend their rights and justice by force, if no other means are available. Gandhi does not preach the passive surrender of rights or of human dignity. On the contrary, he believes that nonviolence is the noblest as well as the most effective way of defending one’s rights. Jesus is presented as the model of non-violent resistance.

Nonviolence seeks Justice respecting the Truth of our inherent Unity, it brings about the Reign of God through selfless dedication to healing of the cosmic family:

Gandhi on Nonviolence: pg 17:

His religious intuition of the Hindu *dharma* saw all life as one in a sacred cosmic family in which each member helped to elevate the whole from a selfish and destructive to a spiritual and productive level through sacrificial participation in the common needs and struggles of all. Hence the cornerstone of all Gandhi’s life, action and thought was the respect for the sacredness of life and the

conviction that love is the law of our being.” For he said, “if love or non-violence be not the law of our being, the whole of my argument falls to pieces.” Note he also says that “Truth is the law of our being.” But obviously Gandhi’s life was without meaning unless we take into account the fact that it was lived in the face of untruth and hatred, the persistent and flagrant denial of love.

Gandhi on Nonviolence: pg 12

The liberation of India was to Gandhi a religious duty because for him the liberation of India was only a step to the liberation of all mankind from the tyranny of violence in others, but chiefly in themselves. So Gandhi could say, “**When the practice of ahimsa becomes universal, God will reign on earth as He does in heaven.”**

Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, pp 113 – 116:

“The business of every God-fearing man,” says Gandhi, “is to dissociate himself from evil in *total disregard of the consequences*. He must have faith in the good deed producing only a good result... He follows the truth though the following of it may endanger his very life. He knows that it is better to die in the way of God than to live in the way of Satan.” This is precisely the attitude we have lost in the West, because we have lost our fundamentally religious view of reality, of being and of truth. And this is what Gandhi retained. **We have sacrificed the power to apprehend and respect what man is, what truth is, what love is, and have replaced them with a vague confusion of pragmatic notions about what can be done with this or that, what is permissible, what is feasible, how things can be used, irrespective of any definite meaning or finality contained in their very nature, expressing the truth and value of that nature.** We are concerned only with “practicality” – “efficiency”: that is, with means, not with ends. And therefore, we are more and more concerned only with immediate consequences. **We are the prisoners of every urgency.** In this way we so completely lose all perspective and sense of the values that we are no longer able to estimate correctly what even the most immediate consequences of our actions may turn out to be. ... **Having lost our ability to see life as a whole, to evaluate conduct as a whole, we no longer have any relevant context into which our actions are to be fitted, and therefore all our actions become erratic, arbitrary, and insignificant.** To the man who concerns himself only with consequences

everything soon become inconsequential, nothing “follows from” anything else, all is haphazard, futile, and absurd. **For it is not humanly possible to live a life without significance and remain healthy. A human life has to have a human meaning, or else it becomes morally corrupt.**

Gandhi on Nonviolence: pp 15-16

Some of the most characteristic and least understood elements in his non-violent mystique follow from this principle which implies a rejection of the basic idea of the affluent industrial society. **A society that lives by organized greed or by systemic terrorism and oppression (they come to much the same thing in the end) will always tend to be violent because it is in a state of persistent disorder and moral confusion.** The first principle of valid political action in such a society then becomes non-cooperation with its disorder, its injustices, and more particularly with its deep commitment to untruth. **Satyagraha is meaningless if it is not based on an awareness of profound inner contradiction in all societies based on force.** “It is not possible for a modern state based on force non-violently to resist forces of disorder, whether external or internal.” **Hence satyagraha according to Gandhi cannot seriously accept claims advanced by basically violent society that hopes to preserve order and peace by the threat of maximum destruction and total hate.** **Satyagraha must begin by putting itself against this claim in order that the seriousness of one’s dedication to truth may be put to the test.** It is not possible for the truly nonviolent man simply to ignore the inherent falsity and inner contradictions of a violent society. On the contrary, it is for him a religious and human duty to confront the untruth in that society with his own witness in order that the falsity may become evident to everyone. The first job of a *satyarghi* is to bring the real situation to light even if he has to suffer and die in order that injustice be unmasked and appear for what it really is. All the political acts for Gandhi were, then, at the same time spiritual and religious acts in fulfillment of the Hindu *dharma*. They were meaningful on at least three different levels at once: first as acts of religious worship, second as symbolic and educative acts bringing the Indian people to a realization of their true needs and their place in the life of the world, and finally they had a universal import as manifestations of urgent truths, the unmasking of political falsehood, awakening all men to the demands of the time and to the need for renewal and unity on a world scale.

Seeds of Destruction - A Tribute to Gandhi: pp 227 – 232 (Passion for Peace – Gandhi the Gentle Revolutionary, pp 78-83)

Gandhi's whole concept of man's relations to his own inner being and to the world of objects around him was informed by the contemplative heritage of Hinduism, together with the principles of Karma Yoga which blended in his thought, with the ethic of the Synoptic Gospels and the Sermon on the Mount. In such a view, politics had to be understood in the context of service and worship in the ancient sense of ... (liturgy, public work). **Man's intervention in the active life of society was at the same time by its very nature... his own personal service (of God and man) and worship... Political action was ... 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 were in the hands of God) and being free from the inner violence that comes from division and untruth...These perspectives lent Gandhi's politics their extraordinary spiritual force and religious realism.**

The success with which Gandhi applied this spiritual force to political action makes him uniquely important in our age. More than that, it gives him a very special importance for Christians. Our attitude to politics tends to be abstract, divisive, and often highly ambiguous. Political action is by definition secular and unspiritual. But Gandhi emphasized the importance of the individual person entering political action with a fully awakened and operative spiritual power in himself, the power of Satyagraha, non-violent dedication to truth, a religious and spiritual force, a wisdom born of fasting and prayer...

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." ... Gandhi's religious action is based on a religious intuition of being in man and in the world, and his vow of truth is a vow of fidelity to being in all its accessible dimensions.

Discussion:

1. What key characteristics of Gandhian Nonviolence stood out to you?
2. How do see these relating to Merton's Spiritual Worldview?
3. How do these resonate with you and your experience?

Conference 3 - Merton on Christian Nonviolence

Christian Nonviolence

Faith and Violence, pp 14-17, Passion for Peace, pp 87...:

Non-violence 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, even political, from its considerations. In a very real sense, he who practices non-violent resistance must commit himself not to the defense of his own interests or even those of a particular group: he must commit himself to the defense of objective truth and right and above all man... Christian non-violence is not built on a presupposed division, but on the basic unity of man. It is not out for the conversion of the wicked to the ideas of the good, but for the healing and reconciliation of man with himself, man the person and man the human family.

Nor should the nonviolent resister be content to prove to himself that he is virtuous and right, and that his hands and heart are pure even though the adversary's may be evil and defiled. Still less should he seek for himself the psychological gratification of upsetting the adversary's conscience and perhaps driving him to an act of bad faith and refusal of the truth. We know that our unconscious motives may, at times, make our nonviolence a form of moral aggression and even a subtle provocation designed (without our awareness) to bring out the evil we hope to find in the adversary, and thus to justify ourselves in our own eyes and in the eyes of "decent people." Wherever there is a high moral ideal there is an attendant risk of pharisaism, and nonviolence is no exception. The basis of pharisaism is division: on one hand this morally or socially privileged self and the elite to which it belongs. On the other hand, the "others," the wicked, the unenlightened, whoever they may be...

Christian nonviolence is not built on a presupposed division, but on the basic unity of man. It is not out for the conversion of the wicked to the ideas of the good, but for the healing and reconciliation of man with himself, man the person and man the human family.

The nonviolent resister is not fighting simply for "his" truth or for "his" pure conscience, or for the right that is on "his side." **On the contrary, both his strength and his weakness come from the fact that he is fighting for the truth, common to him and to the adversary, the right which is objective and universal. He is fighting for everybody.**

For this very reason, as Gandhi saw, the fully consistent practice of nonviolence demands a solid metaphysical and religious basis both in being and in God. This comes before subjective good intentions and sincerity. For the Hindu this metaphysical basis was provided by the Vedantist doctrine of the Atman, the true transcendent Self which alone is absolutely real, and before which the empirical self of the individual must be effaced in the faithful practice of dharma. For the Christian, the basis of non-violence is the Gospel message of salvation for all men and of the Kingdom of God to which all are summoned. The disciple of Christ... proves his faith by the gift of his whole self to the Lord in order that all may enter the Kingdom... The great historical event, the coming of the Kingdom is made clear and is "realized" in proportion as Christians themselves live the life of the Kingdom in circumstances of their own place and time. By their example of a truly Christian understanding of the world, expressed in a living and active application of the Christian faith to the human problems of their own time. Christians manifest the love of Christ for men (Jn 13:35, 17:21), and by that fact make him visibly present in the world. The religious basis of Christian nonviolence is then faith in Christ ... and obedience to his demand to love and manifest himself in us by a certain manner of acting in the world and in relation to other men. This obedience enables us to live as true citizens of the Kingdom, in which the divine mercy, the grace, favor, and redeeming love of God are active in our lives. Then the Holy Spirit will indeed "rest upon us" and act in us, not for our own good alone but for God and his Kingdom. And if the Spirit dwells in us and works in us, our lives will be continuous and progressive conversion and transformation in which we also, in some measure, help to transform others and allow ourselves to be transformed by and with others, in Christ.

The chief place in which this new mode of life is set forth in detail is the Sermon on the Mount. At the very beginning of this great inaugural discourse, the Lord numbers the beatitudes, which are the theological foundation of Christian

nonviolence: Blessed are the poor in spirit. . . blessed are the meek (Matthew 5:3-4).

This does not mean "blessed are they who are endowed with a tranquil natural temperament, who are not easily moved to anger, who are always quiet and obedient, who do not naturally resist." Still less does it mean "blessed are they who passively submit to unjust oppression." ... 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. The Beatitudes indeed convey a profound existential understanding of the dynamic of the Kingdom of God; a dynamic made clear in the parables of the mustard seed and of the yeast. This is a dynamism of patient and secret growth, in belief that out of the smallest, weakest, and most insignificant seed the greatest tree will come. This is not merely a matter of blind and arbitrary faith... **Christian nonviolence is nothing if not first of all a formal profession of faith in the Gospel message that the Kingdom has been established and that the Lord of truth is indeed risen and reigning over his Kingdom...**

Hence in perfect obedience to the Gospel, he effaces himself and his own interests and even risks his life in order to testify not simply to "the truth" in a sweeping, idealistic, and purely platonic sense, but to the truth that is incarnate in a concrete human situation, involving living persons whose rights are denied or whose lives are threatened.

Christian nonviolence does not encourage or excuse hatred of a special class, nation, or social group. It is not merely anti-this or that. In other words, the evangelical realism which is demanded of the Christian should make it impossible for him to generalize about "the wicked" against whom he takes up moral arms in a struggle for righteousness. He will not let himself be persuaded that the adversary is totally wicked and can therefore never be reasonable or well-intentioned, and hence need never be listened to. This attitude, which defeats the very purpose of nonviolence - openness, communication, dialogue - often accounts for the fact that some acts of civil disobedience merely antagonize the adversary without making him willing to communicate in any way whatever, except with bullets or missiles.

Passion for Peace, pg 161:

The standard doctrine of nonviolence says that you can disobey a law you consider unjust but you have to accept the punishment. In this way you are distinguished from the mere revolutionary. You protest the purity of your witness. You undergo redemptive suffering for religious – or anyway ethical – motives. **You are “doing penance” for the sin and injustice against which you have protested...**

Faith and Violence, pp 21-27:

Let us however seriously consider at least the conditions for relative honesty in the practice of Christian nonviolence.

I. Nonviolence must be aimed above all at the transformation of the present state of the world, and it must therefore be free from all occult, unconscious connivance with an unjust use of power. **This poses enormous problems for if nonviolence is too political it becomes drawn into the power struggle and identified with one side or another in that struggle, while if it is totally apolitical it runs the risk of being ineffective or at best merely symbolic.**

2. The nonviolent resistance of the Christian who belongs to one of the powerful nations and who is himself in some sense a privileged member of world society will have to be clearly not for himself but for others, that is, for the poor and underprivileged. (Obviously in the case of Negroes in the United States, though they may be citizens of a privileged nation, their case is different. They are clearly entitled to wage a nonviolent struggle for their rights, but even for them this struggle should be primarily for truth itself this being the source of their power.)

3. In the case of nonviolent struggle for peace the threat of nuclear war abolishes all privileges. Under the bomb there is not much distinction between rich and poor. In fact, the richest nations are usually the most threatened.

Nonviolence must simply avoid the ambiguity of an unclear and confusing protest that hardens the warmakers in their self-righteous blindness. This means in fact that in this case above all nonviolence must avoid a facile and fanatical self-righteousness, and refrain from being satisfied with dramatic self-justifying gestures.

4. Perhaps the most insidious temptation to be avoided is one which is characteristic of the power structure itself: this fetishism of immediate visible

results. Modern society understands "possibilities" and "results" in terms of a superficial and quantitative idea of efficacy. One of the missions of Christian nonviolence is to restore a different standard of practical judgment in social conflicts. **This means that the Christian humility of nonviolent action must establish itself in the minds and memories of modern man not only as conceivable and possible, but as a desirable alternative to what he now considers the only realistic possibility:** namely, political technique backed by force. Here the human dignity of nonviolence must manifest itself clearly in terms of a freedom and a nobility which are able to resist political manipulation and brute force and show them up as arbitrary, barbarous, and irrational. This will not be easy. The temptation to get publicity and quick results by spectacular tricks or by forms of protest that are merely odd and provocative but whose human meaning is not clear may defeat this purpose.

The realism of nonviolence must be made evident by humility and self-restraint which clearly show frankness and open-mindedness and invite the adversary to serious and reasonable discussion.

Instead of trying to use the adversary as leverage for one's own effort to realize an ideal, nonviolence seeks only to enter into a dialogue with him in order to attain, together with him, the common good of man. Nonviolence must be realistic and concrete. Like ordinary political action, it is no more than the "art of the possible." But precisely **the advantage of nonviolence is that it has a more Christian and more humane notion of what is possible.** Where the powerful believe that only power is efficacious, the nonviolent resister is persuaded of the superior efficacy of love, openness, peaceful negotiation, and above all of truth. For power can guarantee the interests of some men but it can never foster the good of man. Power always protects the good of some at the expense of all the others. Only love can attain and preserve the good of all. Any claim to build the security of all on force is a manifest imposture.

It is here that genuine humility is of the greatest importance. Such humility, united with true Christian courage (because it is based on trust in God and not in one's own ingenuity and tenacity), is itself a way of communicating the message that one is interested only in truth and in the genuine rights of others.

Conversely, our authentic interest in the common good above all will help us to be humble, and to distrust our own hidden drive to self-assertion.

5. Christian nonviolence, therefore, is convinced that the manner in which the conflict for truth is waged will itself manifest or obscure the truth. To fight for truth by dishonest, violent, inhuman, or unreasonable means would simply betray the truth one is trying to vindicate. The absolute refusal of evil or suspect means is a necessary element in the witness of nonviolence. As Pope Paul said before the United Nations Assembly in 1965, "Men cannot be brothers if they are not humble. No matter how justified it may appear, pride provokes tensions and struggles for prestige, domination, colonialism and egoism. In a word pride shatters brotherhood" He went on to say that the attempts to establish peace on the basis of violence were in fact a manifestation of human pride. **"If you wish to be brothers, let the weapons fall from your hands. You cannot love with offensive weapons in your hands."**

6. A test of our sincerity in the practice of nonviolence is this: Are we willing to learn something from the adversary? If a new truth is made known to us by him or through him, will we accept it? Are we willing to admit that he is not totally inhumane, wrong, unreasonable, cruel, etc.? This is important. If he sees that we are completely incapable of listening to him with an open mind, our nonviolence will have nothing to say to him except that we distrust him and seek to outwit him. Our readiness to see some good in him and to agree with some of his ideas (though tactically this might look like a weakness on our part), actually gives us power: the power of sincerity and of truth. On the other hand, if we are obviously unwilling to accept any truth that we have not first discovered and declared ourselves, we show by that very fact that we are interested not in the truth so much as in "being right." Since the adversary is presumably interested in being right also, and in proving himself right by what he considers the superior argument of force, we end up where we started. Nonviolence has great power, provided that it really witnesses to truth and not just to self-righteousness.

The dread of being open to the ideas of others generally comes from our hidden insecurity about our own convictions. We fear that we may be "converted" or perverted by a pernicious doctrine. On the other hand, if we are mature and

objective in our open-mindedness, we may find that viewing things from a basically different perspective than that of our adversary we discover our own truth in a new light and are able to understand our own ideal more realistically.

Our willingness to take an alternative approach to a problem will perhaps relax the obsessive fixation of the adversary on his view, which we believe is the only reasonable possibility and which he is determined to impose on everyone else by coercion. It is the refusal of alternatives a compulsive state of mind which one might call the "ultimatum complex" which makes wars in order to force the unconditional acceptance of one oversimplified interpretation of reality. This mission of Christian humility in social life is not merely to edify, but to keep minds open to many alternatives. The rigidity of a certain type of Christian thought has seriously impaired this capacity, which nonviolence must recover. **Needless to say, Christian humility must not be confused with a mere desire to win approval and to find reassurances by conciliating others superficially.**

7. Christian hope and Christian humility are inseparable. The quality of nonviolence is decided largely by the purity of the Christian hope behind it. In its insistence on certain human values, the Second Vatican Council, following Pacem in Terris, displayed a basically optimistic trust in man himself. Not that there is not wickedness in the world, but today trust in God cannot be completely divorced from a certain trust in man. **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.** Therefore if he has hope that God will grant peace to the world it is because he also trusts that man, God's creature, is not basically evil: that there is in man a potentiality for peace and order which can be realized provided the right conditions are there. **The Christian will do his part in creating these conditions by preferring love and trust to hate and suspiciousness.** Obviously, once again, this "hope in man" must not be naive. But experience itself has shown, in the last few years, how much an attitude of simplicity and openness can do to break down barriers of suspicion that had divided men for centuries.

It is therefore very important to understand that Christian humility implies not only a certain wise reserve in regard to one's own judgments a good sense which sees that we are not always necessarily infallible in our ideas but it also

cherishes positive and trustful expectations of others. A supposed "humility" which is simply depressed about itself and about the world is usually a false humility. This negative, self-pitying "humility" may cling desperately to dark and apocalyptic expectations and refuse to let go of them. It is secretly convinced that only tragedy and evil can possibly come from our present world situation.

This secret conviction cannot be kept hidden. It will manifest itself in our attitudes, in our social action and in our protest. **It will show that in fact we despair of reasonable dialogue with anyone. It will show that we expect only the worst. Our action seeks only to block or frustrate the adversary in some way. A protest that from the start declares itself to be in despair is hardly likely to have valuable results. At best it provides an outlet for the personal frustrations of the one protesting. It enables him to articulate his despair in public.** This is not the function of Christian nonviolence. This pseudo-prophetic desperation has nothing to do with the beatitudes, even the third. No blessedness has been promised to those who are merely sorry for themselves.

In resume, the meekness and humility which Christ extolled in the Sermon on the Mount and which are the basis of true Christian nonviolence are inseparable from an eschatological Christian hope which is completely open to the presence of God in the world and therefore to the presence of our brother who is always seen, no matter who he may be, in the perspectives of the Kingdom. Despair is not permitted to the meek, the humble, the afflicted, the ones famished for justice, the merciful, the clean of heart and the peacemakers. All the beatitudes "hope against hope," bear everything, believe everything, hope for everything, endure everything" (I Corinthians 13:7). The beatitudes are simply aspects of love. They refuse to despair of the world and abandon it to a supposedly evil fate which it has brought upon itself. Instead, like Christ himself, the Christian takes upon his own shoulders the yoke of the Savior, meek and humble of heart. This yoke is the burden of the world's sin with all its confusions, and all its problems. These sins, confusions and problems are our very own. We do not disown them.

Christian nonviolence derives its hope from the promise of Christ: "Fear not, little flock, for the Father has prepared for you a Kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

The hope of the Christian must be, like the hope of a child, pure and full of trust. The child is totally available in the present because he has relatively little to remember, his experience of evil is as yet brief, and his anticipation of the future does not extend far. **The Christian, in his humility and faith, must be as totally available to his brother, to his world, in the present, as the child is. But he cannot see the world with childlike innocence and simplicity unless his memory is cleared of past evils by forgiveness, and his anticipation of the future is hopefully free of craft and calculation. For this reason, the humility of Christian nonviolence is at once patient and uncalculating.**

The chief difference between nonviolence and violence is that the latter depends entirely on its own calculations. The former depends entirely on God and on His word.

Discussion:

1. What key characteristics of Christian Nonviolence stood out to you? Did you notice any differences to Gandhian Nonviolence?
2. Which of the 7 conditions for Christian Nonviolence stood out to you?
3. How do see Christian Nonviolence relating back to Merton's Spiritual Worldview?
4. How do these resonate with you and your experience?

Conference 4 -- The effectiveness and challenges of Nonviolence

Basic assumptions and observations

Letter to Jim Forest, February 21, 1966:

...do not depend on the hope of results. When you are doing the sort of work you have taken on, essentially an apostolic work, **you may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and even achieve no result at all, if not perhaps results opposite to what you expect.** As you get used to this idea, **you start more and more to concentrate not on the results, but on the value, the rightness, the truth of the work itself.** And there too a great deal has to be gone through, as gradually you struggle less and less for an idea and more and more for specific people... it gets much more real. In the end,...it is the reality of personal relationship that saves everything.

Gandhi on Non-violence: xii

Gandhi wrote: “**There will never be an army of perfectly non-violent people. It will be formed of those who will honestly endeavor to observe non-violence”**

Faith and Violence – Non-Violence and the Christian Conscience - pp 38-39:

The witness of genuine non-violence has been incontestable. Nevertheless, in spite of this, the whole concept of non-violence remains, as far as most Americans are concerned, on the level of pure myth. We badly need a clear, sound, fundamental treatment of the principles of Non-Violent Action. In particular, Christians need theological exposition of these principles... The chief value of such an exposition is that it clearly shows the difference between non-violence and non-resistance. Not only does non-violence resist evil but, if it is properly practiced, it often resists evil more effectively than violence ever could. Indeed, the chief argument in favor of non-violent resistance is that it is, *per se* and ideally, **the only really effective resistance to injustice and evil.** This does not mean that in practice the solution to grave international and civil problems can be had merely by good will and pious gestures of appeasement. **The non-violent ideal does not contain in itself all the answers to all our questions.** These will have to be met and worked out amid the risks and anguish of day to day politics. But they can never be worked out if non-violence is never taken

seriously... Far from being a fanatical manifestation of misguided idealism, non-violence demands a lucid reason, a profound religious faith and, above all, an uncompromising and courageous spirit of self-sacrifice.

The Root of War is Fear - Passion for Peace, pg 38, New Seeds of Contemplation (Chapter 16):

So instead of loving what you think is peace, love other men and love God above all. And instead of hating the people you think are warmongers, hate the appetites and the disorder in your own soul, which are the causes of war. If you love peace, then hate injustice, hate tyranny, hate greed – but hate these things in *yourself*, not in another.

A notable success

Passion for Peace – Nonviolent Resistance to Hitler: pp 61 -66

One of the rare glimmers of humanity in Eichmann's patient labors to exterminate the Jews... was the nonviolent resistance offered by the entire nation of Denmark against Nazi power mobilized for genocide. Denmark... was one of the only nations which offered explicit, formal, and successful nonviolent resistance to Nazi power. The resistance was successful because it was explicit and formal, and because it was practically speaking unanimous. The entire Danish nation simply refused to cooperate with the Nazis and resisted every move of the Nazis against the Jews with nonviolent protest to the highest and most effective caliber, yet without any need for organization, training, or specialized activism: simply by unanimously and effectively expressing in word and action the force of their deeply held moral convictions. These moral convictions were nothing heroic or sublime. They were merely ordinary. When the Germans first approached the Danes about the segregation of Jews, proposing the introduction of the yellow badge, the government officials replied that the King of Denmark would be the first to wear the badge, and that the introduction of any anti-Jewish measures would lead immediately to their own resignation. At the same time, the Danes refused to make any distinction between Danish and non-Danish Jews. That is to say, they took the German Jewish refugees under their protection and refused to deport them back to

Germany... The Danes replied by strikes, by refusal to repair German ships in their shipyards, and by demonstrations of protest. The Germans then imposed martial law. But now it was realized that the German officials in Denmark were changed men. They could "no longer be trusted. "They refused to cooperate in the liquidation of the Jews, not of course by open protest, but by delays, evasions, covert refusal, and the raising of bureaucratic obstacles. Hence Eichmann was forced to send a "specialist" to Denmark at the same time making a concession of monumental proportions... Denmark was ... the only nation which, as a whole, expressed moral objection to this (Hilter's) policy... The Danes were not even running any special kind of nonviolent movement. They were simply acting according to the ordinary beliefs which everybody in Europe theoretically possessed, but which, for some reason, nobody acted on. Quite the contrary! Why did a course of action which worked so simply and so well in Denmark not occur to all the other so-called Christian nations of the West just as simply and just as spontaneously? ... It was not so much that the Danes were Christians as they were human. How many others were even that? The Danes were able to do what they did because they were able to make decisions that were based on clear convictions about which they all agreed and which were in accord with the inner truth of man's own rational nature, as well as in accord with the fundamental law of God in the Old Testament as well as in the Gospel: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The Danes were able to resist the cruel stupidity of Nazi anti-Semitism because its fundamental truth was important to them. And because they were willing, in unanimous and concerted action, to stake their lives on this truth. In a word, such action becomes possible where fundamental truths are taken seriously.

A continuing struggle

Faith and Violence – Religion and Race in the United States – pg 143:

The American racial crisis which grows more serious every day offers the American Christian a chance to face reality about himself and recover his fidelity to Christian truth, not merely in institutional loyalties and doctrinal orthodoxies... but in recanting a more basic heresy: the loss of that Christian sense which sees every other man as Christ and treats him as Christ. For, as St. John said: "We

know what love is by this: that he laid down his life for us so that we ought to lay down our lives for the brotherhood... Dear children, let us put our love not into words or into talk but into deeds, and make it real.” (I John 3:16-18)... The Christian failure in American racial justice has been all too real, but it is not the fault of the few dedicated and non-violent followers of Christ. It is due much more to the fact that so few Christians have been able to face the fact that non-violence comes very close to the heart of the Gospel, and it perhaps essential to it.

Seeds of Destruction – Letters to a White Liberal: pp 43 – 46

Dr. Martin Luther King has appealed to strictly Christian motives. He has based his non-violence on his belief that love can unite men, even enemies, in truth. That is to say that he has clearly spelled out the struggle for freedom not as a struggle for the Negro alone, but also for the white man. **From the start, the non-violent element in the Negro struggle is oriented toward “healing” the sin of racism and toward unity in reconciliation.** An absolutely necessary element in this reconciliation is that the white man should allow himself to learn the mute lesson which is addressed to him in the suffering, the non-violent protest, the loving acceptance of punishment for the violation of unjust laws, which the Negro freely and willingly bring down upon himself in the white man’s presence, in the hope that the oppressor may come to see his own injustice. The purpose of this suffering freely sought and accepted in the spirit of Christ is the liberation of the Negro and the redemption of the white man, blinded by his endemic sin or racial injustice. In other words, the struggle for liberty is not merely regarded by this most significant sector of the Negro population, as a fight for political rights. It is this, and it is also much more. It is what Gandhi called *Satyagraha* – a struggle first of all for the *truth*, outside and independent of specific political contingencies. **The mystique of Negro non-violence holds that the victory of truth is inevitable, but that the redemption of individuals is not inevitable.** Though the truth will win, since in Christ it has already conquered, not everyone can “come to the light” – for if his works are darkness, he fears to let them be seen. **The Negro children of Birmingham, who walked calmly up to the police dogs that lunged at them with a fury capable for tearing their small bodies to pieces, were not only confronting the truth in an exalted moment of faith, a providential *kairos*. They were also in their simplicity, bearing heroic**

Christian witness to the truth, for they were exposing their bodies to death in order to show God and man that they believed in the just rights of their people, know that those rights had been unjustly, shamefully and systematically violated, and realized that the violation called for expiation and redemptive protest, because it was an offense against God and His truth. They were stating clearly that the time had come where such violations could no longer be tolerated. These Negro followers of Dr. King are convinced that there is more at stake than civil rights. They believe that the survival of America is itself in question. They believe that the sin of white America has reached such a proportion that it may call down a dreadful judgement, perhaps total destruction, on the whole country, unless atonement is made. These Negros are not simply judging the white man and rejecting him. On the contrary, **they are seeking by Christian love and sacrifice to redeem him, to enlighten him, so as not only to save his soul... but also to awaken his mind and his conscience, and stir him to initiate the reform and renewal which may still be capable of saving our society.** **But this renewal must be the work of both the White and the Negro together. It cannot be planned and carried out by the white man alone or even by the Negro under the white man's paternal guidance. It demands some Negro initiative, and the white man cannot collaborate fruitfully until he recognized the necessity of this initiative.** The Negro is not going to be placated with assurances of respect and vague encouragement from our side. He is going to make sure that we are listening and that we have understood him, before he will believe in our attempts to help. **The purpose of non-violent protest, in its deepest and most spiritual dimensions is then to awakened the conscience of the white man to the awful reality of his injustice and of his sin, so that he will be able to see that the Negro problem is really a *White* problem: that the cancer of injustice and hate which is eating white society and is only partly manifested in racial segregation with all its consequences, *is rooted in the heart of the white man himself.* Only if the white man sees this will he be able to gradually understand the real nature of the problem and take steps to save himself and his society from complete ruin.** As the Negro sees it, the Cold War and its fatal insanities are to a great extend generated within the purblind, guilt ridden, self-deceiving, self-tormenting and self-destructive psyche of the white man.

Seeds of Destruction – Letters to a White Liberal: pp 48-49:

Here is the radical challenge of Negro non-violence today. Here is why it is a source of uneasiness and fear to all white men who are attached to their security. If they are forced to listen to what the Negro is trying to say, the whites may have to admit their prosperity is rooted to some extent in injustice and in sin. And, in consequence, this might lead to a complete re-examination of the political motives behind all our current policies, domestic and foreign, with the possible admission that we are wrong. Such an admission might, in fact, be so disastrous that its effects would dislocate our whole economy and ruin the country. These are not things that are consciously admitted, but they are confusedly present in our minds. They account for the passionate and mindless desperation with which we plunge this way and that, trying to evade the implications of our present crisis.... Southern white society feels itself faced with destruction. It is menaced in its inmost being, even though that "inmost being" is in fact only a specter. But we know from experience with other notorious historical forms of fanaticism, that societies which "experience their reality" on this oniric and psychopathic level are precisely those whose members are most convinced of their own rightness, their own integrity, indeed their own complete infallibility. It is this experience of unreality as real, and as something to be defended against objective facts and rights as though against the devil himself, that produces the inferno of fascism and race conflict.

Seeds of Destruction – Letters to a White Liberal: pp 67-69:

The sin of the white man is to be expiated through *a genuine response to the redemptive love of the Negro for him*. The Negro is ready to suffer, if necessary, to die, if this will make the white man understand his sin, repent of it, and atone for it. But this atonement must consist of two things:

1. A complete reform of the social system which permits and breeds such injustices.
2. This work of reorganization must be carried out under the inspiration of the Negro whose providential time has now arrived, and who has received from God enough light, ardor and spiritual strength to free the white man in freeing himself from the white man.

What is demanded of us is not necessarily that we believe that the Negro has mysterious and magic answers in the realm of politics and social control, *but that his spiritual insight into our common crisis is something we must take seriously.*

Faith and Violence, Religion and Race in the United States, pg 144:

The partial failure of liberal non-violence has brought out the stark reality that our society itself is radically violent and that violence is built into it very structure. We live in a society which, while appealing to Christian ethical ideals, violently negates its Christian pretensions and in so doing drives a racial minority to desperation and violence. The white Christian cannot in such a situation be content merely to march with his black brother as the risk of getting his head broken or of being shot. The problem is to eradicate this basic violence and injustice from white society. Can it be done? How?

Discussion:

1. What stood out to you about the assumptions and observations?
2. What is the difference between success and ongoing efforts to apply Nonviolence?
3. Is Nonviolence practical in our world?
4. What do you see as the obstacles and the enablers to the practice of Nonviolence?
5. What most resonates with you from this and what invitations did you sense from our time together?

Conclusion

“O God, we are one with You. You have made us one with You. You have taught us that if we are open to one another, You dwell in us. Help us to preserve this openness and to fight for it with all our hearts. Help us to realize that there can be no understanding where there is mutual rejection. O God, in accepting one another wholeheartedly, fully, completely, we accept You, and we thank You, and we adore You, and we love You with our whole being, because our being is Your being, our spirit is rooted in Your spirit. Fill us then with love, and let us be bound together with love as we go our diverse ways, united in this one spirit which makes You present in the world, and which makes You witness to the ultimate reality that is love. Love has overcome. Love is victorious.

Amen.” – Closing statements and prayer from an informal address delivered in Calcutta, India (October 1968)

Appendix – Extra Material

Asian Journal, October 23, 1968 talk at Calcutta Interreligious conference - pg 306:

The only ultimate reality is God. God lives and dwells in us. We are not justified by any action of our own, but we are called by the voice of God...to pierce through the irrelevance of our own life, while accepting that our life is totally irrelevant in order to find relevance in Him. And this relevance in Him is something that can only be received, not something we grasp or possess. It is something that can only be received as a gift. Consequently, the kind of life that I represent is a life that is openness to gift; a gift from God and a gift from others. It is not that we go out into the world with a capacity to love others greatly. This too we know in ourselves, that our capacity for love is limited. And it has to be completed with the capacity to be loved, to accept love from others, to want to be loved by others, to admit our loneliness and to live with our loneliness because everybody is lonely. This is then another basis for the kind of experience I am talking about, which is a new approach, a different approach to the external experience of the monk. The monk in this solitude and in his meditation seeks this dimension of life. ... And the deepest level of communication is not communication, but communion. It is wordless. It is beyond words, and it is beyond speech, and it is beyond concept. Not that we discover a new unity. We discover an older unity. My dear brothers, we are already one. But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are.

Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, pg 171 – 172:

A basic temptation: the flatly unchristian refusal to love those whom we consider, for some reason or other, unworthy of love. And, on top of that, to consider others unworthy of love for even trivial reasons. Not that we hate them of course: but we just refuse to accept them in our hearts, to treat them without suspicion and deal with them without inner reservations. In a word, we reject those who do not please us. We are of course “charitable toward them.” An interesting use of the word “charity” to cover and to justify a certain coldness, suspicion, and even disdain. But this is punished by another inexorable refusal: we are bound by the logic of this defensive rejection to reject any form of happiness that even implies acceptance of those we have decided to reject. This

certainly complicates life, and if one is sufficiently intolerant, it ends by making all happiness impossible. This means that we have to get along without constantly applying the yardstick of “worthiness” (who is worthy to be loved and who is not). And it almost means, by implication, that we cease to ask even indirect question about who is “justified” who is worthy of acceptance, who can be tolerated by the believer! What a preposterous idea that would be! And yet the world is full of “believers” who find themselves entirely surrounded by people they can hardly be expected to “tolerate” such as Jews, Negros, unbelievers, heretics, Communists, pagans, fanatics and so on. God is asking me, the unworthy, to forget my unworthiness and that of all my brothers and dare to advance in the love which has redeemed and renewed us all in God’s likeness. And to laugh, after all, at all the preposterous ideas of worthiness.

Gandhi on Nonviolence: pp 18-23:

Gandhi knew the reality of hatred and untruth because he had felt them in his own flesh: indeed, he succumbed to them when he was assassinated on January 30, 1948. Gandhi's non-violence was therefore not a sentimental evasion or denial of the reality of evil. It was a clear-sighted acceptance of the necessity to use the force and the presence of evil as a fulcrum for good and for liberation. All forms of necessity can contribute to man's freedom. There is material and economic need. There is spiritual need. The greatest of man's spiritual needs is the need to be delivered from the evil and falsity that are in himself and in his society. Tyranny, which makes sagacious use of every human need and indeed artificially creates more of them in order to exploit them all to the limit, recognizes the importance of guilt. And modern tyrannies have all explicitly or implicitly in one way or another emphasized the *irreversibility of evil* in order to build their power upon it.... It is no accident that Hitler believed firmly in the unforgivability of sin. This is indeed fundamental to the whole mentality of Nazism, with its avidity for final solutions and its concern that all uncertainties be eliminated. Hitler's world was built on the central dogma of the irreversibility of evil. Just as there could be no quarter of the Jews so the acts that eliminated them were equally irreversible and there could really be no excuse of the Nazis themselves... In St. Thomas Aquinas, we find a totally different view of evil. Evil is not only reversible but it is the proper motive of that mercy by which it is overcome and changed into good. Replying to the objection

that moral evil is not the motive for mercy since the evil of sin deserves indignation and punishment rather than mercy and forgiveness, St Thomas says that on the contrary *sin itself if already a punishment* “and in this respect we feel sorrow and compassion for sinners.” In order to do this, we have to be able to *experience their sins as if it were our own*. But those who “consider themselves happy and whose sense of power depends on the idea that they are beyond suffering any evil are not able to have mercy on others” by experiencing the evil of others as their own. This is a splendid analysis of the mentality of power and greed which makes evil irreversible! Such a mentality lacks the interior strength necessary to assume the suffering of another as its own and thus to change his condition by forgiveness and acceptance. Instead of seeing the sin of another as punishment and suffering, and as a motive for compassion, it looks on that evil as a despicable moral blemish which must be eliminated and punished, removed from sight and from experience. Only the admission of defect and fallibility in oneself makes it possible for one to become merciful to others... Indeed, the good that men do is always in the realm of the uncertain and of the fluid, because the needs and sufferings of men, the sins and failures of men, are constant and love triumphs, at least in this life, not by eliminating evil once for all but by resisting and overcoming it anew every day the good is not assured one for all by one heroic act. It must be recaptured over and over again. St Peter looked for a limit to forgiveness. Seven times, and then the sin was irreversible! But Christ told him that **forgiveness must be repeated over and over again, without end**. The “fabric” of society is not finished. It is always “in becoming.” It is on the loom, and it is made up of constantly changing relationship. Non-violence takes account precisely of this dynamic and non-final state of all relationships among men, for non-violence seeks to change relationships that are evil into others that are good, or at least less bad. Hence non-violence implies a kind of bravery far different from violence. In the use of force, one simplified the situation by assuming that the evil to be overcome is clear-cut, definite, and irreversible. Hence there remains but one thing: to eliminate it. Any dialogue with the sinner, any question of the irreversibility of his act, only means faltering and failure. Failure to eliminate evil is itself a defeat. Anything that even remotely risks such defeat is in itself capitulation to evil. The irreversibility of evil then reaches out to contaminate even the tolerant thought of the hesitant crusader who, momentarily, doubts the total evil of the

enemy his is about to eliminate. Such tolerance is already complicity and guilt and must be eliminated in turn... Conscience does indeed make cowards. It makes Judases. Conscience must be eliminated, This is the familiar mental machinery of tyrannical oppression... **Sin is thus prevented from entering into the living dialectic of society.** And yet a dialectic that ignores the presence of evil is itself dead because it is untrue. The greatest of tyrannies are all therefore based on the postulate that *there should never be any sin*... The most awful tyranny is that of the proximate Utopia where the last sins are currently being eliminated and where, tomorrow, there will be on more sins because all the sinners will have been wiped out.

Non-violence has a different logic. It recognizes that sin is an everyday occurrence which is the very nature of actions' constant establishment of new relationships within a web of relations, and it needs forgiving, dismissing, in order to make it possible for life to go on by constantly releasing men from what they have done unknowingly. Only through this constant mutual release from what they do can men remain free agents, only by their constant willingness to change their minds and start again can they be trusted with so great a power as that to begin something new.

This remarkable statement of Hannah Arendt's shows the inherent relation between non-violence and the renewal of India for which Gandhi lived and died. A violent change would not have been a serious change at all. To punish and destroy the oppressor is merely to initiate a new cycle of violence and oppression. The only real liberation is that which *liberates both the oppressor and the oppressed* at the same time for the same tyrannical automatism of the violent process which contains in itself the curse of irreversibility. "The only freedom contained in Jesus' teaching of forgiveness is the *freedom from vengeance*, which encloses both doer and sufferer in the relentless automatism of the action process, which by itself need never come to an end." True freedom is then inseparable from the inner strength which can assume the common burden of evil which weighs both on oneself and one's adversary. False freedom is only a manifestation of the weakness that cannot bear even one's own evil until it is projected onto the other and seen as exclusively his. The highest form for spiritual freedom is, as Gandhi believed, to be sought in the strength of

heart which is capable of liberating the oppressed and the oppressor together. But in any event, the oppressed must be able to be free within himself, so that they may begin to gain strength to pity his oppressor. Without that capacity for pity, neither of them will be able to recognize the truth of their situation: a common relationship in a common complex of sins.

Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, pp 113 – 116:

“The business of every God-fearing man,” says Gandhi, “is to dissociate himself from evil in *total disregard of the consequences*. He must have faith in the good deed producing only a good result... He follows the truth though the following of it may endanger his very life. He knows that it is better to die in the way of God than to live in the way of Satan.” This is precisely the attitude we have lost in the West, because we have lost our fundamentally religious view of reality, of being and of truth. And this is what Gandhi retained. **We have sacrificed the power to apprehend and respect what man is, what truth is, what love is, and have replaced them with a vague confusion of pragmatic notions about what can be done with this or that, what is permissible, what is feasible, how things can be used, irrespective of any definite meaning or finality contained in their very nature, expressing the truth and value of that nature. We are concerned only with “practicality” – “efficiency”: that is, with means, not with ends. And therefore, we are more and more concerned only with immediate consequences. We are the prisoners of every urgency.** In this way we so completely lose all perspective and sense of the values that we are no longer able to estimate correctly what even the most immediate consequences of our actions may turn out to be. ... **Having lost our ability to see life as a whole, to evaluate conduct as a whole, we no longer have any relevant context into which our actions are to be fitted, and therefore all our actions become erratic, arbitrary, and insignificant.** To the man who concerns himself only with consequences everything soon become inconsequential, nothing “follows from” anything else, all is haphazard, futile, and absurd. **For it is not humanly possible to live a life without significance and remain healthy. A human life has to have a human meaning, or else it becomes morally corrupt.**

Gandhi’s standard is the standard of the New Testament: to do all things in the name of Christ, in the name of truth, that is to say for the sake of the truth in

them which is a manifestation of Christ. To act out of the love for truth, “doing the truth in charity” is to act for truth alone, and without regard for consequences. Not that one recklessly does what seems to be good without care or possible disaster, but that one carefully chooses what one believes to be good and then leaves the good itself to produce its own good consequences in its own good time. Of one thing we must be persuaded: good action is not by any means a mere arbitrary conformity to artificial social norms. To conform is not to act well, but only to “look good.” There is an objective moral good, a good which corresponds to the real value of being, which brings out and confirms the inner significance of our life when we obey its norms. Such an act integrates us into the whole living movement and development of the cosmos, it brings us into harmony withal the rest of the world, it situates us in our place, it helps us fulfill our tasks and to participate fruitfully in the whole world’s work and its history, as it reaches out to its ultimate meaning and fulfillment. In a word, it is an act of obedience to God. Sometimes it may be necessary for us to go against social norms in order to obey real norms of objective good on the direct word of God. For when the norms of conduct of society become arbitrary, capricious and pragmatic there is great danger that one will passively enter into cooperation with injustice and evil, and refuse to listen to God’s pre-emptory command... we will come to know the difference between the “ways of God and the ways of Satan.” We cannot trust our society to tell us this difference... We must recover our inner faith not only in God but in good, in reality, and in the power of the good to take care of itself and us as well, if only we attend to it, observe, listen, choose and obey. Gandhi points out very wisely that our feeling of helplessness in the presence of injustice and aggression arises from “our deliberate dismissal of God from our common affairs.” Those who relinquish God as the center of their moral orbit lose all direction and by that very fact lose and betray their manhood. They become blindly dependent on circumstances and upon those who are astute enough or powerful enough to use every circumstance for their own ends...Reliance on God, of course, does not mean passivity. On the contrary it liberates man for a clearly defined activity, “the will of God.” This is, in Gandhi’s words, “intelligent action in a detached manner.” God wills that we act humanly, therefore intelligently. He wills that we act for His sake, for love of the truth not out of concern for immediate material interest: therefore He wills that we act in a “detached manner.” Detachment is not pure indifference, but again

only a concentration of attention on the subject of the act itself, not on the results or the consequences. We are not responsible for more than our own action, but for this we should take *complete responsibility*. Then the results will follow of themselves, in a manner we may not always be able to foresee. But the point is that we do not always have to foresee every possibility. We have only to judge whether the act is right, just and accords with truth and love here and now, because we “believe in the good” and are therefore convinced that, whatever consequences may follow, they will certainly be good ones, beneficial to ourselves and to society.

Seeds of Destruction - A Tribute to Gandhi: pp 225 – 234 (Passion for Peace – Gandhi the Gentle Revolutionary, pp 72-86)

Gandhi... was dedicated to peace, and though he was engaged in a bitter struggle for national liberation, he achieved this by peaceful means. He believed in serving the truth by *nonviolence*, and his *nonviolence* was effective insofar as it began first within himself, as obedience to the deepest truth in himself. It is certainly true that Gandhi was not above all criticism; no man is. **But it is evident that he was unlike all other world leaders of his time in that his life was marked by a wholeness and a wisdom, an integrity and a spiritual consistency that the other lacked, or manifested only in reverse, in consistent fidelity to a dynamism of evil and destruction... His way was no secret: it was simply to follow conscience without regard for the consequences to himself, in the belief that this was demanded of him by God. Perhaps indeed for a long time these results would remain hidden as God’s secret. But in the end the truth would manifest itself.** What has Gandhi to do with Christianity? Everyone knows that the Orient has venerated Christ and distrusted Christians since the first colonizers and missionaries came from the West... **Gandhi certainly spoke often of Jesus, whom he had learned to know through Tolstoy. And Gandhi knew the New Testament thoroughly. Whether or not Gandhi “believed in” Jesus in the sense that he had genuine Christian faith in the Gospel would be very difficult to demonstrate, and it is not my business to prove it or disprove it. I think the effort to do so would be irrelevant in any case. What is certainly true is that 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... For Gandhi, strange as it may seem to us, political action had to be by its very nature “religious” in the sense that it had to be informed by principles of religious and philosophical wisdom. To separate religion and politics was in Gandhi’s eyes “madness” because his politics rested on a thoroughly religious interpretation of reality, of life, and of man’ place in the world. **Gandhi’s whole concept of man’s relations to his own inner being and to the world of objects around him was informed by the contemplative heritage of Hinduism, together with the principles of Karma Yoga which blended in his thought, with the ethic of the Synoptic Gospels and the Sermon on the Mount.** In such a view, politics had to be understood in the context of service and worship in the ancient sense of ... (liturgy, public work). **Man’s intervention in the active life of society was at the same time by its very nature... his own personal service (of God and man) and worship... Political action was ... 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 were in the hands of God) and being free from the inner violence that comes from division and untruth...These perspectives lent Gandhi’s politics their extraordinary spiritual force and religious realism.**

The success with which Gandhi applied this spiritual force to political action makes him uniquely important in our age. More than that, it gives him a very special importance for Christians. Our attitude to politics tends to be abstract, divisive, and often highly ambiguous. Political action is by definition secular and unspiritual. But Gandhi emphasized the importance of the individual person entering political action with a fully awakened and operative spiritual power in himself, the power of Satyagraha, non-violent dedication to truth, a religious and spiritual force, a wisdom born of fasting and prayer. This is the charismatic and personal force of the saints... Gandhi remains in our time as a sign of the genuine union of spiritual fervor and social action... Gandhi made... unconditional devotion to truth the mainspring of his social action... Gandhi is chiefly concerned with truth and with service, rather than with the possible success of his tactics upon other people, and paradoxically it was his religious conviction that made Gandhi a great politician rather than a mere tactician or operator. Note that

Satyagraha is matter for a vow, therefore worship, adoration of the God of truth so that his whole political structure is built on this and his other vows (Ahimsa, etc.) and becomes an entirely religious system. The vow to die rather than say what one does not mean. The profound significance of *Satyagraha* become apparent when one reflects that “truth” her implies much more than simply conforming one’s words to one’s inner thought. It is ot by words only that we speak Our aims, our plans of action, our outlook, our attitudes, our habitual response to the problems and challenges of life, “speak” f our inner being and reveal our fidelity or infidelity to God and to ourselves. Our very existence, our live itself contains an implicit pretension to meaning since all our free acts are implicit commitments, selections of “meanings” which we seem to find confronting us. Our very existence is “speech” interpreting reality.

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.” ... Gandhi’s religious action is based on a religious intuition of being in man and in the world, and his vow of truth is a vow of fidelity to being in all its accessible dimensions. His wisdom is based on experience more than on logic. Hence the way of peace is the way of truth, of fidelity to wholeness and being, which implies a basic respect for life not as a concept, not as a sentimental figment of the imagination, but in its deepest most secret and most fontal reality. The first and fundamental truth is to be sought in respect for our own inmost being, and this in turn implies the recollectedness and the awareness which attune us to that silence in which alone Being speaks to us in all its simplicity... Therefore he fasted, observed days of silence, lived frequently in retreat, knew the value of solitude, as well as the totally generous expenditure of his time and energy in listening to others and communicating with them... **“Jesus died in vain,” said Gandhi, “if he did not teach us to regulate the whole of life by the eternal law of love.”... Gandhi believed that the central problem of our time was the acceptance or the rejection of a basic law of love and truth which had been made known to the world in traditional religions and most clearly by Jesus Christ. Gandhi himself expressly and very clearly declared himself an adherent of this one law. His whole life, his political action, finally even his death, were nothing but a witness to his commitment. “IF LOVE IS NOT THE LAW OF OUR BEING THE WHOLE OF**

MY ARGUMENT FALLS TO PIECES.”... It is true that Gandhi expressly disassociated himself from Christianity in any of its visible and institutional forms. But it is also true he built his whole life and all his activity upon what he conceived to be the law of Christ. In fact, he died for this law which was at the heart of his belief... 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... May God mercifully grant us the grace to be half as sincere and half as generous as was this great leader, one of the noblest men of our century.

Faith and Violence, Religion and Race in the United States, pp 130-134:

In the Negro Christian non-violent movement, under Martin Luther King, the kairos, the “providential time,” met with a courageous and enlightened response. The non-violent Negro civil rights drive has been one of the most positive and successful expressions of Christian social action that has been seen anywhere in the twentieth century. It is certainly the greatest example of Christian faith in action in the social history of the United States...The passage of the Civil Rights Bill has only brought the real problem to a head. The struggle for rights now enters a new and more difficult phase. Hitherto the well-intentioned and the idealistic have assumed that if the needed legislations were passed, the two races would “integrate” more or less naturally, not without a certain of difficulty, of course, but nonetheless effectively in the end. They have also assumed as axiomatic that if something is morally right and good, it will come to pass all by itself as soon as obstacles are removed. Everyone seemed to believe with simple faith that law and order, morality, the “American way of life” and Christianity are all very much the same thing. Now it is becoming quite clear that they are not so at all. Many Christians, who have confused “Americanism” with “Christianity” are in fact contributing to the painful contradictions and even injustices of the racial crisis. For the one thing that has been made most evident by the long and bitter struggle of the South, and now of the North, to prevent civil rights legislation from being passed or enforced or made effective, is that the legislators and the police themselves, along with some ministers and indeed all those whom one can call “the establishment,” seem to be the first to defy the law or set it aside when their own interests are threatened. In other words, we are living in a society that is not exactly moral, a society which misuses

Christian clichés to justify its lawlessness and immorality. And so there are many who think that non-violence has not proved itself a success. It is considered naïve and overly simple and it does not get real results. **Certainly, nonviolence postulates a belief in the fundamental goodness of human nature. But this attitude of optimism can come to be confused with shallow confidence in the morality and intrinsic goodness of a society which is proving itself torn by vicious internal contradictions...** For non-violence apparently presupposed a sense of justice, of humaneness, of liberality, of generosity that were not to be found in the which people to whom the Negroes made their stirring appeal. The problem of American racism turned out to be far deeper, far more stubborn, infinitely more complex. It is also part of a much greater problem: one that divides the whole world into what may one day turn into a revolutionary interracial war of two camps: the affluent whites and the impoverished non-whites. One reason why non-violence apparently cannot continue to be a really effective instrument for the vindication of Negro rights is this: it seems that the willingness to take punishment and suffering, which is essential to non-violent resistance, cannot mean the same thing to the Negro minority in the United States as it meant to the Hindus in their vast majority facing English colonialism in India. There Hindu non-violence bore witness to overwhelming strength... The Negro is always the one who gets his head bashed in. Whether or not this is what non-violence really means, the confused image of it has now become unacceptable to many activists in the struggle for civil rights, while resentful whites, north and south, are not willing to see its true meaning in any case... it became increasingly clear that the Civil Rights Law has not really solved the racial problem and that in actual fact the ghetto existence of the Negro has only become better and more inexorably defined by his inability to take advantage of the rights that have been granted him only on paper and too late. The Negro is integrated by law into a society in which there really is no place for him – not that a place could not be made for him, if the white majority were capable of wanting him as a brother and a fellow-citizen. But even those who have been theoretically in favor of civil rights are turning out to be concretely reluctant to have the Negro as next-door neighbor... The Negro's clear awareness that he is still despised and rejected after years of bitter struggle and deception, has destroyed his confidence in legal and peaceful methods. Perhaps he is beginning to want something besides "rights" that are purely Platonic – and opportunity

to unburden himself in his bitterness by violent protest, that will disrupt a social “order” that seems to him to have proved itself meaningless and fraudulent.

Seeds of Destruction – Letters to a White Liberal: pp 52-59:

There can be no question whatever that the mind of the average Southern White is not only unconsciously but even consciously and willfully tending more and more to identify itself with an explicitly Nazi brand of racism. Meanwhile another significant fact must be mentioned. Not only have the local Southern police conspicuously refused to take any serious action in solving nearly fifty bombings that have recently taken place, some with loss of lives, in Southern states. The F.B.I. have also failed to produce any results.... The conspicuous failure of the law to provide adequate protection or redress for Negroes subject to violent attack by Whites is having one very serious effect: it is causing Negroes to lose confidence in the efficacy of non-violence as a political tactic, because non-violence presupposes a basic respect for legality, and this is being completely destroyed by the inaction and hesitation of the Federal Government, along with the belligerent contempt of law and justice on the part of some Southern states. Unfortunately, not all Negroes can appreciate the Christian foundation of non-violent action as it is practiced by the followers of Dr. King. Many northern Negro leaders, and especially the organizers of the Black Muslim movement, categorically reject Dr. King's ideas as sentimental. They believe that his non-violence is a masochistic exhibition of defeatism which flatters the whites, plays into their hands, and degrades the Negro still further by forcing him to submit uselessly to violence and humiliation... This reaction against what is basically a Christian protest leads to another extreme: a black racism as intransigent and as fanatical as that of the white racists themselves.

If the Christian and non-violent element in Negro protest is finally discredited, it may mean that Christianity itself will become meaningless in Negro eyes. Those Negroes who attach the Christian leaders in the south are usually completely disillusioned with Christianity, if not bitterly hostile to it, because they are convinced that it has no other function than to keep the negro in passive and helpless submission to his white oppressors. When white Christian express admiration and sympathy for Dr. King, this is immediately interpreted by his

Negro critics as evidence of their own negative thesis. As for the attitude of white Christians toward the Negro freedom movement, Protestants and Catholics alike are both confused and evasive in their sympathies... Here and there Christian leaders get together to make encouraging statement. Yet at the same time, even those white Christians most favorable to the Negro cause, have been quick to react against the protests in Birmingham and Jackson, censuring them and demanding "more patience" on the Negro's part, sincerely believing that the whole problem can be adequately settled only by the administration in Washington. This to the Negro is more than naïve. He cannot help but interpret it as an evasion and bad faith and consequently he has little or no confidence in any white Christian group...Evidently, many white Christians will be grieved and disappointed at this evaluation of their sincere concern over the Negro's struggle for his rights. They will remind the Negro that they *have* taken certain steps in his favor. They will expect him to be more grateful... First of all, it shows that these well-meaning critics do not grasp the real dimensions of the problem as the negro sees it. Like the average liberal, they think that the Negro is simply presenting a few reasonable demands which can be met by legislative action. And, as a corollary to this, they assume that if the Negro were to ask any more than this, he would be unreasonable if not rebellious. In actual fact the Negro is not simply asking to be "accepted into" the white man's society, and eventually "absorbed by it"... It is simply taken for granted that, since the white man is superior, the Negro wants to become a white man. As we, liberals and Christians that we are, advance generously, with wide open arms, to embrace our little black brothers and welcome him into white society. The Negro is not only not grateful, he is not even impressed. In fact, he shows by his attitude that he is at the same time antagonized and disgusted by our stupidity... The negro knows precisely why the white man imagines that the Negro wants to be a White Man. The White Man is too insecure in his fatuous self-complacency to be able to imagine anything else.

The Root of War is Fear - Passion for Peace (pp 23- 38), New Seeds of Contemplation (Chapter 16):

pp 23 – 26:

The present war crisis is something we have made entirely for and by ourselves. There is in reality not the slightest logical reason for war, and yet the whole world is plunging headlong into frightful destruction and doing so with the purpose of avoiding war and preserving peace! This is a true war-madness, an illness of the mind and the spirit... Of all the countries that are sick, America is perhaps the most grievously afflicted. ... What is the place of a Christian in all this? Is he simply to fold his hands and resign himself to the worst, accepting it as the inescapable will of God and preparing himself to enter heaven with a sigh of relief? ... What are we to do? The duty of a Christian in this crisis is to strive with all his power and intelligence, with his faith, hope in Christ and love for God and man, to do the one task which God has imposed upon us in the world today. The task is to work for the total abolition of war. There can be no question that unless we abolish the world will remain constantly in a state of madness and desperation in which... the danger of catastrophe will be imminent and probably at every moment everywhere... Peace is to be preached, nonviolence is to be explained as a practical method, and not left to be mocked as an outlet for crackpots who want to make a show of themselves. Prayer and sacrifice must be used as the most effective spiritual weapons in the war against war, and like all weapons that must be used with deliberate aim: not just vague aspirations for peace and security, but against violence and against war. This implies that we are also willing to sacrifice and restrain our own instinct for violence and aggressiveness in our relations with other people. We may never succeed in this campaign but whether we succeed or not the duty is evident. It is the great Christian task of our time. Everything else is secondary, for the survival of the human race itself depends on it. We must at least face this responsibility and do something about it. And the first job of all is to understand the psychological forces at work in ourselves and in society.

pp: 27 – 29

At the root of war is fear, not so much the fear men have of one another as the fear they have of *everything*. It is not merely that they do not trust one another:

they do not even trust themselves... They cannot trust anything because they have ceased to believe in God. It is not only our hatred of others that is dangerous but also and above all our hatred of ourselves: particularly that hatred of ourselves which is too deep and too powerful to be consciously faced. For it is this which makes us see our own evil in others and unable to see it in ourselves... It is easy to identify the sin with the sinner when he is someone other than our own self. In ourselves, it is the other way around: we see the sin, but we have great difficulty in shouldering responsibility for it. We find it very hard to our sin with our own will and our own malice. On the contrary, we naturally tend to interpret our immoral act as an involuntary mistake, or as the malice of a spirit in us that is other than ourselves. Yet at the same time we are fully aware that others do not make this convenient distinction for us. The acts that have been done are, in their eyes, "our" acts and they hold us fully responsible. What is more, we tend unconsciously to ease ourselves still more of the burden of guilt that is in us, by passing it on to somebody else... I minimize my own sins and compensate for doing so by exaggerating the faults of others. As if this were not enough, we make the situation much worse by artificially intensifying our sense of evil, and by increasing our propensity to feel guilt even for things which are not in themselves wrong. In all these ways we build up such an obsession with evil, both in ourselves and in others, that we waste all our mental energy trying to account for this evil, to punish it, to exorcise it, or to get rid of it in any way we can. We drive ourselves mad with our preoccupation, and in the end, there is no outlet left but violence. We have to destroy something or someone. By that time, we have created for ourselves a suitable enemy, a scapegoat in whom we have invested all the evil in the world. He is the cause of every wrong.

pg 34:

If we can love men we cannot trust (without trusting them foolishly) and if we can to some extent share the burden of their sin by identifying ourselves with them, then perhaps there is some hope of a kind of peace on earth, based on the wisdom and the manipulations of men but on the inscrutable mercy of God. For only love- which means humility – can exorcise the fear which is at the root of all war.

pg 37:

If men really wanted peace, they would sincerely ask God for it and He would give it to them. But why should He give the world a peace which it does not really desire? The peace the world pretends to desire is really no peace at all. To some men peace merely means the liberty to exploit other people without fear of retaliation or interference. To others peace means the freedom to rob brothers without interruption. To still others it means the leisure to devour the goods of the earth without being compelled to interrupt their pleasures to feed those whom their greed is starving. And to practically everybody peace simply means the absence of any physical violence that might cast a shadow over lives devoted to the satisfaction of their animal appetites for comfort and pleasure. Many men like there have asked God for what they thought was “peace” and wondered why their prayer was not answered. They could not understand that it actually was answered. God left them with what they desired, for their idea of peace was only another form of war.

pg 38:

So instead of loving what you think is peace, love other men and love God above all. And instead of hating the people you think are warmongers, hate the appetites and the disorder in your own soul, which are the causes of war. If you love peace, then hate injustice, hate tyranny, hate greed – but hate these things in *yourself*, not in another.