

From Bonhoeffer to Gandhi: God as Truth

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The world as suffering and as entering transformation is crucifixion. At the heart of the world is the continuation and working out of Golgotha. The revolution of peace is the world in the critical process of overcoming its self-resistance to unity through the upward convergence of love, a process animated by the union of God and man.

But the world is creation as well as crucifixion, natural growth as well as divine revolution. Man is born in the cathedral of earth and sky, reaches out to the infinite silence of the universe, and begins to form himself in a rhythm of creation and self-recognition. Man is growing and maturing through time, provoking and provoked by a progressive self-understanding. Today the world as creation is man's cumulative discovery of himself in time, not at his deepest self-identity—for his deepest manhood is found through his suffering union with God, through crucifixion not creation, or through that *unique creation* which is crucifixion. But the world as evolving creation is man's growing discovery of himself as distinct and fully responsible, as that one called from childhood to recognize and affirm the possibilities of a world come of age.

In *The Secular City* Harvey Cox has effectively described the present point of the world as creation in terms of secularization, of 'man turning his attention away from worlds beyond and toward this world and this time' (*The Secular City*, 1965, p. 2). The age of the secular city is a liberation of man from religious world-views whose orientation distracted him from the task of building the earth. It is therefore an affirmation of human responsibility and maturity. The secular metropolis today stands as both the pattern of men's life together and the symbol of their view of the world because secularization 'occurred only when the cosmopolitan confrontations of city living exposed the relativity of the myths and traditions men once thought were unquestionable' (p. 1). Cox suggests that the secular city even supplies us with the most promising image to understand the Kingdom of God. Since the Kingdom is the partnership of God and man in history, our responsible shaping of the secular city is the Kingdom in the process of realizing itself. Cox later expresses his awareness, however, that 'secularization is not the Messiah'. In itself secularization is simply 'a dangerous liberation; it raises the stakes, making it possible for man to increase the range of his freedom and responsibility and thus to deepen his maturation. At the same time

it poses risks of a larger order than those it displaces. But the promise exceeds the peril, or at least makes it worth taking the risk' (p. 167). On this level of his analysis, Cox's positive response to the secular city is a necessary re-awakening of Christian concern for the world as continuing creation, and for man as he actually confronts this stage of his evolving history.

Yet granted the need to celebrate creation, which today means an increasingly secular creation, it is impossible to understand the height to which the stakes have been raised by our age unless one recognizes the enormous tension between what is and what must become, and unless one anchors that recognition in a radical distinction between the secular city and the Kingdom of God.

The distance from the secular city to the Kingdom of God is infinite, not because the Kingdom is nowhere present in the city but because it is present as transcendence and therefore active as revolution. In the technological society which is rapidly covering the earth, the city must be a locus for the revolution of peace but it is not its reality. The city as such is pragmatic and profane, beautiful and ugly, calling for both celebration and transformation. The city is all things to those gathered within it, joy and terror on the same block. But the city as city is unredeemed. It remains the city of man, where God's work of love within man is unsettling and explosive. For in terms of justice, the city is more static than mobile and often meets the challenge of non-violent love with violent hatred, revolution with repression. Man's coming of age in the secular city is not identical with the coming of love. Where the two intersect, as they do in the man of truth, a crucifixion takes place, for the city is not prepared to accept the fulfilment of its promise and will exact the penalty of suffering from the prophet. The presence of transcendence in time is loving and abrasive, non-violent and aggressive. The name of transcendence is Truth. In its revolution of peace Truth cannot make peace with the city until the city has taken the form of that new heaven which is a new earth.

It is not so much secularity as technology, the source and sustaining power of the city, which represents the peril and risk of our time. Secularity has brought man a sense of absolute autonomy; technology has given him the power to press his autonomous self into experiments with inconceivable effects on his life and psyche. Yet technology is not simply a huge power complex of machines and apparatus. It is a state of mind, and as such it has formed the frame of reference in which we all live.

The effect of technology on the entire world has been to impel mankind toward a single, all-embracing civilization, a civilization characterized largely by the domination of machines over men, but even more by the domination of standardization over spontaneity and of means over ends. Technique means the pursuit by quantitative calculations of the one best means in every area of human life.

It is a question of the specialist determining everywhere not the best relative means, in which a subjective choice would be made among several possibilities, but the best means in the absolute sense, on the basis of objective numerical calculation. Thus the expansion of technique into the whole of life has meant the creation of a science of means, a science touching very different areas with the same methodology of absolute technical calculation. 'It ranges from the act of shaving to the act of organizing the landing in Normandy, or to cremating thousands of deportees. Today no human activity escapes this technical imperative' (Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 1965, p. 21). It is the aggregate of all these means and the machines embodying them, each the best by calculation in a specific field, which produces technical civilization. We have become, in the words of Jacques Ellul, the foremost analyst of this phenomenon, 'a civilization of means' (p. 19).

It is within this context of technique, of the technological society, that the question of truth must be consciously re-raised by man today. As men of technique we are actually incapable of seeking truth in any other context—we can only conceptualize within our 'civilization of means'—but we are both able and likely to seek truth without conscious recognition of the extent to which our efforts have been managed by our age, and our end pre-determined by our beginning. The question of truth must either be raised critically, with direct reference to our world and its particular kind of dominance over us, or we shall be as much the victims of a passing mythology, in this case imposed by the thought patterns of the secular city, as was any noble savage. On the other hand, there can be no question of aspiring to a timeless, disembodied truth unaffected by the relativities of history. To grow in truth, which is both present and transcendent, relative to life and infinite in reach, man today must do so in terms of, and in response to, the technological society which is forming his world.

Considerations such as these moved Dietrich Bonhoeffer to pose in his prison cell in 1944 his now-famous questions about God and man in the contemporary world: 'The thing that keeps coming back to me is, what *is* Christianity, and indeed what *is* Christ, for us today? . . . We are proceeding towards a time of no religion at all: men as they are now simply cannot be religious any more. . . . How do we speak of God without religion, i.e. without the temporally-influenced presuppositions of metaphysics, inwardness, and so on? How do we speak in a secular fashion of God?' (*Letters and Papers from Prison*, 1962, pp. 162-4).

To judge from two of the current efforts 'to speak in a secular fashion of God', those of Harvey Cox and Leslie Dewart, discourse on God in the contemporary world may have to become increasingly wrapped in silence. Cox feels that due to the fatal equivocality of the word 'God' and its equivalents in our secular civilization, we

may have to take a moratorium on speech until a new name for the reality of God arrives. This new name will come through a continuing revelation in history, 'through the clash of historical forces and the faithful efforts of a people to discern his presence and respond to his call' (p. 266). Dewart suggests in his valuable book, *The Future of Belief*, that in the meantime we should be engaged in a progressive dehellenization of the Christian doctrine of God, especially with regard to such concepts as being, omnipotence, eternity, and the supernatural. What will begin to emerge is a new restraint in applying any name to the Christian God, motivated by the desire to render His presence more immediate to us (pp. 171-215).

It would be difficult to deny the value of any proposal which would reduce radically the invocations to God in a civilization which holds God himself as a means ready to sell its every crime and product. Nor is there anything intrinsically sacred in the name 'God'. For that Reality whose presence evokes awe and a self-crucifying love, the name of 'God', with both its pagan and modern connotations, may be a conceptual reduction verging on blasphemy. On the other hand, it is not blasphemy but belief to signify by our withdrawal of his name that the God who can justify total victory in Vietnam should be declared totally dead.

Yet granting the problem of 'God' and the Christian precedents besides, from Dionysius the Areopagite through St John of the Cross, for a position which would at certain heights deny him every name and attribute, it can still be questioned if an historicized version of negative theology is the fulfilment of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. If to speak meaningfully of God in the technological society is to speak of him less or not at all, then we must still either take on the task of forging a new and living credo for our more restrained speech, or in the case of total negation and silence, suppose in modern man a ready response to that burning awareness of the divine presence which moved the mystics, and would presumably move ourselves, beyond thought and language. If it is more possible to witness to the divine presence without 'God', and even then sparingly, it remains impossible, except in rare instances, to speak of him by denying him speech. If God lives to give birth to others, then his presence must be granted the witness of living words. What Bonhoeffer has proven equally by his life and writings, and what Harvey Cox has re-stated so well, is that the peculiar idiom in which this presence can be conveyed to modern man, if it can be conveyed at all, is political rather than metaphysical:

A church which eschews politics, or worse still, uses politics to shore up its own position in the world, will never speak to secular man. Ministers and nuns on picket lines for racial justice today are not just signs of the church's "social concern". They are evangelists, telling modern man what the Gospel says. The

church which remains securely within the "spiritual realm" will annoy no one and convince no one, for secular man is a political animal *par excellence*. . . .' ('Beyond Bonhoeffer', *Commonweal*, Sept. 17, 1965, p. 657.)

To speak in a secular fashion of God means, first of all, to speak of him in direct response to the suffering and injustice in the world today, and moreover, to speak in so specific and pointed a fashion that there can be no question of one's meaning and position. To speak meaningfully of God to secular man is therefore to act decisively on the faith that conscience can and must seek out and discern the will of God where secular man lives, in concrete events, and that conscience can do so regardless of how much 'the people with watch-chains', as Pasternak referred to the enemies of life, in an early poem, 'My Sister Life', have obscured by doubt and profaned by presumption the fulfilling of such a mandate. There can be no living speech about God, under any name, except where injustice is resisted by love in witness to his presence in the suffering. Discourse on God can only take on meaning with specific reference to suffering man, which is not to deny the truth of transcendence but to affirm the reality of its incarnation and continuing presence.

Because secular man is 'a political animal *par excellence*' he will confront God primarily in a political idiom. If the God of Love seems absent there, as was the case when Karl Marx took up the cause of the workers, then secular man will give him up as dead. A God who is not present in political life today is dead to man's conscience because the decisions, or lack of them, which bring life and death to the majority of mankind now take place in the realm of politics. To speak of God in a secular fashion is to testify to his presence where life and death matter most to man, yet precisely where God has in fact usually been claimed by the forces of injustice and oppression. To cut through the Christian mythologies of class and nation to the core of concern, however, it is clear that the man, Jesus, who was crucified by Rome as a dangerous insurgent can neither be divorced from the political realm nor enlisted as a counter-revolutionary.¹ The judgment of the Romans, who at least discerned in Jesus the fact of revolution, however wrong their interpretation of it, was more accurate than that of modern Christians, whose conception of Christ makes him unworthy of crucifixion if it does not in fact place him among the executioners.

It is not necessary to search through Bonhoeffer's early commentaries, as Cox does (*The Secular City*, p. 241), for a clue to a specific starting point for 'a worldly interpretation of Christianity'. Bonhoeffer

¹New Testament historians have shown an increasing awareness of the charge of insurgency laid against Jesus. See, for example, Paul Winter, 'The Trial of Jesus', *Commentary* (September, 1964), pp. 35-41, esp. pp. 38-39. I am indebted to Dr George Edwards of Louisville Presbyterian Seminary for bringing this point to my attention.

was quite specific on the point in the same prison cell, three months after he posed his initial questions:

God allows himself to be edged out of the world and on to the cross. God is weak and powerless in the world, and that is exactly the way, the only way, in which he can be with us and help us. Matthew 8, 17 makes it crystal clear that it is not by his omnipotence that Christ helps us, but by his weakness and suffering.

This is the decisive difference between Christianity and all religions. Man's religiosity makes him look in his distress to the power of God in the world; he uses God as a *Deus ex machina*. The Bible however directs him to the powerlessness and suffering of God; only a suffering God can help. To this extent we may say that the process we have described by which the world came of age was an abandonment of a false conception of God, and a clearing of the decks for the God of the Bible, who conquers power and space in the world by his weakness. This must be the starting point for our 'worldly' interpretation. (*Letters and Papers from Prison*, pp. 219-20.)

Only a suffering God can help, the God of the Bible, who conquers power and space in the world by his weakness. To speak in a secular fashion of God is to speak of this God of the Bible, crucified and resurrected, and to draw forth the implications of his revolutionary crucifixion for the believer in the technological society. If we are to take Bonhoeffer seriously, it would seem that a fundamental reason for secular man's indifference to God is that Christianity has failed to introduce him to Jesus crucified. Yet it is not apparent that this introduction will be accomplished by celebrating the secular city and making God its appendix. A closed secularity is overcome not so much by speaking less of God as it is by speaking more of man, at that precise point where man meets God in suffering and in revolution. But to speak today of God in the fashion of his man it is imperative that the man of the cross be seen outlined against the totalitarian power of our civilization of means.

In the modern world the meeting of man and God has most closely approximated the revolution of the cross in the person of Mohandas Gandhi. While it cannot be said that to preach Gandhism is to preach Christ, it is always necessary to preach Christ in terms of his continuing presence in man and of the upward revolution of cross and open tomb; their primary exponent in our time is Gandhi. The significance of Gandhi is that more than any other man of our century, except Pope John XXIII on a different level of politics, he has testified to the active presence of God in the world of political man and has done so after the pattern of Jesus. In Gandhi belief met secularity in suffering love and an empire changed. The questions which Bonhoeffer asked, and to which he gave the cross as the beginning of an answer, have their further response in Gandhi. Moreover, this response was such that it offers perhaps the only way to resist

effectively and finally transcend the technological determinants of our civilization.

Gandhi's faith and politics were inseparable. He wrote in the introduction to his autobiography:

What I want to achieve,—what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years,—is self-realization, to see God face to face. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end. (*An Autobiography or The Story of my Experiments with Truth*, 1927, p. xiv.)

Gandhi rejected the popular description of himself as a saint trying to be a politician; he said that the truth was the other way around. Yet the extent to which Gandhi as a politician made his goal, that of seeing God face to face, determine and form each of his concrete actions and policies sets him far apart from any other believing politician. He made God his end not as a terminal point and his particular salvation but as the Reality to be progressively found through his daily politics, the ground and measure of every decision, and as an end already visible in the faces of a people resisting oppression with love. Gandhi was both saint and politician because his deepening vision of God was realized in and through his political vision for man. 'If I could persuade myself that I should find Him in a Himalayan cave, I would proceed there immediately. But I know that I cannot find Him apart from humanity' (*God is Truth*, 1962, pp. 54-5). His faith became incarnate in his suffering people. He was once moved to write: 'It is no exaggeration, but the literal truth, to say that in this meeting with the peasants I was face to face with God, Ahimsa and Truth' (*The Story of my Experiments with Truth*, p. 304). Because Gandhi saw God already present in man he was able to move man to a revolution toward God.

Gandhi's God was Truth, a name he arrived at after much searching but one which so deepened in his consciousness that his final formulation of it passed from 'God is Truth' to 'Truth is God':

I came to that conclusion [that Truth is God] after a continuous and relentless search after Truth, which began nearly fifty years ago. I then found that the nearest approach to Truth was through love. But I also found that love has many meanings in the English language at least, and that human love, in the sense of passion, could become a degrading thing also. I found, too, that love, in the sense of *Ahimsa* [avoiding injury to anything on earth], had only a limited number of votaries in the world. But I never found a double meaning in connection with Truth, and not even atheists had demurred to the necessity or power of Truth. But, in their passion for discovering Truth, the atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of God—from their own point of view rightly. And it was because of this reasoning that I saw that rather

than say that 'God is Truth', I should say that 'Truth is God.'
(*God is Truth*, pp. 29-30.)¹

Gandhi titled his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Truth is limitless. It is gained gradually on an infinite ascent through a painful methodology of search and self-sacrifice. Truth, or God, is so intimate to life that it is the subject of deep personal experimentation and the essence of political action; Truth so transcends life that its way is without end and its power without limit. Yet man can grow into Truth's infinite power only by first recognizing his own powerlessness and in humility reducing himself to zero. 'Satyagraha', or truth-force, is that Power which in itself can overcome any injustice on earth but whose fulness is blocked by the individual's lack of faith and his continuing self-assertion. The extent of each person's commitment to Truth goes beyond all religious and secular loyalties to define his real allegiance to God. A man knows Truth as relative, but if he worships that relative truth and deepens in it, he is certain to attain the Absolute Truth.

Gandhi's answer to the question, How do we speak in a secular fashion of God?, was to speak of Truth. The one name God possesses for every man of good will, believer or not, is Truth; or to put the emphasis where Gandhi wanted it, Truth is God. The Truth Gandhi spoke of and witnessed to was a living Truth. It could shape his life and politics because it exists at the very centre of life:

Truth gives perennial joy. . . . Truth is Knowledge also. It is Life. You feel vitality in you when you have got Truth in you. Again, it gives Bliss. It is a permanent thing of which you cannot be robbed. You may be sent to the gallows, or put to torture, but if you have Truth in you, you will experience an inner joy.
(*God is Truth*, p. 25.)

In his friendships with professed atheists who shared his social concern, Gandhi found the identity of God and Truth the necessary bridge for mutual understanding. For a marriage between two atheists in his Ashram he substituted the words 'in the name of Truth' for 'in the name of God' without compromising either his or their beliefs. On the existential plane the key to belief was love, for as he told one friend: 'You may call yourself an atheist, but so long as you feel akin with mankind you accept God in practice' (Gora, *An Atheist with Gandhi*, 1951, p. 31). Truth incarnated in suffering love was belief. Another atheist by expounding his belief in man's dignity as unhindered by a repressive God forced Gandhi to admit:

Yes, I see an ideal in your talk. I can neither say my theism is right nor your atheism wrong. We are seekers after truth. We change whenever we find ourselves in the wrong. I changed like that many times in my life. I see you are a worker. You are not a fanatic. You will change whenever you find yourself in the wrong.

¹The editor of this book of extracts from Gandhi's writings does not explain why he chose a title which reverses Gandhi's own formulation.

There is no harm as long as you are not fanatical. Whether you are in the right or I am in the right, results will prove. Then I may go your way or you may come my way; or both of us may go a third way. (Gora, p. 44.)

The man who received this response was overwhelmed by Gandhi's openness and understanding. He became a member of Gandhi's 'family' and later wrote a book on their continuing dialogue and friendship, *An Athiest with Gandhi*.

The correspondence between Gandhi's understanding of truth and the thought of the Catholic philosopher, Leslie Dewart, in *The Future of Belief* is remarkable enough to quote Dewart at length:

Belief in the *true God* means not simply belief in a god which, (logically enough), we must *presuppose* to be true, under pain of otherwise not being able to believe at all. It means belief in God precisely *as true*. It would not be inexact, therefore, to say that belief in God really means to have an ultimate commitment to the truth; I mean, to all truth, totally and universally—not particularly to a transcendent, subsistent Truth, that is, not to the presumed Truth of God's self-identity, which is a hellenization of the Christian experience, but to the transcendent truth which is immanent and manifested in every truth. I am talking about the truth which evokes the attitudes of honesty and truthfulness—I mean, that precise sort of openness which is apt to earn self-respect. I refer to that truth which calls for fidelity to the truth wherever and whatever it might be (p. 74; emphasis in original).

Dewart cites as the hallmark of the commitment to God *as true* 'a certain conditioning of one's belief by the willingness to admit the real possibility of disbelief—both by another and by oneself' (*loc. cit.*). Or as the man of our time whose intensity of belief was second to none put it to an atheist: 'I may go your way or you may come my way; or both of us may go a third way.' Unlike Christianity, which has allowed its belief to become fixed on a narrowing conception of God at the expense of its openness to truth, especially as found in its own Gospel, Gandhi felt in no way threatened by an absolute commitment to truth as it opened out to him. For Gandhi God was 'up ahead' in the deeply living sense that his experiments in Truth were drawing him farther and farther into the mystery of a loving goal of life and history. God as Truth opened him to every aspect of man's search for dignity and meaning. Truth is therefore not the adequacy of our representative operations but, in Dewart's words, 'the adequacy of our conscious existence', 'the fidelity of consciousness to being' (p. 92). There was no hesitation in Gandhi's pursuit of all truth, on a rigorously disciplined way, because God's very presence could be separated from no truth.

It is perhaps in this direction as indicated by Gandhi, the identification of God's presence with a loving, existential growth in truth, that the proper approach lies to what Dewart has suggested is the basic

problem for Christian philosophy: to demonstrate whether, in what sense, in what way, and with what consequences, God is *present* (pp. 184-5). If God is present as truth, grounded in suffering love, then the previous deadlock between theism and atheism takes on a new dimension, one in which there is a response to Bonhoeffer when he writes: 'I often ask myself why a Christian instinct frequently draws me more to the religionless than to the religious, by which I mean not with any intention of evangelizing them, but rather, I might almost say, in "brotherhood"' (*Letters and Papers from Prison*, p. 165).

In Gandhi's framework, insofar as the religious have sacrificed the search for truth, which is God's very presence, for a particular notion of God, which in becoming merely abstract and static proclaims the absence of God, they have in effect lost God himself. The religionless, on the other hand, lacking any allegiance to a deity jealous of its own truth, have been free to press forward into God's actual presence as Truth and Love. Bonhoeffer's brotherhood with the religionless was that of a still freely-seeking believer with those whose non-belief was an affirmation of God's presence. To recognize God's presence as truth, loving and liberating, is to shatter dogmatic barriers and reveal the existential ground of genuine faith. It is not surprising therefore that Christianity in the modern world, where it has so often sheltered tradition and institution from an openness to truth itself, is experiencing the death of God. The demise of living truth is the death of God. To speak in a secular fashion of God is to speak meaningfully to men to whom God is already existentially present as vital truth, but for whom religious belief has come to mean the end of truth: a profession of faith which seems to claim that final truth has been found, when in fact it is evident to any man of conscience that the fulness of truth is not given in time and that the way to it has not been luminous enough in the life of the Church. To speak meaningfully of God to secular man is to recognize God's presence in him as truth and to confess God's absence in oneself as untruth, evasion, and hypocrisy. It is, in the last analysis, less a question of language than of living, living in and through a naked commitment to truth as it opens man to history and frees him to feel the presence of the living God.

That vital truth which was the subject of Gandhi's experiments can be understood in terms of the human spirit's own transcendence opening more and more to the mystery that is the ground of all being, as experienced in and through every relative truth of life. By freely accepting the relative process of ever-widening truth, by surrendering himself without reservation to truth as the loving centre and focus of his life, Gandhi simultaneously opened himself to the boundless mystery of Truth which is God's self-communication. God is present as truth insofar as man is serious in his pursuit of it. Man is called to revere and grow in truth, not simply to control and

use it, which is only technique and brings man efficiency, not life. Truth lies over the city like mist over rainy streets. Men are enveloped by it and pass through it. Some pause and are transformed. There is in every vital truth an element of contemplation.

We come then to the heart of our question, the question of truth raised critically in an age overcome by technique: How does Gandhi's approach to truth provide an effective response to the technique dominating our civilization of means? To put the question in this way, in terms of 'how' and 'effective', is already to concede one bias of our time, the view that truth is to be understood pragmatically. To ask it thus with critical reference, however, to the technology behind pragmatism is to adopt provisionally the criterion of effectiveness without committing oneself to the framework normally identified with it.

While it is true that 'technopolitan man's understanding of truth is pragmatic' (*The Secular City*, p. 63), it is the fatal weakness of technique that it is not itself pragmatic. In appearance technique functions effectively for man in the modern world; it is said to work for him. In reality it grants him a tightly contained control over a mechanized mode of life whose ultimate effect has been an operational totalitarianism doubling back on himself. Technique has meant the convergence on man of a plurality, not of techniques, but of systems or complexes of techniques, each of them asserting in good faith that it leaves intact the integrity of its subject but whose cumulative effect on him has been totalitarian (Ellul, p. 391). It is to be feared that in its overall effect technique has functioned not so much for man as it has over and against him. The astounding efficiency of modern technology, from nuclear missiles to electric toothbrushes, has on the whole been efficient only when measured by its own particular technical aims. When measured by its subject, man, and his aspirations for world peace and justice, the overwhelming power generated by technique has coincided with moral impotence. By fostering the illusion of omnipotence over the deepening reality of impotence, technique has been fundamentally ineffective for man: it has freed him from much of his subjection to nature only to enslave him to technical processes.

A primary reason for technique's mastery of its master, man, is that technique has grown out of its machinery into a pervasive state of mind which continues daily to absorb more and more of mankind. Technique as a state of mind has overcome not only the man of the street but most of the potentially liberating intellects of our time. To each man it has dictated an approach to life, that of intense specialization directed toward a series of technical solutions, which has seemed to provide an effective response to every immediate problem of life while distracting him comfortably from most of its overarching questions. The unacknowledged premise is that man, by concentrating his technical skill industriously on each problem as it

confronts him, will arrive finally at an effective end of some kind. In effect, this means adopting the technical answer of the specialist to a multitude of problems, with the consequent loss of any higher perspective. Technique is thought to possess all the answers. Thus President Kennedy was led by advisers through a series of technical problems and solutions into the Bay of Pigs, and was judged most severely afterward not for a failure of overall wisdom but for refusing to employ the further technique of intensive bombing. Thus, on a different level, the American husband's most typical response to death is made through the technique of life insurance and the special advice of his agent. At least the financial aspect of death will have been put under control, which is all of death that deserves immediate attention since it alone admits of a technical solution (unless one takes the attitude that eternal life can be technicized through church donations and spiritual exercises).

The domination of technique over human intelligence and feeling has been nowhere more evident than in modern warfare and the military industry. The techniques of modern war, automatic and usually controlled at some point remote from their human victims, have made it possible for men to execute massive slaughters without feeling any of the normal pain or anguish implied in a single act of killing. Divorced from the living consequences of their actions, the technicians of military power had had no difficulty in justifying human carnage on their charts and boards, although few would wish to pour napalm personally over a child. In Vietnam the crushing victory of military techniques over any human feeling and reason has been so visible as to require no documentation. It was again a dedicated and brilliantly synchronized army of technicians which built the atomic bomb, and another skilled team of technicians which performed the task of dropping it on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The connecting link between them, where wisdom is usually presumed by the weapons technician and seldom found, was the chief of state and his advisers. But they, too, were ruled by technique, the thought of 'the one best way' to end the war. More recently, the thought of nuclear strategists such as Herman Kahn has offered further evidence of technique's victory over intelligence, by turning man from the morally imaginative task of building peace to devising the most surgical ways to wage a thermonuclear war (the justification of which has been the technical function of some moralists on the scene). The unthinkable for Kahn is the problem of peace on earth because it has no technical solution.¹ Like Kahn we have all been trained to think technically, yet technique in itself is ineffective in changing man, except on the most primitive level of fear, and can only divert us from the search for true power into further and ultimate destruction.

¹See my review-article of Kahn's *On Thermonuclear War* and several other books in the 'overkill' genre, 'Peace and the Overkill Strategists', *Cross Currents* (Winter, 1964), pp. 87-103.

The common factor between Gandhi and the technical mind is experimentation: whereas technique has experimented on man to the roots of his functioning being, Gandhi has experimented beyond the acknowledged limits of man's spirit. Both Gandhi and the technical mind have based themselves on experience. The technical mind has abstracted from laboratory experience the infinite variety of techniques which make up our civilization of means, with its claim to have a technical solution for every problem and the power to control life even as it threatens global death. In a very different laboratory, that of his own spirit understood in community, Gandhi sought the way to an enduring power for the powerless. As opposed to the magnitude and resources of technique, Gandhi's experiments were all but invisible. But measured by their pragmatic value for transforming man, Gandhi's tentative experiments in truth were the most effective events of our age. They staked out ground for real hope for political man where only scepticism had thrived in the past: in the correction of massive injustices through the power of truth. It is quite true that Gandhi himself employed techniques—no man is without them—but erroneous to suggest that he relied on or was dominated by them in a way paralleling that of the technical mind. He relied only on Truth and through it developed those non-violent techniques which could convey Truth most effectively. For that reason Gandhi's techniques, not autonomous but under the power of Truth, were effective for man. Because his experiments in truth were given precedence, and not the established techniques of conflict, which were violent and becoming increasingly so, Truth was at last mediated by a new choice and range of methods through which it could find genuine expression in conflict. Truth was shown for the first time on a modern political scale to have living power between opponents when it is not denied from the beginning by violence. Gandhi's experiments were a constant critical search for the means corresponding perfectly to the end of Truth. They can help us transcend our civilization of means if we can see in our own context Gandhi's painfully re-discovered truth that means are end-creating.

Even today with our concentration on technique, we are still accustomed to explain our actions in terms of their ends. The process is a natural one but overlooks the unnatural autonomy of our techniques. Whereas we now act, or rather submit—in terms of the pressures of our time—as if our techniques were autonomous, we continue to speak as if they were directed to some noble end, obscuring the fact that in reality technique has under its own power outdistanced any ideal we might formulate for it and has set its own ends. Every country in the world has been told conscientiously by the United States Government that the only reason for our increasing destruction of Vietnam is that we wish to bring a just peace to it. Yet few have seen any correspondence between our means and stated end, any more that they have recognized in themselves

numerous cases, on a less murderous level, of the same practice of self-deception. One need not accuse government officials, or any of the dignitaries of our respectable crimes, of deliberate genocide: the truth is more complex. Our chosen means in Vietnam and across the world are themselves end-creating, but the ends brought into being by autonomous techniques, destructive of life and repressive of human dignity, are such that we can grant them no formal recognition. We can only hold righteously to our higher formulation of intent, peace and justice (through the repression and destruction of suspected Communists), as if the actually disastrous end already visible through our means were a somewhat unexpected step on the way. In our civilization of means, intended ends seem suddenly to disappear from sight, whereas in reality they have gradually been displaced by the unrecognizable (because unjustifiable) ends implicit in our means. The natural consequence of our studied fixation on apparently noble ends, sought through massive means creating their own, opposite ends, would be a forced recognition of the real character of our actions so that we would have to do ruthlessly the same crimes which for some time we have been in the process of doing righteously. Eventually our ideal end could scarcely justify criminal means even to ourselves because an actually criminal end arising from these means would have become more and more obviously dominant over the ideal. But even a barbarian honesty is not certain in such a process: self-righteousness is tenacious enough, and modern technology effective enough on its own terms, to admit the possibility of our doing today almost any evil in the name of good.

Every means tends to create its own end, unless it truly expresses and is continually formed by a seriously intended end. 'It is necessary to incarnate the end in the means themselves' (Père Régamey, *Non-Violence and the Christian Conscience*, 1966, p. 202). As Gandhi put it, 'there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree' (*Satyagraha*, 1951, p. 10). Or in Maritain's words, the means are 'in a sense the end in the process of becoming' (*L'Homme et l'Etat*, p. 49). The great danger central to our civilization of means is that we shall allow our technology to destroy the earth while we continue to hold self-righteously to an absurdly contradicted ideal. We are no longer even at the criminal stage of justifying our murderous means by a compromised end, but at the pathological stage of refusing to acknowledge, much less resist, the real and overwhelming end emerging from our civilization of means like the beast from the sea. Illusion and hypocrisy have never been so fatal as when wedded to modern technique. The alternative to deepening slaughter and guilt, one seldom chosen in international politics, is repentance: the admission that the existential end implicit in the execution of our policies was criminal from the beginning.

An experiment in truth is an effort to realize God's presence as truth

both in and through a particular action. It is concentrated on neither means nor end but seeks to affirm the integrity of life by an action already embodying as much as possible, and thereby creating, a worthy end. Rabbi Steven Schwarzschild has defined the criterion for a good action as the question 'whether it will be appropriate both for the hastening of the coming of the Kingdom in time and within the Kingdom itself once it is established' ('The Necessity of the Lone Man', *Fellowship* (May 1965), p. 16). An experiment in truth is, in terms of its end-means integrity, what the Jews call a *Mitzvah*, a divinely commanded deed. A *Mitzvah* 'transforms the world into the Kingdom of God in two ways:

in the first place, it establishes the Kingdom in this world for the split moment and in the very narrow space in which it is being performed, and, in the second place, it conquers that moment and that space as one out of billions in the forward-moving front on which the Kingdom conquers the world in history (Schwarzschild, *loc. cit.*).

If there is a difference between a *Mitzvah* and an experiment in truth, it would be in the latter's emphasis on a more tentative and probing search toward that deed which is divinely commanded. An experiment in truth takes place primarily in those murky regions of life and experience where the divine command has not yet been found for an action which could have a place in the actually established Kingdom, and where it has been given up by most as incapable of definition or realization: in day-to-day politics and in situations of intense conflict.

With respect to the technical process we have described, an experiment in truth can be viewed as the rejection of an autonomy of means for the integrity of means and end in truth, an understanding of which must involve eventually a radical critique and redefinition of all our proximate actions in the light of the truth capable of being present in them. Such an experiment is a sensitive probing of the possibilities of truth to which a particular moment and situation are open. It draws no pre-established lines concerning the ability of man to grow in truth but tries instead to open him progressively and self-critically to the Power latent in and transcendent to each second of existence. Its ground and hoped-for justification lie in direct and usually painful experience. It is contemplation in action, a search for and expression of truth in the most spiritually resistant areas of life. In political life an experiment in truth is therefore a way of action which challenges traditional political theory at its perennially unresolved dichotomy of means and ends.¹ It meets conflict and its invitation to resolution through violence with the affirmation that life is whole and that the power of Truth is capable of being incarnated in each successive moment of it.

¹See Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, 1965, pp. 189-233.

What Gandhi sought in his experiments was not simply his own salvation through a series of spiritual discoveries but an ever-widening, communal growth in truth, the convergence finally of whole races and peoples in an upward ascent of mutual recognition. Whereas the effect of autonomous technique on man is fragmentization, the effect of a growth in truth is unity, unity in the man of truth and unity in the community drawn upward by truth. A wholeness of life and a community of love are the fulfilment of truth in man. The purpose of experimenting in truth is not merely to free oneself from a murderous social context but to realize the truth in unity within that very context and on continually higher levels: from city block to race, nation, and world. When God is sought as truth, he draws the seekers into a growing community of love. The concrete way in which Gandhi suffered toward this community of seeking men is the point at which his experiments coincide most perfectly with the life and death of Christ.

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interestingly raised in a different context in the review of *The New Radicals* which we also publish here?

The immediate personal issue, however, is to what extent we can each one of us allow the disturbance of such questions to work within us, whilst actively tolerating and seeking to comprehend similar processes, even the lack of them, in others. And this is surely the first task and locus of peace, alike in the sense given it recently by the Pope—'Development is the modern name of peace'—and in its double function of securing interior coherence within an individual and co-ordination with others.

P.L.