

Class of Nonviolence – Lesson Seven

On the Duty of Civil Disobedience

Henry David Thoreau

I heartily accept the motto, "That government is best which governs least"; and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe — "That government is best which governs not at all"; and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which the will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient. The objections which have been brought against a standing army, and they are many and weighty, and deserve to prevail, may also at last be brought against a standing government. The standing army is only an arm of the standing government. The government itself, which is only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it. Witness the present Mexican war, the work of comparatively a few individuals using the standing government as their tool; for in the outset, the people would not have consented to this measure.

Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men, generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy is worse than the evil. It makes it worse. Why is it not more apt to anticipate and provide for reform? Why does it not cherish its wise minority? Why does it cry and resist before it is hurt? Why does it not encourage its citizens to put out its faults, and do better than it would have them? Why does it always crucify Christ and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther, and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels?

If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go, let it go: perchance it will wear smooth — certainly the machine will wear out. If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank, exclusively for itself, then perhaps you may consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil; but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.

As for adopting the ways of the State has provided for remedying the evil, I know not of such ways. They take too much time, and a man's life will be gone. I have other affairs to attend to. I came into this world, not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad. A man has not everything to do, but something; and because he cannot do everything, it is not necessary that he should be petitioning the Governor or the Legislature any more than it is theirs to petition me; and if they should not hear my petition, what should I do then? But in this case the State has provided no way: its very Constitution is the evil. This may seem to be harsh and stubborn and unconciliatory; but it is to treat with the utmost kindness and consideration the only spirit that can appreciate or deserves it. So is all change for the better, like birth and death, which convulse the body.

I do not hesitate to say, that those who call themselves Abolitionists should at once effectually withdraw their support, both in person and property, from the government of Massachusetts, and not wait till they constitute a majority of one, before they suffer the right to prevail through them. I think that it is enough if they have God on their side, without waiting for that other one. Moreover, any man more right than his neighbors constitutes a majority of one already.

I meet this American government, or its representative, the State government, directly, and face to face, once a year — no more — in the person of its tax-gatherer; this is the only mode in which a man situated as I am necessarily meets it; and it then says distinctly, Recognize me; and the simplest, the most effectual, and, in the present posture of affairs, the indispensablest mode of treating with it on this head, of expressing your little satisfaction with and love for it, is to deny it then. My civil neighbor, the tax-gatherer, is the very man I have to deal with — for it is, after all, with men and not with parchment that I quarrel — and he has voluntarily chosen to be an agent of the government. How shall he ever know well that he is and does as an officer of the government, or as a man, until he is obliged to consider whether he will treat me, his neighbor, for whom he has respect, as a neighbor and well-disposed man, or as a maniac and disturber of the peace, and see if he can get over this obstruction to his neighborliness without a ruder and more impetuous thought or speech corresponding with his action. I know this well, that if one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men whom I could name — if ten honest men only — ay, if one *honest* man, in this

State of Massachusetts, ceasing to hold slaves, were actually to withdraw from this co-partnership, and be locked up in the county jail therefore, it would be the abolition of slavery in America. For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be: what is once well done is done forever. But we love better to talk about it: that we say is our mission. Reform keeps many scores of newspapers in its service, but not one man. If my esteemed neighbor, the State's ambassador, who will devote his days to the settlement of the question of human rights in the Council Chamber, instead of being threatened with the prisons of Carolina, were to sit down the prisoner of Massachusetts, that State which is so anxious to foist the sin of slavery upon her sister — though at present she can discover only an act of inhospitality to be the ground of a quarrel with her — the Legislature would not wholly waive the subject of the following winter.

Under a government which imprisons unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison. The proper place today, the only place which Massachusetts has provided for her freer and less despondent spirits, is in her prisons, to be put out and locked out of the State by her own act, as they have already put themselves out by their principles. It is there that the fugitive slave, and the Mexican prisoner on parole, and the Indian come to plead the wrongs of his race should find them; on that separate but more free and honorable ground, where the State places those who are not with her, but against her — the only house in a slave State in which a free man can abide with honor. If any think that their influence would be lost there, and their voices no longer afflict the ear of the State, that they would not be as an enemy within its walls, they do not know by how much truth is stronger than error, nor how much more eloquently and effectively he can combat injustice who has experienced a little in his own person. Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence. A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight. If the alternative is to keep all just men in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose. If a thousand men were not to pay their tax bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceable revolution, if any such is possible. If the tax-gatherer, or any other public officer, asks me, as one has done, "But what shall I do?" my answer is, "If you really wish to do anything, resign your office." When the subject has refused allegiance, and the officer has resigned from office, then the revolution is accomplished. But even suppose blood shed when the conscience is wounded? Through this wound a man's real manhood and immortality flow out, and he bleeds to an everlasting death. I see this blood flowing now.

The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right. It is truly enough said that a corporation has no conscience; but a corporation on conscientious men is a corporation with a conscience. Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents on injustice. A common and natural result of an undue respect for the law is, that you may see a file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys, and all, marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, ay, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of the heart. They have no doubt that it is a damnable business in which they are concerned; they are all peaceably inclined. Now, what are they? Men at all? or small movable forts and magazines, at the service of some unscrupulous man in power? Visit the Navy Yard, and behold a marine, such a man as an American government can make, or such as it can make a man with its black arts — a mere shadow and reminiscence of humanity, a man laid out alive and standing, and already, as one may say, buried under arms with funeral accompaniment, though it may be,

*"Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corse to the rampart we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
O'er the grave where out hero was buried."*

The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies. They are the standing army, and the militia, jailers, constables, *posse comitatus*, etc. In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgment or of the moral sense; but they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones; and wooden men can perhaps be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well. Such command no more respect than men of straw or a lump of dirt. They have the same sort of worth only as horses and dogs. Yet such as these even are commonly esteemed good citizens. Others — as most legislators, politicians, lawyers, ministers, and office-holders — serve the state chiefly with their heads; and, as the rarely make any moral distinctions; they are as likely to serve the devil.

'Posse Comitatus (Latin: "power or force of the county"), ancient English institution consisting of the shire's force of able-bodied private citizens summoned to assist in maintaining public order.

The Judge & the Bomb

by Judge Miles Lord

The following is a statement by U.S. District Judge Miles Lord at his sentencing of two persons convicted of destroying war-related computer equipment at a Sperry plant in Minnesota.

It is the allegation of these young people that they committed the acts here complained of as a desperate plea to the American people and its government to stop the military madness which they sincerely believe will destroy us all, friend and enemy alike.

As I ponder over the punishment to be meted out to these two people who were attempting to unbuild weapons of mass destruction, we must ask ourselves: Can it be that those of us who build weapons to kill are engaged in a more sanctified endeavor than to see who would by their acts attempt to counsel moderation and mediation as an alternative method of settling international disputes? Why are we so fascinated by a power so great that we cannot comprehend its magnitude? What is so sacred about a bomb, so romantic about a missile? Why do we condemn and hang individual killers while extolling the virtues of warmongers? What is that fatal fascination which attracts us to the thought of mass destruction of our brethren in another country? How can we even entertain the thought that all people on one side of an imaginary line must die and, if we be so ungodly cynical as to countenance that thought, have we given thought to the fact that in executing that decree we will also die?

Who draws these lines and who has so decreed?

How many people in this democracy have seriously contemplated the futility of committing national suicide in order to punish our adversaries? Have we so little faith in our system of free enterprise, our capitalism, and the fundamental concepts that are taught us in our constitutions and in our several bibles that we must, in order to protect ourselves from the spread of foreign ideologies, be prepared to die at our own hands? Such thinking indicates a great deal of lack of faith in our democracy, our body politic, our people, and our institutions.

There are those in high places that believe Armageddon is soon to be upon us, that Christ will soon come to earth and take us all back with him to heaven. It would appear that much of our national effort is being devoted to helping with the process. It may even be a celebration of sorts. When the bombs go off, Christ won't have to come to earth—we will all, believers and nonbelievers alike, meet him halfway.

The anomaly of this situation is that I am here called

upon to punish two individuals who were charged with having caused damage to the property of a corporation in the amount of \$33,000. It is this self-same corporation which only a few months ago was before me accused of having wrongfully embezzled from the U.S. government the sum of \$3.6 million. The employees of this company succeeded in boosting the corporate profits by wrongfully and feloniously juggling the books. Since these individuals were all employees of the corporation, it appears that it did not occur to anyone in the office of the Attorney General of the United States that the actions of these men constituted a criminal conspiracy for which they might be punished. The government demanded only that Sperry pay back a mere 10 percent of the amount by which the corporation had been unlawfully enriched. Could it be that these corporate men who were working to build weapons of mass destruction received special treatment because of the nature of their work?

I am now called upon to determine the amount of restitution that is to be required of the two individuals who have done damage to the property of Sperry. The financial information obtained by the probation officers indicates that neither of the defendants owes any money to anyone. While Ms. Katt has no assets, Mr. Laforge is comparatively well endowed. He owns a 1968 Volkswagen, a guitar, a sleeping bag, and \$200 in cash.

The inexorable pressure which generates from those who are engaged in making a living and a profit from building military equipment and the pork barreling that goes on in the halls of Congress to obtain more such contracts for the individual state will in the ultimate consume itself in an atomic holocaust. These same factors exert a powerful pressure upon a judge in my position to go along with the theory that there is something sacred about a bomb and that those who raise their voices or their hands against it should be struck down as enemies of the people, no matter that in their hearts they feel and know that they are friends of the people.

Now conduct of this Sort cannot be condoned under the guise of free speech. Neither should it be totally condemned as being subversive, traitorous, or treasonous in the category of espionage or some other bad things. I would here in this instance take the sting out of the bomb, attempt in some way to force the government to remove the halo with which it seems to embrace any device which can kill, and to place instead thereon a shroud, the shroud of death, destruction, mutilation, disease, and debilitation.

If there is an adverse reaction to this sentence, I will anxiously await the protestations of those who com-

plain of my attempts to correct the imbalance that now exists in a system that operates in such a manner as to provide one type of justice for the rich and a lesser type for the poor. One standard for the mighty and another for the weak. And a system which finds its humanness and objectivity is sublimated to military madness and the worship of the bomb.

A judge sitting here as I do is not called upon to do that which is politically expedient or popular but is called upon to exercise his calm and deliberate judgment in a manner best suited to accomplish and accommodate and vindicate the rights of the people acting through its government and the rights of those people who are the subject matter of such actions. The most popular thing to do at this particular time would be to sentence them to a 10 year period of imprisonment, and some judges might be disposed to do just that. [Thereupon, sentence was imposed: Six months in prison, was suspended, six months on probation.]

I am also aware of the thrust of the argument which would say this would encourage others to do likewise.

If others do likewise, they must be dealt with at that time.

I am also impressed with the argument that this might in some way constitute a disparity of sentence, that you individuals have not been properly punished for your offense because some others might not be deterred from doing that.

I really wonder about the constitutionality of sentencing one person for a crime that may be committed by another person at another time and place.

It is also difficult for me to equate the sentence I here give you - for destroying \$36,000 worth of property, because you have been charged — with those who stole \$3,600,000 worth of property and were not charged, demoted, or in any way punished.

My conscience is clear. We will adjourn the Court.

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Patriotism or Peace

By Leo Tolstoy

Strange is the egotism of private individuals, but the egotists of private life are not armed, do not consider it right either to prepare or use arms against their adversaries; the egotism of private individuals is under the control of the political power and of public opinion. A private person who has a gun in his hand takes away his neighbor's cow, or a desyatina¹ of his crop, will immediately be seized by a policeman and put into prison. Besides, such a man will be condemned by public opinion — he will be called a thief and robber. It is quite different with the states: they are all armed — there is no power over them, except the comical attempts at catching a bird by pouring some salt on its tail — attempts at establishing international congresses, which, apparently, will never be accepted by the powerful states (who are armed for the very purpose that they might not pay attention to any one), and, above all, public opinion, which rebukes every act of violence in a private individual, extols, raises to the virtue of patriotism every appropriation of what belongs to others, for the increase of the power of the country.

Open the newspapers for any period you may wish, and at any moment you will see the black spot — the cause of every possible war: now it is Korea, now the Pamir², now the lands in Africa, Now Abyssinia, now Turkey, now Venezuela, now the Transvaal. The work of the robbers does not stop for a moment, and here and there a small war, like an exchange of shots in the cordon, is going on all the time, and the real war will begin at any moment.

If an American wishes the preferential grandeur and well-being of America above all other nations, and the same is desired by his state by an Englishman, and a Russian, and a Turk, and a Dutchman, and an Abyssinian, and a citizen of Venezuela and of the Transvaal, and an Armenian, and a Pole, and a Bohemian, and all of them are convinced that these desires need not only not be concealed or repressed, but should be a matter of pride and be developed in themselves and in others; and if the greatness and wellbeing of one country or nation cannot be obtained except to the detriment of another nation, frequently of many countries and nations — how can war be avoided?

And so, not to have any war, it is not necessary to preach and pray to God about peace, to persuade the English-speaking nations that they ought to be friendly toward one another; to marry princes to princesses of other nations — but to destroy what produces war. But what produces war is the desire for the exclusive good for one's own nation — what is called patriotism. And so to abolish war, it is necessary to abolish patriotism, and to abolish patriotism, it is necessary to it is necessary first to

become convinced that it is an evil, and that is hard to do. Tell people that war is bad, and they will laugh at you: who does not know that? Tell them that patriotism is bad, and the majority of people will agree with you, but with a small proviso: "Yes, bad patriotism is bad, but there is also another patriotism, the one we adhere to." But wherein this good patriotism consists of no one can explain. If good patriotism consists in not being acquisitive, as many say, it is nonetheless retentive; that is, men want to retain what was formerly acquired, that is, by violence and murder. But even if patriotism is not retentive, it is restorative — the patriotism of the vanquished and oppressed nations, the Armenians, the Poles, Bohemians, Irish, and so forth. This patriotism is almost the very worst, because it is the most enraged and demands the greatest degree of violence.

Patriotism cannot be good. Why do not people say that egotism can be good, though this may be asserted more easily, because egotism is a natural sentiment, with which a man is born, while patriotism is an unnatural sentiment, which is artificially inoculated in him?

It will be said: "Patriotism has united men in states and keeps up the unity of the states." But the men are already united in states — the work is all done: why should men now maintain an exclusive loyalty for their state, when this loyalty produces calamities for all states and nations? The same patriotism which produced the unification of men into states is now destroying those states. If there were but one patriotism — the patriotism of none but the English — it might be regarded as unificatory or beneficent, but when, as now, there are American, English, German, French, Russian patriotisms, all of them opposed to one another, patriotism no longer unites, but disunites. To say that, if patriotism was beneficent, by uniting men into states, as was the case during its highest development in Greece and Rome, patriotism even now, after 1,800 years of Christian life, is just as beneficent, is the same as saying that, since ploughing was useful and beneficent for the field before the sowing, it will be useful now, after the crop has grown up.

It would be very well to retain patriotism in memory of the use which it once had, as people preserve and retain the ancient monuments of temples, as mausoleums stand, without causing any harm to man, while patriotism produces without cessation innumerable calamities.

What now causes the Armenians and the Turks to suffer and cut each others throats and act like wild beasts? Why do England and Russia, each of them

concerned about her share of the inheritance from Turkey, lie in wait and not and not put a stop to the Armenian atrocities? Why do the Abyssinians and Italians fight one another? Why did a terrible war come very near breaking out on account of Venezuela and now on account of the Transvaal? And the Chino-Japanese War, and the Turkish, and the German, and the French wars? And the rage of subdued nations, the Armenians, the Poles, the Irish? And the preparation for war by all the nations? All that is the fruits of patriotism. Seas of blood have been shed for the sake of this sentiment, and more blood will be shed for its sake, if men do not free themselves from this outlived bit of antiquity.

C'est à prendre ou à laisser, as the French say. If patriotism is good, then Christianity, which gives peace, is an idle dream, and the sooner this teaching is eradicated, the better. But if Christianity really gives peace, and we really want peace, patriotism is a survival from barbarous times, which must not only be evoked and educated, as we do now, but which must be eradicated by all means, by preaching, persuasion, contempt and ridicule. If Christianity is the truth, and we wish to live in peace, we must but only have no sympathy for the power of our country, but must even rejoice in its weakening, and contribute to it. A Russian must rejoice when Poland, the Baltic provinces, Finland, Armenia, are separated from Russia and made free; and an Englishman must similarly rejoice in relation to Ireland, Australia, India, and the other colonies and cooperate in it, because the greater the country, the more evil and cruel is its patriotism, and the greater is the amount of the suffering on which its power is based. And so, if we actually want to be what we profess, we must not, as we do now, wish for the increase of our country, but wish for its diminution and weakening, and contribute to it with all our means. And thus must we educate the younger generations: we must bring up the younger generations in such a way that, as it is now disgraceful for a young man to manifest his coarse egotism, for example, by eating everything up, without leaving anything for others, to push a weaker person down from the road, in order to pass by himself, to take away by force what another needs, it should be just as disgraceful to wish for the increase of his country's power; and as it now is considered stupid and ridiculous for a person to praise himself, it should be considered stupid to extol one's nation, as is now done in various laying patriotic histories, pictures, monuments, textbooks, articles. Sermons, and stupid national hymns. But it must be understood that so long as we are going to extol patriotism and educate the younger generations in it, we shall have armaments, which ruin the physical and spiritual life of our nations, and wars, terrible, horrible wars, like those for which we are preparing ourselves, and into the circle of which we are introducing, corrupting them with our patriotism, the new, terrible fighters of the distant East.

In reply to a prince's question on how to increase his army, in order to conquer a southern tribe which did

not submit to him, Confucius replied, "*Destroy all thy army, and use the money, which thou art wasting now on the army, on the enlightenment of thy people and on the improvement of agriculture, and the southern tribe will drive away its prince and will submit to thy rule without war.*"

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910, Lev Nikolayevich, Count Tolstoy), is the Russian author of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. Later in life he formulated a unique Christian philosophy which espoused non-resistance to evil as the proper response to aggression, and which put great emphasis on fair treatment of the poor and working class. Tolstoy's books *Confession* (1884), *What Then Must We Do?* (1886), and most notably *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1894) outline his radical revision of traditional Christian thinking and were important in winning over Gandhi to the idea of non-resistance to evil.

¹A desyatina is a Russian unit of land measurement, about 2.7 acres

²The Pamir is a mountainous region of central Asia, located mainly in Tajikistan and extending into NE Afghanistan and SW Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, China; called the "roof of the world."

What Would You Do if?

By Joan Baez

Fred: OK. So you're a pacifist. What would you do if someone were, say, attacking your grandmother?

Joan: Attacking my poor old grandmother?

Fred: Yeah, you're in a room with your grandmother and there's a guy about to attack her and you're standing there. What would you do?

Joan: I'd yell, "Three cheers for Grandma!" and leave the room."

Fred: No, seriously. Say he had a gun and he was about to shoot her. Would you shoot him first?

Joan: Do I have a gun?

Fred: Yes

Joan: No. I'm a pacifist, I don't have a gun.

Fred: Well, I say you do.

Joan: All right. Am I a good shot?

Fred: Yes.

Joan: I'd shoot the gun out of his hand.

Fred: No, then you're not a good shot.

Joan: I'd be afraid to shoot. Might kill grandma.

Fred: Come on, OK, look. We'll take another example. Say, you're driving a truck. You're on a narrow road with a sheer cliff on your side. There's a little girl sitting in the middle of the road. You're going too fast to stop. What would you do?

Joan: I don't know. What would you do?

Fred: I'm asking you. You're the pacifist.

Joan: Yes, I know. All right, am I in control of the truck?

Fred: Yes

Joan: How about if I honk my horn so she can get out of the way?

Fred: She's too young to walk. And the horn doesn't work.

Joan: I swerve around to the left of her since she's not going anywhere.

Fred: No, there's been a landslide.

Joan: Oh. Well then, I would try to drive the truck over the cliff and save the little girl.

Silence

Fred: Well, say there's someone else in the truck with you. Then what?

Joan: What's my decision have to do with my being a pacifist?

Fred: There's two of you in the truck and only one little girl.

Joan: Someone once said if you have a choice between a real evil and a hypothetical evil, always take the real one.

Fred: Huh?

Joan: I said, why are you so anxious to kill off all the pacifists?

Fred: I'm not. I just want to know what you'd do if...

Joan: If I was in a truck with a friend driving very

fast on a one-lane road approaching a dangerous impasse where a ten-month old girl is sitting in the middle of the road with a landslide on one side of her and a sheer drop-off on the other.

Fred: That's right.

Joan: I would probably slam on the brakes, thus sending my friend through the windscreen, skid into the landslide, run over the little girl, sail off the cliff and plunge to my own death. No doubt Grandma's house would be at the bottom of the ravine and the truck would crash through her roof and blow up in her living room where she was finally being attacked for the first, and last, time.

Fred: You haven't answered my question. You're just trying to get out of it...

Joan: – I'm really trying to say a couple of things. One is that no one knows what they'll do in a moment of crisis and hypothetical questions get hypothetical answers. I'm also hinting that you've made it impossible for me to come out of the situation without having killed one or more people. Then you say, 'Pacifism is a nice idea, but it won't work'. But that's not what bothers me.

Fred: What bothers you?

Joan: Well, you might not like it because it's not hypothetical. It's real. And it makes the assault on Grandma look like a garden party.

Fred: What's that?

Joan: I'm thinking about how we put people through a training process so they'll find out the really good, efficient ways of killing. Nothing incidental like trucks and landslides. Just the opposite, really. You know, how to growl and yell, kill and crawl and jump out of airplanes. Real organized stuff. Hell, you have to be able to run a bayonet through Grandma's middle.

Fred: : That's something entirely different.

Joan: : Sure. And don't you see it's much harder to look at, because its real, and it's going on right now? Look. A general sticks a pin into a map. A week later a bunch of young boys are sweating it out in a jungle somewhere, shooting each other's arms and legs off, crying, praying and losing control of their bowels. Doesn't it seem stupid to you?

Fred: Well, you're talking about war.

Joan: Yes, I know. Doesn't it seem stupid to you?

Fred: What do you do instead, then? Turn the other cheek, I suppose.

Joan: No. Love thine enemy but confront his evil. Love thine enemy. Thou shalt not kill.

Fred: Yeah, and look what happened to him.

Joan: He grew up.

Fred: They hung him on a damn cross is what happened to him. I don't want to get hung on a damn cross.

Joan: You won't.

Fred: Huh?

Joan: I said you don't get to choose how you're going to die. Or when. You can only decide how you are going to live. Now.

Fred: Well, I'm not going to go letting everybody step all over me, that's for sure.

Joan: Jesus said, "Resist not evil." The pacifist says just the opposite. He says to resist evil with all your heart and with all your mind and body until it has been overcome.

Fred: I don't get it.

Joan: Organized nonviolent resistance. Gandhi. He organized the Indians for nonviolent resistance and waged nonviolent war against the British until he'd freed India from the British Empire. Not bad for a first try, don't you think?

Fred: yeah, fine, but he was dealing with the British, a civilized people. We're not.

Joan: Not a civilized people?

Fred: Not dealing with a civilized people. You just try some of that stuff on the Russian.

Joan: You mean the Chinese, don't you?

Fred: Yeah, the Chinese, try it on the Chinese.

Joan: Oh, dear. War was going on long before anybody dreamed up communism. It's just the latest justification for self-righteousness. The problem isn't communism. The problem is consensus. There's a consensus out there that it's OK to kill when your government decides who to kill. If you kill inside the country, you get in trouble. If you kill outside the country, right time, right season, latest enemy, you get a medal. There are about 130 nation-states, and each of them thinks it's a swell idea to bump off all the rest because he is more important. The pacifist thinks there is only one tribe. Three billion members. They come first. We think killing any member of the family is a dumb idea. We think there are more decent and intelligent ways of settling differences. And man had better start investigating these other possibilities because if he doesn't, then by mistake or by design, he will probably kill off the whole damn race.

Fred: It's human nature to kill. Something you can't change.

Joan: Is it? If it's natural to kill, why do men have to go into training to learn how? There's violence in human nature, but there's also decency, love, kindness. Man organizes, buys, sells, pushes violence. The nonviolent wants to organize the opposite side. That's all nonviolence is – organized love.

Fred: You're crazy.

Joan: No doubt. Would you care to tell me the rest of the world is sane? Tell me that violence has been a great success for the past five thousand years, that the world is in fine shape, that wars have brought peace, understanding, democracy, and freedom to humankind and that killing each other has created an atmosphere of trust and hope. That it's grand for one billion people to live off of the other two billion, or that

even if it hadn't been smooth going all along, we are now at last beginning to see our way though to a better world for all, as soon as we get a few minor wars out of the way.

Fred: I'm doing OK

Joan: Consider it a lucky accident.

Fred: I believe I should defend America and all that she stands for. Don't you believe in self-defense?

Joan: No, that's how the mafia got started. A little band of people who got together to protect peasants. I'll take Gandhi's nonviolent resistance.

Fred: I still don't get the point of nonviolence.

Joan: The point of nonviolence is to build a floor, a strong new floor, beneath which we can no longer sink. A platform which stands a few feet above napalm, torture, exploitation, poison gas, nuclear bombs, the works. Give man a decent place to stand. He's been wallowing around in human blood and vomit and burnt flesh, screaming how it's going to bring peace to the world. He sticks his head out of the hole for a minute and sees a bunch of people gathering together and trying to build a structure above ground in the fresh air. 'Nice idea, but not very practical', he shouts and slides back into the hole. It was the same kind of thing when man found out the world was round. He fought for years to have it remain flat, with every proof on hand that it was not flat at all. It had no edge to drop off or sea monsters to swallow up his little ship in their gaping jaws.

Fred: How are you going to build this practical structure?

Joan: From the ground up. By studying, experimenting with every possible alternative to violence on every level. By learning how to say no to the nation-state, 'NO' to war taxes, 'NO' to military conscription, 'NO' to killing in general, 'YES' to co-operation, by starting new institutions which are based on the assumption that murder in any form is ruled out, by making and keeping in touch with nonviolent contacts all over the world, by engaging ourselves at every possible chance in dialogue with people, groups, to try to change the consensus that it's OK to kill.

Fred: : It sounds real nice, but I just don't think it can work.

Joan: : You are probably right. We probably don't have enough time. So far, we've been a glorious flop. The only thing that's been a worse flop than the organization of nonviolence has been the organization of violence.

Pray for Peace but Pay for War?

by Maurice F. McCrackin

Maurice F. McCrackin, born in 1905, was a Presbyterian pastor in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1948 he stopped paying his federal income tax because a portion of the tax would be used for military affairs war preparations. He stopped filing his returns in 1957 because they aided the revenue department in collecting the taxes. When he was subpoenaed to appear in court with his financial records, he refused. He was carried into the courtroom and sentenced to six months in jail. On his release, the Cincinnati Presbytery censured him and in 1960 suspended him from the ministry. This is his statement to the presbytery during his trial.

I do not think of the defense in this trial as a defense of me as a person, but rather the defense of a principle and that, the right of a Christian, yes, a Presbyterian Christian to follow what he believes to be God's will as it has been shown to him in Jesus Christ.

In June 1945 I was offered the position of co-pastor of the West Cincinnati St. Barnabas Church. Since the church was in a racially inclusive neighborhood and because of my deep interest in church union and cooperation, I gladly accepted the opportunity to share in this venture undertaken by the Episcopal and Presbyterian denominations, and began work in August of the same summer. Two months later we opened a settlement house at what was the St. Barnabas Episcopal Church building. Before the federation of the two congregations Negroes were not welcome at either church, and so children and teenagers came by the hundreds to enjoy the activities at the new settlement house. Soon we organized a community council and tried to come to grips with community problems. Ties in church and settlement house were growing strong and meaningful. Camp Joy opened to children of all races and creeds, and with integrated camping and a racially mixed staff, children and teenaged young people grew in self-awareness and in respect and love for one another.

All the while our community work was expanding, cold war tensions were increasing. Nuclear bombs were fast being stockpiled and reports were heard of new and deadlier weapons about to be made. Fresh in my mind were the bombed cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the crowded, deprived areas of these two cities were people working as we were now working in Cincinnati to build a happier, healthier community. There were nurses, teachers, domestic workers, laborers, and secretaries. There were

babies, children, young people, and adults living together, playing and working together, and praying together. The bomb fell and they, their institutions, their community organizations, all were destroyed.

It came to me that if churches, settlement houses, schools, if anything is to survive in Cincinnati or anywhere else, something must be done about the armaments race, a race which has always resulted in war. I preached against violence, against hatred, against wars, cold or hot. I preached about the dangers which the entire world faced and which had been made so vividly clear by renowned scientists. I was preaching, but what was I doing? We must build peace in our local communities; this we were doing but what about the international community? When I thought of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and of other cities in so-called enemy countries, which we were preparing to incinerate with even more deadly and devastating weapons, I said to myself, "I can no more give consent to the committing of this terrible atrocity against cities in Japan, Russia, or any other country than I would give my consent to such acts of barbaric cruelty being committed against my friends and neighbors surrounding the church and neighborhood house."

Long before, I had decided that I would never again register for the draft nor would I consent to being conscripted by the government in any capacity. Nevertheless each year around March 15 without protest I sent my tax payments to the government. By giving my money I was helping the government do what I so vigorously declared was wrong. I would never give my money to support a house of prostitution or the liquor industry, a gambling house or for the purchase and distribution of pornographic literature. Yet year after year I had unquestionably been giving my money to an evil infinitely greater than all of these put together, since it is from war's aftermath that nearly all social ills stem.

Income tax paid by the individual is essential to the continuance of the war machine. Over 50 percent of the military budget is paid for by individuals through their income tax payments and 75 to 80 percent of every dollar they pay via income tax goes for war purposes.

Again I examined what the principle of personal commitment to Jesus meant to me. Through the years I have tried to achieve a personal relationship with Jesus. This is the burden of the Christian gospel, that Jesus can be known personally and that he can bring a saving power into a man's life. For us Christians to know Jesus personally has reality only as we try earnestly to grow more like him "unto the

measure of the stature of his fullness." If we follow Jesus afar off, if we praise his life and teachings but conclude that neither applies to our daily living, what are we doing but denying and rejecting him? Jesus speaks with authority and with love to every individual. "Follow me. Take up your cross. Love one another as I have loved you." What would Jesus want me to do in relation to war? What must I do if I am his disciple? This was the conclusion I reached: If I can honestly say that Jesus would support conscription, throw a hand grenade, or with a flame thrower drive men out of caves, to become living torches—if I believe he would release the bomb over Hiroshima or Nagasaki, then I not only have the right to do these things as a Christian, I am even obligated to do them. But if, as a committed follower, I believe that Jesus would do none of these things, I have no choice but to refuse at whatever personal cost, to support war. This means that I will not serve in the armed forces nor will I voluntarily give my money to help make war possible.

Having had this awakening, I could no longer in good conscience continue full payment of my federal taxes. At the same time I did not want to withdraw my support from the civilian services which the government offers. For that reason I continued to pay the small percentage now allocated for civilian use. The amount which I had formerly given for war I now hoped to give to such causes as the American Friends Service Committee's program and to other works of mercy and reconciliation which help to remove the roots of war.

As time went on I realized, however, that this was not accomplishing its purpose because year after year the government ordered my bank to release money from my account to pay the tax I had held back. I then closed my checking account and by some method better known to the Internal Revenue Service than to me, it was discovered that I had money in a savings and loan company. Orders were given to this firm, under threat of prosecution, to surrender from my account the amount the government said I owed. I then realized suddenly how far government is now invading individual rights and privileges: money is given in trust to a firm to be kept in safety and the government coerces this firm's trustees into a violation of that trust. But even more evil than this invasion of rights is the violence done to the individual conscience in forcing him to give financial support to a thing he feels so deeply is wrong. I agree wholeheartedly with the affirmation of Presbytery made in February of 1958, that, "A Christian citizen is obligated to God to obey the law but when in conscience he finds the requirements of law to be in direct conflict with his obedience to God, he must obey God rather than man."

Disobedience to a civil law is an act against government, but obedience to a civil law that is evil is an act against God.

At this point it came to me with complete clarity that

by so much as filing tax returns I was giving to the revenue department assistance in the violation of my own conscience, because the very information I had been giving on my tax forms was being used in finally making the collection. So from this point on, or until there is a radical change for the better in government spending I shall file no returns.

The nations seem unable to agree on any negotiated disarmament, and certainly there is little hope that in the foreseeable future any will do so unilaterally. At no time in human history, therefore, has there been such an acute necessity for individuals to disarm unilaterally, to behave as moral and responsible human beings, and to do what they know to be right, beginning now. Some have said that this is the age of the common man. However, if we are to survive, it must become the age of the uncommon man. Unilateral, personal disarmament means that we will accept only work which contributes to the peace, welfare, and uplift of mankind. One by one people are responsible for the most horrible crimes. These are not bad people; they are good people, many socially concerned, pillars of church and society. Yet, with little or no inward protest they respond to the state's demands to do all kinds of ghastly jobs—to perfect the H-bomb or the more terrible cobalt bomb, to work in laboratories to perfect still more deadly nerve gas or to help spawn insects which will be more deadly germ carriers. The state persuades these and others that they are not really responsible for what they are doing, that they are only small cogs in a big machine and if they have guilt it is so slight they shouldn't worry over it.

Leo Tolstoy described this evil process of rationalization in his book *The Kingdom of God Is within You*. He asks, "Is it possible that millions of men can go on calmly committing deeds which are so manifestly criminal, such as are the murders and tortures they commit, simply from fear of punishment? Surely these things would not exist were not the falsehood and brutality of their actions hidden from all classes of men by the system of political organization. When such deeds are committed, there are so many instigators, participants, and abettors that no single individual feels himself morally responsible. The rulers of the state always endeavor to involve the greatest number of citizens in the participation of the crimes which it is to their interest to have committed. Some demand it, some confirm it, some order it, and some execute it."

This evil chain of violence and death must be broken and it will be broken when enough individuals say to the state, "You may order me to do something I believe wrong but I will not execute your command. You may order me to kill, but I will not kill nor will I give my money to buy weapons that others may do so." There are other voices that I must obey. I must obey the voice of humanity which cries for peace and relief from the intolerable burden of armaments and conscription. I must obey the voice of conscience,

made sensitive by the inner light of truth. I must obey the voice heard across the centuries, "Love your enemies, pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you." In obedience to these voices lies the only path to brotherhood and peace. And these are the voices I must obey.

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1963*

A Vigil for Life While We Celebrate Death

by Colman McCarthy

Ten years ago this week, William Thomas, a practitioner of the First Amendment as well as a believer in it, took up residence on the sidewalk across from 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. Since then, he and others have formed an above-ground underground, a small collection of antiwar demonstrators who have been the closest neighbors to the country's last two pro-war presidents. They have turned Lafayette Park into Peace Park.

On this weekend as Washington's widest streets are commandeered by the Pentagon and military contractors to parade their hirelings and machines that did the slaughtering of at least 100,000 people in Iraq, Thomas will counter the mindless celebration of death with a vigil for life.

In front of the White House, he passes out pacifist literature, holds up antiwar signs, and keeps on being, in a decade of iron tenacity, the defiant citizen with whom Amos, Isaiah, St. Francis, Tom Paine, Eugene Debs, Emma Goldman, and other incorrigibles would link arms were they to return.

Like all of those connoisseurs of dissent, Thomas has paid heavily for his disaffections with warlords and their authority. He has endured more than 40 arrests, with about a dozen convictions for civil disobedience. His jail time has been mostly weekends, except for a 90-day stretch for unauthorized camping. The National Park Service has been dogged in its efforts to block Thomas from being a happy camper. Regulations sprout from NPS like springtime tulips in the White House flowerbed.

The doubting Thomas is a short and sturdily built man who was in the jewelry business until 1975 when he took to heart a biblical passage about placing total trust in God. With few such absolutists on the planet, an Episcopal priest, the Rev. J. Ellen Nunally, who is also an English professor at George Mason University, has devoted the past year to interviewing Thomas and his peace vigilers. In time, she will write a book, one that goes beyond the first impressions that this is a sidewalk commune of nomads to reveal the group to be motivated by authentic religious ideals and democratic instincts. Others have found this to be true, including a teacher from a public high school three blocks away who invites Thomas to come discuss civics with students.

As America's most visible antiwar group, and having the choicest real estate outside of the Rose Garden, Thomas and his weather-beaten friends are as accustomed to federal harassment as they are to being dismissed by the media as semi-loonies who, quaintly, prove that the First Amendment works: Tolerating a few sidewalk eccentrics verifies the

superiority of the American system. The self-congratulation also allows the champions of the system to look away when prophets like Thomas show up with a suggestion or two on how governments could be truly humane if peacemaking were done in earnest.

The current suggestion from Peace Park is Proposition One, a proposed constitutional amendment that would require nuclear disarmament and create programs for converting weapons industries into peacetime industries. A Proposition One Committee has been formed to help organize state peace groups to get on voter initiative ballots.

The idea is visionary, revolutionary, and unwieldy, and has everything going against it except for one plus: The goal of Proposition One is what George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev have been proclaiming since each took office. By putting the idea of disarmament to a vote, the Peace Park initiative is acting on the thought of Dwight Eisenhower: "I like to believe that people in the long run are going to do more to promote peace than are governments. Indeed, I think that people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of their way and let them have it."

When that happens, William Thomas will pack up and give over his space in Peace Park to the squirrels, who had it first. He'll donate his sign, "Trust God and Disarm Everywhere," to the Smithsonian and vanish. "I don't favor national boundaries, armies, or governments—not because they're evil but because they aren't necessary," he said the other morning on bench near his sentry as Park Service mowers cut the lawn. "All that's necessary is a wholehearted belief in a God of love and life. The test of that wholeheartedness is the action it produces toward creating a peaceful world."

As a major tourist attraction in Washington—free of charge, round the clock, accessible, and memorable—Peace Park and its keepers are a reminder this weekend that George Bush doesn't understand what's directly in front of his nose. On March 1st he said: "There is no antiwar movement."

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