

# The Power Of Truth

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All bloody principles and practices we as to our own particular do utterly deny, with all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons for any end or under any pretense whatsoever; and this is our testimony to the whole world. . . . That Spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know and so testify to the world that the Spirit of Christ, which leads us into all Truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the Kingdom of Christ nor for the kingdoms of this world.

A declaration to Charles II by the harmless and innocent people of God called Quakers, 1660.

## The Power Of Truth

It is a force vaster than weapons,  
more compelling than fame or fear.

It is now mid-century of a time of violence, and there is no certainty that the torment of men has more than begun. On the surface life goes on without change. Generals and admirals still argue that killing can be stopped only by yet greater weapons of killing. Statesmen still wrangle over who controls which channel of water and who occupies which body of land. Scientists still seek new theories to understand matter and explode atoms. Intellectuals still argue each new fad of thought, and publicists still debase the common experience of men into stories of success or tales of violence. And citizens still go on with their work, their amusements, their life, their world.

There still is empty laboring after money and empty dreaming of fame. There still is mindless indulgence in things not really needed: a host of products ranging from slick magazines to showy cars. There still is the paltry egotism that loves only what loves it and takes offense at anything that irks it. There still is the illusion that so long as a standard of living is high the standard of life is rooted in virtue.

Yet this surface activity fails to hide a secret unrest. There are persistent and unpleasant facts: many persons throughout the earth are sunk in a misery that involves them in hunger, slavery and war. Others are beset by the hidden fear that these pestilences will spread and engulf

them also. It is the dark fear of many men and women that even if they somehow stave off the despoiling of the earth, somehow avoid the breakup of their own minds, and somehow postpone the loss of their jobs, they will not escape a cataclysmic end of the life they know. This fear arises not simply from an awareness of new weapons of destruction; it arises from an awareness of a general discord among persons and among nations, seemingly impossible to overcome.

Thus our world aches with the strife and pain and fear of lonely people. We are in collision with whatever persons—and whatever nations—we meet. Anything that is not ourselves is a danger to ourselves, a thing threatening to our lives, our self-esteem. When person meets person, when group meets group, each thinks he sees something outward to him, something uncertainly and vaguely threatening, something with which he can deal only in terms of the very wars and oppressions and covetings that have made him afraid in the first place. The sense of community, of one person being to some degree part of another, weakens, and men and women seem to lack inward faith to strengthen it. At few times have men longed so desperately to be brothers; at few times have they found themselves to be such uneasy strangers.

Is there a way out? A welter of books and speeches, articles and reports pours out, announcing this or that particular way. There are big political schemes, economic plans, military strategies. There are plans of industry and labor, studies of scientists, undertakings of governments, arguments of journalists, devices of political parties, dogmas of philosophers, and programs of reform. The flood of words pounds upon men and women as surf crashes upon a beach; the various words scatter as they hit upon the sands and roil them, only to form again into yet another breaker, different in appearance but very similar in sort. And as

these waves of words follow upon one another faster and faster, the very sense of words collapses. There is again a tower of Babel. So great has been the flood of words that each word has lost crispness and exactness. Language has become so inflated as to lose currency. The sheer quantity of facts increases until no man can master more than some small corner of some small subject, and men begin to lack terms with which to speak to other men. Gibberish passes for sense: there are the glib nonsense-repetitions of the advertising pages and the radio, the nonsense-ravings of the hawkers of political cure-alls. (The speeches of Hitler were essentially unintelligible, but they roused enthusiasm even among German intellectuals.) Where, where is the simplicity of Truth?

### The End Of The World

In this time of confusion of voices, the possibility of a final and wrathful day becomes alarmingly real. What may have been a symbol to the prophets of Israel and to the saints of early Christendom—the sudden destruction of all things—has now the force of sober fact. Popular magazines print sketches of something that closely resembles Isaiah's vision of doom. The word of the Lord which came to Zephaniah is more readily believable now than it was twenty-five hundred years ago: "I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling blocks with the wicked; and I will cut off men from off the land, saith the Lord."

Today we are cut off even from the solace of the prophets: we are cut off from belief in the survival of a remnant of righteous people. If destruction comes upon us, we know that it will fall as impartially as the rain, wiping out those who appear to be good together with those who

appear to be evil, obliterating impartially places of vain amusement and places of worship, the markets of evil and the factories of a high standard of living, brothels and hospitals, arsenals and schools.

In the mind of our secret fears we sense our oneness in the face of destruction, but with the tongue of our outward self-assurance we cry out, "Not that. Not that. God is love. We are good people, and we have been getting better. God will not let anything happen to us." And we say that there is less oppression now than there was some generations ago, that there is less worship of arms than there was some centuries past, more seeking after the common good, more yearning for the ways of peace. We say that we are less bigoted than our ancestors, and sometimes we note that we are better than persons around us.

In other words, we compare ourselves not with what we are called to be but with what others have been in the past or with what others are now. We judge our social life not by the Kingdom of God but by the outward order of several generations past; we judge our own lives not by the Truth that stirs in us but by the behavior of people we see around us. Thus we have become not the conquerors of evil but the inheritors of it: as our ancestors sinned in smugness so do we. And thus are we judged. In terms of the light that has been given to us, we may be less acceptable than primitive bushmen bowing down before sticks and stones and pounding their chests in prayer for blood victories.

Let no one for these reasons deny that God is Father and that His truth is love. Love is the discovery of thousands of years of men and women who have sought God; it is a discovery to which our own hearts are joined by whatever awareness of reality they possess. Perhaps no one should imagine God, ever-forgiving of His children, to be a God of judgment. But there is still the fact of judgment. There is

still the fact that the bright and proud civilizations of many peoples—from China today to forgotten prehistoric cultures—have come to various abrupt ends. When persons or peoples cut themselves off from the source of life, they cease to be alive. There is the inescapable truth, repeated throughout history, that the universe is of such nature that we are—all together—granted long-term credits, that we are spiritually, so to speak, given all the rope we wish, and that when the credits run out, we are—again all together—tripped up.

It is not necessary to believe that our particular credits have finally run out and that we are inevitably to be tripped. Final destruction is brought upon ourselves by ourselves, and we are not yet destroyed. Rather it is necessary to believe that what is true, what is real, what is divine can work within us—if we give it residence—and that it can change evil into good. But it is essential to grasp the nature of the destruction that we may indeed bring upon ourselves: a destruction not just of evil places or of evil people, but a destruction of all places, all people. For the torment of our times, for the evil in them, for our wars, for our fears, we *are all responsible*. The pacifist is as responsible for war as the militarist, the doer of good works as responsible for poverty as the oppressor, the man of prayer as responsible for ignorance of Truth as the blasphemer. If but a handful among us were completely given to the light of Truth, our world could not remain sunk in torment. But there is no such handful. There is no remnant. All are responsible; each one is responsible. There is no purely personal salvation; if we do not seek to be joined in Truth with every living human person (and, in a sense, with every one who is dead) we shall be damned separately. There is no indication that the Kingdom of God is to be won by merely personal initiative.

### Inward and outward

Our responsibility is not met simply by outward works. It is not met simply by conceiving high-minded plans or endorsing them or even working to bring them about. Such activity, unless it springs from an inward reordering, only adds fresh confusion. And we have dreamed great social schemes.

We have imagined, at one time or another, that the structure of society will be refurbished by free education for everybody or by votes for women or by the creation of new political parties or the reform of old ones. We have thought that social evil will be cut away by considered plans of government welfare or by improved labor legislation or by security for the aged or by a minimum wage law and a forty-hour week. Some have imagined that poverty is to be cured by organized philanthropy: others that it is to be rooted out by the organized state. During the last war, some Westerners took it into their minds that the four-millennia-old civilization of China could be revitalized and preserved by a big hydroelectric project or by a new cabinet or a reorganized army.

At times church bodies have made it seem that the chief end of man is to know what legislation to vote for. Lovers of peace have made it seem that some one big scheme of disarmament or of limited world government or of universal world government will overcome evil, and many persons have come to rest their hopes on the outward existence of the United Nations. Meanwhile there still are the great and numerous economic theories springing out of capitalism, socialism and their admixtures, each proclaimed as a social fountain of youth. And there is always the notion, widely held, that American standards of living and the American devices of efficiency and organization

have only to be applied throughout the world to bring peace, plenty, and universal good will.

The thought persists that there must be some great plan or some carefully dovetailed set of schemes—some brilliant idea of the mind of man—that is bound to save everybody. Thus there spring up fads of social thought, almost as fickle as fads of women's dress, with neo-humanism at one moment, technocracy at the next, a planned economy at another, and at still another economic determinism or historical materialism, capitalism or socialism or communism. There are the economics of Adam Smith and theories arising out of involved considerations of debit-financing, cooperation with a particular nation and hostility toward a particular nation, armament and disarmament, neutrality and intervention. And twice within a generation the nations have resorted to the most monolithic of all outward schemes of ordering life—war.

Coincident with all this outward activity, there is over large areas of the earth great destitution, unexampled tyranny, widespread starvation and an increasingly conscious fear of the future. Only in one country has there come a high standard of living, but even in America there is hidden fear: from anxiety over losing one's job to mass panic over fancied invasions by men from Mars. The very attempt to order life by outward means adds to the confusing tumult of voices that give so little promise of the peace they plan.

The trouble is not that the plans are outward: for persons to attempt to live together without any outward devices would probably be impossible. The trouble is that they are simply outward, that they do not spring from a sharp sense of inward conditions, inward drives. The deep root of our fears, our loneliness, our insecurities, is an inward root, which, untended, sprouts a luxuriant foliage of selfishness, deceit and folly. To attempt to curb these evils

by trimming some few branches of the outward tree, without knowledge of the inward root, is to attempt a cure without knowing the nature of the illness and without knowing the spiritual antibodies that can be drawn upon. The responsibility of all persons for the evil around them is not met by such outward efforts; it is evaded, shifted, thrown off. We cannot be responsible so long as we do not know what is going on, so long, that is, as our futile outward schemes hide what is essential—our own inward condition and the inward condition of those around us.

It is indeed a great heresy of our times—a heresy not alone against the teachings of Christ but against a body of teaching from Isaiah and Buddha to Dostoevski and Gandhi—to believe that inward evil can be overcome simply by outward action. This heresy proclaims: “Change the surface conditions of life, you change the deeper condition of man. Change the economic situation or the organization of nations or the standard of living or the ownership of property or what not, and you thereby eradicate selfishness from men and women, root out violence, kill off covetousness and vanity, and secure some measure of brotherhood and peace.” The heresy maintains, in effect, that man is a robot, that he can be played upon by external controls and made to do what he should (a notion not a little flattering to the self-elect—men themselves—who believe they can operate the controls), that he can be made to dance to some right tune by suitable admixtures of rewards and punishments, pleasures and pains. It is the heresy of those who say, as did the Russian philosopher Belinsky, “Men are so stupid that they must be brought to happiness by force,” and who use government and industry, even religion, as devices to prod their fellows into the millennium. Were there no other evidence of an inward life in the experience of men and women, there would still be evidence of it in the failure of all outward efforts to order society.

The responsibility, therefore, that all persons bear for their confused and twisted life is a responsibility to know what is inward and to make outward works mesh intimately with it. This is no new responsibility. It is a responsibility, basic to a living faith, that has been lived and preached by saints and teachers since the times of the prophets in Palestine, since the times of Lao-tze in China, since the time of the writers of the Upanishads in India. It rests on the knowledge that there is nothing more real and powerful and compelling, nothing more primary to all life than Truth—the Truth which is of God, which is God—inwardly and sensitively felt. It rests on the rejection of that outwardness of planning and scheming which the saints and teachers have long condemned and which they have labeled, contemptuously, the world. Between this outward world and inward Truth there is forever opposition. There is no giving up of oppression, no growth from superstition, no superseding of violence, no solution to outward problems of war and peace unless it be through Truth. For without Truth there is no liberation from the hidden lies and fears and egotisms which bind men, women and children to endless and repeating chains of violence and oppression, hunger, hatred, war.

### The Power Of Truth

But there is the insistent fact of liberation: liberation from our own lies and fears and egotisms, and thus liberation from the outward pestilences provoked by inward ills. This liberation has many names. It has been called love, nonviolence, non-action, pure wisdom. Gandhi gave it a new name, *Satyagraha*, the Power of Truth. All these words are but symbols: they suggest but they cannot define. All of them are attempts by men to convey the many-sidedness of God; they are attempts to give names to Him who is beyond all

names. And yet we must use the names and love them, for we must speak to one another about things of final importance. God is reality, that which is; non-violence, that which holds back from hurt; love, that which goes out to others; pure wisdom, that which is free of outward schemes. He is that power which the apostle John called Truth—that name so profound and yet so incomplete, which embraces all the others, which suggests the eternal inward fact and order and aim of all life. To mean the words *the Power of Truth* is to mean the very source and strength of all that exists.

This power is a force vaster than weapons or prisons, more compelling than fame or fear or success or money, more penetrating than any of the notions whereby men try to enlarge their egos and to gain face in the outward conduct of their lives. It conquers oppression, settles fear, shakes the hearts of the strong, strengthens the muscles of the weak.

For the Power of Truth issues from one of the most audacious convictions that ever took root within men, the conviction:

- That every living person can know God as sharply and as tangibly as he can know a person in the same room with him.

- That Deity and Truth can be experienced as directly and as certainly as one can experience a table or a chair upon which one solidly puts one's hand.

- That men and women and children have in them some part of Light, some part, so to speak, of Deity, and that they can actually dare to love God.

- That all persons have only to reach out toward Light to touch the divine source of energy and to be filled by it.

- That the Light, the Truth as it exists within men, is the only possible weapon against the evil within men.

This then is the Power of Truth—the way whereby men can overcome evil without manipulating men by selfish pains or pleasures, hopes or fears, punishment or rewards—without, in other words, creating fresh evil. Truth is in all men, bringing them together. Certainly it is not just in a few of them, keeping them separate. The Power of Truth is the exact opposite of the world's force, the antithesis of armies and schemes and great outward plans. It is the force counseled by Lao-tze when he said, "Do nothing, therefore do everything," which is to say, "Do nothing outwardly, and you will be able to do all things inwardly." It is the force called for by Isaiah when he said, "Your safety lies in ceasing to make leagues; your strength lies in quiet faith." It is the force of the life and death of Jesus.

Jesus preached no outward salvation, put himself at the head of no organization, offered—much to the displeasure of those who were deaf to the message of the prophets—no outward leadership, no panaceas. As his life was love and inward following of God, so also was his death. He who rejected in the wilderness the temptations of the world and its outward powers, who counseled nonviolence and the return of good for evil, died so that men and women might be made free. To the world's eye Christ died helpless and deserted; no hands were lifted to help him, and he lifted no hand himself. Foreseeing his death, he made no move to avoid it. And yet men have ever since stood in awe of his death, not because it was uniquely unjust but because it was supremely an act of suffering love, in which there shone a faith in the power of Truth, of God, a faith that overcomes all evil by taking it upon oneself.

In this force there is no violence. This is the witness of persons and groups who have freshly experienced the reality of Truth, as for instance the early Quakers, who did not decry force but cried out against outward force and outward weapons. For the weapon of the Power of Truth is

an inward weapon. It is the weapon of self-suffering, of refusing to inflict injury upon men who do evil, of voluntarily accepting injury upon oneself. It is effective as a weapon because that which is of Truth in all men is moved, in some measure at least, by voluntary suffering. Use of this weapon arises out of a faith that Truth is indeed living, and that it stirs in everyone, even the wicked and the abject. If, instead of hurting others, men offered themselves to be hurt; if, instead of killing others, they offered themselves to be killed, then Truth, which is more powerful than fear or greed, must respond.

In India this response is a matter of historical record. In other countries the response has been more hidden. Christian bodies have said relatively little about self-suffering, but many of them have put it into practice. In their battle against religious intolerance in England, the early Quakers (unlike other non-conformists) met in meetings for worship openly, quietly; and in many areas no First Day passed without interruption from the bailiffs. Meetinghouses were torn down. Some twelve thousand men and women went to prison; some hundreds died there; and in some places there were left only children to keep meetings open. And at length, in 1689, this suffering encouraged Britain's Act of Toleration. "Our testimony," said William Penn, "is not fighting but suffering."

This suffering is not long-faced; it is not a judgment of the righteous upon the wicked. It is an act of affection. Jesus, in his final moment, spoke love for those who killed him. The early Christians were able to smile as they faced death. And in our own times in India, non-violent armies fighting with Truth-Force have stood with bared breasts before the attack of armed soldiers, smiled when they were wounded or beaten or imprisoned and would not strike back. These men knew that they had as their brothers not only men of good will but men of violence, that all men are united by the Light that is in each one of them.

It may be, of course, that some men will not at once recognize the Light that lives in them. It may be that men will not quickly respond to the weapon of self-suffering. It may even be that some of them will take sadistic pleasure in striking persons who do not strike back. But the victory of the Power of Truth is not the less inevitable because it refuses to proceed by a strict timetable. Indeed, it is not of first importance that self-suffering against a tyrant produce instant results—Truth is a weapon that can be used only by persons who love Truth better than any results—but it is important that self-suffering serve Truth regardless of whether the victory over evil is of tomorrow or of a hundred years.

The injunction “love as brothers” is indeed demanding of the utmost. There is nothing halfway about the requirements of Truth. It demands a total allegiance; it demands a free gift of all outward attachments; it demands a person’s whole life. It demands even more—a sharp sensitivity to evil. It demands the sensitivity of a John Woolman, the simple lawyer, tailor and merchandiser whose life was probably the most effective witness in eighteenth century America against slavery and all forms of oppression. Shouldering upon himself the responsibility for the evils he fought, John Woolman sought constantly to know what he should do, no matter what trouble or inconvenience or discomfort might be visited upon him as a result. Dyes, for instance, were made by slaves whose condition was wretched; he would prefer to appear as an object of ridicule than to wear dyed cloth. Silver was mined by slaves; he would not use silver articles. Comfort and hospitality could be had in the South, where John Woolman frequently traveled, only through slave labor; he would refuse comfort and hospitality, even though it distressed him to cause hurt to his hosts. When he sailed to England to persuade British Friends to clear themselves of the evil of slave trading, he

noted that the cabins were luxurious and that the steerage was miserable; he insisted upon traveling steerage. He saw that horses were driven hard and young boys overworked on the stagecoaches of England; he traveled on foot and advised friends not to send letters by stage.

The way of Truth is a hard way, but it is the way of liberation. It is the way toward joy in the sticks and stones and persons around one, the way toward affection not simply for people who do good but for those who do evil. It is the way out of loneliness and fear, emptiness of spirit and confusion of mind, the torments that ride men and women in this mid-century. It is, in essence, the way of the saints made available to ordinary men and women, and if there is to be liberation there is no other way.

### The Utility Of Truth

The ages give witness to the force of Truth, but in our own age it has been used the most consciously and widely. This use centers around the person of a short little man with dark skin, large ears, and deep smiling eyes, Mohandas Gandhi. Unimpressive in outward appearance, not unusual in mind or in speech, but overwhelming in his dedication to Truth, Gandhi made his life one continuing experiment in the uses of non-violence. And his life, staked continually on the faith that Truth is alive and active among men, showed clearly to the whole world what the world already understood dimly—that the Power of Truth can be used as a weapon by men or women, children or adults; that it can be brought to bear upon the tyranny of fathers or of nations, the injustices of corporations or of parliaments, the violence of persons or of states, the hatreds of races or of classes.

But the Power of Truth can heal the more obvious social wounds only if experience of it be had in the smaller personal and community problems of daily life. In essence, this power

is based on the command to offend no one, either in fact or in thought, and to love everyone. It is very easy, of course, to wish not to offend the inhabitants of Madagascar; it is more difficult to wish not to harbor uncharitable thoughts toward persons at elbow-friction distance. Yet the success of the Power of Truth as a weapon against social evil hangs on its practice in the small acts of daily living. Required is that state of selfless mind which engenders no irritations and takes no offense at the slurs or odd humors of persons nearby. Required is a willingness to let other persons discharge upon one the accumulated grievances of their inward conflicts without being angered, without being bothered, without being hurt and, of course, without discharging one's own grievances upon them. Required is a willingness to accommodate oneself to the foibles of one's family, to the noises of one's children, to the pique of one's friends. Accommodate, accommodate—but only to the point at which Truth is in no way compromised. For if friend or family think evil or do it, true affection requires that some weapon be brought to bear, and in such case Truth becomes a weapon, a loving one, to be sure, but sharp cutting.

In India the practice of fasting is an effective weapon on these occasions, but such a practice is not available to Westerners, who do not share the Hindu belief that food is an impurity and that fasting is a way toward inward Light. But the method of silence is available: not the silence of hurt sensibilities but the silence wherein one seeks for the power that will help heal others of evil by healing oneself. (For men are brothers in evil even as they are brothers in good.)

Other methods are as many as the situations that call them out. Indeed, it is in the life of families that peoples of all nations use, almost without thinking of it, the sharp, loving weapons of Truth. The story of the Prodigal Son, eternally relived, is a great object lesson of the quickening

power of joyous affection upon a life enmired in evil. Simple expressions of grief when a son or a brother or a father does something wrong are, in the experience of most persons, more powerful incentives toward goodness than noisy expressions of distaste. Loving tears accomplish more than whips. Truth is automatically put to work when members of a family live as brothers.

“Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?” asked Jesus, and he answered, pointing to those around him, “Behold my mother and my brethren.” If we are all in fact brothers, a very special relationship is placed upon us, for we are called to deal with persons we know least exactly as we are called to deal with those we know best. What of evil men? Jesus said, “If a man take thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.” For evil is not overcome by punishment; it is not overcome by hurting the person who has hurt someone else. Evil, after all, is more truly an inward intention than an outward action. It is not evil—however inconvenient it may be—that someone loses his coat; but that someone is willing to inconvenience others in order to convenience himself is evil. The thief offends because he is unbrotherly; his inward eye is hardly to be opened by paying him back in the coin of his own offense. A street thief, a murderer, a dictator even, is as much a brother as a member of one’s own family. The evil they do can be corrected only by their being treated as such; the thief is less likely to steal if he is given the cloak in addition to the coat than if the coat he has stolen is forcibly taken from him. The penal laws of the nations may produce some apparent measure of outward order, but the man who contemplates evil and refrains from it only because he fears he cannot get away with it may well harbor greater evil than the man who actually does wrong.

Furthermore, the evil that someone else does may be prompted by the evil within oneself. He who has many possessions and prides himself on what he has is a sign to

him who has little, and who, following example, wishes to have more. Indeed, we all set the example of theft by seeking after more things than are really needful; for then we keep what we do not need out of the hands of those who do need it. That anything is stolen from us—or that anything requires protection to prevent its being stolen—is, in a sense, an indication to us that we ourselves have already stolen. We can possess things rightly only to the extent that our neighbors let us possess them, and forcefully to preserve what we own is to compound evil.

If the Power of Truth be practiced in such homely instances, it will be far less difficult to practice it in situations socially more complex, as for example in strikes. If one side genuinely believes that the other has done evil, then let that side make use of the methods of loving correction, such methods, that is, as one would use with a member of one's own family. Since the aim is to bring light and not anger into the mind of the opponent, let the aggrieved side hold back his hand from causing suffering but let him stretch out his hand to accept suffering. There have been no strikes of this kind in Western countries, but for that matter there were none in India until Gandhi began giving object lessons of the Power of Truth. Needed primarily is a genuine concern for the person who does evil, for such a concern must lead to a will to relieve him of evil. To take an example, a picket line made up of men ready to undergo poverty and hunger for an erring employer can be a far more effective weapon than a picket line made up of men set upon hurting the employer. In any country where public opinion crystallizes quickly, a strike which is non-violent in intention (and not simply non-violent in action) can generate pressures of an order few persons could withstand.

Is this Power of Truth a weapon possible only for persons of a cultural tradition not our own? It would seem not. Gandhi discovered it first in the Jewish-Christian

tradition, particularly in the teachings of Jesus: he rediscovered it only later in Hinduism. And in India, itself, he found some of the steadiest, non-violent fighters among peoples like the Pathan Mussulmans, although violence had been a matter of honor and enthusiasm to them for generations. A country like America, furthermore, offers wider avenues for the non-violent correction of abuse than does India, for in America people by their everyday activities constantly cast economic votes which, altogether, make the shape of industry and trade. Are things produced that are not really needful, things, moreover, that incite to covetousness and theft? We need not purchase them. Is a transportation line conducted with undue regard for money or with insufficient concern for employees? We need not ride on it. Does a newspaper or magazine debase pure wisdom or good taste? We need not read it. Does some entire industry pursue some course of evil? We need not fit in with it. To be sure, personal inconvenience may result, but the Power of Truth cannot be effective unless he who uses it is more genuinely concerned for the plight of the persons who do evil than he is for his own comfort. There is no force of Truth unless there is sensitivity to what is evil and unless there is readiness to suffer against it.

But if these exist, the force can be overwhelming. That it has been so little applied consciously—although applied every day unconsciously—in Western countries is not the obstacle. The obstacle, rather, is unreadiness to take trouble for Truth. It is evident, certainly, that there can be no true release from the evil of race prejudice until some change is effected in the hearts of the persons who are prejudiced. Laws by themselves have proved of little help. Agitations and lectures have sometimes fanned emotion instead of curbing it. It is unlikely that any laws and any outward arguments will by themselves open more than a few restaurants and places of amusement to Negroes in the North of the United States. But it is probable that a concerted

mass refusal to go into any restricted places can initiate the deeper inward changes that produce great outward consequences. In the South, Jim Crow is not likely to be broken down until groups of concerned Southerners systematically violate local law and custom and suffer willingly whatever injuries and hatred and mob wrath ensue.

In such situations there is need for definite tactics and stratagems, and the actual experience of non-violence in India can be a source of great potential aid. There the Power of Truth erased in many places racial issues as involved as any that exist in America. In the town of Vykom, for instance, untouchables were forbidden not only the temples and other places of public gathering but even the principal streets. To reach the hearts of the high castes, followers of Gandhi walked the forbidden streets in company with untouchables until the jails overflowed and there was no room for them. Then they stood in the Hindu attitude of prayer in front of guarded barricades thrown up across the streets; they stood thus for more than one year. At times the heat was intense; at times floods filled the streets with water to the shoulder level. There was no outside help; Vykom had as strong feeling against such interference as any town in the South of the United States. And at the end of the year, without bitterness, the high castes broke down and said, "We cannot resist any longer the prayers that have been made to us, and we are ready to receive the untouchables."

### **The Cold War And Truth**

The uses of the Power of Truth in a world already in the midst of a cold war and deeply fearful of a bloody one are not so obvious. In India, after all, Gandhi dealt with a government which, whatever may have been its weaknesses, was by no means committed to policies of total

violence against dissatisfaction. In India Gandhi went to jail; in certain other countries a man like him would have been summarily murdered and false reports would have been spread as to the nature of his death. The attempt would have been made not simply to suppress his movement but to exterminate it. Such an attempt, Gandhi believed, must fail. "The non-violent technique," he said, "does not depend for its success on the good will of a dictator, for a non-violent resister depends upon the unfailing assistance of God, which sustains him throughout difficulties which would otherwise be considered irresistible."

This answer may seem to be no answer. But it rests on the conviction that an extreme of evil and ruthlessness can be overcome by an extreme of loving self-suffering. The problem is not what would happen to a non-violent movement were it suddenly to appear in a totalitarian country. The problem is whether such a movement can grow in our own hearts to such strength that it can fight effectively against all forms of evil. But it is still necessary to ask whether such a movement could effectively touch the hearts of such men as those who rule Russia, men who hold it a moral duty to balk at no device of violence and deceit in order to expand their system throughout the world. Will men of this mind ever be dissuaded from violence by the self-suffering of any number of men?

This question cannot be answered logically, but it can be answered in either-or terms: Either there is that of God in the rulers of Russia or there is nothing of God in anyone (God is unthinkable except as the God of all persons); either these men can in some way or in some time respond to Truth or no one can—and if no one can the inward discoveries of many millennia of search after Truth are delusions, and life lacks Truth, lacks meaning. Thus it is necessary now, as it has always been necessary, to gamble one's whole being on the faith that life does have meaning,

that Truth is alive, and that it will act, at least potentially, in all men. The problem is not whether the Power of Truth can work but how it can be applied.

Let the tactics of its application be seen in terms of an immediate and concrete situation: that period of war preparation, undertaken in the hope of war prevention, that is called the cold war. One of the chief facts of this war is that the country of Russia is under the control of men who hold to a highly rigid theory of history and who take an unusually dogmatic view of facts. It is their faith, which they hold with great fervor, that their system of rule is fated by history to conquer the whole world; it is also their faith, revealed they believe by the processes of history, that all other countries are continually plotting war and violence against them. For thirty years Russia has been recurrently gripped by war scares, many of which lacked foundation. Since the morality of the Russian rulers endorses conquest of other countries wherever possible in order to block the "plots" of capitalist countries and to further the process of history, it is a matter of some moment to bring their minds into fresh contact with facts. Unless it is possible to penetrate the dogmatic encrustations with which they have surrounded themselves, there is no way of arresting the spread of their totalitarian system, short of waging or being ready to wage total outward war upon an empire already of the greatest bulk known in history.

For almost a decade every conceivable worldly device has been attempted by the governments of Britain and America in the hope of effecting such a penetration; the devices have run the gamut from cordial good will to measured denunciation, but none of them seems to have had measurable effect. Indeed it would seem likely that penetration of this sort is possible only by the Power of Truth, only by a great transformation in democratic countries from worship of possessions to worship of Truth, from attachment

to high standards of living to attachment to freedom, from yearning for rank and position to yearning for equality, from the egotism that involves both self-disgust and self-esteem to inward unity with others. Were a movement centered in the Power of Truth to gain the power and momentum of the great religious movements of the past, it would seem unlikely that any dogmatic encrustations, however thick, could be proof against it.

But what of actual war? The experience of Truth in India indicates that the inward force of non-violent armies must match the outward numbers and strength of armies of weapons and explosives. Such a conflict would mean that men and women would stand in determined defenselessness against the arms of the aggressor, would stand openly and voluntarily against his vehicles, his tanks, and his armed men. Should there be occupations of cities, there would be a population pledged to disobedience and noncooperation. Should there be occupation of the whole land—for the victory of Truth may be long-term not short-term—there would be groups of men and women given at all costs to living Truth.

Seen in the light of Truth, the main problem of our relations with Russia may be not so much the rulers of Russia as our own selves. More often than not we consider, not how those rulers should react to us, but how we should react to them. Thus we sometimes incline to the view that they represent dark forces of violence to which we should react with violence of our own. And sometimes we incline to the very different view that there is good intent and a laboring for equality amongst them, and that we should react with sweetness and light, searching the while for devices to promote intimacy with them.

Had we looked more closely into our own evil, we would be more capable of discerning alike the evil of the Russian system and the manner by which it can be fought. For the evil of that system is essentially the evil of other systems

and other nations carried to an extreme so great that it becomes almost a caricature. The two chief facts about present-day Russia, both of them so settled as to admit of little argument, are facts which in lesser and varying degree apply to all nations:

- The Russian system frankly does away with any talk of Truth and embraces the technique of *the lie*; not simply the lie that is used to confuse people and make them believe that the opposite of a thing is the thing—as for instance that tyranny is freedom—but also the heresy that demands that the people be manipulated by force to produce whatever their manipulators consider good. Force, in the Russian system, is something to be used whenever possible; it is not, as in most non-totalitarian systems, something to be used as a last resort.

- The Russian system uses without apology the heresy of *the plan*, the twin of the technique of the lie. It centers upon systems of outward organization that try to change man through a change in his economic life, that make the state supreme above the individual and lead the individual by the nose for the purposes of the group. Marxism, which aimed to impose brotherhood by force, has ended in Russia by justifying the imposition of more external controls upon men and the use of more appeals to mass selfishness than the government it overthrew.

That these extreme but settled facts contain a partial description of our own heresies, however less extreme our own may be, should suggest that the rulers of Russia are very critically in need of the same sort of inward regeneration that we are, and that deep-rooted heresies are not likely to succumb to the outward force of arms. That the facts contain such a description should not suggest, on the other hand, that things are wrong with Russia exactly as they are wrong with us, and that we have no right to criticize.

Criticism is essential. Judgment, of course, is impossible. Only the saints can judge. Judgment is a measurement of a man's success in living up to the light given him, and the most corrupted sinner may be found more worthy than the most approved apostle of righteousness. But to criticize is not the same thing as to judge. Criticism is a recognition of evil; it can be a loving recognition, a recognition that carries with it responsibility to seek to alter the inward prejudices of those who do evil. The responsible person is not blind. He does not hide from his eyes the fact that the Russian system has, in the minds of those who operate it, a messianic destiny to reproduce itself everywhere in the world. Responsibility is not taken by insisting that persons or groups of them are equally and sweetly righteous or that they are equally and impotently sinful. It is not taken by assuming that one's self or one's country must become perfect before one sets out to battle with evil. Responsibility is taken by battling evil wherever or whenever it shows itself. The evil is one evil; to recognize it in one place is to recognize it in another. It is as necessary to fight with the loving weapons of Truth against the lie and the plan of the Russian system as it is to fight with those weapons against the race prejudice of the United States as it is to fight against the Mammonism of one's own heart. To wait until one is perfect is never to become perfect. It is not necessary to hate the Russians or to hate the bigots or even to hate oneself; but it is necessary to hate evil. To hate darkness means so to love those who live in it that one will risk one's whole life in making an opening for Truth.

If there be Truth and if there be any power in it, men and women are called to fight evil everywhere—by living with all their strength without evil and by suffering with all their lives against it.

Truth is in fact liberation. But will weak, finite men and women accept a liberation so demanding? No one can

know. Faith is forever a gamble on the reality of things which the mind of reason cannot know but which the inward eye can see. Yet it is clear that the likely alternative to some persons dying because of attachment to Truth is the dying of very much greater numbers because of the world's separation from Truth. It may be that there is no short-term way of blocking the messianic urge of Russia except the way of violence. But violence, while it may overthrow the rulers of Russia, even as it overthrew the rulers of Germany, will not overthrow the deeply rooted heresies of the lie and the plan. It may even be that the only way in the long run to stop the rulers of Russia from conquering the world is to let them do what they like in the short run. Short-term suffering of evil is far preferable to long-term stimulation of it. The force of Truth now gives one final chance to break the endless chain of evil bred by evil, war bred by war, the cycle of enslavement forged by our ancestors and by ourselves. Were Truth to take root today amidst any people of the world as powerfully as it has at times taken root in the past, there would be no lack of recruits for the army of the terrible meek, and the force of Truth would in fact triumph, breaking at long last the chains of man's enslavement to violence.

### Obstacles

John Woolman wrote, "O that we who declare against wars and acknowledge our trust to be in God only, may walk in the Light and . . . look upon our treasures and the furniture of our houses and the garments in which we array ourselves, and try whether the seeds of war have any nourishment in these our possessions or not."

The seeds of war are indeed as obvious in every part of our lives as the power of Truth is hidden. At the very time when we are pressingly called to give ourselves to that

which is real and inward and unchangeable, we have become unable to choose between the unchangeable and the world; sometimes we have even become unable to distinguish between them. We are uncertain, hesitant, reluctant, caught in the incompleteness of our inward lives. Wishing to seek Truth, we find it difficult to seek it completely. Determined to put ourselves into the hands of God, we find it difficult to move beyond a first step towards Him. Anxious to touch the divine source of energy, we find it difficult to reach out to it, and our lives are very little charged with Truth. The rooms of our inward being have become clogged with dust and cluttered with debris; they have become inhospitable to the inward visitor of Light. Even as we assure ourselves that we hate killings and oppressions, we shrink from the power that overcomes killings and oppressions. Our attention is upon other things.

It is difficult to bear with an inward emptiness of spirit, to wait out grimly the boredom and uncertainty of an incomplete life, until life and spirit are filled with Truth. It is easier to seek relief from outward stimuli and outward things. Thus we seek escapes.

We may not want to be conspicuously rich, but we often want to be moderately well off. We may not want rich clothes and ornate furniture, but we often want things that are comfortable and nice. We may not want overweening power, but we want the false comforts of ambition and pride. We may not want to be notably famous, but we want to be widely liked by our friends. We may not want to carouse, but we want to thrill vicariously to flimsy movies or relax under the mental anesthesia of weak magazines or lull ourselves with neatly packaged entertainment on radio or television or do anything that does not charge us with Truth.

Whether our involvement be with obvious vices or with more subtle evils, our inward sensitivity is dulled. Things good in themselves come to figure in our lives as escapes,

for there is nothing good, save Truth itself, which cannot be perverted into evil. Business, labor, hobbies, sports, pursuit of knowledge, conversation with friends—there is nothing that cannot be used to hide Truth, nothing that cannot be used to twist inward awareness of it. Conspicuous intellectualism can be as profound an inward evil as conspicuous consumption. Immersion in hard work can be as great an escape as immersion in drink. Even the practice of religion can be a drug. Prayer can become a talking to oneself, a noisy monologue instead of a silent readiness to hear the whispering of Truth. A knowledge of the comfort of faith can become a falsehood if there is not joined to it knowledge of a divine discomfort with evil. A concern for outward worship and for proper works can become empty respectability. And involvement in the committees, the boards, and all the outward bodies of the churches can become a worldly running off from God. Our eyes grow clouded, our ears dulled; we neither hear nor see that we must lose ourselves in Truth.

It is indeed possible to enjoy God's creation and to find pleasure and gaiety in the natural recreations of laughing and talking and dancing and playing at sports. One needs to take joy in walking to no purpose, in listening to the sound of the rain, in studying idly the blue of the skies and the shapes of clouds. One needs to feel a happy sense of worship in the simple activities of eating, working, chatting, sleeping. But it is impossible to lose oneself in worldly things and still lose oneself in Truth. Certainly there can be growth in Truth; certainly there can be a gradual giving up of the wisdom of the world. But there can be nothing halfway in one's commitment to Truth. Half a commitment is, in the inward experience of mankind, less a commitment than no commitment at all. In the Book of Revelation it is written, "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that

thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

Our condition is indeed desperate. We know that we must grow in Truth, but we are worldly even when we decry the world. We know that Truth demands that we take responsibility and suffering upon ourselves, but we find it easier to dispute and make speeches. We know that the world is torn with oppression and killings, but we sometimes talk as if our only responsibility were to put the best complexion upon evil and to smile at it. We are reluctant to face discomfort. We are reluctant to face death. We shrink, that is, at the loss of any part of our self-esteem, that adoration of ego that brings not peace or joy or love or life, but rather fear and lethargy, torment and confusion, that blocks our own liberation, that locks out Truth until in final desperation we fling open our inward doors and let some part of it in.

Until that final and desperate moment, our weak selves find it easier not to face the virulence of evil—the profound evil in ourselves, the profound evil in the world around us. One way of dodging it is to assume that evil is the essence of man’s life on this earth, that the weapon of Truth is not for this time, and that Truth lives altogether outside this world, leaving man only evil with which to fight evil. If Truth be banished to some place else, there is no responsibility to fight with its demanding weapons, and thus no pressing need to battle against evil in one’s own heart. In such case, distant Truth, satisfied by a philosophic exercise of the mind, demands no exercise of the whole of a person’s life and being against the inward seeds of evil. And evil grows.

An easier and more popular way of dodging is simply to overlook evil and attempt to rationalize it into the

appearance of good. Optimism of this sort manages to excuse others but fails to love them: it puts a gloss upon the inward conceits of persons and of nations; it pushes aside as unnecessary the solvent force of Truth. Many persons find it difficult to detect evil in themselves, in the comfortable Mammon-worship around them, or in the outward acts and inward motives of governments and nations. Again evil grows; the living Truth is forgotten.

It does not matter primarily to Truth, one suspects, whether nations live or die. It matters primarily whether men and women attend to the whole business of their lives: loving God and their neighbors. The Power of Truth will not be let loose upon the earth until that business is attended to. If men and women are to take responsibility for their tormented world, if they are to seek salvation for all the persons who are oppressed and injured and starved and stunted by it, they will have, each one, to take the gamble that every person can only take alone: the gamble that there is God, that the Truth of God is in fact the Truth of life, not to be broken and never to be overcome, neither in this world nor in any other. At the root of all faith is a gamble against the world, a divine guess that there are hands of God ready to catch us if we throw ourselves into them.

Yet there is always the insistent fact of liberation; the gamble has, in a sense, been taken for us. It was taken unknown ages past when men first lifted their eyes to the heavens and the hills. It was taken by the prophets, the sages, and the saints known and unknown. It was taken supremely when Jesus let himself be killed upon a cross. And, once again, in the person of Gandhi it has been taken in our own time and before our own eyes. Once again, in our own time and before our own eyes, a man who found reality by staking his life on it has shown that the power of God is greater than any of the powers of this world.

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