Remembering the reality of war at the Vietnam War Memorial

A Change of Heart ~ Conscientious Objection and the Life of Compassion

An Interfaith Workbook and Reader for a Six-Month Course Exploring the Process of Becoming a Conscientious Objector to Participation in, and Support of, Organized Killing

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A Change of Heart: This book in a single page…

In exploring the process of becoming a conscientious objector, this book hopes to persuade you of three fundamental and related ideas:

Conscientious objection involves issues of spiritual development that we all share with draft-age youth. *The first big idea is that conscientious objection to military service can best be understood as part of a person's overall life journey toward compassion and spiritual unfolding, rather than being seen primarily as a legal process for exempting oneself from the military. The young person facing a military draft faces an entire set of burning moral issues. How will I reconcile the gruesome specifics of killing people with the commandments of my faith (and/or yearnings of my soul) to become a more honest, forgiving, kind, aware, responsible (and so on) sort of person? But this challenge arises for the young person because the challenge to become a more compassionate person is part of the human condition. The second big idea is that we are all challenged in this way every day of out lives; just not as dramatically as by having someone put a gun in our hands and tell us to start killing. So in helping people explore the possibility of becoming conscientious objectors, this workbook focuses on the basic questions of "what kind of person am I trying to become?", "what actions can I live with doing?" and "what kind of country am I trying to help America become?" I try to keep these questions from being overshadowed by questions concerning Selective Service rules and regulations (which are explained in a supplementary reading). Also, the soldiers of today and the draftees of tomorrow act now and will act on our behalf, therefore I believe we are, twice over, all in the same moral boat together.*

Conscientious objection can be a stand taken by everyone in a society, including parents, not just draft-age youth. *The third big idea follows from the first two. If we are all in the same moral boat about killing in war, we can all become conscientious objectors. I believe we need to redefine what it means to be a conscientious objector. While a young person (or medical professional) will have to deal with the legal requirements, such as they are or may be, for becoming a C.O., in a deeper sense we can't rely on the Draft Board's definition of who is a C.O. That is because the Draft Board's definition is designed to make what is a moral challenge for all of us look like a moral challenge of only eighteen-to-twenty-year-olds.* ***First, for the sake of our deepest personal integrity,*** *we need to find public ways of expressing our objections to the vision of perpetual war which has gradually become the dominant theme in American life. As Dr. King wrote, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."* ***And secondly, young people would be better able to resist the social pressure to kill****, if there were a large and vocal community of peers and elders who were publicly committed to nonviolence and courageous compassion as a way of life. I hope this book will help the larger community stand side by side with youth and together turn away from the madness of mechanized killing as the answer to all America's problems. This new extended community of conscientious objectors would bear continual witness to all the possibilities of reconciliation and cooperation the are eclipsed by the current culture of violence.*

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Chapter 1: A Very Brief Introduction to Some of the History, Processes and Tangles of Becoming a Conscientious Objector

THE BOOK I WISH SOMEONE HAD GIVEN ME. In putting together this workbook, I am creating the book I wish someone had put into my hands when I was in my early twenties. Back then (1963), everyone just assumed a young man would go off and do his two years of military service. Conscientious objection was for a few extremely religious folks, like the Quakers and Amish, and if you were not extremely religious, you generally did not imagine you had any other choice. None of my classmates at Los Angeles City College in those days imagined that the few thousand military advisors in Vietnam would grow to a force of 500,000 troops, and that the war there would go from bad to catastrophic for everyone involved. As a Naval Reservist called to active duty in 1966, I spent my two years behind a typewriter on an aircraft carrier, staying as far from the fighting as I could possibly arrange.

At the time I was glad that I did not have to personally shoot anyone. But the ship I was on was part of the armada of aircraft carriers that was trying to bomb North Vietnam into submission. It was not until years after the war that I came to understand the full dimensions of the tragedy to which I had given my two years of labor and my consent. Looking back now, I regret that I was part of it. And it was for nothing. As the United States established normal relations with the once-dreaded Communist China, much of the rationale for all the long and painful years of the Vietnam War evaporated. (If only I had given more careful thought, as a young man, to the morality of war, I might have been less willing to believe that violent means would produce worthy ends.)

MUCH HAS CHANGED IN THE INTERVENING YEARS. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that deeply-held moral convictions can be the functional equivalent of religious convictions in evaluating a person's claim to be a conscientious objector. The Catholic Church in the United States has recognized the religious legitimacy of conscientious objector claims by Catholics. The draft has been scaled back to a registration program, but could spring back into existence at a moment's notice. The recently announced doctrine of preventive war, promoted by the U.S. administration of George W. Bush, re-opens serious moral questions about military service because a citizen can no longer assume that he or she would be required to fight and kill only as a matter of national self defense, as ordinarily understood (but often not followed). In the doctrine of preventive war the United States gives itself the right to attack any nation which the United States feels may become a serious threat at some unspecified time in the future, and this without recourse to any international mediating body such as the U.N. As with the possession of nuclear weapons, the United States does not grant the right of preventive attack to all other countries, thus failing the Golden Rule test. In following this new doctrine, the United States has become bogged down in a brutal war in Iraq that is considered to be illegal by many of the countries on planet Earth, and immoral by many American citizens.

FIVE RESPONSES AGAINST ORGANIZED KILLING. In the face of such actions, actions that are dangerous, aggressive, harmful to others and irrational, you may feel compelled to re-examine your deepest thoughts and feelings about the legitimacy of war and your participation in it. Examining one's conscience about issues of violence is truly as American as apple pie (although not nearly as popular). Many of the European settlers who came to America, came exactly because their religious beliefs forbade them to fight in the wars that were going on in Europe.

In the course of US history, draft-age people opposed to organized killing have generally fallen into one or more of the following categories. (All these changes of heart also happen in people who are already in the military, and there are some provisions in military law for them to become conscientious objectors.)

- **Selective Objectors:** Some people have reached the conclusion that a particular war was especially immoral or ill-conceived, but also thought that some wars might be justified. Of these, some have gone to prison rather than participate in a particular war. (The current rules governing

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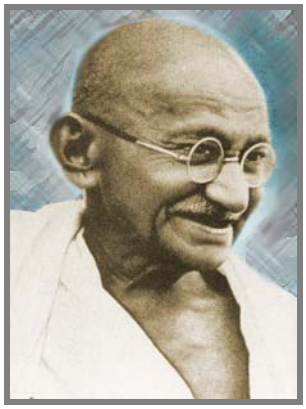
conscientious objection do not allow a person to object only to a specific war, even though St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas distinguish between just and unjust wars.) In recent years this group has come to include people whose opposition to war is based on the Nuremberg Principle that you cannot be legally compelled to perform acts illegal under international law. (Much of modern warfare violates the Nuremberg Principle against injuring civilians, such as the permanent poisoning of entire regions with the dust from depleted uranium anti-tank shells used by the United States.)

- **Non-combatants:** Some have reconciled what they felt was their duty to their country and what they felt was their duty to God or Ultimate Reality by becoming *non-combatant* members of the armed forces, serving primarily as medics. This is the position often recommended by Seventh Day Adventists, and required by the Baha'i Faith.
- **Flee the country that requires you to kill:** Some have been overwhelmed by the tangle of issues surrounding military service, or felt that the process of becoming a conscientious objector was constrained and compromised beyond what they could tolerate, and have fled the country to avoid being drafted.
- **Oppose all war:** For other people, the re-examination brought on by the crisis of war caused them to repudiate war altogether, in any and all circumstances, as a violation of the laws of God, Nature and/or the human heart and soul. Reaching this conclusion, they refused to participate in any form of organized killing, and refused to participate in any organization that conducts or supports organized killing. They assert that their duty to their country can be met in ways other than military service.
- **War tax resisters:** Regardless of their draft status, many people have objected to paying taxes in support of any war, or in support of a specific war, on the basis that they should not be required to pay for other people to do actions that the taxpayer feels are immoral or against the will of God. War tax resisters generally propose a system of alternate uses of their tax dollars.

People who are not of draft age are confronted with similar challenges by war and the culture of war and armaments. For it is their children who will kill and die in war, and their tax dollars which will pay for war, their country whose honor will be lost by ill-conceived wars, and their world that will become more dangerous as the culture of war and armaments increases.

CONVINCEMENT CAN ONLY BE INVITED, NOT FORCED. The purpose of this guide is to invite you to consider the various aspects of the moral and/or religious renunciation of war. (I honor the bravery of those who sincerely believe that they must fight, even though I disagree with them deeply.) The renunciation of all war, or of a specific war, is not a conclusion that one person can impose on another by force of argument. You can't even force this conclusion on yourself, as much as you might want to. It is a conclusion reached in the depths of your body-heart-mind-soul as you fit together all the evidence, arguments, teachings and intuitions into an overall pattern of meaning. I cannot tell you which of the five paths described above, or other paths, may be your own.

GREAT PEACE ADVOCATES



Mahatma Gandhi
teacher of nonviolence

Right now, only the morally and/or religiously based opposition to all war under all circumstances meets the requirements for becoming a conscientious objector in the United States. I will try to show you how to meet the current requirements, but as you study the material in this workbook, I appeal to you to listen to your own heart, and follow where it leads you. The conclusions you reach from your own study and

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deliberation may or may not be those that satisfy your draft board. The first person your conclusions need to satisfy is yourself. If you are not deeply convinced of your position, you will not be at peace with yourself, and you will never convince anyone else of it, either. Your own truth may lead you on a difficult path, but it will be truly your path and not someone else's, and, as long as you are mindful of not hurting others, you will grow in integrity from following it. Whatever conclusions you may reach about participating in war, you will be much better off for having given this subject your deep and sustained attention. You will be much less likely to look back at some later point in your life, as I now do, and think, "if only I had given it more thought."

LISTENING TO YOUR HEART AND FILLING OUT FORMS. Becoming a conscientious objector has an inner aspect, an in-between aspect, and an outer aspect. The inner aspect is about clarifying your deepest moral beliefs and commitments. The in-between is about learning how to communicate your views to others. And the outer aspect is about understanding regulations, gathering letters of support, filling out forms, and submitting them on time. These administrative procedures have been admirably detailed by the Center on Conscience and War in their publication, *Basic Draft and Registration Information*, which is included in the readings of this workbook. It will give you all the details about what kind of forms you need to fill out and submit. A crucial point to remember about all three aspects is that it can take you months or years to build up a solid body of evidence in support of your conscientious objections to war, and to begin living out these commitments if they are new to you. **If you wait until an actual draft law is put into effect, current information strongly suggests that you will have only ten days in which to make your conscientious objection claim. That means for most people there will not be enough time to do either the deep personal work or the administrative paperwork involved in becoming a conscientious objector.** So if you feel inclined to move in this direction, it is really important to begin working on all three aspects now.

POSSIBILITIES IN THIS CRISIS. Knowing that the outer part of becoming a C.O. has been carefully addressed in the document mentioned above, most of this guide will be devoted to the inner part (of values clarification), and to the in-between part (of how you can best communicate your convictions to others). Clarifying your deepest moral beliefs and commitments is the heart of the process of becoming a conscientious objector. I approach the crisis of facing the military draft as one pivotal moment in a person's lifelong spiritual journey, a journey we all share. This moment presents you (and everyone around you, young and old) with a group of deep possibilities…

- the possibility of experiencing and saying a much deeper, much more powerful YES to life,
- of feeling, living and saying a deeper yes to compassion,
- of feeling, living and saying a deeper yes to creativity,
- of feeling, living and saying a deeper yes to moral courage,
- of feeling, living and saying a deeper yes to gratitude,
- of facing and telling the truth of your life in a deeper, clearer way
- of honoring of the Divine Presence/ultimate worth in each person more intensely,
- of saying NO to all forms of organized killing, both the sudden killing in war and the slow killing accomplished by oppression and exploitation.

THIS PREGNANT MOMENT. While the draft issue has confronted you with these possibilities, these are the deeper dimensions and challenges of the spiritual life under any circumstances. The need to make a choice about participating in organized killing greatly intensifies these challenges, but this workbook grows out of the vision that these same challenges will be part of your life (and mine, and ours) even without a war or a draft. Waking up to the importance of compassion, moral courage and gratitude is a blessed moment in life, no matter what wakes you up. It could be the draft, or an automobile accident, or a death in the family, or the

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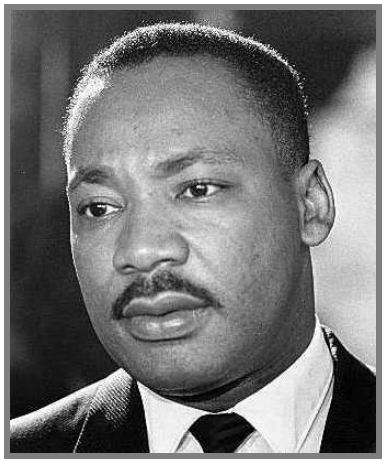
conclusion of long and patient study on your part, or a time in jail, or meeting a saintly teacher, or it could just suddenly occur to you one day that developing more self-giving Love is the most important task of your life! How you begin this process of finding your fundamental moral and spiritual direction is not important. What is important is where you go with it: how you put it into action, so that your life expresses it. I hope this guide helps you to embrace this present ordeal as part of your path to developing a stronger spiritual integrity and a life of integrity that exemplifies it.

GREAT PEACE ADVOCATES



The Rev Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
teacher of peace, justice and nonviolence,
advocate of conscientious objection

EVERYONE IS IMPACTED. When war comes, it impacts all of us in one way or another. Those who choose to fight, those who refuse to fight, those who sit home wondering what's happening to the people they love, those who are driven mad by the fact that this world of ours is still stuck in the practice of organized violence, those who "numb out" hoping it will all go away, those whom we declare to be our enemies, those whose schools and communities decay because money is spent on war instead of on a better life for everyone. We are all affected in one way or another, but rarely in the ways that we would like or we would choose. Very few people enjoy fighting on a battlefield, very few people enjoy having to defy their society's expectations about participating in military service, and I doubt that anyone starts a family imagining that their spouse or child will leave them to go and fight in a war.

THE C.O. SYSTEM IS FAR FROM PERFECT. I bring this up, this issue of being challenged by current events, this issue of being challenged by war, on terms not of one's own choosing, because the process of becoming a conscientious objector is far from ideal. I am glad that it is possible to be a conscientious objector to military service in the United States, and I appreciate the efforts of many people who have made conscientious objection available. At the same time, the rules and procedures for becoming a conscientious objector are the result of a lot of negotiation and compromise. They contain their own strange constraints and what I see as injustices and even theological absurdities. For example:

- Simply not wanting to hurt others does not count, although in many religions God judges a person by the desires of their heart, and many religions forbid the injury of others.
- Not wanting to be killed or injured is not considered an appropriate objection, although Jesus quite specifically teaches his followers to consider the consequences of their actions ("As you sow, so shall you reap." and "He who draws the sword shall die by the sword.").
- The process favors families with the time and money to prepare their children, and favors ethnic groups which have the best access to education and the widest access to jobs, because for some, giving up military service means giving up their only opportunity for job training. (In practice this means giving an advantage to Whites and Asians over African-Americans and Hispanics).
- The process favors young people with strong verbal talents who are not shy. Young people whose intelligence is visual or kinesthetic, or who are shy, may not be able to present a persuasive case for their convictions, no matter how deep those convictions are. (If this applies to you, please ask someone to help you practice presenting your beliefs and feelings to others.)
- If you believed that your participation in war had been totally forbidden by the Purple Angels that live on the Moon, whom you had obeyed since childhood because you were brought up in the Church of the Purple Angels, by law that would have to be accepted as a valid religious objection to war. But if, after careful thought, you reached the

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conclusion that war was stupid, ineffective, illegal, based on lies, or exploitive, and therefore unworthy of your participation, your reservations would be disqualified as "merely" philosophical or political. (As a longtime student of religion, I see this devaluation our capacity to reason as being in direct opposition to the Catholic teaching that our capacity to reason comes from God and helps us to understand God's will for us, which is part of the larger Judeo-Christian tradition that humans are made "in the image and likeness" of God.)

- No system can be considered morally ideal if it excuses a few people and sends everyone else off to commit mass murder. Allowing oneself to be excused from battle does not by itself stop the war, although it can be a strong bearing of witness against war. (In my experience, in the US, religious opposition to participation in war has always included opposition to the greed, cruelty, fear, ignorance, injustice, exploitation and hatred that make war seem possible and/or necessary: Quakers, Engaged Buddhists, Mennonites and Catholic Workers are good examples of this larger life of conscience out of which opposition to military service arises, and there are many more.)

DEALING WITH THE C.O. SYSTEM AS IT IS. These kinds of considerations lead me to say that the legal process of becoming a conscientious objector will challenge you on its terms rather than on your terms. I bring up these issues so that you won't be overwhelmed and paralyzed by them. You may feel quite justifiably angry and/or horrified that the burden is upon you show why you feel war is morally wrong, instead of the burden being upon the draft board to convince you that war is morally justified. I would appeal to you to accept that this is the confused world into which we are called to bring compassion, and to bring as much light as possible in through the small openings that the world makes for us. I believe very deeply that refusing to participate in our country's addiction to organized killing is an act of great moral courage: good for you, good for your country, good for the world, and good in the eyes of God; but it is not a perfect step. With patience and quiet awareness, I want you to be able to acknowledge the limits and tangles of the current system and stay on your path. The process is contentious. Therefore, I want to help you learn how to struggle more compassionately and more forgivingly for the well being of everyone.

BIG DECISIONS AND A SHORT TIME TO MAKE THEM. Some people live an entire lifetime without being directly challenged about their participation in organized violence. Others, at eighteen or twenty, face this great decision. War and violence are big issues; you could easily spend five or ten years clarifying your thoughts and feelings about them. But now, you don't have five or ten years. You may only have a few months. And in those few months, if you do not want to participate in the military, you will need to engage in a deep process of self inquiry. It's not particularly fair. You should have more time to respond to issues so large. But that's what I mean when I say that the world challenges us on its terms rather than on our terms. People much older than you decide the country should go to war, but it is young people who must decide whether they will enact war, or refrain and object to it. My life has taught me that we have to respond as best we can to whatever comes along, ready or not. Sometimes the extreme situation we are asked to face may involve a sick child, a dying parent, a cheating boss or a burning building. As much as I would like to prepare for everything, I have come to accept that life includes being suddenly challenged beyond my accustomed limits.

A MAJOR FORK IN THE ROAD OF YOUR LIFE. I am deeply convinced, from my own life experience, that the challenge to define your beliefs about military service and the meaning of compassion will change your life. You have reached a very significant and difficult fork in the road. No path forward from this point will be easy. Participating in war will not be easy, standing against war will not be easy, and even trying to avoid the issue will not be easy (although it may seem so). Whatever choice you make will probably cause some people to admire you for the rest of your life and other people to dislike you for the rest of your life. (And whatever choices we your elders make about hiring you to kill on our behalf will define <u>us</u> as persons, too.)

Many people try avoid responsibility for killing in war by asserting that they had no choice and that everybody had to do it. Others try to avoid responsibility by putting up a wall of silence, evasion and denial about the subject. When you publicly make a

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choice about not participating in organized killing and take responsibility for your actions, you will upset and anger those who are trying to blot out their own misgivings and conscience. The best response to this anger is forgiveness and compassion, because at some time in our lives, we have all probably evaded one or another difficult moral challenges. (As someone who enlisted in the military without thinking about it very much, I know for certain that I have.)

With or without a draft, war challenges us to become more compassionate persons and to decide what form that compassion will take. The stand you take on personally participating in organized violence or not, and about supporting others to do so (or looking the other way), will shape how you feel about yourself for many years to come. The alternative service work you may perform instead of participating in the military, will shape your evolution as a person and become one of the defining moments in your life. I hope this guide will help you to embrace this very uncomfortable moment, and to become a better person through the courage, compassion and thoughtfulness you bring to it.

WHO CAN BECOME A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR?

In the United States, you do not need to be a traditionally religious person in order to be a conscientious objector to military service. You do need to have…

1. deeply held moral beliefs about not injuring other people ("not participating in war");
2. if not religious, these beliefs must play the same role in your life that traditional religious beliefs play in the lives of traditionally religious persons;
3. your beliefs must influence the conduct of your life in ways that allow other people to make reasonable conclusions about your sincerity;
4. and finally, you need to be able to explain your beliefs and moral feelings to others, in the face of questioning that is very probing, and may even occasionally be hostile.

I hope this guide will be of help many different persons and communities. First, I hope it will be helpful to all those whose religious communities that honor conscientious objection based on individuals making up their own minds and hearts about it. (There are many such in the United States, spanning the spectrum from Catholic and Baptist to Unitarian and Buddhist.) Because my own spiritual life embraces the natural world and all peoples and creatures as the Body of God, I also feel deeply called to reach out to those who find their spiritual and ethical life in and through nature, ecology, yoga, Tai Chi, healing bodywork, psychotherapy, and in simple concern for others. What matters in becoming a conscientious objector is the depth, coherence, sincerity and living out of your moral convictions in favor of caring for others and against war; but the task is yours to explain your convictions and how you live them. For example, the reverence for life tradition is thousands of years old, includes many luminous saints, teachers and heroes, and fully justifies a stance of conscientious objection; but the reverence for life tradition is not well organized as a formal religion, and hence its followers are somewhat at a disadvantage in presenting their moral commitments to a draft board. I hope to present here materials that will help people whose paths toward compassion are less-well-known to express clearly and strongly their conscientious objection to organized killing.

GREAT PEACE ADVOCATES

Dorothy Day
Co-Founder of the Catholic Worker Movement
opposed wars and supported war resisters

If you have significant ties to an existing religion with at least some members who have become conscientious objectors, I believe that you would be well advised to contact peace advocates within your

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tradition and let them help you (perhaps using this workbook as a supplement). That is because the legal process of becoming a conscientious objector is adversarial (like a court case) rather than pastoral (like a counseling session). Your case is somewhat stronger if you can show that you are following the ideals of a well-understood religious community, than if you have to introduce your draft board to your unique moral or spiritual commitments. Many religious denominations, (Catholic, Jewish, Buddhist, Baptist, etc.) have a peace fellowship you can join.

If your moral commitments and spiritual path are uniquely your own, I encourage you to embrace the task of documenting and explaining them in much more detail than you may have done before, and to make a special effort to associate yourself with others of similar mind. If you are deeply drawn to reverence for life, and the practice of compassion and kindness, you will surely be welcome at any Quaker Meeting or Unitarian-Universalist congregation or Fellowship of Reconciliation chapter, no matter how unique your path toward peace. If there are no branches of the above nearby, you are welcome to join the Fellowship of Reconciliation or Turn Toward Life as a member-at-large, and start a local peace and reconciliation study and advocacy group, as a way of taking the next step in your spiritual and moral development, and as a way of documenting your systematic reflection on the topics of nonviolence, compassion and the life of reconciliation. If you have not already done so, begin today to keep a journal of all your actions, study and reflection in opposition to war.

BECOMING COMFORTABLE WITH RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE. In this guide I will explore the various dimensions of becoming a conscientious objector, and provide you with readings from people who have gone into these issues at great depth, often from a religious perspective. I have to tell you, a lot of these readings are *serious!* I wish there were some way to be more light-hearted about all this, but I have not found it yet. For example, in the wars of recent decades, ninety percent of casualties have been civilians, up from five percent in World War I and fifty percent in World War II, which is something no military wants to tell its recruits. Thus, in seeking to be recognized as a conscientious objector, you are trying to save the lives of all the soldiers *and civilians* whom you would otherwise kill in a war. That *is* serious.

As an individual wanting to follow your individual conscience, you may or may not use the language of religious faith in order to conduct your own inner conversations about life. I will try to help you become more comfortable with the language of religious faith, both so that you can feel supported in your quest for a compassionate way of life, and also so that you can explain what's going on inside of you in terms that other people can understand. It is not a matter of misrepresenting yourself as a religious person. It <u>is</u> a matter of learning how to present yourself as a moral person, and learning that there are many languages of deep reverence, not just one.

Because some churches and religious communities have failed so badly over the centuries to embody peace and compassion, it is easy to become anti-religious or anti-theological. But the moral issues around military service have been discussed and thought about for thousands of years in religious terms. Even if you generally do not think in religious terms, I believe you will be greatly strengthened in your resolve to not injure others by understanding how deeply and beautifully people over the centuries, such as Quakers, Buddhists, Mennonites and pacifist Catholics have committed themselves, and commit themselves today, to not injuring others, and to serving the well-being of all.

EMPHASIS ON BELIEFS. On the other hand, you may be traditionally spiritual or religious, but in ways that are not easy to explain to your draft board. Because the United States is a largely Protestant country, there is a kind of unconscious Protestant tilt toward *beliefs* and away from *feelings* in the structure of conscientious objector regulations. If you are a Catholic or a Hindu, for example, a large part of your spiritual life may consist of devotion to a particular saint or group of saints, and dedicating your life to following in the footsteps of that saint and to live continuously in the spiritual presence of that saint or holy person. Or you may feel, in line with Celtic and Native American spirituality, that the whole world is alive and is guiding you to choose and support life. These are strong <u>feelings, intuitions and practices</u> rather than <u>beliefs</u> (in the tradition of Protestants reciting a written creed and referring to specific Bible verses), so

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they may or may not register on the spiritual radar screen of your Draft Board. If this is your situation, this guide will encourage you to do the inner work required to explain your deeply felt spiritual path, and to translate at least some of it into the language of belief, so that others can understand you better.

WHAT IF I AM A TOTAL BEGINNER? Finally, it may be the case that you simply have not thought about these topics very much up to now in your life. While that might make the task before you more difficult, it does not prevent you from becoming a conscientious objector. You can, at any moment in your life, suddenly decide that you do not want to kill people and that organized killing is irredeemably immoral and/or against the will of God. Such a decision can be utterly sincere on your part. You will have to work a lot harder to explain this decision to others than if the decision emerged over many months or years, but you can make this decision and you can live by it. This is true even if you are already in the armed forces! (But if you are already in the armed forces, you will need special administrative counseling that is beyond the scope of this book, as well as the inner emphasis explored here.) If you are a complete newcomer to issues of war, peace, compassion and conscience, I hope this workbook and the attached book of readings will help you to enter more fruitfully into this crisis moment, and help you to be transformed by it, developing and clarifying the beliefs that will probably guide you for the rest of your life. The C.O. process assumes that you already have well-developed, carefully reasoned, morally grounded beliefs against war, but I view that as highly unrealistic for most 18- or 20-year-olds. It certainly favors 25-year-olds over 18-year-olds, because a lot of thinking can go on between eighteen and twenty-five, and 25-year-olds are probably a lot better at asserting and defending their views. I do not think you should have to go and kill people just because there was nothing in your high school social studies classes about what it means to kill a human being. I hope this guide will …

- help you clarify your thoughts and beliefs about God, truth, love, justice, war, violence, peace, mercy, duty and patriotism, etc.; all complex topics that people have been arguing about for thousands of years and are still arguing about today (you don't have to have perfect answers for everybody else's unanswered questions).
- help you to make a new and strong commitment to life, to compassion, to nonviolence, to your own personal integrity and to our Ultimate Relatedness (in God, in the Universe, in the Buddhamind, in Brahman, and so on, using whatever vocabulary expresses your heart's journey).
- help you explain your moral feelings, conclusions and commitments to others

STANDING WITH OUR CHILDREN. One final group is invited to read these pages, do these exercises and make (or renew) their commitment to protecting life and opposing organized killing: the parents, friends and fellow citizens of the young people who are ordered to become soldiers.

GREAT PEACE ADVOCATES

Thich Nhat Hanh, Buddhist Monk
teacher of awareness, forgiveness, and reconciliation

Truly, if the armies of the world drafted only people over forty years of age, there would be precious few wars. People in their late teens and early twenties are at an extreme disadvantage when dealing with giant military bureaucracies. Fresh from the rule-following and group-following environment of high school, they may not have had much experience exerting their will and conscience against the will of a dominant group. The military draft process is clothed in the robes of national authority and centuries of (allegedly) noble tradition. Also, the draft lottery allows society at large to disown responsibility for sending any particular

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young person to kill and die on the battlefield, disguising a process of deliberate social decision-making to make it look to the draftee like a random instance of bad luck. This is exactly the same sort of social self-deception that is at work when one of the rifles in a firing squad is loaded with a blank cartridge, so that no one in the firing squad will know if they actually killed the person who was executed. All of us, young or old, have to live with the knowledge of everything we have ever done, but older people have had more time to assimilate this truth about life. As older people, we are asking a lot of young people, to imagine that they can, alone, resist being bullied (or seduced with visions of glory and educational benefits) into killing or being killed.

I imagine a great awakening, in which many men and women who are not in their draft-eligible years, will become conscientious objectors in some public way, as an opportunity to say to young people, **We stand with you in your moment of great crisis. They will say, We stand with you against participation in all organized killing, and we stand with you against all the domination, exploitation, greed, ignorance and hatred that make wars seem necessary.** We will be saying to the young people: **you are not alone**.

Words of the Buddha from the Majjhima Nikaya #61:

…one's actions, words and thoughts
must be reflected upon as if
one were looking at them in a mirror.
Before actions are done,
consider whether they are harmful to yourself,
to others or to both yourself and others.
Only when they are beneficial to all
should they be done.
In the same way, before you speak,
consider whether your words are harmful
to yourself, to others or to both yourself and others.
Only if they are beneficial to
all should they be spoken. When thoughts arise,
consider whether they are harmful to yourself
or to others or to both yourself and others.
If they are not beneficial to all,
they should be discarded.
This is the way you must train yourself
to consider your actions, words and thoughts.
This is the way
to purify yourself.

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Chapter 2: *Some Personal Stories to Get You Started Thinking About Not Participating in Organized Killing*

A U.S. Marine. The Change is Forever
By Kathie Nov 1, 2004
(a mother tells the story of her teen-aged son)

My name is Kathie and I live in Fredericksburg, VA. My husband has been a Naval Officer for 25 years now, which may have a little to do with our son joining the Marines through their Delayed Entry Program in June 2003. He was 17 years old and had just finished his junior year of high school.

He was shipped off to boot camp June 2004, expecting to find the adventure and personal fulfillment that the recruiters and brochures had promised. He was going to be one of "The Few, the Proud, a Marine" and "The Change Would Be Forever," and after his four years of service he would have money for college.

He did not find what the military was hoping and told him he would find, but rather he experienced something that would "Change Him Forever." He left to train at Parris Island without having a realistic concept of what he was about to do. Somehow, all the glossy brochures and videos about the Marines had failed to mention the dehumanization of military training and war.

The thought of killing another human being, and the reality of all the innocent lives lost during war, didn't really hit him until he was at boot camp. He came to realize that what might be asked of him in the future, killing others, was not something he could do and that it would violate his conscience. On the rifle range, the human shaped targets began to seem so real. They became another human being, someone's father, son, or daughter whose life he was about to end, changing their families lives forever. At that time he knew how he would feel, shooting and taking the life of another. His conscience had awakened and he was going to listen to it.

While at boot camp he became depressed and experienced anxiety. He felt trapped and had no one to talk to. Most of his letters home were hard for me to read, as he spoke of how much he did not want to be in the military and had made the biggest mistake of his life, but felt there was nothing that could be done about it.

He graduated on September 10, 2004, and came home for leave. He was depressed and confused and was sent to see a military chaplain and a mental health counselor at the Marine base close to our home. He knew he was now a part of something that would expect things from him that he couldn't do.

While he was home he heard about conscientious objectors. He didn't know that people in the military who opposed war and killing could apply for conscientious objector status and possibly be discharged. The process is long and hard and many people that apply are denied it.

Still depressed he left for Camp Lejeune in NC, September 28, 2004. He saw a mental health counselor the next day and spoke to his commanding officer declaring himself a conscientious objector. He has a lawyer and is working on his application to apply for a conscientious objector discharge. Once he gets his paperwork in they are supposed to put him in a job that conflicts as little as possible with his beliefs until his application is reviewed, but his application will not be ready before training is supposed to start. He does not want to pick up a weapon, but has been told by someone there that he will be taken to the brig if he refuses to train.

I wanted to send his story out in hopes of finding people that will support him and write him letters expressing that support. He is against killing and war and is willing to go to jail to stand up for his beliefs. I fear for his safety, as a fellow Marine has already punched him in the face causing a cut that required stitches.

I am hoping the process will work for him and he will be home soon. I am hoping he will not be ordered to do things that would go against his beliefs, orders that he might have to refuse to obey. He realizes that going against the crowd may be the hardest thing he has done, but it is the only thing that he can do, that can lead to a real change for the better in his life, even if he has to go to jail.

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I told him I felt that there were worse prisons than being behind bars. If a person goes against their beliefs they will be living in a prison of their own making filled with the visions and memories of the deaths and injustices they brought to others. There are many kinds of prisons. Sometimes a person is more free behind bars when they have followed their heart.

Kathie

Our personal statement:
We want people to know that we support our troops completely. We are not against any branch of the military. We support each and every person that has made the decision to be there. Our story is not about the U.S. Military, but rather about our sons right NOT to be forced to do something that he has realized is wrong for him.

"War will exist until that distant day when the conscientious objector enjoys the same reputation and prestige that the warrior does today."
-John F. Kennedy

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Facing Iraq duty, two U.S. G.I.'s head north to seek asylum

Soldiers Choose Canada

by **Alisa Solomon**
April 6th, 2004 – The Village Voice

TORONTO—Army private Brandon Hughey got in his silver Mustang around midnight on March 2, rolled past the gates at Fort Hood in Texas, and headed northeast. All he had to guide him was a deepening dread and principled objection to the war in Iraq and a promise of help from a complete stranger he'd found on the Internet. His unit was deploying to the Middle East the next morning and, as Hughey, 18, wrote in a February 29 e-mail to the stranger, an anti-war activist, "I do not want to be a pawn in the government's war for oil, and have told my superiors that I want out of the military. They are not willing to chapter me out and tell me that I have no choice but to pack my bags and get ready to go to Iraq. This has led me to feel hopeless and I have thought about suicide several times."

His heart pounding to the hip-hop beat on his radio, Hughey drove for 17 hours straight, keeping an anxious eye on the speedometer, panicked that he might get pulled over. The activist met him on March 4 in southern Indiana, stashed the Mustang (with Hughey's dog tags in the trunk) in Indianapolis, and took the wheel behind his own car for a 500-mile trip to the bridge at Niagara Falls. He gave Hughey a New York Knicks cap to pull on over his crew cut so the guards at the Canadian border would believe they were on their way to see a Toronto Raptors game.

Hughey did watch New York shut down Toronto in a fourth-quarter comeback that night—but on TV from St. Catharines, Ontario, where a Quaker couple has taken him in. He is the second American soldier who opposes the war to have applied for refugee status in Canada. As the occupation in Iraq drags on, morale among soldiers plummets, and talk of a post-election draft heats up, their cases will determine whether Canada will once again welcome young Americans resisting a questionable war.

The first was Jeremy Hinzman, a private first class with the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne, who arrived in Toronto on January 3 with his wife, Nga Nguyen, and their 21-month-old son, Liam. In contrast to Hughey, Hinzman engaged a lengthy process of pleading from within his unit for non-combat duty as a conscientious objector (C.O.). After his request was denied, Hinzman faced orders for Iraq. He and his wife crammed what they could into their Chevy Prizm and headed north, with their son, from Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Hinzman, 25, understood what he was risking: if he wins his case, never being able to visit the U.S. again; if he loses, being deported, going directly to jail with a harsh sentence. Desertion during wartime is a capital offense; though the last execution for a runaway soldier was in 1945, Hinzman worries that the penalty could be revived. "The Bush administration has done so many unprecedented things," he notes. Nonetheless, seeking sanctuary in Canada looked better than any alternative. Hinzman reasons, "I thought of refusing orders and turning myself in [as Staff Sergeant Camilo Mejia did last month]. But because of how they had handled my C.O. application, I wasn't sure I would get

a fair shake. Anyway, I don't feel I should be incarcerated for following my conscience."

To win refugee status, Hinzman and Hughey will have to demonstrate that they are fleeing a well-founded fear of persecution in the U.S.—an extremely tough claim. What's more, notes a former member of Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board, refugee law specifies that "prosecution is not persecution": Punishment for breaking a law is not grounds for asylum unless the law itself—China's one-child policy, for instance—is deemed a form of persecution.

That is the kind of argument Hinzman and Hughey's attorney, Jeffry House, will make before Canada's immigration board about eight weeks from now. Essentially, House will be putting the war itself on trial by contending that the U.S. wants to send these young men to jail—or worse—for choosing to comply with international law. "Rather than do something unthinkable or horrible as soldiers," House says, "they came to Canada. That's a huge step."

House knows the feeling. As a college student in Madison, Wisconsin, in the late '60s, he concluded that the Vietnam War was wrong and that he would not participate. The day he got his draft notice, he went to Canada.

Canada has a long tradition of providing safe haven for dissenting Americans: Loyalists during the War of Independence, refugees from the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, so-called "skedaddlers" deserting from Civil War battalions, and, most famously, some 60,000 men and women resisting the Vietnam War.

Unless there's a draft, no one expects a flood at the northern border nowadays. But the trickle could certainly swell. According to a U.S. Army survey released last week, 72 percent of soldiers report that morale in their unit is low or very low. Meanwhile, the suicide rate among service members is at an all-time high. From April through December last year, 23 killed themselves while on duty in Iraq or Kuwait; at least seven more did so after their return home.

Thousands are seeking less dire means of escape. Calls to G.I. Rights Hotline, which answers questions from recruits trying to leave the armed forces, shot up to 28,822 in 2003, from 17,267 in 2001. Meanwhile, though the Pentagon will not confirm figures, military attorneys, activists, and the European press have estimated that 600 to 1,700 soldiers have fled to avoid service in Iraq. Most are likely living underground in the U.S.—going AWOL, even for long periods, is a far less serious offense than actually applying for refugee status in another country—which clearly demonstrates the intent to desert. Nonetheless, the peacenik grapevine in Canada began buzzing on Wednesday with news that a female deserter is on her way.

Canada itself has resisted the war in Iraq. Backed by overwhelming public sentiment, its government officially refused to join the "coalition forces." But much has changed in the 35 years since a draft dodger or G.I. could simply present himself at Canada's border and sign up for landed-immigrant status. "In the '60s, we didn't have a refugee determination system," explains the former Immigration and Refugee Board member, Audrey Macklin, a professor of law at the University of Toronto. "The war resisters who came were not required to jump through any hoops. Now we have a rigorous one-by-one approach and more complex and narrow regimes for permitting entry."

Besides, notes law professor John Hagan, who himself went to Alberta to beat the draft and recently wrote *Northern Passage: American Vietnam War Resisters in Canada,* "The door didn't really open until 1969, and that was in the context of very high levels of casualties—far, far higher than are involved in the current situation. The pressure was immense and took a long time. Neither of those variables is operating now."

Even in the Vietnam War era, U.S. policies and public sympathies judged those who had enlisted and then abandoned their posts more harshly than those evading the draft. Indeed, a blanket pardon President Jimmy Carter granted the day he took office in 1977 applied only to draft dodgers, not to deserters. Hinzman and Hughey hear the same criticism today. "My grandpa was against the war and can't stand Bush," Hinzman says, "but he has firm notions of duty. I think it might be a little humiliating for him to see my name in the media."

Still, as House puts it, "No one has to give up basic moral principle because he signed a contract. Even the U.S. military recognizes that people can become conscientious objectors after enlisting."

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Brandon Hughey was 17 when an army recruiter called him at his home in dry, hot, and heavily Republican San Angelo, Texas, to invite him to join up. "I wanted to go to college, and they offered me a $5,000 signing bonus," he recalls with a smile that pulls dimples into his boyish cheeks. "That really caught my attention." Hughey's dad, a computer programmer, had to sign the enlistment papers for his underage son. Then, last summer, shortly after his high school graduation, the teenager left west Texas for Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Hughey trained in bayonets, rifles, and hand grenades, and he learned to drive a tank. At the same time, figuring he should know what he was going to war for, he started to give himself an education in affairs of state. "It wasn't until I joined the military that I began to form political views," he says. On the base, Fox News blared everywhere, but Hughey began reading AP and MSNBC stories online. "When I learned that Saddam did not have weapons of mass destruction, I began to doubt things," he says. He brought questions to his officers, but they told him it wasn't his job to do the thinking. He didn't even know that applying for C.O. status was an option. His first one-month leave came, and Hughey had earned enough cash to finance the Mustang.

By the time Hughey reported to Fort Hood in mid December, he had read what international law has to say about wars of aggression and sensed he had made a terrible mistake. As the days ticked by, he dutifully carried out his orders—spraying insecticide on uniforms, packing gear to be shipped to Baghdad—but at night he surfed the Net, feeling increasingly frantic to get out of serving in a war he couldn't believe in. Hughey didn't feel he could turn to his pro-war family. (In fact, he hasn't called them from Canada.)

Then he found the stranger: One evening he stumbled on an article that quoted one Carl Rising-Moore calling for a new underground railroad and saying it would be better for suicidal soldiers to desert, as George W. Bush had done, than to take their own lives. He dashed off an e-mail with the subject line "Please help a desperate serviceman."

Carl Rising-Moore, 58, who describes himself as having been "a brainwashed young man" who enlisted during Vietnam and has been a peace activist ever since, says he couldn't help responding to Hughey's plea—even though it's a felony to assist a deserter. With only hours to go before Hughey was to report for baggage drop-off, Rising-Moore made arrangements with the Quakers. When Rose Marie Cipryk and Don Alexander agreed to receive Hughey in their St. Catharines home, it was déjà vu all over again: They had sheltered resisters in the late '60s. "Simplicity is a value for Quakers," says Alexander, "so there's a debate raging in the community over whether the Internet is good or bad. I think it's obvious which side wins in this instance."

Jeremy Hinzman also figured that the army was his most direct route to college. "I guess I made a Faustian bargain," he says, characteristically flashing both a literary reference and a wry smile. He enlisted on January 17, 2001, shortly after his marriage—and many months before Bush decreed a policy of preemptive war.

Hinzman excelled at the drills and enjoyed the camaraderie, but, he says, "I started to question things as it became clear that basic training is all about breaking down the human inhibition against killing." In rifle training, he says, "You start out with targets that are black circles. Then the circles grow shoulders and then the shoulders turn into torsos. Pretty soon they're human beings."

The chanting was worse. One day, during bayonet training, when the instructor would holler, "What makes the grass grow?" Hinzman caught himself joining in the response: "Blood, blood, blood." Aghast, Hinzman asked himself, "What am I doing?"

He was a novice practitioner of Zen, and when he got to Fort Bragg in July 2001, the closest thing he could find "that wasn't too New Age-y" was the Quaker House in Fayetteville. He and Nguyen started attending in January 2002, and felt at home with its philosophy of nonviolence. Over time, Hinzman began preparing an eloquent application for C.O. status. "Although I still have a great desire to eliminate injustice," he wrote, "I have come to the realization that killing will do nothing but perpetuate it. Thus, I cannot in good conscience continue to serve as a combatant in the Army." He submitted it that August.

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At the end of October, the army claimed it had never received his application. (It suddenly turned up in the army's files almost a year later.) He submitted it again, just as his unit was being deployed to Afghanistan. While the application was pending, he slogged through eight months of KP duty in Afghanistan—in punishing 14-hour shifts, seven days a week. In a hasty hearing in Kandahar last April, his request was turned down because Hinzman admitted he would fight in self-defense. That month, his unit returned to Fort Bragg, and on December 20, the orders came for Iraq. He knew he would not be accommodated with non-combat duty again, so in January he and his family fled to Toronto, where they were sheltered by Quakers and then moved into an apartment.

While it will be months before their refugee claims are decided—possibly years if there are appeals—Hughey and Hinzman have already been embraced by Canada's anti-war movement. On March 20, they were featured guests at Toronto's "The World Still Says No to War" rally, which brought out some 7,000 students, trade unionists, religious peaceniks, and lefty sectarians despite a relentless cold, thin rain.

Hinzman addressed the crowd. Though he had never given a speech at a demonstration before, he was a high school debater in his hometown of Rapid City, South Dakota, and for as long as he can remember, he has been an avid reader—later, he comments that the rally reminded him of Elias Canetti's *Crowds and Power*—so he knows how to turn an oratorical phrase. He told the demonstrators, "I could not simply claim that I was merely a victim of the times or that I was just following orders. Had I taken part in the occupation of Iraq, I would have been making myself complicit in a criminal enterprise."

Hughey stood quietly next to him, soaking up everything but the downpour. "I had no idea so many people think this way," he said later. "It's good not to feel so alone."

Editor's note: It looks like Hinzman's C.O. claim was illegally turned down by the Army, so I am including here some paragraphs about the topic of self-defense from the **Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors:**

One common question asked by Investigating Officers, chaplains, friends, and neighbors, is this: What would you do if someone attacked your mother (or sister or yourself)? If you answer that you would use force to defend the person attacked, the person who asked the question may conclude that you don't really object to war.

That's not true. A Court of Appeals decision in the early 1970s stated that:

> "Agreement that force can be used to restrain wrongdoing, especially as the last alternative, has little bearing on an attitude toward war." (U.S. v. Purvis)

That's still what the law says. You don't have to object to personal self-defense, or defense of your loved ones, to qualify as a conscientious objector. And you can't really say what you would do. A person who says he or she would use force in self-defense may find that a nonviolent response makes more sense in actual practice. And a person who favors a nonviolent response may respond violently in practice.

One thing you can be certain of, though. If you or someone you loved were attacked, you wouldn't dig a trench around the attacker's house, bombard them with artillery fire, drop napalm on their family, and demand their unconditional surrender--if they survived. That's the point. Personal self-defense is not war. In fact, it doesn't resemble war in any way.

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Chapter 3: *Starting Your Work on the Three Basic Questions*

As mentioned in Chapter 1, there are three overlapping aspects to developing and supporting your claim to be a conscientious objector, and this guide has pages or entire chapters about each one.

INWARD ASPECTS of clarifying your beliefs and commitments concerning participation in organized violence. (Chapters 1, 4 and 5)

IN-BETWEEN ASPECTS about communication: preparing and gathering written materials that express or support your views:

- explaining your beliefs against participating in war in a clear, truthful and convincing way through **written answers to the three central questions** on the conscientious objector claim form. (Chapters 3 and 6)

  > *"Describe your beliefs which are the reasons for your claiming conscientious objection to combatant military training and service or to all military training and service."*
  >
  > *"Describe how and when you acquired these beliefs."*
  >
  > *"Explain what most clearly shows that your beliefs are deeply held. You may wish to include a description of how your beliefs affect the way you live."*

- talking to and gathering **letters of support** from people who can attest to the sincerity of your opposition to war. (Chapter 7)
- preparing to appear before your draft board and **respond to questions from draft board members** about the content and sincerity of your beliefs and commitments. (Chapter 8)

OUTER ASPECTS consisting of actually filling out Selective Service forms, submitting them, and meeting with your draft board. Some of the outer work can only take place after a draft law goes into effect.

This chapter will start your work on **the three central questions**, by presenting them in the form of journal pages that allow you to express your thoughts, feelings and beliefs at length. I am convinced that you will write clearer responses to the three central questions if you approach that task in two phases: a **brainstorm** phase now and a **careful writing** phase later. You can begin the process of answering these questions by getting to know them, thinking about them, and using them as an outline to organize your thoughts, feelings, study, arguments and auto-biographical information. Begin by writing down any thoughts that come to your mind when you first read each question. Then, as you study the remaining chapters in this guide, and your thoughts and feelings about participation in war become clearer, you can come back to these journal pages and add new information and reflections. It doesn't have to be perfect or logical the first time through. What is important is to get a lot what is in your heart and mind onto paper. Finally, in Chapter 6, after you have given the subject of conscientious objection a lot of thought, I will ask you to sift and sort through all your notes and assemble your thoughts and feelings into clear paragraphs.

WAR TAXES: A RECURRING CHALLENGE TO C.O.'S

Refusing to pay taxes for war is a form of conscientious objection and protest that has a long history in the United States. Henry David Thoreau, one of the great American writers of 19th century, went to jail in the 1840s rather than pay taxes in support of the Mexican-American war, which he believed to be immoral. Although the issue of paying or not paying taxes in support of war may not loom large on your horizon, because it is not as dramatic as being drafted into the army, it is good to give this issue some thought, too. What does it mean to get an exemption from military service, if through your taxes you pay other people to go and do the things you find morally objectionable? One person might answer this challenge by saying that in a democracy we can, through the political process, influence the way our tax dollars are spent, and campaign for them to be spent on peaceful activities rather than on war. That might allow you to live with your own conscience, provided that you continue to

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make strong efforts to have your tax dollars spent in nonviolent ways. But others would argue that we are truly responsible for the actions accomplished with our tax dollars, and that we need to work much harder to make a direct difference in how those dollars are spent, lest the blood of innocents be upon our hands. I believe the issue of paying taxes for war and armaments is a reasonable moral challenge to every conscientious objector in a democratic country. It is worth thinking about in its own right, and it could be a question that a draft board member asks you in your interview.

WHO WILL GO IN MY PLACE? The arguments about war taxes point to an even deeper issue: if I am excused from military service, the war will not stop right away. Who will go in my place, to kill and be killed? Here is one possible response to get you thinking about the issue. It seems to me that although we may be excused from the army, we are not excused from the war. The war now claims our attention as peace advocates rather than as soldiers. Every time someone dies, no matter which side they're on, a part of us dies with them. War has failed humanity for thousands of years and *someone must search for a different way*. That is our task. In working earnestly for peace, justice, mercy and conflict resolution, we can try to save at least some of the lives of those who have gone to war in our place.

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The information on the following pages concerning the three central questions has been adapted from *Basic Draft and Registration Information* from the Center on War and Conscience. That document is reproduced for your convenience in the Readings section of this workbook.

QUESTION 1: DESCRIBE THE BELIEFS WHICH ARE THE BASIS FOR YOUR CLAIM AS A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR. IF APPROPRIATE, STATE WHETHER THOSE BELIEFS WOULD PERMIT YOU TO SERVE IN A NONCOMBATANT POSITION IN THE ARMED FORCES, OR PAY TAXES FOR WAR.

(Form 22, the Selective Service System Documentation Form for Conscientious Objectors, says: "Describe your beliefs which are the reasons for your claiming conscientious objection to combatant military training and service or to all military training and service.")

1a. The first part of this question asks you to describe, in some detail and as honestly as possible, the basic principles by which you guide your life. You should describe those values which are of utmost importance to you, such as God, love, truth, etc., and why these beliefs are in conflict with participation in war or paying for war or preparations for war. You should begin by saying that you are conscientiously opposed to participation in war, and then describe the beliefs that lead you to such opposition. (Feel free to use additional paper for the answer to this and other questions.)

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1b. The second part of this question seeks to determine whether as a draft registrant you claim noncombatant status (such as being a medic or a cook) in the military or a full exemption from military service. You should specify what it is about noncombatant service that would violate your conscience if this is the exemption you seek. Conscientious objectors to paying taxes for war should specify what it is about paying taxes for war that violates your conscience. If your convictions lead you to be a non-cooperator with the draft board system, your answer to this question might be useful should you ever be prosecuted or seek financial aid or other help from sources such as FEAT which provides school loans to CO non-registrants.

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QUESTION 2: DESCRIBE HOW YOUR BELIEFS DEVELOPED.

(Form 22 says: "Describe how and when you acquired these beliefs.")

In answering this question, you should include anything of significance which helped to form your beliefs. Mention any religious training you have had if you feel such training has helped you arrive at your position. If you feel you arrived at your beliefs with no formal training, there is, of course, no need to mention any. The influence of clergy, teachers, family members, books, television, movies, membership in organizations and experiences in your life should be listed. Be specific. You need to show that strong influences in your life have stimulated you to think clearly and seriously about participation in war. If you have already been in combat, describe your feelings about the injuries and death inflicted in combat.

Specific incidents can be mentioned, such as seminars or assemblies you have attended, courses taken, trips taken, contact with refugees, demonstrations you were in, to show that your beliefs had substantial formation beyond a merely "academic interest." Obviously, if you have experienced war, be sure to reflect on it. Take care not to give the impression that your belief is primarily a matter of political considerations, expediency, or merely an arbitrary, personal moral code unrelated to higher values. Unconventional beliefs do qualify, but they will require careful statement. Describing all of the above in chronological order will make the story of your life more understandable.

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QUESTION 3: DESCRIBE HOW YOUR BELIEFS AFFECT THE WAY YOU LIVE AND THE TYPE OF WORK YOU DO OR PLAN TO DO.

(Form 22 says: "Explain what most clearly shows that your beliefs are deeply held. You may wish to include a description of how your beliefs affect the way you live")

This may be a difficult question for objectors who have not had many experiences which can show sincere beliefs. Select the best illustrations of your convictions. Think about community service; church, mosque or synagogue participation.; clubs; sports; or relationship with friends. You can always discuss how your future plans are strongly affected by a commitment to those beliefs. Describe kinds of employment you have had or plan to have which reflect your commitment. Discuss any public expression, written or oral, you have given to your beliefs. Describe your lifestyle, mention your life's goals as you have set them, and show how they are an outgrowth of your beliefs. Don't forget to mention movies, video games, and other aspects of our violent culture that you don't participate in, if that is the case for you. This question allows you to demonstrate the sincerity with which you hold your beliefs.

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Chapter 4: Our Ten Journeys: The spiritual roots of conscientious objection

BRINGING OUT THE PRINCIPLES THAT ARE IMPLICIT IN YOUR FEELINGS. As I explained in Chapter One, the process of becoming a conscientious objector is focused on your beliefs, how you acquired them and how sincerely you live them. While that certainly does describe the spiritual unfolding of some people, there are many people whose spiritual lives unfold in different ways. Some people practice kindness for a lifetime and would be at a total loss to explain that kindness or to philosophize about it. We would still count them as deeply moral people.

Some people come to their moral commitments through an intuitive process that involves their life experiences. For example, you may be a student of Yoga, Tai Chi or massage. Through these disciplines, you may come to a deep awareness of, and gratitude for, the miracle of the human body, and you may feel a deeper than usual revulsion toward shooting, burning or stabbing someone else's body. Another example: Giving birth to babies, and taking care of babies, can fill a person with deep intuitions about the beauty and fragility of human life, and an intense reluctance to injure others. In these cases, our living gives birth to our believing.

In this chapter I am going to try to put into words what you already know at some level of your being. I am going to put into simple words the basic principles of living that many religions and psychologies and schools of human development agree on. (All religions probably agree on most of these principles, but I can't say *all* here because I haven't studied all religions.) These are also conclusions that you could reach on your own, without the help of religion, by paying a lot of attention to the people you've known or read about who seem to be most fully human. (The study of fully human people was an approach pioneered in the 20th century by the humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow, but it has precedents that go back to Aristotle.) You can also see the opposite of these guiding principles, or directions of development, by paying careful attention to the lives of those who cause pain to others.

"FROM-TO" THINKING AS A WAY OF UNDERSTANDING MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT. Over the centuries people in many different cultures have come to the same intuitive understanding that *journey stories* are a powerful way of organizing our thinking about life. Our spiritual lives are not simply a static following of principles. They can be better understood as an endless journey into deeper levels of development. Thus, some of the best known prayers of humanity are expressed in a "from-to" format. I will give two famous examples here and then in the remainder of this chapter I will use the journey theme as a way of exploring the web of values shared by mature spiritual and psychological traditions.

The first is a Sanskrit prayer which is part of the daily practice of millions of Hindus, from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishads (1.3.28), one of the sacred books of Hinduism, recorded sometime around 800 BC:

> O Lord, lead me from the unreal to the real.
> Lead me from the darkness to light.
> Lead me from death to immortality.
> May there be peace, peace, and perfect peace.

The second example of the "from-to" spiritual journey is the Peace Prayer associated with St. Francis of Assisi (and while not personally written by him, certainly expressing his spirit).

> Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
>
> Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
> where there is injury, pardon;
> where there is doubt, faith;
> where there is despair, hope;
> where there is darkness, light;
> and where there is sadness, joy.
> O Divine Master,
> grant that I may not so much seek
> to be consoled as to console;
> to be understood as to understand;
> to be loved as to love.
> For it is in giving that we receive;
> it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
> and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
>
> Amen.

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TEN JOURNEYS At the heart of all religions and psychologies is a vision that human beings are capable of choice and development. If we were not capable of at least some choice and some development, no religion would promulgate any ethical teachings or commandments, because none of us would have the capacity to follow such commandments by changing our behavior. It is certainly true that different religions and different schools of psychology understand the processes of change in people differently. But when you look at the directions of change, what you see is a remarkable similarity. Along with laughing, sneezing, crying and giving birth in similar ways, human beings all over planet Earth seem to unfold spiritually in similar ways. As the Dalai Lama put it, *"The time has come for us to think on a deeper level, on a human level and appreciate and respect our sameness as human beings."* After studying this topic for 40 years, here is how our shared journeys of spiritual development look to me. All of them, it seems to me, point strongly away from violence, and away from war.

The journey from deception and a divided self to truthfulness and integrity

From revenge and retaliation to forgiveness and reconciliation

From being unaware of the choices that are available to me and the consequences of my actions, to a widening awareness and acceptance of my responsibilities and my capacity to choose

From fear, anger and hatred to love, trust and compassion

From selfishness and resentment to gratitude and generosity

From last-minute thinking to seven-generations thinking

From being stuck in old patterns to learning new life abilities and attitudes, and creating new responses (whether as a person or as a culture)

From isolation and indifference to communion, reverence and caring

From coercion and violence to cooperation, kindness and mutual aid

From causing injury and death to sustaining life and development

Along with amazing similarities among religions, there are also valuable differences associated with these journeys. Along with having a deep common ground of shared experiences and universal aspects of human development, people are also unique, cultures are unique, and religions are unique. No account of human life is complete without honoring both our shared common ground and our uniqueness.

In relation to the Ten Journeys, I want to honor that people are called to these journeys in different ways. I feel called *to* these journeys, and accompanied *on* these journeys, by Jesus, St. Francis, the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Oscar Romero, among others. You might feel called and accompanied by other great souls and Divine messengers, by the Bible, the Bhagavad-Gita or the Koran, or by the Milky Way! For me, part of the practice of humility in the spiritual life is to follow the teaching of Jesus that "by their fruits you will know them." Works of goodness, kindness and mercy, and a heart full of forgiveness and generosity, tell me that the spirit is working in a person's life. I do not feel that it is my place to demand that such a person use my treasured words or ideas. I feel my task is to honor that person and to learn from their life and example.

So, along with affirming that these ten journeys are the roots of nonviolence in every culture, I want to encourage you to explore them and express them in ways that draw on the deepest resources of your own culture and/or religion, and the deepest resources of your own unique life. All of this is summed up in the questions, "*Who* calls *you* to make these ten journeys?" and "*Who* accompanies you on these journeys?"

In the following ten chapters, 5 through 14, I will explore each of these ten journeys, and invite you to consider at length how you could participate in each of them more fully. All of them apply as much to a couple, to a family, to an organization, to an entire culture, as they do to an individual person, so please feel free to discuss them with your parents, spouse, teenaged children, and friends. In each of these chapters I will invite you to enter into a process of intensive self-inquiry and journal writing.

In Chapter 15, I will go further into the experience of feeling called by something or someone beyond ourselves, and invite you to renew, deepen and/or develop your own unique set of spiritual friendships with some of the saints and exemplars of nonviolence and conscientious objection

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Chapter 5:

The journey from deception and divided self to truthfulness and integrity

One journey at the heart of spiritual development is to commit ourselves to leave behind all lying, all deception of others, all hiding from the truth, all self-deception and all clever evasions of the truth; and to commit ourselves to grow each day in truthfulness and openness, searching for the wisdom and kindness that will make this possible.

Here are some reflections on truthfulness, and following this introduction, you will find some conscientious objections based of the value of personal truthfulness, as well as some journal pages on which to do your own reflecting and exploring.

Truthfulness is as close to a universal principle as one is likely to find. Here are some quotes. (You can find many spiritual quotes on truthfulness at http://www.origin.org/ucs/ws/theme148.cfm)

- Thou shalt not Lie. Thou shalt not bear false witness. *(Christianity and Judaism: the Ten Commandments)*
- Those who cling tenaciously to truth will ultimately realize God. *(Hinduism: Sri Ramakrishna)*
- Putting away falsehood, let everyone speak the truth with their neighbor, for we are members one of another. (*Christianity. Ephesians 4.25)*
- Let your conduct be marked by truthfulness in word, deed, and thought. *(Hinduism. Taittiriya Upanishad 1.11.1)*
- One should utter the truth. *(Buddhism. Dhammapada 224)*
- Beautify your tongues, O people, with truthfulness, and adorn your souls with the ornament of honesty. Beware, O people, that ye deal not treacherously with any one. *(Bahá'i Faith: Sayings of Bahá'u'lláh)*

Truthfulness is also the central theme of modern psychotherapy, which tries to help people face the truth of their own feelings, and to face the choices that they themselves make, which contribute to the pain in their lives and relationships. For reasons of shame, people are often deeply reluctant to acknowledge the roles they play in the creation of their own difficulties. And, people are often equally reluctant to admit having been wounded or abused by those whom they need and love. The psychological problems involved with lying and denial include that lying and denial are addictive, disorienting, enmeshing and progressive: as a person lies more, they begin to lie to themselves and others *about lying itself*, and gradually become disconnected from themselves, from others, from life and from the over-arching unity of all things that some people address as God. In relation to war, this issue of honesty-to-self means, among other things, facing the fact that military service often includes hurting and killing people, and the fact we have choices to make about whether or not we are going to participate in organized killing.

THE ETERNAL LIES OF WAR. Wars begin with lies, deceptions and self-deceptions, are carried out with lies deceptions and self-deceptions, and are followed with lies, deceptions and self-deceptions, at many. levels, some spoken and some silent. Those who participate in organized killing are strongly motivated and encouraged, if not forced, to embrace, repeat, live out and perpetuate those lies. As the Greek playwright Aeshcylus stated some 2,500 years ago, "In war, truth is the first casualty." While any particular war can have its own unique lies, such as the lies told to the American people about Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons of mass destruction, here I want to focus the lies that have probably been part of organized killing since it began.

Misleading narratives. When a government wants to begin a war, it must create a rationale, an image of the "enemy," a story about the values to be fought for, and a proclamation about who will benefit from the success of the war. Sometimes this is called war propaganda. This narrative is often filled with lies, evasions, resurrected memories of past sufferings and injustices borne, and visions of threats looming on. In the 1990s, the Serbs were mobilized for war against Croatia by the Serbian government playing World War II atrocity films on national TV, day and night. President Wilson promised that American participation in World War I would "make the world safe for democracy." As is usually the case in war, things did

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not turn out as planned. World War I was followed by two of the worst dictatorships the world has ever seen: Hitler and Stalin. The American people were recently summoned to war against Iraq with images of nuclear annihilation. "The world is not a court of law," the politicians intoned gravely, and we cannot wait to resolve issues of evidence. Later, when it was discovered that Saddam Hussein did not have nuclear weapons, the rationale for the war was retroactively redefined, asserting that Saddam Hussein *wanted* to have nuclear weapons and that was a threat enough. (The politicians who advanced this rationale did not pause to consider how the American example of half a century of using nuclear weapons to threaten other countries, might inspire other countries to want nuclear weapons of their own. This is an example of story-making in which a significant chunk of information has been left out.)

Abstractions. A recurring lie of war involves using abstract words like "war," "enemy," "defend freedom," and "serve your country" to mask over the horrors of the actual processes organized killing and military conquest. Military training prepares a person to shoot others with guns, stab them to death, and blow them up with various sized bombs, scattering about the person's eyes, teeth, fingers, arms, legs, intestines and so on. If you do not do this yourself in the military, you support others to do so. It is much easier to hide the moral ugliness of killing behind abstractions such as "war" and "warrior," than it is to hide the moral ugliness of "I shoot people to death (or blow them up) because and whenever someone in power over me tells me to do so." The persons who are going to be killed are de-personalized by describing them with abstract terms such as "enemy soldiers" and "targets" which is supposed to make us forget how much they are like us, have families hoping they will get home alive, feel pain when they are hurt, and so on. Abstractions such as freedom, democracy and peace, often drift away from any recognizable everyday meaning, allowing President Bush to say "this war is really about peace." In our struggle for "freedom" and "democracy" we have enlisted the help of Afghan warlords and brutal dictators in Pakistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, to name only a few.

"Forget-ability." Another significant, and usually silent, lie of war is the idea that a person can go to a foreign country, kill and maim a lot of people, and then come home and just forget about it as they resume a normal life. No military recruiting poster says "if you're lucky enough not to be killed, the faces of those whom you have killed or injured will probably haunt you for the rest of your life," but the posters *should* say that. While it is probably not true, as had been previously reported, that tens of thousands of Vietnam veterans committed suicide, the debate about the suicide rate masks over the deeper truth that many veterans of every war are emotionally shattered by their combat experiences. This silent lie about the "forget-ability" of killing experiences is a lie that you will be required to believe and perpetuate, whether as a soldier or as a guilty taxpayer sending the soldier off to kill. Without it most organized killing would fall apart.

Battlefield deception. Another aspect of the conflict between truthfulness and war, is that soldiers in combat have since the beginning of war tried to deceive their opponents into exposing their location so that the opponents can be killed. (If you wish to explore this topic further, on the Internet you will find an entire US Army field manual [FM 90-2] devoted to the topic of battlefield deception.) Tell me, do you cease to be a person when you step upon the battlefield? And if you do cease to be a person at that moment, when do you get your personhood back? I can see how some might say that you are justified, in extreme situations, in lying in order to save a life. I do not understand how one could justify, spiritually, morally or psychologically, a continual practice of deception in order to kill people.

Violence can be contained. No one joins the Army, or is drafted into the military, with the intention of murdering women and children. But the fact is, 90% of the casualties in modern conflicts are civilians. The idea that violence can be contained has always been an illusion with horrific consequences. Once the deep inhibition against killing is broken down in a person, it is very difficult to make sure that person kills or injures only designated victims, as the My Lai massacre and the torture at Abu Ghraib prison show. And with the passing of the decades, it is getting more difficult rather than easier to protect civilians from the processes of war. The Agent Orange that the United States dropped on the Vietnamese countryside to kill the foliage that was hiding the guerrillas, has poisoned generations of Vietnamese children. The depleted uranium antitank shells used by the United States in recent conflicts burn to a poisonous, radioactive dust

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that will continue to poison everybody for literally millions of years. There are still active landmines in the Libyan desert from World War II! At some point your heart breaks, and you realize that no matter how much you love your country, violence is the wrong path. Violence cannot be contained.

Every effort. A frequently stated lie associated with war, is the assertion that "we have made every possible effort to avoid war." This is a lie that recruits are supposed to adopt and use to console themselves, justify themselves and absolve themselves of their responsibility for killing people. This assertion is often blatantly, screamingly, untrue. For example, in the 1980s, during the secret wars in Central America and Afghanistan, the United States spent on peacemaking and disarmament approximately the same amount of money that the United States Army spent on marching bands, a few hundred million dollars out of a military budget of hundreds of billions. That was hardly "all we could do." And neither is the US making "every possible effort" to avoid war and violence today, when, with five percent of the world's population, we spend more on preparations to kill (we call it the military budget) than all our possible adversaries combined, indeed, *close to the amount spent by all the other countries of the world combined.*

After the fact justifications and the mythology of noble wars. The sorrow of losing loved ones in war is so great that the bereaved family members search desperately for consolations, and one of the most frequent consolations is that the person who died, died for a noble cause. It is unbearably painful to lose a family member, and that unbearable pain would become even worse if one were to know that the loved one died simply because the leaders of one's country were greedy, stupid, confused or deluded by fantasies of grandeur. And those who have killed others in war are also desperate to soothe their consciences with retroactively invoked ideas of noble justifications. No leader or politician wants to face the disgrace of having sent people to their deaths out of incompetence or stupidity. Out of this well of sorrow, guilt and false pride arises the mythology of noble purposes for all past wars, and this mythology keeps nations from learning anything from their mistakes. To pick a relatively safe example, World War I was caused by inept European diplomats whose systems of secret treaties and poor communications caused them to mobilize their armies and blunder into a bloody conflict from which they could not extricate themselves. The study of history convinces me that not one of the millions of people, including Americans, who died in World War One died for a noble cause. They may have died deaths made personally noble by their bravery or their devotion to their fellow soldiers, but in a larger sense, they died because of human stupidity and incompetence. They are now memorialized as "defending freedom" and "sacrificing for their country." It would be truer to say that they were sacrificed by their country, but I would hate to have to say that to someone who had lost a grandfather in World War I, or to anyone who had lost a family member in war. (The feeling of personal loss surrounding the death of family members is so intense that for many people the topic is beyond the reach of ordinary thought and conversation. I would also place it beyond the realm of "I'm right and you're wrong-" style debates, and the sense of personal vindication that comes from winning debates. The point of being a peace advocate is not to prove that "we" are right and "they" are wrong, the point is to live the life of compassion invitingly enough that others are inspired to explore it.)

The relevance of all this is that when we face a military draft, we are asked to trust that the leaders of our country will exercise great prudence and restraint in sending us off to kill people. But the record of the last hundred years is full of catastrophic blunders disguised with after-the-fact justifications, with no evidence of prudence or restraint anywhere. Even the case of World War Two, often referred to as "the good war," is murky, given that American industrialists in the 1930s poured billions of dollars into the build-up of Hitler's war machine. If that had not happened, World War Two might not have happened.

More recently, the United States backed Saddam Hussein's dictatorship in the 1980s and then went to war against him in the name of the same "Iraqi freedom" we had undermined for at least ten years. In that same time period, the CIA poured billions into the Afghan Mujaheddin groups that later became Al Queda, to fight a war of terror against the Russians in Afghanistan. Now we are being asked to fight a noble war against the terrorist movement *we ourselves launched*. Actually, we are being asked to pay in blood and treasure for the blunders and miscalculations of the Reagan Administration.

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But my point here is not to demonize Reagan or his advisors, however deeply confused they may have been. The point is that human history is one long record of leaders deluding themselves and their citizens into fruitless wars, and later mythologizing those wars as noble. To the degree that we hope to follow the Commandments, "Thou shalt not lie" and "Thou shalt not bear false witness," I am convinced we have a moral duty to resist the ways that *an entire society* lies to itself and others. Only by facing the painful truth of our mistakes and self-deceptions, can we extricate ourselves from an endless cycle of self-deception-fueled wars. (And, from my experience, only by facing these painful truths in humble and compassionate ways can make a way for others to do the same. This was one of Gandhi's great teachings, we have to live the peace we want to teach.)

As far as I can see, history provides absolutely no evidence that we should ever trust someone who orders us to kill people. Whatever duties we have to our country, we must be able to fulfill in a different way: by bearing witness to other possibilities than the shooting, stabbing and burning of human beings.

THE DIVIDED SELF IN WAR The quest for honesty is also the quest for personal integrity: to have a unified rather than a divided sense of self, to have a self that is a coherent chord of thoughts, feelings, words and actions.

Faced with intolerable conflicts between and among various needs, goals, ideals, and social demands, it is a common pattern for a person to fragment into several sub-personalities, each of which strives to "not know" about the activities of the others. The issue of truthfulness here is the issue of being truthful to oneself, of facing the truth of one's actions, one's intentions and one's situation.

A major archetype of the divided self in American history is represented by the "good Christian slave-owner," who sang hymns about Christian love on Sunday in church, but inflicted brutality on his slaves during the week. A more recent historical example of lying to oneself as a willful "not seeing" was President Harry Truman's announcement in August, 1945, that the atomic bomb had been dropped on "Hiroshima, an important Japanese Army base." Hiroshima in 1945 was a port city like New York or Los Angeles (only smaller), with some military installations, but not a "military base" in any ordinary sense of the word. Military bases are not full of tens of thousands of women, children, schools, businesses, etc. Many US generals and admirals in 1945 objected to the plan to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, because they felt that blowing up an entire city was immoral, but their voices were not heeded. The people in charge of the process appear to have engaged in a willful "not knowing" that Hiroshima was a city full of many civilians (to be less abstract: old men, women, children, babies). Another glaring example of the divided self in recent history is that of the Nazi concentration camp guards and doctors, who would go home at the end of a day's work killing people, and resume their family roles as caring fathers and husbands.

I think the lesson we need to learn from these examples is not how bad those people were, but how vulnerable we all are to becoming fragmented persons. Under sufficient stress and pressure to conform, we each could probably become as numb and divided as the people in the examples just given. All combat training is intended to make it possible for a person to injure and kill others without being distracted by feelings or by thinking about it: to make a person numb. And to a large degree it succeeds.

War, and preparation for war, do terrible things to everybody, losers and "winners" alike, and chief among these terrible things is the wounding of the connection between the heart, head and hands. The hands now do things, or prepare to do things, that the heart cannot stand to feel and the mind cannot stand to contemplate. It seems to me that only by accepting and befriending our vulnerability to fragment, can we struggle against the forces that would fragment us, and develop a unified sense of self.

Thus, I believe, when Jesus says that those who live by the sword shall die by the sword, he is pointing not only to a physical truth, but also to an emotional truth, a truth of the heart. In preparing to injure others we start to practice a "not seeing" and "not feeling" sort of dishonesty, a sort of emotional and cognitive self-mutilation. Whatever parts of ourselves we wall off or kill off in order to be able to kill others or support the killing of others, we may not be able to reclaim. From this perspective, there is absolutely no such thing as a good war.

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REFLECTING ON TRUTHFULNESS – A JOURNAL PAGE. Please express and explore your thoughts and feelings about truthfulness in everyday life and in war. Here are some suggested questions, just to get you thinking. You are welcome to write here whatever comes to your mind on this topic. If no answers seem to come to mind, set this assignment aside for a few days and then come back to it. (Insert extra pages here if you need them.)

What does truthfulness mean to you as an everyday value and as a spiritual or religious value? What struggles have you had to face in order to tell the truth? What role does the search for personal truthfulness play in your life and in your relationships? Whom do you admire as great seers and tellers of the truth? (since truthfulness is as much about the willingness to *see* as about the willingness to *say*) How do you relate to the lies of war described on the previous page?

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CONCLUSIONS ABOUT TRUTHFULNESS – STARTING POINTS AND JOURNAL PAGES. Here are some reasonable examples of conscientious objections based on the moral value of truthfulness. Please spend some time thinking about each one of them as a way of starting the mental and spiritual processes needed for you to make your own statements. On the journal pages that follow, please record the conclusions you have reached so far about the topic of truthfulness and/or the commitments you want to make in relation to truthfulness, and how these are related to participation in war. (Insert extra pages here if you need them.) You are also welcome to adopt any or all of the conscientious objections shown below as your own. If you do that, I would recommend that you discuss them with your spiritual adviser, if you have one, or a close friend, and make time to pray about them, meditate on them, re-write them in your own words, commit them to memory as your personal religious vows (if that feels appropriate) and find other creative ways of making them deeply your own.

Based on my commitment to personal truthfulness, I refuse to engage in the normal forms of battlefield deception in order to lure enemy troops to their deaths, nor do I wish to be a part of any organization that uses deception in this way. I wish to make my contribution to America by serving in a hospital, school or social service agency where I can practice my ethic of personal truthfulness in the process of helping others.

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Based on my commitment to personal truthfulness, I cannot be silent about the consequences of organized killing on those who perform the organized killing. For many soldiers, to participate in war is to commit emotional suicide. I am convinced that all armies and all governments lie to their citizens about this and I refuse to participate in such lies. Pinning a medal on someone's uniform will not erase from that person's mind the faces of those whom they have killed. As St. Paul says, we are all part of one another, therefore, I believe that when we deliberately injure others, or support the injury of others, or look away when others are being injured, we injure ourselves, and we injure our relationship with God, with life, and with all other people. I believe that when we kill others, we kill a part of ourselves. Therefore, whenever and wherever possible, I will try to compassionately dissuade people from participating in or supporting organized killing, and I will do everything within my power to help people find peaceful resolutions to their conflicts.

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Based on my commitment to personal truthfulness in facing the consequences of my own actions, I believe that I am personally responsible before God for any act of killing in which I engage. And furthermore, I am personally responsible for the products and actions of the organizations in which I participate. If I work for a company that makes landmines or poison gas, I am personally responsible for the injuries these things will cause; therefore I choose not to make instruments of death and injury. If I'm part of the military organization that kills people, I am personally responsible for the deaths of those people; therefore I will not participate in organizations that kill people. I do not believe that any government agency can absolve me of these personal responsibilities. I realize that other people see this issue differently, and that in a democracy we have to find ways to work together with people who see life in different ways than we do. I want to support the best in America, even when I think America is making very serious mistakes. I believe I can do that by performing alternative service in a school, hospital or social service agency.

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I believe that killing in war is the result of intense self-deception, a looking away from the Golden Rule, a lying to oneself about the consequences of one's action by using vague abstractions like "war," "enemy," "national security," "win," "collateral damage" and "defend America." I declare before you, so help me God, that I will not shoot, burn, stab or blow up any person, neither will I support or encourage others to do these things. And furthermore, wherever people are shooting, stabbing, burning, or blowing up each other, I will do everything in my power to gently and compassionately persuade them to stop, regardless of what sort of special clothes they may be wearing, such as military uniforms of various countries, my own included. And wherever I find people who are training to shoot, stab, burn, or blow up others, I will make every effort to gently and compassionately persuade them to stop such training and turn toward the life of reconciliation. May God give me the strength to follow His ways of mercy and peace.

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My thoughts, reflections, conclusions and commitments about the journey from deception to truthfulness, as they relate to the topic of participating in organized killing. (Insert additional pages here as needed.)

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Chapter 6:

The journey from revenge and retaliation to forgiveness and reconciliation

INTRODUCTION Without some extraordinary change of heart, cycles of revenge and retaliation tend to go on forever in human affairs, bringing endless misery into the lives of individuals, families and nations. The great religious traditions of humanity intend to help us have this change of heart: *to move from revenge and retaliation to the life of forgiveness and reconciliation*. Here are some examples.

- [27]"But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, [28]bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. [29]If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. [30]Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. [31]Do to others as you would have them do to you. -- Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 6:27-31 New International Version)
- [37]"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. [38]Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." -- Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 6:37-38 New International Version)
- [16]Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.[a] Do not be conceited.
  [17]Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.
  [18]If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.
  [21]Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Verses from Romans Chap. 12 New International Version)
- "The reward of the evil is the evil thereof, but whosoever forgives and makes amends, his reward is upon Allah." (Koran: al-Shura 42:40)
- The Prophet -peace be upon him- was the most forgiving person. He was ever ready to forgive his enemies. When he went to Ta'if to preach the message of Allah, its people mistreated him. They abused him and hit him with stones. He left the city humiliated and wounded. When he took shelter under a tree, the angel of Allah visited him and told him that Allah sent him to destroy the people of Ta'if because of their sin of mistreating their Prophet. The Prophet -peace be upon him- prayed to Allah to save the people of Taif, because what they did was out of their ignorance. He said, "O Allah, guide these people, because they did not know what they were doing." When he entered the city of Makkah after the victory, the Prophet -peace be upon him- had in front of him some of his staunchest enemies. Those who fought him for many years, persecuted his followers and killed many of them. Now he had full power to do whatever he wanted to punish them for their crimes. It is reported that the Prophet -peace be upon him- asked them, "What do you think I shall do to you now?" They pleaded for mercy. The Prophet -peace be upon him- said, "Today I shall say to you what Joseph (referring to Prophet Yusuf -peace be upon him- as mentioned in the Qur'an, Yusuf 12:92) said to his brothers, 'No blame on you today. Go, you are all free." Soon they all came and accepted Islam at his hands. (from Forgiveness in Islam, on www.pakistanlink.com)
- When we react out of fear and hatred, we do not yet have a deep understanding of the situation. Our action will only be a very quick and superficial way of responding to the situation and not much true benefit and healing will occur. Yet if we wait and follow the process of calming our anger, looking deeply into the situation, and listening with great will to understand the roots of suffering that are the cause of the violent actions, only then will we have sufficient insight to respond in such a way that healing and reconciliation can be realized for everyone involved. (Buddhist monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh)
- *Adonai* spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the Israelites: When a man or woman commits any wrong toward a fellow man, thus breaking faith with *Adonai*, and that person realizes his guilt, he

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shall confess the wrong that he has done. He shall make restitution in the principal amount and add one-fifth to it, giving it to him whom he has wronged. If the man has no kinsman to whom restitution can be made, the amount repaid shall go to *Adonai* for the priest--in addition to the ram of expiation with which expiation is made on his behalf. (Hebrew Bible: Numbers 5:5-8)

- An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth leaves everyone blind and toothless. (Gandhi)

- Where there is injury , may I sow forgiveness. (Peace Prayer in honor of St. Francis of Asissi)

- An enemy is one… whose story we have not heard. (Gene Knudsen Hoffman, Quaker peace activist)

- Forgiveness means giving up the hope of ever having a better past, in order to be able to create a much better present. (contemporary psychotherapy)

- A Native American grandfather was talking to his grandson about how he felt about the tragedy on September 11th. He said, "I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is vengeful, angry, violent. The other wolf is loving, forgiving, compassionate." The grandson asked him, "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?" The grandfather answered, "The one I feed." (source unknown)

FORGIVENESS BEGINS WITH NOT RETALIATNG. Mutuality, the pattern of ***you help me and I'll help you***, is one of the deepest patterns of human survival and it has served us well over the eons, often lifting people to great heights of cooperative achievement. But mutuality has a tragic flaw. When people start fighting, it can spiral downward toward blind rage and mutual suicide. There is a crude reptilian logic to retaliation. If we are both lizards, and you bite me, then if I bite you back even harder, you will probably let go. The thing is, since lizards have small brains, they don't get too fancy about retaliation. No poison gas, no land mines, no nuclear weapons, no computerized missiles to blow up entire cities. Human beings are wonderfully smart but not necessarily wise. Hitched up to revenge, our smartness can create a lot of pain and, guess what? *the need for a whole lot more revenge!* We have to learn to steer our smartness in directions that sustain life. That is both a religious and an evolutionary imperative.

So far as I have been able to understand this matter, one of the central goals of all the spiritual luminaries and guides of human history has been and now is to help people overcome this tragic vulnerability to spirals of revenge, by embracing forgiveness and renouncing retaliation. And I will say from my own experience, that wherever you find a strong commitment to retaliation, you'll find endlessly long periods of misery punctuated by brief periods of satisfaction. Thus, *Adonai* in the Hebrew Bible says "Vengeance is Mine." He is saying, let go of this, I'll take care of this, this is my job not yours, you'll be very sorry if you follow that road. The cycles of the seasons teach us similar lessons, lessons about dying and being reborn, about letting go and finding what you need, about starting over each year and being fulfilled, about springtime following the harshness of winter, about carrying only the good things, the seeds, forward from one year to the next.

THE FALSE EMPOWERMENT OF WAR To participate in war is to participate in a ceremonialized orgy of revenge. War is revenge masquerading in the robes of patriotism and love of country and solidarity with one's comrades-in-arms. "You messed with us and now we will show you who is boss." "Just cause" is a polite phrase for "license to kill." War is the worst in people dressed up to look like the best. For part of what motivates people to go to war so easily is the well of unhealed wounds and rage we carry around inside of us. Did your father beat you until you bled? Did the kids from across town burn you with their cigarettes? Were you molested and abused and betrayed by the people who were supposed to take care of you? Did the drill sergeant hurt you so bad that you cried in front of five hundred strong men? Were you publicly humiliated by someone you considered your social or racial inferior? Now, the seductive voice of war tells us, you'll be able to release all that hatred and contempt and rage by just killing day and night, all you want, till you drop from exhaustion, and then you'll be free, and new, and brave, and victorious, and strong, and healed.

But it's simply not true. Soldiers come back empty and shattered. The intoxicating, God-like power to coerce and kill turns out not to be the power to do anything else worthwhile in life. Injuring others will

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not heal us of our wounds, nor build a sustaining sense of self. We are many-leveled beings, and there is a part of us that knows the truth: those people over there wearing different uniforms are not the people who betrayed us, they're mostly just angry, scared kids like us. And we are still vulnerable creatures. We can't kill our way out of vulnerability, nor kill our way to fulfillment, no matter what a million violent video games promise us with blazing. blinking lights. Killing 100,000 Iraqis, as we Americans have now done, will not ease the pain of 9/11, because revenge is mainly a way of escaping from our own grief.. Like alcohol and drugs, the adrenaline rush of revenge blots out the sorrows we don't want to feel, but only for a while, and then we need another injection of violence.

FORGIVENESS IS A LONG JOURNEY You can see this same process going on in relation to the issue of capital punishment. Again and again people go to witness an execution of the murderer who killed their loved one. They hope to find some satisfaction in it, but they don't. Because the heart is not healed by injuring others. The heart is healed by going through the terribly difficult death and rebirth of forgiveness. The death of facing what we have lost, the death of whatever mask we used to cover our sorrow. The rebirth of turning toward life, in the memory of the person we have loved, or in the case of abuse, honoring our own capacity to live a fuller, richer life, and to help others do the same. We each are called to make this journey many times in the course of a lifetime. In the course of an peaceful life we might approach the subject gradually. But being asked to kill in war challenges us to choose paths decisively.

Forgiveness is a complex topic for many reasons. One of the largest reason's is that we have not only to figure out how to respond to those who injure *us*, we have also to figure out how to respond to the injuries we witness, injuries to loved ones, injuries to fellow citizens, injuries to the Earth and Her creatures. A common feeling is that we owe it to the victim to attack the attacker. But what this common feeling lacks is an awareness of how quickly we become just like the attackers. My school of forgiveness was a brutal emotional civil war that went on in my family for fifty years. That experience led me to the conclusion that what we owe the victims is to help, in a really deep way, to make a world in which there are fewer victims. But I confess it takes awhile to get around to this view. At first glance forgiveness seems to be about how much or how little the offender should be punished. But if you explore the topic at length, you will come to see that a large part of forgiveness concerns how much or how little the victim will remain burdened with resentment.

STORIES AND JOURNALS In the pages that follow you will find some really amazing stories about forgiveness. I hope they open for you, as they have for me, an entire new horizon of human possibilities. Once your heart has expanded with that spirit of forgiveness, you may find that you can never again fit it back into the little mental cage that people call revenge. The practice of forgiveness casts all war in doubt, even though coercion and war are much more common than forgiveness and cooperation. But war surrounds itself and propels itself with the hypnotic slogan, "there was *nothing* else we could do." War sees no possibility of a new start, and thus warriors in general make no effort to find openings for new relationships with those they consider their enemies. It is part of the self-destructive madness of war that warriors *need* enemies in order to be worthy warriors. (Someone pointed out that the United States could have rebuilt Vietnam several times over from the ground up for the money we spent trying to destroy it. What *were* we trying to accomplish there? Are we really to believe that dropping millions of tons of bombs on a little country was the *only* human possibility, for a country that had just put three men on the Moon?) Revenge keeps the world the same sort of place, because I am going to do back to you whatever you did to me. By the logic of revenge, I am enslaved by your behavior and must repeat it, or do something similarly ugly and painful! The power at play in revenge is the power to hurt and the power to keep things the same.

The eyes of forgiveness, on the other hand, allow us to see a world full of transformational possibilities. Freed from the need to play the all-powerful judge, jury, and executioner, the eyes of forgiveness can see the many things that we *could* do, *even this very moment,* to start anew, to befriend the so-called enemy, to make the world a different place. In forgiveness, my relationship to my heart or to my tradition or to both, outweighs whatever you have done, *so that I do not have to repeat what you have done.* The power at play

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in forgiveness is the power to heal and the power to create something new.

Well, these are some of the themes I see unfolding in the following stories. After the stories you will find more journal pages and the opportunity to explore how following the life of forgiveness can lead a person to deep conscientious objections to participation in war, and also to the perpetual preparation for war, and the idealization of violence, which have become so much a part of America. All citizens face the same challenging question: How much political and military revenge are we willing to support and participate in?

Fainting to the Tune of "Amazing Grace"

Imagine this scene from a recent courtroom trial in South Africa: A frail black woman rises slowly to her feet. She is over 70 years of age. Facing her from across the room are several white security police officers, one of whom, Mr. van der Broek, has just been tried and found guilty in the murders of both the woman's son and her husband some years before.

It was indeed Mr. van der Broek, it has now been established, who had come to the woman's home a number of years back, taken her son, shot him at point-blank range and then burned the young man's body on a fire while he and his officers partied nearby.

Several years later, van der Broek and his cohorts had returned to take away her husband as well. For many months she heard nothing of his whereabouts. Then, almost two years after her husband's disappearance, van der Broek came back to fetch the woman herself. How vividly she remembers that evening, going to a place beside a river where she was shown her husband, bound and beaten, but still strong in spirit, lying on a pile of wood. The last words she heard from his lips as the officers poured gasoline over his body and set him aflame were, "Father, forgive them."

And now the woman stands in the courtroom and listens to the confessions offered by Mr. van der Broek. A member of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission turns to her and asks, "So, what do you want? How should justice be done to this man who has so brutally destroyed your family?"

"I want three things," begins the old woman, calmly but confidently. "I want first to be taken to the place where my husband's body was burned so that I can gather up the dust and give his remains a decent burial."

She pauses, then continues. "My husband and son were my only family. I want, secondly, therefore, for Mr. van der Broek to become my son. I would like for him to come twice a month to the ghetto and spend a day with me so that I can pour out on him whatever love I still have remaining within me."

"And, finally," she says, "I want a third thing. I would like Mr. van der Broek to know that I offer him my forgiveness because Jesus Christ died to forgive. This was also the wish of my husband. And so, I would kindly ask someone to come to my side and lead me across the courtroom so that I can take Mr. van der Broek in my arms, embrace him and let him know that he is truly forgiven."

As the court assistants come to lead the elderly woman across the room, Mr. van der Broek, overwhelmed by what he has just heard, faints. And as he does, those in the courtroom, friends, family, neighbors — all victims of decades of oppression and injustice — begin to sing, softly, but assuredly, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me."

By James Krabill, in Keep the Faith, Share the Peace, the newsletter of the Mennonite Church Peace and Justice Committee, Volume 5 number 3, June, 1999.

An Associated Press news story from Iran.

Iran Teen Pardoned Before Hanging

TEHRAN, Iran, January 2, 2000 (AP) -- A 17-year-old murderer -- hands cuffed, tears streaking his ashen face and a noose draped around his neck -- was granted clemency Sunday seconds before he was to be hanged.

The man who spared his life? The murder victim's father.

Under Iran's Islamic legal system, whether the convicted boy would die was up to the relatives of his victim. After the boy's family and many of the public hanging's 4,000 spectators pleaded with the victim's

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father, he told authorities to spare Morteza Amini Moqaddam's life.

The teen's family, overcome with joy, said they would never forget the act of mercy by the father, Ali Mohebbi.

"Ever since his son died I have been praying for him. I will never forget as long as I live how he gave me my son's life back," said Moqaddam's mother, who did not give her first name.

Moqaddam returned to prison in the ambulance that had been waiting to take his body to the morgue.

He is expected to be re-sentenced soon.

Moqaddam was convicted of fatally stabbing 22-year-old Hadi Mohebbi on Dec. 13 after a quarrel about smoking in public. He was to be hanged from a crane fixed atop a truck 30 feet from the electronics shop where he committed the crime.

A dozen of Moqaddam's relatives, including his parents and grandmother, gathered in front of the shop before dawn, holding open copies of Islam's holy book, the Koran, and chanting, "Islam demands forgiveness. Forgive him for the sake of the Koran."

A crowd watched over by hundreds of anti-riot police began to build in the working-class neighborhood. The street was closed to traffic.

Shortly after sunrise, a judicial official brought Moqaddam, dressed in a blue sweatshirt and sweatpants, out of the police car where he had been waiting. The official read out the death sentence and fixed a thick rope around Moqaddam's neck. The teen-ager's face went pale and he started weeping.

His family began screaming and turned to the crowd around them.

"Please help us," they pleaded. "He's only 17 years old. Please ask for forgiveness with us." Hundreds of people joined Moqaddam's family. About a dozen others shouted against clemency: "He should be killed," they yelled. "Otherwise he will kill again."

Mohebbi's father then spoke to judicial officials, saying he had forgiven Moqaddam.

The crowd rejoiced at the news, clapping, crying, and shouting "Allahu Akbar!" or "God is great!" Some lifted Mohebbi's father on their shoulders, exclaiming, "Long live Mohebbi!" Even police officers joined the celebration.

Sunday evening, authorities brought the teen to Mohebbi's home for a meeting with both families. State-run Iranian television ran footage of Moqaddam repeatedly thanking Ali Mohebbi and kissing his hand and face.

"I really appreciate the father of Hadi, whom I owe until the last moment of my life," Moqaddam said.

Ali Mohebbi said he decided to forgive Moqaddam because "I just considered the honor of Islam."

"If I forgave him, maybe millions of people who would watch the news would learn about forgiveness -- and that is the message of Islam," he said.

"When I saw his hands cuffed behind him and the noose around his neck and everyone was waiting for my order, I thought that first of all if this boy is dead, it will not bring back my son." What kind of sentence Moqaddam will face is uncertain.

A friend who participated in the killing was sentenced to 15 years in prison and 74 lashes

Forgiven Sins:

Mourning his wife and daughter, Bruce Murakami finds an unlikely ally—the driver who caused their deaths

People Magazine, November 18, 2002

The instant he spotted the column of black smoke, Bruce Murakami felt a sense of dread. Driving from his suburban Tampa home toward the plume, Murakami stopped— he still can't explain why—to run toward its source, a flaming tangle of vehicles sprawled across a six-lane highway. Then, in the inferno his eyes caught a stomach-churning sight: the crumpled remains of his family mini-van. "There was a part of me that was going, 'No, it couldn't be,"' says Murakami, *53,* of that horrific day in November 1998. "But then I realized it was my wife and daughter."

A 19-year-old racing his rented sedan as fast as 85 mph—30 over the speed limit—had hit and killed Cindy Murakami, *45,* and daughter Chelsea, 11. The crash shattered Bruce Murakami's world, launching him on an emotional voyage of revenge and, eventually, forgiveness that would transform his life—and that of the teen who had robbed him of his family. "It's important to me that something good come from this," Murakami says. "It's what Cindy would have wanted." Generosity of spirit was always what struck people most about Cindy, a chef and school volunteer active in her church. She was a divorced mother of one son (Josh, now 29) living in Hawaii in 1978 when she went

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on a date with the finance specialist who'd helped her buy a car—Murakami. Wed in 1980, they had son Brody the next year and in 1987 adopted Chelsea, who became an avid reader and talented singer. "She was just like her mother—they were both very loving," says Murakami, who moved the clan to Tampa, where he was a contractor.

On that last afternoon, after going home for lunch, he was heading back to work when Chelsea called out, "You didn't give me a kiss." He quickly obliged. Minutes later, realizing he had forgotten something, Murakami returned home. In the meantime, Cindy and Chelsea had gone to the supermarket. As they were pulling out, a gold Dodge Intrepid came barreling toward them. Behind the wheel was Justin Cabezas, a Sarasota, Fla., college student visiting his parents, who had sped up when he noticed a Mustang in the next lane. "It was just random," says Cabezas, now 23, who had no previous record of traffic violations. "It just turned into racing."

The impact made the minivan careen into an oncoming SUV and explode into flames. Minutes later Randy White, pastor of the Murakamis' church, happened by. "Bruce was on his knees with his face in his hands," says White, "crying uncontrollably, screaming, 'Why? Why?'" Cabezas heard the anguished cries from the ambulance that took him to the hospital for treatment of minor injuries.

Devastated, Murakami quit work, spending long hours alone at the beach, a place Cindy had loved. "My dad hit the depths of despair," says Josh. "He had to reevaluate priorities in life." While he waited for the state to file charges against the driver, Murakami battled successfully to have the speed limit reduced and a median closed off on the deadly stretch of road where four others had been killed in five years. But then he learned the state attorney's office, plagued by internal problems, had opted against pursuing Cabezas. "I just hit the ceiling," says Murakami. "I became a man with a mission."

He hired a criminal lawyer, who examined police reports, found new witnesses and brought in a team of traffic experts, eventually persuading a new state attorney to file vehicular-homicide charges against Cabezas in June 2001. "When I found out," says Cabezas, by then back in Sarasota trying to rebuild his life, "it was like the world was ending again."

But something changed when Murakami finally laid eyes on Cabezas at his September 2001 arraignment. Expecting a punk, he encountered a clean-cut honors student. "He was a scared boy," says Murakami. "I couldn't see sending a kid the same age as my son to prison for 30 years."

He told his lawyer to start working on a plea agreement—on the condition that Cabezas meet Murakami for a one-on-one talk. Before Murakami signed off, he says, "I wanted to see if there was some real remorse." There was. Trembling and crying, Cabezas said he'd wanted to apologize since the crash but had been stopped by his lawyer. Murakami wept too, and they embraced. "It was very good for both of us," says Cabezas, who got 10 years' probation (the first two under house arrest), five of them without a driver's license. At Murakami's suggestion, there was one more penalty: 300 hours of community service, to be spent speaking—with Murakami— to teens about reckless driving.

Last month the pair began that odyssey, sharing their cautionary tale with 450 students at St. Petersburg's Northside Christian School. "I'm trying to keep you from following in my footsteps," Cabezas told the students, who seemed to hear him. "It was a real reality check," says Eric Douglas, 17, who got a speeding ticket last summer. "I don't think I'll ever forget." For Murakami, who has sold his business, it is all a part of rebuilding. "It was tough for me and tough for Justin," he says. "But together we're going to make a difference."

Thomas Fields-Meyer
Kristin Harmel in Tampa and Jeff Truesdell in St. Petersburg
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REFLECTING ON FORGIVENESS – A JOURNAL PAGE. Please express and explore your thoughts and feelings about forgiveness in everyday life and in war. Here are some suggested questions, just to get you thinking. You are welcome to write here whatever comes to your mind on this topic. If no answers seem to come to mind, set this assignment aside for a few days and then come back to it. (Insert extra pages here if you need them.)

What does forgiveness mean to you as an everyday value and as a spiritual or religious value? What struggles have you had to face in order forgive others or overcome resentments? How easy is it for you to forgive yourself when you make a mistake? How easy should it be? What role does the practice of forgiveness play in your life and in your relationships? Whom do you admire as great exemplars of forgiveness? How do you relate to the stories of forgiveness and reconciliation just presented? To what degree do you think the bombing of Hiroshima by the United States was an appropriate response to the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese?

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CONCLUSIONS ABOUT FORGIVENESS – STARTING POINTS AND JOURNAL PAGES. Here are some reasonable examples of conscientious objections based on the moral values of forgiveness and reconciliation. Please spend some time thinking about each one of them as a way of starting the mental and spiritual processes needed for you to make your own statements. On the journal pages that follow, please record the conclusions you have reached so far about the topics of forgiveness and reconciliation, and/or the commitments you want to make in relation to forgiveness, and how these are related to participation in war. (Insert extra pages here if you need them.) You are also welcome to adopt any or all of the conscientious objections shown below as your own. If you do that, I would recommend that you discuss them with your spiritual adviser, if you have one, or a close friend, and make time to pray about them, meditate on them, re-write them in your own words, commit them to memory as your personal religious vows (if that feels appropriate) and find other creative ways of making them deeply your own.

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I believe that each person votes with their life actions for what sort a world they want to live in. If I want to live in a more peaceful world, it's up to me to begin to live in a more peaceful way. If I want a more violent world, I can make the world for more violent place by engaging in violent actions. Following Jesus, Buddha and St. Francis, I have made forgiveness and reconciliation central themes of my life. In the words of the Prayer of St. Francis, wherever there is injury, I want to be a sower of forgiveness and reconciliation. Wherever people are in conflict, I will gently and compassionately try to get them to stop hurting each other, and to begin forgiving one another, and to begin building a new relationship based on mutual respect. I respectfully refuse to follow orders from any person that contravene these central values of mine, no matter what special clothing or insignia that person may be wearing. My commitment to reconciliation makes it impossible for me to participate in organizations whose primary purpose is to kill people. But it does not prevent me from serving my country in other ways, which I want to do.

~ ~ ~

> In so far as we conquer the demons who stir up war and disturb peace, we perform better service for our ruler than they who bear the sword.
>
> Origen (3rd century Christian philosopher), *Against Celsus* 8:246

I believe that war is part of a total mindset that generates its own confirmation and justification. Since World War II America has spent trillions of dollars in the quest for total military superiority. Now peoples around the world, frightened by our total military superiority, plot our undoing, which proves that we need even more weapons. This is a spiral of madness, and only a vision of forgiveness and reconciliation, as taught by the saints of all religions, can keep us from arming ourselves to death and provoking what we most fear. Wars are not like automobile accidents: they don't just happen. Wars are the revenge of one nation upon another and are always justified by reference to injury and transgression, but always result in much more injury and transgression. I believe that in refusing to participate in organized killing, I <u>am</u> defending America, I am defending America against the seductive attractiveness of power through violence, which always promises glory but delivers sorrow.

~ ~ ~

Because wars are result of years of planning, weapons building, and mental and financial investment, we have a deep responsibility to plan and create something different. In embracing a life of forgiveness and reconciliation, I am trying to serve my country in the deepest possible way I know. Democracy is not compatible with perpetual war and perpetual preparations for war, which require a mindset of total obedience and secrecy rather than of creative deliberation and openness. Forgiveness and reconciliation are part of a different mindset, a spiritual path that always sees the possibilities of starting over and of doing something kind and generous. I believe this is what Jesus meant when he said "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." Those are the possibilities of peace that I want to help bring to fruition in America with my life efforts. I believe that I have a human right not to kill people. With all due respect to the good intentions of many people in the military, I will not accept orders to kill people from anyone, nor will I participate in organizations whose primary purpose is to kill people. Wherever I go, I will gently and compassionately try to call people to the life of forgiveness and reconciliation.

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Chapter 7:

From being unaware of the consequences of my actions and the choices that are available to me, to a widening awareness and acceptance of my responsibilities and my capacity to choose

ETHICS In this chapter we are going to explore some of the most fundamental ideas about human responsibility, and how concepts of responsibility bear on our participation in armed conflict. The law concerning conscientious objection in the United States recognizes that a person's objection to participation in the military can be based on strongly held ethical and moral beliefs. These beliefs do not need to be religious, but they need to hold the same important place in a person's life that religious beliefs hold in the life of a religious person. Ethics is the area of human thought devoted to the consideration of how human beings should treat one another. Personal choice and responsibility are at the heart of all ethical and moral teachings, whether religious or secular. This is because the whole process of setting forth ethical commandments, laws or principles only makes sense if people are capable of understanding and guiding their own behavior to some degree. Otherwise, giving commandments is pointless, and so is punishing people for not guiding their behavior. Because ethical considerations have such a central place in thinking about conscientious objection, this chapter is going to be larger than the others in this book, and include an extended discussion of the meaning of personal responsibility

FOUR MEANINGS OF RESPONSIBILITY When a person says, "I am responsible for my actions," what does that mean? Responsibility implies that our actions unfold in the context of a relationship, and that we will have to "respond" when the other person in the relationship asks us about our actions. Over the course of the last few thousand years, responsibility has come to have four different but overlapping meanings, as people understood their actions in the context of four different relationships. Each culture and religion weaves these four meanings of responsibility together in a different way.

Responsible to God, Gods and/or the Ancestors One of the oldest and best known meanings of responsibility is religious. Most religious people through the ages have felt themselves to be in an eternal relationship with God, a pantheon of Gods, the prophetic figures who express God's will on Earth, the living spirits of all Nature, and/or the spirits of the Ancestors. All these are felt to know everything that a person has done, and they will reward good actions and punish evil ones. Within this framework of understanding, the Divine will for humans is expressed through various commandments and teaching, such as the Ten Commandments (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), the Laws of Manu (Hinduism), the Sermon on the Mount (Christianity), the 613 Commandments recorded in the Torah (Judaism), and the Koran and Hadiths (Islam), to name only the best known.

Responsible to the Law of Cause and Effect A second, and similarly ancient, meaning of responsibility, is that I am in relationship with the universe, a universe that is governed by laws of cause and effect from which I cannot escape. My actions, and my thoughts as well, set in motion forces that will come back to me. This is the principle of "that which you sow, you shall also reap" taught by both Jesus and Buddha. This is much less personal than the responsibility to God, but it is deeply, even relentlessly, intimate. For example, if I ski down a too-steep ski slope and kill myself, God is not punishing me. I am violating the laws of the universe by going outside the boundaries of what a human body can tolerate. One aspect that makes Buddhism unique among religions is that Buddhism is focused primarily on the law of cause and effect rather than on an understanding of God (although popular Buddhism includes many exalted, divine figures). In the Four Noble Truths and Eight-Fold Path, we are not commanded to obey God's rules, rather we are invited to seriously consider how we cause our own suffering, and to awaken from the painful dream of selfishness.

Responsible to Family and Community A third form of responsibility comes out of our experience of being born into families. In order for a family to survive, family members have to learn how to constrain their behavior and work together for the common good. Parents use love, teaching, rewards and punishments to motivate both their children and one another to be good members of the family team. This kind of family responsibility gets extended in wider

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and wider circles and becomes social responsibility. We are, for example, answerable to the local authorities about how we obey or disobey traffic signals. If we cause harm to another person by running a red light, we will have to "respond" to the local authorities by presenting ourselves, and ultimately accepting whatever judgment and punishment they decide upon. In addition to punishing people who break the accepted rules, we also honor and reward people who do more than their share to make our community (and the world) a better place. What is at work here is an ethic of reciprocity: we do a lot to help you, therefore we want and need you to help us. In the beginning children may need rewards in order to motivate them to participate, but eventually many people understand that doing one's part is how to have a happy family and successful community, and so rewards are much less important. Doing my part becomes an affirmation of my connectedness, and so becomes satisfying as an end in itself. When Jesus said, "love one another as I have loved you," he was invoking an ethic of familial relatedness and expanding it to include all humanity.

Responsible to Self The fourth form of responsibility concerns our relationship to ourselves. This is more difficult to explain, because usually we are in relationship to someone or something *outside* of ourselves. But we do have a complex relationship with ourselves. The "I" of today has a significant relationship with all the "I's" of the future. If I get drunk today, my head will ache tomorrow. If I hurt you today, I will have to live with the knowledge of what I've done for the rest of my life. Also, we are composite beings, a bringing together of body, heart, mind and spirit. The different parts of our being need one another in just the same way all our different physical organs need one another. If I became so fascinated with what money can do for me that I decided to rob a bank, this would be an example of my mind being unfaithful to my heart. My heart would be left to bear the many sorrows created by my mind's illusions. Another example of inward irresponsibility would be to marry someone based only on the desire for social status, rather than on true affection for that person. This could easily create a lifetime of sorrow for both partners. A large part of becoming a fully human person consists in coming to know one's different facets, and doing the inner work required to weave them together in a harmonious way..

RESPONSIBILITY IN RELATION TO WAR This time of war, the first decade of the 21st century, challenges each of us to understand our responsibilities more deeply. To what causes will we give our life energies, and our lives? Thinking about the four forms of responsibility just described, let us explore the following questions.

In the face of war, how will I keep faith with Ultimate Reality, the heart of all things, however I understand It, Him or Her? What does Ultimate Reality require of me in relation to a war that may go on for decades? Most religious traditions are inconsistent about war, commanding people to refrain from killing, on the one hand, and then specifying a variety of circumstances under which killing is justified. So we must all eventually decide for ourselves which voices in our tradition are truly the wisest and most faithful voices. There are strong voices for peace in all the great traditions. To what saints, prophets, and teachers of peace do you feel an affiliation and loyalty?

What processes of cause and effect do I need to respect, as I am commanded by military authorities to pick up a gun and start shooting people? As America becomes more and more enchanted with a vision of military superiority over every other country on planet Earth, a reasonable person could feel compelled to protest. After all, human history is the story of the defeat of one military empire after another. Those who hold sway by force, inspire others to use force to remove them from their exalted position. This is the hard side of the Golden Rule: do unto others as you would have others do unto you, because whatever you do to others, you are teaching others to do. If America gets its way in world politics by continually threatening to use nuclear weapons, then we are teaching every person on planet Earth that having nuclear weapons is a good thing. Eventually someone will want to use nuclear weapons against us. Knowing that violence only breeds more violence, the challenge comes to each of us: what will we cooperate with in the course of our lifetime.

What do I owe my community in relation to war? In the example that I gave above of obeying traffic signals, it was obvious that obeying traffic signals is a good thing to do, both good for me and good for the people in the other cars. But the United States appears to be becoming addicted to war. In the past 110 years, United States has been in 10 major wars and numerous

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smaller conflicts: the Spanish-American war, World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, 1980s war by proxy in Nicaragua, 1980s war by proxy in Afghanistan, Gulf War, ground war in Afghanistan, and the current war against Iraq. In each of these wars citizens were told that it was their duty to fight or support the fighters, but in retrospect this seems more and more like giving alcohol to an alcoholic. A sincere argument can be made that citizens today owe it to their country to help lead their country away from violence, and to continually bring forward examples of how some countries have made peace. For example, Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua, Peru and Ecuador have all in recent years settled border disputes by creating national parks that span the disputed border areas. In the past, war was seen as the only answer for border disputes. I included the phrase "conscientious objection and the life of compassion," in the title of this book, because conscientious objection makes the most sense when it is accompanied by a deep commitment to help your country find alternatives to war as a way of resolving disputes or meeting its needs.

Trying to answer the question of what I owe my community in relation to war, leads us quickly to another large question: who is my community? I invite you to wrestle with this question for a while, because the answer you come up with will have many implications for your stand as a conscientious objector. The law concerning a military draft defines your community as only the nation state in which you live. If that were true, it might seem to make sense to take up arms to defend your nation state against other nation states. But spiritual teachers both ancient and modern tell us that our community is in fact all of humanity. "All men are brothers," is the old way of expressing this. "All people are brothers and sisters," would be a more contemporary way of expressing it. No one ought to be compelled by law to kill their brother or sister, and stated in this way we recoil from the idea. If you accept that your community is all of humanity, then what you owe your community might be to help your brothers and sisters resolve their differences with the least amount of hurt all around.

<u>What is my responsibility to myself in relation to war?</u> As I have discussed at length in the preceding two chapters, participation in war is based on the hugely false premise that you can kill people and just forget about it. Let's say there were a person in your town who went around once a month killing people with a rifle, but then would go home and just forget about it, otherwise living an ordinary life full of ordinary joys and sorrows, with no sense of responsibility for the murders he had just committed. Without a doubt you would conclude that this person was suffering from the most severe sort of mental illness, a degree of mental illness which would almost certainly require him to be confined to an institution for the criminally insane for the rest of his life. You might use words such as "an utterly fragmented sense of self," or, "a profound lack of personal integration." But this, I submit to you, is exactly what military training is about. Military training is about breaking your sense of responsibility, so that you can kill people at a moment's notice, without giving it any thought at the time, and supposedly no thought about it at any time in the future. At some point in the future you're supposed to be able to fit your fragmented pieces back together and become a whole and untroubled person! Let me tell you, I have friends who physically survived jungle warfare in Vietnam, but they never put the pieces back together, and in thinking about their situation for many years I have reached the following conclusion. We would like to be able to rely on our elders in business and government to watch out for our best interests. But experience shows this trust to be tragically misplaced, as proven by smiling cigarette company executives selling us death in a little box, shiny new cars that are liable to burst into flame, Savings and Loan swindlers, among a long, long list, and finally war, promising glory, strength and security, but delivering only amputations, lifelong nightmares, death and more wars. With great sorrow I have to say that, as adults, we can't rely on other people to take care of our bodies, hearts, minds and spirits. We must, each of us, learn how to take care of our own body, heart, mind and spirit, to keep them meaningfully woven together. That, it seems to me, means we need to find ways of serving our country that do not involve killing people.

The issues discussed in the last few pages certainly present lots of things to think about. So please take some time to write down on the following journal pages your thoughts and feelings about each of the four understandings of personal responsibility outlined above.

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BECOMING MORE RESPONSIBLE IN THE COURSE OF A LIFETIME One important quality shared by all four forms of responsibility discussed earlier in this chapter is that they all unfold slowly over the course of a lifetime. Teachings about responsibility are often presented as if responsibility were light switch. You either treat people fairly or you don't. But in human life a person's complex, threefold or fourfold sense of responsibility usually emerges gradually, like the coming of the dawn. In the first part of the chapter I discussed the forms of human responsibility. In this part I'm going to discuss what might be described as the components of responsibility. A mountain range seen from far away looks like a single bump on the horizon, but when you get up close you see that it is composed of many peaks and valleys. Similarly, a sense of responsibility seems like one thing, but when you think about it you begin to realize there are three or four parallel strands in a sense of responsibility.

Among these strands I would certainly identify **responsibility** as accompanied by three companions:

- **abilities,**
- **capacity to choose, and**
- **a sense of possibilities.**

We can hardly make sense of any of these four without some reference to the others. While this might seem overly philosophical to you, I appeal to you to bear with me in this discussion, because you will see how consideration of each of these bears directly on the issue of participating in the military.

Here is how I see the four strands unfolding in the course of a lifetime: A baby can hardly do or choose anything, and thus is not responsible for doing anything. As the young child's abilities unfold, parents coach the child to except more and more responsibility for their activities. The baby can't hurt anyone, but a four year old can punch, bite and kick, so the parents of four-year-olds are involved in intense interactions with their children to help their children understand the consequences of their actions and make conscious choices not to hurt others. As the child's physical abilities increase parents work hard to help their child develop a parallel sense of possibility and responsibility. Parents are very concerned about teaching their four year olds how to cross the street, but not at all concerned about teaching their four year olds how to drive, since four year olds are capable of running and walking but they're not physically or mentally capable of driving an automobile. In a well-nurtured human life these four facets of being human: ability, choice, responsibility and sense of possibility are deeply interwoven and grow side by side. In the course of a lifetime, we go from the challenge of being responsible for our own bodily actions (in childhood), to the challenge of being responsible for our mental and emotional life (in the teen years), to the challenge of being responsible for the care and safety of other people (our family members, our coworkers/employees, our students, and so on). As adults we face to the challenge, as voting citizens in a democracy, of deciding what laws are good laws, what policies are good policies, and which persons will make good lawmakers; taking responsibility for what kind of country our country becomes. In relation to war the following issues are worth thinking about:

Abilities: The United States has invested a lot of money in the ability to blow people up. In the past half-century we spent approximately $6 trillion on nuclear weapons and the vehicles for dropping them on someone. What with the world be like if we had spent $6 trillion developing our ability to negotiate and mediate. Refusing to participate in the military is refusing to cooperate with what is, in effect, the worship of weapons, and at a deeper level the worship of our ability to kill. The conscientious objector bears witness to our ability to love. We see examples of this love in everyday life, and we are moved by the faith that it could be extended to wider horizons.

Sense of possibilities: We can only be held responsible for doing things that are humanly possible to do. But our sense of what is possible is often strangely constrained. In my state, California, we find it is quite possible to build new prisons, but that it is excruciatingly difficult to build new campuses for the State University. In the early 1980s, allegedly reasonable people wrote allegedly reasonable articles about how one quarter of the American population might need to die in a nuclear war with the Soviet Union. In the face of this dire possibility, a world wide anti-nuclear movement emerged, believing that the United States and the Soviet Union could get along together. History has proven them correct.

One of the things that conscientious objectors object to is the assertion that we have no choice, no other possibility, except to go to war. In the most

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recent war with Iraq, such allegations of immediate necessity appear to have been an extreme process of social self-hypnosis rather than a process of rational thought. Conscientious objectors bear witness to the fact that in life there are always other possibilities. The questions are , really, how willing are we to explore them, and whose interests are served by ignoring them,

Making choices: Many people hate making choices, perhaps because to make a choice is to expose oneself to be punished for having made a bad choice. People frequently want to do several mutually exclusive things, and that complicates the matter of making a choice because every choice will have some costs. I, for example, want to both eat chocolate and lose weight. Whatever I choose is going to leave part of me unsatisfied. What would be helpful here would be a process of inner dialogue, where each of the contending needs could have its say. But instead what often happens is more like a tug-of-war with alternate sides being ahead on alternate days. When people can't make conscious decisions, they often make decisions by default. Time runs out, options expire, the game ends before I could make up my mind which move was the right move.

> *This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live*
>
> Deuteronomy 30:19
> (New International Version)

In the face of these problems with making choices, it is easy to do nothing, but in the case of decision-making doing *nothing* really is doing *something*. In relation to the draft, a young person might think, if I do nothing they will draft me. It will not have been *my* choice, so therefore whatever I do in uniform will be *their* responsibility. However comforting this kind of rationalization is on a temporary basis, in the long run it leaves a person feeling utterly powerless and ashamed for not having followed their inner truth. The truths of life are often hard to bear. One of them is that we always have some choices, no matter what other people tell us we can do or not do. It is a lifelong discipline to face one's decisions more directly. To be a conscientious objector is to assert that you have a choice in a matter of whether or not you will kill other people, and that no state can absolve you of the personal responsibility for your actions. The state cannot talk to God on your behalf, the state cannot negotiate with the universal law of cause and effect on your behalf, and the state cannot erase from your memory the knowledge of what you have done.

Like most other human virtues, ability responsibility, capacity to choose and sense of possibility are directions in which we move rather than destinations that we reach. That is because we are only partially in control of our bodies, our minds, other people or the world around us. One of the great challenges of life is to learn how to live gracefully with having ***some*** power. Not ***all*** power, or ***no*** power, but ***some*** power, a continually shifting zone of influence that spreads out from our lives in concentric circles. Events beyond our control have impacts on our lives, but we have at least some choice in how we will respond to those impacts. (In the concentration camps of World War II, for example, some people became monsters, but other people became saints.) There are limits as to how much any one human being can or should try to control other people. Group responsibility evolves better from conscious cooperation toward shared goals rather than from domination.

THE TEMPTATION TO AVOID RESPONSIBILITY At every stage along life's way we make mistakes and choices that turn out badly, and we have the opportunity of learning from those actions of ours, in order to refine our understanding of the world around us and our behavior in that world. And we also have the temptation to look away from our mistakes and say, "I couldn't help it" or, "they made me do it."

While "I couldn't help it" or, "they made me do it" are temporarily comforting to someone over-whelmed with shame or embarrassment about a particular mistake, such repudiations of responsibility don't help us learn anything. A problem drinker who says "they made me drink." will never stop drinking. Someone prone to get into fights will almost always say "they started it." One on the most frequent repudiations of personal responsibility is, "they did it first." For example "they insulted me so of course I insulted them back." What is hidden in this excuse is the assumption

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that there were no other possibilities. Our sense at any given moment that *there are no other possibilities* probably says as much about us as it does about the situation. How good are we at seeing new possibilities? How good are we at searching them out? How good are we at foreseeing a collision of needs, and intervening creatively to make sure that everyone gets at least some of what they need?

The great religions recognize that people struggle to guide their actions, and spiritual teaching offer deep encouragement for us to take more creative responsibility for our lives. For example the apostle Paul says "in God all things are possible." The implication is that transformational possibilities are present everywhere, even though we may not be aware of them. No matter what happens, the Holy Spirit can transform it in the heart of the faithful believer. Our responsibility is to open ourselves to that possibility. What this says to me is that no matter how much people have killed one another in the past the spirit can open the way for you to walk the path of peace.

Buddhists are encouraged to see each moment as utterly new, and therefore full of new possibilities. One does not have to go on repeating old behaviors, because each moment contains within itself an entire universe of possibilities. Our task, according to Buddhism, is to enter into each moment with a mind free of preconceptions, and unburdened by the force of habit. In that way we will not carry old sorrows into new moments. What this says to me is that no matter how often people have killed each other in the past, this is a new moment and they don't need to do so now.

THE GOLDEN RULE AS A KEY TO RESPONSIBILITY In my experience, the deepest and most universal teaching concerning ability and responsibility is the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." The Golden Rule asks us to look at each situation from a new angle, "how would I feel if I myself were receiving this treatment," and therefore to see new possibilities beyond the usual strife of attack and counterattack.

The Golden Rule occurs in almost every religious tradition, and holds a special place in the teachings of Jesus, who gives it not only as a rule in itself, but also uses it as a pattern for many other teachings, for example "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," and, "as you judge others, so shall you be judged." Jesus also asserts the emphatic centrality of the Golden Rule in the spiritual life by saying that it "sums up the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12) I am convinced that when Jesus uttered those words, there was no higher praise or endorsement of the Golden Rule that could have been given.

It is important to note that while the Golden Rule is at the very heart of ethical behavior, it is not self-contained -- it does not stand alone. That is because the Golden Rule, as it occurs in many cultures, assumes that an individual has a reasonable sense of self interest and a healthy self-love. "Love your neighbor as yourself," but what if you hate yourself? We know today that some people actually do hate themselves, seek out the experience of pain as part of their self-loathing, and that such deeply wounded people are also capable of inflicting pain on others without any feelings of inner conflict. (The great mass murderers of the last 100 years, Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Saddam Hussein and Charles Manson, were relentlessly punished and abused as children. Hurting others was a compulsive re-enactment of their traumatic experiences.) Thus, the Golden Rule, with its emphasis on the logic of reciprocity, makes its deepest sense when accompanied by feelings and teachings of love, mercy, and forgiveness, and these we need to bestow upon ourselves as well as upon others.

Accompanied by feelings of love, mercy and forgiveness, the Golden Rule is the rule that gives us a deeper understanding of all other rules of the spiritual life. It is a call to a life of continuous compassionate action. In relation to war the implications are quite stark: if you would not like being shot to death, don't shoot other people. The people who would send you to war will always assert that there is no alternative to killing. Therefore, it seems to me that <u>proposing an alternative</u> needs to be a central part of every war protest. And the alternative is near at hand: it is the Golden Rule itself. If we build schools and hospitals in third world countries, instead of threatening those countries with napalm and airborne robot drones of death, those same countries will not plot our undoing.

On the following page you will find many examples of how the Golden Rule is expressed in the world's religions.

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Bahá'í Faith:

"Ascribe not to any soul that which thou wouldst not have ascribed to thee, and say not that which thou doest not" "*Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself."* Baha'u'llah

And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbour that which thou choosest for thyself." Epistle to the Son of the Wolf

Buddhism:

"...a state that is not pleasing or delightful to me, how could I inflict that upon another?" Samyutta Nikaya v. 353

Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful." Udana-Varga 5:18

Christianity:

"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 7:12, New International Version

"Do to others as you would have them do to you" Luke 6:31, New International Version.

"*...and don't do what you hate...*", Gospel of Thomas 6.

Confucianism:

"Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you" Analects 15:23

"*Tse-kung asked, 'Is there one word that can serve as a principle of conduct for life?' Confucius replied, 'It is the word 'shu' -- reciprocity. Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire*.'" Doctrine of the Mean 13.3

"*Try your best to treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself, and you will find that this is the shortest way to benevolence*." Mencius VII.A.4

Hinduism:

"This is the sum of the Dharma [duty]: do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you." Mahabharata 5:1517

Islam:

"None of you [truly] believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself." Number 13 of Imam "*Al-Nawawi's Forty Hadiths*."

Jainism:

"Therefore, neither does he [a sage] cause violence to others nor does he make others do so." Acarangasutra 5.101-2.

"*In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self.*" Lord Mahavira, 24th Tirthankara

"*A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated. "*Sutrakritanga 1.11.33

Judaism:

"...thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.", Leviticus 19:18

"What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. This is the law: all the rest is commentary." Talmud, Shabbat 31a.

"*And what you hate, do not do to any one*." Tobit 4:15

Native American Spirituality

"*Respect for all life is the foundation.*" The Great Law of Peace.

"*All things are our relatives; what we do to everything, we do to ourselves. All is really One.*" Black Elk

Sikhism:

"*No one is my enemy, none a stranger and everyone is my friend*." Guru Arjan Dev : AG 1299

"Don't create enmity with anyone as God is within everyone." Guru Arjan Devji 259

Sufism:

"*The basis of Sufism is consideration of the hearts and feelings of others. If you haven't the will to gladden someone's heart, then at least beware lest you hurt someone's heart, for on our path, no sin exists but this.*" Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh, Master of the Nimatullahi Sufi Order.

Taoism:

"Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss." T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien.

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REFLECTING ON RESPONSIBILITY – A JOURNAL PAGE. Please express and explore your thoughts and feelings about the forms and stages of responsibility, as they have unfolded in your life up to now. Here are some suggested questions, just to get you thinking. You are welcome to write here whatever comes to your mind on this topic. How do you feel about your own journey toward responsibility? At what times in your life has responsibility felt like a burden? At what times in your life did your responsibilities help you feel powerful, competent, and/or capable for participating in projects larger than one person could accomplish? What are your responsibilities toward human beings that your government labels as "enemy soldiers?" If no answers or ideas seem to come to mind, set this assignment aside for a few days and then come back to it. (Insert extra pages here if you need them.)

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CONCLUSIONS ABOUT CHOICE AND RESPONSIBILITY – STARTING POINTS AND JOURNAL PAGES. Here are some reasonable examples of conscientious objections based on the Golden Rule and the moral value of personal responsibility. Please spend some time thinking about each one of them as a way of starting the mental and spiritual processes needed for you to make your own statements. On the journal pages that follow, please record the conclusions you have reached so far about the topic of personal responsibility for your actions, and how these are related to participation in war. (Insert extra pages here if you need them.) You are also welcome to adopt any or all of the conscientious objections shown below as your own. If you do that, I would recommend that you discuss them with your spiritual adviser, if you have one, or a close friend, and make time to pray about them, meditate on them, re-write them in your own words, commit them to memory as your personal religious vows (if that feels appropriate) and find other creative ways of making them deeply your own.

~ ~ ~

In my life I'm trying to become a more responsible person. With regard to each of my actions, I try to look for ways to accept more personal responsibility, and I try as much as is humanly possible to avoid excuses and evasions. With regard to responsibilities in war, I see no difference from everyday life. I believe that I'm personally responsible for each human being I kill or injure. I am responsible to God, I'm responsible to that person's family, and I'm responsible to my own heart and mind. In everyday life, killing someone or helping one group of people kill another group of people are terrible crimes. They do not cease to be terrible crimes simply because the people involved put on green clothing and use special words such as "enemy soldier." Therefore, I respectfully decline to kill people under any circumstances, and I respectfully decline to participate in organizations that kill people, such as armies and navies and air forces. All the great religions teach the Golden Rule, do onto others as you would have them do unto you. You can't follow the golden rule and kill people. I'm committed to making America a better place, and a better place means taking care of people's basic needs and not killing anyone.

~ ~ ~

All the great religions teach the Golden Rule: Do unto to others as you would have them do unto you. On that basis, I respectfully decline to kill people under any circumstances, and neither will I participate in organizations that kill people, whether they are gangs, mobs, or armies. By trying to live by the Golden Rule, and by teaching and advocating the Golden rule, I AM serving America, because more than anything else, I believe, America needs to learn how to live by the Golden Rule. The more we threaten everyone on the face of planet Earth with death and destruction, as we have been doing continuously since World War II and do even more today with our current doctrines of total military supremacy and pre-emptive war, the more people around the world hate us and plot our undoing. America is the sum total of everything that the people in America are willing to do. If we are all willing to kill or willing to hire other people to go kill on our behalf, then that's what America is about. But following Gandhi and the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., I have a different dream for America. My dream is an America that serves life rather than takes life. By coming before you today and declining to participate in organized killing, I am voting with all my heart and strength for that other America.

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Chapter 8:

The journey from last-minute thinking to seven generations thinking

> Our societies are based upon great democratic principles of the authority of the people and equal responsibilities for the men and the women. This was a great way of life across this Great Turtle Island and freedom with respect was everywhere. Our leaders were instructed to be men of vision and to make every decision on behalf of the seventh generation to come; to have compassion and love for those generations yet unborn. We were instructed to give thanks for All That Sustains Us. [my emphasis]
>
> Haudenosaunee Faithkeeper, Chief Oren Lyons, 1992

> The possession of long-range goals, regarded a central to one's personal existence, distinguishes the human being from the animal, the adult from the child, and in many cases the healthy personality from the sick.[1]
>
> Gordon W. Allport

SEVEN GENERATIONS THINKING AND WAR This chapter is dedicated to Native Americans, who know something extremely valuable about human survival and who have labored for many centuries to keep that knowledge alive. To think about the impact of one's actions on seven generations to come is to think in an entirely new way. To think about centuries rather than weeks or months casts a whole new light on the topic of going to war. The parallel in Buddhism and Hinduism is to be continuously mindful that the consequences of every thought you think and every action you take will be with you for many lifetimes.

In the heat of the moment wars always seem justified to the people who propose them. "We have been attacked and we must respond with force of arms" the war cry goes, and so we are asked to rush off and kill people. Before the war there is no time to think. Unfortunately, after the war there is plenty of time to grieve. Because killing people is a serious matter, I believe is important to examine more fully the kind of hurried thinking that often leads to war. The hurried thinking of war is always *reactive*, focusing on what *they* did. It becomes almost impossible to think of what we might have done to get ourselves into the predicament. But if we do not learn to think these impossible thoughts we will get into exactly the same predicaments again and again, which is the case in US history.

The hurried thinkers, forever in a rush to send us off to the battlefield, to not have a particularly good track record over the past hundred years. The faith that people have in war as a method for achieving some noble goal, is not justified by a careful examination of recent history. As a participant in the military you are required not only to kill people, or to support others who kill, you are also required at a deeper level to *believe in war*, *to believe the stories that make it all seem necessary*, *to adopt the time frame that makes war seem necessary,* and to subscribe to the irrational faith that shooting, stabbing and burning other people will somehow make your country more secure or the world a better place! It is a magical belief that good ends will come from evil means. (Gandhi and St. Paul would strongly counsel us otherwise.) The antidote to this kind of belief is seven generations thinking. Both individuals and nations have moments of fevered rationalization and lose track of the forces they are setting in motion. We owe it to both our friends and our country to embody the calm that allows careful thinking to happen. To be a conscientious objector is to refuse to be carried away by the fevered rationalizations of this moment. Here are some calm thoughts about the

[1]Gordon W. Allport, *Becoming* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 51.

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wars of the last century and the rationalizations that made them seem necessary.

THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR The Spanish-American war began because of the February 15, 1898, sinking of the U.S. battleship Maine, allegedly by a Spanish mine, in the waters of Havana harbor. Within nine weeks the United States had gone to war against Spain. But as several later boards of inquiry concluded, including one chaired by Admiral Rickover in the 1970s, the physical damage to the hull of the ship (which was dredged up in 1911) strongly suggests that the ship was destroyed by an explosion of coal dust, a common accident among the coal-fired ships of the 1890s. There was not even good evidence of a mine attack in 1898, but the newspapers were in the grip of war fever at the time, so it did not seem to matter.

THE VIETNAM WAR Along similar lines, the war in Vietnam escalated rapidly after the Gulf of Tonkin incident, which led to the hurried passage of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, giving President Johnson the authority to use "all means necessary" to defend American forces in South Vietnam. There were soon 500,000 American troops in Vietnam. The problem is that the Gulf of Tonkin incident never happened. It was a stormy night and the radar equipment on the US warships in the Gulf was functioning badly, persuading frightened radar operators that they were being attacked by North Vietnamese patrol boats. A later review concluded that there was no evidence at all of an attack, but it was too late. President Johnson had already hurried to send a fleet of US bombers to bomb North Vietnam. The Communist threat, which was given us as the true, long-term reason for the Vietnam war, evaporated a few years later as the United States decided that it could have cordial relations with the largest communist country in the world, Red China. Today, Red China is our partner in many endeavors. If your view encompasses only one month at a time, you might not notice that the reasons given for a war have evaporated.

WORLD WAR I Similar issues about evaporating rationales trouble our understanding of World War I. In the years before World War I, the European powers engaged in a pattern of secret alliance making. Uncertain about who would fight on the side of whom, the Great Powers responded to the crisis brought on by the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by mobilizing their armies, and thereby frightened one another into a war in which there were catastrophic losses on all sides. (10 million soldiers died, 21 million were wounded) The United States entered World War I to punish Germany for its attempt to get Mexico and Japan to enter the war on its side. Waves of anti-German feeling swept the United States, and Americans were persuaded that the United States should enter the war in order to "make the world safe for democracy," in a "war to end all wars," according to President Wilson. The aftermath of World War I gave rise to two of the worst dictators in human history, Hitler and Stalin, and a long string of wars. Never was the result of a war further from the advertised benefits. It is sobering to contemplate that the myth of war is so strong that people in England cheered and celebrated in the streets when England first went to war against Germany in 1914.

SETTING SORROW IN MOTION OVER DECADES America has always had a problem with double standards, and our double standards have brought us no end of grief. We began with a double standard of freedom for white people and slavery for black people. That brought us the Civil War and more than a century of painful struggles of African-Americans to overcome the damage done during the slaves centuries. There is another double standard which has also cost us dearly, which might be called virtue at home and villainy abroad. While wanting to see ourselves as a shining city on a hill, a beacon of light for all nations, we have in fact supported all manner of foreign dictators and gangsters when it seemed to serve our interests, as defined by the hurried thought of the moment. This has resulted in war after war, and we do not seem to be learning the lesson. (If your view only encompasses one month at a time, you will never see that there are any lessons to be learned.) Here are three examples.

- United States companies such as Ford, General Motors and IBM, played a significant role in the building up of Hitler's war machine. If Hitler was bad enough for us to fight him in the 1940s, why was he good enough for us to finance him in the 1930s? (We were afraid of the Soviet Union.)
- In the 1980s the United States poured billions of dollars into Muslim fundamentalist groups in Pakistan arming them to fight the Russians in Afghanistan. These groups evolved into the Al Qaeda terrorist network against which we went to

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war in Afghanistan . Our fear of the Russians *again* produced bitter fruit.

- Also in the 1980s, the United States backed Saddam Hussein in the war he started with Iran. He was clearly the aggressor, but our fear and dislike of the Iranian theocrats caused us to set aside our sense of justice and build up someone whom we knew was already a murderous megalomaniac. We taught him, in fact, that he could get away with murder, and then went to war against him in the Gulf War to unteach him that lesson.

CONCLUSIONS: THINKING HARDER ABOUT PEACE

I could go on giving examples but I think the examples I've given so far are enough. These examples lead me to this radical conclusion: **in the short run war will always seem justified, and the in the long run war is never justified**. War is something people to because they can't figure out anything better to do, because they are angry, bitter, frustrated, ashamed, humiliated or otherwise in the grip of some blinding feeling. Given enough time, the missed possibilities come into focus, again and again. The task of the conscientious objector, therefore, and the task of reasonable people everywhere, is to embody seven generations thinking and to get our fellow citizens and public officials to engage in it. "Be the change you want to see," Gandhi said.

From the examples given, you can see the unfairness of asking a conscientious objector, "what would you do if your mother were being raped and you had a gun." By picking an example in which there is no time to think and no time to prevent, the questioner masks over the way that societies believe in war, invest in war and plan for war, making other possibilities impossible. There are many uncertainties and life but there is one thing I can tell you that is absolutely certain: Any nation that, decade after decade, spends a thousand times more money on armaments and armies than it does on disarmament, peaceful alliances and meeting fundamental human needs, will eventually get the wars it prepares for. And you can be sure that the causes of these wars will always be understood as the hostile actions of other countries on some particular day.

During the Cuban missile crisis, the joint chiefs of staff came to Robert F. Kennedy with plans to start World War III, in which perhaps half of the people in the United States and half people in the Soviet Union would have perished. Kennedy was reported to have said, "if we can't think of an alternative to war, we are not thinking hard enough." The Cuban missile crisis was resolved by face-saving, back-channel negotiations. We are fortunate that John and Robert Kennedy had the strength of character to resist being hurried into what would have been a war of a thousand Hiroshimas. Robert Kennedy's statement could be the motto of every conscientious objector, which I repeat here for emphasis: "if we can't think of an alternative to war, we are not thinking hard enough."

To those who would say we have enemies in this world and we must prepare to fight them, I would say that if we have enough time to prepare to fight them we have enough time to turn them into allies. If you say they can't be turned into allies, then I must ask you why not? Why are we so good at building weapons and so bad at building alliances? Toward which course of action are we investing our resources and why? After the house is already on fire, you say, we can only concentrate on putting out the fire. But after so many houses have ready burned to the ground, I say, we must start to ask how we have become trapped in a cycle of endlessly burning houses.

Like a forest fire that creates its own wind, military actions create their own momentum and necessity. The spiral of escalation that started World War I is not the only example of this. In the months preceding the war against Iraq that began in 2003, the United States, at great expense, assembled an invasion force on the border of Iraq. Various commentators in the U.S. then explained to the public that the U.S. would look weak and foolish if the troops were simply brought home. The proponents of the war had made the war inevitable. Whether that was by intention or ineptitude really does not matter. Another example of the self-generated momentum to kill comes from World War II. The army general who supervised the creation on the atomic bomb, Leslie Groves, explained years later in an interview that the atomic bomb had to be used, otherwise the creators of the bomb would have been held responsible for wasting billions of dollars of public funds on the largest single government project in U.S. history, from which we may infer that all their careers would have been ruined.[2] Having traveled so

[2] According to the Brookings Institution, the cost of developing the atomic bomb was twenty billion dollars (adjusted for inflation to 1996 dollars)

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far down that path, it felt impossible to turn back. That is why we need conscientious objectors: to keep reminding us not to take the first step down that path.

Seven generations thinking takes the ideas about responsibility explored in the last chapter and applies them to nation states. The great Biblical injunctions about personal conduct:

> those who live by the sword shall die by the sword,
>
> whatever a man sows, that also shall he reap,
>
> do to others as you would have them do to you,
>
> thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not lie,

apply to nations in the same way they apply to persons. (Consider, the law of gravity applies to you as an individual, and also applies to the entire planet on which you stand. There aren't any exemptions.) We recognize that the really important things in human life, raising a child, building a marriage, preparing for your life work and getting better at it, all unfold over many years and involve many choices. There is an almost universal recognition that being able to understand and accept long-term responsibilities is a central part of being a mature human being. Well, in a similar way, the relationships between nations, which lead to war or peace, unfold over decades and involve many moral choices. Unfortunately, cultures learn more slowly than individuals. It has taken the Europeans many centuries of war to finally understand that **war is a burden they do not need to inflict upon one another any more** (and not everyone understands it yet). Conscientious objectors around the world bear witness to this gradual awakening. And conscientious objectors struggle against the mind-boggling irresponsibility that funds dictators in one decade and goes to war against those same dictators in the next. Only seven generations thinking can keep us from repeating the sorrows and tragedies of war forever.

The painful experience of the Vietnam War has left many people in the United States with a very fundamental question, a question which remains with us to this very day: **How obligated am I to kill and die because people in high government positions…**

> **don't understand the long-term consequences of their actions,**
>
> **can't discipline themselves to think straight,**
>
> **have an irrational faith in violence,**
>
> **can't imagine those who suffer in war, or**
>
> **don't care who suffers in war?**

A reasonable person could reach the conclusion that we have no such obligation to kill and die, and instead that we have a prophetic obligation to bear witness to the possibilities of compassion, peacemaking and long-term thinking both in our personal lives and in the affairs of nations. Therefore, I invite you to take the above question to heart, and to use the following journal pages to begin working out an answer that you can live with and explain to others.

Notes:

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REFLECTING ON SEVEN GENERATIONS THINKING – JOURNAL PAGES Please express and explore your thoughts and feelings about seven generations thinking, and your own personal journey toward responsibilities that unfold over long periods of time. Here are some suggested questions to get you thinking about the issue. They are very challenging questions, so it may take a while for your heart and mind to bring forward some responses. What has been the longest responsibility in my life up to now? What laws do I feel most deeply obligated to follow? What time frame seems to be operating in the discussions about war and peace that I hear? (week, month, year, etc.) What kind of person would I like to become in the course of my entire lifetime? What sort of world do I want to leave to my great-great-grandchildren? You are welcome to write here whatever comes to your mind on these topics. (Insert extra pages here if needed.)

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CONCLUSIONS ABOUT SEVEN GENERATIONS THINKING – STARTING POINTS AND JOURNAL PAGES. Here are some reasonable examples of conscientious objections based on seven generations thinking. Please spend some time thinking about each one of them as a way of starting the mental and spiritual processes needed for you to make your own statements. On the journal pages that follow, please record the conclusions you have reached so far about the topic of personal responsibility for your actions, and how these are related to participation in war. (Insert extra pages here if you need them.) You are also welcome to adopt any or all of the conscientious objections shown below as your own. If you do that, I would recommend that you discuss them with your spiritual adviser, if you have one, or a close friend, and make time to pray about them, meditate on them, re-write them in your own words, commit them to memory as your personal religious vows (if that feels appropriate) and find other creative ways of making them deeply your own.

~ ~ ~

I believe the Native Americans have something important to teach me about how to live right, and I am trying to learn it and live it. Native Americans teachers say, whatever you do, think about the consequences of your actions on the next seven generations before you do it. If it's not good for future generations, don't do it. I look at my country, the United States, and I see that we are putting our faith in instruments of death and those who operate them. Our military budget is $400 billion a year and most of what we give other countries in terms of foreign aid is actually credits to buy weapons. We are also the largest arms exporter in the world (approximately $10 billion a year). We have become a nation that "lives by the sword." Meanwhile, of the 6 billion people on planet Earth about 4 billion of them are trying to live on less than two dollars a day, which is to say that more than half the planet is desperately poor. As President Eisenhower said in 1953, "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired is, in a sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed." By making, selling, believing in and using instruments of death, rather than meeting basic human needs, I believe we will leave our descendents a much more dangerous world. I believe that our emphasis on military might is bad for all the children of today and will be bad for all the children of tomorrow, and is a mistake of tragic proportions. Jesus said, those who live by the sword shall die by the sword. I respectfully refuse to participate in what I see as my country going in the wrong direction. More specifically I refuse to participate in any organization whose primary purpose is to kill people, or to coerce people with death threats. I will make every effort to gently and compassionately persuade my fellow citizens to believe in nurturing life, not in taking life. I refuse to be silent in the face of what I see as a giant mistake for America.

~ ~ ~

In my life I'm working on becoming a more responsible person. Part of that journey toward becoming a more responsible person is to pay attention to how things unfold over the course of a lifetime, and how my actions affect not only me but those who come after me. As I look at the history of the last hundred years what I see is that every war that was once presented as a matter of burning necessity might have been prevented if people had been really serious about preventing it. Government officials with extremely short attention spans do things that create military crises, like the United States building up Saddam Hussein in the 1980s, or building up Hitler's war machine in the 1930s, or giving billions of dollars to France in the 1950s so that it could try to recolonize Vietnam, or giving money to the Mujaheddin groups that became Al Qaeda so that they would fight the Russians in Afghanistan. Then the same government officials ask young people to go and kill, and die, to resolve the crises. And if you don't go, people say you don't love your country. Well, I love my country, but I also believe that unless lots of people follow their consciences and say no war, we will always have war. In the 20th century, Peru and Ecuador fought three times over a disputed piece of border territory. With help from thoughtful peacemakers, they finally decided to change the piece of disputed border territory into a bi-national park. We could learn from Peru and Ecuador, and we could invest some of our trillions of "defense" dollars into becoming those thoughtful peacemakers. (Every three years now America spends around a ***trillion*** *dollars, about $180 for every man woman and child on Earth, on guns, bombs and the people who will use them.) In the Bible, God says "choose life that you and your descendents may live." I have renounced all organized killing and I renounce again the short-term thinking that makes it seem necessary. With all the power in me, I will strive to nurture life and invite others to do so as well. I feel <u>this</u> is my moral duty to America, not shooting people.*

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Chapter 9:

The journey from fear, anger and hatred to love, trust and compassion

RESISTING THE MADNESS OF WAR WITH THE POWER OF LOVE In the preceding chapters we've explored the way that war creates its own momentum, narrowing people's sense of time, and sense of possibilities also. In this chapter we are going to explore the inner workings of emotions, hatred and love, in order that we may resist the temptations of hatred, and that we may become grounded in love deeply enough to say no to all organized killing. From my perspective, it is and not enough for us to simply denounce hatred and announce compassion. I believe we must understand more deeply what is going on inside people who hate, in order to find a path beyond it.

WHERE FEELINGS COME FROM Every human life includes significant experiences of suffering, loss and fulfillment, experiences of both joy and sorrow. This seems to be built into the structure of human life. As Judith Viorst explains in her book, *Necessary Losses*, every step forward in human development is based on a painful letting go of old supports. For example, the toddler can exercise his or her newfound ability to move around only by leaving mother's comforting embrace. Teenagers yearning to be adults discover that they can only have more freedom by accepting lots more responsibility and relinquishing most of the support their parents gave them as children. Young adults often experience the deaths of their grandparents as their introduction to the deep truth that everyone we love will eventually pass away, a truth so large we spend most of our lives coming to terms with it. As we grow older we struggle with the dawning realization that however much we may have accomplished, not all of our hopes and dreams will be realized, whether we were hoping for personal success or hoping for a better world.

Another angle on the painful elements in human experience concerns trial and error. Most human learning processes include lots of failure. People who succeed in life are people who have learned how to fail productively. When our parents still love us after we have fallen down a thousand times, we learn to love ourselves in the middle of all of our fallings down, and we learn how to pick ourselves up. But this is the ideal and much of human life is lived far from the ideal. Many people are crushed by their failures, cannot tolerate the embarrassing trial and error that goes with learning, and are haunted with a sense of personal inadequacy. We need also, in the course of a lifetime, to make peace with death and dying as part of life rather than viewing death as a personal defeat.

In addition to these losses related to universal processes of human development, every life has its own share of what you could call accidents, both lucky and unlucky. These can include automobile accidents, crippling diseases, abusive parents and bosses, wars and depressions. Life includes grace as well, in the form of loving parents and teachers, the support we find in friends, the beauty we find in nature, and the strength we find in faith, to name only a few.

A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF WHERE HATRED COMES FROM[3] One way of understanding our emotions is to see them as our creative response to all the experiences just mentioned. I use the word creative because the research of recent decades points to the fact that a large part of *how we feel* is deeply interwoven with *what we think*, and the kinds of novel-like stories we tell ourselves to make sense out of our lives. Some events are naturally frightening, but most fears are a learned response to a painful experience, maintained through inner repetition of the story. Anger is often a response to a sudden disappointment of our expectations about how we should be treated, and is very much shaped by our understanding of the situation that we're in. If someone walked up to you on the street and called you an ugly name, you might experience a flash of anger. If your were are visiting a mental hospital and one of the patient's called you the same name, you might be filled with pity for the person's distress.

Hatred is very often woven together with betrayal stories, so much so that I have come to see hatred as *finding someone to blame for all of one's*

[3] This interpretation of hatred is based on ideas and research presented in the work of psychologists Arno Gruen, Robert Kegan and Richard S. Lazarus.

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unacknowledged suffering, failures, pain and losses. Hatred is not just a mindless emotion; *it is a radical form of self-deception*, a primitive and irrational way of defending oneself against the pains of being human. If I can convince myself that you are the cause of all my problems, failures and sufferings, then all I have to do is destroy you (or at least thoroughly humiliate you) and I will be happy. The source of all my sorrows will have been removed. All that I fear, even death, will be symbolically defeated or held at bay. This was the twisted but very persuasive emotional logic of Hitler's speeches against the Jews in the 1930s. This is what you might call "hate thought."

The emotional self-deception of hatred appears to be comforting to those who hate in four basic ways, which might explain why hatred comes back again and again, like weeds in a garden.

- First of all, for various reasons I may have a very difficult time accepting that sorrow, failure and loss are a part of human life. Making you the source of all of my problems seems to allow me to avoid the painful truths of life.
- Second, making you the source of all of my problems can keep me from being ashamed and guilty. I could be ashamed of my problems, losses, sorrows and failures because I suspect they might be the result of my own lack of skill, understanding, courage or initiative. I may hate myself for not living up to the ideals of my culture to be competent and confident in all things. Hating you blots that out of my awareness.
- Third, making you the source of all of my problems, losses and sorrows may keep me from being ashamed because I might suspect my problems and losses prove that God doesn't like me, that I am a "loser," or that I am a member of an unworthy social group. Putting your group down lifts me and my group up one notch, but I can only stay "up" in this way by investing a lot of effort in keeping you and your group "down."
- Finally, blaming you for all my problems, losses and sorrows may allow me to avoid confronting my actual tormentors. If, for example, an adult has never confronted their violent parents, that adult is ripe to hate someone in order to avoid the intolerable conflict of both loving and hating their parents. It is common for people to both need their jobs and resent their bosses, and not know what to do with such strong mixed feelings.

Understood from this perspective, a life filled with hate will also be a life filled with fear. If I hate you in order to avoid facing the losses and sorrows of my life, whatever it is that I'm avoiding is always in danger of breaking through. So I have to continually pump up my hatred in order to ward off my unwelcome feelings. I must have someone to hate in order to maintain my fragile equilibrium, in order to keep from being swallowed up by guilt and shame (My guilt and shame may be based on mistaken premises, but until I realize that, it does not matter.) And I must see the person or group whom I hate as totally different from myself. I am all things good and noble. They are all things ugly and disgusting, which is why they are determined to ruin my life and my country. From this perspective hatred is a tremendously creative activity, and also a deep mistake, like using alcohol in order to feel better. Only by facing my fears and difficulties more directly can I ever feel better about myself and about life.

I submit to you that this kind of "hatred as a way of avoiding one's own pain," is a widespread problem of human development, somewhat similar to alcoholism. This leads me to two conclusions. Hatred will probably be with us for centuries to come, and, with great effort we can overcome the grip that hatred has on human beings.

HATRED, WAR AND THE PATH OF COMPASSION Using the above information is a working model of the human vulnerability to hate, we can begin to explore two important topics:

- how war is related to hate
- how both religion and psychology, at their best, propose to guide us beyond the temptation to hate.

As sociologist Thomas Scheff has explored at great length in his various books, nations often feel and act like persons. Which makes sense if you think about the fact that a nation is a collection of persons. So just as I am vulnerable to hating you in order to avoid the pain of my own life, my country is vulnerable to hating your country in order to escape from various unpleasant feelings. To use World War I once again as an example, there was a giant effort in the United States during World War I to vilify Germany as a barbarian monster, and to make World War I seem like an

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instance of German aggression. The truth is all the great powers in Europe were responsible for World War I. They all blundered into the war with equal irrationality and ineptitude. But it was much easier to hate the Germans than to have some sort of mass confession of stupidity on the part of high government officials all around. Britain celebrated the beginning of World War I as if it were the start of a high and noble adventure. But none of the principal countries involved in World War I had fully grasped what the mechanization of war would mean. *There were more than a million casualties in the five-month Battle of the Somme;* twenty thousand British troops *were killed on the first day*.[4] The war turned into a nightmare stalemate that consumed an entire generation of young men. In the face of their own catastrophic mis-calculations about the war, the British response was to… hate the Germans, and get the United States to hate Germany as well, which they succeeded in doing. What we see at work here is the underlying logic of "hate thought:" I will turn you into a demon in my mind so that I do not have to face my own mistakes.

Since the self-deceptions of hate thought are a universal human vulnerability, the Germans responded with an orgy of hate thought of their own, not wanting to look at the role that Germany might have played in the start of World War I, or the sorrows that their martial tradition might have brought them. Instead, Germans focused on how Germany had been abused by the victorious Allied powers and burdened with reparations. Unwilling to learn from history, because learning from history is embarrassing, they repeated the painful history 20 years later to the world's great sorrow. (To its great credit, Germany is today one of the most thoughtful nations on Earth concerning costs and risks of war.)

Another aspect of hate thought that plays a significant role in war is the I'm-all-good-you're-all-bad syndrome. This syndrome makes it impossible to reach reasonable compromises with the other side. And like blaming other people for my mistakes, I'm-all-good-you're-all-bad is a universal vulnerability. Both communist countries and capitalist countries engaged in this syndrome throughout the 40-year duration of the Cold War. During this time, both the United States and the Soviet Union had pressing social problems. On each side, hating the other allowed each country to avoid facing its own problems. People on both sides had an emotional interest in *not* reaching agreements. Without another country to hate, each nation would have had to look at its own shortcomings. After 40 years of conflict and trillions of dollars in rubles spent on armaments, the Soviet Union collapsed and the United States can't provide health care to many of its citizens or keep its large cities from degenerating into violent, gang-ruled slums. It remains to be seen if the United States will survive the massive waste of resources that the Cold War required.

Meanwhile, the I'm-all-good-you're-all-bad mutual demonization in the Cold War resulted in several horrific hot wars, including one in Vietnam and one in Afghanistan. The Vietnam War might have been avoided, but both sides were only interested in total victory over the total demon. For example, in the 1950s and 60s the communist nation of Yugoslavia declared itself neutral in the global competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, in order to not be crushed by that competition. The Vietnamese probably would have been happy to have become the socialist Switzerland of the Far East, aligned with no military bloc and threatening no one, just minding their own business and recovering from the wounds of World War II. But neither the United States nor the Soviet Union were interested in this solution, so the Vietnamese never got a chance to try it out.

Bitter about losing the war in Vietnam and unwilling to consider the slightest possibility that our thinking about Vietnam might have been confused or misguided, the United States conceived of the plan in the early 1980s to inflict a similar loss on the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Determined to teach the "evil empire" a lesson, the United States backed religious militias from around the world to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan. Afghanistan was utterly demolished in the process, and the religious militias gradually coalesced into the Al Qaeda terrorist network with which we are at war today. Al Qaeda is our new hate object. Whatever problems America has in the world today, they are not our responsibility. They are the responsibility of that demon, Al Qaeda. And, according to Al Qaeda, whatever problems exist in the Arab world are not the responsibility of the Arabs, they are the responsibility of that demon, the United States.

[4] http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/battles.htm

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I think Professor Scheff is right: nations are like people. And the problem with blaming others, whether you are a person or a nation, is that you never learn anything from your mistakes. There is always someone new to blame, and life never gets any better. But there is a positive side to this similarity. If nations are like people, then the teachings that have helped individuals overcome the temptations of compulsive blaming, may also help nations overcome the same temptations.

THOSE WHO SHOW US A DIFFERENT PATH

The problem of hate thought (demonization and compulsive blaming) has been around for a long time. In the Old Testament, Cain was convinced that all would be made right if only Abel were dead.[5] Religion has a very mixed record as far as demonization is concerned. Popular religion is full of demonization, has been for thousands of years, and often encourages people to blame all their difficulties on the devil or on some hated minority. On the other hand, the religions of humanity quite regularly produce saints who teach universal forgiveness and compassion. In the comments that follow, therefore, I acknowledge that I'm presenting the very best examples I can find in spirituality, rather than what may be the average or the more common.

Almost all religions have what might be called an outward tradition in an inward tradition. The outward tradition explains the universe: who put the stars in the heavens, why the rains came or did not come. The inward tradition is focused on guiding our response to life, not on explaining things, even though it may occasionally offer explanations. As Aldous Huxley wrote, summarizing the inward tradition, your life is not what happens to you, your life is what you do with what happens to you.

As I read them, the inward-oriented guiding lights of each religion show us the way beyond demonization and beyond compulsive blaming and toward an inner truthfulness. Here are three examples that, starting from very different places, point in the same direction. Of course, these are small samples from centuries of tradition. And I am not saying that everyone in these religions follows these teachings. But I am saying that some have followed them radiantly enough to show us paths beyond hatred.

THE CHRISTIAN WAY BEYOND HATRED Jesus teaches a spirituality of infinite forgiveness, and speaks not of forgiving just a few times, but of forgiving seven times seventy times. Jesus also turns his followers away from considering the faults of others and asks them to focus first on their own shortcomings. In the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 7, Jesus chides his disciples, saying, how will you be able to see to remove a splinter from the eye of your brother when you have a beam (a roof timber) in your own eye? In our time one of the most ardent followers of this teaching was Mahatma Gandhi. Faced with the mutual massacres of Hindus by Muslims and Muslims by Hindus, Gandhi, a Hindu, went first to the Muslims to express his deep regret and sorrow over what had happened. His fellow Hindus criticized him for this and asked how he could do such a thing. He replied by saying that if you begin with the examination of other people's faults, you will go mad.

In a teaching the bears directly on the issue of demonizing others, Jesus counsels his followers that the spiritual life includes suffering, and teaches them to love, forgive and pray for their tormentors. He embodies this teaching in the most dramatic way imaginable as he prays for those who crucify him. Jesus acknowledges that people hurt one another (otherwise there would be no need to teach forgiveness), but, like the inward-turning teachers of all great religions, Jesus focuses on our capacity to respond compassionately rather than on the demonic qualities of those who injure us. Finally, in saying to his disciples, "love one another as I have loved you," Jesus seeks to offer a personal relationship created by a love so strong that it outweighs all human strife, and gives a person the inner resources to reach for reconciliation rather than revenge.

THE MUSLIM WAY BEYOND HATRED Islam means surrender to the will of God. And in Islam the path beyond compulsive blaming lies in this practice of surrender. At the very heart of Islam you find the belief that everything without exception is the will of God, in some mysterious way that we may not understand. As mentioned above, those who follow the inward path are not looking for explanations, they are searching for responses. Thus, for a devout Muslim every calamity and sorrow in life is not so much a riddle to be solved, or an offense to be blamed on someone, but rather a test of one's faith in the ultimate mercy and compassion of Allah, and an opportunity to surrender to His will.

[5] http://thewitness.org/agw/witnessstatement040203.html

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Mohammed's (peace be upon him) teaching of injury for injury has been widely misunderstood as justifying revenge. But taken in its historical context, the purpose of this teaching, carried forward from Judaism, was not to justify revenge but to moderate and restrain revenge, and to prevent the escalation of blood feuds. It introduces the idea of proportionality into our thinking about conflict. A small injury does not justify a large injury in response. This seeks to turn people away from the irrationality of demonizing those with whom they are in conflict. There is clear evidence in the Koran that the teaching of proportionality of response was not intended to justify revenge: A profound endorsement of forgiveness as the better way is given in the very same verse as the teaching about proportionality of response. "The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): *but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation his reward is due from Allah:* For (Allah) loves not those who do wrong." (Koran 42:40) (my italics)

THE BUDDHIST WAY BEYOND HATRED One of the central attitudes of Buddhism is the attitude of "no blame." The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism teach us that we are each, without exception, the authors of our own suffering. We have no one to blame for our difficulties but ourselves, and even that blaming is pointless because it focuses our attention on the past instead of on the present. If I walk through life bringing attention and compassion into each present moment, I will no longer create suffering for myself and I will help others cease to create suffering for themselves.

By way of explanations, the doctrine of reincarnation and the law of karma guide a Buddhist to understand that if someone is treating them badly today, it is probably because they treated that person badly in some previous life. Therefore they should welcome the opportunity today to treat with great kindness and forbearance those with whom they have painful encounters, so that this particular part of the endless cycle of karma may come to an end.

In the Buddhism of later centuries the bodhisattva ideal emerges. The bodhisattva ideal envisions the deepest purpose of human life to be serving the spiritual awakening of everyone and everything, good and bad, friend and foe, angel and demon, plant and animal. None of these outer distinctions matter in this vivid example of inward-turning spirituality. All that matters is one's response of infinite compassion.

PSYCHOTHERAPY AS A PATH BEYOND HATRED AND BLAMING Over the past century psychotherapy has focused intensive attention on the problems of blaming and hating. Much of what is painful in human life comes out of our sense of shame and our fear of being shamed. We all yearn for love and approval, and dread the thought that other people may see us as unworthy of love, for whatever reason. This can make it extremely difficult to face one's own mistakes. Our desire to look good in the eyes of others is in conflict with our need to learn from both our successes and failure. If I can't bear to look at how I'm doing in my life, then my chances of changing improving my behavior are very slim. That is why a recurring theme in psychotherapy is the therapist's nonjudgmental and accepting relationship with the client. The therapist listens to my story of sorrow and struggle without judging or condemning me, thus showing me how I could have a less condemning and more accepting relationship with myself. Freed from the pressure to defend myself, I may actually be able to see my life more clearly and the role that I play in creating my own life difficulties. When that happens I am free from the need to blame others. Blaming others may shore up my self-esteem for a short period of time, but it leaves me blind to my own behavior and therefore powerless to improve my life. At its best psychotherapy brings together love and truth in a new way: surrounded by the therapist's unconditional acceptance, I find the strength to face the truth of my own imperfections, weaknesses, incompletenesses, and failures, as well as my strengths and successes. Facing those truths frees me from the need to wear a mask, frees me from the need to blame others for my difficulties, frees me from the fear that other will expose my weaknesses, and allows me to be more compassionate toward others as they struggle, like me, to become more fully human.

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REFLECTING ON YOUR JOURNEY TOWARD COMPASSION – JOURNAL PAGES Please express and explore your thoughts and feelings about the place of compassion in your life. Here are some questions to get you thinking. And, as mentioned in all the other chapters, you are welcome to write here whatever comes to your mind on these topics.

What are your deepest memories of having been treated compassionately by others? Recall the times in your life when you have felt and/or acted in a compassionate way toward others. How has your life been influenced by fear and hatred? Who have been your greatest teachers of compassion? Which historical figures, such as Gandhi or the Rev. Martin Luther King, have inspired you to want to become a more compassionate person? In what ways might it be possible to reconcile the value of compassion with the process of injuring others in war? How much do you trust the arguments that propose that you can be a compassionate person and also participate in organized killing? (Insert extra pages here if needed.)

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CONCLUSIONS & COMMITMENTS ABOUT COMPASSION – STARTING POINTS AND JOURNAL PAGES. Here are some reasonable examples of conscientious objections based on the values of love and compassion. Please spend some time thinking about each one of them as a way of starting the mental and spiritual processes needed for you to make your own statements. On the journal pages that follow, please record the conclusions and commitments you have reached so far about the topic of compassion as a way of life, and how these are related to your participation in war. (Insert extra pages here if you need them.) You are also welcome to adopt any or all of the conscientious objections shown below as your own. If you do that, I would recommend that you discuss them with your half spiritual adviser, if you have one, or a close friend, and make time to pray about them, meditate on them, re-write them in your own words, commit them to memory as your personal religious vows (if that feels appropriate) and find other creative ways of making them deeply your own.

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Three things are clear to me from the teachings of Jesus. The first is that Jesus wants us to love each other and not hurt one another, even when provoked. He talks about turning the other cheek, loving one another, loving our enemies and praying for those who abuse us. The second is that Jesus wants us to go the extra mile in order to reconcile our disagreements with others. That comes out in the teaching "if thy brother hath ought against thee," where Jesus tells a person who was on his way to the temple to go and seek reconciliation first. The third thing is that being a peacemaker is blessed, but it is not easy. Jesus asks his disciples to be both harmless as doves and wise as serpents. I think those two things are actually related: in order to be as harmless as a dove you have to be as wise as a serpent. That means peacemakers need to think clearly and deeply. I have come here today to tell you that I have thought about war as deeply as I can, and I cannot reconcile the teachings of Jesus with participating in any organized killing, or any organization that kills. I know there are people who have thought hard about this and decided differently, and I do not doubt their sincerity. But I do not agree with their conclusions. As a person trying to follow the teachings of Jesus, I want to serve my country by doing works of mercy, not works of violence.

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I believe that war is morally wrong in every circumstance. I believe that human beings are made to love one another, to forgive one another, and to work together to survive. All people are my brothers and sisters. Therefore, for me, every war means murdering our family members, a catastrophic betrayal of the best that is in us. I try to live the life of kindness, forgiveness and cooperation every day. And I feel it's not enough for a person to simply oppose war. I think a person who opposes war needs to offer an alternative to war. The central organizing theme of moral thought in recent centuries has been Kant's categorical imperative: behave in such a way that you could will that all people would act similarly. But in war I would be doing all sorts of things that I positively do not want other people to do to me. In war I would be living out totally indefensible moral double standards: It's OK for me to kill them, but it's not OK for them to kill me. When I kill their children, it is unfortunate collateral damage for which I'm not responsible; but when they kill my children, it is an abominable war crime for which they must be punished, and so on and on. It seems to me that immorality has a big element of self-deception in it, because no one in their right mind could defend those double standards.

Morality also concerns what we owe other people. I believe that what I owe other people is to believe in the best that is in them, even if they have temporarily forgotten it. To believe in war is to believe that people can't do better than war. I refuse to believe that. I believe that people can always do better than war if they really try. People can always love more. People can always think more. Wars are long in the making. I feel it is my moral duty to bring up all the missed opportunities for making peace and avoiding war. I feel that in doing that I am defending my country. I am defending my country against the seductive attraction of violence as the answer to all human problems. As a result of these considerations I respectfully decline to participate in any organized killing, or to support any organizations that engage in organized killing.

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Notes for next chapters:

Chapter 10: From selfishness and resentment to gratitude and generosity

Chapter 11: From being stuck in old patterns thought, feeling, and action to learning new life abilities, whether as a person or as a culture

Chapter 12: Our journey from isolation and indifference to communion, reverence and caring

Chapter 13: Our journey from coercion and violence to cooperation, kindness and mutual aid

Chapter 14: Our journey from causing injury and death to sustaining life and development

Chapter 15: Saints, martyrs and exemplars - opening ourselves receive the empowerment and blessing of those who have walked before you on the path

Chapter 16: Coming back to the "three central questions" and evolving your position

Chapter 17: Getting letters of support for yourself, and reaching out to support others

Chapter 18: Preparing to be challenged in your interview

Chapter 19: Following your path of compassionately nurturing life, regardless of whether there is a military draft

The apostle Paul counsels us never to commit evil acts imagining that good will somehow come from them.

all people are my kin, and I say with George Fox, no one is my enemy

all men are my brothers

Tibetan Buddhists believe that, because of eons of re-incarnation, everyone you pass has in some previous lifetime been your mother, your father, your child and your spouse. Therefore we should treat each person with infinite kindness

In the words of George Fox, we prepare to walk cheerfully over the earth answering that of God in every person.

echo chamber military budget: self-fulfilling prophecies of fear and hate

the right not to kill - rights come from creator - then duties come from creator

one person' right to life liberty and the pursuit of happiness, is my duty not to kill or injure

fear of being seen as weak, violence for the sake of one's threatened ego

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"There is no such thing as a small act of kindness. Every act creates a ripple with no logical end." -Scott Adams

Comparing oneself to others in such terms as "Just as I am so are they, just as they are so am I," he should neither kill nor cause others to kill. Buddhism. Sutta Nipata 705

"Do not think of your faults, still less of others' faults; look for what is good and strong, and try to imitate it. Your faults will drop off, like dead leaves, when their time comes."

- John Ruskin quotes (English writer and critic of art, architecture, and society, 1819-1900)

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book of readings

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CAN LOVE REALLY OVERCOME VIOLENCE AND HATE? REFLECTIONS ON FRIENDS [QUAKER] PEACE TESTIMONY

Mary Lord
Interim Director, Peace Building Unit,
American Friends Service Committee

Given at the Annual Meeting of
Friends World Committee for Consultation,
Section of the Americas
Friday, March 15, 2002, Philadelphia, PA

Dear Friends, when you first invited me to speak on the peace testimony last summer, I was working at Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) starting up a new program on the peaceful prevention of armed conflict. I had been doing talks on the spiritual basis of our testimony and on the opportunities presented by the emerging field of conflict prevention. I enjoyed telling the stories of heroic peacemaking being done by many people, including Friends in regions of conflict, and of the possibilities for a new vision of the peaceable kingdom. I planned a speech on those lines, and I will do some of that tonight.

After September 11th, I agreed to come to Philadelphia, on loan from FCNL to work as the Coordinator of the No More Victims Campaign, AFSC's response to September 11th and the emerging war. In the months since then, I found that many Friends in the US have struggled with the peace testimony because they were not sure what we should do instead of going to war. So I had decided to respond to that need and to talk also about the need to end the bombing of Afghanistan. That was when I picked my title, and I will do some of that tonight.

Both my little world and the world around us have changed again. Tonight, I have a new task at AFSC, as the incoming Interim Director of AFSC's Peace Building Unit, following Judith McDaniel's decision to return to Tucson and a very special new job. As I was writing up the talk for tonight, I began to struggle—while Cilde Grover [FWCC Executive Secretary] got more and more nervous because the translators were supposed to have the talk two weeks ago. Finally, on Tuesday night of this week, I needed to acknowledge that I was having so much trouble with the speech that I must be working on the wrong message. So in prayer I asked God what I was supposed to say. The response was pretty swift and clear. It is a hard message to give, and probably a hard one to hear. But we live in hard times.

I need also to apologize to Friends coming from outside the United States, because much of my message is directed to those of us who are US citizens and must face the consequences of what our government is now doing. I hope what I say will also be of value to you, and I hope that you dear Friends from other countries will help us, through your prayers and your insights, to be faithful to our witness.

A New Global War

Friends, as events unfold in the world around us, I very much fear that we are on the eve of a new and terrible global war. Even now it could be stopped, but there is not the will to stop it. There is rather the will to threaten and to fight, either by design or lack of thought, blundering forward in a manner reminiscent of the events that led up to World War I. The consequences of the war now beginning will bring immense suffering to many peoples. We as Friends need to do what we can to stop the wars that are already spreading or intensifying. But we also need to be prepared to be Quakers in wartime—never an easy experience.

What leads me to this dire prediction? First, of course, are the statements by the US President Bush and other US government officials that we are in a war that will reach into many countries and last perhaps through our lifetime. It is the decision of this government to respond to the present crisis by promising this generation of young adults decades of warfare as their inheritance. There are Friends in Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America who know first hand what decades of war can mean.

Second are the actions that have accompanied the statements. As the war in Afghanistan apparently begins to wind down—both sides in this war of terror are taking the battle to many other countries. US forces are already in the Philippines in what some believe is a

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violation of their constitution. Troops are also present or en route to Yemen and probably Somalia. Military aid is increasing to Colombia—intensifying that war which until recently was a war on drugs, and is now a war on terror. Troops are reported heading to the former Soviet republic of Georgia. An invasion of Iraq is almost certain, possibly with tactical nuclear weapons. This expansion of the war to a longer and longer list of countries has little or no support from our allies in Europe, except perhaps Tony Blair, or the Middle East or Asia. But it is very likely that the US will nonetheless, as Secretary of State Colin Powell told the Congress, "go it alone."

Recently the US announced a change in nuclear weapons policy—changes that will make it more likely that nuclear weapons might, for the first time in almost 60 years, actually be used in war. Against the backdrop of insider debates about whether to use mini-nukes in Iraq, the change of nuclear policy is ominous indeed. Listening to all of this, the Board of Directors of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists moved the "Doomsday Clock" 2 minutes closer to midnight. Having served on that Board myself for several years in the past, I can tell you that the hands of the clock are not moved lightly.

Of course, the US was attacked on our own soil in a despicable act that left more than 3,000 dead in New York and Washington. These terrible attacks affected the children of my own home meeting, Adelphi, which is near Washington DC. It was not widely reported that there were a number of school children on the plane that went into the Pentagon. Some of those children were playmates of the children in our meeting, and the adults at Adelphi had the task of trying to help our children understand what happened to some of their friends. Like me, you may have watched the CBS documentary a few days ago about the firemen in the World Trade Center. It gave us a small sense of the horror of the day close up. The attacks had to be answered—but how? What might we have done instead of going to war?

The Road Not Taken

On September 12th, the US immediately began to prepare for war. There was another road that might have been taken—the road of international law, working together with other nations to find and arrest the members of the criminal conspiracy. In fact, many individuals were identified, arrested, and await trial in a number of countries, using just such methods.

There is an International Criminal Court that will soon come into force when 60 nations ratify it. Already more than 50 have done so. The current US Administration rejects this treaty and refuses to support or cooperate with it. As a nation, the US has declared itself above the law of other nations. We might on September 12th have supported a special tribunal like that now operating in The Hague and trying Slobodan Milosevic. We might have developed a special court or arrangement, like the Scottish court that operated in the Hague to try the perpetrators of the bombing of Pan AM 103 (on which one of my closest friends lost his youngest daughter).

We might take action to make future terrorist activity less likely. We could ratify international agreements on stopping the financing of terrorist groups, but we have not yet done so. We might support efforts for better information sharing between nations to identify such criminals, but we have not yet done so. We might have tried to limit the trade in weapons to unstable regions, but instead the US almost single-handedly thwarted a special United Nations conference convened for that purpose. We might have sought to strengthen the verification procedures on biological and chemical weapons, but instead the US scuttled that conference also, enraging our British and Australian allies who had worked six years to bring nations together on this treaty. We might have sought to limit the spread of nuclear weapons technology to rogue nations and others, but instead we are dismantling the international agreements that have limited proliferation, and the US appears to be standing ready to resume testing of nuclear weapons. I could go on for some time.

There has been a conscious choice to use US military force rather than international law against Al Quaeda. There is a conscious decision to expand the war to countries with whom we want to settle old scores (North Korea, Iran, Iraq), or where we can gain access to oil (the former Soviet republic of Georgia), or where we hope to regain military bases (the Philippines)—whether or not the nations involved have any connection to September 11th.

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This is a decision to use the tools of warfare rather than the tools of policing and international law. It is also a decision to seek to weaken or prevent the development of any international structures that might provide an alternative to military force. As long as decisions are made by military force, the US, which spends now over 400 billions of dollars a year on the military has a decided advantage. This amount ($400 billion) is more than the military budgets of the next 25 nations combined. Russia, the nation with the next largest military budget spends about $60 billion on its military each year. (source: Center for Defense Information and FCNL) For over a year, it has been the stated policy of the Bush Administration to seek "full spectrum dominance"—to be able to do whatever the US wants anyplace in the world without fear of retaliation by its opponents. That is one reason the attacks of 9-11, using commercial aircraft as missiles against civilian targets, was such a shock to the government.

There are, of course, consequences to such military buildup. Other nations feel they have to respond in kind. The European Union, America's friends and allies, confronted by a unilateralist US, has decided they must develop a European military capacity capable of acting without US involvement, in situations where the US has no interest. Japan and Germany are for the first time since World War II sending troops outside their borders, in what some citizens of those countries regard as an unconstitutional policy. China, believing itself to be a potential target of the US, is increasing military spending by 17%

Conflicts in those parts of the world where the US has an interest in oil or military bases are intensifying. And every military dictator and despot is now using the catch phrase of "terrorism" to expand military operations, crush dissent, limit human rights, and carry out atrocities—all in the name of fighting terror. Open our eyes! Look and see!

India and Pakistan still stand poised for conflict and each side now has nuclear weapons. Indonesia's military, which only a few months ago was a pariah in the world because of the atrocities in East Timor, has now been given a green light to crush "terrorism." This has grievous consequences for the dissident movement in Aceh. This summer I met a young man from Aceh at the Peace Brigades International conference, and I worry about him and his family. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has worsened in recent months and at times descends into war. It is hard to tell if the recent UN resolution on Palestine has come soon enough or will be implemented. Certainly many on both sides have died. Naming North Korea and Iran as part of an "axis of evil" set back, perhaps for decades, the diplomatic work and the work by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including AFSC, that have tried to bring those nations back into the international community. In the Americas, the war in Colombia is escalating dangerously with peace talks broken off and a new offensive underway. It is already spreading into neighboring countries. I worry about the Peace Brigades team and the Mennonite community in Colombia. I pray for the safety of the Peace Team delegation that Val Liveoak is preparing to take into Colombia.

War Does Not Work

This is, of course, the way of war. Once started, wars are almost impossible to control. They tend to spread. There are always unintended consequences. We cannot know where the path we are now on will lead. What we do know is that hatred and greed <u>always</u> breed violence, and that violence <u>always</u> begets violence.

Pacifism has been called naïve and unpatriotic. But I ask you, which is the greater naiveté—to believe that the frustrating but productive path of using and strengthening international law is the path of safety, or to believe that a never-ending worldwide war against loosely defined terrorism fought with weapons of mass destruction will make us safe and secure in our gated communities?

The path of war is always, as history proves, the more naïve. War almost never works. Even when it seems to, for a short time, or after a long struggle, it is with a horrific cost of life, and property, and treasure, and the fouling of the earth, and the killing if its creatures. Almost always, similar ends could have been achieved through negotiation or international law and peacekeeping, with far less cost.

In the end, even when war seems to work, as in World War II for the Allies, it is because of the quality of the peace that followed. In WWI, the soldiers were

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just as brave, but the peace was an excuse for revenge, and it led in a generation to Hitler and another greater war.

For some months as I have been preparing my talk, I have been drawn to the prophet Habakkuk. It is a very small book—only three chapters. In the first chapter Habakkuk complains to God, as only Hebrew prophets can, that injustice and violence are everywhere. How long, the prophet asks God, before you will act? I thought I was supposed to use that chapter as my text tonight, and I couldn't understand why it wasn't working. But I discovered I was supposed to use Chapter 2, God's response to the prophet's complaint. I want to read part of it to you.

> *I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart;*
> *I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint.*
> *Then the Lord answered me and said:*
> *Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it.*
> *For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie.*
> *If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.*
> *Look at the proud!*
> *Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.*
> *Moreover, wealth is treacherous; the arrogant do not endure.*
> *They open their throats wide as Sheol; like Death they never have enough.*
> *They gather all nations for themselves, and collect all peoples as their own.*
>
> *Habakkuk 2: 1-8 (NRSV)*

I think the message is very clear. Those who live by greed and violence, and that characterizes us more than we want to admit, will find our own violence turned against us. The path of war will be disastrous for the US as well as for the many peoples who live in lands labeled "terrorist".

I have a close friend who has served in the White House and National Security Council in two previous Administrations. She told me she was frightened of the whirlwind this country is sowing. If you travel in Europe, or the Middle East, or Asia, or Africa, or almost anywhere outside the US, you will find many experienced statesmen frightened about the forces this war is unleashing. It is a frightening time—and I have said nothing about the damage already done at home—not just in New York and Washington, but also to our psyches, to our democracy with the shocking attack on civil liberties and democracy, to the immigrants and refugees among us, to our economy as we transfer more tens of billions to the Pentagon and the wealthy.

Faith in Violence

What propels us toward war? Why do we rush toward battle in the belief that combat and killing will make us safe? We could talk about the economic and military and cultural roots of the conflict—and that is important to understand. But tonight I want to talk about belief. Again Habakkuk, this time in chapter one, gives us insight.

Speaking of the Chaldean armies of his time, Habakkuk complains:

> "Dread and fearsome are they;
> their justice and dignity proceed from themselves" (Habk 1: 7)
> In verse 1: 11 "..Their own might is their god."

And verses 1: 15-16, "..He (the Chaldeans) brings all of them (the people) up with a hook; he drags them out with his net. He gathers them in his seine. Therefore he sacrifices to his net and makes offerings to his seine, for by them his portion is lavish and his food is rich."

Habakkuk complains that the Chaldeans have come to worship themselves, their own power, and their weapons of war, allegorically described as hook, seine, and net.

I believe this is what we face. We also live in a time when the nations and those in positions of privilege have come to worship their own power and the military forces which they use to "…claim dwellings not their own."

Walter Wink, a theologian and author, wrote a remarkable book—Engaging the Powers, which gives insight on the world around us and the role of active nonviolence. Wink points out that we all live in a culture, which for many centuries is founded in the belief in combat as the way that goodness overcomes

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evil. This belief, dating back at least to ancient Babylon, is the undercurrent of our myths. The ritual story is always the same. The hero is attacked by evil and almost overcome. But, in the end, good prevails through strength and skill in combat and slays the evil enemy.

This myth pervades our own culture in the West. Whether Gary Cooper in the western movie High Noon, or Superman, or with a darker veneer of the outlaw-heroes of current times, this myth of what Wink terms the belief in "redemption through violence" becomes the underlying structure of our culture and actions.

Make no mistake. This is a system of religious faith—often-blind faith—in the effectiveness of military force or the threat of force (which is sometimes mistaken for a peaceful alternative). So pervasive is this myth that we speak of military force as "the last resort" as if it would, though costly, be guaranteed to work. In reality, while one military force may defeat another, the war rarely achieves any other aims. Once a war starts, defeating the enemy becomes the only war aim, and the original goals are forgotten.

Faith in militarism also shows up in the questions not asked. We do not inquire—why didn't almost $400 billion for US military—about 7 times that spent by any other nation—make us safe? We do not ask this. We only assume we need to spend more—sacrificing our cities, our environment, the education and training of our children and youth, the health of our people—to do so. Like the Chaldeans of ancient times, the nations and institutions of our time have come to worship themselves and to make sacrifice to our weapons and our military structures as though they were gods.

Faith in God

The Gospels of Luke and Matthew tell the story of Jesus' temptation in the desert when he was preparing for his ministry. According to these Gospels, there were three temptations. In one of them, Jesus was shown all the nations of the world. The tempter, Satan, offered Jesus dominion and power over all these nations. Satan urged Jesus to think of the good he could do with such power, if only Jesus would worship Satan. The Gospel tells us that Jesus rejected this temptation, saying, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him."

This is really, in my mind, what the peace testimony is about. What do we worship and trust? What do we understand to be the real base of power and change in the world? How does God want us to treat one another?

In turning away from "realpolitik," Jesus pointed to power, God's power, that is real and lasting and rejected the illusion of power that lay in the nations of that time. After all, where now are the Chaldeans of Habakkuk's time? Unless we are professors of history we do not even know who they were. So too have many empires come and gone—the Greeks of Alexander's time, the Romans, the Mayan and Aztec Empires, the Spanish Conquistadors, and the British Empire on which it was said the sun never set. All have come and gone. Most of us carry in our blood the inheritance of both the conquerors and the people who were conquered. Perhaps in our DNA we carry the racial memories of many conquerors and many of the once vanquished. The stories are dimly remembered if at all.

Jesus left the desert and began a ministry of preaching and living the power of God's love for the sick, and the poor, and the people who had made mistakes in their life but wanted to make amends. He seemed to pay little attention to those in power at the time. The message of that ministry is perhaps best summarized in the Sermon on the Mount, one of the most remarkable and radical prescriptions for living. In it we are told to love our enemies, to do good to those who hurt us, and to love one another.

As early Christians, and later early Friends, studied these teachings and the life that Jesus lived, they came to believe that God had clearly shown us that we were not to kill one another. The Gospel is full of teachings about forgiveness and the power of love. The Gospels and the Epistles that follow do not teach hate or violence or human vengeance. We should remember that all of the world's principal religions teach these same principles. Universalist Friends tend to emphasize the Light within, rather than the Sermon on the Mount, but the teaching about how to live is the same. God has spoken to us in many faiths and many cultures with the

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same message of love and compassion to one another and of love, obedience, and faithfulness to God.

The Gospels and other sacred writings give a different view of what power is—a different view of what human beings are capable of if we dare to trust in the power of God to transform us and the situations of our lives. It calls us to worship, not the institutions of this world, but to worship God, and to live in faith and harmony with one another.

Early Quakers, reading the Gospel found in it a vision of a different kind of power than the armies then contending in England's civil war. One of the earliest statements was from George Fox, who had been asked to accept a commission in the militia. In those days, many people believed that if the good people could gain control of government, England could be a holy commonwealth. All that was needed was military success over the corrupt government of the time. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? In our time, we see many opposing forces each strong in the belief that God's kingdom can be achieved through military power—whether a crusade or a jihad.

Fox turned down the commission, explaining that he "…lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars…" that he "…was come into the covenant of peace which was before wars and strife were." The power that takes away the occasion of war, the peace that existed before wars and strife were, is the power and peace of the Spirit of the love of God. That is the love that has the power to overcome hate and violence. That is the power of love that can transform even the situation in which we find ourselves today. That is the power of love that sustains the witness for peace through many centuries, and despite persecution. That is the power of love and witness that outlasts all the empires, and all the armies.

What We As Quakers Can Do

How shall we as Quakers sustain ourselves as a people of peace in the midst of worldwide war? By living in that covenant of peace which was before wars and strife were … by living in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all war. It is not our Quakerism, or our pacifism, or our knowledge, or skill, or emotion that overcomes hate and violence. We shall surely fail if we become proud of our virtue and traditions and become vain in our witness. We shall fail if we think the power that may move through us is our own. The power is not ours, it is God's.

This is the foundation of what we must do in our testimony of peace in this time of war. The foundation is faith in the power of God's love to transform us and our society and to bring justice to the poor and the oppressed. Our task is to act, as best we understand what we are led to do, in obedience to that power. Our Meetings and Friends Churches, if they have grown lazy in their faith, need to "get ready". The time is now.

I cannot claim wisdom as to how God will have us act. I have some suggestions of things we can usefully do now.

First, we can make sure that our young adults are counseled about conscientious objection. We are already in a time of persecution of CO's and war tax resisters. Young men who do not register for Selective Service in the US, and there is no way to indicate conscientious objection on the form itself, lose student loans, federal employment opportunities, and in some states, drivers' licenses. Young men must think about their registration for Selective Service, and be sure to be on record with the Meeting or Friend's church as COs in the event of the draft's reinstatement. Meetings and churches also need to counsel the young men and women who are not Quakers, but who need our help thinking through the realities of military service. We should be helping young people who are poor to find alternatives to military service as a path of advancement and education. There are a number of Friends organizations with good information on youth, militarism, and conscientious objection. Counseling young people on this topic also lends reality to the Meeting's discussion of the war because the youth at risk are our own children.

Second, we can begin the work of non-violent resistance. Militarism and injustice may seem very strong, and they are, but nonviolence is "a force more powerful." One of the dangers of the myth of the power of violence is that it robs us of the memories of effective nonviolent resistance. How can we say that bullies and unscrupulous people cannot be defeated when we have the successful examples of the Mahatma

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Gandhi, of the Solidarity movement in Poland against Soviet domination, of the Danish resistance to Hitler's Germany that saved thousands of Jews, of the end of legal racial segregation in the United States with Dr. Martin Luther King's inspired leadership, of the astonishing peaceful transfer of power in apartheid South Africa and the equally amazing truth and reconciliation commission that followed, of the "people power" movement in the Philippines which toppled Marcos's corrupt and brutal regime, and of the nonviolent people power movements in Eastern Europe that brought down the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall, of the popular demonstrations in Chile that ended Pinochet's rule, and many, many more stories of active, disciplined, nonviolent change.

A first step in the formation of a nonviolent movement in the United States against this war may begin on April 20th with a student led mobilization in Washington. The mobilization will, for the first time, begin to bring together the Colombia Mobilization, an anti-war demonstration, and concerns about the global economy. All have pledged nonviolence. Let us hope the police and other authorities are also nonviolent.

Third, we in the US can ask the prayers, help and support of Friends throughout the world. We are not used to asking for such help but we need it. Some of you Friends in other countries are living through or have lived through violent struggles or wars in your own countries and have much to share with us about what it means to be faithful in difficult times. You can also help US Quakers to "see ourselves as others see us." Most people in the US do not know what our country is doing in your lands. We need to learn, and we need to have the strength to try to change it. You can help us. Friends should also remember that we have much to learn from those who are poor and from people of color in our own country. Here too we can benefit from the prayers and insights of those whose experience of life in this country may be different than our own.

Fourth, Friends and Mennonites and Brethren, as the "historic peace churches", have an opportunity to begin to articulate a new vision of a peaceful world that does not rely on military force to solve problems. This is partly the story of the road not taken on September 12th. It is also sharing the vision of how nations and NGOs and people of faith can work together to build the institutions that can prevent most armed conflict. There is much to be learned from experience and the literature. It is at least a whole other speech. It is in fact the one I intended to give, but instead the Spirit needed us to remember that war is a terrible thing, and that our peace testimony is realistic, not naïve.

Finally, let us put on the whole armor of God. The forces of culture and wealth and nationalism and fear against which we contend are very powerful. Our protection is the power of the love of God to sustain us through what may be the dark days ahead.

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And No One Shall Make Them Afraid

A Mennonite Statement and Study on Violence

I. Introduction

Jesus came that we might have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10). However, violence, the threat of violence, and the fear of violence permeate life in North America, often robbing us of this abundant life. Violence is also pervasive in our world. Perpetrated by individuals, groups, social systems, and governments, it leaves countless victims around the globe.

As Mennonites in Canada, the United States, and Puerto Rico, we have been affected by this violence. While we affirm a commitment to peace and nonviolence, we have frequently tolerated and even benefited from some forms of violence. We have wrongly accepted, at least in part, what theologian Walter Wink has called the "myth of redemptive violence," the belief that good ends can come from violent means, and that some violence is necessary to solve problems, to ensure security, and to make peace.

The scope of this statement, while broad in some respects, is limited in several ways. The terms *violent* and *violence* refer only to violence perpetrated by human beings, human institutions, and human social structures, which harms human beings. The statement makes no attempt to address acts of God or human violence that harms animals or other parts of God's creation. While these are important issues, they are beyond the scope of this statement.

For the purpose of this statement, violence is defined as **the human exercise of physical, emotional, social, or technological power which results in injury or harm to oneself or others.** The perpetrators of violence often exploit an imbalance of power to dominate, control, or use others. The various kinds of violence form a continuum. At one end are acts of physical violence, rape, incest, and sexual abuse, which result in serous psychological damage, severe bodily injury, and/or death. At the other end are acts of intimidation, threats, and emotional and verbal abuse, which result in fear and the destruction of personhood.

Any form of human violence, wherever it might appear on the continuum, is an expression of evil. Violence was present in the first human family. Since then, the spirits of revenge, greed, and domination, along with unresolved anger, have multiplied violence many times. Violence alienates us from God and from each other, and the fear of violence is a prison in which our very souls shrivel.

All violence is fundamentally incompatible with the reign of Jesus Christ in God's kingdom of love. Therefore, as followers of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, we must directly confront the reality of violence in and around us. Jesus calls us not to resist evil with violence and to forgive rather than to seek revenge. We want to find ways to reject all forms of violence in our relationships and endeavors, and to increase our efforts to live out the nonviolent way of Jesus.

This statement seeks to name the violence in ourselves, our church, and our society. It identifies way sin which the church is responding to this violence and suggests additional ways for us to respond as peacemakers and children of God.

II. Biblical and Theological Foundations

One of the most basic issues of the Bible is how one deals with evil, and with violence in particular. In Spite of some Old Testament Scriptures where certain kinds of violence were used, the basic direction of both the Old and New Testaments is toward peacemaking, which includes non-retaliation, reconciliation, and mutuality.

God's intention for a peaceful world has been present since creation. Genesis 1 describes the creation of humankind, male and female, in God's own image. Both the woman and the man were blessed and given the command to fill the earth and subdue it. Both were given dominion over the rest of creation, but neither was given dominion over the other. This peaceful creation was marred by sin. The rule of man over woman is one of the consequences of sin (Gen. 3:16). This pattern of domination continues with Cain's murder of his

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brother Abel and with Lamech's song of revenge (Gen. 4). Then "the earth was filled with violence." This is one of the reasons given for the great flood in the time of Noah (Gen. 6:11).

One of the purposes of the Law (Torah) was to restrain violence and to provide penalties for violent behavior (including murder, rape, assault, and theft) within Israelite society. In the Prophets and Writings, violence is associated with man kinds of sin, including human bloodshed (Hab 2:8), kidnapping (Hab. 1:9), injustice and unrighteousness (Isa. 59:6), planning evil things and stirring up wars (Ps. 140:1-2), wars of ruler against ruler (Jer. 51:46), eviction of people from their land (Ezek. 45:9), and robbery (Amos 3:10). For Isaiah, violence is the opposite of peace, justice, salvation, and the praise of God (Isa. 59:6-8; 60:17-18). According to the Old Testament, the source of violence is not only the human heart, but the "gods," the spiritual powers that act contrary to the ways of the true God (Ps. 58:1-2).

War, as an act of mass violence of one nation against another although sometimes sanctioned in the Old Testament, is restricted by God to old-fashioned weaponry (Isa. 31:1), to small armies (Judg. 7), and to dependence on God for victory (Judg. 7:2; Ps. 20:6-7). The books of the Law, as well as the later Prophets, hold up as the ideal battle the crossing of the sea in the Exodus, when God fought for Israel, and Israel had no weapons (Exod. 14:13-14).

The Psalms, as well as other passages, expect that God will save people not only from the sins they commit, but also from violence committed against them (2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:48; 140:1). One of the ways that God will take care of the violent and the wicked is to let their own violence turn back upon themselves (Ps. 7:16; 37:12-15; Prov. 21:7). God also brings salvation through surprising acts of deliverance: making a way through the Red Sea, or routing the enemy with floods and swarms of hornets (Exod. 14-15; Judg. 5:21; Josh. 24:12).

The Prophets look forward to the day when violence will be no more, when even the wolf, lion, and lamb will be at peace with one another (Isa. 65:25). In the age to come, people will trust in God alone and "no one shall make them afraid" (Zeph. 3:12-13).

In the New Testament, Jesus suffers violence, but does not commit violence. Although Jesus at times chose to avoid suffering (Luke 4:28-30), he accepted suffering when his hour had come. Jesus told his followers not to use violence to prevent him from being arrested (Matt. 26:52; John 18:36), thus rejecting the use of violence for self-defense. He suffered crucifixion, but god overcame the violence by raising Jesus from the dead.

Jesus taught his disciples not only to avoid committing violence, but actively to love their enemies (Matt. 5:43ff.); not only to avoid murder or insult, but to be reconciled with the brother or sister (Matt. 5:21ff.); not only to avoid adultery or rape, but to refrain from looking on each other with lust (Matt. 5:27ff.). Instead, Jesus' followers are to respond to enemies with surprising acts of mercy and nonviolence – going the second mile, for example (Matt. 5:38-42).

As Jesus had forewarned them, the early disciples experienced persecution, imprisonment, banishment, beating, and execution. The apostle Paul was an intended victim of mob violence (Acts 21:35-36). Far from complaining about his imprisonment, Paul rejoiced no matter what his situation and considered that he and others like him were completing the sufferings of Christ, participating in Christ (Col. 1:24). Paul assumed that believers would no longer participate in such sin as murder and strife (Rom. 1:29-31). The general prohibitions against violence also appear in the qualifications for a bishop (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7). The writings of the early church reinforce Jesus' teaching against retaliation and violence: "Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing" (1 Pet. 3:9); "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God… Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:19, 21). In the early centuries of the church, these teachings applied not only to personal morality; they informed those Christians who refused to participate in the army and its organized violence.

The examples of Jesus and the early church can give us guidance in not intending violence against others. Likewise, they show us how to deal

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with others' violence against us. We believe the following about violence and suffering:

1. God's wrath sometimes allows sin to boomerang against the sinner, but God's central attribute is love. God may turn suffering to our good or use it to teach us, but God does not desire that anyone suffer. In Jesus' healing ministry, he worked actively to relieve suffering. The powers of violence are active in the world and, in this age, sometimes thwart God's will. Only in the age to come, when Christ's victory over the powers (by means of the "sword of his mouth," that is, the Word) is apparent to all, will violence be completely overcome.

2. No violence committed against us, or those we love, justifies our committing violence in return. When we are sinned against, we become more vulnerable to the temptation to sin in return. But violence does not overcome violence; it only turns us also into violent people. There is no way to peace and nonviolence, except through peaceful, nonviolent means.

3. No suffering, not even death, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:38-39; 2 Cor. 4:8-10). God, whose own Son suffered and was killed, is with all those who suffer and call on God for help and comfort. No violent act committed against us can remove us from relationship with God. God's invitation "Do not be afraid" echoes through the Old and New Testaments. God helps us overcome our fears when we put ourselves completely into the hands of a loving God.

4. The process of forgiveness is the way to get through suffering. Forgiveness, in contrast to reconciliation, does not require the perpetrator's repentance. Instead, forgiveness is a process we go through in the power of the Holy Spirit to release and to begin loving the offender or enemy rather than harboring anger. Forgiveness is a choice not to become what we hate.

5. When we choose the way of loving enemies, rather than violence, we are becoming transformed into the image of Christ, who is the image of God. Romans 5:10 affirms that the character of God is one of love for us; even when we were God's enemies, Christ died for us. And Matthew 5:38-48 explains that it is precisely when we are loving enemies that we are acting as God acts. Our love may also open the way for God to transform enemies and situations of violence.

Thus, Christians are not to commit acts of violence nor to respond violently to enemies. Beyond this, Christians are called to be channels of God's peace and to help reconcile others who are committing violence against each other. Christ calls us not only to be gentle or nonviolent, but to be peacemakers, active workers for peace, inviting others to turn to Christ's way of love (Matt. 5:5, 9).

We affirm, with the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, that "violence is not the will of God. We witness against all forms of violence, including war among nations, hostility among races and classes, abuse of children and women, violence between men and women, abortion, and capital punishment."[6]

III. Violence and Our Life Experiences

Violence is pervasive in many areas of life. In the following sections, violence and the church's response to it will be explored in five ever-widening circles of life experience, from individual to global. Each section includes calls for specific action. Even though no one person or congregation will be able to do all these things at one time, we must remember that silence and inaction can perpetuate violence. We call the church to consider prayerfully how it will respond.

A. Violence Against Oneself.

Jesus invites each person to enjoy wholeness. Resources to foster wholeness are available through the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures, and the church. However, instead of accepting this gift from God, we often commit violence against ourselves.

Suicide and attempted suicide are the ultimate violence against the self, but suicide leaves many other victims – family, friends, even whole congregations. Understandings gained from our mental health ministries are leading us into greater

[6] Article 22, "Peace, Justice, and Nonresistance," p. 82 (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1995).

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openness and helpfulness in these tragedies. As we practice compassionate care and listening, we can displace secrecy, fear, and condemnation, and we can provide safe places to grieve, talk, and struggle with difficult questions.

Another form of violence against self is violence for "kicks" – reckless risk-taking to prove oneself, demand respect, or achieve a high. Such recklessness can be manifested in many ways.

An additional, more subtle form of violence against self, abortion, not only ends the life of the unborn but violates the woman who has chosen it, or who has had this decision forced upon her. She will very likely feel she has lost a part of herself and will need to grieve the irreversible decision she has made. This can be a life-wrenching experience for the woman, sometimes for the father of the unborn, and others close to them.

There are numerous other forms of violence against the self, including substance abuse, eating disorders, and self-mutilation. Not all of these forms can be addressed here.

Self-destructive patterns often develop without any awareness of the harmful consequences to self and others. Such behaviors may result from individualism and selfish choices, from fear or unresolved anger, or from other interacting factors such as mental illness, trauma, major losses, or inadequate economic, emotional, or spiritual support. Often the self-destructive person has been the victim of another's violence. Part of the enslaving nature of evil is the cyclical pattern of violence in which victims become violators- becoming what they hate, and sometimes hating themselves, too.

In response to violence against oneself, we call the church to:

- **Counsel, nurture, and lead people away from behaving violently against themselves.**
- **Build each other up with affirmation, encouragement, and prayer.**
- **Help people learn to process anger and rage in healthy ways**
- **Become better informed about depression, its early symptoms, and evaluation of suicide risk factors.**
- **Encourage people to choose constructive, life-enhancing behavior rather than self-destructive behavior and harmful addictions.**
- **Respond with compassion to all those hurt by abortion, seeking to help them in their journey of healing.**
- **Be instruments of God's grace for forgiveness and healing, acknowledging that violence against the self, while contrary to the will of God, is also within the range of God's redemptive work.**
- **Uphold the value of, and cherish, every human life.**

B. Violence in Close Relationships.

As humans, we need close relationships. In our families and friendships, we love and care for one another, nurture children, and experience God's love. Yet, in these close relationships, many people experience intense personal violence.

Violence in close relationships takes many forms. It can be physical, sexual, verbal, or psychological. Most commonly it is perpetrated by men against women and children. However, some women also use violence against their partners and/or their children, some juveniles abuse their parents, and some adults abuse elderly parents.

Research reveals that spousal abuse occurs in more than one quarter of marriages in the United States and Canada, and that almost all of the victims are women.[7] Research also reveals that the incidence of family violence may be as high in Mennonite homes as in the general population.[8] We confess that, while we affirm a commitment to peace and nonviolence, many of us have allowed violence in our homes and in our churches.

[7] "What Every Congregation Needs To Know About Domestic Violence" (Seattle: Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 1994).

[8] Isaac Block, *Assault on God's Image: Domestic Abuse.* Winnipeg: Windflower Communications, 1992.

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Child abuse continues to be widespread. Through abortion, many children become victims before birth. In Canada and the United States, abortion results in over one million deaths each year.[9] Violence against children takes many forms, including physical abuse, incest and other types of sexual abuse, psychological and emotional abuse, threats and verbal abuse, and neglect and abandonment. Numerous studies show that rates of child abuse are alarmingly high. Those who work with survivors of childhood abuse testify that the same seems to be true in the church.

We acknowledge that sometimes it is necessary and appropriate physically to restrain children in order to protect them or others and/or to discipline them. Such restraint should always use the least amount of physical force possible and should be done to ensure safety, never to instill fear or to harm the child.

Physical and sexual violence in dating relationships among teens and young adults is also widespread. Statistics show that rape and attempted rape are major problems in this age group. Most of this sexual violence, as well as physical violence, is perpetrated on dates or by persons known to the victim.

Sexual misconduct by pastors, church leaders, and counselors also violates close, trusting relationships. This form of violence is present in the Mennonite church and may be more prevalent than we want to admit.

At the heart of nearly all violence in close relationships is the desire to control or use another person. This violence exploits some perceived or actual imbalance of power in the relationship, whereby the person with more power seeks to dominate the person with less power. The attempt to control may begin with verbal and emotional abuse such as put-downs and name calling. If these tactics do not work, some people resort to physical or sexual violence. As painful as this relationship may be, many are reluctant to leave an abusive relationship because they fear economic consequences and other factors.

[9] According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Health Canada.

According to the video *Broken Vows*,[10] churches have been slow to respond helpfully to violence in close relationships. Some victims of abuse have not been listened to or believed by their congregations. Sometimes victims have not received the support needed to leave an abusive situation and to seek healing. Sometimes victims have been blamed by well-meaning church leaders and told to go back to the abuser and be more submissive. Some congregations are beginning to respond more helpfully to victims. Yet, we have a long way to go in responding to both victim and abuser.

We affirm the congregations and church agencies that have begun to respond. The Women's Concerns Office of Mennonite Central Committee ahs provided educational materials, workshops, and a support network for survivors of abuse. Some area conferences have held workshops or appointed special committees to respond to abuse. Two consultations for Mennonite leaders called "Men Working To End Violence Against Women" helped participants begin to better understand the dynamics of power and control in close relationships, and called men to a new level of accountability and nonviolence.

Victims and perpetrators of violence in close relationships are not just someone else, somewhere else. When any congregations meets for worship, undoubtedly victims, survivors, and perpetrators of abuse are present. We need to start with honest self-reflection and a careful review of our own relationships, so that healing and change can begin with us and flow through us to a hurting world.

In response to violence in close relationships, we call the church to:

- **Move beyond denial and disbelief, break the silence that surrounds domestic and professional abuse, and proclaim that the gospel of peace and nonviolence applies to close relationships.**

[10] *Broken Vows: Religious Perspectives on Domestic Violence* (Seattle, Wash.: Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 1994).

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- **Make the church a safe place for victims and survivors of abuse so that they may speak up and receive care and healing.**
- **Promote and support compassionate and realistic alternatives to abortion.**
- **Learn the special dynamics of power and control that are at work in violence within close relationships**
- **Recognize that the safety of the victim- whether adult or child- is the first priority, and that providing safety often requires a period of separation.**
- **Recognize that individual counseling rather than counseling the couple together is essential for the safety, transformation, and healing of the domestic abuse victim.**
- **Work redemptively in calling perpe-trators to be accountable for their actions, to stop their violent behavior, and to submit to God in their own transformation and healing within the church.**
- **Reexamine our understandings of church and home leadership in light of Jesus' teaching and example, and reject any patterns based on injustice.**
- **Face more honestly the reality of male privilege in society, and find ways to counter the violent and destructive aspects of our children's socialization.**
- **Study carefully and teach creative, nonviolent ways to discipline our children.**

C. Violence in Leisure.

Violence has long been part of leisure and entertainment, since the time of the first tragic dramas and publicly-staged fist fights. Modern society presents violence as entertainment through a bewildering variety of media, including books, magazines, comic books, movies, television, arcade games, video tapes, electronic games, personal computer games, music lyrics, and the Internet.

Dinner parties feature murder mysteries. Electronic games lead players to rape, eviscerate, and decapitate the enemy. Action hero toys and war game theaters cater to would-be warriors. Toys of violence give children practice in the actions and attitudes of violence. Professional sports often glorify violence and encourage winning at all costs.

News reports of violent acts have increased, despite declining rates of violent crime in North America. It appears that some editors have decided, "If it bleeds, it leads."

Violent content in entertainment has increased and become more explicit in the past decade. When violence is linked to sex in the entertainment media, it contributes to sexual violence and distorted ideas about sexuality and sexual pleasure. Studies suggest that violence in the media teaches children and adults to behave more violently, become desensitized to the harmful consequences of violence, and become more fearful of being attacked.[11][6]

Popular culture also perpetuates the myth that violence brings the victory of order over chaos, and that, if a "bad guy" commits violence against others, an indestructible "good guy" must use violence to vanquish such an irreformable "bad guy" and restore peace- until the next installment.

Jesus taught people to love their enemies, not exterminate them. Just as we guard ourselves and our loved ones against other dangers so, too, we must guard against the violence so prevalent in leisure today.

In response to violence in leisure, we call the church to:

- **Advocate for and help create more choices in entertainment that are not based on violence.**
- **Model cooperation, acceptance of differences, and nonviolent ways of resolving conflicts in our own lives.**
- **Refrain from leisure activities that make a game of violence, or minimize the harmful consequences of violence.**

[11] Reported in the video *Beyond the News: TV Violence and Your Child* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Mennonite Media Ministries, 1996).

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- **Speak out against the "violence for profit" ethic that drives many of our leisure industries.**
- **Screen our children's toys, games, television viewing, and play for violent content and intent.**
- **Work to reduce violence in community and professional sports, and refuse to participate in such violence ourselves.**
- **Watch newscasts with our children and teach them to be sensitive to other's pain.**
- **Raise awareness to the desensitizing effects of using violent entertainment themes.**

D. Violence in Public Life.

Violence in public life is tightly woven into the social fabric of North American society. Canada and the United States were established and much of their wealth obtained by the violent oppression and genocide of native peoples, the oppressive violence of slavery, and the exploitation of certain immigrant groups, women, and children for hard labor.

We confess that we have benefited from these atrocities. Much of the land that brought wealth to Mennonite families and congregations was available to our forebears because of this violence. Many of us, especially Mennonites of European background, have benefited and continue to benefit from white privilege, and from the economic and structural violence in society. Racism and other forms of deeply entrenched institutional injustice do violence to many in society, and continue to perpetuate and sanction the use of violence by one person or group against others.

Individualism and deteriorating family and social ties have been major factors in the recent growth of violence in North American public life. Many people no longer have the family and community connections that once served to control public violence.

Fear of violent attacks has grown. Many people, especially women, are afraid to go out alone at night. Public parks, streets, and parking facilities are perceived as dangerous, particularly after dark. Even church people are tempted to buy weapons for self-protection.

Weapons manufacturers advertise fingerprint-resistant handguns. The growth of gangs with ever more lethal weapons, illegal drug traffic, militia groups, bombings, and drive-by shootings has led to a demand for larger police forces, harsher penalties for crimes (including the death penalty), and more prisons.

Structures, systems, and institutions themselves are violent when they contribute to an atmosphere in which economic classes and ethnic groups are pitted against one another, and in which the antidote to violence is assumed to be more violence. High school youth are lured into expanded military cadet training that promotes violence as a solution to problems.

Violence does not overcome violence. As an alternative society within the broader society, the church can proclaim and demonstrate a different way. We can provide healing and hope by what we practice within the church, our workplaces, and neighborhoods. We can teach and demonstrate that biblical justice comes through peaceful means.

Many programs of healing and hope already exist within Mennonite circles and can serve as models for additional programs: victim-offender reconciliation programs, restorative justice programs, mediation networks, peace centers, prison ministries, peer mediation in schools, communication with legislators, and peace education programs. In addition, many congregations and individuals have created communities of love and accountability that counteract the violence in the surrounding society.

In response to violence in public life, we call the church at all levels to:

- **Demonstrate a community of love and accountability within the church, call people into that community, and work to build community in neighborhoods and cities.**

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- **Work and pray in ways that confront the powers that promote institutional violence, racism, sexism, prejudice, and poverty.**
- **Create and support programs of restorative justice, rather than punitive retribution, so that both offenders and victims can receive justice.**
- **Establish friendships with people in prisons, demonstrating that no one, no matter what crime he or she has committed, is beyond the love of Christ.**
- **Work to abolish capital punishment, wherever it has become law.**
- **Advocate laws for greater restriction of the manufacture and possession of guns whose primary purpose is to kill or threaten human beings.**
- **Teach and practice nonviolent conflict interventions and dispute mediation as third parties when others are involved in, or tempted to, violence.**
- **Use the 1995 statement "Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love" as a guide to dealing with conflict in the church.**
- **Teach the skills that enable people who are personally threatened with violence to act nonviolently, relying on love and creative responses rather than responding out of fear or using weapons for personal protection.**
- **Develop programs within the church to train people in the spiritual disciplines of peace, nonviolence, forgiveness, loving enemies, and building relationships in the face of differences.**

E. Global Violence.

Violence is also hurting the global community. Major armed conflicts continue to 40 countries. World military spending remains at U.S. $750 billion per year. Twenty-three thousand active nuclear weapons are still deployed, and 20 nations possess or are attempting to acquire nuclear weapons. One hundred million land mines have been sown around the world, and more are sown than removed each year. Over half the weapons sold to the Third World now come from the United States and Canada.[12] The threat of military violence continues to be used to manipulate and control other countries, and to enable wealthy countries to enlarge and protect their wealth at the expense of the world's poor. This vast economic and public policy commitment to violence presents a model of violent behavior that is imitated at all societal levels.

This armed violence is the result of nationalism, nations' unrestrained pursuit of self-interest, and the structural violence present in the world economic system. Ninety percent of the victims of this violence today are civilians, those who are weakest and least responsibly for the economic disparity and the wars they must endure. Those who survive the violence are often disabled or made homeless or destitute by war. In nations no longer able to meet their citizens' basic needs, the resulting civil violence does lasting damage.

The victims of global violence are our brothers and sisters made in the image of God. We affirm, as in previous statements,[13] that our first loyalty is to Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God, rather than to any earthly nation. We affirm our common humanity under God and our responsibility to care for the whole human family in the name of Jesus Christ.

In response to global violence, we call the church to:

[12] Project Ploughshares, *Armed Conflicts Report* (Waterloo, Ontario: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 1996); Ruth L. Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures* (Washington, D.C.: World Priorities, 1996).

[13] "Peace and the Christian Witness," Mennonite Church, 1961; "A Christian Declaration on the Way of Peace," General Conference Mennonite Church," 1971; "Justice and the Christian Witness," Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church, 1983; "A Commitment to Christ's Way of Peace," Mennonite Central Committee, 1993; and "Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective," General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church, 1995.

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- **Restrain our own material desires and ambitions, and promote a fairer distribution of the world's resources, in order to reduce inequity, hunger, and hurt, which feed violence.**
- **Identify the causal connections between socially-approved military and economic violence, and socially-disapproved personal and domestic violence.**
- **Finance and pray for the work of our church agencies in promoting international justice, economic and personal well-being, respect for human rights, and participation in decision making.**
- **Call on legislators to reduce military spending and arms sales, and to promote global justice.**
- **Expand and publicize the range of nonviolent alternatives to conflict offered through our conciliation and mediation programs, and through direct interventions by Christian peacemakers.**
- **Be steadfast in our refusal to participate in, train for, pay for, or directly profit from the use of military violence.**

IV. Conclusion

The statement "Vision: Healing and Hope" calls us to "grow as communities of grace, joy, and peace so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world." Therefore, we commit ourselves to **build church communities that demonstrate a peaceful alternative to violence** in all areas of our life together – communities that can serve as channels of God's healing and hope to a world angry and frightened by violence.

As members of the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church, with God's help, we commit ourselves, our congregations, and our church agencies to **be communities of nonviolence,** demonstrating and proclaiming the peaceful life to which Jesus Christ calls us. We commit ourselves to **teach nonviolence and peacemaking,** both within the church and beyond it. We choose to **confront, in the Spirit of Jesus Christ,** the powers, structures, institutions, and spirits of violence that tend to shape human behavior. We pledge our **love,** both to violence victims and to violence perpetrators. We will **encourage laws,** public institutions, and policies that work to reduce violence. We commit ourselves to **renounce the use of violence** and urge others to pledge the same.

> For I will leave in the midst of you
> A people humble and lowly.
> They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD-
> The remnant of Israel;
> They shall do no wrong
> And utter no lies,
> Nor shall a deceitful tongue
> Be found in their mouths.
> Then they will pasture and lie down,
> And no one shall make them afraid
> (Zeph. 3:12-13).

Prepared by the Joint Committee on Violence, appointed by the Mennonite Church General Board and the General Board of the General Conference Mennonite Church:

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Religious Values and Human Society
The Fourteenth Dalai Lama , His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso

In one way - in material terms - this present generation has reached a high level of development. Yet at the same time, we human beings are facing many problems. Some are due to external events or causes, such as natural disasters. These we cannot avoid.

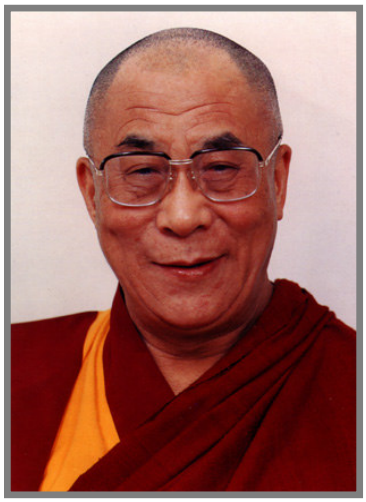
However, many problems are created by our own mental defects; we suffer due to an internal lack. I call these problems unnecessary ones, for if we adopt a right mental attitude, these man-made problems need not arise.

Often they are due to differences in ideology, and unfortunately different religious faiths are also sometimes involved. Hence it is very important that we have a right attitude. There are many different philosophies, but what is of basic importance is compassion, love for others, concern for others' suffering, and reduction of selfishness. I feel that compassionate thought is the most precious thing there is. It is something that only we human beings can develop. And if we have a good heart, a warm heart, warm feelings, we will be happy and satisfied ourselves, and our friends will experience a friendly and peaceful atmosphere as well. This can be experienced nation to nation, country to country, continent to continent.

The basic principle is compassion, love for others. Underlying all is the valid feeling of 'I', and on a conventional level, there is an I- "I want this," "I do not want that." We experience this feeling naturally, and naturally we want happiness- "I want happiness," "I do not want suffering." Not only is it natural, it is right. It needs no further justification; it is a natural feeling validated simply by the fact that we naturally and correctly want happiness and do not want suffering.

Based on that feeling, we have the right to obtain happiness and the right to get rid of suffering. Further, just as I myself have this feeling and this right, so others equally have the same feeling and the same right. The difference is that when you say 'I', you are speaking of just one single person, one soul. Others are limitless. Thus, one should visualize the following: On one side imagine your own I which so far has just concentrated on selfish aims. On the other side imagine others - limitless, infinite beings. You yourself are a third person, in the middle, looking at those on either side. As far as the feeling of wanting happiness and not wanting suffering, the two sides are equal, absolutely the same. Also with regard to the right to obtain happiness they are exactly the same. However, no matter how important the selfishly motivated person is, he or she is only one single person; no matter how poor the others are, they are limitless, infinite. The unbiased third person naturally can see that the many are more important than the one. Through this, we can experience, can feel, that the majority-the other limitless beings-are more important than the single person 'I'.

Thus, the question is: Should everyone be used for my attainment of happiness, or should I be used to gain happiness for others?



If I am used for these infinite beings, it is right. If others are used for this single I, it is absolutely wrong. Even if you can use these others, you will not be happy, whereas if this one single one contributes, serves as much as he or she can, that is a source of great joy. It is in terms of this attitude that real compassion and love for others can be developed.

Compassion which is based on such reasoning and feelings can be extended even to one's enemies. Our ordinary sense of love and compassion is actually very much involved with attachment. For your own wife or husband, your parents, your children, you have a feeling of compassion and love. But because it is in fact related with attachment, it cannot include your enemies. Again it is centered on a selfish motivation -

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because these are my mother, my father, my children, I love them. In contrast to this is a clear recognition of the importance and rights of others. If compassion is developed from that viewpoint, it will reach even to enemies.

In order to develop such a motivation of compassion, we must have tolerance, patience. In the practice of tolerance, one's enemy is the best teacher. Your enemy can teach you tolerance whereas your teacher or parents cannot. Thus from this viewpoint, an enemy is actually very helpful - the best of friends, the best of teachers.

In my own experience, the period of greatest gain in knowledge and experience is the most difficult period in one's life. If you go along in an easy way, with everything okay, you feel everything is just fine. Then one day when you encounter problems, you feel depressed and hopeless. Through a difficult period you can learn, you can develop inner strength, determination, and courage to face the problem. Who gives you this chance? Your enemy.

This does not mean that you obey or bow down to your enemy. In fact, sometimes, according to the enemy's attitude, you may have to react strongly - but, deep down, calmness and compassion must not be lost. This is possible. Some people may think, "Now the Dalai Lama is talking nonsense," but I am not. If you practice this, if you test it in your own experience, you can feel it yourself.

The development of love and compassion is basic, and I usually say that this is a main message of religion. When we speak of religion, we need not refer to deeper philosophical issues. Compassion is the real essence of religion.

If you try to implement, to practice, compassion, then as a Buddhist, even if you do not place much emphasis on the Buddha, it is all right. For a Christian, if you try to practice this love, there is no need for much emphasis on other philosophical matters. I say this in a friendly way. The important thing is that in your daily life you practice the essential things, and on that level there is hardly any difference between Buddhism, Christianity, or any other religion. All religions emphasize betterment, improving human beings, a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood, love - these things are common. Thus, if you consider the essence of religion, there is not much difference.

I myself feel and also tell other Buddhists that the question of nirvana will come later. There is not much hurry. But if in day to day life you lead a good life, honestly, with love, with compassion, with less selfishness, then automatically it will lead to nirvana. Opposite to this, if we talk about nirvana, talk about philosophy, but do not bother much about day to day practice, then you may reach a strange nirvana but will not reach the correct nirvana because your daily practice is nothing.

We must implement these good teachings in daily life. Whether you believe in God or not does not matter so much, whether you believe in Buddha or not does not matter so much; as a Buddhist, whether you believe in reincarnation or not does not matter so much. You must lead a good life. And a good life does not mean just good food, good clothes, good shelter. These are not sufficient. A good motivation is what is needed: compassion, without dogmatism, without complicated philosophy; just understanding that others are human brothers and sisters and respecting their rights and human dignity. That we humans can help each other is one of our unique human capacities. We must share in other peoples' suffering; even if you cannot help with money, to show concern, to give moral support and express sympathy are themselves valuable. This is what should be the basis of activities; whether one calls it religion or not does not matter. In the current world atmosphere, some people may think that religion is for those who remain in remote places and is not much needed in the areas of business or politics. My answer to this is "No!" For, as I have just said, in my simple religion, love is the key motivation. Except for certain minor ones, all actions - all larger and deliberate actions - come with motivation. In politics, if you have a good motivation and with that motivation seek to better human society, such a politician is a right and honest politician. Politics itself is not bad. We say, "Dirty politics," but this is not right. Politics is necessary as an instrument to solve human problems, the problems of human society. It itself is not bad; it is necessary. However, if politics are practiced by bad persons, out of cunning and lacking the right motivation, then of course it becomes bad.

This is true not only of politics but in all areas, including religion - if I speak of religion with a bad motivation, that preaching becomes bad. But you

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cannot say religion is bad; you cannot say, "Dirty religion."

Thus motivation is very important, and thus my simple religion is love, respect for others, honesty: teachings that cover not only religion but also the fields of politics, economics, business, science, law, medicine - everywhere.

With proper motivation these can help humanity; without it they go the other way. Without good motivation, science and technology, instead of helping, bring more fear and threaten global destruction. Compassionate thought is very important for humankind.

At the present moment, if you look more deeply into society, you see that people are not as happy as might first seem. For example, when I first land in a new country, everything is very beautiful. When I meet new people, everything is very nice, no complaints at all. But then day by day I listen, I hear peoples' problems, and it is clear that everywhere there are many problems. Deep down there is unrest. Due to this inner feeling of unrest, people feel isolated, they get depressed, have mental uneasiness, mental suffering. This is the general atmosphere. Real justice and honesty are impossible within cunning feelings. Wanting to benefit others but deep down having a selfish motivation is again impossible. If you talk about peace, love, justice, etc., but then when things are actually affecting you, forget all about them and, if necessary, suppress others or even make war, this is a clear sign that something is lacking.

This troubled atmosphere is our current reality. It is very bad, but it is reality. People may feel that the opposite of this, the internal transformation about which I have been speaking, is merely idealistic and not related with our situation here on earth. My feeling, however, is that if this present atmosphere in which everything depends on money and power and there is not much concern about the real value of love continues, if human society loses the value of justice, the value of compassion, the value of honesty, we will in the next generation or farther in the future face greater difficulties and more suffering. Thus, although to bring about inner change is difficult, it is absolutely worthwhile to try. This is my firm belief. What is important is that we try our best. Whether we succeed or not is a different question. Even if we could not achieve what we seek within this life, it is all right; at least we will have made the attempt to form a better human society on the basis of love - true love - and less selfishness.

The people who deal daily with current problems must focus on the immediate problem but at the same time must look at the long-term effect on humankind, on human society. For example, basically, your whole physical body must be healthy and strong, for, with a basis of good health, you will not experience small illnesses or, even if you do, can within a short period easily be cured. Human society is similar. If we concentrate one hundred percent in the "realistic way" on short-term benefits, on a temporary-benefits-basis, that is like being sick today and taking a pill. If at the same time there is more thought and more discussion about the long-term future of humankind, this is like building a healthy body. It is necessary to combine temporary and long-term handling of problems.

For the last several years I have been looking at the world's problems, including our own problem, the Tibetan situation. I have been thinking about this and meeting with persons from different fields and different countries. Basically all are the same. I come from the East; most of you here are Westerners. If I look at you superficially, we are different, and if I put my emphasis on that level, we grow more distant. If I look on you as my own kind, as human beings like myself, with one nose, two eyes, and so forth, then automatically that distance is gone. We are the same human flesh. I want happiness; you also want happiness. From that mutual recognition we can build respect and real trust for each other. From that can come cooperation and harmony, and from that we can stop many problems.

In this world at the present moment, not just nation to nation, but continent to continent we are heavily dependent upon each other. Hence it is essential that there be true cooperation with good motivation. Then we can solve many problems. Good relations, heart to heart, human to human, are very important and very necessary. Everything depends upon good motivation.

This essay was excerpted from *Kindness, Clarity, and Insight*, published by Snow Lion Publications.

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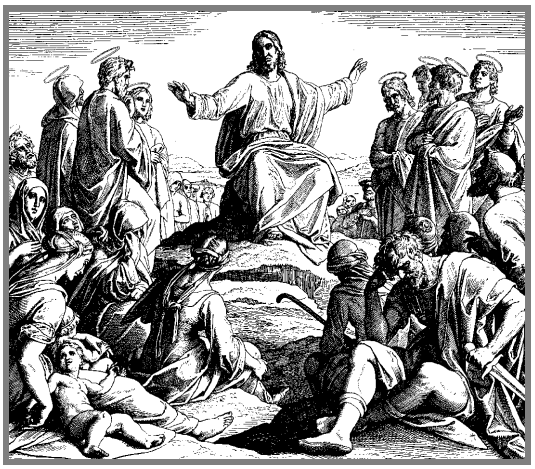

The Path of Hope and Nonviolence That Jesus Sets Before Us

Rev. San Williams

During his brief ministry, Jesus increasingly met opposition from those in positions of wealth, power and authority. Jesus preached a new order of society, one that had its roots in the Jewish prophetic tradition. Echoing Isaiah, Jesus envisioned a world in which all who lived in the valley of poverty and sorrow would be lifted up, while those who live on the hillside of economic and social privilege would no longer dominate. All the rough places of injustice and inequality will be smoothed out. Not surprisingly, those who believed it was their right to dominate others by means of power, wealth or title rightly concluded that Jesus threatened the very premise upon which their positions of privilege relied.

But when the powers that be rose up against Jesus, he refused to respond in kind. Because Jesus reflected God's will for the world, he met hostility with nonviolent love. "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" cried one of Jesus' disciples. "No," Jesus answered, "for those who live by the sword, die by the sword." Jesus chose to overcome enmity through nonviolent love. To the end, he loved those who rose up against him and forgave those who killed him. His resurrection signifies that God validates Jesus' nonviolent response as the only response that can, and will, triumph over the pattern of revenge that still ravages our world.

Why then, have Christians in general been slow to embrace Jesus' path of nonviolence? A partial answer lies in history. When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, Christianity was reinterpreted to serve the survival and goals of the Empire. Accordingly, those who live in the "Christian" Empire tend to see themselves as good, while projecting evil onto those outside the Empire. Christianity, seen through the lens of the Empire, then, allows and even fuels the human propensity for revenge, scapegoating and hatred – the very things Jesus repudiated!

Once Jesus' radical message of a domination-free, justice-filled world (the Kingdom of God) was co-opted, the implication of the Passion was largely reduced to a private transaction between the individual believer and God. Jesus wasn't rejected and crucified simply because he preached forgiveness to a ruthless world; he was crucified because he went further and also proclaimed a New Order of love and justice that was, and is, a threat to the unjust social arrangements that we take for granted and even defend, when necessary, with violence. By his refusal to take up the sword against his adversaries, Jesus showed us that nonviolent, suffering love is the only means capable of healing the creation. This vision of a healed creation is at the heart of our Jewish and Christian hope for the world.

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An Ecology of Devotion

A Personal Exploration of Reverence for Life

by Dennis Rivers

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Somewhere in his essays about the ecological crises of our time, I remember Wendell Berry writing "What we do not love, we will not save." One of the many possible implications that I draw from his statement is that the eco-spiritual life is breath-like: the more we want to reach out to nurture the web of life (and save our own species along the way), the more deeply we will need to journey into our own hearts to connect with love's sustaining energy.

Although Planet Earth needs love the way a person lost in the desert needs water, love cannot be summoned by a simple act of will. Love, in my experience, is not like an object already in our possession, that we could give if we chose to do so. Love seems to me much more like a garden that will eventually bear fruit if cultivated in a spirit of apprenticeship, taking the time to learn about each tree and plant.

In this essay I will explore a five-fold vision of what might be called an ecology of devotion: a way of seeing how our various loves, concerns, gratitudes, adorations and celebrations are all part of a larger organic unity.

These many loves and concerns call to us, often in a chaotic din, urging us forward in many directions, appealing to us at many levels: friends need comfort, a new baby is born, the forests are dying, the dolphins are beaching, millions of landmines wait silently for human or animal footstep. Where and how shall we turn toward life and begin (or continue) the labors of "mending the world," the *Tikkun Olam* of Jewish tradition, which would also constitute the mending of our own broken hearts? As I have experienced the web of life being threatened by the explosive mix of greed, fear and technology, I have been challenged to find inside myself a love stronger than all fears, a deeper reverence for life that could be my compass through the chaos of a world unraveling.

Pilgrim Marion C. Honors

Over the past year, in dialogue with a community of supportive friends called Turn Toward Life, I have been exploring a kind of mental rosary of our various loves and devotions, reverences that span the spectrum from gratitude to care to adoration. Like a garland with five flowers arranged in a circle, this five-fold rosary holds the various loves that struggle to be born in me. Here is how I see them, and how I will discuss them in the pages that follow:

reverence for the life that lives within us,

reverence for the life that unfolds between us,

reverence for the life that surrounds and sustains us,

reverence for all the life of the future,

reverence for the source of all life

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1. Reverence for the life that lives within us.

The closest life for which we can have reverence is the life that lives within us, our breathing, moving seeing, hearing, tasting, hoping, loving, yearning, and reaching; all the direct experiences of being alive, and those moments, often out in nature, when we suddenly feel good about being alive. I remember as a child the thrill, the infinite, bodily well-being, of running down a long beach near my house.

The Universe has labored mightily that we might breathe, and see the light of morning. The calcium, carbon and iron that support these processes were made in the hearts of ancient stars. The caloric energy that lets us run is compressed starlight, the light of the sun conveyed to us from leaf to corn and wheat through countless hands.

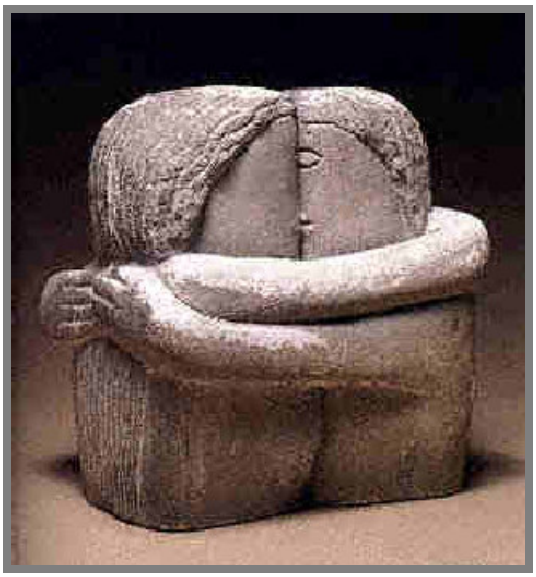
I have never felt more alive in my life than when I have been in love. For most of my life I took these feelings as revelations about the person with whom I was in love. Only in recent years have I begun to realize that these feeling were also saying something to me about my capacity to love, inviting me to get more acquainted with my own heart, with this intense aliveness. How is it that compressed starlight found this way of expressing itself? At times in my life I have complained bitterly to the Universe that love was not more evident in life. At some point the gestalt shifted and I suddenly realized how extraordinary it was that a universe composed mostly of rock and gas could have given birth to any experience of love, anywhere. And even more extraordinary was the fact that I was a carrier of this capacity, however clumsily I might carry it.

Our seemingly mundane existence, looked at from this angle, is a miracle of mind-boggling proportions. However ordinary or unworthy we may feel, we are nonetheless recipients of this galactic grace. Coming to understand how much we have received, beyond any measure of earning (for who could earn sunlight, or a billion years of evolution), sets the stage for us to give something back to life out of the fullness of gratitude, delight and awe. We are the Milky Way with arms and legs, eyes and ears, and hearts yearning to love. What will we create with the creative energy that the Universe has poured into us?

2. Reverence for the life that lives between us

There is a paradox at the heart of human unfolding: We can only love others to the degree that we are capable of loving ourselves. But, on the other hand, we are not born loving ourselves; we develop self-love by internalizing the love of all those who have loved us. As infants, we do not make our own food; neither do we make our own love.

Later in life, having been given the template, we may become bestowers of kindness; having been fed, we will feel the rightness of feeding others; having been nurtured by someone along the way, we will find a way to nurture others.



The Kiss Constantin Brancusi

Like day and night, summer and winter, the nature that lives and breathes through us is full of polarities. I come into the fullness of MY personal being in relation to many YOUs. To cherish life at a deeper level is to accept this web of interwovenness, of land and sea, yes… of lake and forest, yes…but also, of <u>you</u> and <u>me</u>. This fragile human co-arising is as much a part of nature as spiderweb, wildebeeste or waterfall.

The life that emerges between us… The partnership of bodies brings forth new bodies. The partnership of minds, brings forth new minds. Hearts joined in love invite everyone to love more. “Love one another,” Jesus said, “as I have loved you,” not only counseling his followers but also describing the path love travels down the generations, if we let it, because

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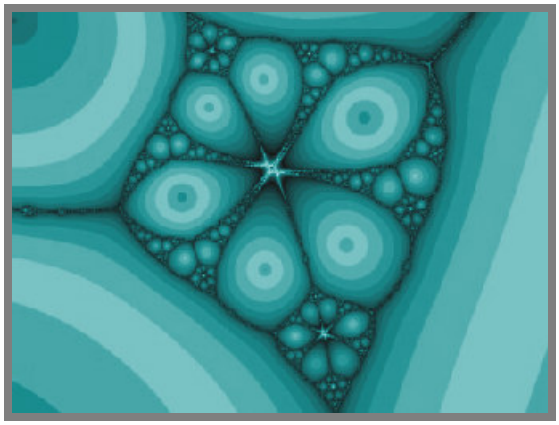
we let it. So also do hatred and oppression travel down the generations.

And how beyond the circle of our human lives, one well might ask, is this related to ecology and reverence for life? In more ways than one would imagine. Perhaps the most dramatic link is that our human conflicts are having catastrophic impacts on other species. Driven by greed and unskilled in sharing, human beings are emptying the sea of fish and emptying the mountains of trees. Elephants in the jungles and forests of Indochina step on landmines just as people do. Our fears of our enemies, and their fears of us, have left the world awash in nuclear waste, which damages the gene-pools of human and animal alike. Ultimately, as Wendell Berry observes, we treat the natural world with the same love or disregard that we bestow on one another:

> *The Earth is all we have in common. We cannot damage it without damaging those with whom we share it. There is an uncanny resemblance between our behavior with each other and our behavior toward the earth. The willingness to exploit one becomes the willingness to exploit the other. It is impossible to care for each other more or differently than we care for the earth.*

To cherish the web of life, to protect life, it is now clear that we must necessarily face the shadow side of our own temperaments and our own cultures, the life that unfolds between us. For it is we humans, moved by various greeds and fears in relation to one another, who make and use these technologies of contamination and death.

The extremity of our predicament -- that we are destroying our own life-support system as we drive many species over the brink of extinction -- draws us toward the life that lives between us, not only as a source of despair, but also as a source of hope. Just as it is true that two together can carry a larger object than either would be able to carry alone, it is also true that in the company of supportive friends we can bear sorrows that are more than one heart can contain. I have become deeply convinced that creating an ecologically sustainable civilization will require creating a web of emotionally sustaining friendships, full of gratitude, listening and celebration. Gandhi would say start with yourself, be the change you want to see. A more intimate way of expressing this might be to say, embody the love, gratitude and compassion you want to promote.



Fractal Mark King

3. Reverence for the life that surrounds and sustains us

This is the dimension of reverence for life that is most familiar to us, having been lived and expressed so beautifully by such eco-advocates as Albert Schweitzer, Rachel Carson, Jane Goodall, John Muir, Matthew Fox, Joanna Macy and Thomas Berry. Along with being great lovers of nature, these guiding lights were and are great students of nature.

A path of devotion in relation to the web of life around us is something more than just having a well of good feelings toward all creatures great and small, although that would be a great place to start. Feelings arise out of understandings. The more we under-stand about the history of each bite of food we take, the more likely we are to be filled with awe and gratitude. The more we know of fruit trees, the more each peach feels like a miracle. But if all of this is true, and the path toward a respectful partnership with the rest of nature is so straightforward, why is the world still falling apart. What is the problem? What follows is one approach to an answer.

Early in the twentieth century, the philosopher Martin Buber introduced what may be one of the most important distinctions in the history of human thought. Buber proposed that human beings do not have a sense of "I" in isolation. Rather, we have a sense of "I" in

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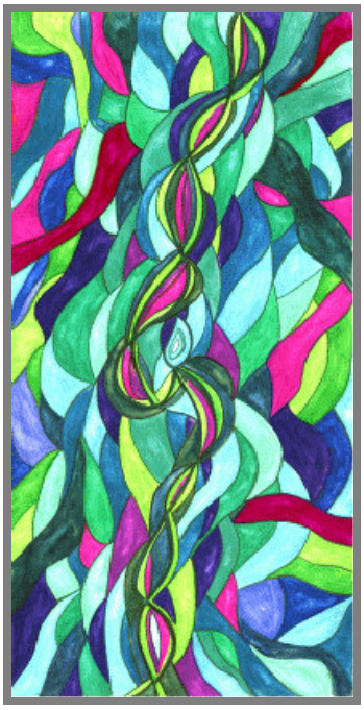
relation to someone or something. When we relate to another person as having experiences, feelings and purposes in the same way we do, we have an "I-Thou" sense of self. We strive to acknowledge the other person as an end in themselves, not merely as a means to the satisfaction of our own needs or desires. When we relate to an object that we experience as having no will, desire or consciousness of its own, we have an "I-It" sense of ourselves in relation to that object. We see the object as material for our use, as is often the case in relation to wood, food, oil, the ground that bears food, and members of ethnic groups other than our own. Buber acknowledged that we could not survive without using at least some of the objects in our world to sustain our lives. But he felt that we become truly human only when we are able to grant humanness to others, are able to feel others as worthy of our care and not just see others as sources of care, food, resources, power, status, etc. A healthy person would shift back and forth as appropriate, not treating a chair as if it were a person, but also not treating a person as if he or she were a chair.

The decades that followed the publication of Buber's book, *I and Thou*, developed the "I-Thou" and "I-It" ideas in two important ways. Within the field of human development, significant thinkers concluded that the ability to value other people as ends in themselves, distinct from oneself and yet worthy of care, was one of the central features of mature human development. And in the field of psychotherapy, there was a related realization that the inability to feel the personhood of others, as a consequence of severely disturbed early relationships, was one of the major character disorders of our era (including the "narcissistic personality"). People suffering from narcissistic personality disorder experience an inflated sense of entitlement in which everyone and everything are reduced to the status of furniture to be used at will. (Think of a mountain with all the trees cut down.)



Life Lila-Hog

I have given this extended introduction to Buber's ideas about the "I-Thou" and "I-It" ways of being a person because they describe the central area of problems for people in societies experiencing runaway industrial-ization. Runaway industrial-ization turns every person, plant and animal on Planet Earth into a heap of inert raw material, into psychologically dead stuff, all the better to plan for how it may all be used for the only source of purpose and value left in the world: profits in capitalist societies, the triumph of the state in totalitarian ones. This is the "I-It" sense of self writ large across the world, leaving behind a trail of clear-cut mountains and flooded lowlands. Capitalism, communism and totalitarianism agree deeply on one thing: living nature is really just dead stuff in motion, therefore we may do with it whatever we please.

The problem with this view is that, from a Buberian perspective, in "deadening" or de-personalizing the world in order to use it for our ends, we have deadened and depersonalized ourselves. We harden ourselves to not feel the pain of whomever and whatever we use, exploit and/or consume. And once having thus hardened, deadened and depersonalized ourselves, no amount of cars and refrigerators and 60-inch television sets can ever make us happy. We may not even feel the ecological cliff toward which we are racing.

In his book, *The Dream of the Earth*, Thomas Berry describes how interwoven our personal development is with the web of life on Planet Earth. To grow up in a world that includes whales and tigers and elephants is to have evoked in oneself a very specific sense of beauty and majesty. When those creatures are gone, that specific sense will be gone, and the personhood of humanity will be radically diminished.

Seeing the no-win nature of the "I-It" path can be a shock, but can also free us to explore more sustainable and fulfilling ways of living. There are two sides to this realization: a warning and a promise. The warning is that whatever we inflict upon the world around us we

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inflict upon ourselves in a variety of ways. The promise, full of transformational possibilities, is also two-fold:

First, the more value, beauty, depth of experience and purpose that we recognize and nurture in the world around us, the more of these we will be able to recognize and nurture in ourselves and in one another.

And the converse is also true:the more value, beauty, depth of experience and purpose that we recognize and nurture in one another, the more of these we will be able to recognize and nurture in the larger web of life around us.

This suggests to me an almost-haiku:

start where you are
the path
is wherever you are standing

4. Reverence for all the life of the future

Like a pregnant woman big with child, the web of life today holds all future generations of life on Earth. Life blossoms forth through an endless spiral of eternal pregnancy, birthgiving, nurturing, coming together (of earth and seed, of egg and sperm) to begin again, and dying away to make way for the new.

Pregnant Woman Sigrid Herr

Into this steady progression of ebbs and flows something new has entered, something that holds both promise and peril. In recent eras of evolution, *evolution itself has begun to evolve,* evolving from adaptation to adaptability, from the perfectly adapted claw to the hand and brain that can learn many new ways of holding many new things, and the evolution of a temperament to love one's offspring and teach them these new ways of holding.

We humans are not alone in this development; we share this evolution toward learning and creativity with many species, especially our primate brothers and sisters, chimpanzees, gorillas and bobonos. And we are far from fully understanding of the intelligence of creatures quite different from us, such as dolphins and bee colonies. But we have gone further on this path of open adaptability, as far as we know, than any other species, and therefore our freedom and capacity to make catastrophic mistakes is much greater than that of any other species. No other creature, for example, leaves behind leaking piles of radioactive waste, slowly destroying the genetic integrity of all life as the radioactive contaminants circulate more and more widely through the biosphere.

Because we alone have developed the power to destroy all life, we alone are challenged to love all creatures intensely enough to want to save them, to love all creatures intensely enough to be willing to restrain our own appetites, to understand our own hatred and greeds. That, I submit to you, is a very intense devotion, a trans-formational gratitude, and, paradoxically, in this era of technological might, that all-embracing love has become the assignment of every human heart. As the cosmologist Brian Swimme has noted, from the point of view of species extinction our present era is the worst time in the last sixty-five million years. Without some deep transformation, it is not clear how life on Earth will continue. If there are going to be living plants and birds and fish and human beings in the future, it will be because we work to protect the seeds of their existence today, and the land and water that will make their lives possible. It will be because we open our hearts to love them now.

5. Reverence for the source of all life

In this exploration of reverence for life, I have deliberately shifted among a family of related words: love, reverence, devotion, gratitude, respect, service, celebration, nurture, protection, adoration. Other times and cultures would add such words as *agape*, *bhakti, karuna* and *caritas*. I used this wide variety of words out of my feeling that reverence for life is larger and more complex than any one word would suggest. I am deeply convinced, for example, that when we reach

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toward the source of all life, we are also reaching toward the ultimate source of love, because love is the core of our aliveness. In a fertile arc of self-referentiality, our capacity to love life is something that life itself is exploring and developing!

As children it is very difficult for us to imagine how we might have come out of our parents' bodies. Later we understand that, but struggle to bring into focus the way our personalities emerged from the matrix of personalities surrounding us when we were young. Eventually, we face the deepest mystery of all: how all of us, the family of life together, are continuously emerging out of the womb of an endlessly pregnant Universe. In the galactic unfolding of life, the life webs and planets that may survive are those who learn to love and nurture the ongoing miracle of their own co-emergence!

Spiral Galaxy Image Courtesy NASA

As our reverence for life deepens, it often deepens to include that something (or someone) larger than us, of which our lives are felt to be a creative and loving expression. The influence of science over the last few centuries has been to rule out such feelings of connectedness to something larger, because the science of that era could only look down the scale of connectedness at what were our "parts" and how those "parts" were hitched together. The emerging science looks both up and down and asks: what larger system enfolds this element (you and me), and how does this element function in relation to that larger system? Parts imply wholes, as your hand implies every bit of the rest of you, raising the extraordinary questions of what *we together* imply and what life implies.

We may never be able to fully grasp the larger system that enfolds us, but we have many hints and many suggestive analogies. Consider the fern in your garden. The tiniest part of a fern leaf bears the shape of the entire fern branch. When we turn to nature, we find that there are many such "fractal" examples, from trees to rivers to blood vessels, in which the very small mirrors the shape and function of the very large. So it is much more thinkable today than it was half a century ago, for us to feel that the noblest impulses in us express a larger nobility that enfolds us.

In my own life my sense of "the larger something of which I am a part" have been deeply influenced by the teaching, affirmed by many faiths using different vocabularies, that "God is love, and whoever dwells in love, dwells in God and God in them" -- a truly fractal mysticism. For me, this teaching of lovingkindness, and the people who have embodied this lovingkindness, complete the spiral ecology of devotion.

In reaching toward the infinite,

I am brought back to my own heart,

to the life that lives within me as love,

to the life reaches toward people and plants and animals as caring,

to the life in us capable of cherishing the presence in the now of all future generations,

to the life in you and me that intuits and celebrates the presence in us of a life and love greater than our own.

Dennis Rivers lives, writes, and teaches in Santa Barbara, California. Dennis is one of the founding participants in Turn Toward Life, an eco-spiritual, anti-nuclear affinity group and community-without-walls dedicated to exploring reverence for life as a spiritual path. A slightly shorter version of this essay appeared in the Summer, 2003, issue of *EarthLight* Magazine and is part of *Turning Toward Life*, a free web book about reverence for life as a spiritual path. available at www.turntowardlife.org. All of Dennis's various books and essays are available free of charge in e-book format at the online library, www.karunabooks.net

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Catholics should be more conscientious about objecting to war

Father Michael Baxter, C.S.C.

Our church challenges us to always think twice before marching to the drums of war, argues Father Michael Baxter, C.S.C. What would you do if the U.S. goes to war against Iraq?

For most of this year, President Bush and his administration have been telling the people of the United States that their safety depends on a "regime change" in Iraq. In the culture of euphemism that pervades our nation's capital, this means that Saddam Hussein will be ousted by military force and replaced by a president who behaves like the head of a client-state should.

Not surprisingly, Bush's what-we-say-goes agenda has run into a few obstacles. Key members of the U.N. Security Council and all but one European ally of the United States strongly oppose it, and several Arab nations whose cooperation has been instrumental to recent U.S. endeavors in the Middle East say they will not cooperate with this one. Half or so of U.S. citizens do not think the circumstances warrant a full-blown military intervention.

One need not harbor any illusions about the pernicious nature of rule by Hussein and his cronies to deplore what the Bush administration is planning to do to Iraq. So even though a U.S. invasion now looks inevitable, we Catholics should do whatever we can to prevent what may prove to be an utterly senseless slaughter of innocent lives.

We should echo the pope's repeated calls for the United States to refrain from aggressive military action (including the U.S.-led embargo) that brings undeserved suffering upon the Iraqi people. We should join with the new Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, in condemning an attack of Iraq as patently unjust. We should use all our lobbying resources to dissuade policymakers from the present course. And we should attend the demonstrations that always emerge at the prospect of going to war.

We should do all of these good things. But in addition, we should do one more thing: We U.S. Catholics should raise a "mighty league of Catholic conscientious objectors."

This slogan was used by Dorothy Day and others involved in the Association of Catholic Conscientious Objectors (ACCO), an organization that supported Catholics who refused to be drafted into the military during World War II for reasons of conscience. As one might expect, their number was not legion: 135 in all. But during the Vietnam war Catholic conscientious objectors numbered well into the thousands, more than any other religious group in the United States.

By this time, Catholic conscientious objectors had received a clear endorsement from the Second Vatican Council, which declared that "laws should make humane provision for the case of conscientious objectors who refuse to carry arms, provided they accept some other form of community service."

This represented a definite development in the modern church's teaching on war and peace. Until then the normative position in the church had been that Christians were duty-bound to defend the innocent against unjust aggression by means of military force, so long as it was applied in accord with the traditional definition of a just war: it must be applied by a competent authority, with a proper intention, as a last resort, for the sake of peace, with a probability of success, and without disproportionate destruction. But now the church affirmed the validity of pacifism as well as just-war theory, thus giving rise to two traditions of Catholic teaching on the morality of war and peace.

From these two traditions are derived two forms of conscientious objection: total conscientious objection (CO)—the refusal to participate in war in any form—and selective conscientious opposition (SCO)—the refusal to participate in particular wars or actions of war judged to be unjust on the basis of just-war theory. In their 1983 peace pastoral, the U.S. bishops gave unequivocal support to both CO and SCO.

This development in Catholic teaching did not arise, as some critics have argued, out of a naive '60s-type idealism that supposes sin and evil can be countered by getting everyone to "make love, not war." On the contrary, the church has come to endorse

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conscientious objection because it stands against sin and evil.

To a large degree this new development in the church's theology of peace is rooted in the hard lessons the church learned as it examined the behavior of Catholics under the Nazi regime. It was not, to say the least, exemplary. Bishops wrote pastoral letters declaring their devotion to the Fatherland and Führer, priests preached homilies calling upon their flocks to do their duty for the nation, and Catholic men, with only a handful of exceptions, went off to fight while their loved ones at home generally fully supported what was obviously an unjust war.

Thus it was in a spirit of repentance that the bishops at the Second Vatican Council wrote that "any action which deliberately violates [just war] principles and any order which commands such actions is criminal, and blind obedience cannot excuse those who carry them out." And it was in a spirit of admiration for the lonesome witness of conscientious objectors like the Austrian Catholic farmer Franz Jägerstätter that they added, "We cannot commend too highly the courage of the men who openly and fearlessly resist those who issue orders of this kind." The experience of Nazi Germany taught the church that conscientious objection is a staunch refusal to acquiesce in sin, a bold resolve not to cooperate with evil.

But the church's teaching on conscientious objection applies to wars waged not only by the Nazi regime, but also by democratic countries such as the United States. For example, even though most moral theologians regard this country's entry into World War II to have been just, they judge the obliteration bombing of German and Japanese cities and the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to have been unjust—the latter described by Pope Paul VI as "a butchery of untold magnitude."

The call for conscientious objection was also valid during the Vietnam War (which in 1971 the U.S. Catholic bishops said had become unjust due to the disproportionate evil it was inflicting), in the Gulf War (which many just-war theorists challenged on the grounds of last resort, proper intention, and proportionality), and in the present "war on terrorism" (on grounds of last resort and reasonable chance of success). And it certainly applies to any use of nuclear weapons on civilian areas.

And yet Catholics flew carpet bombing missions over Germany and Japan in World War II, carried out destructive operations in Vietnam, contributed to the most intensive air attack in history in Iraq, and currently sit in nuclear missile silos ready to turn the launch key on command. Granted, good scholars and soldiers can and do come down on either side of some (though not all) of these issues. But what I find troubling is that conscientious objection to war is not so much as a passing concern to most Catholics.

The problem, I believe, is that when it comes to war, too many Catholics, like so many others, pledge their allegiance to their country, right or wrong. They are obedient to the nation before all else: before the natural law, before divine law, before the words and example of Jesus Christ, before conscience. The problem is, in a word, idolatry. The nation-state has taken the place of God.

This is not an overstatement. According to Pope John Paul II, conscience is nothing less than a witness to God, whose voice and judgment penetrates to the depths of a person's soul. As such, it can never be totally silenced, but it can be muted, garbled, and distorted by sin. Sin is something we cultivate internally with the help of our dissatisfied egos and disordered appetites and loves. But this process also operates externally, as our tendency to sin is reinforced by social, economic, and political forces, including nationalist ideologies.

This is why John Paul II denounces the way in which modern, value-free democracies foster ethical relativism and thus "turn into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism." This is also why he has decried "the tyrant state" for arrogating to itself the right to dispose of society's weakest and most defenseless members, from the unborn to the elderly. The pope's chief concerns here are abortion and euthanasia.

"Abortion and euthanasia," the pope writes in his 1995 encylical Evangelium Vitae, are "crimes which no human law can claim to legitimize. There is no obligation in conscience to obey such laws; instead, there is a grave and clear obligation to oppose them by conscientious objection. From the very beginning of the church, the apostolic teaching reminded Christians of their duty to obey legitimately constituted public authorities (Rom. 13:7; 1 Pet. 2:13-14), but at the same time, it firmly warned that ‘we must obey God rather than men' (Acts 5:29)."

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What we can take from the pope's point is this: as Christians, our readiness to come forth as conscientious objectors is essential, it's a matter of faithfulness to God. But if this applies to the pernicious practices of abortion and euthanasia, it also applies to the pernicious practices of war. Admittedly, the practices of abortion and euthanasia, according to Catholic teaching, are evil in themselves or "intrinsically evil," while when it comes to war, there are two traditions of moral teaching, the pacifist and just war traditions. But I believe the call for conscientious objection is just as urgent, perhaps more so, given the way that the passions of the American people can be so easily manipulated into supporting war.

On this score, we should admit that Catholics have not been much different. In fact, the vast majority of Catholics are neither pacifists nor just-war adherents, rather they follow the "blank check" approach to war, which means they go to war whenever their national leaders tell them to. Like with most Americans, a spell descends upon Catholics once the president gets on TV to announce, interrupted only by the barking applause of a sycophantic Congress, that "we" are going to war. The apostolic witness is strangely inverted: we must obey men and women, rather than God.

Conscientious objection to war should be seen as a way for the church to retain its apostolic witness. But what would this mean concretely? Suppose the Bush administration presses ahead with its plans for a "regime change" in Iraq. And suppose the U.S. Catholic bishops and moral theologians declare that waging war against Iraq at this time would be unjust. For the 375,000 Catholics in the armed services this means that they would be obligated to discern whether they can participate in this war, and if not, to change their duties accordingly. It would also mean that the 1,000 Catholic priests serving as military chaplains would be obligated to exhort these Catholics to examine their consciences in this way and assist some of them in coming forth as selective conscientious objectors.

If half of the Catholics on active duty decided to conscientiously object to participating in this particular war, that would be more than 185,000; even if it were as few as 10 percent, that would still be 37,500. Whether or not this comprises a "mighty league" of conscientious objectors, it would certainly make the papers.

It is not clear that raising a mighty league of conscientious objectors would halt an impending "regime change" in Iraq. But it would send a strong signal to the president, Congress, the Pentagon, and others that there are many Catholics in the United States —tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions—who will obey God rather than them; Catholics whose primary allegiance is to Christ and to the church and not (as Dorothy Day put it) "Holy Mother State"; Catholics whose membership in the Body of Christ forbids them to allow their bodies to be used for unjust purposes and evil ends. Catholics for whom conscience is a witness to the voice of God and who, in following their conscience, themselves become a voice of God, echoing the words of the ancient prophet: "nor shall they train for war" (Isa. 2:4).

Father Michael J. Baxter, C.S.C. teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana and serves as the national secretary for the Catholic Peace Fellowship.

E-mail this article!

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Letter to Youth: A Buddhist Exploration of Conscientious Objection

By Hank Fukui, St. Paul, Minnesota

Hank Fukui wrote the following article specifically for young people in the American Buddhist association, Soka Gakkai International-USA (SGI-USA). However, I believe the article's ideals pertain to a broad range of readers. (M. LaVora Perry)

http://www.fortunechildbooks.com/objector.htm

[*Original title of document: Letter to Youth: Should Conscientious Objection be an Expression of the Sokka Gakki GI-USA's Victory-Over-Violence Initiative? (includes history of the Christian roots of the Conscientious Objector movement)*]

National politicians have started to prepare the reinstatement of the Draft[*1]. The Pentagon placed a notice on its web site asking people to serve as members of local draft boards (they are looking for around 2,000 persons in the US.) Since long-term deployment of national guards and reservists in Iraq has been under severe criticism, politicians need to find an alternative way to supply fresh solders to the occupied nation of Iraq. The Pentagon prefers volunteer forces because operation of modern weaponry requires longer technical training and morale of troops is much higher in a volunteer force. However, we must keep eye on the political situation regarding this issue because current international policy will cause tremendous stress on our military personnel and they will need some alternative solutions to current volunteer military service.

Once congress passes the resolution, the draft machine will be fully up and running within four days according to the Military Selective Service Act. Then, you, our youth division member, must face, conscientiously, the dilemmas of conscription, military training, and service, and decide your responsible course of action. I would like you to consider that there is an alternative way to express your patriotism other than serving in the military as a Buddhist. In fact, the alternative way, that is, conscientious objection to participating in military training and a war, is a noble and meaningful way to serve your country. John F. Kennedy stated that 'War will exist until that distant day when conscientious objectors enjoy the same reputation and prestige that the warrior does today." Kennedy was keenly aware that only way to prevent war is to honor those who courageously stand on his or her conscience and reject state-authorized violence.

Nichiren stated that "Life is the foremost of all treasures. It is expounded that even the treasures of the entire major world system cannot equal the value of one's body and life." (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1125) The reason why life is such an irreplaceable treasure is that the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life dictates that every being in this universe possesses the Buddha Nature within the depth of her or his self. Nichiren further proclaimed that "The precept against the killing of living beings is the first among all the various precepts. The five precepts begin with the precept against taking life, and the eight precepts, the ten precepts, the two hundred and fifty precepts, the five hundred precepts, the ten major precepts of the Brahma Net Sutra, the ten inexhaustible precepts of the Flower Garland Sutra, and the ten precepts of the Jeweled Necklace Sutra, all begin with the precept against killing." (ibid, p. 1019) As a Nichiren Buddhism practitioner, it is overwhelmingly clear to me that we cannot participate in any form of war.

A Conscientious Objector (CO) is a person who, on the grounds of conscience, resists the authority of the state to compel military service. There are three types of COs, 1) Total COs opposed to war in general; 2) Non-combatant COs oppose to war, but in conscience could serve as a non-combatant; 3) Selective COs opposed to a specific war because, in conscience, they understand that specific war to be unjust; 4) War tax objectors refuse to pay defense appropriation portion of Federal Tax. The last two forms of conscientious objection are not recognized in US law. Those COs who reject service even in non-military sections, because these services essentially support war, are some times called absolute objectors and this form of objection is also illegal in the US.

CO movements were initiated by Christians. Originally, they were pacifists, and were therefore, conscientious objectors until the theory of the 'Just War[*2]' was developed by St. Augustine in the 4th Century and later by theologians such as St. Thomas

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Aquinas and Francis Suarez. The roots of the historic peace churches began during the Reformation, where Christians were renewing a voluntary faith (as opposed to state-sponsored religion) that included nonparticipation in warfare. Primary among them were the Anabaptists dating from 1525 in Switzerland, the Netherlands Mennonites in 1536, the Amish began in the late 1600s, and the Quakers (Society of Friends) in the mid-17th century. In the beginning of the 20th Century, Jehovah's Witness also objected to participating in wars, not as COs but based on the teaching that all the members of their church are ministers.

In the United States, the history of CO starts with the Revolutionary War. Quakers, Mennonites, and Dunkards would not take the oath of loyalty during the war period. Further, many of Quakers refused to pay taxes, asserting that they support war efforts. During Civil War, the entire administration of the conscription was managed by the US Congress. Those who could find a substitute or pay were exempted in both the Union and Confederate armies. Many COs rejected those conditions. This was the first time, records show, that COs were tortured and imprisoned. During WWI, people who claimed CO status expanded. In addition to the traditional peace church members, such people as political objectors became COs. All COs were sent to Army Camps, prisons, and mental hospitals. Records show that 3,989 men declared themselves to be COs.

During WWII, 72,354 men declared CO status. Many of them served in non-combatant service and Civilian Public Service (CPS), yet 6,086 men went to prison for refusing to cooperate with the Selective Service. 12,000 men served in over 150 CPS camps operated by historic peace churches and the government. Their service included such fields as conservation, forestry, agriculture, firefighter, public health, and surveyor. Those COs provided service without pay. Some of them further volunteered to be subjected to medical experiments. Perhaps, the most notable contribution of COs during this period are those who served in mental hospitals. Many of them noticed inhuman treatment of patients in those hospitals, and they initiated reform movements for the mentally ill.

In 1952, During the Korean War, CPS was transformed into the I-W programs. More than 10,000 COs served in 1,200 institutions and agencies between 1952 to 1955. They worked on experimental farms, did relief and welfare work in Europe, and worked in the fields of education, health service, and social service. Over 170,000 men received CO deferments and 300,000 applicants were denied deferments during the Vietnam Conflict. Noticeably, nearly 600,000 illegally evaded the draft. In the most recent war, The Gulf War, at least 2,500 had sought CO discharges. Of those, at least 42 marines were sentenced to terms of six to 36 months in prison.

Nichiren declared his freedom of spirit over political power saying, "Even if it seems that, because I was born in the ruler's domain, I follow him in my action, I will never follow him in my heart" (ibid, p. 579); "If you quail before the threats of the ruler of this little island country [and abandon your faith], how will you face the even more terrible anger of Yama, the load of hell?" (ibid, p. 765). Nichiren's declaration of freedom of thought and conscientious led to his acts of civil disobedience; that is by remonstrating the Kamakua Shogunate government three times for the sake of establishing true security in the nation in spite of endangering his life.

Though attempts were made to question first and second Soka Gakkai presidents Makiguchi's and Toda's anti-militarism stance,[*3] evidence clearly indicates that their acts during the Pacific War were that of rejecting to accept the spiritual grounds of the Japanese militarism and imperialistic expansionism.[*4] Therefore, the mentor (Makiguchi) and his disciple (Toda) were following our founder's (Nichiren's) footsteps of civil disobedience by insisting upon the independence of individual conscience and freedom of religion from the State. Their acts strongly echo with the ideals of civil disobedience in the West and other parts of the world; which were developed by individuals such as Hobbs, Rousseau, Tolstoy, Thoreau, Gandhi and King who realized that a ruler's powers are derived from the voluntary obedience of subjects.

The legal bases for CO are consistent with the independent spirit of Nichiren; that is, the right for life and freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. Currently, there are two levels of legal bases for CO

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in the U.S.; one on international law and the other on the US statutory rights. The High Commission for Human Rights of the United Nations bases its support for CO on Articles 3 and 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[*5], Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights[*6], and Article 12 of the American Convention on Human Rights[*7]. The United States is the signatory of and has ratified all of the above. In the US Military Selective Service Act, Section 456. Deferments and Exemptions for Training and Service states:

[Conscientious Objectors] Nothing contained in the title (sections 451 to 471a of this Appendix) shall be construed to require any person to be subjected to combatant training and service in the armed forces of the United States who, by reason of religious training and belief, is conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form. As used in this subsection, the term "religious training and belief" does not include essentially political, sociological, or philosophical views, or a merely personal moral code.

Two Supreme Court cases greatly expanded the "religious training and belief" clause. The first was United States v. Seeger, 380 U.S. 163 (1965) which allows CO status to those who do not believe in a Supreme Being; thus, the agonistic and atheist can claim exemption. The second was Welsh v. United States, 398 U.S. 333 (1970) which allows any individual to object to military service on ethical and moral grounds, if such convictions "are deeply felt." Prior to these court decisions, CO status was not available to Buddhists who do not believe in a Supreme Being. These more recent decisions, however, allow Buddhism to serve as the foundation for the CO claimant.

Let's look at international situations regarding CO. In Germany, conscientious objection is completely legal. There were 34,014 agencies and institutions providing 167,000 positions for COs in 1995. Twenty percent of German youth who are eligible for conscription select alternative services based on CO every year. A total of 786,958 people declared CO status from 1984 to 1995. COs services are so essential to their social service system that a reduction in CO numbers would cause a tremendous problem in German society. They are much closer to the society that J. F. Kennedy envisioned.

Pictures are not always bright internationally; there are many countries that do not recognize legal rights of COs yet (Only 47 countries legally granted CO status in 1998.) However, in those countries, individuals who believe in the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion are insisting on having their rights. For example, in South Korea, the first CO based on Buddhist belief has been in Jail since 2001. His name is Mr. Oh Tae Yang, a Buddhist and pacifist who rejected service in the South Korean Military based on his conscience. South Korean Military Service law which was enacted in August 1949 states that all men ages 18 to 40 who are not physically handicapped are subject to the draft. They usually serve two to three years depending on the branch of the military. Since the law does not recognize CO status, there are currently 1,600 COs in Jail. Not only are they imprisoned for two to three years, but the stigma follows them when they are released from prison; their conscientious acts will be a black mark for them in society throughout their life. As fellow Buddhists, I strongly believe that the SGI-USA youth must raise a voice for solidarity and act to support for Mr. Oh and others who are fighting for their freedom in different countries.

Christian contributions to the conscientious objection movement and protecting freedom of thought, conscience, and religion are remarkable. Discovery of the individual through the Reformation necessitated that they focus on the internal spiritual life and this focus created a set of values. Ones life, then, became the vehicle to express these values. When their way of living came into conflict with the power of the state, the only option was to refute that power. Though exceptional Buddhist leaders, such as King Asyoka, Makiguchi, the Dali Lama, and Thich Nhat Hanh appear throughout history to articulate Buddhist pacifism, the relationship between individual practice and state power has not been fully comprehended and accepted in our tradition as it has in historic peace Churches. A well known historic fact is that many Buddhist schools in Japan enthusiastically supported, and in some cases, actively promoted the imperial expansionism and invasion of Asia. Nichirenism, an ultra-nationalistic movement of Nichiren Buddhism in Japan, was the philosophical backbone for such key persons as Chigaku Tanaka, Kanji Ishihara, Nissho Inoue, and Ikki Kita. These were the leaders for the movement giving rise to

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totalitarianism and militarism in early 20th Century Japan.

What does peace and non-violence means to individual practitioners of Nichiren Buddhism? What can we learn from historic peace churches in the West and the conscientious objection movement in large? My mentor in life, Ikeda, has repeatedly stressed that we must make the state authority relative to individual life as the way to abolish atomic weapons and war. He stated that Nichiren's teachings serve as the foundation for this action. If his statements are true, is it feasible for practitioners of Nichiren Buddhism to participate in war efforts? Each of you young members of the SGI-USA must answer these questions. I sincerely hope that this essay will be a catalyst to your thinking on this subject.

For further information regarding CO, please see following sites:

http://www.objector.org/publications.html

http://www.witherspoonsociety.org/military_service_&_c_o_s.htm

http://www.thesaurus-dictionary.com/files/o/b/j/objector.html

http://www.nisbco.org/

http://webarchive.afsc.org/youthmil/choices/dep.htm

http://www.nonviolence.org/issues/conscience.php

To request truthful information about the possibility of a draft visit:

http://petition.democracyforamerica.com/page/p/nodraft

Notes:

[*1] A) US Senators McCain (R-AZ) and Lieberman (D-CT) have launched a bipartisan effort to use public service volunteers as homeland security; B) US Rep. Nick Smith (R-MI) and Rep. Curt Weldon (R-PA) have introduced H.R. 3598, a bill to institute universal military service for males of age 18-22; C) US Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-SC) and US Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY) have introduced the universal draft bill to the both houses.

[*2] Some "Just war" guidelines include: 1. Force can only be used as a last resort; 2. The war must have as its goal the return to wholeness, health, and peace; 3. Force must be used against solders only – the lives of civilians must be protected; 4. The use of force must be applied with sadness of heart, not vengeful spirit.

[*3] For example: Victoria, B. D. 2001. Engaged Buddhism: A Skeleton in the Closet? Journal of Global Buddhism. 2:72-91.

[*4] For example: Bethel, D. M. 2003. Two Views of Tunesaburo Makiguchi's Attitude Toward Japanese Militarism and Education. The Journal of Oriental Studies. 13: 204-211.

Kumagai, K. 2000. Value-Creating Pedagogy and Japanese Education in the Modern Era.

The Journal of Oriental Studies. 10 (Special): 29-45.

Miyata, K. 2000. Tunesaburo Makiguchi's Theory of the State. The Journal of Oriental Studies. 10 (Special): 10-19.

_____. 2002. Critical Comments on Brian Victora's "Engaged Buddhism: A Skeleton in the Closet?" Journal of Global Buddhism. 3:79-85.

Sato, H. 2000. Nichiren Thought in Modern Japan: Two Perspectives. The Journal of Oriental Studies. 10 (Special):46-61.

[*5] Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states:

> Article 3 – Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
>
> Article 18 - Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice worship and observance.

[*6] The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which states:
Article 18

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1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief his choice.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

4. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own conviction.

[*7] American Convention on Human Rights states:

Article 12. Freedom of Conscience and Religion

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience and of religion. This right includes freedom to maintain or to change one's religion or beliefs, and freedom to profess or disseminate one's religion or beliefs, either individually or together with others, in public or in private.

2. No one shall be subject to restrictions that might impair his freedom to maintain or to change his religion or beliefs.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion and beliefs may be subject only to the limitations prescribed by law that are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals, or the rights or freedoms of others.

4. Parents or guardians, as the case may be, have the right to provide for the religious and moral education of their children or wards that is in accord with their own convictions.

About the Author:

Hank Fukui says, "I have never been in the military, although I am an associate member of Veterans for Peace. I have been practicing Nichiren Buddhism since 1965 (I am 50 years old). I have Ph. D. in Biology (Evolutionary Genetics), but now own a small business in St. Paul. All of my family members are Buddhists—my wife, daughter and son."

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Conscientious Objection and the African-American Experience: An Interview with Michael Simmons

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Objector: One problem with most historical accounts of the anti-war movement, or the peace movement as a whole, is that in most accounts, the contributions, or even the very presence of black people is virtually omitted or overlooked. What is your impression of this?

Simmons: There's a sense, particularly in the progressive movement, that African Americans just deal with domestic issues, and historically that's absolutely false. Even if you go back to World War I

or World War II, African Americans have challenged wars and U.S. foreign policy. While it is true that at the beginning, and first half of the century, a lot of our people viewed going into the military as a down payment on freedom, that if we fought, then folks would treat us better. So that created a lot of ambivalence in the African-American community, but by-and-large, and particularly in World War I, African Americans were not in support of these wars.

During World War II, due to Hitler's racism there was clearly more support (for the war), but even with that, a lot of African Americans had a lot of trouble with the whole Japanese issue. There are people, who to this very day, including me, who do not think that they would have dropped an atom bomb on Germany as they did in Japan. But going back to the war in Vietnam, in particular, people should know that Malcolm X demonstrated against the war in Vietnam in 1960 in Harlem. People should know that throughout the civil rights movement in the south, groups like SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) had opposing the war as their agenda. That was a plank in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, for example, as well as a lot of SNCC projects.

Acknowledging the Essential Links

The problem with African Americans challenging U.S. foreign policy has always been that whites in this society, including white progressives have always challenged us in the sense that we should not link those issues (civil rights and peace). So that when SNCC, which had among its leadership Stokley Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, and which I was a part of, formally came out against the war, our funding base just went down, and people were very critical of us. But what is significant about the statement by SNCC against the war, if you read it, is that unlike Students for a Democratic Society, or those of many other white progressive groups, the SNCC statement was also a critique of U.S. foreign policy. It criticized not only the war in Vietnam, but it criticized the policies on South Africa, the policies in Latin America, so it went way beyond just the war.

Regarding draft resistance there was another mythology about this being just a "white" issue. First of all, just keep in mind that the people who fought the war in Vietnam were by-and-large poor people of color, as well as white working class people. The high school I went to (Thomas Edison HS in Philadelphia), was, at the time I graduated in 1963, about 60% Black and 40% White. Edison had the highest per capita casualty rate of any HS in the country, in terms of the war in Vietnam, and Thomas Edison HS was made up of all very working-class people. But the thing about opposing the war, is that if you look at the draft resistance, be it Black or White, there were very few people who actually went to jail. For the most part, people found other ways out. The first thing that a lot of African-Americans did was just not register at all. That was the first way that people opposed the war.

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The other dimension is that because the draft counseling aspect of the war in Vietnam came to the Black community late, a lot of people went into the military because they didn't know that they had any other options. But I would argue that the untold story about the opposition to the war in Vietnam is the role of Black troops who were in the military. Because I would argue, and things are beginning to come out, that a lot of the discontent that occurred within the military, had a profound impact, just as profound if not more profound, than the anti-war movement as it's characterized. Even if you look at the anti-war movement, the white progressives who marched, look at who organized it. For example one of the largest demonstrations, the mobilization in 1965, was organized by James Luther Bevell of the Southern Christian leadership Conference (SCLC), as well as a number of SNCC organizers.

Frankly, if they hadn't started drafting white middle-class kids for the war in Vietnam, I'm not so sure how large the anti-war movement would have been. Even in terms of the Gulf War in 1991, a lot of us organized African-American opposition to the war, but the white campuses, by-and-large, were not on fire. Nevertheless, it is not to put white people down that I raise these issues, it is more to elevate the significance of the African-American community. There's a brother who teaches at Tufts University, named Gerald Gill, who wrote his Ph.D. dissertation on African American opposition to U.S. wars in the 20th century. Invariably what is found is that African-Americans see going into the military as either an employment opportunity, a travel opportunity, and educational opportunity, or something they can't avoid and they don't want to go to jail. But in terms of the military having people with politics, I would argue that the most political people in the military continue to be African-Americans, and that is the group that the military is always the most concerned about.

One Man's Journey

My story is, one, that because of the Civil Rights Movement, and because of the influences of people like Malcolm X, along with some things that were happening in Philadelphia in the early 1960s, I had made up my mind in high school that I didn't want to go into the military even if there hadn't been a war, and clearly I wasn't going to fight anybody. But my intent was to try to avoid the military and jail, because I didn't want to go to jail either. When I got out of high school, I did register for the draft, because I didn't know any better, and then I started college. During my days in college there was no problem, but I went to college for two years and then I dropped out and went down south and joined the Civil Rights Movement. That's when I started being hassled by the government in terms of reporting [to the draft board] to take my physical, and the other stuff that I was supposed to do.

It was at that point that I started playing games with the draft board. For example, I used to write these very long letters on Black History, and right in the middle of one of these 12 page letters, I would mention a change of address. Unfortunately, the person who was handling my case was rather astute, so that didn't work. The draft board would schedule me (to report), and because I was in the Civil Rights Movement, I could arrange to be in jail, or in another town at the time that they scheduled me to report. This went on for a long time, until finally, they sent me a letter that basically scared me into going in and taking the physical, the other tests, and I was classified as 1-A. At that point, most of the people around me in the civil rights movement were around draft-age, so we were all facing the draft. I started organizing demonstrations at the draft board in Atlanta, and the people at the draft board got accustomed to seeing me down there demonstrating.

On the day of my induction they wouldn't allow me in the building, and because of an altercation between us and the cops, myself and 11 other people wound up going to jail on the day of my induction. We spent two months in jail for disturbing the peace, disorderly conduct, etc. Two of the men who were charged with me were also charged with insurrection, which at the time, carried a death sentence, which shows you how outrageous this was. While spending two months in jail, my SNCC comrades, the women, started protesting in front of the draft board every day in black, and that became an international issue because people were talking about the fact that African-Americans were opposing the war, and this became a big deal.

I got out of jail after two months, but about 6-7 months later, I was indicted for refusing to report for

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induction, even though I had reported, and couldn't get into the building. They tried me for refusing to report for induction, they claimed that we had damaged a door, so they charged us with damaging federal property, then they claimed that we physically tried to keep another guy from going into the induction center so they charged some of us with impeding the draft. I was convicted of refusing induction, a couple of brothers were also convicted of impeding the draft, and we were all convicted of damaging federal property. A couple of brothers left the country as opposed to doing the time. I managed to stay out (of jail) for about two years on appeal, and then finally, I lost all my appeals, and I wound up doing 2 1/2 years. I might add, that back in those days, the average draft case only did 1 1/2 years. There's no question, that because I was African-American, my sentence was stiffer.

Objector: During this time, what sort of reaction did you receive from CCCO, or other "traditional" peace organizations?

Simmons: It was negative, man. Back in those days, I went to CCCO, and talked to a guy, one of the founders of CCCO. I told them that I was a conscientious objector, and they told me that I wasn't. They refused to help me, the Friends Peace Committee, the whole Quaker community, there was no white group that helped me. In fact it was the civil rights movement that became a support mechanism for me. My lawyers, I had very good lawyers, helped me a great deal, the courts were just so stacked against us. In those days, it was very, very hard for a non-Quaker, a Black person who was not a Quaker or a Mennonite to get help. Because my opposition to the war was not a theological opposition, it was a political opposition.

Back in those days they were very hostile toward African-Americans, and really poor people in general. I just shouldn't say African-Americans, because I'm sure that if a white, working-class kid from Kensington would have gone to them, they probably would have done the same thing. I mean, they saw conscientious objection as this precious little group of narrow, upper-middle-class strata, and then they saw people like me as riff-raff, who would dilute conscientious objection. In fact, the opposition to the war in Vietnam clearly changed, and widened the definition of conscientious objection. The kind of work that you, Alex Doty, and people like Harold Jordan of AFSC, are doing today, is rooted in the war in Vietnam. For example , the fact that theology is not the only thing that people have , the fact that you all are willing to help people who are already in the military, those things truly came out of struggle. I should say that, among the Quakers, the people who were the fore-runners of Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS), provided a lot of support for my family while I was in prison. They were able to find some funds for my wife and daughter, which helped to ease the situation. But by then, things were beginning to change, because the civil rights movement was really challenging the white peace community around those kinds of issues.

Objector: What would you say to young people today who are confronted daily with the military's sales pitch?

Simmons: I acknowledge that given the options that a lot of young people see, I can understand why they choose the military. And I understand that in the same way that these days there are companies that the prison authorities will let people work for that if you were free, that company would never hire you. To that degree, I know that there are so-called opportunities in the military for young African-Americans, Hispanics, as well as others who don't have access to resources for education. The thing that people need to understand is that the way they sell the military, they sell it not as a military apparatus, but as a post-high school training program, a post-high school travel program, and I think that if young people would look at the information regarding bad discharges, if they would look at the problems of racism in the military, and the reality of them getting stuck in places like Bosnia, Somalia, or Haiti, or Iraq, that they'd realize that the military is first, and foremost, a military.

Just from being around CCCO, as well as being around the work of AFSC, and others, the amount of bad discharges, and its racial component, is just amazing to me. So to that degree, I just think that young people need to realize that having a bad discharge on your record, just puts you further down the totem pole, when you try to step up your life. I think that the problem, that people like you, me, and others face, is that it's very hard to find alternatives for

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these kids, in terms of employment, job training, or education. I think that part and parcel of this kind of work, in the long run, should be trying to organize around those kinds of issues. The hard part about doing this kind of work, I think, is trying not to just help individuals, but trying to create a political movement that says, "Why do poor people have to go into the military for a college education, or for a job?"

The other thing that you'll find, is that a lot of skills that people learn in the military are not transferable out here. The thing that has shocked me is just how little respect private industry has for the training that people get in the military. I know guys who have worked on jet planes (in the military) for example, and have had very technical kinds of jobs, but then they come out, and employers don't want to hire them because the military isn't very respected in terms of training, by civilian employers. This is definitely something else that young people need to think about with regard to the military.

The thing that hit me personally is now that I see these movies, be it Dead Presidents, or any of these other Vietnam movies, I know that there was no way that I would have done those things. While I may not call myself a pacifist, I am clearly non-violent. The thought of, for example, just killing you because somebody said that you're a bad guy, or over this nonsense with Iraq right now, is just ludicrous. I couldn't have done that. The other thing, is the fact that the people who have been through that, now have to beg for treatment. My brother, who was two years older than me and was in Vietnam, died of Agent Orange at a V.A. hospital. I, personally, spent eight months with him at the V.A. hospital while he was dying. He was dying of Agent Orange, but it looked like he was dying of AIDS. Dying of Agent Orange is just like dying of AIDS. There is also a great deal of psychological trauma of people, like when I was in prison, I was always amazed at how many vets were in jail. People need to understand that they just use up these guys, and throw them out. Now today we're trying to deal with Gulf War Syndrome, and people shouldn't have to hire lawyers and go to court about this stuff.

Objector: What responsibility do white organizers who are doing counter-military work, and their organizations, have to communities of color, and how can they be supportive of the work that organizers of color are doing?

Simmons: First of all, for a white person to go into a black community where the unemployment rate is high, where the schools are bad, and it's hard for students to get sufficient scores on the SATs that enable them to get into college, it's hard for a black person in this situation to even hear it coming from a white person. So clearly, these groups have to be willing to hire people of color to go into those communities.

The second thing, is that when I was doing this work more actively, the first thing that I did was, I acknowledged the entire issue. I mean everybody knows, at least somebody who got their home on a V.A. loan, or went to college on the GI Bill. So you can't just go into the community totally castigating. You have to acknowledge what people already know, and you have to give people, particularly young people enough information to counter the military propaganda, while acknowledging that, "Yeah, some folks do have a positive experience in the military."

Thirdly, if you look at voting patterns in this country, historically, black folks don't vote for huge defense budgets, don't support U.S. intervention into other peoples' countries. So that if you look at the African-American community, we historically are the most peaceful community in terms of our expressions of outrage. The last thing we talk about is, that the U.S. should go and bomb somebody, or murder somebody. So we start with that formulation, the fact that by-and-large, we don't go into the military out of patriotism, with aspirations of saving America, or fighting for our country. We go in as an employment, educational, or last hope kind of opportunity. I just think that when we go to challenge young people, that that's the basis that we challenge them on.

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Jewish Perspectives on Conscientious Objection -- Part 1

WHAT DO *YOU* SAY?
From the Jewish Peace Fellowship

In a non-dogmatic tradition such as Judaism, there is much room for individual intuition and understanding. Within the Jewish community, even if you do not have much Jewish education or do not regularly attend synagogue services or do not observe Jewish dietary laws, you can still be classified as a CO if the beliefs you hold prevent you from participating in war. While this booklet cannot tell you what to believe, it is possible, however, to share some of the teachings of the Jewish tradition which provide the basis for many of those Jews who have been COs. For while Judaism is not in any absolute sense a "pacifist" tradition, some of its basic teachings, when applied to modern warfare, raise grave doubts about the permissibility of participation in war today.

You may also find it helpful to talk with your rabbi, or some other counselor or teacher of religion who you respect, or someone to whom the JPF may be able to refer you to.

WHAT DOES THE TRADITION SAY?
In the Biblical period Judaism regarded peace as the most divine fulfillment of God's will.

"It shall come to pass in days to come . . .that they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. . . . There will be no harm or destruction in all My holy mountain; for the land shall be full of knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

Isaiah 2:2,4, 11:9

This attitude, so basic to Judaism, was strikingly reaffirmed in the classical rabbinic period.

"Great is peace, for all blessing are contained in it. . . Great is peace, for God's name is peace. . . . It is written, 'Seek peace and pursue it.' (Psalm 34.15). The Law does not command you to run after or pursue the other commandments, but only to fulfill them upon the appropriate occasion. But peace you must seek in your own place and pursue it even to another place as well."

Leviticus Rabbah, Tzav IX, 9
Numbers Rabbah, Hukkat, XIX, 27

But the tradition contains more than general statements of ideals. It was very specific about what it understood to be the application of these ideals to daily life with all its conflicts. Thus for example, Judaism regards the sanctity of life as a paramount value and expressly prohibits murder or the shedding of blood.

In every other law of the Torah, if a man is commanded, 'Transgress and suffer not death,' he may transgress and not suffer death, excepting idolatry, incest and shedding blood. . . . Murder may not be practiced to save one's life. . . . Even as one who came before Raba and said to him, 'The governor of my town has ordered me, "Go, and kill so and so; if not, I will slay thee",' Raba answered him 'Let him rather slay you than that you should commit murder; who knows that your blood is redder? Perhaps his blood is redder.

—Talmud (Sanhedrin 74a)

Nor should one think that Judaism, while insisting on the scrupulous limitations of violence in individual cases, was willing to forget such scruples in the case of war itself. Even when war was fought for the most legitimate reasons, Judaism recognizes that killing is an offense before God. For example, in the Biblical era a sin offering was made by all soldiers.

The tradition is also specific in declaring certain strategies impermissible, no matter what ends are being sought:

When siege is laid to a city for the purpose of capture, it may not be surrounded on all four sides but only on three in order to give an opportunity for escape to those who would flee to save their lives.

Maimonides Code
"Treatise on Kings and Wars,"
Chapter VII, Law 7.

This strict limitation of violence, (no matter how just the cause may be), is one of the most basic of all

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Jewish ethical teachings. With the power of modern weapons, the impersonality of long-range warfare (do we really know whom we are killing?), and the complexity of issues being fought about, can you imagine that a Jewish tradition so scrupulous about shedding innocent blood and so scrupulous about limiting destruction could possibly sanction war today, whether nuclear or "conventional"?

BUT WHAT ABOUT DEFENSE?

On first consideration, such a rejection of war may seem irresponsible. For after all, haven't we certain responsibilities to others and to ourselves? Are we simply to remain passive before tyranny and injustice? Shall we not defend human values when they are threatened?

Such questions are reasonable and the conscientious objector has no easy answers. (Neither has the military, it should be noted. For is it not perfectly clear that proposed military solutions to these problems are increasingly irrelevant and dangerous?) But even here the tradition has something to suggest which we, in our age, may be able to understand and apply with new insight. We know something of what Gandhi achieved in India by nonviolent means and what Martin Luther King Jr. accomplished in this country by dedicated nonviolence. We also have impressive records of Danish nonviolent resistance to the Nazis on behalf of Danish Jews. In the village of Le Chambon in France during World War II, French Protestant pacifists protected Jews from the Nazis. Nonviolent resistance overthrew apartheid in South African and brought democracy to the Philippines. And we have witnessed the extraordinary nonviolent protests of Soviet Jews against oppression and anti-Semitism. In the light of these and many other examples, the words of Isaiah may point to a better way to solve the world's problems:

For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In turning and stillness shall you be saved, in tranquility and trust shall be your strength. . ."

Isaiah 30; 15

When we consider what Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai accomplished nonviolently in the face of Roman military might, or when we read in Josephus the stirring report of the successful nonviolent resistance to the Emperor Caligula by our people, we realize that modern experiments with nonviolence have an important place in Jewish tradition..

Though far from fully understood or developed, such nonviolent techniques seem to offer more genuine hope for the future than any means currently available for defending human values. The pacifist position, then, which compels us to intensify this search for effective nonviolent alternatives, asserts that at this crucial period in human history, to say "no" to war is to say "yes" to a slowly developing but vital mode of human struggle, and that in fact the apparently irresponsible negation of military service may be the most deeply responsible affirmation of all that we would truly fight for.

The Jewish Conscientious Objector is supported by the following authoritative groups:

"We recognize the right of the conscientious objector to claim exemption from military service in any war in which he cannot give his moral assent, and we pledge ourselves to support him in his determination to refrain from any participation in it."

Rabbinical Assembly of America

"Conscientious objection to military service is in accordance with the highest interpretation of Judaism."

Central Conference of America Rabbis

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Jewish Perspectives on Conscientious Objection -- Part 2

The Jewish Pursuit of Peace
By Rabbi Philip Bentley

Jewish tradition teaches that human being were created in the Divine Image. As the basis for ethical teachings this is a radical concept. It means that every human being who ever lived or ever will live is made in the Divine Image. The worst villain imaginable as well as the saintliest person is sacred. Jewish ethics are based on respect for the dignity and integrity of every person. Violence against a fellow human being is therefore a terrible thing.

In the Talmud (Pirkei Avot 1:12) we learn that Hillel taught, "Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing it, loving your fellow creatures, and drawing them near to the Torah." Once Hillel saw a skull floating on the surface of water and he said to it, "Because you drowned others, they drowned you; and ultimately those who drowned you will themselves be drowned." (Pirkei Avot 2:7) The cycle of violence is futile. Instead, peace must be sought.

The Hebrew word for peace, Shalom, is well known. What is not so well known is that the root of this word is not quietness or lack of hostility but completion or perfection. The word suggests that the way to a perfect world must be peaceful and therefore nonviolent. Of the pursuit of peace, the Rabbis taught (B'midbar Rabbah Hukkat 19; 27) that for all other Mitzvot (commandments), we are to "Seek peace and pursue it," (Palms 34; 15). The Talmud teaches (Gittin 59b) that the entire Torah was given for the safe of pursuing peace, as it is written, "and all her paths are peace," (Proverbs 3; 18).

Some argue inaccurately that the Torah teaches "an eye for an eye." This principle was never intended as a license for vengeance or corporal punishment but rather as the basis for lawsuits. Some have suggested that the Talmud tells us that if someone comes after you intending to kill you, turn and kill the pursuer. Those who believe this fail to note the way the Talmud strictly limits this to a kill or be killed situation in the most immediate sense. Even the Israeli military has a tradition of tohar ha-neshekh (purity of arms) that demands that deadly force be used only to preserve life. In short, Jewish tradition does not exalt military might or regard warriors as role models.

Not only our spiritual and ethical traditions but also our historical experience tell us that we should pursue our aims through nonviolent means. We have survived exile and oppression but have not only survived but have continued to flourish. We have done this almost always without resorting to violence. We know the evil of violence and the power of nonviolent action. As Rabbi Arthur Waskow wrote, "One can see practically the entire history of Rabbinic Judaism as a nonviolent effort to persist as a decent community in the face of hostility and oppression."

The earliest known instance of nonviolent resistance is recorded in the Torah (Exodus 1; 15 - 21). When Pharaoh sought to kill all of the male children of the Israelites he ordered Shifra and Puah, the midwives who served that community, to kill newborn boys. The midwives, fearing God, refused and made excuses. Pharaoh was forced to let them go and order his people to commit these murders in the open. This first nonviolent resistance took place under the absolute Egyptian monarchy and was successful. From that time to this there are many instances of such actions. In our own day the Soviet Jewry movement in the Soviet Union was entirely nonviolent and was crowned with success. In Israel the work of hundreds of nonviolent projects of action, dialogue, and education over the past half century is proving that the way to end the conflict between the Israeli and Palestinian people is not military victory but reconciliation.

The Jewish Peace Fellowship sees Judaism as a nonviolent search for justice and peace. We seek to do this not only for our own people but also for the entire human family.

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Jewish Perspectives on Conscientious Objection -- Part 3

Judaism and War
by Rabbi Michael Robinson

The Bible, the Talmud and contemporary Judaism are not monolithic on any topic. In the Bible we read about a feisty people fighting its way through the wilderness and into the Promised Land. According to Biblical theology, when they were unfaithful to God they lost in battle, when faithful, they won.

But we also read how Father Abraham settles a dispute between his shepherds and his nephew Lot by simply telling them: you go to the right and we will go to the left. (Genesis 13:1-12) For Abraham, the best land and the best water were not worth fighting over. The critical issue was to live side by side in peace. The tradition Abraham established continues in the Bible and develops among the Prophets. Then, too, according to the Book of Chronicles, King David was not allowed to build the Temple because the blood of others was on his hands. (1 Chronicles 22:7-10).

The laws of Deuteronomy on warfare demanded that when war was made on a city the trees of the city could not be destroyed. (Deut 20:19-20). From this the rabbis of the Talmud extended the principle to require that nothing of use could be destroyed, not even a ceramic pot or plate. (cf. Maimonides Mishneh Torah, Melakhim 6, 8. 10). This, of course, would make modern warfare impossible. The Talmud does speak of forbidden, optional and obligatory war. The obligatory war is against the seven nations that made war against the children of Israel as they made their way towards and into the Promised Land. Yet at the time that the rabbis designated this as an obligatory war, none of these nations existed any longer.

Deuteronomy also establishes a draft law by designating those who cannot be required to serve in the army. If a man has built a house and not lived in it, planted a vineyard and not eaten its fruit, or betrothed a wife and not lived with her, he cannot be called to serve. It also declares that if he is afraid he is exempted from military service. (Deut.20:5-8.) The ancient rabbis interpreted this to mean a person is exempt if he is afraid that he might sin by killing someone. This may be considered the first provision for conscientious objectors in any draft legislation.

The Biblical prophets dreamed of a world of peace "where each would sit under his vine and his fig tree and none would make them afraid." The way of peace for them was the only way, and instruments of war should be destroyed and converted into tools to build a fruitful life for humanity. Rabbi Hillel in the Mishnah admonished us to "be as the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace." (Pirke Avot 1:12). "He who saves a single life it is attributed to him as if he had saved the entire world, and he who destroys a single life, it is as if he had destroyed the entire world." (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4.5)

Throughout our history there has been a continuous stream of commentators who find warfare to be a violation of the Jewish principles of compassion and of doing no harm, and, most important, of violating the sacredness of human life, since each human has been created in the image of the Divine. This was especially true during the rabbinic period when the rabbis of the Mishnah and Talmud were almost unanimous in rejecting capital punishment and war. The creation of the State of Israel and its struggle with its neighbors has caused many Jews to endorse violence, however reluctantly. Yet there are still many Jews who have refused to rationalize violence and understand that violence breeds violence and leads to even more bloodshed, more tragedy, more death. Derech emunah b'charti—I have chosen the way of faith.

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Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence

By Rev .Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 4 April 1967

Speech delivered by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4, 1967, at a meeting of Clergy and Laity Concerned at Riverside Church in New York City
http://www.ssc.msu.edu/~sw/mlk/brkslnc.htm

[Editor's note: Although no war is an exact repetition of a previous war, it is amazing how many of the issues and arguments discussed by Dr. King in relation to the Vietnam war apply to our current situation. Above all, many Americans continue to believe that evil means (killing) will produce noble ends (freedom, democracy) in spite of a mountain of evidence to the contrary, and that there are no significant alternatives to those evil means. In this speech, Dr. King invites everyone to seriously consider becoming a conscientious objector.]

I come to this magnificent house of worship tonight because my conscience leaves me no other choice. I join with you in this meeting because I am in deepest agreement with the aims and work of the organization which has brought us together: Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam. The recent statement of your executive committee are the sentiments of my own heart and I found myself in full accord when I read its opening lines: "A time comes when silence is betrayal." That time has come for us in relation to Vietnam.

The truth of these words is beyond doubt but the mission to which they call us is a most difficult one. Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conformist thought within one's own bosom and in the surrounding world. Moreover when the issues at hand seem as perplexed as they often do in the case of this dreadful conflict we are always on the verge of being mesmerized by uncertainty; but we must move on.

Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. And we must rejoice as well, for surely this is the first time in our nation's history that a significant number of its religious leaders have chosen to move beyond the prophesying of smooth patriotism to the high grounds of a firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history. Perhaps a new spirit is rising among us. If it is, let us trace its movement well and pray that our own inner being may be sensitive to its guidance, for we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness that seems so close around us.

Over the past two years, as I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my own heart, as I have called for radical departures from the destruction of Vietnam, many persons have questioned me about the wisdom of my path. At the heart of their concerns this query has often loomed large and loud: Why are you speaking about war, Dr. King? Why are you joining the voices of dissent? Peace and civil rights don't mix, they say. Aren't you hurting the cause of your people, they ask? And when I hear them, though I often understand the source of their concern, I am nevertheless greatly saddened, for such questions mean that the inquirers have not really known me, my commitment or my calling. Indeed, their questions suggest that they do not know the world in which they live.

In the light of such tragic misunderstandings, I deem it of signal importance to try to state clearly, and I trust concisely, why I believe that the path from Dexter Avenue Baptist Church -- the church in Montgomery, Alabama, where I began my pastorate -- leads clearly to this sanctuary tonight.

I come to this platform tonight to make a passionate plea to my beloved nation. This speech is not addressed to Hanoi or to the National Liberation Front. It is not addressed to China or to Russia.

Nor is it an attempt to overlook the ambiguity of the total situation and the need for a collective solution to the tragedy of Vietnam. Neither is it an attempt to make North Vietnam or the National Liberation Front paragons of virtue, nor to overlook the role they can play in a successful resolution of the problem. While they both may have justifiable reason to be suspicious

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of the good faith of the United States, life and history give eloquent testimony to the fact that conflicts are never resolved without trustful give and take on both sides.

Tonight, however, I wish not to speak with Hanoi and the NLF, but rather to my fellow Americans, who, with me, bear the greatest responsibility in ending a conflict that has exacted a heavy price on both continents.

The Importance of Vietnam

Since I am a preacher by trade, I suppose it is not surprising that I have seven major reasons for bringing Vietnam into the field of my moral vision. There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I, and others, have been waging in America. A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor -- both black and white -- through the poverty program. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Then came the buildup in Vietnam and I watched the program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.

Perhaps the more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. So we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would never live on the same block in Detroit. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.

My third reason moves to an even deeper level of awareness, for it grows out of my experience in the ghettoes of the North over the last three years -- especially the last three summers. As I have walked among the desperate, rejected and angry young men I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through nonviolent action. But they asked -- and rightly so -- what about Vietnam? They asked if our own nation wasn't using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today -- my own government. For the sake of those boys, for the sake of this government, for the sake of hundreds of thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent.

For those who ask the question, "Aren't you a civil rights leader?" and thereby mean to exclude me from the movement for peace, I have this further answer. In 1957 when a group of us formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, we chose as our motto: "To save the soul of America." We were convinced that we could not limit our vision to certain rights for black people, but instead affirmed the conviction that America would never be free or saved from itself unless the descendants of its slaves were loosed completely from the shackles they still wear. In a way we were agreeing with Langston Hughes, that black bard of Harlem, who had written earlier:

> O, yes,
> I say it plain,
> America never was America to me,
> And yet I swear this oath--
> America will be!

Now, it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war. If America's soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read Vietnam. It can never be saved so long as it destroys the deepest hopes of men the world over. So it is that those of us who are yet determined that America

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will be are led down the path of protest and dissent, working for the health of our land.

As if the weight of such a commitment to the life and health of America were not enough, another burden of responsibility was placed upon me in 1964; and I cannot forget that the Nobel Prize for Peace was also a commission -- a commission to work harder than I had ever worked before for "the brotherhood of man." This is a calling that takes me beyond national allegiances, but even if it were not present I would yet have to live with the meaning of my commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ. To me the relationship of this ministry to the making of peace is so obvious that I sometimes marvel at those who ask me why I am speaking against the war. Could it be that they do not know that the good news was meant for all men -- for Communist and capitalist, for their children and ours, for black and for white, for revolutionary and conservative? Have they forgotten that my ministry is in obedience to the one who loved his enemies so fully that he died for them? What then can I say to the "Vietcong" or to Castro or to Mao as a faithful minister of this one? Can I threaten them with death or must I not share with them my life?

Finally, as I try to delineate for you and for myself the road that leads from Montgomery to this place I would have offered all that was most valid if I simply said that I must be true to my conviction that I share with all men the calling to be a son of the living God. Beyond the calling of race or nation or creed is this vocation of sonship and brotherhood, and because I believe that the Father is deeply concerned especially for his suffering and helpless and outcast children, I come tonight to speak for them.

This I believe to be the privilege and the burden of all of us who deem ourselves bound by allegiances and loyalties which are broader and deeper than nationalism and which go beyond our nation's self-defined goals and positions. We are called to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for victims of our nation and for those it calls enemy, for no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brothers.

Strange Liberators

And as I ponder the madness of Vietnam and search within myself for ways to understand and respond to compassion my mind goes constantly to the people of that peninsula. I speak now not of the soldiers of each side, not of the junta in Saigon, but simply of the people who have been living under the curse of war for almost three continuous decades now. I think of them too because it is clear to me that there will be no meaningful solution there until some attempt is made to know them and hear their broken cries.

They must see Americans as strange liberators. The Vietnamese people proclaimed their own independence in 1945 after a combined French and Japanese occupation, and before the Communist revolution in China. They were led by Ho Chi Minh. Even though they quoted the American Declaration of Independence in their own document of freedom, we refused to recognize them. Instead, we decided to support France in its reconquest of her former colony.

Our government felt then that the Vietnamese people were not "ready" for independence, and we again fell victim to the deadly Western arrogance that has poisoned the international atmosphere for so long. With that tragic decision we rejected a revolutionary government seeking self-determination, and a government that had been established not by China (for whom the Vietnamese have no great love) but by clearly indigenous forces that included some Communists. For the peasants this new government meant real land reform, one of the most important needs in their lives.

For nine years following 1945 we denied the people of Vietnam the right of independence. For nine years we vigorously supported the French in their abortive effort to recolonize Vietnam.

Before the end of the war we were meeting eighty percent of the French war costs. Even before the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu, they began to despair of the reckless action, but we did not. We encouraged them with our huge financial and military supplies to continue the war even after they had lost the will. Soon we would be paying almost the full costs of this tragic attempt at recolonization.

After the French were defeated it looked as if independence and land reform would come again through the Geneva agreements. But instead there came the United States, determined that Ho should not unify the temporarily divided nation, and the peasants watched again as we supported one of the most vicious modern dictators -- our chosen man, Premier Diem. The peasants watched and cringed as Diem ruthlessly routed out all opposition, supported their extortionist landlords and refused even to discuss reunification with

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the north. The peasants watched as all this was presided over by U.S. influence and then by increasing numbers of U.S. troops who came to help quell the insurgency that Diem's methods had aroused. When Diem was overthrown they may have been happy, but the long line of military dictatorships seemed to offer no real change -- especially in terms of their need for land and peace.

The only change came from America as we increased our troop commitments in support of governments which were singularly corrupt, inept and without popular support. All the while the people read our leaflets and received regular promises of peace and democracy -- and land reform. Now they languish under our bombs and consider us -- not their fellow Vietnamese --the real enemy. They move sadly and apathetically as we herd them off the land of their fathers into concentration camps where minimal social needs are rarely met. They know they must move or be destroyed by our bombs. So they go -- primarily women and children and the aged.

They watch as we poison their water, as we kill a million acres of their crops. They must weep as the bulldozers roar through their areas preparing to destroy the precious trees. They wander into the hospitals, with at least twenty casualties from American firepower for one "Vietcong"-inflicted injury. So far we may have killed a million of them -- mostly children. They wander into the towns and see thousands of the children, homeless, without clothes, running in packs on the streets like animals. They see the children, degraded by our soldiers as they beg for food. They see the children selling their sisters to our soldiers, soliciting for their mothers.

What do the peasants think as we ally ourselves with the landlords and as we refuse to put any action into our many words concerning land reform? What do they think as we test our latest weapons on them, just as the Germans tested out new medicine and new tortures in the concentration camps of Europe? Where are the roots of the independent Vietnam we claim to be building? Is it among these voiceless ones?

We have destroyed their two most cherished institutions: the family and the village. We have destroyed their land and their crops. We have cooperated in the crushing of the nation's only non-Communist revolutionary political force -- the unified Buddhist church. We have supported the enemies of the peasants of Saigon. We have corrupted their women and children and killed their men. What liberators?

Now there is little left to build on -- save bitterness. Soon the only solid physical foundations remaining will be found at our military bases and in the concrete of the concentration camps we call fortified hamlets. The peasants may well wonder if we plan to build our new Vietnam on such grounds as these? Could we blame them for such thoughts? We must speak for them and raise the questions they cannot raise. These too are our brothers.

Perhaps the more difficult but no less necessary task is to speak for those who have been designated as our enemies. What of the National Liberation Front -- that strangely anonymous group we call VC or Communists? What must they think of us in America when they realize that we permitted the repression and cruelty of Diem which helped to bring them into being as a resistance group in the south? What do they think of our condoning the violence which led to their own taking up of arms? How can they believe in our integrity when now we speak of "aggression from the north" as if there were nothing more essential to the war? How can they trust us when now we charge them with violence after the murderous reign of Diem and charge them with violence while we pour every new weapon of death into their land? Surely we must understand their feelings even if we do not condone their actions. Surely we must see that the men we supported pressed them to their violence. Surely we must see that our own computerized plans of destruction simply dwarf their greatest acts.

How do they judge us when our officials know that their membership is less than twenty-five percent Communist and yet insist on giving them the blanket name? What must they be thinking when they know that we are aware of their control of major sections of Vietnam and yet we appear ready to allow national elections in which this highly organized political parallel government will have no part? They ask how we can speak of free elections when the Saigon press is censored and controlled by the military junta. And they are surely right to wonder what kind of new government we plan to help form without them -- the only party in real touch with the peasants. They question our political goals and they deny the reality of a peace settlement from which they will be excluded. Their questions are frighteningly relevant. Is our nation

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planning to build on political myth again and then shore it up with the power of new violence?

Here is the true meaning and value of compassion and nonviolence when it helps us to see the enemy's point of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weaknesses of our own condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition.

So, too, with Hanoi. In the north, where our bombs now pummel the land, and our mines endanger the waterways, we are met by a deep but understandable mistrust. To speak for them is to explain this lack of confidence in Western words, and especially their distrust of American intentions now. In Hanoi are the men who led the nation to independence against the Japanese and the French, the men who sought membership in the French commonwealth and were betrayed by the weakness of Paris and the willfulness of the colonial armies. It was they who led a second struggle against French domination at tremendous costs, and then were persuaded to give up the land they controlled between the thirteenth and seventeenth parallel as a temporary measure at Geneva. After 1954 they watched us conspire with Diem to prevent elections which would have surely brought Ho Chi Minh to power over a united Vietnam, and they realized they had been betrayed again.

When we ask why they do not leap to negotiate, these things must be remembered. Also it must be clear that the leaders of Hanoi considered the presence of American troops in support of the Diem regime to have been the initial military breach of the Geneva agreements concerning foreign troops, and they remind us that they did not begin to send in any large number of supplies or men until American forces had moved into the tens of thousands.

Hanoi remembers how our leaders refused to tell us the truth about the earlier North Vietnamese overtures for peace, how the president claimed that none existed when they had clearly been made. Ho Chi Minh has watched as America has spoken of peace and built up its forces, and now he has surely heard of the increasing international rumors of American plans for an invasion of the north. He knows the bombing and shelling and mining we are doing are part of traditional pre-invasion strategy. Perhaps only his sense of humor and of irony can save him when he hears the most powerful nation of the world speaking of aggression as it drops thousands of bombs on a poor weak nation more than eight thousand miles away from its shores.

At this point I should make it clear that while I have tried in these last few minutes to give a voice to the voiceless on Vietnam and to understand the arguments of those who are called enemy, I am as deeply concerned about our troops there as anything else. For it occurs to me that what we are submitting them to in Vietnam is not simply the brutalizing process that goes on in any war where armies face each other and seek to destroy. We are adding cynicism to the process of death, for they must know after a short period there that none of the things we claim to be fighting for are really involved. Before long they must know that their government has sent them into a struggle among Vietnamese, and the more sophisticated surely realize that we are on the side of the wealthy and the secure while we create hell for the poor.

This Madness Must Cease

Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as an American to the leaders of my own nation. The great initiative in this war is ours. The initiative to stop it must be ours.

This is the message of the great Buddhist leaders of Vietnam. Recently one of them wrote these words:

> "Each day the war goes on the hatred increases in the heart of the Vietnamese and in the hearts of those of humanitarian instinct. The Americans are forcing even their friends into becoming their enemies. It is curious that the Americans, who calculate so carefully on the possibilities of military victory, do not realize that in the process they are incurring deep psychological and political defeat. The image of America will never again be the image of revolution, freedom and democracy, but the image of violence and militarism."

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If we continue, there will be no doubt in my mind and in the mind of the world that we have no honorable intentions in Vietnam. It will become clear that our minimal expectation is to occupy it as an American colony and men will not refrain from thinking that our maximum hope is to goad China into a war so that we may bomb her nuclear installations. If we do not stop our war against the people of Vietnam immediately the world will be left with no other alternative than to see this as some horribly clumsy and deadly game we have decided to play.

The world now demands a maturity of America that we may not be able to achieve. It demands that we admit that we have been wrong from the beginning of our adventure in Vietnam, that we have been detrimental to the life of the Vietnamese people. The situation is one in which we must be ready to turn sharply from our present ways.

In order to atone for our sins and errors in Vietnam, we should take the initiative in bringing a halt to this tragic war. I would like to suggest five concrete things that our government should do immediately to begin the long and difficult process of extricating ourselves from this nightmarish conflict:

1. End all bombing in North and South Vietnam.

2. Declare a unilateral cease-fire in the hope that such action will create the atmosphere for negotiation.

3. Take immediate steps to prevent other battlegrounds in Southeast Asia by curtailing our military buildup in Thailand and our interference in Laos.

4. Realistically accept the fact that the National Liberation Front has substantial support in South Vietnam and must thereby play a role in any meaningful negotiations and in any future Vietnam government.

5. Set a date that we will remove all foreign troops from Vietnam in accordance with the 1954 Geneva agreement.

Part of our ongoing commitment might well express itself in an offer to grant asylum to any Vietnamese who fears for his life under a new regime which included the Liberation Front. Then we must make what reparations we can for the damage we have done. We most provide the medical aid that is badly needed, making it available in this country if necessary.

Protesting The War

Meanwhile we in the churches and synagogues have a continuing task while we urge our government to disengage itself from a disgraceful commitment. We must continue to raise our voices if our nation persists in its perverse ways in Vietnam. We must be prepared to match actions with words by seeking out every creative means of protest possible.

As we counsel young men concerning military service we must clarify for them our nation's role in Vietnam and challenge them with the alternative of conscientious objection. I am pleased to say that this is the path now being chosen by more than seventy students at my own alma mater, Morehouse College, and I recommend it to all who find the American course in Vietnam a dishonorable and unjust one. Moreover I would encourage all ministers of draft age to give up their ministerial exemptions and seek status as conscientious objectors. These are the times for real choices and not false ones. We are at the moment when our lives must be placed on the line if our nation is to survive its own folly. Every man of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits his convictions, but we must all protest.

There is something seductively tempting about stopping there and sending us all off on what in some circles has become a popular crusade against the war in Vietnam. I say we must enter the struggle, but I wish to go on now to say something even more disturbing. The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality we will find ourselves organizing clergy- and laymen-concerned committees for the next generation. They will be concerned about Guatemala and Peru. They will be concerned about Thailand and Cambodia. They will be concerned about Mozambique and South Africa. We will be marching for these and a dozen other names and attending rallies without end unless there is a significant and profound change in American life and policy. Such thoughts take us beyond Vietnam, but not beyond our calling as sons of the living God.

In 1957 a sensitive American official overseas said that it seemed to him that our nation was on the wrong side of a world revolution. During the past ten years we

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have seen emerge a pattern of suppression which now has justified the presence of U.S. military "advisors" in Venezuela. This need to maintain social stability for our investments accounts for the counter-revolutionary action of American forces in Guatemala. It tells why American helicopters are being used against guerrillas in Colombia and why American napalm and green beret forces have already been active against rebels in Peru. It is with such activity in mind that the words of the late John F. Kennedy come back to haunt us. Five years ago he said, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable."

Increasingly, by choice or by accident, this is the role our nation has taken -- the role of those who make peaceful revolution impossible by refusing to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investment.

I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a "thing-oriented" society to a "person-oriented" society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. n the one hand we are called to play the good Samaritan on life's roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say: "This is not just." It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of Latin America and say: "This is not just." The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just. A true revolution of values will lay hands on the world order and say of war: "This way of settling differences is not just." This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into veins of people normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way in this revolution of values. There is nothing, except a tragic death wish, to prevent us from reordering our priorities, so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war. There is nothing to keep us from molding a recalcitrant status quo with bruised hands until we have fashioned it into a brotherhood.

This kind of positive revolution of values is our best defense against communism. War is not the answer. Communism will never be defeated by the use of atomic bombs or nuclear weapons. Let us not join those who shout war and through their misguided passions urge the United States to relinquish its participation in the United Nations. These are days which demand wise restraint and calm reasonableness. We must not call everyone a Communist or an appeaser who advocates the seating of Red China in the United Nations and who recognizes that hate and hysteria are not the final answers to the problem of these turbulent days. We must not engage in a negative anti-communism, but rather in a positive thrust for democracy, realizing that our greatest defense against communism is to take offensive action in behalf of justice. We must with positive action seek to remove those conditions of poverty, insecurity and injustice which are the fertile soil in which the seed of communism grows and develops.

The People Are Important

These are revolutionary times. All over the globe men are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression and out of the wombs of a frail world new systems of justice and equality are being born. The shirtless and barefoot people of the land are rising up as

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never before. "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light." We in the West must support these revolutions. It is a sad fact that, because of comfort, complacency, a morbid fear of communism, and our proneness to adjust to injustice, the Western nations that initiated so much of the revolutionary spirit of the modern world have now become the arch anti-revolutionaries. This has driven many to feel that only Marxism has the revolutionary spirit. Therefore, communism is a judgment against our failure to make democracy real and follow through on the revolutions we initiated. Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism. With this powerful commitment we shall boldly challenge the status quo and unjust mores and thereby speed the day when "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain."

A genuine revolution of values means in the final analysis that our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Every nation must now develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual societies.

This call for a world-wide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all men. This oft misunderstood and misinterpreted concept -- so readily dismissed by the Nietzsches of the world as a weak and cowardly force -- has now become an absolute necessity for the survival of man. When I speak of love I am not speaking of some sentimental and weak response. I am speaking of that force which all of the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is somehow the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality. This Hindu-Moslem-Christian-Jewish-Buddhist belief about ultimate reality is beautifully summed up in the first epistle of Saint John:

Let us love one another; for love is God and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. If we love one another God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

Let us hope that this spirit will become the order of the day. We can no longer afford to worship the god of hate or bow before the altar of retaliation. The oceans of history are made turbulent by the ever-rising tides of hate. History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals that pursued this self-defeating path of hate. As Arnold Toynbee says : "Love is the ultimate force that makes for the saving choice of life and good against the damning choice of death and evil. Therefore the first hope in our inventory must be the hope that love is going to have the last word."

We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked and dejected with a lost opportunity. The "tide in the affairs of men" does not remain at the flood; it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is deaf to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residue of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: "Too late." There is an invisible book of life that faithfully records our vigilance or our neglect. "The moving finger writes, and having writ moves on..." We still have a choice today; nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation.

We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world -- a world that borders on our doors. If we do not act we shall surely be dragged down the long dark and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.

Now let us begin. Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter -- but beautiful -- struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the sons of God, and our brothers wait eagerly for our response. Shall we say the odds are too great? Shall we tell them the struggle is too hard? Will our message be that the forces of American life militate against their arrival as full men, and we send our deepest regrets? Or will there be another message, of longing, of hope, of solidarity with their yearnings, of commitment to their cause, whatever the cost? The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise we must choose in this crucial moment of human history.

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As that noble bard of yesterday, James Russell Lowell, eloquently stated:

> Once to every man and nation
> Comes the moment to decide,
> In the strife of truth and falsehood,
> For the good or evil side;
> Some great cause, God's new Messiah,
> Off'ring each the bloom or blight,
> And the choice goes by forever
> Twixt that darkness and that light.
>
> Though the cause of evil prosper,
> Yet 'tis truth alone is strong;
> Though her portion be the scaffold,
> And upon the throne be wrong:
> Yet that scaffold sways the future,
> And behind the dim unknown,
> Standeth God within the shadow
> Keeping watch above his own.

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Archbishop Oscar Romero's Last Sermon (1980)

Editor's preface: One of the enduring myths of violence is that it can be carefully controlled. We hear of "surgical strikes" and "precision guided munitions." But the truth is that violence is rarely ever controllable and almost always spins out of control, creating a widening circle of massacre and the torture of prisoners, consuming both the killers and the killed. Such was the case in the El Salvador of 1980s, when the army, police and government sponsored death squads sought to exterminate all forms of peasant organization and both political and religious advocacy for the poor. Many Christians in El Salvador had reached the conclusion that the extreme poverty of peasant families was not reconcilable with the church's vision of all persons being part of the Body of Christ, neither with Christ's teaching that we should love one another. In this context of increasing violence, Archbishop Romero spoke directly, in this sermon, to the members of the Salvadorean army, National Guard and police and both begged and ordered them to stop the killing. He was assassinated by a death squad the next day, but his spirit lives on in the people around the world who have been inspired by his love, truthfulness, faithfulness and courage.

Let no one be offended because we use the divine words read at our mass to shed light on the social, political and economic situation of our people. Not to do so would be unchristian. Christ desires to unite himself with humanity, so that the light he brings from God might become life for nations and individuals.

I know many are shocked by this preaching and want to accuse us of forsaking the gospel for politics. But I reject this accusation. I am trying to bring to life the message of the Second Vatican Council and the meetings at Medellin and Puebla. The documents from these meetings should not just be studied theoretically. They should be brought to life and translated into the real struggle to preach the gospel as it should be for our people. Each week I go about the country listening to the cries of the people, their pain from so much crime, and the ignominy of so much violence. Each week I ask the Lord to give me the right words to console, to denounce, to call for repentance. And even though I may be a voice crying in the desert, I know that the church is making the effort to fulfill its mission....

Every country lives its own "exodus"; today El Salvador is living its own exodus. Today we are passing to our liberation through a desert strewn with bodies and where anguish and pain are devastating us. Many suffer the temptation of those who walked with Moses and wanted to turn back and did not work together. It is the same old story. God, however, wants to save the people by making a new history....

History will not fail; God sustains it. That is why I say that insofar as historical projects attempt to reflect the eternal plan of God, to that extent they reflect the kingdom of God. This attempt is the work of the church. Because of this, the church, the people of God in history, is not attached to any one social system, to any political organization, to any party. The church does not identify herself with any of those forces because she is the eternal pilgrim of history and is indicating at every historical moment what reflects the kingdom of God and what does not reflect the kingdom of God. She is the servant of the Kingdom of God.

The great task of Christians must be to absorb the spirit of God's kingdom and, with souls filled with the kingdom of God, to work on the projects of history. It's fine to be organized in popular groups; it's all right to form political parties; it's all right to take part in the government. It's fine as long as you are a Christian who carries the reflection of the kingdom of God and tries to establish it where you are working, and as long as you are not being used to further worldly ambitions. This is the great duty of the people of today. My dear Christians, I have always told you, and I will repeat, that the true liberators of our people must come from us Christians, from the people of God. Any historical plan that's not based on what we spoke of in the first point-the dignity of the human being, the love of God, the kingdom of Christ among people--will be a fleeting project. Your project, however, will grow in stability the more it reflects the eternal design of God. It will be a solution of the common good of the people every time, if it meets the needs of the people.... Now I invite you to look at things through the eyes of the church, which is trying to be the kingdom of God on earth and so often must illuminate the realities of our national

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situation.

We have lived through a tremendously tragic week. I could not give you the facts before, but a week ago last Saturday, on 15 March, one of the largest and most distressing military operations was carried out in the countryside. The villages affected were La Laguna, Plan de Ocotes and El Rosario. The operation brought tragedy: a lot of ranches were burned, there was looting, and – inevitably -- people were killed. In La Laguna, the attackers killed a married couple, Ernesto Navas and Audelia Mejia de Navas, their little children, Martin and Hilda, thirteen and seven years old, and eleven more peasants.

Other deaths have been reported, but we do not know the names of the dead. In Plan de Ocotes, two children and four peasants were killed, including two women. In El Rosario, three more peasants were killed. That was last Saturday.

Last Sunday, the following were assassinated in Arcatao by four members of ORDEN: peasants Marcelino Serrano, Vincente Ayala, twenty-four years old, and his son, Freddy. That same day, Fernando Hernandez Navarro, a peasant, was assassinated in Galera de Jutiapa, when he fled from the military.

Last Monday, 17 March, was a tremendously violent day. Bombs exploded in the capital as well as in the interior of the country. The damage was very substantial at the headquarters of the Ministry of Agriculture. The campus of the national university was under armed siege from dawn until 7 P.M. Throughout the day, constant bursts of machine-gun fire were heard in the university area. The archbishop's office intervened to protect people who found themselves caught inside.

On the Hacienda Colima, eighteen persons died, at least fifteen of whom were peasants. The administrator and the grocer of the ranch also died. The armed forces confirmed that there was a confrontation. A film of the events appeared on TV, and many analyzed interesting aspects of the situation.

At least fifty people died in serious incidents that day: in the capital, seven persons died in events at the Colonia Santa Lucia; on the outskirts of Tecnillantas, five people died; and in the area of the rubbish dump, after the evacuation of the site by the military, were found the bodies of four workers who had been captured in that action.

Sixteen peasants died in the village of Montepeque, thirty-eight kilometers along the road to Suchitoto. That same day, two students at the University of Central America were captured in Tecnillantas: Mario Nelson and Miguel Alberto Rodriguez Velado, who were brothers. The first one, after four days of illegal detention, was handed over to the courts. Not so his brother, who was wounded and is still held in illegal detention. Legal Aid is intervening on his behalf.

Amnesty International issued a press release in which it described the repression of the peasants, especially in the area of Chalatenango. The week's events confirm this report in spite of the fact the government denies it. As I entered the church, I was given a cable that says, "Amnesty International confirmed today [that was yesterday] that in El Salvador human rights are violated to extremes that have not been seen in other countries." That is what Patricio Fuentes (spokesman for the urgent action section for Central America in Swedish Amnesty International) said at a press conference in Managua, Nicaragua.

Fuentes confirmed that, during two weeks of investigations he carried out in El Salvador, he was able to establish that there had been eighty-three political assassinations between 10 and 14 March. He pointed out that Amnesty International recently condemned the government of El Salvador, alleging that it was responsible for six hundred political assassinations. The Salvadorean government defended itself against the charges, arguing that Amnesty International based its condemnation on unproved assumptions.

Fuentes said that Amnesty had established that in El Salvador human rights are violated to a worse degree than the repression in Chile after the coupe d'etat. The Salvadorean government also said that the six hundred dead were the result of armed confrontations between army troops and guerrillas. Fuentes said that during his stay u l El Salvador, he could see that the victims had been tortured before their deaths and mutilated afterward.

The spokesman of Amnesty International said that the victims' bodies characteristically appeared with the thumbs tied behind their backs. Corrosive liquids had been applied to the corpses to prevent identification of

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the victims by their relatives and to prevent international condemnation, the spokesman added. Nevertheless, the bodies were exhumed and the dead have been identified. Fuentes said that the repression carried out by the Salvadorean army was aimed at breaking the popular organizations through the assassination of their leaders in both town and country.

According to the spokesman of Amnesty International, at least three thousand five hundred peasants have fled from their homes to the capital to escape persecution. "We have complete lists in London and Sweden of young children and women who have been assassinated for being organized," Fuentes stated....

I would like to make a special appeal to the men of the army, and specifically to the ranks of the National Guard, the police and the military. Brothers, you come from our own people. You are killing your own brother peasants when any human order to kill must be subordinate to the law of God which says, "Thou shalt not kill." No soldier is obliged to obey an order contrary to the law of God. No one has to obey an immoral law. It is high time you recovered your consciences and obeyed your consciences rather than a sinful order. The church, the defender of the rights of God, of the law of God, of human dignity, of the person, cannot remain silent before such an abomination. We want the government to face the fact that reforms are valueless if they are to be carried out at the cost of so much blood. In the name of God, in the name of this suffering people whose cries rise to heaven more loudly each day, I implore you, I beg you, I order you in the name of God: stop the repression.

The church preaches your liberation just as we have studied it in the holy Bible today. It is a liberation that has, above all else, respect for the dignity of the person, hope for humanity's common good, and the transcendence that looks before all to God and only from God derives its hope and its strength.

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