

HEALING HEARTS IN CONFLICT: THE EXAMPLE OF CAUX

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THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

WHY HEAL THE HEART?

Why should healing the heart matter? From the vantage point of history most conflicts between groups and nations are solved by structural changes that allow for a more just division of scarce resources. The more even the distribution the deeper the resolution. It does not seem to matter how little or how much there is to be distributed as long as it is distributed with some fairness, so that no group sees the other group as having a systematic and consistent advantage. Lesser structural solutions than perfect equality, such as equal opportunity, also dramatically lessen conflict, turning it mostly nonviolent in the long term. Equal opportunity, favored by democratic capitalism and libertarianism, turns the conflict into a long-term social justice struggle that runs in parallel to individual initiative and self-improvement strategies for communities. This has been largely the experience of immigrant groups in the United States, for example, with the exception being any minority group that consistently lacked equal opportunity, such as African Americans, due to ingrained prejudice.

The exceptions to this reality, in terms of violence and nonviolence, are inherently unfair structural arrangements between communities or the sexes that are so enshrined in history and tradition that a majority of the inferior group accept their

status. Grudging acceptance means that they are not willing to violently resist, such as occurs in various class and caste systems. But this arrangement is not acceptable to most people on the planet today, neither to the victims of such systems nor to third parties in search of fair political arrangements.

In conflict resolution and social change circles the basic argument against the priority of healing the heart is encapsulated by the ethical vantage point of justice, or just peace, or the social scientific reduction of injustice to structural violence. The argument is that a focus on the emotional life is often a cover for unjust systems that will remain intact. This perspective must be taken seriously.

The problem with this perspective, to put it simply, is the inseparability of the rational mind and the emotional mind. They are one in all of us. The problem, put another way, is that there is nothing rational about the “rational distribution of resources” that is the vaunted bedrock of peace and justice political culture. Distribution of scarce resources is and always has been profoundly conditioned by emotions of fear and insecurity, of protection and aggression. It is not that Hobbes was right and that our state of nature is one of emotional barbarism. It is rather that our state of nature is an emotional maelstrom that mixes noble feelings and ignoble ones, hope and despair, security and fear, hate and love, trust and paranoia. They mix at such a fantastic rate, and they are so easily affected by rapidly changing circumstances, and the unpredictable effects of group-think, that rationality appears more and more the pretense of minds desperately in search of an escape from passions. But emotions cannot be escaped, nor should they.

Our passions are our life, our spirit, and embody our most noble dreams, our most sacred visions, and not just our worst nightmares. We work with our passions as a potter with clay. Some philosophers, both religious as well as rationalists from the

Enlightenment, would have us believe that we work with emotions as a gravedigger with what is putrid. But it is not empirically true, unless we will it to be, unless we convince ourselves that emotions are inherently destructive to civil society.

Good and bad impulses are constantly in conflict within us, and they provoke serious conflict within us that is expressed both through the confusion of our emotions as well as the inconsistency of our analysis and rational ideas. But our best passions of love, empathy, forgiveness, pity, remorse, and hope, are not emotional excesses to be tolerated, but are instead the jewels of reconciliation. They must be cultivated in each generation as building blocks of human survival just as surely as we nourish the children of the earth with potable water and healthy food.

We must admire efforts at peacemaking that make justice issues front and center. Who can argue with this from a theoretical view of moral balance? But the basic problem is that justice is completely perspectival in the heat of conflict. There are injustices on all sides at every turn, with everyone living in fear, abused by the situation on many levels. The ‘haves’ are at least as filled with fear as the ‘have nots’, assuming one can even determine justly in every situation who are the ‘haves’ and who are the ‘have nots’, or at what point in time to determine who the ‘haves’ are.

The deepest problem of all is that justice does not know how to move the human being out of a place of injustice without violence or the use of police force. Only empathy has that capacity, and only empathy can often break the violent cycle of hatred in ultra-violent situations. How empathy should be evoked from the heart, then, is the essential question of healing. Once empathy is evoked in a sufficient number of people of all classes on both sides of a conflict, and among the witnesses or third parties, then the mind begins to discover its genius for reason, for compromise, and for justice.

In most approaches to conflict resolution the emotional and spiritual passions of the individual or community are tolerated, and redirected where possible toward more “constructive” strategies of conflict resolution. But many of us have come to discover that indulgence of emotions, even the seemingly peculiar, is the way to move the human heart away from violence. In fact, the crazy responses to conflict are the most interesting, the most revealing, and the most instructive as to what needs to be said or done.

How do you bring someone to such a state of mind that he cannot hear what is reasonable, that he cannot see his own sins or those of his group, that he cannot empathize with another? By humiliation, by silencing, by denial of his or her right to exist through various words and deeds, symbolic and substantive, by a cold encounter or conference that prevents self-examination, by deprivation of that which nurtures, such as food, light, and comfort, by deprivation of that which dignifies, by the enforcement of that which is uniform and without identity to the exclusion of all other cultural expression.

How do you bring someone to a state of mind in which he can see the pain of the other, that he can recognize faults in himself or in his group, that he can envision a better future and properly mourn the past without hatred or the need for revenge? How can he travel to a place of practical reason and justice? By nurturing all his senses, by honoring, by finding what is unique in him and his group and exalting its value, by acknowledging with dignity his existence and that of his group, by mourning with him and sharing sorrow in its entirety no matter how long it takes, no matter how many years, by listening with infinite patience, by sharing in the daily chores of life and the cyclical experiences of life and death, by helping wherever possible, by experiencing

the insanity of conflict together, across enemy lines by whatever means possible, in other words, by the intimacy of friendship and even love.

The vast majority of human beings on this planet are governed by reason only when their emotions tell them to be governed that way. There are vast resources at work in this world today to incite people's destructive emotions, to fill them with rage and hatred. We can compete with such manipulations of the human heart and mind but we cannot pretend that they do not exist, or that we can conquer these emotions with conferences and papers. The competition for hearts and minds is then the global order of the day, and we dare not desist.

Healing the heart requires great internal discipline as well considerable ingenuity in one's engagement with the unique circumstances of all relationships and conflicts. It requires intuition and experimentation. It is challenging to classify all the different ways in which healing hearts contributes to peacemaking. So many approaches actually overlap and come together inside spectacular exemplars of peacemaking whose ways of interacting with others give rise to so much healing and so much rethinking in terms of enemy systems. Let us try, nevertheless, to isolate a number of these ways, at first through the use of examples from experience.

But before we continue we have to deal with the problem of labels. What do we call these wonderful ways of interacting? One could call them 'moral principles', 'paths of friendship', 'discovering the divine spark', 'seeing God in all people'. One could refer to the same phenomena as 'methods' or 'strategies' of peacebuilding or conflict resolution. The latter embraces an instrumentalist approach to human relations, engaging in certain patterns of behavior for the sake of some practical end. The problem is that this latter form of phraseology, typical of secular conflict resolution, misses the compelling and sustainable nature of moral relationships and

gestures that are self-justifying. They are not pragmatic or strategy-driven. They are rather a way of being as one stands before one's highest principles, before one's path to Enlightenment, Heaven, or as one stands before one's God.

A way of being is not a method or a strategy. It is a cognitive and emotional construct that is reinforced regularly by a certain way of viewing oneself, one's community, and the world itself. It is spiritual in essence. As such it has great power over both the cognitive and emotional components of human character. It has a deep solidity to it inside the human heart. And thus it translates into a heart-to-heart encounter as it is engaged in peacemaking.

Its greatest strength is its depth and enduring reliability. Its greatest disadvantage is the difficulty of its replicability as a practice to be taught to others. It requires far more apprenticeship and the adoption of a vocation rather than the simple learning of a series of strategies or techniques. Its other great disadvantage is that it is emotion-driven and can thus easily be swayed from the central requirement of peacemaking, the capacity to empathize with all sides of a conflict. It can also distract from the driving necessity of all peacemaking, which is bringing combatants ultimately to a space of rational compromise. The depths of emotions engaged can often lead its practitioners to 'go native', diminish their capacity as mediators, and thus lose their place in between enemies.

THE EXAMPLE OF CAUX

I want to now share some stories from Mountain House, the international retreat center of Initiatives of Change that is found in a small village of the Swiss Alps called Caux. Through those stories we can illustrate a series of moral/spiritual paths (methodologies, if you must) to healing the hearts and souls of conflict.

I should begin with the fact that my time in Caux has been punctuated by distinct evolutions in the place of non-Christians at Caux, and in particular an acknowledgement of the relative absence of Jews since its inception. Ironically, before Caux became a center of Moral Re-Armament, Initiatives of Change, it had been a hotel, and during World War II had housed hundreds of Jewish refugees who had barely escaped with their lives. That is only now becoming part of the official history of the place, and there was, in fact, a tree planted overlooking Lake Geneva, that was planted in acknowledgement of refugees who made it over the border as well as those who were not allowed to come, and who were subsequently murdered. Planting that tree was one of my many powerful experiences of homecoming at Caux.

Observing the dietary laws of Judaism, “keeping Kosher”, is one of the most peculiar elements of Judaism. It is a practice that has survived over three thousand years of Jewish history, and it has developed in the last 1500 years or so into a rather arcane and complex set of rules and regulations regarding the consumption of food. Food consumption is one of the deepest things that we do as human beings. It speaks to the essence of human survival as well as embodying symbols of psychological and spiritual nourishment, especially in terms of home and security. Food keeps people separate if they have peculiar needs and requirements, but food also is one of the most powerful bonds between human beings. Feeling safe enough to eat with others is a fundamental crux of conflict and peace. Witness, by contrast, the pervasive tales and beliefs regarding poisoning that permeate centuries of distrust in some cultures. Deliberate food poisoning and cannibalism are the exact antithesis of food’s general effects in creating comfort and trust.

Dietary laws in many ways are a path to bring people together who share the same guidelines. They are a very special bond. They are also a ritual path to come

closer to God, to discipline oneself before unbridled gluttony. They are a way to purify oneself, but also can be a way to declare others impure.

Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam are at least three major religions that make rituals of eating into a basic test of one's commitment to sacred pursuits. But the truth is that most religions contain this component to one degree or another. There is a wide degree of variation in observance of these practices in our day and age. Sometimes I think that observance of these practices and interpretation thereof is as diverse as the people who observe them. We also live in an age in which people have discovered the value of holding fast to that which is peculiar and unique, such as dietary restrictions, as they resist the bland onslaught of modern life.

Kashrut has put me personally in an odd and interesting position for many years now. More often than not I find myself travelling well beyond the confines of my own small subgroup of Jews who appreciate, respect and share my Kashrut standards. I travel beyond them to engage those who are more strict in Kashrut, less strict, not Jewish, anti-religious, all the way toward those people from Ireland to Africa who think Jews are some kind of Christian sect. I have done so because the driving force of peacemaking as a religious endeavor of the highest order is something that I came to see as front and center in a legitimate religious experience. I have endured countless inconveniences and serious embarrassments as I tried to negotiate a reasonable observance of Kashrut in the most difficult of dietary experiences. This has gone on for almost twenty years since I left the cocoon of smaller universes.

Kashrut, with all its difficult challenges, however, has given me a lens through which to observe the world around me, a device to evaluate the degree of commitment by others to tolerance and respect for difference. What a revelation it has been that tolerance and liberalism in word has nothing whatever to do with tolerance in deed,

and that intolerance in principle has nothing whatever to do sometimes with personal respect in practice.

I came to Initiatives of Change (IC) on the heels of its transition culturally from a very conservative, mostly Christian society. I have had some difficulties and I have had some amazing experiences. What amazes me is the degree to which a number of members of this society understood that my dietary needs were my most private place of vulnerability, as well as my barometer of acceptance, fear, and trust.

Caux is a place where food has mattered for fifty years. Food, meals, their preparation, their service, their cleaning, their sharing, are a central opportunity for spiritual and moral bonding between members and guests. People from all over the world come and partake in meals, all races and religions, and all income brackets, each serving the other in ways that fly in the face of their fame, their fortune, or place of privilege—or lack thereof--outside of Caux. It is an astounding experience.

It should have not come as a surprise that the best members of a group which has valued meals as an opportunity for reconciliation would take my needs seriously. It is the lengths to which they went that astonished me--and taught me. With each passing encounter, with each year, it became clearer to me that they understood what perhaps I did not even myself acknowledge. The most peculiar aspect of who I am as a Jew was what they wanted to welcome the most. They understood that the injuries of being deliberately left out require the healing of being deliberately ushered in. They understood that nothing accomplishes this more than honoring what makes you unique.

These very special members of this society bought utensils for me. They bought food for me in more than one Swiss city—every year. They eventually made a special

kitchen section for me and other religious Jews, in addition to special accommodations for vegetarians of various needs. In effect my case began to open up a kaleidoscope of accepted dietary differences and inclusions. They even went beyond my own Kashrut requirements.

They insisted on celebrating special meals for special days of my religion, especially the Sabbath. They listened for special needs as if they were secrets, as if they were keys to open up doors, the many doors to my heart. And somehow they knew that through all my travels far and wide, through all my engagements with the outside world, I had many experiences with regard to my private observances, ranging from gross intolerance to insensitivity, ignorance and the benign cultural imperialism of majorities, liberal or conservative. They knew my injured heart, and they knew the way in. They changed me forever in ways that are hard to describe, and for which I will be eternally grateful.

These friends have shattered for me a known world of exclusion and thrust me into a new and uncertain world in which there are no absolutes about humanity. There are no more consistent assumptions of assured alienation, no guarantees that genocide will always come in the end, only the reality of a world of free men and free women who create hell on earth and create heaven on earth with their each and every gesture to the stranger. That is truly a strange universe, but admittedly better than a world circumscribed by Holocaust certainties.

Then one beautiful summer night in Caux, 2001, a Friday night, sixty five years after the Nuremberg rallies, I sat with a Christian Bishop at our Sabbath table in the dining room, along with over thirty friends, late into the night. So as not to spoil the Sabbath of the others, he and I spoke in hushed words. We spoke about concentration camps, with a translator in between us. We went through the exact images and the

corridors of torture. We indulged memory as if it were the only thing we could do for the dead. We saw before our eyes the victims who could not be helped, we heard their cries as we drove past the walls of the camp or as we tried to reason with the guards to no avail. Anguish, guilt, defiance, nightmares, a broken soul that continues to try to observe ancient religious rituals in a strange and unredeemed world. Only these memories and images were not mine, and the victims were not my people. They were his people and his memories. And they were not from Poland in 1942 but from Bosnia of the 1990's. And the Jewish rabbi was not the victim and the Bishop was not the bystander, but the Jew was the bystander feebly attempting to console the Christian. And the healing of Caux's legacy on that night, at least for me, was complete. For it had turned the Jew from a victim who had stayed in Caux as a desperate refugee in 1942 into a responsible healer in the twenty-first century. And perhaps the Bishop's students will do the same for others some day, a half century from now.

How and why did Caux make this happen? I do not believe that it could have happened elsewhere. A conservative and broken Bishop, a survivor, in close intimacy with a rabbi, at a traditional Sabbath table, with the bread and wine before our eyes, receiving comfort, comforting each other, embracing with tears streaming, speaking softly of God's eternal love? Were we in the depths of hell together or were we in heaven? I was in both that night.

There is much that is mundane about Caux, but then mystery seeps in, and you question who else or what else is inhabiting such moments that you cannot see or touch. You look at the darkened mountains over Lake Geneva, you look up at the thick bed of stars at 3AM, you see the Bishop's mournful eyes before you, emblazoned in your own mind's eye, and despite your ingrained skepticism, you feel—accompanied, and on an inescapable journey not of your own choosing.

GUIDELINES AND PATHWAYS

So many thousands of encounters have occurred in Caux over the years. There are many different venues for these encounters, at meals, on the veranda at tea-time, in private talks, on walks in the woods, in highly dramatic moments of public confession, through media of arts and music, and sometimes on kitchen duty. It is the complete experience of living together, from early morning to late at night, in the context of such a beautiful, contemplative, isolated, world. And it is also in the context of the best talents of individual members at work as they facilitate or orchestrate special, often private encounters between one or two people that generates new possibilities. Much thought goes in to this, and often the best work is inside the hearts of individual members of IC.

What guides and pathways can we derive from these and many other stories which can help us understand what healing hearts entails and how it becomes a part of peacemaking? Bryan Hamlin, a forty-year veteran and senior member of IC, has outlined some of these guides:

1. Honor of groups of people in ways that directly speak to their culture
2. ‘Positive shock’, or what psychologists refer as cognitive dissonance. This means the use of surprising gestures that people would never expect as a way of entering their hearts and causing them to rethink things.
3. Intense care of individuals around their life-cycle issues, birthdays, illness, favorite meals, holidays

4. Sharing of food
5. Mutual empathy generated by shared stories of suffering
6. Shared work, the experience of inter-dependence as symbolic of greater possibilities in the transformation of the whole relationship between self and enemy others
7. Providing examples of changed enemies, providing a model of at least one person in enemy groups whose heart was transformed. The power of modeling in giving people the emotional strength to think and see things in a new way, and even to change.
8. The willingness to apologize, the evocation of apology from those who are ready
9. Meeting the enemy with the preparation to receive a great deal of anger
10. Long-term friendships between those peacemakers who evoke all of the above responses from enemies. The power and strength of having friends working on both sides to evoke these changes of heart from others.

From the stories that I shared above we can see some of these guidelines confirmed. Others are new. Bryan wisely records the importance of role models in how human beings have the courage to change, and he correctly points out the Caux strategy of always having people on hand who provide powerful models of human transformation. Being prepared to receive anger is also very wise advice for such encounters. There is no change of heart without the full panoply of human emotions coming into to play. To evoke such profound emotional changes that induce, for example, a willingness to apologize for at least some of what one's group has done

requires a series of emotional battles. Anger will be present, and it is best for everyone to be prepared for it, rather than be 'shocked' by uncivil behavior. Finally, a cadre of friends who help you take enemies through change is absolutely indispensable. So much of peacemaking falters on the hyper-individualism of those who refuse to accept the devastating impact of this work. So much of the field of conflict resolution, and its attendant fundraising, fails to provide constructs for emotional support of peacemakers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF IDENTITY

This is assumed by stories above, and it is directly related to the emotional power of honor as an antidote to the humiliations that are part and parcel of human conflict. The more that the acknowledgment and honor speaks specifically and surprisingly to the uniqueness of the group or the person the more effective.

SYMBOLIC PEACEMAKING

This can take on many forms, including honoring of another's rituals, but its assumption is that the deepest things in life go beyond words, and that deeds, symbolic deeds, evoke trust and change in ways that sometimes words cannot accomplish.

CONFESSIONAL PEACEMAKING

There is immense value to those rare moments in which people acknowledge before others some wrong that they or their group has done. It is a kind of participatory drama, and it often evokes counter-responses and a dynamic of their own. Sometimes the response is immediate, sometimes years later. But the effect on the human psyche is unmistakable. Confession entails a certain level of humiliation,

even though it can and should be buttressed by a group that honors such gestures. Nevertheless that moment of deliberate self-humiliation is a partial restoration of honor to the recipient of such confessions. This often evokes a certain generosity of spirit that induces further emotional transformations. Again, we see the powerful interplay of humiliation and honor in peace and conflict, and how the dramatic re-creation of some humiliation can be an antidote to further conflict, a kind of healing.

VISION, HOPE, AND TRUST

Visionary peacemaking entails the creation of an atmosphere that encourages hope by virtue of past examples of success and survival. It requires a quiet confidence, patience, and faith that people eventually learn the futility of war. For some it induces healing through trust in Providence, trust in historical turns, trust in becoming an instrument of God's plan. This is a kind of simultaneous surrender to and empowerment by the forces of history, or the power of God's guidance. It has features of childhood and adulthood that interlace, mixing freely, as do our moods and emotional states.

STORY AND NARRATIVE

This is a well-known element in peacemaking that has been in place in Caux for half a century. There is no substitute for the truth of story in conflicts where we continually despair of knowing the truth. A parade of honest stories from war zones always brings people closer to effective peacemaking and further away from fruitless political slogans. In particular it is the diversity of stories that deepens understanding. Story skewers platitudes of blame, and exposes unexpected heroes and saints on all sides. At first such knowledge yields some despair as we face the absence of simple

solutions, but in the end it brings us closer to individual people and their needs. And this is the deeper place of peacemaking.

PSYCHODRAMATIC PEACEMAKING

Drama has always played a critical role at Caux, including the staged productions, as well as the less planned drama of public meetings between enemies who are ready to apologize or forgive. Drama has a way of inculcating vision in ways that abstract conversations cannot. It reaches a deeper place in us. Of course, its message can be manipulative depending on your point of view. As we encourage the use of the dramatic we must always be aware of its implied messages and whether those messages are inclusive and realistic.

HUMILITY

Humility plays a crucial role in successful peacemaking. Humility is all at once the moral and spiritual foundation of listening skills, the active display of compassion for both sides even when your bias is to side with one group, and it is critical in the process of working with others in groups as small as two or as large as an entire organization. It is not a skill, and not even a way of being, but really a struggle with our desire to pursue what we think is right versus what others think is right. There are no simple formulas as to when humility is appropriate and when it is excessive. This is to be distinguished from self-deprecation and under-confidence which are not helpful.

How humility is to be negotiated when it comes to either taking credit for what you have done or remaining in the background is a difficult question. Most of the people who I know who have been great peacemakers walk a line between pride in some of their work and silence about work that they have done for which others will

no doubt take credit. This is a kind of discipline that shuns pride which destroys what you are trying to do but also shuns self-deprecation as destructive to the human spirit and to the sustainability of the peacemaker. Balance is key here to the heart of the peacemaker. I have seen many groups suffer because everyone is humble but burning with the anguish of non-recognition. Ideally if we all remain humble but are praised for who we are by our colleagues then the balance we seek here can satisfy all hearts.

CONCENTRATION

Concentration, meditation, discernment, prayer, all come under the same experience. Friends at Caux have deliberately and consciously cultivated the kind of prayer that awaits a voice within, a kind of self-instruction that is believed to be from God. In some ways this is a classic Protestant style of engagement with the spiritual life. Why would it have a salutary effect on peacemaking, and would it be proper to encourage enemies to engage in such behavior? These are difficult questions that in some ways only have existential or personal answers. In my experience, the inner voice is the voice of intuition. It is the voice of clarity that rises above the cacaphony of external information as well as the cacaphony of conflicting cognitive analyses and internal emotions. There is no greater characteristic of deadly conflict than the pervasive and enervating reality of chaos and complexity. Intuition that feels that it is outside ourselves (perhaps it is) touches on a higher capacity in human beings that we do not fully understand. But it is undoubtedly the case that those who do not at least try to do this often become tricked by their own basest instincts. The self-reflection is a chance to liberate from confusion and also a chance to place a bright light upon our darkest instincts, hear them for what they are, and then try to hear something else.

BODY HEALING

This is an avenue of healing the heart that some are exploring. The heart and the life of the emotions are completely connected to our bodies. After twenty years of abusing my body as a peacemaker, allowing it to become a repository of all the anguish of conflict, I have come to understand its central importance to healing the heart. Touching, breathing, eating, hearing, seeing. All of the senses can increase our stress and be used by us to destroy ourselves--or to heal ourselves. Having peace emanate out of the habits and practices of our bodies as well as out of the discipline of our heads is crucial to the success of our work. The more we model this for those who are in trouble the more that they too will take advantage of this ancient wisdom.

GLOBAL HEALING: THE MISSING INGREDIENT

The single greatest tragedy of most peace work is its limited effect. Even when its programs are excellent and its representatives are the best their work cannot match the overwhelming power of violence to destroy what they do. Most people are ten times more conscious of the violence that surrounds them than the peace that surrounds them, even when this consciousness is completely inaccurate. Why? Because peace is quiet and violence is loud. Because peacemakers do things in quiet ways for the few, whereas war makers do things very loudly and know how to appeal quickly to the many.

If it teaches nothing else the twentieth century must teach us that the media, the air waves, the micro-chip, the website, they are all like a latter day sacred trust. As with all things sacred they have great power, which is sometimes a demonic power. There would have been no mass murder quick enough to be successful in the previous century without the wonders of technology. It is a sacred trust that has been violated and usurped by killers and predators of many different kinds in a number of cultures.

We can no longer afford to ignore its captivating power over the human heart, and we can no longer afford the kind of peacemaking and healing of hearts that is exclusively private. Yes, peacemaking in person is more real, more authentic. But the power of the virtual has shifted our reality for the worse. We must compete on the global stage for the billions of hearts and minds. We must find more creative ways to do this. The media must become a place in which many of the categories of healing the heart that are listed above can be realized. This is the direction of the future.

In many ways the power of the media represents a complete shift in privileges. It is more individualistic, less subject to traditional hierarchies of religion, for example, and yet more dependent than ever on astonishingly large sums of money. Religions can be shifted dramatically by whoever controls the message.

That is not to say that poverty or social injustices do not play a major role in the kind of message made and received. But it is also the case that suffering peoples make such vastly different choices in history depending on the message that they hear and the power of its delivery. Some riot and kill, others proclaim a messianic arrival, others retreat to mysticism, and some strive for wealth as testimony to their chosenness or better destiny. Still others hear the message of nonviolent social struggle and democracy. Some hear the message of revolution and others of evolution. Some are told that love is the answer and others are told that hate is the answer. Thus, despite the poverty and desperation, it is the message that matters. It always has. The message of healing hearts as a way to peace and coexistence needs to see the light of day in the virtual reality of every teenager, not just in the private reality of retreat centers and conferences. This is our great task.

IMAGES

It is a tradition at Caux that at least several people, sometimes many, come with you to the train station near the retreat center as you depart. I remember in the summer of 2000, as my family departed, the good byes were long and heartfelt. It is never easy being at Caux. So many relationships with so many people from all over the world who you will not see again for a very long time. So many struggles over tough issues, and so many of the struggles experienced at the deepest level of feelings.

As the train pulled out of the station and slowly started down the mountain I told my daughter Ruthie, who was four, to take one last look at the house and the gardens. She began to wail in a way that I had never heard before. It was profound and it moved me in a way that is hard to describe. It felt ancient. We had left family before, many times. I never saw this reaction from her. And I believe to this day that she was expressing a feeling that we all had. The one word that comes to mind is 'beloved'. So many people embraced her presence at Caux. So many made her feel safe and wanted. She craves that like water in a desert. Don't we all?

When all is said and done there is nothing simpler nor more profound that we can do for each other in war and in conflict than the gift of love. It is a rare gift and not everyone can or should give love to everyone else. It becomes disingenuous. But if you can find an enemy to love then you have changed the world. You have changed the world because you have changed yourself, and you will never be the same again. The Talmud said thousands of years ago, "Who is a true hero? He who can make someone who hates you into someone who loves you."

Never have I felt that truth as much as this year. I know all the books and papers I have written and the speeches I have delivered for peace, and the back channels that I have sought. But none of it really mattered in the end. What mattered was the Sheikh in Palestine to whom I became a beloved brother, as we mourned together, as his

voice and face became implanted in my heart, and mine in his, as we wept together for the sacred family of Abraham.

Then one day, at the end of one of a thousand fruitless phone calls to the West Bank, my Jewish rabbi and friend asked me to send a message to a religious Muslim Palestinian officer who he had worked with for years to create peace. Direct contact was too dangerous for the Palestinian. The message he passed to me, as the bombs were falling like rain, was “Tell him that I love him”. I broke as I heard those words. I broke because ‘love’ was the word that surrounded all of my frenetic behavior, a word that I could not utter for fear that it would crush me with its weight. How can you fall in love precisely when they are dying, I would think to myself. And yet I did. Not with many. I have also been filled with much rage at people on both sides, to be brutally honest. But love is a gift in the worst of times that we dare not squander. We also dare not desist from it, for it is often the one last bridge that has not been destroyed. It is a victory that no one can take away.

As we conclude this exploration of healing of the heart, and all the various paths to doing so, let us not forget the word ‘beloved’. For in this word there is a bridge of profound power, there is a method of care, there is hope, and there is victory.