In his foreword to the second edition of Richard B. Gregg's The Power of Nonviolence, King expresses his hope that the "classic book" will be widely read, especially among those who are "seeking ways of achieving full social, personal and political freedom in a manner consistent with human dignity." Gregg expressed his thanks to King in a 2 May letter: "Your introduction will greatly help the sale of the book and thus spread further Gandhi's ideas and help solve conflicts of all kinds."

When the great Quaker leader, Rufus Jones, wrote an introduction to the first edition of The Power of Nonviolence, he observed that "here is a new kind of book... a fine blend of what is and what ought to be... There is as much realism in this book as there is idealism." That was in 1935. Since then history's most devastating war has swept the globe, and new weapons of terrifying dimensions have made it more clear than ever that war and civilization cannot both continue into man's future. New ways of solving conflicts, without violence, must be discovered and put into operation.

The years since 1935 have not only demonstrated how uncontrollable war is when it breaks out; they have shown also how right Richard Gregg was in preparing this perceptive study in the first place. The heroic, though unanticipated nonviolent resistance against the Nazis in Denmark and Norway, recounted in this new edition, and by smaller groups in France, the Netherlands and in Germany itself, was such a demonstration. So has been the struggle in South Africa against unjust laws, the winning of its freedom by the new nation of Ghana, and our own experience in Montgomery.

I am delighted that Richard Gregg, after spending another eighteen months in India in more research into this vital new kind of action, should have put the time and effort into this new version of his classic book. I hope it gets a wide readership, particularly among those, in this country and throughout the world, who are seeking ways of achieving full social, personal and political freedom in a manner consistent with human dignity.

—Martin Luther King Jr.
Montgomery, Alabama


1. After reading the first edition during the Montgomery bus boycott, King wrote Gregg that he found the book "filled with lasting spiritual meaning" (King to Gregg, 1 May 1956, in The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr., vol. 3: Birth of a New Age, December 1955–December 1956, ed. Clayborne Carson, Stewart Burns, Susan Carson, Peter Holloran, Dana L. H. Powell [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997], p. 244). The two men met for the first time in February 1959 at a War Resisters League (WRL) event in New York (Gregg to King, 2 May 1959; see also King, Address at the Thirty-sixth Annual Dinner of the War Resisters League, 2 February 1959, pp. 120–125 in this volume).

2. Rufus M. Jones co-founded the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in 1917 and served as honorary chair of the Quaker organization until his death in 1948.
Montgomery Ala.,

Jan. 1-1959

Rt. W. T. King,

I must warn you that my husband is being paid
5 hundred dollars from some
of the members of your
church to kill you.

They are tired of your love
and always making trouble
for them. You have caused some
of them to lose their jobs.

I ask my husband not to
do it. But he said the
world would be better off
when you are in jail.

Where you belong, with the
rest of the sincere, that
you were a disgrace to our
race.

Be careful.