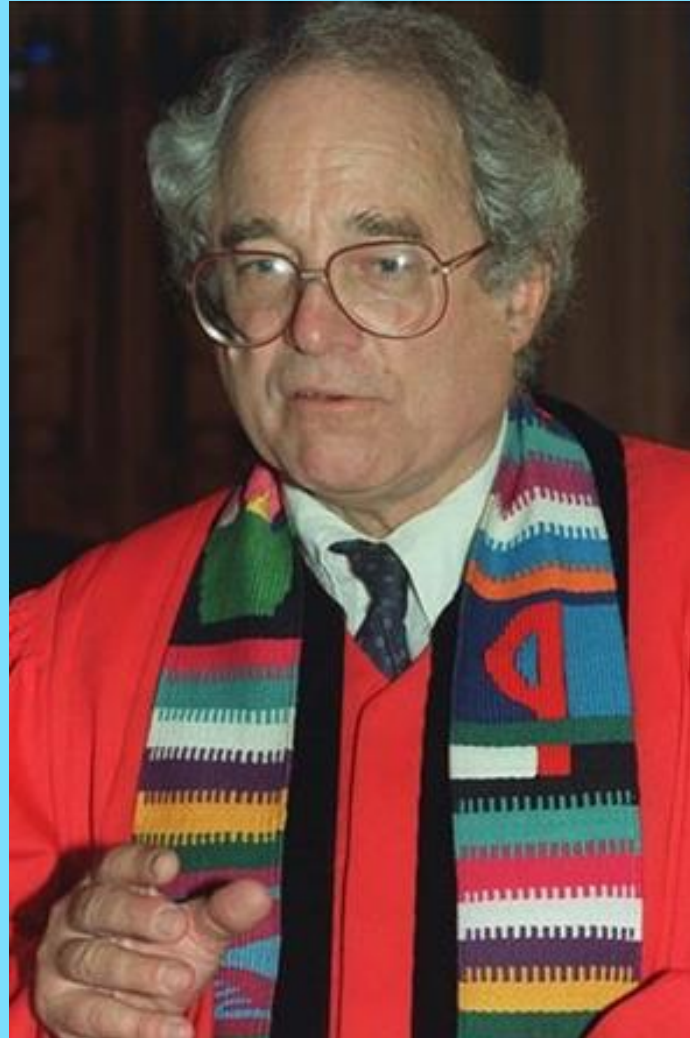


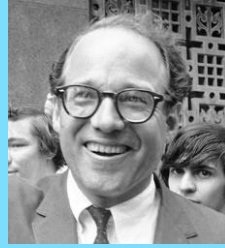
# ***William Sloane Coffin, Jr.***

***(June 1, 1924 – April 12, 2006)***



# Timeline

**June 1, 1924**, born, NY, NY, son of William, Sr., furniture store exec & Catherine (Butterfield)



**1933**, father dies

**1934**, mother moves family to Carmel, California, with financial assistance from his uncle Henry Sloane Coffin

**1938**, practices piano for hours a day in Paris and studies with Mlle. Nadia Boulanger

**1942**, graduates from Phillips Academy

**1943-1947**, serves in U.S. Army

**1949**, BA, Yale University

**1950-1953**, works for CIA on Russian affairs;

**1956**, BD, Yale Divinity School; ordained as Presbyterian minister; marries ballet dancer and actress Eva Rubenstein, daughter of pianist Arthur Rubenstein;

**1956-1957**, acting chaplain, Phillips Academy;

**1957-1958**, chaplain, Williams College (Williamstown, MA)

**1958**, becomes chaplain, Yale University

**1961**, one of eleven Freedom Riders who venture to Montgomery, AL

**1965**, with John Bennett and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel forms Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam

**1975**, resigns Yale chaplaincy

**1977**, senior minister, Riverside Church, NYC

**1978**, establishes Riverside Disarmament Program

**Christmas, 1979**, visits hostages in Tehran

**January 17, 1983**, son Alexander dies

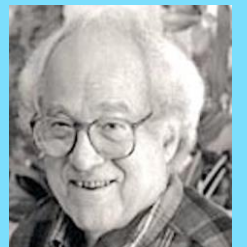
**1984**, marries Virginia Randolph (“Randy”) Wilson

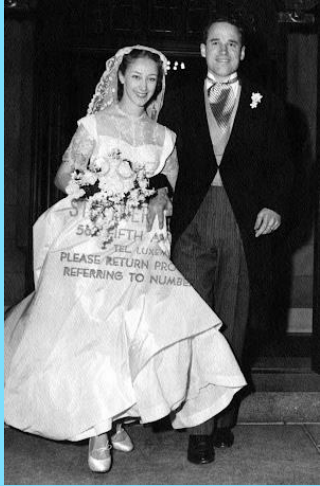
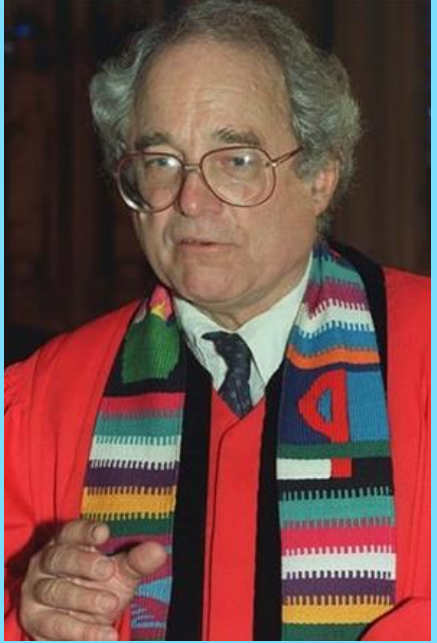
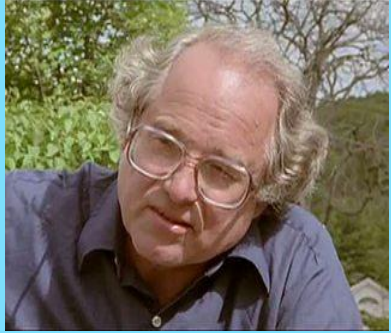
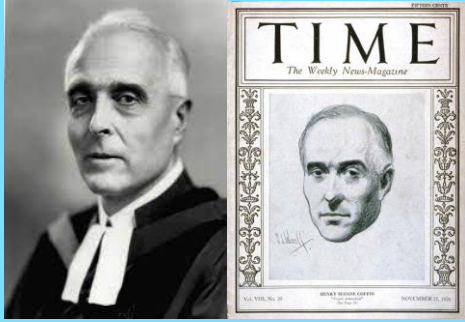
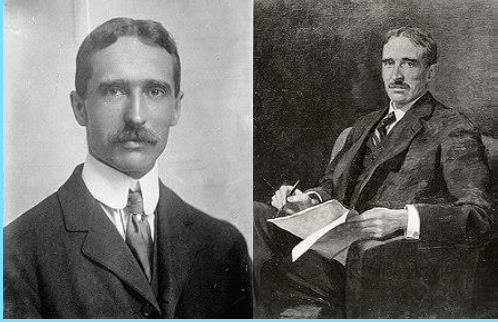
**1987**, retires from Riverside

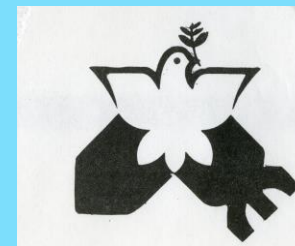
**1988-1993**, head of Nuclear Freeze; in retirement lectures widely on social justice issues

**1999**, suffers stroke

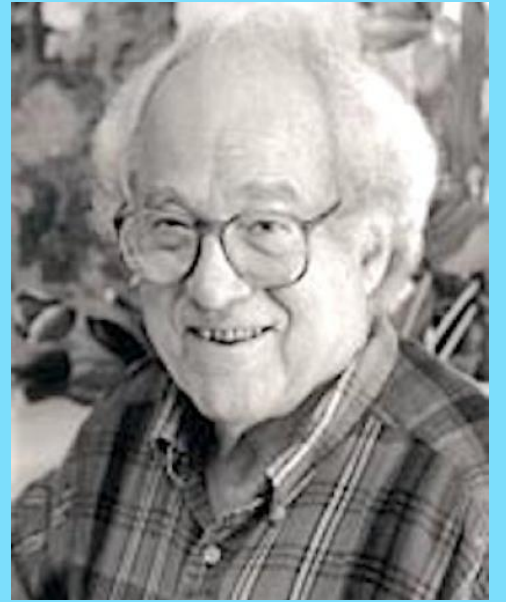
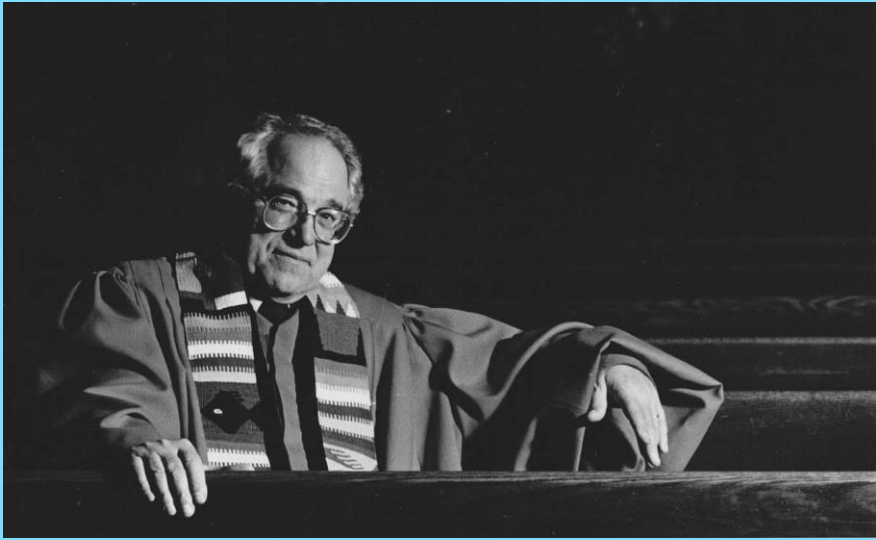
**April 12, 2006**, dies peacefully at home, Strafford, VT







Peace Action Fund of New York State presents  
The William Sloane Coffin, Jr.  
**PEACEMAKER AWARDS**



# What/Who Made William Sloane Coffin, Jr.?

... a life of enthralling contrasts ...

- “Of the manor born” . . . and . . . loved all people where they were
- Trained as a concert pianist . . . and . . . volunteered for service as a soldier in two wars
- Worked for the CIA on Russian affairs . . . and . . . sat at the feet of the world’s greatest theologians
- Served as chaplain at Yale University. . . and . . . expressed the height of his homiletical powers as pastor of Riverside Church
- Galvanized awareness of the civil rights struggle as one of eleven Freedom Riders who ventured to Montgomery, Alabama . . . and . . . he wrote, mused, and prayed in his final home in rural Vermont
- Loved to celebrate life at every turn (with a *bon vivant* spirit!) . . . and . . . he worked hard on his sermons, prayers, and all other public presentations

# Coffin's Masterful Use of Language

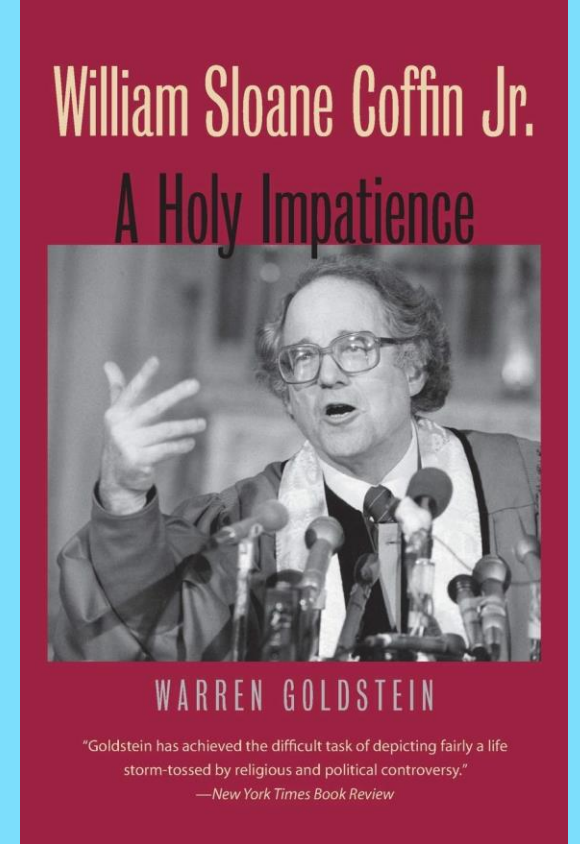
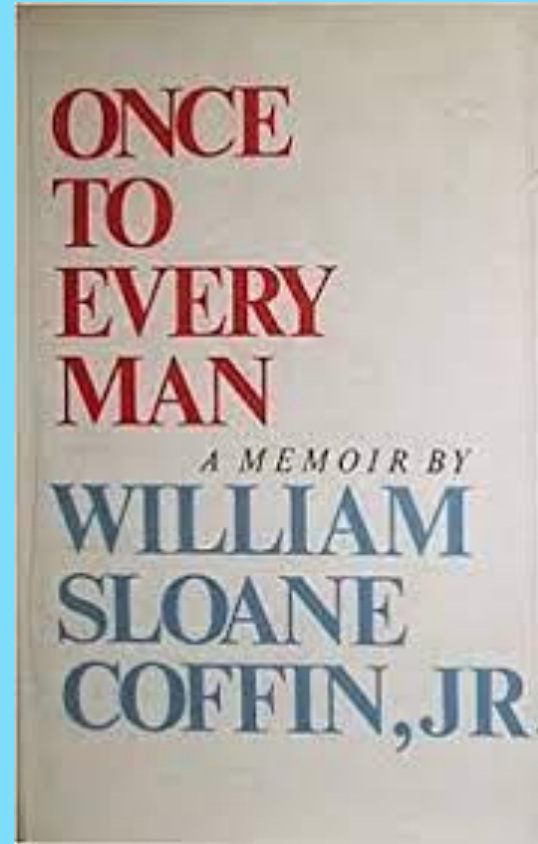
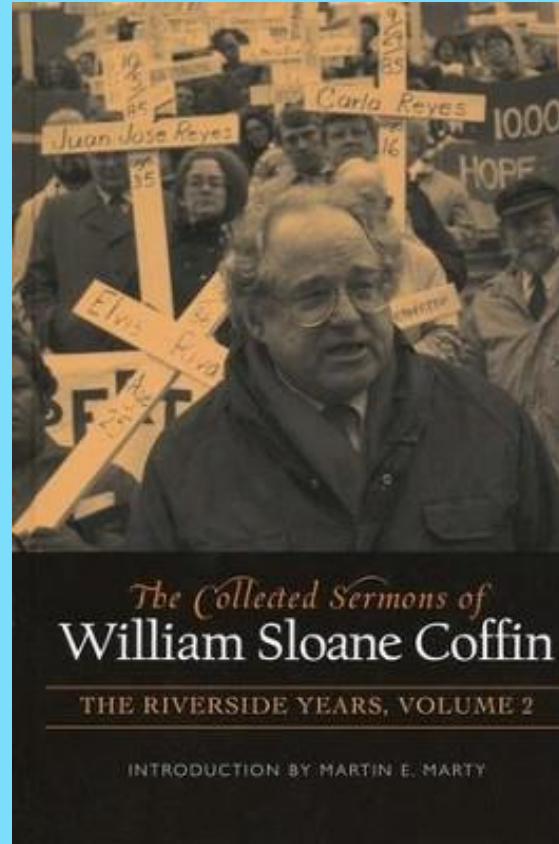
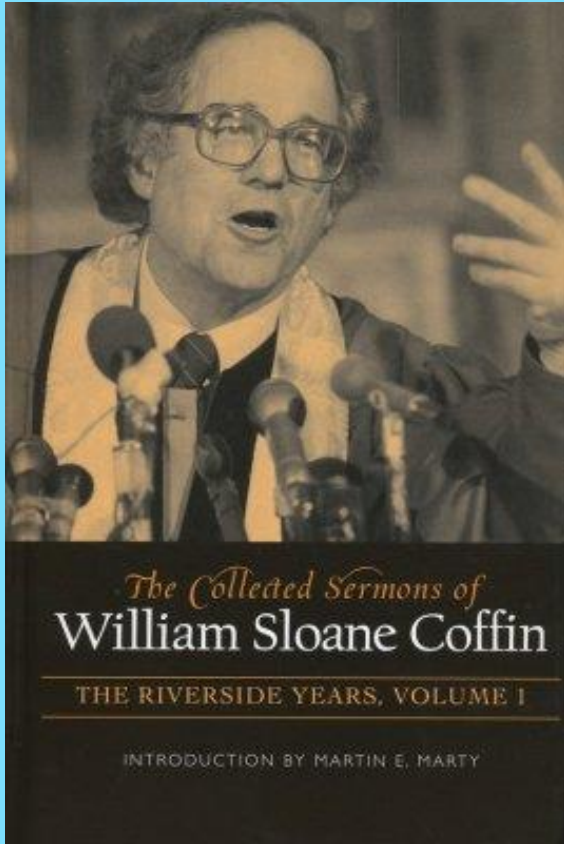
- Possessed a consistent capacity to share his compassionate, caring heart on real terms and in real time, with a sure grasp of the grand nature of faith and faith's connection with the great issues of the day. (His prayers and sermons always had "size.")
- Was pastorally sensitive and prophetically passionate
- Could soar into poetic heights while also referencing specific events of the day.
- Possessed a genius use of parallelisms and powerful images

# A Few of Coffin's Memorable Quotes

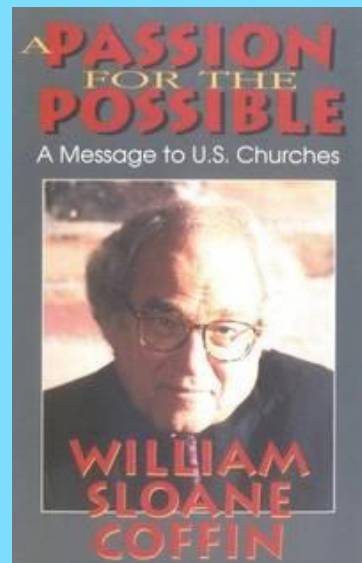
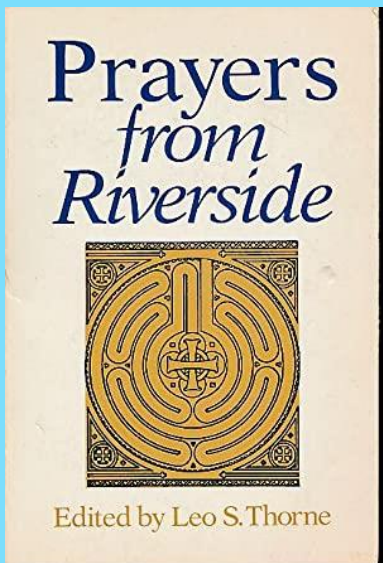
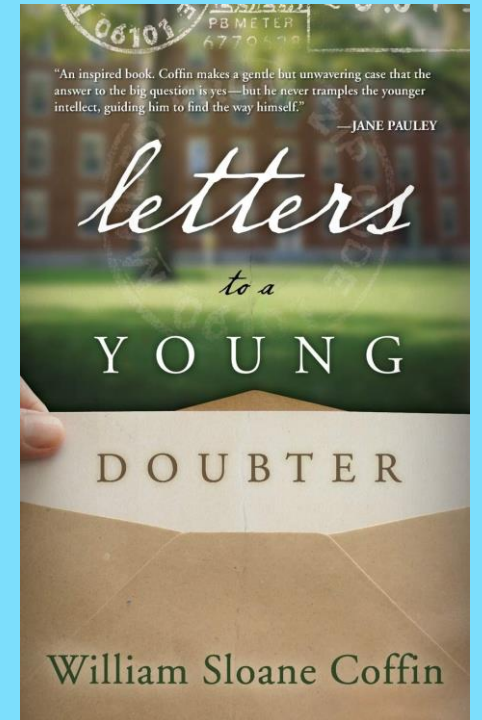
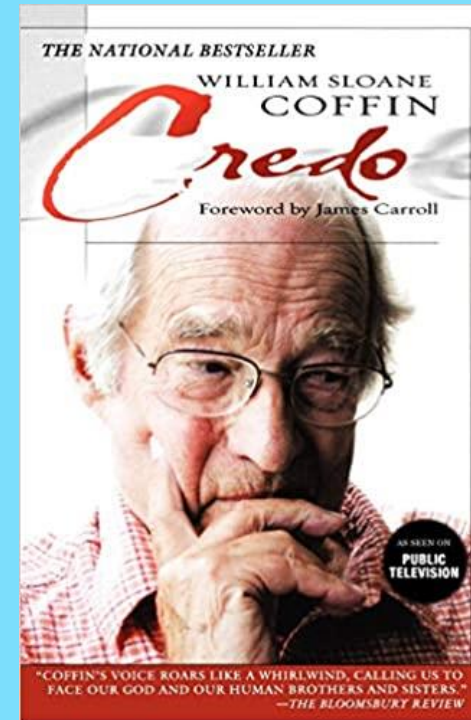
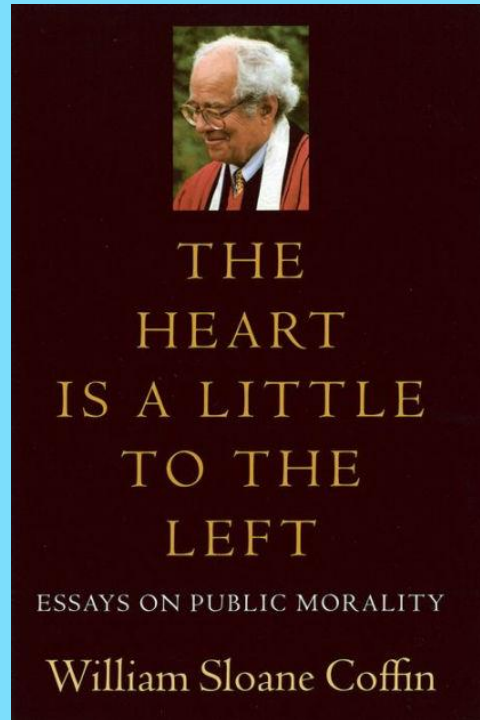
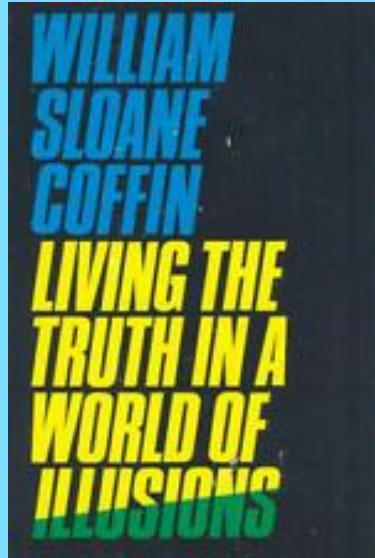
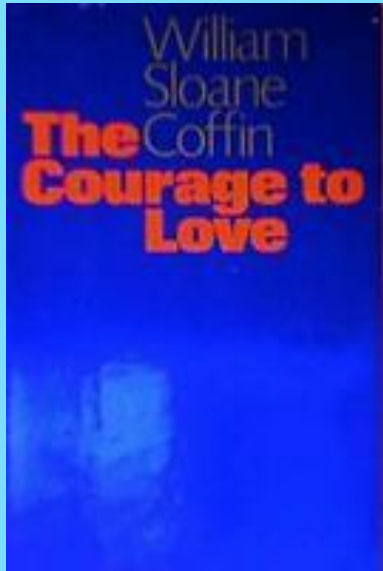
- *“Unless we become meek, there will be no one left to inherit the earth.”*
- **“Human unity is based not on agreement but on mutual concern.”**
- *“Never mind how crude or how trivial your prayers may sound to you. There are no unimportant tears to God.”*
- **“We are always called to love the good more than we hate the evil, lest we only become damn good haters.”**
- *“There is too much dignity in too many prayers . . . dignity at the expense of specificity.”*
- **“Prayer is praying ‘Our father who art in heaven’ when everything within us longs to cry out ‘My father,’ because ‘our’ includes that horrible divorced husband, that wayward child; it includes muggers, rapists, the Iranian captors, all the people who jam thorns into our flesh. ”**



# Where to start??



# Where to start?? ... continued



# Audio/Video resources

**Firing Line with William F. Buckley Jr.: The Role of the Church Militant (1966)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGvcHIWIK6E> (48:25)

**Rev. William Sloane Coffin at Chautauqua (2003)**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_yENNiVdbsc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_yENNiVdbsc) (26:54)

✓ **Religion & Ethics Newsweekly: William Sloane Coffin, Jr. (2004)**

<https://www.pbs.org/video/religion-and-ethics-newsweekly-william-sloane-coffin/> (9:29)

✓ **Yale Divinity School-The Public Witness & Ministry of William Sloane Coffin, Jr. (2005)**

<https://divinity.yale.edu/news-and-media/videos/celebration-public-witness-and-ministry-william-sloane-coffin-jr> (2:06:59)

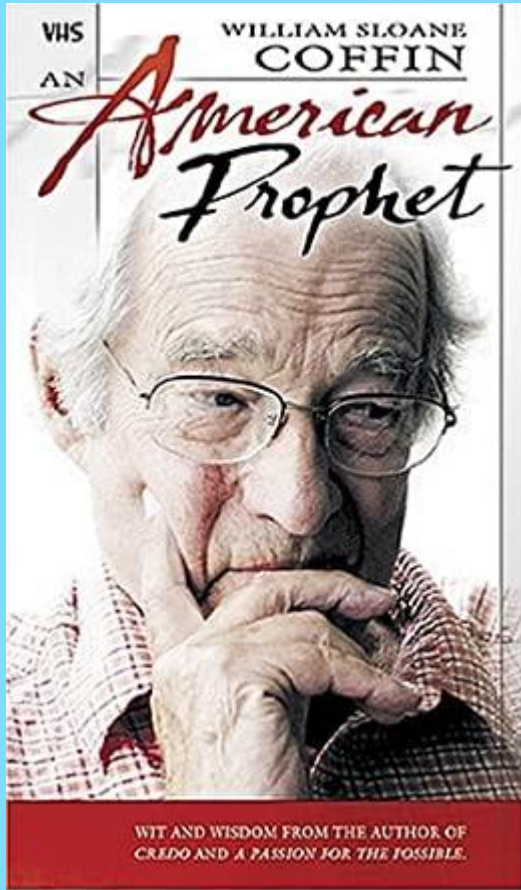
✓ **“A Politically Engaged Spirituality”** <https://montgomery.dartmouth.edu/william-sloane-coffin> (22:22)

**“Dr. Fred Craddock on His Favorite Preachers”** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aVEq4wy0nXI> (0:45-1:07)

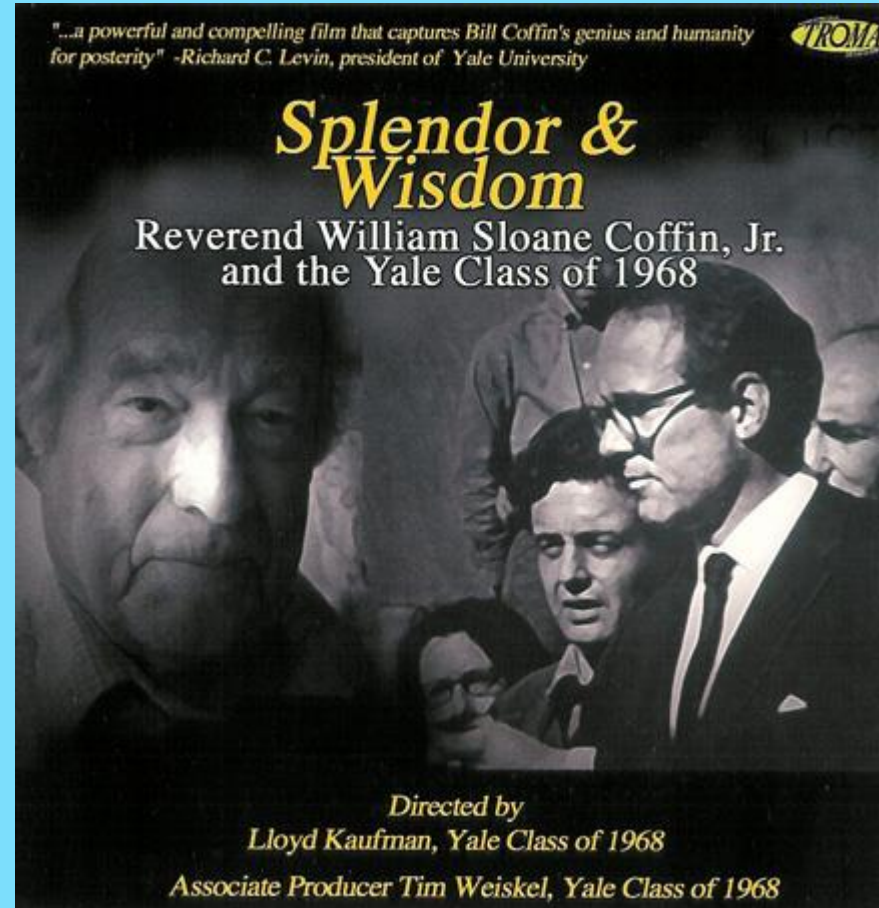
**William Sloane Coffin Sermon Archive Project** <http://williamsloane.hopsie.org/>

**“Preached from the Piano Bench”** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rg9ZWWhc9B6E> (26:35)

# Audio/Video resources . . . continued



(2004)



(2008)

# Video Clips

## **William Sloane Coffin “Grace”**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQzLfWFE6mY> (1:18)

## **William Sloane Coffin “A Lover’s Quarrel with America”**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XMwVBValwXc> (1:55)

# Summary Estimations

“Coffin’s preaching remained relevant and inspiring ... for forty years because, like the biblical prophets, he never allowed his enemies -- racism, war, nuclear weapons, hunger, homophobia -- as much power as he ascribed to the love of God. By taking his God seriously and preaching Christianity joyously, William Sloane Coffin Jr. helped create a ‘holy impatience’ with injustice . . . that will live long beyond his own life.”

– Warren Goldstein

“When Bill Coffin prepared . . . he was the best preacher in this country. The simple mixing of an evangelical message of God’s love with ‘Let’s get out there and get it done.’ He was just extraordinary.”

– Fred Craddock

**TIME's YOURS . . . .**

**Q & A . . . .**

**Discussion . . . .**

**Musings . . . .**

