

# Spirituality and Political Commitment

## Notes on a Liberation Theology of Nonviolence

In his new book *Giving Up the Gun: Japan's Reversion to the Sword, 1543-1879*, Noel Perrin describes the decision of the Japanese under the Tokugawa shogunate not to use the firearms recently introduced to their nation by the Portuguese. They based their decision not simply upon a national abhorrence of bloodshed, but rather upon the values traditionally associated with the samurai warrior. The gun unfairly enabled any common soldier to overcome all the prowess, learning and piety that constituted samurai spirituality. Hence, for 250 years Tokugawa Japan enjoyed peace without guns. By the end of that period, only scholars were still familiar with the words used to describe such weapons. Furthermore, the nation escaped invasion during that period (at least in part) by hanging canvas murals along the seacoasts to frighten away enemy ships. On the murals were painted large fortresses with threatening cannons atop their walls.

This delightful story from Asian history raises important questions about the interrelationship between nonviolent liberating action and the creative revisioning of the world that occurs through spiritual reflection. It lends itself to rethinking the classic tension between action and contemplation, especially as it relates to political decision making. In a post-Puebla, mid-SALT II era, the need for an imaginative and liberating theology of nonviolence is more prevalent than ever. And it can only be discovered as praxis and meditation are drawn inseparably together. Segundo Galilea has urged that "as well as a theology, we need a spirituality of liberation." Paradoxically, our lives require both the apatheia of which the desert fathers wrote (a spiritual distance from our own suffering) and a consciousness of the deepest

pathos in the world around us (especially in the third world). Spirituality and political commitment can no longer be disjointed.

How, then, does one begin with Galilea the task of "transforming contemplatives into prophets and militants into mystics"? Where do the two poles of action and contemplation come together? This article will make an effort at proposing a model for relating the two through an analysis of impasse situations and their resolution. Making use of change theory, Laingian psychoanalysis and the Zen conception of the koan, it will suggest ways of rethinking the Sermon on the Mount as a theology of the unexpected, offering an appreciation of the power of the paradoxical in behavioral change. Drawing upon the experience of contemporary proponents of nonviolence, it seeks, in other words, to understand anew the words of Our Lord: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

### Impasse Situations and Consciousness

Impasse situations are those intensely irritable frustrations that we invariably seek to avoid, but which sometimes—because of their very difficulty—result in breakthroughs of enormous creativity. They form a meeting place for the world of activity and the world of reflection, the Taoist yang and yin. On the one hand, in a genuine impasse every normal way of action is brought to a standstill. The left side of the brain, with its usual application of conventional thinking, is ground to a halt. The impasse forces us to start all over again, driving us to contemplation. On the other hand, the same impasse provides a challenge and concrete focus for contemplation, keeping it from evaporating

into lofty speculations. It forces the right side of the brain into gear, seeking intuitive, unconventional answers so that action can be renewed with greater purpose.

The idea is nothing new. Impasse situations have long been viewed by visionaries as creative junctures. St. James told his readers to "count it all joy when you meet various trials" (1:2). But Christians have never taken that as seriously as they might have; nor have they applied it sufficiently to political realities. Ironically, we seldom are fully aware of the trials or impasses we actually face. Therefore, we carry on with the same hopeless activity and fail to reflect on new alternatives long after the need for change has become apparent. Particularly, we find ourselves amidst impasse situations formed by social and political forces, and we view them with a passive sense of inevitability. They contain no joy, offer no promise of paradox. Instead of letting them take form before us as thoroughgoing impasses, forcing to an end our habitual methods of acting, we simply carry on with conventional solutions. Nowhere is this more dangerous than in our attitudes toward violence and its structures.

Dom Helder Câmara, Archbishop of Recife and Olinda in Brazil, speaks out of his third world experience of the deadly impasse formed by the "spiral of violence." This, he insists, is what most threatens our world today, primarily because we are unconscious of its operation. The spiral begins with what he calls violence number one, the injustice that is written into society and readily accepted by those in power. It is an institutionalized violence, often of the white-collar variety though seldom identified as such. But it breeds an angry frustration among the oppressed, which often breaks out into vio-

lence number two, the violence of despair. This, in turn, usually becomes an excuse for the reaction of those in power and the continuation of the spiral into violence number three, the violence of backlash, or fascist violence, with its ersatz appeal to law and order. Hence the impasse is brought to completion, with all its seeming inescapability. Each stage is a conventional and predictable response to the one previous.

As a way out of this spiral, Dom Helder looks to those Abrahamic minorities in the world who possess tremendous energy in their "hope against hope." Daring to imagine the impossible, they respond out of the full consciousness of their own suffering within situations of violent impasse. Their consciousness then becomes the key to identifying and awakening the consciousness of all those involved directly or indirectly in the formation of such conditions. With Paulo Freire, he knows that only as people recognize the spiral of violence to be the impasse that it is can there be any hope of resolution. Consciousness must always precede change.

This focus of consciousness directly upon impasse situations is an extremely important concept, finding parallels in many other fields. A fascination with mind-boggling problems, for example, has deep roots in Zen Buddhist thought. In Zen meditation there is a deliberate concern to cultivate impasse situations as a way of breaking through into new understandings or enlightenment. The Zen koan serves precisely that purpose. A master has his disciple intentionally stump his mind on a question that defies rational explanation, such as the classic example, "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" After days, maybe even weeks of intense concentration, the solution may suddenly come to him unexpectedly, as a flash of insight, at the peak of this spiritual tension. It results in a creative new synthesis which would formerly have been inconceivable. All this is possible because

of the decision not to avoid the impasse.

Robert Pirsig, in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, describes the same experience in terms of the concept of "stuckness." This is an impasse situation where, in his understanding, "classical thinking" breaks down and "romantic thinking" has to struggle for a new focus. He describes sitting along the highway one afternoon confronted with a screw that sticks on the side cover assembly of his stalled motorcycle. Experience in the past has told him to apply force to a stuck screw. So he clamps the vice grips onto his screwdriver, twists as hard as he can and suddenly tears the slot right out of the screw. Immediately he is caught in the kind of impasse we all have experienced. His first inclination is to push the whole machine over the embankment on the side of the road. But instead, he suggests that now is the time to roll a cigarette, to sit back and to let the right side of the brain begin to wander. He thinks about the screw not as an object to be moved, but as a set of functions of rigidity and adhesiveness. This may lead him to thoughts of solvents or the use of a torch or drill. In fact, if he stayed at it long enough, he might come up with a way of extracting screws never thought of before, something patentable and able to make him a millionaire. Such are the possibilities inherent in cases of "stuckness."

R. D. Laing uses a different language but suggests the same thing when he describes the "knots" or paradoxical binds in which we sometimes get ourselves in interpersonal relationships. In a genuine knot there is no escape. Both parties are trapped by their mutual misunderstanding or the power they use against each other or the games they can't help but play. Witness this exchange:

JILL: I am frightened.

JACK: Don't be frightened.

JILL: I am frightened to be frightened when you tell me I ought not to feel frightened.

Given the situation as so construed, one becomes hopelessly lost within the tangles of such a bind. The more Jack tries to comfort Jill, the less she is comforted. But the very process of describing the impasse situation in this way is itself therapeutic, says Laing. It offers a way of recognizing the conflict as a first step toward resolving it. Again, conscientization (to use Freire's term) is the beginning of change.

### The Principle of Second Order Change

In each of the illustrations offered above, a genuine impasse situation is such that the more action one applies to escape it, the worse it gets. Ordinary ways of proceeding fail directly in proportion to the intensity with which they are tried. The only way to resolve the problem, therefore, is to completely reframe the situation in one's mind, looking again at the assumptions previously made about it and formulating altogether new plans for action (or inaction). Three Stanford psychiatrists have recently proposed a theory of behavioral change designed to enable their clients to work through problems not readily solved by ordinary psychotherapies. They offer a contrast between what they label as principles of first- and second-order change; their conclusions speak directly to the question of impasse situations and their resolution.

First-order change, they suggest, is our usual procedure for solving problems. When confronted with an obstacle, we generally resort to emphasizing its opposite, opposing force with force. We assume that when something is bad, then its opposite has to be good. When resolution is not immediately forthcoming, our response then is usually to double the intensity of our effort. Yet what often happens is that the opposite becomes simply more of the same. The more Jack urges Jill not to be frightened, the more anxious she becomes. Genuine change, therefore, only occurs through a second-order response, one which rethinks the solution previously tried and suggests something altogether unexpected. This quality of paradox is at the heart of second-order change. It requires a radical breaking out of the conceptual blocks that normally limit our thinking. Paul Watzlawick, John Weakland and Richard Fisch begin their book *Change: Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution* with a compelling illustration of this:

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"When in 1334 the Duchess of Tyrol, Margareta Maultasch, encircled the castle of Hochosterwitz in the province of Carinthia, she knew only too well that the fortress, situated on an incredibly steep rock rising high above the valley floor, was impregnable to direct attack and would yield only to a long siege. In due course, the situation of the defenders became critical: They were down to their last ox and had only two bags of barley left. Margareta's situation was becoming equally pressing, albeit for different reasons: Her troops were beginning to be unruly, there seemed to be no end to the siege in sight and she had similarly urgent military business elsewhere. At this point, the commandant of the castle decided on a desperate course of action which to his men must have seemed sheer folly. He had the last ox slaughtered, had its abdominal cavity filled with the remaining barley and ordered the carcass thrown down the steep cliff onto a meadow in front of the enemy camp. Upon receiving this scornful message from above, the discouraged duchess abandoned the siege and moved on."

Had the commandant persisted in an attempt at first-order change, he would have ordered a further cut in rations, hoping to outlast the enemy by countering their siege. But his second-order response was a stroke of genius, an absurd and wholly unexpected action that put the entire impasse into a new light. The duchess departed, fully persuaded that the castle had food to last for months.

In such a way, second-order change redefines one's conception of the impasse. Previous solutions are evaluated and attempts are made at doing less instead of more of the same. As a result, there is a lessening of the tension caused by opposite joined against opposite. In the case of Jack's efforts at easing Jill's fear, for example, he may have to choose a wholly different and unexpected approach. This happened by accident in our home recently. My wife expressed fear about a graduate course in which she was involved, and my initial response was to follow exactly the lines of the Laingian knot, assuring her that she had nothing to be afraid of. But on later reflection (as this obviously did nothing to help), I suggested that maybe she really did have reason to fear. Maybe the professor and other students in the class were secretly laughing together

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about how little she knew. Maybe they hid behind the door before she came in, waiting to see what ignorant thing she might do next. And, of course, the absurdity of it all made us both laugh. There is a refreshing quality about being able to imagine the worst in a situation, especially after one has been repeatedly told that she has no reason whatever to fear. The element of laughter, surprise, paradox is central here. The solution is so immediately welcomed because of its sudden release of pressure.

But the discovery of such solutions demands a consistent eye for the unexpected, a keen taste for paradox. As Heraclitus, that great student of change, understood, "If you do not expect it, you will not find the unexpected, for it is hard to find and difficult." G.K. Chesterton speaks of St. Francis of Assisi as God's jester or tumbler—one who stands on his head for the pleasure of God, a fool for Christ's sake. The image is an apt one for those who would understand second-order change. By standing on his head, Francis sees the world in a new way, "with all the trees and towers hanging head downwards." The result is a new perception of reality. "Instead of being merely proud of his strong city because it would not be moved, he would be thankful to God Almighty that it had not been dropped." He would be struck by the dependence of all things upon God, the world for him would be reframed and with divine absurdity he would embrace poverty as his greatest joy.

One last illustration of this principle of second-order change, given by Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch, will help to indicate its particular application to impasse situations charged with violence: "During one of the many 19th-century riots in Paris, the commander of an army detachment received orders to clear a city square by firing at the canaille. He commanded his soldiers to take up firing positions, their rifles leveled at the crowd, and as a ghastly silence descended he drew his

sword and shouted at the top of his lungs: 'Mesdames, m'sieurs, I have orders to fire at the canaille. But as I see a great number of honest, respectable citizens before me, I request that they leave so that I can safely shoot the canaille.' The square was empty in a few minutes."

In the face of a hostile, violent crowd, the commander refused to view the situation as it had been framed for him by his superiors. Instead of pitting himself and his men against the people, his redefinition of the impasse allowed him to identify with them and still accomplish his task.

The question, of course, is how one develops this facility for recognizing new possibilities in a world tragically lacking in second-order change. Is it possible to prepare in advance for discovering the unexpected? In a sense, that is precisely one of the byproducts of Christian spirituality. Taking time for reflection on the character of the Christian faith reveals the paradox that lies at its very heart. The whole scandal of the Gospel is that it is not what people expect. "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise and . . . what is weak in the world to shame the strong" (1 Cor. 1:27). At its best, then, Christian contemplation leads to an appreciation of paradox. It is critical of action which has become conventional, customary and merely traditional, and it nurtures instead that action which provokes surprise, laughter, the joy of the unexpected. Here then is an action-contemplation synthesis which is rooted in a celebrative theology of the unexpected.

Its specific implications for political life, however, need to be drawn out more carefully. How do action and contemplation so conceived lend themselves to a liberating theology of nonviolence? Can the element of surprise or paradox be applied to sociopolitical impasses, for example, in a way similar to the philosophy and technique of judo? Instead of opposing the opponent's thrust with a counterthrust, is it possible to find ways of yielding to the

initial force, disarming the opponent by one's nonresistance, and thus creating a new situation altogether? Such is the technique as applied by proponents of nonviolent resistance in this century. The model of the impasse situation and second-order change can readily be applied to their experience in order to suggest elements that will be common to any liberating theology of nonviolence, especially one that is Christian. Specifically, five axioms can be set forth, each put in the form of a paradox, each characterized by the unexpected.

### **Axioms for Nonviolent Liberating Action**

1. *Liberating change will always begin with consciousness rather than action.* Danilo Dolci, the Italian architect who became the "Gandhi of Sicily," went to the wretched village of Trappeto 27 years ago to do nothing. He simply began asking questions, gradually urging the people to think about their plight through a process he liked to call "popular self-analysis." His imaginative "strike in reverse," the construction of the dam on the Iato River and his direct opposition to Mafia rule all came later. He knew that the raising of consciousness had to precede any liberating action. Gandhi, of course, had discovered the same axiom half a century earlier on his first train ride to Pretoria in South Africa. Dressed fully the part of an English barrister, with top hat, leather gloves and spats, he was nevertheless deprived of his first-class seat because of racial discrimination. Forcibly evicted, he spent a long, lonely night in the train station at Maritzburg and as a result both his and the British Empire's consciousness would never be the same. After her first foray into labor organization among mine workers in southern France, while still a teacher in the girls' lycée at Le Puy, Simone Weil realized her utter lack of the consciousness that workers possessed. Therefore, she spent most of 1934-35 as a factory worker in Paris, driven to physical

collapse by the pressure constantly to produce more pieces on the lathe or metal press. "Exhaustion ends by making me forget the real reasons for my working in the factory," she wrote. But in the process the workers' consciousness of grinding monotony became her own.

Liberating change can only emerge out of conscientization. As Paulo Freire so well insists, the initiative for such liberation always lies with the oppressed and their own struggle for consciousness. Those of us in the first world, therefore, find ourselves in many ways dependent upon others for our own liberation. The Gospel can only be heard by people who are caught in impasses, by those who are oppressed. Only to them does it ring as a liberating "good news." Freire suggests:

"Only the third world—not in the geographic sense, but in the sense of the world that is dominated, dependent, voiceless—is able to hear the Word of God. For the first world to hear that Word, it must previously undergo an Easter. It must die as first world and be reborn as third world. Only from the third world, too, in the sense I am giving it here, can a utopian theology emerge, a theology of denouncing and announcing, implying prophecy and hope."

Liberation, therefore, must begin not with action (especially not with the simple expenditure of large sums of money for the schooling of society, as Ivan Illich deplores), but with the raising of consciousness, with the awareness of suffering and repentance. The various impasses of poverty and oppression can never be moved by first-order change.

2. *Liberating change will involve respect for the opponent, not his repudiation.* A second paradoxical axiom for liberating nonviolent action involves the reframing of one's perception of both oppressor and oppressed. The image of the intractable enemy is particularly called into question here. Gandhi's conception of *satyagraha*, or the force of truth, insisted

on seeing both parties within a conflict as subject to truth and in need of its wholeness. Gustavo Gutiérrez urges similarly that the liberating love of Christ has to be applied in two directions. The oppressed need to be liberated from their misery, and the oppressors need to be liberated from their sin. He writes: "One loves the oppressors by liberating them from their inhuman condition as oppressors, by liberating them from themselves. . . . It is not a question of having no enemies, but rather of not excluding them from our love."

The conviction, therefore, is strong that full liberation occurs only when both oppressor and oppressed are set free. Instead of hardening the impasse by matching force against force, the two sides are now seen to be mutual parts of a larger whole. The *satyagrahi* acts toward his opponent not simply so as to get power from him, but so as someday to make him his neighbor. Gandhi's experience with Gen. Jan Christaan Smuts is a classic example. When the Indian leader left South Africa for the last time in 1914, he presented a pair of leather sandals he had made in prison to the very man responsible for placing him there. Twenty-five years later, Smuts returned them as a gesture of friendship, saying that while he had often worn them he had never felt worthy to stand in the shoes of such a man. The beauty of Gandhi's action was that he had not merely won a victory over his opponent; he had won his opponent over. In their conflict they had enhanced each other's stature, growing together into a mutual respect. One sees a similar dynamic at work in Dag Hammarskjöld's extraordinary diplomatic encounter with Chou En-lai in 1955 as well as in Martin Luther King's pause in the Birmingham boycott to pray on the steps of the hospital where Eugene (Bull) Connor was ill. The persuasive force that one uses against his opponent here is not basically manipulative or coercive. The strongest appeal the *satyagrahi* is able to make is rooted in his own suffering.

3. *Liberating change will require the appropriation of suffering rather than the escape from it.* For 25 years, Cesar Chavez has been rallying farm workers around the principle that their suffering is the only thing they can truly call their own. They are painfully familiar with it and good at it. Hence, all they need to learn is how to claim it as their own and use it as a per-

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suasive tool. Ironically, as he knows, liberation is discovered not through the escape from one's suffering, but through one's own appropriation of it. Suffering exerts a far greater persuasive force than reason ever could alone. As Gandhi understood, "reason has to be strengthened by suffering and suffering opens the eyes of understanding." When it is made one's own, suffering can then become a powerful moral force. Mr. Chavez has known this since his earliest days in community organizing under Saul Alinsky. In fact, his life growing up reads like a page taken from Steinbeck's description of dustbowl migrants in the 1930's. Never has he escaped the anguished experience of struggling migrant workers.

His celebrated fast at Delano in 1968, therefore, came as a natural recourse to him. For 25 days he fasted, not to humiliate or threaten the growers who had refused negotiation, but rather to urge a commitment to nonviolence within the United Farm Workers movement itself. His self-assumed suffering was directed toward those who could most be moved by it. Hence, the poignant story of the rough old campesino who came to Delano one night during the fast with a sackful of tacos, determined to force Cesar to eat because he was the only hope his people had.

Dorothy Day made a similar appropriation of suffering when she and Peter Maurin repeatedly refused in the 1950's to be "saved" from nuclear destruction by entering one of the underground air raid shelters in New York City. Protesting the climate of cold war hysteria that the air raid drills promoted, she chose rather to sit on a bench above ground and subsequently be taken to jail for the crime of neglecting her own self-preservation. There is an important Christological note here that is echoed in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church from Vatican II: "Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and under oppression, so the church is called to follow the same path in communicating to men the fruits of salvation." The point of the church is not to survive, but to serve. The church can never be viewed as simply an end in itself, something to be carefully preserved from adversity. Only as the church aligns itself with those who suffer and appropriates their suffering as its own can liberating change then occur.

4. *Liberating change will necessitate the initiation of tension, though without the*

*usual recourse to violence.* Lanza del Vasto's writings on the technique of nonviolence are appropriately entitled *Warriors of Peace*. Since his founding of the Community of the Ark in France a generation ago, this gentle man has been unrelenting in his resistance to injustice, not the least in his protest of the use of torture by the French Army in the Algerian war. Non-violent liberating action can never be the choice of those who are by nature weak and submissive. Gandhi insisted that ahimsa can be practiced only by those who know themselves to be strong. "The clemency of a sheep or a rabbit means nothing. One must possess power in order to renounce it," says Lanza del Vasto. Hence, only the fearless are free to explore the energies of peace, whereas cowardice is necessarily the mother of violence.

The warrior of peace recognizes the importance of initiating tensions in which impasse situations will become fully visible as such. His hope will always be that the opponent will play into his hand by a relentless application of first-order change. If he can provoke a response of this kind, the situation suddenly becomes ripe for the introduction of a second-order solution.

The confrontation Gandhi invited by his celebrated march to the sea in 1930 illustrates this axiom. Choosing the relatively innocuous Salt Laws as the particular focus of his civil disobedience, he galvanized the attention of the nation on a handful of India's poor marching to the sea, the mother of life. Praying as they went, sweating in the sun, they eventually took water from an ocean that belongs to all people, heated it to make salt to relieve their suffering and thereby broke the law of the British Government. The British then went on to cooperate grandly in further demonstrating the absurdity of their own law. Following the dynamics of first-order change, they promptly arrested Gandhi and all those who followed his example. As a result, within three months 100,000 satyagrahis were in Indian prisons

for making their own salt. The British made perfect fools of themselves, the world laughed and Gandhi had made his point.

Martin Luther King was similarly grateful for Bull Connor's crucial and ironic role in the success of the demonstrations in Birmingham in 1963. Using all the weapons of first-order change—from billy clubs and police dogs to fire hoses and mass arrests—the police commissioner made the impasse so complete as to virtually welcome the new solution King proposed. With singing children being loaded into patrol wagons and school buses to be carried away to jail, the nation recognized that the impasse had reached that absurd point at which it must break into something new. The tension had been carried to a glorious conclusion.

5. *Finally, liberating change will be made possible by a spiritual discipline, not simply a political ideology.* John Paul II at the CELAM conference in Puebla this year called for "a correct Christian idea of liberation" which would include "liberation from everything that oppresses man but . . . above all liberation from sin and the evil one, in the joy of knowing God. . . ." It is a spiritual discipline, rooted in the church's living tradition, he urges, that protects this social doctrine from "manipulation by ideological systems and political parties." This requires, therefore, not simply a commitment to certain ends, but also to certain means. It is commitment with a particular content.

In Gandhi's case, his commitment to truth (satya), as formed by his study of the Bhagavad-Gita (as well as the Sermon on the Mount), gave him an amazing lack of interest in the actual results of his action. Since he was never anxious to achieve the ends of ideological struggle, his life was marked rather by the quietness of a spiritual discipline. His achievements in politics were always less important to him than the quality of his life before God. As a result, the discipline of a brahmacharya became for him a value in its own right, complete-

ly apart from the ends of political action, although the two could never really be separated. "Just as one must learn the art of killing in the training for violence," he wrote, "so one must learn the art of dying in the training for nonviolence." This dying, in Christian theology, is rooted in one's baptism, wherein one dies to sin and is raised anew to life in Christ. It means the conquering of the fear of death and the nurturing of a discipline that both pleases God and changes the world. Gilbert Murray's tribute to Gandhi indicates the power of such a discipline:

"Be careful in dealing with a man who cares nothing for sensual pleasures, nothing for comfort or praise or promotion; but is simply determined to do what he believes to be right. He is a dangerous and uncomfortable enemy because his body, which you can always conquer, gives you so little purchase over his soul."

This was exactly what Martin Luther King sought to instill in the volunteers who satisfied his qualifications for service as demonstrators in the Birmingham struggle. All were required to pledge themselves to a strict discipline. It committed them to daily meditation on the teachings and life of Jesus, as well as prayer that all men might be free. It reminded them of the nonviolent movement's quest for justice and reconciliation rather than victory. It enjoined them to observe the ordinary rules of courtesy with both friend and foe and repudiated all violence of fist, tongue or heart. It made extraordinary demands. But it was only by such a discipline that Dr. King was able to commit his followers to the practice of second-order change.

#### Rethinking the Politics of the Possible

These axioms help explain the effectiveness of nonviolent action within a situation where violent response would most often be expected. They emphasize the paradoxical character of that behavior which evokes second-order change. Per-

haps they even suggest how the Japanese were able to give up the gun for some 250 years of their history. The achievement of disarmament in Tokugawa Japan was, of course, a function of many factors. But in part it required the same kind of imaginative reflection that is necessary to escape the bounds of any impasse. Surely the painting of threatening murals, for example, is an irregular means of national defense, in any century. Yet the resources the Japanese found in samurai spirituality enabled them to set certain limits to the expression of violence and to avoid the impasse of a constantly improved weaponry. Furthermore, they did this without falling back upon a naively optimistic view of human nature that is frequently the *bête noire* of nonviolent movements. The Japanese possessed no blind and easy trust in the restraint of their enemies. Their thinking was marked rather by a clever realism requiring the leaders of the shogunate to be wise as serpents while remaining essentially harmless as doves. Curiously, throughout this period the samurai maintained the image of a formidable opponent, an image projected more by the tradition of his discipline than by the unsheathing of his sword.

By contrast, our own culture remains extremely wary of nonviolent alternatives in general. Deeply suspicious of the quixotic, we pride ourselves on a hardheaded realism that deals with rugged certainties rather than imaginative possibilities. Hence, we find it difficult to entertain the ideas that make second-order change possible. A combination of American pragmatism, the frontier experience and our extraordinary confidence in technology makes us unusually susceptible to the logic of first-order change. We have always been persuaded that any impasse could be broken if only sufficient pressure were brought to bear upon it. Therefore, the massive expenditure of force, money or technical savvy has been our usual approach to problem solving. It may not often have worked in earlier circumstances, but it always had the advantage of appear-

ing to be practical and tough-minded.

As a result, second-order change, with its appeal to the unexpected and unconventional, is generally hampered by the cultural blocks we throw up against it. One is taught not to waste time in fantasy and reflection, for example. Playfulness and humor may be acceptable in our dealings with children, but they have no role in the sober business of problem solving. Dreaming is similarly impugned with a vehemence like that reserved for idleness by the Puritans. Yet dreams, as we have seen, are the stuff of which liberating action is made. They carry us beyond the languish of impasse to the impossible possibility of change.

In 1947, Gandhi was assassinated by a tough-minded realist named N. V. Godse, one who ridiculed the idea that Hindus and Muslims could live together in peace. His words at his trial were an eloquent assault upon all that Gandhi had taught: "To imagine that the bulk of mankind is or can ever become capable of scrupulous adherence to these lofty principles in its normal life from day to day is a mere dream." The image of the dream is an appropriate one. It is echoed in the words inscribed on the stone over Martin Luther King's grave. Taken from the story of Joseph and his brothers, the inscription reads: "And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him . . . and we shall see what will become of his dreams" (Gen. 37:19-20).

Gandhi did have a dream, like Martin Luther King, a political dream that emerged out of the dreams which filled his spiritual life. Whether it was a mere dream is something yet to be judged by ourselves in the world we will make. With all of its absurdity, the dream of nonviolent liberation still lives today. There are people now living who lead us to ask if small may be not only beautiful, but powerful as well. Their very existence raises tough questions about the mystery of evil and the triumph of liberating grace. What keeps Helder Câmara or Danilo Dolci or Cesar Chavez alive? That question alone demands a hearing for second-order change. It gives pause to those who find themselves within the deepest of impasses. "Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him . . . and we shall see what will become of his dreams."

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