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Satyagraha: Conquest of Violence

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of a number of prelates of the Orthodox Church. Later, as pope, he sent the famous Papal Relief Expedition which did such good work in Russia during the time of the Famine.

Pius XI is known as the Pope of the Concordats. He effected a reconciliation between the Italian government and the papacy on the vexed question of the papal states. Although a resolute opponent of totalitarianism in all its forms, he tried to arrive at a *modus vivendi* with Hitlerian Germany in order to relieve the sufferings of the persecuted Catholics there.

Pius XI wrote some thirty encyclicals which constitute a perpetual monument to his ability as a teacher and his worthiness to occupy the Chair of Peter. By means of these encyclicals, he gave fresh impetus to Catholic education, reformed and reorganized the training of priests in seminaries, and exposed the evils of Nazism and Communism. He was about to take issue with the tyrannical regime set up by the Fascists in Italy when God called him to Himself.

The author relates all this swiftly, with an admirable economy of style. The picture of Pius XI that emerges is that of a man of high intelligence and deep sanctity, who devoted his whole self and his great and varied gifts to the service of Christ.

AUSTIN V. DOWD

SATYAGRAHA

CONQUEST OF VIOLENCE: THE GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY OF CONFLICT. By Joan V. Bondurant. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958. xv, 269 p. \$5.00.

In her preface, Dr. Bondurant disclaims any intention to write a biography of Gandhi or an essay on his political philosophy. The focus of her study is *satyagraha*—Gandhi's non-violent technique for dealing with a conflict situation. Her aim is to try to abstract "from the Gandhian experiments a theoretical key to the problem of social and political conflict." (p. vi).

Gandhi's theoretical explanation of *satyagraha* has three elements: truth, non-violence, self-suffering. The *satyagrahi* (one who engages in *satyagraha*) is a searcher for truth. Gandhi's translation of *satyagraha* is "truth-force." The *satyagrahi* is convinced that truth is on his side: his aim is not to triumph over his adversary but to convince him. At the same time, part of the *satyagrahi's* truthfulness is an awareness that no man can possess the full absolute truth concerning any given human situation. He himself might be mistaken; hence he is willing to learn from and even to be convinced by his adversary.

The satyagrahi, then, engages in a kind of dialogue with his adversary in order that the truth may prevail. In this dialogue, the satyagrahi's attitude is that of *ahimsa* or non-violence. He must abstain from anything that may harm his opponent, be it physical force or evil thoughts and wishes. In Gandhi's interpretation, *ahimsa* also means love: one must do good to one's opponent and refuse to acquiesce in evil done by him for such an acquiescence will harm him. *Ahimsa*, however, would be ineffective without willingness to suffer and preparedness for sacrifice even unto death. Self-suffering makes *ahimsa* a force. It also gives satyagrahis a gauge to measure their leader's sincerity: he has to be willing to die.

Gandhi stresses the strength of soul essential for genuine satyagraha. *Ahimsa* is not the meekness of the man too weak to use violent means. "It means the pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant" (quote from Gandhi, p. 26). "I do believe that where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence" (*ibid.*). However, Gandhi never advised violence. Instead he counseled the ultimate in courage: the satyagrahi should not be afraid to die and should not yield to the temptation to use force even when certain that failure to do so will result in death.

Satyagraha should not be confused with *duragraha* ("stubborn persistence"). Not any form of non-violent resistance is satyagraha. Some movements have called themselves satyagraha, but their emphasis on coercion — though non-violent — betrays their character as mere *duragraha*. In satyagraha, deliberate non-violent coercion is avoided as much as possible and is considered a defect in certain circumstances since the aim is to engage in dialogue with the opponent with a view to finding the truth.

Dr. Bondurant sets forth the fundamental rules and code of discipline of satyagraha; then, under the rubric "Steps in a Satyagraha Campaign" she sets up a construct of the "typical" campaign. Most valuable are the case histories of five actual campaigns: they show the adaptability of the technique to the most diverse situations and its effectiveness. Not that the technique was always perfectly carried out — the human element was not always capable of living up completely to the strict discipline required by the ideal. Still, the large measure of success attained was due to the willingness of crowds of ordinary people to suffer even fatal injuries rather than strike back.

Some of the characteristic features of satyagraha follow. *Self-reliance*: no one could expect help for himself or for his family when he joined a campaign. If the campaign called for a strike, the strikers were expected to support themselves. Accordingly, the manufacture of *khadi* (hand woven cloth) was often a feature of satyagrahi camps. *Law-respecting civil disobedience*: Gandhi did not have an anarchic

disregard for law; a law was to be violated only if it violated the truth. The law which was to be the target of a civil disobedience campaign was always chosen carefully—it had to be “either central to the grievance or symbolic” (p. 41). *Respect for opponents*: before every important move the satyagrahis gave their opponents precise information concerning it; demands were so phrased that an opponent could yield to them without losing face. The fulfilment of this ideal often demanded heroism since the opponents were not bound to avoid violence and often used it ruthlessly. *Discipline*: it is obvious that the satyagraha technique cannot be carried out without strict discipline. The most successful satyagrahis were those who had undergone an austere training which was partly ideological, partly ascetical. It was a fairly common practice to undergo a purificatory fast before actively engaging in satyagraha.

Dr. Bondurant shows that satyagraha—as developed by Gandhi—was rooted in traditional Hindu metaphysical and religious notions. Gandhi went beyond tradition by giving these notions a more social and activist interpretation. Thus he was able to utilize them as a motivational basis for his technique. Dr. Bondurant then tries to show that the technique is not inseparable from the ideology which formed its original matrix. She cites the case of the Pathan tribesmen—Muslims—who used satyagraha effectively although their traditions had hitherto accustomed them to a life of violence.

Dr. Bondurant traces the effectiveness of satyagraha to a relative notion of truth and to an attitude that identifies ends and means. She finds Western political thought faulty in that it tends to view ends and means separately. She considers this unfortunate because men are closest to the facts of political life when actually engaged in the employment of means. Therefore, if ends are separated from means, ends lose contact with facts and tend to become unrealistic. A further result is that means lose their effectiveness because they are aimed at something unreal. In a polity that views ends and means as separate, violence is the only resort in the event of disagreements too basic to be solved by compromise.

For Gandhi, satyagraha was not only a means to attain an end, but especially a truth-finding and, therefore, end-creating technique. Gandhi moved towards the end even as he was conceiving it. This would have been impossible, Dr. Bondurant contends, if he did not, in practice, follow a relative notion of truth. Like most Hindus, Gandhi claimed that his desire and aim in life was to see God face to face. But his expressions of desire for the absolute were always accompanied by strong protestations that no living man could claim possession of knowledge of the absolute. Hence, for him, all points of view were relative, all equally capable of being true. Satyagraha was, therefore, an “experiment with truth”. Gandhi’s aim was that

truth should emerge through the interaction between the satyagrahis and their opponents. Gandhi's truth is no compromise. In a compromise, both sides of a conflict yield parts of their original position in order to arrive at a settlement. In satyagraha, neither side should yield any elements in its position unless convinced that the truth demands it; consequently, the final result should be a true synthesis of both points of view.

In Dr. Bondurant's interpretation, Gandhi's relativism enabled him to work successfully with people of all shades of belief and unbelief. She admits the sincerity of Gandhi's faith, but denies any necessary connection between it and success of satyagraha.

Despite the tremendous faith Gandhi had in divine power, the technique of satyagraha is based upon the admission of relative truths and the rejection of absolutes which are not knowable for mortal man. God was, in Gandhi's definition, the atheism of the atheist. There was no insistence upon an objective absolute (pp. 192-93).

If there was no insistence upon an objective absolute, how could satyagraha have been an experiment with truth? The criterion of truth was, in Dr. Bondurant's interpretation, the meeting of human needs. Satyagraha was a search for "relative truth in terms of substantial human needs." (p. 193).

Dr. Bondurant's contention is that its relativism makes satyagraha an efficient tool in almost any political system. The liberal democratic system, for instance, uses yea-and-nay voting to decide differences between citizens. It still has to rely on force in the event of serious differences. But already it is beginning to realize the need for different techniques. The Quaker method of decision-making, for instance, has been tried successfully. In this method, "queries" are addressed to the members of a group. Each member expresses his opinion in answer to the queries; then each member "gets under the weight" of the other opinions; that is, each member tries to consider the views of the other members as if they were his own. An open discussion follows. At the end of the meeting, the chairman declares the "sense of the meeting." This stands as the group's decision unless a member challenges it; in such a case, the meeting is adjourned to allow for further thought and research. A date for reconvening is set; on that date the entire procedure is repeated. Dr. Bondurant points out the resemblance to satyagraha. Satyagraha, then, cannot be entirely uncongenial to liberal Western democracy and, furthermore, some technique like it is necessary if modern Western democracy is to solve its problems. If satyagraha is to be used in western democracies, there is need for "extensive education in humanist ethics (as apart from religion) and training in the use and method of the satyagraha technique" (p. 224).

We have just given a brief sketch of what we deem to be important points covered in Dr. Bondurant's many-faceted and meticulously planned book. The reviewer does not intend to give a critical estimate of all these points. There is one, however, which he desires to discuss further; it is Dr. Bondurant's interpretation of relativism in satyagraha.

Hindu relativism differs from Western secularistic relativism. The latter is founded on a distrust of absolutes, a conviction that discussions concerning absolute values are meaningless. The former is based on a conviction that the absolute is too richly meaningful to be exhausted by any relative manifestation. The popular religion of Gandhi's time was based, for the most part, on the *tantras*. These view Brahman as both absolute being and relative becoming. Brahman is absolute and infinite; but everything finite is also Brahman hiding himself in this or that limited manifestation. And, since Brahman is infinite, there is no limit to the number and variety of manifestations into which he can project himself. By a paradox, then, the Hindu can consider any relative finite as both unimportant and tremendously important. It is important because it manifests the absolute; it is unimportant because if it passes away not all manifestation of the absolute will have passed away. It was Gandhi's view of the absolute as immanent in the relative that enabled him to combine extreme tenacity of purpose with extreme flexibility of technique. His end-creating use of means was ultimately based on his view of the absolute end as immanent, and inchoatively self-manifested, in the relative means. Satyagraha is a technique demanding constant effort and constant willingness to die. Such a technique cannot succeed if those who employ it do not have an inexhaustible source of motivation. Gandhi's source was his conviction that, throughout all his floundering in the relative, he was nonetheless ineluctably drawing nearer to the absolute.

Dr. Bondurant cites Gandhi's ability to work successfully with people who did not share his metaphysical and religious commitments as an indication that in practice satyagraha depended only on relativism, not at all on the immanence of the absolute in the relative. Yet an examination of the satyagraha campaigns analyzed in her book shows that there was always some sort of absolute immanent in the relative. The Vykam Temple Road satyagraha ultimately fought for the right of untouchables to be considered the equals of all human beings. The Bardoli satyagraha fought for the right of peasants to just taxation; the Ahmedabad labor satyagraha fought for just wages. The Rowlatt Bill and the Salt satyagrahas were aimed against the unjust encroachments of a colonizing power. In all these five satyagrahas analyzed by Dr. Bondurant, there was a basic human right underlying the more immediate appeal of the cause. The basic

right at stake gave each cause an appeal that had an elemental and absolute quality.

In the case of the Muslim Pathan tribesmen, there was a long-standing tradition of obedience to leaders whom they considered God's representatives. This tradition had made them great fighters; it also provided the absolute source of dynamism for the relative tactics of satyagraha. The change from men of violence to non-violent satyagrahis was made possible because of an underlying religious orientation which did not change. It is significant that the Muslim satyagrahis called themselves "Khudai Khidmatgar"—"Servants of God."

The remarks just made do not diametrically contravene Dr. Boncurant's position. She holds, as has been mentioned above, that human needs are Gandhi's norm of truth; in her suggestions for adaptation of satyagraha to western democracies, she calls for education in "humanist ethics"—qualified by the phrase "as apart from religion." She sees, then, the need for a quasi-stable basis (human need) for the relative tactics of satyagraha; she also sees the need for motivation (humanist ethics). We differ from her in that we hold that both basis and motivation must have an absolute quality.

One does not make an absolute commitment merely in order to make a technique effective. On the other hand, one who has made an absolute commitment will choose the technique that best implements his commitment. Hence, only one who has already made an absolute commitment can use the relative tactics of satyagraha with success.

ROQUE FERRIOLS

THE CHURCH IN PHILIPPINE LAW

CHURCH AND STATE LAW IN THE PHILIPPINES. By Jorge S. Coquia. Manila: Central Book Supply, Inc., 1959. xii, 412p.

In the year 1950, the author of this book published a doctoral dissertation at the Catholic University of America entitled *Legal Status of the Church in the Philippines*. A *pari passu* reading of both works quickly reveals the fact that the current title could quite truthfully be styled a second edition of this thesis. For example, Chapter Nine of the doctoral dissertation has become Chapter Ten of the present work, and vice versa. A careful perusal of the content of the other chapters after following through a maze of juxtapositions makes it evident that almost three-fourths of the book under review has been taken verbatim from the original dissertation. This does not in any way detract from the value of the newer work for two reasons. Firstly, the substance of the original, which was limited in its diffusion, is now available to the general public of the Philippines for