

at Stanford University to be highly commended for this first of 14 anticipated volumes of the papers of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. sponsored by The Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Non-Violent Social Change in association with Stanford University and Emory University.

The first volume contains documents collected from the first period of King's life, from childhood (the first entry is a Father's Day greeting from 1937, when King was 8 years old) through his graduation from Crozer Theological Seminary in 1951. The chief value of this volume is that it documents how King was fundamentally shaped by the black family, the black church and the larger black community, to all of which he added the western intellectual tradition. (This thesis has been amply demonstrated in Lewis Baldwin's fine book, *There is a Balm in Gilead: The Cultural Roots of Martin Luther King Jr.*, 1991.) In one statement, King writes, "In the quiet recesses of my heart, I am fundamentally a clergyman, a Baptist preacher. This is my being and my heritage, for I am also the son of a Baptist preacher, the grandson of a Baptist preacher, and the great grandson of a Baptist preacher." Earlier studies on King's intellectual development that emphasized his appropriation of the Bible and works by Gandhi and Reinhold Niebuhr and treated his contribution as chiefly a product of white western philosophy and theology, will have to be reevaluated now in the light of this new material. These documents show unmistakably King's deep roots in the black church tradition, with its twin emphases on salvation, the wholeness realized here but completed in heaven that God wills for all human persons, and on liberation, the quest for social justice and freedom as God's own quest.

The excellent introductory essay traces King's roots in the black Baptist church to his slave great-grandfather, Willis Williams (1810-1874), who belonged to an antebellum white Baptist church in which blacks predominated numerically but were subordinate. After the war, the black members withdrew and organized a black-controlled church. There is valuable information here about King's grandfather, Adam Daniel Williams (1863-1931), who as pastor of Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church supported the Georgia Equal Rights League and the militant black nationalist AME Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, and served as a founder of Atlanta's NAACP. King's father, Martin Luther King Sr., who married A. D. Williams's daughter and succeeded him as pastor of Ebenezer, legally changed his name and that of his son from Michael Luther to Martin Luther after a trip to Europe. Like his father-in-law, he was a black Baptist pastor with a foot in both the ecclesiastical world of Baptist church politics and the black community's struggle against segregation and institutional racism. Martin Luther King Sr. was a leader in many organizations, including the NAACP.

King described his days at Morehouse College as "very exciting ones." He was permitted to enter at the age of 15, having completed the 11th grade, since Morehouse had seen its enrollment diminished by the recruitment of men for the war effort. Here, through the influence of Benjamin Mays, Morehouse president and family friend, and George Kelsey, "the shackles of fundamentalism were removed from my body." As his education proceeded, King found himself increasingly at variance with the uncritical fundamentalism pervading the black Baptist church. At 13, he had shocked his Sunday school class by declaring that he did not accept the bodily resurrection of Christ. After being licensed to preach at 17, King went to a dance after the ser-

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essed great skill in adapting them to the faith with which he entered the seminary. In reading his essays at Crozer on topics ranging from "The Christian Pertinence of Eschatological Hope" to "The Chief Characteristics of the Doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism," one is impressed with King's analysis and synthesis, which are essentially derivative, but also by his conclusions, which invariably affirm his traditional orthodox faith. In an essay on the place of reason and experience in finding God, King extols reason but concludes that experience is "probably the primal way" and "open to all levels of human intelligence." One can trace his growing theological sophistication, a sophistication that returns again and again to his roots.

King graduated from Crozer as the top student and as valedictorian, the dean rating him as one of the school's "most brilliant students with a keen mind which was both analytical and constructively critical." He had honed a great skill in appropriating the western theological and intellectual tradition to support his traditional faith, which in turn fueled his social discontent.

The note of Christian optimism, the belief that, in spite of civil and human suffering God's will would ultimately triumph in the world and bring liberation and salvation to all people, was sounded early in King's writings. As a high school student he delivered an oration on "The Negro and the Constitution." King cited the experiences of Marian Anderson and discussed the contradictions among biblical faith, constitutional guarantees and the continuing problem of racism. He concluded, "My heart throbs anew in the hope that, inspired by the example of Lincoln, imbued with the spirit of Christ, they will cast down the last barriers to perfect freedom." In dealing with the problem of evil in a Crozer essay, King quoted, as he was to do many times in his career, the poem by James Russell Lowell

Truth forever on the scaffold  
Wrong forever on the throne,  
Yet that scaffold sways to future,  
And behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow  
Keeping watch above His own.

**T**HIS VOLUME is ably edited by Ralph E. Luker and Penny A. Russell, with careful descriptions of persons and events noted in the texts. The editing sheds considerable light on King's methodology in writing, especially his alleged tendency to plagiarize. Senior editor Clayborne Carson raised this problem in 1990 when he announced that King had plagiarized sections of his doctoral dissertation. Repeatedly, King does very closely paraphrase without attribution. It is clearly not intended plagiarism, for in most instances, sources are cited in his bibliography; however, the fact that they are not footnoted does obscure the extent of derivation in his essays. The editors very carefully note these instances and give in the footnotes the exact quote from which King is drawing. The papers are reproduced as written with the instructors' grades, comments and corrections. Occasionally, King omits words or misspells. What is surprising is that in no case did the instructor note the unfootnoted paraphrases. The editors have done yeoman work in footnoting these exact sources.

What the volume demonstrates over and over again is the profound creativity of King's genius. Although he struggled with the theological antinomies of liberalism and neo-orthodoxy, spirituality and activism, personal salvation and social gospel, King fused them into an ideology that would make the black religious tradition accessible and understandable to whites. That process can be seen at work in most of these documents. ■

7/26/92 Wash Post review of  
the Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>11</sup>  
Vol 1, by John Arthur Hayden