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ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN: A VISION OF WORLD ORDER FOR THE 21st CENTURY

*The Honorable C.G. Weeramantry**

It is a high privilege for me to deliver this lecture in honor of one of the greatest of all Americans. Martin Luther King, Jr. was one of those rare spirits, cast in the mold of Mahatma Gandhi, who, from time to time in history, rise gigantic above the troubles of their era to demonstrate what the human spirit can envision and what the human will can achieve.

He attuned the minds of an entire generation to a nobler plane of mutual respect, a warmer spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood, and a gentler path towards that sunlit plateau that has long been the philosopher's dream — a society wherein equality and human dignity reign supreme. To this end, he guided America through a long dark tunnel of suspicion, anger, and misunderstanding. Each year the world joins the United States in celebrating and saluting a life and work that have ennobled the human spirit in this century.

When the history of the twentieth century comes to be written by generations yet to come, the name of Martin Luther King, Jr. will be emblazoned on its roll of honor as one whose work will reverberate over generations. He kept his engagement with destiny with a rare combination of courage, idealism, and steadfastness. In doing so, he reshaped the landscape of his time.

* The Honorable C.G. Weeramantry, Judge, The International Court of Justice, The Hague. This speech was presented at the University of Tulsa in commemoration of Martin Luther King, Jr., on January 17, 1995. Judge Weeramantry is currently working on a book of the same title.

It is particularly appropriate that we remember this great leader at the commencement of 1995, which has been designated by the United Nations as the International Year of Tolerance. Tolerance shone through his life's work like a beacon in stormy weather. That beacon was kept alive by his unquenchable optimism about the powers of religion. Dr. King forged new links between religious principles and public conduct, thus bringing the latter closer to the spirit of love, the heartbeat of Christianity. His power-packed sermons reflected a clear vision of his unfolding dream, his life of painful suffering bravely borne, and his capacity to take on mountains of responsibility. They showed how it was possible to tear up the legacies of hate, and demonstrated that hate recedes before the power of love. Those sermons sent an electric current pulsing through the conscience of our age. Blessed with the gift of making language sing, he formulated in ringing phraseology the principles of non-violence which have guided decades of civil rights workers and brought a new version of hope to disadvantaged people everywhere.

As a tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr., this lecture will center on the twin themes which irradiated through his work — the principles of religion and the translation of those principles into practical conduct. The theme of the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., was the interaction between religious principles and practical conduct.

It is of major importance today that we should reflect on this interaction. Whereas religion has from time immemorial inspired philosophy, and philosophy has inspired international law and human rights, there has been a continuing trend to cut these disciplines away from their philosophical roots. All law owes its prime inspiration to philosophy. To cut itself adrift from philosophy, and from the sources that have nourished philosophy, is to cut it away from one of its primary sources of inspiration.

A trend which began in the time of Grotius, when the wars of religion were tearing Europe apart, is being relentlessly continued, even though we live in an age when more than ever before the great discipline of international law needs the support of the moral sense of humanity. And where is that better contained than the immense reservoirs of moral principles contained in the great religions?

Lacking sheriffs or legions to enforce its will, international law must fall back upon the sense of moral righteousness ingrained in the vast bulk of the global community. Over four billion of the world's population of nearly six billion are followers of one of the major religions. Deeply embedded in those religions are many of the basic moral principles on which international law rests. If that connection can be traced and brought out into the light of day, international law and human rights will be vastly strengthened.

We are on the verge of the twenty-first century but, as Thomas Carlyle once wrote, every century is the lineal child of its predecessor. The twentieth century, though a century of great achievement on many fronts, has become a blood-drenched century. Perhaps more blood has been shed in this century than in any century before. Such is the century which is the parent of the century lying ahead of us.

Before the twentieth century began, the hopes of philosophers ran high. They hoped that as we turned over a new leaf in the book of universal history, we would be able to keep the page clean of the blemishes that had stained its

predecessor. The Great Peace Conference of 1899 gave expression to those hopes. That vision was not to be fulfilled. The new century, like its predecessor, became a century of war. The nineteenth century had come to be known as the Clausewitzean century, for it followed the patterns of violence charted out by Clausewitz, the philosopher of war, who taught that war was a natural means of resolving disputes. The twentieth century itself became a Clausewitzean century, a century of lost opportunity.

A new century now lies before us. Another page is about to be turned. Like its predecessor, it offers us a clean sheet on which to write the continuing history of mankind. But unlike its predecessor, it will not afford us another chance. It will be a century of last opportunity for humanity, for we now have what our predecessors did not have when our century dawned — the power to destroy ourselves. The choice before us is clear — do we opt for yet another Clausewitzean century or do we turn to greater philosophies to guide our steps through the tangles and quagmires that await us?

As Albert Camus has so aptly warned us, “Probably every generation sees itself as charged with remaking the world. Mine, however, knows that its task will not be merely to remake the world. Its task is even greater: to keep the world from destroying itself.”

As the new century of last opportunity takes over from this century of lost opportunity, the example and teaching of leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., offer perhaps the only route towards averting the legacy of violence that the nineteenth century bequeathed to the twentieth, and the twentieth is about to bequeath to the twenty-first. Otherwise, we shall have a re-run of the violence, the racism, the genocide, the arms races, and the carnival of torture which have disfigured this century.

We may well see new forms of domination more severe than the old, new forms of discrimination more subtle than racism, new forms of exploitation more powerful than the sword. The armour we need for this conflict is to be found in the repositories of wisdom contained in the great religions, not in the sense of dogmatic religion dominating public life, but in the sense of the wisdom of religion guiding and inspiring us to a gentler and nobler method of addressing the problems that confront us. Martin Luther King, Jr. recognized this need and demonstrated to an astonished world the power of religious teaching as a practical mode of addressing problems in the public domain.

It is the task for each religion to harness the infinite riches of wisdom and guidance contained within its scriptures. This task is worthy of the most dedicated efforts of scholars, but no one scholar can accomplish this for all religions, nor for all the scriptures of even one religion.

A practical means of approaching such an enormous task is to concentrate on a minute portion of the scriptures of one religion. To this end, I have attempted to explore the juristic implications of The Lord's Prayer for the purpose of building a bridge between religious principles and international law. Unmatched in its authority, unrivaled in its brevity, and unfathomable in its depth, the Prayer is an excellent vehicle for this purpose. The exercise is one which, I would like to think, would have had the approval of Dr. King, who sacrificed his life to translate religious teachings of love and non-violence into principles of public conduct.

Over the centuries, more than one thousand books have been written on various aspects of The Lord's Prayer, and it is timely that its connection with legal principles, not hitherto sufficiently investigated, should be explored. I feel privileged to do so in a lecture honoring an American whose public record was a shining example of religion in action.

I shall attempt to show the wealth of principles of public order contained within the crisp formulations of principles and obligations of a prayer which, from the days of the earliest writers on Christianity, such as Tertullian, has been described as a summary of the whole Gospel. I have interpreted the Prayer in the light of Jesus' abhorrence of insincerity. This comes through clearly in all the gospels, and it was furthest from his intentions that the Prayer should be mechanically recited without a firm resolve on the part of the utterer to match its every word with appropriate conduct.

One must not therefore deny by one's conduct what one affirms by one's words. To quote an extreme example all too often repeated in modern life, one must not recite The Lord's Prayer in the morning, proceed to harass, oppress, torture, or kill a fellow human being and then, in the privacy of one's home, repeat The Lord's Prayer again before retiring. Throughout history, this has been done by rulers and ruled alike, privately pursuing unabashed self-interest while publicly reciting The Lord's Prayer. Empires have been built in this way by persons who daily recited the Prayer in words, and daily denied it by their conduct. In our time we have only to look around the world to see that this trend continues.

If we examine the major problems of our time, a great many of them could probably resolve themselves into this dichotomy between profession and performance — the sort of conduct against which Jesus protested most bitterly during his public ministry. Dr. King's life is one of this century's most stirring examples of the correspondence between word and deed.

In short, reciting the Prayer is a commitment to the principles it contains; and each time the Prayer is repeated, there is a renewal of that pledge. In lawyer's language, one cannot blow hot and cold, affirming in words what one repudiates in action. The Prayer is a supreme recognition that heavenly duty is to be performed on earthly soil.

Viewed this way, The Lord's Prayer contains a large number of basic principles underlying law and human rights which, if practiced, offer us a way out of the paths of violence and self-centeredness which threaten to lead humanity to self-destruction through another century of violence. In the words of Dr. King: "No longer can we afford the luxury of passing by on the other side. Such folly was once called moral failure; today it will lead to universal suicide." The reference was of course to the parable of the Good Samaritan, which is often looked upon as teaching The Lord's Prayer in action. There is no scope within the short time available to delve in any depth into the Prayer's richness of meaning. I shall have time to refer to the juristic implications of just a few words - Our, Father, Hallowed, Thy Kingdom Come, Daily Bread, Temptation, Forgiveness, and Trespasses. It is possible to make a similar analysis of every other word in the Prayer, but there is no time to do so now. I start with the word "Our."

OUR

Jesus was asked by his followers to teach them how to pray. "Pray after this manner" he commanded, and he commenced with the word "Our."

Now, if you were to ask any student of human rights to select for you the basic principles on which the vast structure of modern human rights depends, he would tell you that they are the principle of equality, the principle of dignity of every human being, and the principle that the rights conferred upon human beings are inalienable — they inhere in each human being by reason of his humanity, and cannot be taken away by any authority however high. All these fundamental concepts are encapsulated in the very first word of the Prayer. I shall show you how.

In the first place, all of humanity is placed in the one category of those who together address a common superior. Humans may make distinctions among themselves based on rank, birth, gender, wealth, or race, but all of these vanish before the eyes of the Father who sees them all as one group. Humanity is a seamless web and the supposed distinctions made among groups of persons are as irrelevant as distances traversed on the earth are irrelevant to the traveller's position in regard to the sun and the stars.

The very commencement of the Prayer thus places all humans in their proper context of basic equality. The walls of privilege that humans love to erect around themselves appear grotesque and ridiculous in this light.

Second, we have the concept of dignity. Jesus tells his followers that every one of them, however lowly, has a right to address the Almighty directly. No learned or priestly caste is required as an intermediary. Every individual is thus vested with a supreme dignity in his capacity as a human being. This dignity is further emphasized by the fact that Jesus himself often prayed to the Father, thus identifying himself with others who prayed. Identification with the personage who is, for Christians, the supreme embodiment of dignity, thus also confers dignity on those with whom he identifies.

Third, the equality and dignity that has been thus conferred, no temporal or spiritual power can take away. In saying that every individual has sufficient dignity to address the Father direct, the Prayer is stating also that no Pope or Emperor, no church or government, can take that dignity away — the dignity that inheres in every human being.

We thus have all these pillars of modern human rights doctrine embedded in the first word of the Prayer. The word contains other concepts as well — the the concept of community, the concept of universality, the concept of a higher law of conduct which all children of a common father must observe, and concept of social rights and duties. It is for very good reason that the Prayer says *Our* Father and not *My* Father.

FATHER

The father analogy is pregnant with meaning. It is of course a word transcending gender and conveying the most loving and protective connotations of parenthood. We read in Isaiah, "As a mother comforts her son, so will I

myself comfort and protect you.” The word is symbolic of love and care, and reaches far beyond all connotations of gender.

1. *Love*

The first meaning one can extract from it is love. The word “Father,” used by Jesus as many as 170 times in the gospels, is said to embody the sort of love and immediacy of the affectionate words Dad or Daddy. The deliberate use of the simple word “abba,” in contrast to dignified and formal modes of address, conveyed to his listeners in a special way, the lessons of immediacy, intimacy, and love which Jesus was seeking to convey. The great American philosopher Emerson said in his essay on love, “Love is our highest word and a synonym for God.” It is a little wonder that The Lord’s Prayer uses the analogy of a loving parent.

2. *Brotherhood and Sisterhood*

If all human beings alike are the children of a common father, they are all brothers and sisters to each other. It is totally inconsistent with the notion of common fatherhood that the children should deliberately impose suffering on each other, let alone kill them, torture them, or deprive them of sustenance.

3. *Peace*

This follows from the fatherhood notion because brothers and sisters cannot be at war with each other. If they have disputes, as indeed brothers and sisters often do, they must seek a peaceful resolution of those disputes. Violence and killing never prove the correctness of an argument. International law abounds with methods for the peaceful resolution of disputes, and these must be used.

4. *Collective Responsibility*

Those who belong to a common group have duties towards each other. No one acts as a brother or sister who permits that brother or sister to starve or suffer while it is within one’s power to help.

5. *Affirmative Action*

It follows from what has just been said that there is a duty of affirmative action to relieve a brother or sister in distress. In our age, the ambit of this common fellowship is much wider than when Jesus taught the Prayer, for the community to which we belong has visibly expanded from the village which circumscribed the vision of people of those times. Our duty of affirmative action is thus correspondingly greater. In this context, reference must be made to the Good Samaritan story which Jesus used to illustrate the extent of this duty of affirmative action, even in that parochial society. The story illustrated both the width of the circle of neighbors we must assist and the depth of that duty.

6. *Impartial Justice*

If all humans form one family, it follows that within that family, justice will be exercised impartially. Should disputes arise, they will be resolved in

accordance with the highest principles of fairness and equity, without regard to rank or privilege.

7. *The Concept of a Higher Law*

It follows also that there would be principles of justice that stand above domestic or parochial laws and are universal and eternal. In the words of ancient Hindu scripture, "Thy laws, O God, are firm, like the mountains" (*Rig Veda*, II, 28:1-9). Therefore, when one piously recites a prayer which likens God to a loving Father, all these connotations flood in.

HALLOWED

When the Prayer says "hallowed" be thy name, it is saying that the reciter will treat God as hallowed. This means also that God's attributes will also be treated as hallowed, and that this hallowedness will be honored by one's conduct. Among these attributes are justice, fair play, and love for all humanity, for these are some of the essential attributes of God.

Ancient Judaic wisdom has analyzed these various attributes of God and, indeed, reflected those attributes in the various names of God, such as Adonai-Shalom (God the Sender of Peace), Adonai-Tsidken (God the Embodiment of Righteousness), and Adonai-M'Kaddesh (God who Sanctifies). When one commits oneself to hallowing God's name, one is also committing oneself to hallowing these attributes of God by one's own conduct.

This recital is thus a commitment to justice and fair play and love for humanity, to peace and righteousness and proper conduct. One cannot recite this word of the Prayer without making such a pledge, and the prayer is thus a continuing pledge of just conduct. Otherwise, the recitation of belief in God's hallowedness rings hollow.

THY KINGDOM COME

In the midst of a very tightly composed prayer, there are three references to heaven and the Kingdom of God. "Who art in *Heaven*," "Thy *kingdom* come," and "On earth as it is in *Heaven*." This section will refer to the broad outlines of the concept, leaving the more legally-related discussion to the section on "Thy kingdom." John Wesley observed of this concept:

The Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God are but phrases for the same thing. They mean not merely a future happy state in heaven, but a state to be enjoyed on earth. . . . In some places of scripture the phrase more particularly denotes the state of it on earth; in others, it signifies only the state of Glory; but it generally includes both.

As the *Jerome Biblical Commentary* puts it, "The Prayer expects an earthly, this-worldly realization of God's will." This realization would not however be achieved except by human effort. In Martin Luther's words, in the 5th Wittenberg Sermon, of 1522: "the kingdom of God — and we are that kingdom — consists not in speech or in words, but in deeds, in works, and exercises."

This doctrine of bringing the Kingdom of Heaven down to earth by an unswerving adherence to rightness of conduct led H.G. Wells to observe:

This doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, which was the main teaching of Jesus, and which plays so small a part in the Christian creeds, is certainly one of the most revolutionary doctrines that ever stirred and changed human thought. It is small wonder if the world of that time failed to grasp its full significance, and recoiled in dismay from even a half-apprehension of its tremendous challenges to the established habits and institutions of mankind. . . . For the doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, as Jesus seems to have preached it, was no less than a bold and uncompromising demand for a complete change and a cleansing of the life of our struggling race, an utter cleansing without and within (*The Outline of History*, 526-27 (1920)).

Associated with it is the word "come," which is a resounding call to action - the sort of call that drove people like Martin Luther King to strain every nerve, every ability they had, and every ounce of their energy to make the principles of God's Kingdom take root and blossom on earth. One does not passively intone the hope that God's Kingdom come on earth. One actively works towards it, as Martin Luther King did. The word contains an injunction to each individual to do for his community, his country, and the international community what William Blake so eloquently captured in his words:

I shall not cease from mortal toil
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till I have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

The opposition between the two kingdoms - the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Man - has been a central theme of philosophy from the time of St. Augustine who wrote of them in his *City of God*, 410 A. D. The bridge between the two kingdoms is human conduct - conduct such as Martin Luther King exemplified. The Lord's Prayer is a daily reminder to Christians of their duty in this regard.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

This is the point where the Prayer now comes down to earth. It has been dealing thus far with loftier values, but turns now to a recognition of the absolute necessities that everyone requires to keep life going on this earthly plane. The Prayer is thus not purely a collection of spiritual recitals, as most other prayers are. It turns now to the mundane requirements of food, clothing, shelter - what would, in human rights parlance, be called economic rights:

In human rights, there was for a long time a concentration on civil and political rights. In fact, right up to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), that stream of thought scarcely concerned itself with economic, social, and cultural rights. These did not receive full recognition until after eighteen years of debate in the United Nations, when the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights of 1966 accorded equal status to the human rights that concerned our material needs, as opposed to our civil and political rights. Here, in the Prayer, you have material needs being given a place alongside of spiritual needs. This is why the Prayer is intensely practical without suffering any diminution of its concentrated spirituality.

There is also a reference to collective needs. "Give *us* this day *our* daily bread," not, "Give *me* this day *my* daily bread."

There are other connotations here as well. One cannot ask the Lord for one's daily bread while at the same time taking the daily bread out of the mouths of others, or denying it to them when they are in need and one is in a position to help them.

There are also environmental considerations. These are well stated in the verse:

Back of the bread is the snowy flour
 And back of the flour the mill
 And back of the mill is the field of wheat
 The rain, and the Father's will.

The Prayer for bread involves a commitment reaching beyond it to its sources. One cannot stretch out one hand to receive what the other destroys in advance.

The prayer that we be given our daily bread thus involves by clear implication an attitude of respect towards land and the environment - an attitude which does not negative the Prayer by an anti-social attitude in regard to its possession and enjoyment.

We must also take account of the word "daily." There is here a clear injunction against anti-social conduct such as hoarding or cornering the market in essential commodities. There is a clear point here to Christian attitudes towards wealth.

TRESPASSES

It is in the light of the moral message of Jesus that the word "trespass" needs to be construed. That moral message is found in the vast expanses of moral territory covered in such teachings as the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount and the nature of the Kingdom of God, and in such parables as that of the Good Samaritan. The whole of that moral territory is covered by The Lord's Prayer and, although keeping the Ten Commandments is part of the duty of every Christian, the word "trespasses" in the Prayer reaches much further than mere obedience to the Commandments.

Even if one confines oneself to the particular laws contained in the Ten Commandments, their specific words assume a much wider meaning in our age than could have been appreciated when they were first revealed. Merely by way of illustrating this proposition, let us consider just one Commandment, "Thou Shalt not Steal."

Of course, it would be a trespass within the meaning of The Lord's Prayer, to indulge in theft. But what constitutes theft, when against the background of the twenty-first, or for that matter twentieth, century? The ambit of the offence has surely broadened the simple physical appropriation of another's property which occupied center stage in the concept of theft many centuries ago.

Today the wrongful deprivation of another's property can take a myriad of forms not even envisaged in earlier ages. Taking that which rightfully belongs to future generations - intergenerational theft if it may be so described - is a prime example. Using economic pressure to extract financial or other benefits from a poor country is another, for in the result, that which belongs to the people of that poor country is drained away in a manner that can be worse than theft and, in fact, resembles extortion. Multinational corporations trading in third world countries without moral restraints, may commit this sort of depredation.

Theft of information by computer crime is another form of theft peculiar to our age. Theft of ideas or of "intellectual property" is yet another.

In other words, our approaches to the wording of the Commandments, implicitly incorporated as they are in The Lord's Prayer, must be on an extended basis, taking into account the changed global milieu essential to a proper understanding of its implications for our age. It is all too easy under the economic ordering of today's global society for those in a superior economic position to appropriate, under the protection of legal forms, the property that rightly belongs to others with as little color of right as in the case of open theft.

Commandments such as "Thou shalt not kill" and "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" take on similarly extended meanings in the light of modern conditions.

Viewed thus, the concept of trespass in the twenty-first century will need fresh study more than most other sections of the Prayer, for the obligations imposed upon ordinary people in this modern age far transcend, in complexity and scope, any that could have been visualized in earlier centuries.

The time has come when, in interpreting this word, we should not confine ourselves to the narrow visibility of sin as discernible in the context of a simple and parochial society. In the complex, technologically-oriented, and economically dominated global society of the twenty-first century, such a vision is not only totally inadequate but productive of infinite danger to the very survival of human the species.

Martin Luther King, with his love for all humanity, his prophetic vision, and his firm resolve to translate religious principle into matching conduct, was impatient with narrow interpretations of scripture. Rather, he was intimately concerned with matters of practical conduct and their true impact upon people here and now. In his own language, "I'm not concerned with the temperature of hell or the furnishings of heaven, but with what men do here on earth."

AS WE FORGIVE THEM

We cannot call back our-yesterdays, but we can build our tomorrows. This can only be done on the basis of forgiveness, not recrimination. If, in the next century, we are to silence the guns of war, and if, in a hundred places on earth, the atmospheres now dripping with poison are to be cleansed, we can only do so on the basis of the principle of forgiveness so heavily emphasized in the Prayer.

Moreover, in this area, we are expressly told that we will get exactly as we give. The measure of forgiveness we receive is the measure of forgiveness we extend to others. We decide by our own conduct the standard by which we will be judged.

All that has been said thus far relates to what may be deemed as "passive" forgiveness, i.e., the state of mentally forgiving wrongs done to oneself. One wipes the slate clean of hostile or revengeful thoughts. It is important to stress, however, that the Christian standard of forgiveness reaches far beyond this. One is required not merely to forgive those who have caused harm to oneself but, indeed, to turn this into the "active" sentiment of loving them. One is called upon to love one's enemies and persecutors. Christ speaks of this as a distinctive mark of Christian love (Mark 5:43).

This aspect of forgiveness was exemplified by Dr. King's life, and emphasized by his teachings. His achievements underlined its power. In the face of constant abuse and threats and vilification, he preached love for those who persecuted him. "If one day you find me sprawled and dead," he said, "I do not want you to retaliate with a single act of violence." The more intense the persecution, the stronger was his love towards his opponents. "Jesus still cries out across the centuries 'Love your enemies.'" This was a message he stressed to the very end. Sometime before his assassination, when he was seriously injured and had a knife sticking through him within millimeters of his heart, Dr. King, like Gandhi, asked for the forgiveness of his assailant.

TEMPTATION

Coretta King tells us that Dr. King believed all his life that God is a loving Father who strives for good against the evil in the universe. Temptation being the way one is lured into evil, the Prayer seeks God's protection against temptation.

One of the greatest temptations of our age is the temptation to be passive and unconcerned in the face of grave injustice. It has become extremely easy to enjoy the pleasures of freedom and affluence without bestirring oneself regarding the problems of those who live on the wrong side of privilege, or regarding the sufferings of the poorer nine-tenths of the human family. Martin Luther King's thinking on this matter was different. His view was that he who accepts evil without protesting against it is really co-operating with it.

As with trespasses, so also with temptation, the concept has broadened its scope in the vastly altered human society of today as compared with the time of Jesus. This change has magnified the ambit of the word "temptation" in a manner which can only be described as phenomenal. For twenty centuries the interpretations of the word have tended to stress the comparatively narrow connotations of sexual morality, theft, and violence with which the word was originally associated. The significantly altered ambit of temptation in today's world thus largely escapes attention and such traditional interpretations do less than justice to the Prayer.

There is often a tendency to construe the word in the sense of protection from the temptation to *commit* affirmative acts of evil. There is also an opposite aspect to this — the temptation to *refrain from doing* affirmative acts of good when the occasion demands it — the temptation to pass by on the other side, which, as we have seen, Dr. King expressly condemned.

In the spirit of Dr. King's universalism, I give you a few comparative insights from other religions on this positive aspect, which so much concerned Dr. King.

A comparable sentence from the *Upanishads* of Hinduism reads, "Lead us beyond all pain and grief *along the path of righteousness*" (*Rig Veda*, I.89, emphasis added).

In Islam, we have a similar concept in the opening verse of the Koran:

Guide us to the straight path
The path of those whom You have favoured
Not of those who have incurred Your wrath
Nor of those who have gone astray.

In Buddhism, the concept of avoidance of temptation and observance of righteous conduct is minutely analysed and broken down into its component elements in the teaching regarding the Noble Eightfold path of right vision, right thoughts, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right efforts, right mindfulness, and right concentration. All of these concepts are comprehended within the phrase, "lead us not into temptation," with its connotations both of abstention from evil and of pursuance of righteous conduct.

This positive aspect, which Dr. King so often stressed, is quite clearly inherent in the Prayer's appeal for guidance. It is often missed in unthinking recitals of the Prayer. Just as the true Christian is not one who merely abstains from evil, the true world citizen of the future, in a world teeming with waste and want, will need to do more than merely abstain from evil. Affirmative action in the cause of justice, such as that of Dr. King, is an important part of the deliverance from evil sought by reciters of the Prayer.

Dr. King launched out on precisely such a course of affirmative action, and all his efforts were directed to this end. The shot that rang out on that fateful evening twenty-seven years ago did not end those efforts personally, but his memory lives on to guide and inspire millions and to etch this affirmative aspect into the American way of life. This path of service, inspired by universal love, was the Christian path which Dr. King chose, despite the suffering it meant for him. It was the path he lived and died for. He demonstrated how the principles of religion can rise out of the books of scripture and walk among us in flesh and blood.

His efforts were lit by his vision of tomorrow - a vision founded on the American dream. That dream, in its turn, was founded on the belief that all human beings were created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.

There were powerful forces abroad that were souring this American dream. They were tarnishing the grandeur of the heritage left to all Americans by the founding fathers. It was Dr. King's resolve to win this heritage back for all Americans. He wanted that freedom, in Coretta King's words, for *all* God's children, black people and white people, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics. He set about this task which he described as "pulling down the gigantic mountains of evil." He did this undeterred by the power of the forces arrayed against him, setting about his mission with a serene confidence born of his abiding faith, with a perfect matching of action, word, and vision and with a radiance that scintillated streams of light into the darkness surrounding him.

"Let freedom ring," he proclaimed in his famous speech of August 28, 1963. The moment when Dr. King took up the challenge was a visionary-moment in history. Coretta King says in her life of her husband that, as that famous speech ended, "it seemed that for that brief moment the Kingdom of God seemed to have come on earth."

That is precisely the vision that The Lord's Prayer inspires. Dr. King, for that fleeting moment, threw a bridge between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Man. The greatest tribute we can pay to his memory is by our collective efforts to rebuild that bridge, for upon that bridge will ride the hopes of all humanity for a better world for all.