

Chp 5 Jesus' Third Way *See the bottom of these pages for two additions to Chapter 4 discussion*

“‘Turn the other cheek’ has come to imply a passive, doormat-like quality that has the Christian way seem cowardly and complicit in the face of injustice. ‘Resist not evil’ seems to break the back of all opposition to evil and counsel submission. ‘Going the second mile’ has become a platitude meaning nothing more than ‘extend yourself’ and appears to encourage collaboration with the oppressor.” p98

Augustine: “Christian must not attempt self-defense. However... if someone is attacking *my neighbor*, then the love commandment requires me to defend my neighbor...” this became to foundation of **just war**. This attempt to make “sense” of Jesus’ teaching has always been a prime example for me of 1Cor. 3:19 “what this world considers to be wisdom is nonsense in God’s sight”  
“But the gospel does not teach nonresistance to evil. Jesus counsels resistance, but without violence.” p99

“[King] James had explicitly commissioned a new translation of the Bible because of what he regarded as ‘seditious ... dangerous, and tryterous (sic)’ tendencies in the marginal notes printed in the Geneva Bible, which included endorsement of the right to disobey a tyrant.” Thus it was translated so Jesus only ‘seems’ to offer the alternatives of fight or flight. “Jesus is not telling us to submit to evil, but to refuse to oppose it on its own [violent] terms.” “He is urging us to transcend both passivity and violence by finding a third way, one that is at once assertive and non-violent.” p100

- This was new information to me. King James: “resist not evil” Good News: “do not take revenge” Have you ever been taught this understanding? Do you think Wink is correct in his analysis of ‘*antisteneai*’?

#### TURN THE OTHER CHEEK

*A strike on the right cheek was a slap with the back of the hand as was done to inferiors. A strike on the left cheek would have been a punch with a fist as was done with those of equal status. (Using your left hand was taboo) p101*

“By turning the cheek, then, the ‘inferior’ is saying: ‘I’m a human being, just like you. I refuse to be humiliated any longer. I am your equal. I am a child of God. I won’t take it anymore.” (p102)  
Jesus is saying: “ ‘Stand up for yourselves, defy your masters, assert your humanity, but don’t answer the oppressor in kind. Find a new, third way that is neither cowardly submission nor violent reprisal.’ ” p103

- I was awed and inspired by this understanding of what Jesus was suggesting by turning the left cheek You?

#### STRIP NAKED

*Set in a court of law where a creditor is suing over an unpaid loan. Deuteronomy said you could take the debtor’s long outer robe but had to return it every evening. It was the Powers that had created a system in which people were taxed beyond their ability to pay. Giving up your cloak as a shaming of the creditor as it was taboo to be naked in public “... a stunning protest against the system that created his debt.” p103*

“The creditor is revealed to be not a legitimate moneylender but a party to the reduction of an entire social class to landlessness and destitution. This unmasking ... offers the creditor a chance to see, perhaps for the first time in his life, what his practices cause, and to repent.” p105

“The Powers That Be literally stand on their dignity.”

- This seems like an important point, but I need your help understanding it. What happens to the Powers if they lose their dignity?

*South African women stopped the razing of a squatters’ camp at the last minute by stripping naked.*

## GO THE SECOND MILE

*Carrying a centurion's load a second mile was an infraction of military code.*

"... the oppressed can recover the initiative and assert their human dignity..." p107

"From a situation of servile impressment, the oppressed have once more seized the initiative. They have taken back the power of choice." p108

" [Jesus] is helping an oppressed people find a way to protest and neutralize an onerous practice ..."

Wink speaks of how the second mile tactic would only work a few times before the system found a way to stop it. But it was not that Jesus was offering an exhaustive list to strategies for resistance, rather a few examples of how we can resist and assert our own dignity and worth and open the oppressor to humanization. The idea is to have a new approach and be creative.

"To those whose lifelong pattern has been to cringe before their masters, Jesus offers a way to liberate themselves from servile actions and a servile mentality." "There is no need to wait until Rome is defeated, peasants have land or slaves are freed. They can begin to behave with dignity and recovered humanity *now* ... The reign of God is already breaking into the world, and it comes, not as an imposition from on high, but as the leaven slowly causing the dough to rise (Matt. 13:33) Jesus' teaching on nonviolence is thus integral to his proclamation of the dawning of the reign of God. Here was indeed a way to resist the Powers That Be without being made over into their likeness." p109

*Nonviolence not merely as resistance and self-humanization but also creating space for the oppressor to humanize and become compassionate and just.* p110

"Jesus ... abhors both passivity and violence. He articulates, out of the history of his own people's struggles, a way by which evil can be opposed without being mirrored, the oppressor resisted without being emulated, the enemy neutralized without being destroyed." p111

○ What have been your "take aways" from this week's chapter? What are you intrigued by? What do you reject?

Next week: Practical nonviolence, doing it as an individual (week after that, doing it as a nation)

From Chapter 4

"... **the false God changes suffering into violence, the true God changes violence into suffering.**"

Last week we had this quote from Wink that we tried to decipher. When I got back to Aaron Houghton that we had been unable to unpack it, he responded

A selfish person who is suffering enacts violence out of Rage, or a sense of "how dare the world allow ME to suffer". And because their heart is committed to a false God, they feel encouraged and justified in enacting violence for the sake of their own perceived well-being.

The empathic person, whose heart is for the true God, suffers with victims of violence.

Harold Greer called me to share that what he learned in Baptist seminary about Jesus' death was very much in agreement with Wink. So why, we wonder, do so many Christians seem to believe that God required Jesus' sacrifice in order to forgive us and love us? ... that Jesus died **FOR** our sins?