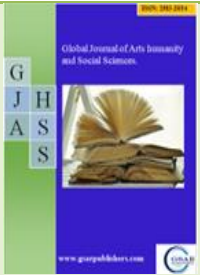
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The Crowning of a Nonviolent King in the 1950s and 1960s America by Christ, Gandhi, and Thoreau

BY

Mouhamed DIOP

Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar, Po BOX: 5005, Dakar, Senegal



Abstract

This paper highlights that Martin Luther King, Jr.'s pilgrimage to nonviolence was successful thanks to his mentors. Jesus Christ, his divine teachings of love and brotherhood, along with the biblical parables, gave him spiritual lessons on nonviolence. Mahatma Gandhi and his *Satyagraha* doctrine strengthened his belief that nonviolence was the methodological key that could open to his fellow African Americans the heavy doors of freedom. Henry David Thoreau, through his acts of disobedience to injustice, inspired him and allowed him to adapt several useful strategies that paved the way to an American society where people, whatever their skin color, would be judged by the content of their character. Thanks to these spiritual, methodological, and strategic sources of inspiration, Barack Obama became the 44th US President. This paper probes the different steps that led to the crowning of Martin Luther King, Jr., by Christ, Gandhi, and Thoreau.

Keywords: *agape*, Christian faith, civil disobedience, nonviolence philosophy, *Satyagraha*.

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Corresponding author

Mouhamed DIOP

1. Introduction

King was not a saint or a prophet who naturally abhorred violence. His abhorrence of violence went a long and twisting way riddled with difficulties and mistakes, trials and tribulations. He was simply a man of conviction and not a man of conformity. He was not a man of dishonest compromise who just leapt on the bandwagon to follow the trend. King carried conviction thanks to his philosophy of nonviolence. King's conviction that an evil power could only be harnessed by a good power rests on his diverse sources of great inspiration. He inspired by the life and divine teachings of Jesus Christ, Mahatma Gandhi's *Satyagraha* philosophy, and Henry David Thoreau's beliefs on civil disobedience.

In a theoretical framework, in King's God talk, the religious language of his works impregnated with religion, and the intrinsic relationship between God and human beings, Christ is in the center. Quoting his principal references, King (1986) declared that Christ furnished the spirit and motivation while Mahatma Gandhi furnished the method. In his days, Gandhi was the most prominent apostle of nonviolence in the world. He not only advocated the

method of nonviolence but he also lived an exemplary nonviolent life. His speeches, his clothing, and even his family life had been sending the universal message of nonviolence throughout the world (King, 1999).

Next to Christ and Gandhi, Thoreau influenced King's thinking. In his days, Thoreau was one of the major authors of American Transcendentalism, a lecturer and a naturalist. Thoreau had published on a large number of themes. But civil disobedience was the one that marked King the most. The pastor marveled at Thoreau's courage to resist against evil, as he marveled at how Christ defied the Roman Empire, as he marveled at Gandhi's nonviolent protest, the way he managed to mobilize Indians, and their struggle against white South Africans' injustice and the British' oppression until the independence of India.

These sources of inspiration have a political and social importance in the world today. Hence, the interest of this study. These three Kingian masters have numerous disciples in the world, but people remain drowned in the vast ocean of ignorance and amnesia, refusing to board the Christian, Thoreauvian, and Gandhian boats that could land them on the seashore. As of the year 2021,



Christianity had approximately two point thirty-eight billion adherents, and it is the largest religion by population respectively (Wikipedia, 2024). King thought that great numbers do not necessarily mean something positive. The following is an example:

This numerical growth should not be overemphasized. We must not be tempted to confuse spiritual power and large numbers. Jumboism [worship of bigness], as someone has called it, is an utterly fallacious standard for measuring positive power. An increase in quantity does not automatically bring an increase in quality. A larger membership does not necessarily represent a correspondingly increased commitment to Christ. Almost always the creative, dedicated minority has made the world better.
 (King, 1991, 499)

Other great religions such as Judaism and Islam have the same importance as Christianity, however, the world is moving in an unorthodox way. It increasingly delves into a spiral of external violence materialized by high crime rates, war, and internal conflicts in countries. The world is also increasingly sinking into an abyss of internal violence materialized by drug and alcohol abuse, hate, and suicide. In his lifetime, King had proved that he abhorred violence. So this paper will investigate King's abhorrence of violence through his discipleship under Christ, Gandhi, and Thoreau.

This study will be a prior investigation to serve as the base of another study on King's own philosophy and principles as preached and practiced in the USA, from his prominence as a charismatic civil rights activist in 1955 to the day he passed away in 1968.

1. Christ's Spirit

Christ's life and teachings taught King spiritual lessons of humility, forgiveness, love, truth through God's eminence, leadership, and nonviolence. Christ is first humility as in this thorough description by King:

I know a man, and I just want to talk about him a minute, and maybe you will discover who I'm talking about as I go down the way, because he was a great one. And he just went about serving. He was born in an obscure village, the child of a poor peasant woman. And then he grew up in still another obscure village, where he worked as a carpenter until he was thirty years old. Then for three years, he just got on his feet, and he was an itinerant preacher. And then he went about doing some things. He didn't have much. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never owned a house. He never went to college. He never visited a big city. He never went two hundred miles from where he was born. He did none of the usual things that the world would associate with greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

He was thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against him. They called him a rabble-rouser. They called him a troublemaker. They said he was an agitator. He practiced civil disobedience; he broke injunctions. And so he was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. And the irony of it all is that his friends turned him over to them. One of his closest friends denied him. Another of his friends turned him over to his enemies. And while he was dying, the people who killed him gambled for his clothing, the only possession that he had in the world. When he was dead, he was buried in a borrowed tomb, through the pity of a friend.
 (King, 1991, p. 266)

This sorrowful narrative teaches that the most revered person in Christianity, and one of the most revered persons in the world had led a modest life. He did not need big transportation means. He never brag about his powers. He never boast about his diplomas. He never pride himself on possessions. His death is a reminder of how every human being will meet his Maker. None of your fancy clothes, big cars, beautiful houses, and bank accounts will accompany you when you travel in the afterlife. Christ personifies forgiveness in the purest meaning of the word. He died to atone the sins of humankind. He even forgave his persecutors for their sins because his forgiveness had no limit.

Christ is love, too. When his critics accused him of being an extremist activist, King reminded them that Christ was an extremist in love who prodded his followers to love their enemies, and to bless those who curse them, and to pray for those who spitefully use them (King, 1991, p. 297; *English Standard Version Bible* (2001), Matthew 5:44). Love and truth are the basic strategies of nonviolence. Love, in this context, is different from liking people. It is the greatest of all virtues. It is called *agape*. It goes beyond sentimentality and aesthetic considerations.

The slave who daily undergoes whipping, insults, name-calling, and torture cannot love his oppressors as men love their wives. He cannot love his oppressors as a botanist loves a beautiful flower. The slave cannot sentimentally love his oppressors or any person who exploits, tramples over, or threatens him day in and day out unless he is out of his mind. But the battered slave must love his oppressors as God Himself loves all human beings, however, they are, in an understanding, creative, redemptive goodwill.

This purely religious explanation of love created enemies to King's conviction among African Americans. But all religions teach this human value. Love is a Hindu-Muslim-Christian-Jewish-Buddhist belief about the ultimate reality (King, 1968, p. 201). In the passage below, King justifies himself:

This often misunderstood and misinterpreted concept [*agape*] has now become an absolute necessity for the survival of man. When I speak of love, I am speaking of that force which all the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality.

(King, 1968, p. 201)

This power of love evidences that King had no reason for being a gradual activist. He signified that he was an activist to the most extremist degree. Christ is truth, too. In the Judeo-Christian-Muslim tradition, truth is the most beautiful expression of God's eminence. King always quoted American literary figures to sing the beauty of the power of truth. Yet, its more religious meaning appears in these examples:

He who lives with untruth lives in spiritual slavery.

Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.
(King, 1968, p. 71; *English Standard Version Bible* (2001), John 8:32)

God still works through history His wonders to perform.
(King, 1991, p. 438)

Armed with truth and with God by his side, Christ did not flee from his oppressors when he could. He did not use his cosmic power to destroy his enemies even though he could. He did not attempt to escape death even though he was mindful of the traitor who was sitting with him at the same table. He was a responsible shepherd who chose to lead his flock out of the danger of the wolves. Christ's life was dedicated to service for humankind. In King's discourse, metaphorical words such as flock, sheep, and shepherd are recurrently employed to refer to Christ's leadership. What do these metaphors imply? The following theological passage makes a poignant analysis of it:

One of the titles that the New Testament bestows upon Jesus Christ is that of the Good Shepherd. The metaphor of the shepherd who cares for his flock becomes then the metaphor that defines the work of the local pastor. [...]

In the first place, to be a shepherd over the flock of sheep means that it is the shepherd's responsibility to lead the sheep. If anyone has observed the behavior of sheep who are left unguided, without the care and constant supervision of a shepherd, he is aware that sheep tend to move willy-nilly in all directions without any order to their movement. They are prone to getting lost, getting injured, and being left in a state of vulnerability unless they are cared for by a shepherd.

Secondly, the shepherd is responsible to feed the sheep. [...] Sheep without food soon grow thin, weak, emaciated, and sickly, ultimately perishing. [...] That feeding is given at the responsibility of the pastor.

Thirdly, the pastor is called to tend the flock. Following again John's imagery from nature, when a sheep is wounded or becomes ill, it is to be noticed by the good shepherd, who takes that sheep from the flock and gives the special attention needed by the sheep to be restored to fullness of health. So it is that the good pastor is one who knows the aches, the pains, the joys,

and the sorrows of each member of his congregation, so that he can tend to their needs and so that they aren't overcome by physical maladies or by spiritual and psychological distress. He is there to encourage the sheep and to see to it that they grow to the fullness of maturity in the life of Christ, conforming to Christ's very image.

Sproul (2017)

From Sproul's perspective, the preacher's role regarding his congregation is three-fold. He must preach them the gospel through sermons, homilies, and prayer services. This gives the congregation spiritual lessons about the Creator of the universe and moral lessons about life. Life lessons should prompt the congregation into doing good in society being mindful that this earthly life is only an ephemeral passage. The preacher does not stop his relationship with his congregation there. He must show that he cares for their well-being, morally, materially, and physically.

The good preacher practices social gospel by visiting the sick, spending his money when necessary, listening to people who confess their sins, and suggest ethical solutions to problems submitted to him. Another Christian responsibility of the preacher is to lead his congregation and his community, believers, and nonbelievers to a series of actions for good and noble causes. The church should not confine its services to the congregation in its walls. The church should not be on the side of any power unless it is the power of the people, whether the people are pious or lay. Its responsibility is bigger because:

The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool. If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority. If the church does not participate actively in the struggle for peace and for economic and racial justice, it will forfeit the loyalty of millions and cause men everywhere to say that it has atrophied its will. But if the church will free itself from the shackles of a deadening status quo, and, recovering its great historic mission, will speak and act fearlessly and insistently in terms of justice and peace, it will enkindle the imagination of mankind and fire the souls of men, imbuing them with a glowing and ardent love for truth, justice, and peace. Men far and near will know the church as a great fellowship of love that provides light and bread for lonely travelers at midnight.

(King, 1991, p. 501)

Religion has always been the refuge of African Americans. It calmed them down when they were seething with anger and vengeance. It advised them in their quest for freedom and justice. Religion had played the most important role during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s America. Both Christian



and Muslim leaders had turned their faith into courage to fight injustice. During the Civil Rights Movement the most prominent African American leaders were ministers of God. Malcolm X, for example, loved to remind his listeners that he was a Muslim minister. The following words are illustrative of this reminder:

I would like to clarify something concerning myself. I'm still a Muslim; my religion is still Islam. That's my personal belief. Just as Adam Clayton Powell is a Christian minister who heads the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York, but at the same time takes part in the political struggles to try and bring about rights to the black people in this country; and Dr. Martin Luther King is a Christian minister down in Atlanta, Georgia, who heads another organization fighting for the civil rights of black people in this country; and Reverend Galamison, I guess you've heard of him, is another Christian minister in New York who has been deeply involved in the school boycotts to eliminate segregated education; well, I myself am a minister, not a Christian minister, but a Muslim minister; and I believe in action on all fronts by whatever means necessary.
 (Malcolm X, 1964)

Malcolm X quotes Reverends Powell, King, and Galamison as religious men who combated oppression on several fronts just as he did. As for King, his combat was totally nonviolent. But before espousing the principles of nonviolence to the full, he had doubts and fears. He doubted that nonviolence could be injected in the veins of international relations and that it could solve group conflicts within nations (King, 1986, p. 60). His skepticism went even further affecting his Christian belief. He thought that the non-retaliation philosophy encompassed in Christian love as in "turn the other cheek" or "love your enemies" is only valid as far as individuals are concerned (King, 1986, p. 60).

During the dark times of hate letters, blackmailing via phone calls, and bombings of the activists' homes, King let his sentries carry pistols and shotguns, and he even let them bring their weapons inside his home. Even though he told people that this was only for self-defense, the guns troubled him. He felt afraid with them in his house. He told himself that he had to be totally nonviolent because the guns there were going to attract guns. Then he ordered the guns out of his home. Henceforth, he would face any form of violence with only his faith in God and in the power of love (Oates, 1982, pp. 87-88). King's transformation from a hesitating nonviolent resister to an extremist of nonviolence became a reality thanks to Mahatma Gandhi's method.

2. Gandhi's Method

When Gandhi settled his ashram near Wardha, in the center of India, he pursued his immense writing project for four years, from 1936 to 1940. The complete collection of his writings was posthumously published in ninety volumes. In the ashram, he received lots of influential people such as Benjamin Mays. Mays visited him and learned about the fundamental principles of his philosophy (Bouillet, 2007). In 1940, Mays became president of

Morehouse College in Atlanta. His contribution in the black church is beyond measure in deeds and words (Houck & Nixon, 2006). On the occasion of a meeting held on August 21, 1954, he cried out these words:

Segregation based on color or race makes it impossible for the Christian of color to qualify; for one cannot change his color and he cannot change his race. And this restriction is tantamount to penalizing one for being what God made him and tantamount to saying to God, "You make a mistake, God, when you made peoples of different races and colors."
 (Houck & Nixon, 2006)

King had many doubts on the power of nonviolence at Crozer Theological Seminary. His readings of Reinhold Niebuhr's criticisms of pacifism confused him until he heard a lecture of Mordecai Johnson about Gandhi in Philadelphia one Sunday afternoon (King, 1958). Johnson preached on Gandhi and nonviolence. At the end, King "bought a half dozen books on Gandhi's life and works" (King, 1958). And he confessed that he came to feel that that was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom" (King, 1958).

On February 3, 1959, King was accompanied by his wife and Dr. Lawrence Reddick, to perform a "pilgrimage to nonviolence" in India (King, 1998). During the stay, they made up a set of three-headed team with six eyes and six ears for looking and listening (King, 1998). King felt safe in India but was appalled when he saw how poverty had deteriorated Gandhi's country. He witnessed the problem of the untouchables but approved the Indian government's atonement for the injustices. As a result of his visit to India, his understanding on nonviolence became greater and his commitment deeper (King, 1998).

In his theoretical conception of nonviolence, King admired this Gandhian aspect as he started reading his works. In the following quotation, King talks about his fascination of the Indian nonviolent guru's *Satyagraha* doctrine:

Then I came upon the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. As I read his works I became deeply fascinated by his campaigns of nonviolent resistance. The whole Gandhian concept of *satyagraha* (*satya* is truth which equals love, and *graha* is force; *satyagraha* thus means truth-force or love-force) was profoundly significant to me. As I delved deeper into the philosophy of Gandhi my skepticism concerning the power of love gradually diminished, and I came to see for the first time that the Christian doctrine of love operating through the Gandhian method of nonviolence was one of the most potent weapons available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom. At this time, however, I had a merely intellectual understanding and appreciation of the position, with no firm determination to organize it in a socially effective situation.

(King, 1986, pp. 58-59)

Gandhi had relinquished his family life to settle into an ashram during all his living days. An ashram is a sort of semi-monastic community characterised by sharing personal and material resources. The whole community lives in a perfect harmony of brotherhood where there are no untouchable, no social distinction, and no discrimination at all. It is a melting pot of democracy, solidarity, and understanding. The members abide by the rules of a rotation in the execution of all the tasks, including the modest and most polluting ones (emptying the latrines, for example). That aspect takes a great importance in the Hindu environment of high caste in which Gandhi evolved (Markovits, 2000).

Gandhi's ashram lifestyle impacted King's thinking. King's dream of a beloved community takes its root from it. He believed nonviolence is so powerful that in this modern world of rapid evolution of nuclear sciences and technologies, it is the only means to face violent oppression. Gandhi used nonviolence to free India from the domination of the powerful British Empire. So it was possible for African Americans to free themselves from Jim Crow laws. Next to Christ and Gandhi, Henry David Thoreau's intellectual stature and fierce opposition to injustice helped King and his fellow activists to develop other nonviolent strategies based on the refusal to obey unjust laws.

3. Thoreau's Strategy

Henry David Thoreau gathered, in 1846, his arguments in a small opusculé titled "Resistance to Civil Government" in which the phrase "civil disobedience" did not appear yet. It is only in 1866, four years after his death that the phrase appeared as a posthumous edition of his work. According to Mellon (2010), no one knows certainly that the phrase "civil disobedience" is Thoreau's even if he is credited for its paternity. Thoreau's basic premise is that a higher law than civil law demands the obedience of the individual. Human law and government are subordinate. In cases where the two are at odds with one another, the individual must follow his conscience and, if necessary, disregard human law (CliffsNotes, 2024).

As a student, King had received an assignment to read "On Civil Disobedience" by Thoreau. It was his first experience with the power of the civil disobedience theory (King, 1999). Two years after the Montgomery bus boycott which launched the Civil Rights Movement, King remembered going home late one Sunday afternoon after a heavy day's work. As he sat down reading the morning paper, many ideas came to his mind questioning their decisive non-cooperation to travel in segregated buses (King, 1991). At that point, he began to think of Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience:

I remembered how, as a college student [at Morehouse College], I had been moved when I first read this work. I became convinced that what we were preparing to do in Montgomery was related to what Thoreau had expressed. We were simply saying to the white

community, "We can no longer lend our cooperation to an evil system".

(King, 1991, p. 429)

Thoreau's influence on King may be understood for his essay was a mindset revolution in the American intelligentsia. Furthermore, not only the civil disobedience principle dominates it, but intellectual freedom is also suggested when reading between the lines. Why did Thoreau write his essay? King had probably found answers when working on his assignment. Thoreau wrote his essay to categorically stand against all forms of governmental oppression doing what he thinks right according to the dictates of his conscience:

I am too high born to be propertied,
 To be a second at control,
 Or useful serving man and instrument
 To any sovereign state throughout the world.
 (Thoreau, 1849)

Three points deserve consideration in Thoreau's indictment of injustice: ethics, justice, and politics. Concerning ethical questions, Thoreau "paid no tax for six years" and "was put into jail once on this account, for one night" (Thoreau, 1849). His refusal was an act of citizenship duty meant to oppose injustice:

When a sixth of the population of a nation [African Americans] which has undertaken to be the refuge of liberty [the USA] are slaves, and a whole country is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army [the USA's war against Mexico], and subjected to military law, I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize.
 (Thoreau, 1849)

Politically, Thoreau defines "government" simply as the "mode which the people have chosen to execute their will" but which "is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it" (Thoreau, 1849). In his days, Thoreau was not understood by his society. But other thinkers such as Ralph W. Emerson shared with him the feeling of being rejected for one's ideas and the pangs of isolation when everyone thinks differently. In the "American Scholar", Emerson argues for an independent thinking necessary for a society who has claimed independence (Diop, 2022).

King believed that only nonviolence could help African Americans walk out of the dark valleys of despair to reach the luminous mountaintop of hope. But they should employ all legally nonviolent means necessary to reach their goals, armed with courage, moral strength, and faith because "if a man has not discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live" (King, 1963). And As Thoreau put it, "Nothing is so much to be feared as fear" (King, 1991, p.512).

King justifies civil disobedience as the best response to unjust laws. The following explains what unjust laws really meant for King:

From a purely moral point of view, an unjust law is one that is out of harmony with the moral law of the universe. More concretely, an unjust law is one in which the minority is compelled to observe a code that is not binding on the majority. An unjust law is one in which people are required to obey a code that they had no part in making because they were denied the right to vote.

(King, 1991, p. 164)

In the 1950s and 1960s America, unjust laws met nonviolent direct actions such as boycotts, marches, sit-ins, freedom rides, etc. For King, these actions equaled to withdrawing one's cooperation from an evil system, rather than merely withdrawing one's economic support from a company. These actions equaled to expressing one's refusal to an authority's decision, to demonstrating one's discontent, or to disobeying injustice. But these actions, too, took shape thanks to Christ's, Gandhi's, and Thoreau's inspirations. These inspirations made King a devoted humanist.

4. King's Humanism

As already discussed in the introduction, King was not a saint, or a prophet who naturally abhorred violence. Most importantly, he never pretended to be one. By his own words, he defended himself from such a misconstrued perception of his personality. He believed all humans are prone to making mistakes, committing sins, and turning to the most degrading form of evil. Nonetheless, he also thought all humans are able to behave in an exemplary way, working toward a fair society, and doing good. The following quotation illustrates King's perception of each person's two opposing selves:

In a sense, the history of man is the story of the struggle between good and evil. All of the great religions have recognized a tension at the very core of the universe. Hinduism, for instance, calls this tension a conflict between illusion and reality; Zoroastrianism, a conflict between the god of light and the god of darkness; and traditional Judaism and Christianity, a conflict between God and Satan. Each realizes that in the midst of the upward thrust of goodness, there is the downward pull of evil.

(King, 1963)

In early 1964, King was not aware that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) knew about his "lower self" and was snooping into his private life. Edgar Hoover's agents launched counterintelligence operations against him, planting unauthorized and illegal microphones in his hotel rooms. As King spoke out against the delicate issues of war and poverty, issues different from civil rights, 36th US President Lyndon B. Johnson no more had sympathy for him as before, and the FBI intensified his vendetta against King's guilt over his sins. The bureau was claiming that he had a mistress, the wife of a California dentist, whom he met in motel rooms (Oates, 1982, p. 438).

He confessed to his friends that he was conscious of two "Martin Luther Kings", and that the "Martin Luther King" that the people talk about seems to be somebody foreign to him. He believed that each person is a combination of two selves and that the great burden of life is to always try to keep that higher self in command. The challenge then is not to let the lower self take over. King acknowledged that there is a Mr. Hyde (evil character) and a Dr. Jekyll (good character) in each person, and he was no saint but a "sinner like all of God's children" (Oates, 1982, p. 438).

Being well molded and remolded by Christ, Gandhi, and Thoreau, King had not only become a master of nonviolence, but he had also reached the universal dimension. He believed in a new foundation of the world on humanistic principles and values that do not imitate the past but draws its lessons from it. Blind imitation of the past or the current trend is a dangerous enterprise. A rational person had better be a hammer shaping a new society rather than stay an anvil molded by the old. King believed we live in a dark, desperate, confused, and sin-sick world that awaits for this new kind of leaders.

5. Conclusion

This paper has highlighted that the nonviolent resistance Martin Luther King, Jr., preached and practiced in the 1950s and 1960s America were not *ex nihilo*. He was not born with powers or a divine mission to lead his people. King learned from the Holy Spirit of Christ as a good Christian minister. He learned from Mahatma Gandhi the methods thanks to which President Johnson signed the 1964 *Civil Rights Act* and the 1965 *Voting Rights Act*. He learned from Henry David Thoreau's courageous civil disobedience the strategies that circumvented the centuries-long opprobrium heaped on his fellow African Americans. This paper has also emphasized that King was a humanist as in these moving words:

I'd like somebody to mention that day [of his burial ceremony], that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to give his life serving others. I'd like for somebody to say that day, that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to love somebody. I want you to say that day, that I tried to be right on the war question. I want you to be able to say that day, that I did try to feed the hungry. And I want you to be able to say that day, that I did try, in my life, to clothe those who were naked. I want you to say, on that day, that I did try, in my life, to visit those who were in prison. I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity.

(King, 1986, p. 191)

King's humanism hinges upon his recognition of being relentlessly thrust upward by good and ceaselessly pulled downward by evil. He knew that like everybody else he was on the horns of this perpetual dilemma that could make or mar his personality as both a man of God and a trusted leader. When the FBI started spreading scurrilous rumors surrounding his so-called extramarital relationships, and communistic leanings, he did not seek to justify himself. He just reminded people of his being a simple sinful

human being like Adam and Eve were. In a nutshell, King's humanism rests on his nonviolence philosophy inspired mainly by Christ, Gandhi, and Thoreau. Now as the question on the crowning of King as a nonviolent resister is answered, what about the question on King's own perception on nonviolence as both philosophy and principles?

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