

Kurlansky, Mark. *Nonviolence: The History of a Dangerous Idea*. New York: The Modern Library, 2006.

Mark Kurlansky (1952(?)–____) works from New York City as a freelance writer and lecturer. Kurlansky's works address nonviolence, food and culinary works, children's books, science, Basque history, Judaism, and the Caribbean culture. Mark Kurlansky is also an artist, and illustrates some of his books personally. He refused to serve in the military during the Vietnam War and received early education in nonviolence.

Foreword by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama's daily practice cultivates nonviolence and compassion, which helps create deep relations with others. Nonviolence exceeds mere lack of violence. Nonviolence leads one to intimacy that results in feeling responsible for others' well-being. Violence leads to more violence, and is seldom warranted. We should aim to resolve conflicts by talking and listening, rather than through coercion.

I. Imperfect Beings.

No proactive word for nonviolence exists. The only word available is the negation of violence. Proponents of nonviolence have been marginalized because nonviolence threatens state militarism. The victors of wars write the histories of those wars. Nonviolence differs from pacifism. Nonviolence seeks to persuade its opponents. Its core conviction is that persuasion is more effective, as a political strategy, than violence. Gandhi's word for nonviolence, *satyagraha*, has never achieved popular usage.

Hinduism does not advocate nonviolence, though strains of nonviolence run through its history. Man is stained by violence, and remains obligated to attempt to remove the stain. Nonviolence emerges from spiritual strength.

Nonviolence entered Chinese culture through Buddhism. Buddhism avoids taking life, but its strictures suffer many interpretations. Chinese Confucianism endorsed armies, but is ambivalent about their proper uses. Confucius advocated neither pacifism nor nonviolence. Mozi wrote against Confucians, advocating universal love, pacifism, and the Golden Rule. In Taoism, Lao Tzu advocates only defensive wars, which is but half-way to nonviolence.

Judaism's sixth commandment forbids murder, but the tradition has many strands that evade or redirect the rule. The prophet Isaiah foresaw a day when God's people cease war.

Many religions forbid violence, but have been coopted for political and violent ends. Kurlansky notes the perversion of Zen Buddhism in the hands of Japanese ninjas or the celebration of the Maccabean Revolt (Chanukah) in the hands of Zionists. Rebels who insist on nonviolence are killed, then canonized, as was Jesus. States prefer saints to revolutionary martyrs.

II. The Problem with States.

Jesus advocated a thorough-going nonviolence, including emotional nonviolence. The early church, sundered from its Jewish roots, became a Roman anti-war cult. Origen (Alexandrian third century A.D. Christian philosopher) argued that Christians should submit to the emperor but decline to fight his wars. Origen did not reject armies, only Christian participation in them. Christians targeted converts among the Roman legions, impairing Rome's ability to war. Christianity's control of the Roman world was, for the church, its greatest disaster.

Constantine I, believing he needed a powerful divine partner in battling to become emperor, painted crosses on the shields of his soldiers. When they won, Christianity was coopted into the service of Roman wars. The Edict of Milan decriminalized Christian faith. So, Christianity, like all great religions, was turned to serve state power and the wars by which it is maintained.

The erosion of the church commenced almost immediately. Accommodations of state violence led, in Augustine's work, to the just war concept, which emphasized not the killing of others, but the motives of the killers in killing others. Some objected. Martin, a Roman soldier of two years, put down his sword and refused to fight. He offered to lead the phalanx into battle unarmed, and would have been slaughtered but for a rapid peace on the field of battle. Martin became St. Martin of Tours. Saints are of use to the state. Rebels are not.

III. The Killer Peace Movement.

Involved in war, the church began to interfere in state war-making. The Crusades sought to effect theological ends by military means. Just war theory prevailed: the State declares a bad guy, whom good guys must kill. The Truce of God required kings to lay down arms every Sunday, and half of all days in the year (the holy days). The church organized peace militias to attack lords who violated the Truce of God. The kings retaliated. By the eleventh century, the church argued that killing criminals and aggressors pleased God. This was malicide, killing of bad people, not homicide, killing of the good.

Islam, in its origins, emphasized peace. Mohammed's attempt at utopia in Mecca required no violence. But when Mohammed was put to the task of defending Medina, after Mecca rejected him, "just wars" ensued. Mohammed conducted nineteen campaigns, even while arguing that nonviolence was preferable. Jihad originally meant intense struggle to convince others nonviolently. It was subsequently bifurcated into spiritual struggles and martial struggles, the greater and lesser jihads. A just war theory prevailed, when it became apparent that Islamic soldiers would prove unable to conquer Europe.

Pope Urban II declared the first crusade in 1095, a holy war to liberate Jerusalem from Saracen domination. This was a time of apocalyptic frenzy in Europe. The church demonized Islamists. Taking the Muslim world by surprise, the first crusade was alone among the six invasions in military success. Islam eventually mounted a counter-crusade, driving the west from Jerusalem, demonizing the "Franks." War makes one like one's demonized enemy. The imagery associated with crusading echoes through all subsequent wars.

IV. Troublemakers.

Most dissenters from the militarization of the Church fled to monasteries, which remained intellectual refuges. The Cathars, adopting Manichean dualism, rejected violence, individual and state. They rejected the sacraments, and refused to support the church financially. The church demonized the Cathars (the church's designation for the sect, which means "kissers of cat anuses"), spread rumors that the Cathars ate cremated baby remains, and held orgies for anal intercourse. A 100 year crusade resulted in the death of every Cathar. Where the nonviolent become violent, they always lose their argument. Other small sects of nonviolent originalists emerged: Waldensians, Taborites, Hussites, Mennonites, and Anabaptists. A Taborite writer, Petr Chelcicky, wrote that war resides in the logic of power. Renouncing power politics, that is both war and imprisonment, would be sufficient to beckon world peace. An Anabaptist leader named Michael Sattler defended himself at trial for refusing to kill Turks, arguing that Turks knew nothing of Christ, but those from Europe who killed Turks knew Christ's prohibitions on murder but rejected them. Sattler preferred to fight the Europeans. Sattler suffered execution. After the Thirty Years War, Spiritualism, Pietism, the Diggers, the Quakers, and the Dunkers evolved, all embracing pacifism and opposing war.

V. The Dilemma of Unnatural People.

Quakers and other pacifist Christian communities flocked to America, and received diverse welcomes. By 1658, four Quakers had been executed in the Massachusetts and Plymouth colonies. Pennsylvania, however, was formed as a pacifist haven.

Political warmakers enlist intellectuals to create rationales for their ventures. None fabricated more creative war theories than the English. Alberico Gentili, then at Oxford, invented preventive war theory, arguing that one may preemptively attack those one fears may attack you in the future. John Selden argued that extending empire was itself a justification for war, because all men are acquisitive. Thomas Hobbes argued that war was the natural human state. Jean Jacques Rousseau extended that sentiment to nation-states. All naturally war. John Locke enthused about colonialism and asserted the right to take slaves.

Other thinkers disagreed. William Penn's supporters established Pennsylvania as a pacifist enclave out of line with British foreign ventures. Non-pacifist Pennsylvanians were given western lands, and Quakers eastern lands (the more fertile soils). Tensions rose. In 1756, the pacifists lost control of the legislature, and nonviolence ceased to be Pennsylvania's guiding principle.

Some indigenous peoples attempted pacifist or nonviolent approaches. After initially fighting, the Cherokee nation sued and won before Chief Justice John Marshall their rights as a sovereign nation. President Andrew Jackson circumvented this ruling, and forced the Trail of Tears, during which forced march 4,000 Cherokees perished. The Maori of New Zealand, after offering armed resistance, followed Te Whiti, the leader of a village called Parihaka. Te Whiti taught nonviolence, self-reliance for necessary goods, and peaceful negotiation. The Maori flocked to Parihaka. They made agreements with neighboring Maori and retained ownership of their lands, though they let whites settle there too, without selling. Then they plowed the land. When whites objected, police arrested ploughmen, who did not resist. Te Whiti encouraged his ploughmen, wearing a white feather to identify themselves, to remain calm. Five per day were sent to plow. Five were arrested daily. Te Whiti encouraged them to use the tongue as their weapon. Eventually, Te Whiti himself was arrested. Settlers destroyed homes of natives in Parihaka. Thousands of Maori died. No responsive violence ensued.

VI. Natural Revolution.

Most Americans of the revolutionary period could not imagine order without coercion. Still, 80,000 pacifists inhabited the colonies. The Continental Congress permitted conscientious objection provided the resisters paid their taxes and a penalty. But some wanted war with the British. War is more durable than peace. To break peace, one merely fires shots. Debate ends. Fighting begins.

Americans had waged nonviolent contest with the British. The upper classes pamphleteered. The lower classes rioted. Both were commonplace. The colonies had become so unruly as to be unprofitable. The English attempted to remedy this problem with taxes, which proved unworkable. Nonviolent acts ensued: the 1773 Boston Tea Party, and the 1774 blockade of the British puppet judiciary in Massachusetts. It would appear that the American Revolution was a *fiat accompli* before hostilities commenced. Why then war? Perhaps war proved necessary because none could imagine achieving independence peacefully. War may have been necessary to galvanize and consolidate the already-accomplished revolution.

Once fighting commenced, unsupportive citizens were branded loyalists. In New Jersey, 105 were sentenced to death. All but four recanted and fought. The recalcitrant four hanged. A Connecticut pacifist was tarred, covered in pig dung, forced to eat the same. An accused Delaware loyalist was hanged, then drawn and quartered while alive. Benjamin Franklin's son was incarcerated in a dungeon. Franklin did nothing to help. Pacifists, vilified as British loyalists, found no safe harbor.

The American Revolution has been mythically sanitized, home to founding fathers and blessings of liberty. The conflict was, rather, a brutal civil war, as well as an international one. So many colonists behaved unconscionably during the war that no critical history was written during the lives of the participants. Nonviolent pacifists insist war always leads to more war. The War of 1812 followed hard on the heels of the American Revolution.

VII. Peace and Slavery.

Peace activism rose after the Revolution. David Low Dodge argued that keeping armies leads to wars, that war is an economic disaster, and that war most injures the poor who pay higher prices from depressed wages. Noah Worcester characterized war as the mass delusion obsessing a guilt-ridden world. Peace societies grew in number. Charles Whipple revised the revisionist Revolutionary histories. Abolition and nonviolence groups united in common cause. William Lloyd Garrison lead anti-slavery forces, calling for immediate freeing of all slaves and boycott of elections until emancipation was completed. Garrison burned a copy of the American Constitution and called for the North to secede from the Union because Southern slavery was guaranteed by Northern armies. Garrison was accused of fomenting Nat Turner's slave rebellion in which fifty-five slave owners died. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sold 300,000 copies in its first year. Lydia Maria Child joined Garrison's nonviolent movement and wrote forcefully for abolition. For her book *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans*, which discussed the state of black slaves, blamed North and South equally, and treated interracial sex, a taboo subject, Child lost her job, her fortune, and her career as a novelist. Elijah Lovejoy was assassinated by pro-slavery mobs for printing abolitionist tracts. Haitian blacks

overthrew two French armies to form a free black society, but the savagery of that war has lingered in their culture for two centuries. The Haitian experience led Congress to forbid further importation of slaves, and the British and French to outlaw slavery altogether. In America, a battle of terror raged between blacks and slave-owners.

John Brown espoused violence to end slavery. He and several sons moved to Kansas in hope it should become a non-slave state. They tortured five pro-slavery men to death by swords. Brown assaulted and took the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, hoping to lead a slave rebellion. Robert E. Lee captured him the following morning. Brown was hanged, convicted of treason. Many in the abolitionist nonviolence movement teetered at Brown's actions toward endorsing violence. C. K. Whipple continued to encourage nonviolence, and asked for all slaves to stop cooperating with their owners. But once the Civil War shooting commenced, the nonviolent activists were silenced. Some condoned the violence. Garrison argued that once the shooting began, nonviolence was unworkable. The dissenters would merely be pushed aside and ignored. So, Garrison abandoned nonviolence for pragmatic reasons.

The Lincoln administration finessed the question of slavery, since its top priority was to restore the Union. The Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in rebellion states, but not in the Northern states. In short, the Proclamation freed no slaves. More Americans died in the Civil War (around 650,000) than in all other American wars combined. Slaves were freed legally, but not actually. After Lincoln's assassination, Andrew Johnson, a Tennessee citizen, appointed pro-slavery governors in the seceding states. Black codes and voting obstacles were passed. The task of making abolition a reality in the daily life of southern blacks remained for another century to attempt.

VIII. The Curse of Nations.

In 1867, Victor Hugo predicted the decline of the nation-state and war, in favor of a peaceful global community. He was wrong. Wars lead to wars, each tilling the soil of the next. The socialists boycotted the next pan-European peace conference. People seeking power distrust pacifists.

Kurlansky recounts numerous peace conferences running up to World War I. The United States began wars of colonization (Mexico, Philippines), with many, including Samuel Clemens, dissenting. As is usual, when the shooting began in Europe, criticism was stifled. Bertrand Russell found his neutrality support waning. The labor movement argued that a bayonet was a weapon with a worker on each end.

The losses in World War I were unprecedented. As hostilities dragged on, opposition rose. So many British died that the country imposed a draft. Drafted conscientious objectors were treated badly, set to punitive hard labor. Clive Bell, in his *Peace at Once*, savaged the paltry rationale for World War I and warned that humiliating Germans would not be good for Europe. Dissenters were punished. Bertrand Russell was given six months for opposing a U.S. military base in England. He lost his lectureship at Cambridge as well.

In the United States, anti-war sentiment was criminalized as spying, and 142 life sentences and seventeen death verdicts were rendered. None of the executions was enacted.

Military desertions spread in all involved armies. In the end, ten million died and twenty million were injured.

IX. A Favorite Just War.

Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* encouraged a flurry of anti-war sentiment and writings. The Court of International Justice was formed, and the League of Nations. When Hitler came to power, Remarque fled Germany and his novel was burned.

In Hitler's early years, the United States supported Hitler and provided armaments. British prime minister Neville Chamberlain appeased Hitler in the Munich Pact (1938) by giving Germany the Germanic cultural zone of Czechoslovakia, without consulting the Czechs. Critics of appeasement tend to forget that appeasement was popular in the decade preceding the Munich Pact. In America, conscientious objectors were sixteen percent of the U.S. prison population. These imprisoned pacifists worked to integrate prison mess halls, one of the first events in the American civil rights movement.

Gandhi encouraged German Jews to rise up in nonviolent protests. More Jews were saved in Germany by nonviolence than by violent resistance. Kurlansky recites the nonviolent resistance to the Nazis in Denmark and Bulgaria, where most Jews were saved, and the dismal statistics from nations where Jews resisted by force of arms. Throughout the war, British and American allies knew of the Holocaust, but declined to do anything. The Holocaust was, militarily, unimportant. And the U.S. was sensitive to German propaganda that Jews were insidiously leading American government. Saving Jews was politically unpalatable.

Warmongers use World War II as an example of a just war. Stephen Spielberg and Tom Brokaw proclaim soldiers to be acting ethically and saving the world. Winston Churchill did little but encourage warfare. The Allies were good; the Germans and Italians and Japanese bad. It was that simple. War makes an army become like its enemy. When Germany bombed the civilian center of Coventry, the British took to bombing German population centers, which may have prolonged the war. The U.S. continued this policy by producing and then deploying nuclear weapons on the civilian populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

X. The Rule of Thugs and the Law of Gravity.

The twentieth century was a time of war extremes, but it was also the greatest century for nonviolence in history. Gandhi, influence by Tolstoy and Thoreau, freed India. The nonviolent advocate was then elevated to sainthood and ignored by nuclear India. Gandhi valued self-denial, nonviolent non-cooperation, and force of will. Gandhi espoused nonviolent resistance, not passive impotence. Kurlansky recounts Gandhi's biography briefly: satyagraha, the South African protest years, and Indian independence strikes and actions. Gandhi recruited a Pathan leader, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who had been violently opposing the British in northern India for decades. They formed a nonviolent army and took up nonviolent non-cooperation. Gandhi's import lies in creating a template for nonviolent resistance.

Gandhi's example deeply influenced Americans. Kurlansky tells of Richard Gregg's book, *The Power of Nonviolence*, George Houser's pacifist union work, Muste's Fellowship of Reconciliation, Houser and the Congress of Racial Equality. Leaders accepted beatings in nonviolent fashion. They accepted prison terms for refusing military service. Martin Luther King Jr. was turned from his insistence upon armed revolt to a path of nonviolent non-cooperation by Muste's rhetoric.

Anti-nuclear activists opposed the weapon that rendered the fundamental equation of war antiquated—a weapon for which no political end could justify its use, since it would result in annihilation of the user as well as the target. Still, the Cold War justified around 130 shooting wars in the next forty plus years, but no nuclear exchanges. Nonviolence suffered. Stokely Carmichael took over the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee with his Black Panther Party, a violent radical group. Students for a Democratic Society took beatings without retaliation, but refused to categorically rule out violent responses. David Dellinger, a nonviolent activist, found most opponents of the Vietnam War criticized this particular war, not war generally. The Weathermen violently terrorized domestic corporations.

Violence is rationalized, and we reject the rationale only if the violence fails. Violence infects and spreads like a disease. Nonviolence wins only if it has the moral rigor to escape the control of thugs and remain simply nonviolent. Violence makes people afraid; fearful people seldom behave well.

XI. Random Outbreaks of Hope.

Will and Ariel Durant calculated that of the last 3,421 years, only 268 passed without war. Still, nonviolence has had some seminal moments. The Mexican rightists were removed by years of gentle pressure. The Soviet Union fell, largely due, not to Reagan arms and rhetoric, but due to nonviolent resistance in Eastern Europe. The secret power of nonviolence is patience. Nonviolent resistance to the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia became a turning point, according to Mikhail Gorbachev. Governments function by public opinion; when it turns against an administration, that administration can accomplish nothing. The Argentine junta fell in part because the *Mothers of Plaza de Mayo* met every Thursday in the square to protest. Beaten and killed, they persevered. Nonviolent dissent played its part in toppling Marcos's Philippine dictatorship. In South Africa, nonviolence alternated with violence, Gandhi being followed by

violent Mandela, followed by Desmond Tutu. The most effective resistance was not guns, but economic boycott of white businesses by blacks.

Soldiers are not killers, but can be trained to kill. PTSD is the result. Kurlansky tells the stories of two U.S. military deserters facing deployment to the Iraq or Afghan fronts.

Anatole France said that war will cease only when people refuse violence and suffer what comes of their refusal. This movement has begun.