

Does youth dare to practice the idealism of nonviolence?

Ideas are on the march. Forces are abroad whose time has come. Youth are the receptacles of these ideas. They are able to bring unjust orders to an end. The past year has seen the passing away of the silent generation. Today the white cloaked phantom of race prejudice fears for its existence as never before. It joins with the other forces of darkness to stave off its own annihilation. "Error is wounded; it writhes with pain."

Youth leads in the battle because it is naive and inexperienced enough, foolish enough, to dare to superimpose starry-eyed ideals upon the facts of cold reality. Youth is prepared to give itself for truth because it has not yet been bribed by wealth, comfort, fear and social pressure. Youth leads because it has only itself to give and so is able to give all. Youth is still tender to the injuries of injustice.

Around the world youthful idealists have grasped that complex of ideas which alone is able to keep civilization afloat. Today's whispering breeze of nonviolence is able to turn into a whirlwind of spiritual force. This nonviolence is "twice blest". It blesses him against whom it is used as well as him who uses it. The power of nonviolence is the ideal way, the loving way, the courageous way, the Christian way, and the truly effective way to oppose evil.

Men are born into a world containing both good and evil. In such a world life has a purpose. In such a world man is born into a struggle. In such a situation man can cease to struggle only at the risk of not really having lived. It is for this reason that bodies are created; it is for this reason that men are born: that they might seek out the truth and bear witness to it. Youth consciously and unconsciously bring new meaning into their lives as they present their bodies and their actions in efforts to achieve truth and justice. Gradually they learn that it is in heroism that life's mystery is hidden.

Youth is willing to "live dangerously" and to answer to the cry for heroes in the moral and spiritual realm. Youth, who do not divorce their beliefs from their actions, are in prisons today to achieve racial justice and universal disarmament. When others join them in fearless action the two greatest evils in our world can be defeated.

"There is one man in the world and his name is all men"; there is one religion in the world and its name is truth. Youth is able to rally to the support of this man in his religion. It proves itself able to produce the incredible effort which truth demands. The truly dedicated youth shows that he is not deterred by discomfort and annoyance, hunger and wet, pain and cold, squalor and filth, depth upon depth of exertion, or even death. He discovers new energy and power and life more abundantly as he participates in the strenuous life of nonviolence. The soul truly dedicated to nonviolence can be unbribed and free from material things. Such a youth can pave his way by what he is and does rather than by what he has. He is prepared to fling away his life as a witness to truth for he is the moral fighting man.

God offers every human being the choice between truth and repose, but he cannot choose both. He who chooses repose may get comfort, ease, luxury and affluence, but he closes the door to truth. He who really chooses truth finds insecurity, challenge, truth, crisis, adventure and life more abundant. "Youth, sow in yourselves the seed of nonviolence, then 'sow yourselves, sow the living part of yourselves in the furrow of life.'"

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From: Polaris Action  
13 North Bank St.  
New London, Conn.