

JESUS AND SELF-AFFIRMING RESISTANCE

Self-Affirming, Nonviolence for Survival and Liberation

James H. Cone—"When whites ask me, "Are you for violence?" my rejoinder is: "Whose violence?" "Richard Nixon or his victims?" "The Mississippi State Police or the students at Jackson State?" "The New York State Police or the inmates at Attica?" If we are going to raise the question of violence and Christian love, it ought to be placed in its proper theological perspective. Violence is not primarily a theoretical question but a practical question, and it should be viewed in the context of Christian ethics generally and the struggle of liberation in particular." (God of the Oppressed)

Mark Van Steenwyk—"Folks that have become enthralled by liberal/neoliberal ideology tend to ignore systemic violence and oppression and only notice disruptive violence."

Paulo Freire—"Never in history has violence been initiated by the oppressed. How could they be the initiators, if they themselves are the result of violence? How could they be the sponsors of something whose objective inauguration called forth their existence as oppressed? There would be no oppressed had there been no prior situation of violence to establish their subjugation. Violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognize others as persons— not by those who are oppressed, exploited, and unrecognized." (Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th Anniversary Edition)

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—"I think America must see that riots do not develop out of thin air. Certain conditions continue to exist in our society which must be condemned as vigorously as we condemn riots. But in the final analysis, a riot is the language of the unheard. And what is it that America has failed to hear? It has failed to hear that the plight of the Negro poor has worsened over the last few years. It has failed to hear that the promises of freedom and justice have not been met. And it has failed to hear that large segments of white society are more concerned about tranquility and the status quo than about justice, equality, and humanity. And so in a real sense our nation's summers of riots are caused by our nation's winters of delay. And as long as America postpones justice, we stand in the position of having these recurrences of violence and riots over and over again. Social justice and progress are the absolute guarantors of riot prevention." (1968; "The Other America")

Thomas Merton—"A theology of love cannot afford to be sentimental. It cannot afford to preach edifying generalities about charity, while identifying 'peace' with mere established power and legalized violence against the oppressed. A theology of love cannot be allowed merely to serve the interests of the rich and powerful, justifying their wars, their violence and their bombs, while exhorting the poor and underprivileged to practice patience, meekness, longsuffering, and to solve their problems, if at all, nonviolently. A theology of love may also conceivably turn out to be a theology of revolution. In any case, it is a theology of resistance, a refusal of the evil that reduces a brother or sister to homicidal desperation . . . Instead of preaching the Cross for others and advising them to suffer patiently the violence which we sweetly impose on them, with the aid of armies and police, we might conceivably recognize the right of the less fortunate to use force, and study more seriously the practice of nonviolence and humane methods on our own part when, as it happens, we possess the most stupendous arsenal of power the world has ever known." (Toward a Theology of Resistance.)

Josephus—"At this the Jews as though by agreement fell to the ground in a body and bent their necks, shouting that they were ready to be killed rather than transgress the Law." (War 2:175-203)

Josephus—"On no account would we fight," they said, "but we will die sooner than violate our laws." (Antiquities 18:261-309)

Philo—"When the Jews at large got to know of the scheme, they staged mass demonstrations of protest before Petronius, who by then was in Phoenicia with an army." (Legatio ad Gaium)

Matthew 5.38-41—"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles." (<https://renewedheartministries.com/Esights/02-19-2016>)

El-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz—"That Uncle Tom can't see his enemy. He thinks his friend is his enemy and his enemy is his friend. And he usually ends up loving his enemy, turning his other cheek to his enemy." (January 23, 1963, Michigan State University; Twenty Million Black People in a Political, Economic, and Mental Prison)

Exodus 22.25-27—“If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not treat it like a business deal; charge no interest. If you take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, return it by sunset, because that cloak is the only covering your neighbor has. What else can they sleep in? When they cry out to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

Deuteronomy 24.10-17—When you make a loan of any kind to your neighbor, do not go into their house to get what is offered to you as a pledge. Stay outside and let the neighbor to whom you are making the loan bring the pledge out to you ... Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge.

Genesis 9.22-23—...Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked.

Walter Wink—“Once we determine that Jesus’ Third Way is not a perfectionistic avoidance of violence but a creative struggle to restore the humanity of all parties in a dispute, the legalism that has surrounded this issue becomes unnecessary. We cannot sit in judgment over the responses of others to their oppression. Gandhi continually reiterated that if a person could not act nonviolently in a situation, violence was preferable to submission. “Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence.” But Gandhi believed that a third way can always be found, if one is deeply committed to nonviolence. Jesus’ way... means voluntarily taking on the violence of the Powers That Be, and that will mean casualties. But they will be nowhere near the scale that would result from violent revolution.” (Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way)

Barbara Deming—“With one hand we say to one who is angry, or to an oppressor, or to an unjust system, ‘Stop what you are doing. I refuse to honor the role you are choosing to play. I refuse to obey you. I refuse to cooperate with your demands. I refuse to build the walls and the bombs. I refuse to pay for the guns. With this hand I will even interfere with the wrong you are doing. I want to disrupt the easy pattern of your life.’ But then the advocate of nonviolence raises the other hand. It is raised outstretched – maybe with love and sympathy, maybe not – but always outstretched . . . With this hand we say, ‘I won’t let go of you or cast you out of the human race. I have faith that you can make a better choice than you are making now, and I’ll be here when you are ready. Like it or not, we are part of one another.’” (Revolution and Equilibrium)

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Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—And if a man happens to be 36 years old, as I happen to be, some great truth stands before the door of his life – some great opportunity to stand up for that which is right. A man might be afraid his home will get bombed, or he’s afraid that he will lose his job, or he’s afraid that he will get shot, or beat down by state troopers, and he may go on and live until he’s 80. He’s just as dead at 36 as he would be at 80. The cessation of breathing in his life is merely the belated announcement of an earlier death of the spirit. He died...A man dies when he refuses to stand up for that which is right. A man dies when he refuses to stand up for justice. A man dies when he refuses to take a stand for that which is true. So we’re going to stand up amid horses. We’re going to stand up right here in Alabama, amid the billy-clubs. We’re going to stand up right here in Alabama amid police dogs, if they have them. We’re going to stand up amid tear gas! We’re going to stand up amid anything they can muster up, letting the world know that we are determined to be free! (Selma, Alabama, March 8 1965, the day after “Bloody Sunday”)

Mark 8.34-36—Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?”

Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, God So Loved The World? —“It is not acceptance of suffering that gives life; it is commitment to life that gives life. The question, moreover, is not, Am I willing to suffer? but Do I desire fully to live? This distinction is subtle and, to some, specious, but in the end it makes a great difference in how people interpret and respond to suffering. If you believe that acceptance of suffering gives life, then your resources for confronting perpetrators of violence and abuse will be numbed.” (Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse, pp. 1-30)

Mark 11.11—Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Mark 11.16—And would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.

