

No Execution For Mumia Abu-Jamal

Perhaps the most celebrated American Death Row inmate, writer and former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal, had his 20-year-old death sentence thrown out by a Federal judge in Philadelphia on Dec. 18. U.S. District Court Judge William Yohn called for a new sentencing hearing within 180 days, saying that the jury that sentenced Abu-Jamal was not properly instructed on how to consider mitigating factors. If no hearing occurs within 180 days, Yohn ruled, then Abu-Jamal's death sentence would be void and he would be sentenced to life in prison.

Abu-Jamal's thousands of supporters—from the international anti-death-penalty movement and the political left—welcomed the fact that he won't be executed, but announced their determination not to stop their efforts until Abu-Jamal, whom they believe to be innocent, goes free.

Abu-Jamal's claim of innocence is not without foundation. Most important, his supporters point to Judge Yohn's refusal—now and earlier this year—to admit as evidence a sworn affidavit and videotaped account by mob hit-man Arnold Beverly, who has fully admitted to the 1981 murder of Philadelphia policeman Daniel Faulkner, the murder for which Abu-Jamal was convicted.

In July, Judge Yohn refused to allow Beverly to testify in court, ruling that the confession was "time barred." Yohn cited the notorious 1992 U.S. Supreme Court decision in the case of Leonel Herrera, a Texas Death Row inmate. In that case, the Supreme Court ruled that it is *Constitutional* to execute a person who has been convicted of murder, but who is actually innocent, if the time limit for his appeals has run out.

Beverly made his confession, not just last year, but also to Abu-Jamal's original attorneys in the case, who said that it was not credible and refused to pursue it. (Abu-Jamal's supporters say that these attorneys were on the side of the prosecution.) But, Beverly has passed a lie detector test on his confession. In his affidavit, he said that he was hired and paid to shoot and kill Faulkner by the mob and corrupt elements in the Philadelphia police force, because Faulkner "interfered with graft and payoffs."

Abu-Jamal's current attorneys asked Judge Yohn, "In what case, in what court, anywhere in this country, has any jury ever convicted a defendant of a crime after the true perpetrator voluntarily came into court and testified under oath that he, rather than the defendant, was the guilty party?"

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Book Review

Martin Luther King, Jr.: Still Preaching In 2002

by Anita Gallagher

King Came Preaching: The Pulpit Power Of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

by Dr. Mervyn A. Warren

Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001
223 pages, hardbound, \$19.99

It is with both profound joy and deep sadness, that one spends some hours with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. through Dr. Mervyn Warren's new book. Joy, for the obvious reasons, and also because in looking intensely at Dr. King's relationship to preaching, one meets him afresh. Sadness, that such a giant is no longer among us in the end phase of a centuries-long struggle which will either see the development of all men, or a new "Dark Age." Such a powerful exemplar of the belief in human progress for all, should be living at this revolutionary hour.

Amelia Boynton Robinson, the heroine of the 1965 "Bloody Sunday" civil rights march who invited Dr. King to Selma, and a leader of the movement of U.S. statesman Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. since 1979, has spoken many times of the similarities between what Martin Luther King, Jr. did and what LaRouche is doing today: "Were Dr. King living, he would certainly be working with us."

Salient Insights On Dr. King

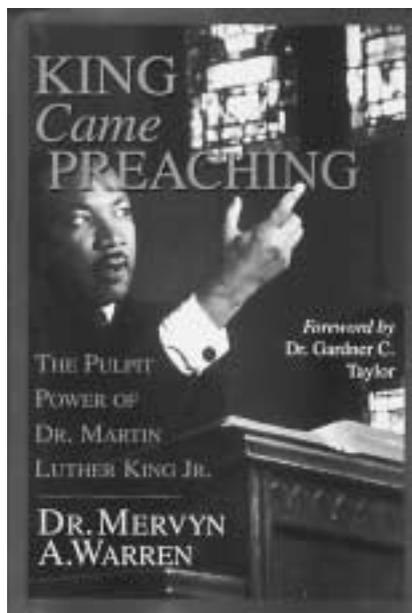
Dr. Warren's book arose out of his Ph.D. dissertation at Michigan State University in the late 1960s. His faculty adviser, Dr. Robert Green, who had marched with Dr. King in Selma, granted him permission to write on Dr. King's preaching only if Dr. Warren would attend Dr. King's sermons and interview him about them. Dr. King agreed, and their first, lengthy interview occurred in Chicago in August 1966. Dr. Warren, currently Professor of Preaching at Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama, did not present his finished dissertation to Dr. King before he was assassinated, but did present it to his widow, Coretta Scott King, in 1988, and rewrote it for the general public in his 2001 book. This valuable book

also includes three stunning sermons and one speech by Dr. King which have never before been published.

Martin Luther King, Jr. located himself in this way in their first interview: "I am . . . the son of a Baptist preacher, the grandson of a Baptist preacher, and the great grandson of a Baptist preacher. The Church is my life, and I have given my life to the Church." Describing himself in Morehouse College, Dr. King wrote that he planned first to be a doctor, then a lawyer, "But as I passed through the preparation stages of these two professions, I still felt that undying urge to serve God and humanity through the ministry. During my senior year in college I finally decided to accept the challenge to enter the ministry." This was a challenge, as Warren points out, because, as Dr. King told *Time* in its 1964 "Man of the Year" story on him: "I had doubts that religion was intellectually respectable. I revolted against the emotionalism of Negro religion, the shouting and the stamping. I didn't understand it and it embarrassed me."

Warren describes Dr. King's search for a philosophical basis for theology powerful enough for his mission—to be God's instrument in a Christian transformation of the world. Dr. King chose integrated Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania and Boston University because of teachers whose philosophy he was attracted to. He chose Boston University over the University of Edinburgh for his doctoral studies, because of the strength of its faculty, especially Edgar S. Brightman, in "personalism." According to Prof. L. Harold DeWolf, who taught Dr. King, "personalism" emphasizes the value of the individual: "The Supreme Person, God, is the source of that process we call the physical universe and the creator of other persons. Since the human personality is in the likeness of God and the object of God's own love, every human person, however humble or wicked, must be treated as of inestimable dignity and worth." According to Brightman's predecessor, B.P. Bowne, "personalism" includes the idea that "reality is rational, and hence in some way an organic whole. . . . In the final synopsis of thought, all reality must be viewed as conscious experience [signifying] that concrete reality is a self or a person." This appears to be one source of Dr. King's belief that the individual can change history through ideas.

Dr. King told Warren in 1966, "As a minister of the Gospel, I have a priestly function and a prophetic function"—"prophetic meaning leading people into new spheres of witness in their cultural environment." For Dr. King, Christianity had an application to society, and was not just a mediation between God and the individual. Dr. King, in his 1955 doctoral dissertation on "A Comparison In The Conceptions Of God In The Thinking Of Paul Tillich And Henry Nelson Wieman," wrote, "All theology, as Tillich sees it, has a dual function: to state the basic truth of the Christian faith and to interpret this truth in the existing cultural situation." Doctoral candidate King then contrasted



A study of Dr. King's life from an unusual standpoint, the book points to influences, but looks for the ultimate source of his moral power as preacher and speaker.

Tillich favorably to Karl Barth: "But he [Barth] refuses, with the most persistent pertinacity, to undertake the apologetic task of interpreting the message in the contemporary situation. . . . Tillich is convinced, on the contrary, that it is the unavoidable duty of the theologian to interpret the message in the cultural situation of his day. Barth persists in avoiding this function."

Later, in his sermon "Transformed Nonconformist," Dr. King would frontally state that the church has been weakened by diluting its gospel and conforming to the status quo of the world: "Ever since that time [c. 4th Century, A.D., when the church began compromising with Rome] the church has been like a weak and ineffectual trumpet making uncertain sounds, rather than a strong trumpet sounding a clarion call for truth and righteousness. If the church of Jesus Christ is to regain its power, and its message its authentic ring, it must go out with a new determination not to conform to this world" (bracketed note in original).

Nor did truth-teller King exempt the clergy: "Even we preachers have often joined the enticing cult of conformity. We, too, have often yielded to the success symbols of the world, feeling that the size of our ministry must be measured by the size of our automobiles. So often we turn into showmen, distorting the real meaning of the gospel, in an attempt to appeal to the whims and caprices of the crowd. . . . If you want to get ahead in the ministry, conform!"

Dr. King swam against the social experience of his flock with a higher concept, *agapē*: an understanding, redeeming goodwill for all humankind; an overflowing love that is altogether spontaneous, unmotivated, groundless, and creative, and is set in operation by no quality or function of its object (see his book *Stride Toward Freedom*). In his sermon "On

Being A Good Neighbor,” Dr. King expounds on the parable of the Good Samaritan to say: “The real tragedy . . . is that we see people as entities or merely as things. Too seldom do we see people in their true humanness. We see men as Jews or Gentiles, Catholics or Protestants, Chinese or American, Negroes or whites. We fail to think of them as fellow human beings made from the same basic stuff as we, molded in the same divine image.”

Dr. King’s World-Historical Movement

With these best ideas of mankind—*agapē* toward mankind, the dignity of every human person, the power of truth, the commitment to universal justice—Dr. King formed his movement and changed history.

In Dr. King’s previously unpublished speech at Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama on March 2, 1962, which Warren cites as typical of Dr. King’s speeches to civil rights audiences, King emphasized that the victory would be for everybody: “If there is a victory, it will not be a victory merely for 20 million Negroes, but if there is a victory, it will be a victory for justice, a victory for freedom, a victory for democracy, and it will make a better nation for everybody because the pestering sore of segregation debilitates the white man as well as the Negro, and we are struggling to free him. . . .”

In the same speech, Dr. King bluntly presented the risks: “God needs you now, he needs you at this minute, he needs you at this hour. Who this evening will be a co-worker of the Almighty God and set out to get your freedom, realizing that freedom is the greatest thing in all the world? It is worth losing a job for. Freedom is worth getting killed for. Maybe before this struggle is over, some will have to get killed. If physical death is the price that some must pay to free their children from a permanent life of psychological death, then nothing can be more redemptive.”

Though Dr. King at the beginning of his ministry at Dexter Baptist Church in Montgomery set two to three days a week for prayer in his own schedule, he rejected the cowardly misuse of prayer so common today in his sermon “The Answer To A Perplexing Question”:

“The idea that man must wait on God to do everything has led to a tragic misuse of prayer. He who feels that God must do everything will end up asking him for anything. Some people see God as little more than ‘a cosmic bellhop’ that they will call on for every trivial need. Others see God as so omnipotent and man as so powerless that they end up making prayer a substitute for work and intelligence. . . . God gave us minds to think and breath and body to work, and he would be defeating his own purpose if he allowed us to obtain through prayer what can come through work and intelligence. . . . Prayer is a marvelous and necessary supplement of our feeble efforts, but it is a dangerous and callous substitute. Moses discovered this as he struggled to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land. God made it clear that he would not do for

them what they could do for themselves. In the Book of Exodus, we read: ‘And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.’ ”

King And Gandhi

Dr. King first read Mohandas Gandhi while a student at Crozer Theological Seminary, after hearing the then-president of Howard University report on his recent visit to India, then struggling for independence from the British Empire. The young seminarian became fascinated by Gandhi’s campaigns of non-violent resistance on a social scale. Warren says that before reading Gandhi, Dr. King had thought the ethics of Jesus, such as to “turn the other cheek” and “love your enemies,” were pertinent only when an individual was in conflict with another individual. In *Stride Toward Freedom*, King says, “Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale.”

Warren’s book also gives us a picture of Dr. King as an individual who strove always to develop his mind. Dr. King’s major professor at Boston University, L. Harold DeWolf, says, “[King was] a very good student, all business, a scholar’s scholar, one digging deeply to work out and think through his philosophy of religion and life.” Dr. King told Warren in an interview that when he began his first pastorate in Montgomery in 1954, he spent at least 15 hours each week preparing his Sunday morning sermon (later, of course, this had to be modified by his non-stop activities). On Tuesday, he outlined what he wanted to say; on Wednesday, he did necessary research and thought of illustrative material. He began writing out the sermon on Friday and usually finished Saturday night. Dr. King said he always wrote out his sermons first, but never read them, and rarely even took an outline to the pulpit. By the time he gave his sermon, he was completely in command of the order and flow of the ideas. When Warren asked Dr. King why he preached without any written aids, Dr. King replied, “Occasionally, I read a policy speech or an address for civil rights, but I never read a sermon. Without a manuscript, I can communicate better with an audience. Furthermore, I have greater rapport and power when I am able to look the audience in the eye.”

In describing how cultures are lifted up, Lyndon LaRouche observed: “It is the act of cognition as I’ve defined it . . . which ‘infects’ a cultural milieu with the active spark of life provided by interaction with the exceptional individual, which sustains a viable tradition and gives it the vitality to move forward. Without the infectious spark of cognitive excitement contributed by the aggressively cognitive individual mind, any society’s cultural qualities will tend to be ruined through attrition.” Dr. King is easily recognized in this book as just such an “aggressively cognitive mind.”