



Lecture 1948

William Penn

*In
Apprehension
How Like a
God!*

Bayard Rustin

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**In Apprehension How Like a
God!**

*Delivered at
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The name of William Penn has been chosen because he was a Great Adventurer, who in fellowship with his friends started in his youth on the holy experiment of endeavoring “to live out the laws of Christ in every thought, and word, and deed,” that these might become the laws and habits of the State.

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What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason!
how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how
express and admirable! in action how like an angel!
in apprehension how like a god!

-*Hamlet*, Act II, Sc. 2.

“In Apprehension How Like a God!”

On August 6, 1945, a bomb fell on Hiroshima. At that same moment a bomb fell upon America, and its impact was felt around the world. Since that time, there has been considerable discussion of the atomic bomb and its effect upon man, and much of this discussion speaks of the bomb as a new factor in the stream of history. In the physical sense this is no doubt true. However, in a spiritual sense the atomic bomb is not new, but is merely another listing in the encyclopedia of force which began with the club and the slingshot and which now includes biological agents and chemical warfare. The atomic bomb has forced us to raise a question: Will not those who rely on violence end not only in utilizing any degree of violence, but in justifying it? If the answer to this question is Yes, then the use of violent force becomes the greatest problem of our time. In his book, *Thieves in the Night*, Arthur Koestler recognizes this fact when he says. “We are entering a political ice-age in which violence is the universal language and in which the machine gun is the esperanto to be understood from Madrid to Shanghai.”

The world over, suspicion is so intense, apathy so wide-spread and reliance on old methods so established, that man has become cynical and frustrated. Yet, when we look upon our scientific progress, we can, without worry, repeat the words of Hamlet, “What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty!” But, can we add, “in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!”? Many formerly trusting men, observing the manifestations of depravity today, have begun to question whether that spark of God in each of us is not all but completely smothered.

The spark, the potential, is indeed still within us, but in our reliance on violence we have misused our energies and sapped the strength from our moral muscles. At this moment each man in the world possesses a limited energy for social action. Let us consider this quantity similar to the contents of a drinking cup. If we use a portion of this energy in fear, another portion in frustration, and still another in preparation for violent aggression, soon we shall discover that our power is greatly diminished. But, if we can discipline ourselves – and that is a matter requiring a practical, willing, and thorough-going devotion – we can remove fear, hatred, bitterness and frustration. Then the cup will overflow with energy, a great deal of which can be used in finding a creative solution to our problems.

On the other hand, placing our faith in weapons, no matter how reluctantly we do so, and no matter how compassionately we rationalize, means that we are using our energies in the hope that the Devil can cast himself out. Reliance on violence by inexorable logic leads to

three conditions that are contrary to that community of spirit on which law and order are based. Violence leads to fear, to moral suicide and to nation-worship

May we begin with an examination of fear and certain of its effects upon human behavior? When we are frightened our behavior often becomes erratic and unaccountable. We may be petrified, or we may run about wildly, as men have done in a burning building. It might be a simple matter to walk directly to an exit. But frightened men behave as if the truth were not true.

So great has America's fear of the Soviet Union become that many people do not recognize the law of cause and effect still to be in operation. The argument runs that getting tough with the Russians will bring them to their senses and inspire in them a more reasonable attitude toward us; when, actually, a rather substantial case can be made that our present discord with the Soviet Union may be in large part the result of our own past policies and unfriendly acts. We are, in reality, in the present crisis precisely because the law of cause and effect has been and still is in operation – unfriendliness begetting unfriendliness, trust-inspiring trust.

Many people today believe that the way to peace is to play upon the horror of modern weapons and the devastation of any future war. In an article, "Do People Like War?", published in *Look* on September 30, 1947, A. M. Meerloo, the Dutch psychologist, comments on the current notion that people will actually be forced by fear to build a constructive plan for peace: "Psychology tells us that this

way of thinking is dangerous. We know that fear never evokes peaceful reactions in men. On the contrary, people react to fear by readying themselves for defense and attack. ... But we are not only children and fighting primitives. We still possess positive drives for peace. But they are based on love and social adaptation, not on fear of attack.... The answer to how to build a positive peace cannot be found in military strategy and atomic science. The militant way of life always fails. It always turns into a vicious circle of defense, aggression, and renewed attack. 'To resist force inspires force.' Mobilization of armies in this country means counter-mobilization of armies elsewhere. This is an eternal law. But making peace without fear and suspicion encourages peace. That is the other aspect of the same eternal law." This is the kind of statement one had learned to expect only from the pulpit. Today men in all walks of life are deeply concerned.

At a meeting of the Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists at Princeton on November 17, 1946, Dr. Albert Einstein addressed himself to the question of fear, and concluded that making peace is basically a psychological problem. He stated that today we have the profound dilemma of wanting to make peace at the same time we prepare for war. In conclusion, he said, "You cannot serve two masters. You cannot prepare for peace and for war at the same time. It's psychologically impossible." An indication of this lies in the fact that while the great majority of people in America cry "peace, peace" and truly desire peace, and while the Government claims that its first job is to insure peace, we go on spending 79 cents

of every dollar paid into the treasury for war, present, past and future, while we spend a mere pittance in developing the functional agencies of the United Nations which might lead to world government. We hope in one direction but follow the road that is diametrically opposed.

It was in fear that Congress, on August 2, 1947, placed its stamp of approval for the first time in American history, upon the creation of a secret police: the Central Intelligence Agency, with orders to operate throughout America and the entire world. This agency must now spend as much time watching our “trusted and essential” scientists as in observing individuals who may be engaged in sabotage. For in times when war is total, who, indeed, is to be trusted? It is fear which prompts us to permit the military to shackle research in physical sciences in our universities.

Our fears demand total preparedness, and such preparedness demands totalitarianism for American citizens. Cord Meyer, Jr., is a marine veteran who was wounded in the fighting in the Pacific, and who returned to serve as an aide to Commander Harold Stassen at the San Francisco Conference. The editor of *Harper's Magazine* describes him as adding up realistically, what it will cost America to disperse our industries, to move cities underground, and to build up stockpiles for atomic bombardment. In the June 1947 issue of Harper's Meyer wrote:

... Total preparedness means totalitarianism for American citizens. There is hardly an aspect of

human life that will not have to be corrupted to the organized pursuit of force. Together with their loss of the democratic right to determine public policy, the large majority of American citizens stand to lose also their right to choose their work and to live where they please. It is unlikely that the freedoms of speech and assembly can be allowed to survive. Conscripted to serve in the defense forces or to labor in the subterranean factories, regulated by police restrictions in their attempts to travel, subjected to arbitrary search and arrest, forced to work longer hours at less pay, they will become mere instruments of the state. If there is complaint against these staggering sacrifices, the answer will always be that they are necessary in order to preserve the sovereign independence of the United States. This is the monumental irony inherent in the whole policy of modern preparedness....

In fear most Americans give passive support to totalitarian governments abroad at the very moment we protest totalitarianism. Fear of Russia dictates that we defend a government in Greece which follows the secret police techniques practiced for years in Nazi Germany. Fascist Italy and Spain, Japan, and the Soviet Union. On April 1, 1947, Arthur Krock, observer for the conservative *New York Times*, telegraphed his paper that between midnight and 5:00 A. M. on March 29, 1947, hundreds of innocent citizens had been arrested by the Greek Government. He then added:

In one three-day period, after the United States said it would assume political responsibility, the Greek Government arrested about 600 persons in Athens, mostly professionals – doctors, lawyers, etc. – and sent them away, frankly declaring there was no longer any need to exercise restraint. There is no doubt that the loudest shouters in support of the United States are Athens' three thousand wealthiest citizens whom the government continues to protect against any direct taxation and who, with their gold pounds, hardly realize there is any inflation. And the Rightists, and extremists, encouraged by the President's speech, now trumpet that the Center is almost as traitorous as the Left because it doesn't make humble obeisance to the government.

That one finally becomes the thing he violently fights is a fact that Hitler understood, in 1933, when he said, "The great strength of the totalitarian state is that it forces those who fear it to imitate it." It would be a tragic thing indeed if we Americans were stripped of our freedom by a foreign and aggressive power; it is all the more tragic that we gradually and somewhat unknowingly give up our freedoms, one after another, in the pursuit of that force which we claim will guard our liberty.

If it is true that violence destroys our liberty, it is also possible to offer some evidence that violence causes inconsistencies that are tantamount to moral suicide. The moral man is he who is opposed to injustice *per se*,

opposed to injustice wherever he finds it; the moral man looks for injustice first of all in himself. But in the process of creating and utilizing modern weapons, one cannot really be concerned with injustice wherever it appears. Certainly, many who use violence wish to be so concerned, and begin with a broad sense of community; but they end in opposing injustice when it touches them, having become capable of rationalizing when they use it against others. An indication of this lies in some editorials which appeared in the *New York Times* in the year 1904, when the Japanese had “without warning” attacked Russia, as the United States was attacked at Pearl Harbor. In the editorial of February 9, 1904, the *Times* stated:

Our Manchurian trade has, under Russian occupation, sunk from a very promising beginning to a condition which has brought American mills to bankruptcy. ... Japan stands for freedom, cultural enlightenment.

In the editorial of February 10, 1904, it continued:

The blow came unexpectedly.... As a matter of naval strategy and tactics, this prompt, enterprising and gallant act of Japanese arms will be memorable.

And on February 11, 1904, the editor concluded:

It hardly becomes the dignity of a great nation to complain that it has been struck before it was quite ready. If Russia is caught unprepared, the fault is surely her own. To impute treachery to the Japanese because they took the promptest possible advantage,

was a gloss reserved for the publicists at St. Petersburg.

Thus we observe that we are not opposed to sneak attacks; we are opposed to sneak attacks upon us, or when they are not to our advantage. We may justify a sneak attack according to its affect upon our “Manchurian trade.”

Or, let us consider the efforts of a large segment of our leadership and citizenry to pass the Universal Military Training bill. In the thirties, we argued that conscription in peacetime was wrong in principle, that Italy and Germany, by conscription, were depriving young men of a most sacred freedom – freedom from military domination. Arguments which appeared in American newspapers and journals condemned totalitarian leadership which then conscripted youth. Yet today, many responsible men would conscript our young men in peacetime, and would be embarrassed to reread the things they once wrote. Military preparedness has led to its logical conclusion, as it did in Germany and Italy. We are opposed to conscription when others prepare to fight us, but can justify it when we are preparing to fight them.

When Vittorio, son of Benito Mussolini, returned from Addis Ababa and described to newspaper correspondents the effects of Italian flame-throwers, the American public was justly incensed that such a weapon had been used upon barefooted and ill-equipped Ethiopians. The American papers used such words as “cruel,” “barbaric,” and “uncivilized,” in describing Italy’s use of the flame-thrower against defenseless women and children. Yet

scarcely ten years had passed before we destroyed hundreds of thousands of defenseless women and children by dropping bombs into Japan and Germany. Now it would be an easy mistake to call men in responsible positions evil because such bombs were dropped, but it is a more complicated problem than that. Such acts lie in and are the direct result of, dependence upon violence.

On November 4, 1947, the United Press reported from Tokyo that the United States Government had placed on trial several Japanese generals who had participated in the bombing of Chinese cities in 1937. In presenting its case, the American Government took the “view that any general bombing of extensive areas wherein resides a large population engaged in peaceful pursuits, is unwarranted and contrary to the principles of law and humanity.” Since then, several of these Japanese generals have been hanged. One may ask why have we not hanged Eisenhower and the other American generals who engaged in the “general bombing of extensive areas wherein resides a large population engaged in peaceful pursuits”? We have not done so because we are not opposed to indiscriminate bombing. In addition, we have reached that stage in history where the choice must be between total war and total peace, since it may now be argued that all pursuits in wartime in some way, directly or indirectly, are connected with the war effort. Where does this process lead?

There is some indication that even military men are concerned to answer this question. On September 21, 1946, an Associated Press dispatch reported in the *Herald Tribune* for September 22, quoted Admiral Halsey as

having said that the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima was a “mistake” and an “unnecessary experiment” because the Japanese had already put out peace feelers. Halsey also indicated that he was sorry the bomb had been invented and used, and he deplored “exaggerated statements that the atomic bomb was responsible for the collapse of Japan.” Even those who put pressure upon Admiral Halsey to change his statement could not, on the other hand, suppress “*The United States Strategic Bombing Survey*,” an official Government document published July 1, 1946, under the editorship of Commander Walter Wilds, United States Naval Reserve, which, in discussing the atomic bomb, concluded:

Based on a detailed investigation of all the facts and supported by the testimony of the surviving Japanese leaders involved, it is the Survey’s opinion that certainly prior to 31 December 1945, and in all probability prior to 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated.

We thus observe the eternal truth proclaimed by Laotse, Buddha, Jesus, St. Francis, George Fox and Gandhi: the use of violence will destroy moral integrity – the very fundamental of community on which peace rests. We cannot remain honest unless we are opposed to injustice wherever it occurs, first of all in ourselves.

Further, there is real evidence in history that those nations which have defended themselves by physical force have produced citizens whose final allegiance is to the political state rather than to principle, to truth, or to God.

On May 28, 1946, the Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists set out to raise \$200,000 for a Campaign of Education on the Atomic Bomb. The Committee stated in its press release that the time had come to “let people know that a new type of thinking is essential in this atomic age” if mankind is to survive and move toward higher levels. On the day following this urgent appeal the Federation of American Scientists said, “Scientists seek by education to teach men that they must abandon atomic weapons to preserve civilization.” But there is some reason to question whether scientists who are building stockpiles of atom bombs can “teach men that they must abandon atomic weapons to preserve civilization.” How can scientists expect the man on the street to follow their leadership? Would not ordinary human beings conclude that the matter is not so serious after all, and that the thousands of dollars which the scientists are attempting to raise will have little effect? It would seem that the only logical conclusion many could reach in observing the scientists continue to make what they describe as “utterly dangerous and destructive” would be that these scientists are “afflicted with insanity.”

The campaign of education on the atom bomb was addressed to those “possessing the power to make decisions for good and evil.” It announced that “our modes of thinking must be changed,” and yet the atomic scientists

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themselves are still addicted to outmoded thinking, and the Federation of Atomic Scientists expressed it most frankly in their statement made on May 26, 1947, to which we have referred, by admitting that in these matters “we must submit to *the guidance and orders of the military.*” The behavior of these scientists is symbolic of many Americans’ basic allegiance. Although these scientists claim that the atom bomb will destroy civilization, and although they sincerely appeal for funds in order that this calamity shall be avoided, they end in foregoing the dictates of their conscience, and, in the interests of national defense, “submit to the orders of the military.” A few days after the Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists issued their appeal for funds, A. J. Muste of the Fellowship of Reconciliation wrote Dr. Einstein and said, in part:

You and your colleagues seek to draw a line between yourselves and the military. You speak of them as “fantastic and shortsighted” in the estimation of “reasonable men.” Some of you have said even harsher things than this of General Groves and other military men. But plainly you are subservient to the military, as you were during those years when, without the knowledge of your fellow citizens, you made the first atomic bomb. The military say they must have atomic bombs, which will wreck civilization, and you make them! You are cogs in the same machine as they are. If you think there are not some of them who also work with heavy hearts and without enthusiasm, you are surely mistaken and

lacking in the grace of humility. They have not changed their mode of thinking – the habit of command. You have not changed your mode of thinking – the habit of subservience to the military and to the State – when it comes to a showdown. In the final analysis, they practice the Fuehrer principle, and you submit to it.

Mr. Muste ended his statement by urging the scientists to forsake being merely scientists, and to become prophets, persons, whole human beings, and not technicians or slaves of a war-making state. He urged them to become conscientious objectors, and to refuse to make weapons of destruction.

On June 10, 1946, Dr. Harold C. Urey, who had received a copy of the Einstein letter, wrote Muste from the University of Chicago, Institute of Nuclear Studies. He began by saying, “In the first place, neither Dr. Einstein nor I myself nor anyone else has the power to prevent some scientists from working on military weapons if they wish to. We have only control over our own actions and no others.” He then said, “I personally believe in obeying the laws of this country, and in aiding its efforts in whatever direction my own government and the responsible officials believe that we should go.”

Thus, men who cry out that atomic weapons will destroy civilization continue to make them, because national allegiances demand it. They announce that they work with “heavy hearts and without enthusiasm” but they do not answer the heart. They answer the demands of the state. It

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may be true, of course, that men continue to depend upon guns because they see no other way. Faced with tyranny within and without, we have begun to question man's ability to reach peaceful solutions. One of the chief causes of dictatorship and war may be the readiness of the average citizen to go into uniform. How difficult it must be for leaders in government to make a sacrificial effort to avoid hostilities, when men and women doubt the efficacy of demanding that their leaders find a real way to peace. The hearts of thousands of men cried out against participation in the last war, yet they who protested against the useless order of a life at variance with the centers of their beings, had been so conditioned by nationalism that they could not use the unique and powerful weapon within their own hands – civil disobedience. We find many reasons for our failure to use this weapon. As Tolstoi pointed out in his book *Christianity and Patriotism*:

One man does not assert the truth which he knows, because he feels himself bound to the people with whom he is engaged; another, because the truth might deprive him of the profitable position by which he maintains his family; a third, because he desires to attain reputation and authority, and then use them in the service of mankind; a fourth, because he does not wish to destroy old sacred traditions; a fifth, because he has no desire to offend people; a sixth, because the expression of the truth would arouse persecution, and disturb the excellent social activity to which he has devoted himself.

For these and other reasons, we have failed, in the past, to identify ourselves with all men. Now we have no choice but to do so if we are to survive. We have reached that stage where only a miracle can save us – the miracle of individual responsibility. Individual responsibility is the alternative to violence; individual responsibility is capable of overcoming fear; it is capable of converting nation-worship back to the Judaeo-Christian tradition and ethic; it is capable of re-establishing moral integrity. How can we begin? We can begin by opposing injustice wherever it appears in our daily lives. As free men we can refuse to follow or to submit to unjust laws which separate us from other men no matter where they live, nor under what government they exist. As the now-famous editorial in *Life Magazine* pointed out, in our time it is “the individual conscience against the atomic bomb.” In the parochial states of the world today, it is the responsible man, the man against all injustice, who can save us, and this in a very real sense means man against the state.

Justice Jackson of the United States Supreme Court, in his opening statement at the Nuremberg trials, addressed to the people of the civilized world, castigated the German people for refusing to recognize this principle. Mr. Jackson said over and over again that German citizens had been irresponsible in following the cruel and antisocial directives of the Hitler government. He reiterated that responsible people would have resolved to end the Nazi regime and its wide-spread injustice, even though they were aware that to have done so would have meant severe

punishment or even death for many of them and their families. There is some question in my mind that Mr. Jackson understood the total implication of his words, since he had issued no such statement in defense of the conscientious objectors in this country, who refused to register under what they considered the antisocial Selective Service and Training Act. I agree with him, however, that the failure of the German citizens to resist unjust laws from the beginning of Hitler's regime logically ended in their placing Jews in gas furnaces and lye pits, although many who did these things, no doubt, worked with "heavy hearts and without enthusiasm."

It would, however, be a mistake to make simple the matter of resistance to the state. Several of the greatest teachers of the past, and such practitioners of civil disobedience as Mahatma Gandhi, have never taken lightly their inability to follow the directives of governmental officials, and have with intense study and grave concern for all persons involved, weighed many aspects of the question under consideration before appearing to set themselves off from the will of an organized social group. Although there has not been complete agreement among those who have practiced civil disobedience, most leaders have generally adhered to certain very basic principles. The chief of these is that no individual has the right to rebel against the state. One has not the right to resist the social group of which he is a part. This is particularly true where decisions made have been reached after extensive democratic discussion. One has, on the other hand, a duty to resist, and one resists because the state is poorly organized and one's everlasting

aim is to improve the nature of the state, to disobey in the interest of a higher law. Hence, one has the duty but not the right to rebel. But before rebelling, one must clearly examine the questions outlined by the British scholar, T. H. Green, in his *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation*:

I must ask:

- (a) Have I exhausted all possible constitutional methods of bringing desired change?
- (b) Are the people I ask to rebel keenly conscious of a flagrant wrong to them? Or do I excite their passions?
- (c) What is likely to be the effect of the resistance? Will the new state be worse than the first?
- (d) What of my own motives? Have I removed all EGO?

To these one must add another: Can I accept punishment, prison, or even death, in that spirit which is without contention? It is most important to examine one's own motives, for even if a given resistance fails, this does not disprove its validity; repeated attempts and repeated failures may be necessary to success. But, since it is not possible to see completely what the results of any given resistance will be, one must therefore be careful that one's character and motives are clear. Henry Thoreau, sitting in prison, was visited by Ralph Waldo Emerson, who urged him to forego his useless efforts to stop slavery and an unjust war. But Thoreau, whose aim was clear, held to his belief and action. Little did Emerson realize that

Thoreau's action was to be one of the chief factors in the development of the life and spirit of Mahatma Gandhi, and that Thoreau's resistance was to move through history and help bring freedom to four hundred million people, far exceeding the number Thoreau attempted to free in the middle of the 19th century.

There have been many great men in history who have been civil resisters. All who have resisted have seen clearly that social progress is made through simultaneous change in men and in the environment in which men find themselves. Thus, these men have not only sought to behave with integrity, but they have resisted secure in the faith that their opposition ultimately would influence society in the direction of those conditions which make it possible for other men to see issues clearly enough to press for a more abundant economic, social, and political life. These men recognized that there is "individual responsibility for collective guilt." Among these have been Socrates, Henry Thoreau, and more recently, Norbert Wiener, the American scientist.

Plato describes in the *Apology* a scene in which Socrates is on trial for the practice of philosophy. In that great work Socrates, having heard an indictment against himself by Anytus, turns to the Athenian court, and says:

If you say to me, Socrates, this time we will not mind Anytus and you shall be let off, but upon one condition, that you are not to inquire and speculate in this way any more, and if you are caught doing so again, you shall die – if this was the condition on which you let me go, I should reply: Men of Athens, I

honor and love you; but I shall obey God, rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting anyone whom I meet and saying to him after my manner.

I tell you that virtue is not given by money but that from virtue comes money and every other good of man, public as well as private, this is my teaching: this is the doctrine which you say corrupts the youth – For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, – not to take thought of your persons, or your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul – I shall never alter my ways, not even if I have to die many times. – For I will obey God rather than you . . . and so I bid you farewell – I to die, you to live; which is better, God only knows.

Centuries later, the United States government, which at the time condoned slavery, called upon Henry Thoreau to contribute his share into the tax-box to support the war with Mexico. Thoreau, as you know, refused to pay such taxes, and in his *Essay on Civil Disobedience*, which Mahatma Gandhi lists as one of the four great influences in his life, raised the question which will be raised again and again if there are to be free men, “How does it become a man to behave toward this ... government today?” And he went on to comment, “I answer that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it. I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government

which is a slave's government also." The American people "must cease to hold slaves and to make war on Mexico though it costs them their existence as a people.... There are thousands who are in opinion opposed to slavery and to war, yet who in effect do nothing to put an end to them; who, esteeming themselves children of Washington and Franklin, sit down with their hands in their pockets and say they know not what to do, and do nothing; who even postpone the question of freedom to the question of free trade.... I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and to revolutionize."

In 1944 G. B. Shaw published his book, *Everybody's Political What's What*. In discussing the question of general strike versus conscientious objection as a means of bringing government officials to the point of seeking peace or stopping war, Shaw observed that:

- The social organization of such conscientious objection is the only method now available for preventing a war....
- The conscientious objector does not starve himself; he asserts himself in the practical form of a flat refusal to fight. And if he is numerous enough, there will be no war....
- A majority of objectors is not necessary: an organized minority could stop war as it stopped Prohibition in the United States....

One may question that a minority could stop war, but certainly one cannot question that disobedience both to military service and to payment of taxes for war would reveal to the state that a segment of the population cares enough to pay a price for peace. Wide-spread resistance to war preparations and the willingness of resisters to face imprisonment would have to be taken seriously by the state and ultimately would have a profound effect on American foreign policy.

The action of Norbert Wiener a year ago is worthy of observation, for this one scientist has had a profound effect upon the thinking and action of many men in the States and abroad. Norbert Wiener, one of the outstanding mathematical analysts of our time, a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, January 1947, a letter which earlier he had addressed to the president of a great aircraft corporation who had requested of him the technical account of a certain research Wiener had conducted during the war. Professor Wiener's indignation at being asked to participate in rearmament less than two years after the war's end is typical of a growing sensitivity among many American scientists today. His conclusion is revolutionary and makes Norbert Wiener more than a scientist and more than an ordinary man: he has become a prophet. After stating that in the past scholars had made it the custom to furnish scientific information to any seeking it, Norbert Wiener pointed out that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had made it clear to him that "to provide scientific information is not necessarily an innocent act,

and may entail the gravest consequences.” He therefore felt it necessary to reconsider the established custom of scientists to give information to any person who might inquire of him. He stated it had become perfectly clear to him that to disseminate information about weapons in the present state of our civilization is to make it practically certain that the weapons will be used, and in that respect the controlled missile, concerning which he was requested to give data, represented the still imperfect supplement to the atomic bomb and bacteriological warfare. He said that their possession can do nothing but endanger us by encouraging what he describes as the “tragic insolence of the military mind.” Wiener’s conclusion was this: “If, therefore, I do not desire to participate in the bombing or poisoning of defenseless peoples – and I most certainly do not – I must take a serious responsibility as to those to whom I disclose my scientific ideas.... I do not expect to publish any future work of mine which may do damage in the hands of irresponsible militarists....”

Civil disobedience is not advocated as a cure-all, nor is it urged as an alternative to world government. It is not itself equal to the adjustment of social, political and economic displacements which have produced first depression and then dictatorship and war. Such adjustments are in reality the means of peace. But in our fear, when we behave as if the truth were not true, the real problem, the struggle to provide men with bread, beauty and brotherhood, has been relegated to a second place. Our fears have brought about an armaments race and until we have broken the vicious circle of this race with the Soviet Union, there cannot be

attention, energy and money given to the basic causes of war and injustice. It is important to realize that such competition can be ended when the United States is willing to disarm completely. We have within us as individuals the responsibility and power to help achieve this task. We have the responsibility and the duty to make an effort to save the world from the curse of atomic war. We have the power to disarm the United States by one gun if we refuse to carry one; we have the power to take a gun from another if we refuse to pay for it by refusing to pay that part of taxes used for war.

There are those who will say that this is a futile, unrealistic and impractical course, but as we look through history we find that it is dependence on arms which is unrealistic. Every nation that has put its faith in violent force has sooner or later been overcome. Today we must face not merely the question, What will happen if we give up our arms? but we must face two other questions: first, What will happen if we do not give up our arms? Then we must ask ourselves, Can we expect that others will be willing to give up their arms unless we do so first?

Edmund Taylor, formerly director of the Office of Strategic Services in India, and author of *Strategy of Terror*, has since published his book *Richer by Asia*, in which he describes his living in India and his contact with Gandhi and Asia. In discussing disarmament he points out that pending the establishment of one world it is our duty to try to persuade other nations to join us in extensive disarmament, but he is quick to point out we must not expect to be trusted or followed immediately, for too much

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suspicion has been sown for too many years. He is convinced that we must resign ourselves to seeing other nations insist on retaining some war-making potentialities, and be pleased if they accept any limitations at all. He then concludes:

That leaves us the alternatives of retaining our own arms, or disarming unilaterally and announcing to the world that we will never under any circumstances resist aggression by force. The time may be near – if it has not arrived already – when we must seriously consider whether that is not the best thing to do, whether the evils which armed resistance, even successful, would bring on us would not be worse than any possible consequences of surrender.

In a very real way the American people sense that Edmund Taylor's question is a profound one. Men argue that violent force is the great protection of our democratic institutions, that in arms alone lies security. On this premise we pile higher and higher armaments and bases which are to provide us this much sought security. Consequently we have the world's largest air force, the greatest industrial output, fantastic weapons; we have naval bases circling the globe; we urge our scientists to find even more devastating weapons. Yet how do you account for the fact that the higher and higher this mountain of force rises, the deeper and deeper the fears of the American people become?

We have become so involved that Dr. Harold C. Urey, outstanding liberal scientist, in a quarterly publication, *Air*
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Affairs, recently came out with an article which conclusively proves what a frightened man he is. Failure to safeguard development and use of atomic energy, he believes, will inevitably lead to civilization-destroying war, and to head it off he concludes that the United States may have to declare war itself “with the frank purpose of conquering the world and ruling it as we desire and preventing any other nation from developing more weapons of war.” He reveals the extremity of the proposition by adding, “This is a possible course of action; it’s one that I can’t contemplate with any pleasure but one which may be a strict necessity.”

Indeed, only a miracle can save us, and that is the miracle of opposing injustice everywhere, first of all in ourselves; it is the miracle of depending upon the power of good to overcome the power of evil; it is the miracle performed when we no longer believe that Satan can cast out Satan. In the book, *What Can We Believe?* an exchange of letters between Dick Sheppard and Laurence Housman, English poet-dramatist, there appear the following statements:

I don’t believe the rise and fall of empires, however good and great, is decisive for the coming of God’s Kingdom on earth. The Fall of the Roman Empire must have seemed at the time the biggest possible disaster for the advance of civilization in the then-known world. But was it?

Most nations die, I suppose, because of their sins; but if one nation died because of its righteousness, as the Christ of history died on the cross, what a wonderful

New Incarnation that would be to prove, and what a wonderful new faith for the troubled nations it might give rise to, it might convert nation-worship back to Christianity again.

We cannot convert nation-worship back to Christianity again unless we care enough, unless we can believe that man is in apprehension like a god, unless we are able so to revolutionize and to discipline ourselves that those who behold us exclaim of us, "In action how like an angel!", unless like Jesus and Gandhi we attain that spirit which makes it possible for us to stand with arms outstretched, even unto death, saying, "You can strike me, you may destroy my home, you may destroy me, but I will not submit to what I consider wrong; neither will I strike back." Many will question the practicality of such a course, but has not the life, the work, the death of Gandhi demonstrated in our time that one man holding fast to truth and to non-violence is more powerful than ten thousand men armed?

Yet even though failure should seem certain, the faith we profess demands allegiance. But how are we different from the heathen if we strike back or submit to unjust demands and laws; or what have we left to protect if in the process of defending our freedom we give up both democracy and principle? How can we love God, whom we have not seen, if we cannot, in time of crisis, find the way to love our brothers whom we have seen?

About the Author

Bayard Rustin (1912 – 1987) was an American leader in social movements for civil rights, socialism, nonviolence, and gay rights.

Rustin worked with A. Philip Randolph on the March on Washington Movement in 1941 to press for an end to racial discrimination in employment. Rustin later organized Freedom Rides and helped to organize the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to strengthen Martin Luther King Jr.'s leadership, teaching King about nonviolence and later serving as an organizer for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

After the passage of the civil rights legislation of 1964–65, Rustin became the head of the AFL–CIO's A. Philip Randolph Institute, which promoted the integration of formerly all-white unions and promoted the unionization of African Americans. During the 1970s and 1980s, Rustin served on many humanitarian missions, such as aiding refugees from Communist Vietnam and Cambodia. At the time of his death in 1987, he was on a humanitarian mission in Haiti.

Rustin was a gay man who had been arrested early in his career for engaging in public sex (in a parked car). Due to criticism over his sexuality, he usually acted as an influential adviser behind the scenes to civil-rights leaders. In the 1980s, he became a public advocate on behalf of gay causes, speaking at events as activist and supporter of human rights.

Later in life, while still devoted to securing workers' rights, Rustin joined other union leaders in aligning with ideological neoconservatism, for which President Ronald Reagan posthumously praised him after his death in 1987. On November 20, 2013, President Barack Obama posthumously awarded Rustin the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayard_Rustin

About the Lectures

The William Penn Lectures started as a ministry of the Young Friends' Movement of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. In the beginning of the last century, "Young Friends" was the community of young adults from both the Hicksite and the Orthodox Philadelphia Yearly Meetings, which reunited in 1955. The Young Friends Movement began the lecture series "for the purpose of closer fellowship; for the strengthening by such association and the interchange of experience, of loyalty to the ideals of the Society of Friends; and for the preparation by such common ideals for more effective work through the Society of Friends for the growth of the Kingdom of God on Earth." The name of William Penn was chosen because the Young Friends Movement found Penn to be "a Great Adventurer, who in fellowship with his friends started in his youth on the holy experiment of endeavoring 'To live out the laws of Christ in every thought, and word, and deed; and that these might become the laws and habits of the State.'"

The first run of William Penn Lectures were given between 1916 and 1966, and are warmly remembered by Friends who attended them as occasions to look forward to for fellowship with our community, inspiration, and a challenge to live into our faith. The lectures were published by the Book Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has granted Pendle Hill and Quaker Heron Press permission to reproduce the lectures as free ebooks.

Although it was [announced](#) in 1960 that the series would be discontinued several lectures were published in the early '60s. It appears that the lectures given between 1923 and 1931 were never published. If we come upon manuscripts of these lectures, we hope to publish them in future.

In 2010, the Young Adult Friends of PYM revived the series, officially launching the second run of the William Penn Lectures in 2011. [The series was renamed](#) the *Seeking Faithfulness* series in 2016, as part of the Young Adult Friends of PYM's concern for dismantling racism within the yearly meeting and the wider society. It no longer felt rightly ordered to have a major event named after a slaveholder. The [Seeking Faithfulness](#) series is hosted by the Young Adult Friends for the benefit of the whole yearly meeting community, and invites a Friend to challenge us all to explore new ways to practice our Quaker faith. The Seeking Faithfulness series seeks to nourish our spiritual lives and call us to faithful witness in our communities and throughout the world.