

CHAPTER 7

THOSE WHO BELONG TO CHRIST AND “THE THIS-WORLDLY CHARACTER OF THE NEW CREATION”¹

Josiah U. Young III

I don't want a long funeral. . . . Tell them not to talk too long. . . . Say that I was a drum major for justice; say that I was a drum major for peace; I was a drum major for righteousness. . . . I won't have any money to leave behind. But I just want to leave a committed life behind.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

My mother grew up in Danville, Virginia when it was a very dangerous place for African Americans because of its intense racism. Years later, during the Civil Rights movement, black-church folk went to the city jail in Danville to support the incarcerated black youth who had attempted to integrate the public library. Police, a few state troopers, firemen, and deputized sanitation workers ambushed the blacks in the alley beside the jail and fire-hosed them. Mirinda Kossoff, director of communications for Duke University Law School, writes that the “force of the water flung the demonstrators to the street like debris, washing some under cars and tearing the clothes off the minister’s wife.” The next day, white Danville enlisted the aid of thirty state troopers, replete with an armed tank, to enforce segregation.² Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, had thought that Danville might be the next big campaign after Birmingham, Alabama. Danville’s

1. I am indebted to Jürgen Moltmann’s *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) for this part of my title. See pages 152-53.

2. <http://www.spectatoronline.com/2000/060300/notebook2.html>, page 3.

brutal, well-organized police and notorious zealots for states' rights, however, undermined the civil rights struggle there. Dr. King writes that Danville's "upright white citizens, concerned that police brutality [was] insufficient . . . wore guns in their belts."³ Four little girls lost their lives during the Birmingham campaign. I shudder to think what the price would have been if blacks had managed to mount a major campaign in Klan-infested Danville, the last capital of the Confederacy.

My own childhood neighborhood in Brooklyn suffered from racism too. Services were inadequate. The police were hostile. The public school system undereducated black youth. The system placed too many of us in go-nowhere elementary-school classes. High school counselors steered us away from college-prep courses. The system programmed us to become menial workers or suffer unemployment. Few aspired to more than that by the time we reached middle school. What Dr. King wrote about Chicago surely applied to Brooklyn: "Too soon," he writes, "you begin to see the effects of this emotional and environmental deprivation."⁴ Heroin addiction took a high toll on my neighborhood as hundreds of black youth overdosed.

My neighborhood rioted the night of Dr. King's assassination. Sirens blared, stores burned—a distressed people expressed their rage over living in a nation hostile to Dr. King because he represented the oppressed. The neighborhood was quiet, though, on the day of his funeral. With the scent of burned-out buildings reminding us of the trouble we were in, my whole block seemed to be inside watching the funeral on television. Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, the former president of Morehouse College, eulogized Dr. King on the college's campus (I resolved to go to school there while I watched the funeral), and an ailing Mahalia Jackson sang "Precious Lord" with a pathos that rendered our ineffable sense of loss. As Atlanta's black community laid Dr. King in his tomb, my mother, breaking the silence, said, "I'm looking for a resurrection."

I was a teenager then and found her words unusual. For the longest time I thought my mother had confused Dr. King with Jesus, as if Dr. King were himself the kingdom of God. After reading Jürgen Moltmann's highly acclaimed *The Coming of God* years later, I realized I did not have to take her statement that way. Basing his view on Paul's thought (see, for example, 2 Tim 2:12, 1 Cor 15:23, 1 Thess 4:16), Moltmann distinguishes Christ, who is himself the kingdom of God, from those who belong to him. Their resurrections will herald the imminence of the new creation but will not constitute the new creation itself. One can hold that Jesus Christ himself *is* the new creation because his death and resurrection incorporate all of the dead to rise on the Day of days and all of the living who will

3. Martin Luther King Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Mentor, 1964), 116.

4. King, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 114.

await the universal restoration of all things (Col 1:15-20).⁵ Christ is thus the kingdom of God because the new creation is in him not unlike the way in which this present creation was made through him. Given Paul's sense of the resurrection *from* the dead, believers such as Dr. King "are to be raised ahead of other dead in order that they may be with Christ and appear with him when he comes" (Col 3:3f.).⁶

The light went on with respect to my mother's statement. In concert with Moltmann, I realized that Dr. King's resurrection *from* the dead would be "analogous to the raising of Christ, not a mere prolepsis of the general raising of the dead."⁷ Dr. King's rising would thus be "christomorphic" and reveal that the new creation will hardly be ethically indifferent but the expansive glorification of Jesus' therapeutic and prophetic way in the end-time. I understood my mother's hope for Dr. King's resurrection "in a millenarian sense, in the framework of the end-time of history, not eschatologically as the end of history itself."⁸

The political significance of such millenarianism is compelling. As Jürgen Moltmann put it:

The millenarian hope is a *hope for martyrs*. The praxis of this hope is resistance in the godless kingdoms of the world, and the refusal to conform to their idol worship and cults of power. It is not just the hope that must be called messianic and millenarian; it is the resistance and martyrdom itself that precedes the hope [i.e., resistance and martyrdom are also messianic and millenarian]. For in that resistance the relative, conditioned and often so ambivalent *Here and Today* is made the point in time of an eschatological, absolute and unconditioned decision.⁹

Dr. King was surely way out front in the resistance to the godless kingdoms of this world. As he told us in his well-known sermon "The Drum Major Instinct," excerpts of which were played during his funeral, he was a drum major for justice, peace, and righteousness.

Dr. King based that sermon on Mark 10. He contextualized the text:

5. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996). He writes: "In dying, Christ became the brother of the dying. In death, he became the brother of the dead. In his resurrection—as the One risen—he embraces the dead and the living, and takes them with him on his way to his future. When he appears in glory, they will be beside him and will live eternally with him. That is what Paul means too when he says that 'neither death nor life . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 8:38f.), for the unconditional and prevenient love of God is the beginning of the divine glory that raises the dead and annihilates death" (105).

6. *Ibid.*, 151.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, 198.

9. *Ibid.*, 152.

The setting is clear, James and John are making a specific request of the master. They had dreamed, as most Hebrews dreamed, of a coming king of Israel who would set Jerusalem free . . . establish his kingdom on Mount Zion . . . [and] in righteousness rule the world. And they thought of . . . that day when Jesus would reign supreme as the new king of Israel. And they were saying now, “when you establish your kingdom, let one of us sit on the right hand, and the other on the left hand of your throne.”¹⁰

Jesus tells the ambitious brothers that he cannot determine their position in the kingdom because the kingdom is “for those for whom it has been prepared” (Mark 10:40). For Dr. King, *for those for whom it has been prepared* signifies what people decide to do with the lesson Jesus was teaching.¹¹ In other words, Dr. King has little use for the view that God has chosen some for the kingdom and others for damnation; the choice has been ours. We cause damnation, not God; but we can choose to work with God for Christ’s sake. Dr. King conceptualizes this choice in terms of the drum major instinct, which signifies “a desire to be out front,” “a desire to be first” and “runs a whole gamut of life.” In a nutshell, the drum major instinct fosters either egoism or humane service to others.

The egoistic side of this instinct, its “perverted use,” has fueled racism and other manifestations of “man’s inhumanity to man.”¹² Dr. King asserts that this side of the drum major instinct explains “what is wrong in the world,” why there is racial struggle and why “the nations of the world are engaged in a bitter, colossal contest for supremacy.” According to Dr. King, “if somebody doesn’t bring an end to this suicidal thrust that we see in the world today, none of us [is] going to be around, because somebody’s going to make the mistake through our senseless blundering of dropping a nuclear bomb somewhere, and then another one is going to drop.” For King, then, it could well be that “we won’t be here to talk about Jesus Christ and about God and about brotherhood too many more years.”¹³ Indeed, King’s sense that an aggressive instinct accounts for the nuclear weapons that threaten to exterminate us brings to mind Freud’s concluding remarks in *Civilization and Its Discontents*: “Men have gained control over the forces of nature to such an extent that with their help they would have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man. They know this, and hence comes a large part of their current unrest, their unhappiness and their mood of anxiety.”¹⁴

10. King, “The Drum Major Instinct,” in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by James Melvin Washington (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 259.

11. *Ibid.*, 260.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*, 264.

14. See Sigmund Freud, *Civilizations and Its Discontents* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989), 112. King’s “Drum Major Instinct” refers to Freud: “Sigmund Freud used to contend that sex was the dominant impulse” (260). Although I cannot attribute this view

According to Dr. King, the Gospel teaches us to overcome “this suicidal thrust” by showing us how to be “first in love . . . first in moral excellence . . . first in generosity” (Mark 10:44-45).¹⁵ This alternative represents the humane side of the drum major instinct. Dr. King held that Jesus has given those who belong to him “a new definition of greatness”: all one needs is a “heart full of grace . . . a soul generated by love” to transmogrify the drum major instinct into a force that would bring about community rather than chaos. After the liberal thinker Eugene W. Lyman, Dr. King called this community the Beloved Community—“the historical goal of the divine purpose.”¹⁶

Dr. King’s sermon exemplifies his sense that the kingdom of Christ, or what he called the Beloved Community, is within us and thus always this-worldly in character. He summed up his sense of the kingdom as follows:

Yes, Jesus, I want to be on your right side or your left side, not for any selfish reason. I want to be on your right side or your best side, not in terms of some political kingdom or ambition, but I just want to be there in love and in justice and in truth and in commitment to others, so that we can make of this old world a new world.¹⁷

As one who believed that he belonged to Christ, Dr. King wanted those who would eulogize him one day to remember him as a drum major for a new world as seen in his civil rights activism, his position on Vietnam, and his leadership of the Poor Peoples’ Campaign.

As he made plain in the Massey Lectures aired by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 1967, King thought the Vietnam War was a “moral outrage” that took a terrible toll on the poor. With respect to America’s poor, King asserted that “the war was doing far more than devastating” their hopes. “It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to die and in extraordinarily higher proportions relative to the rest of the population.” Dr. King writes, moreover, that the draft took “the young black men who had been crippled by our society” and sent them “eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem.”¹⁸ With respect to the Vietnamese poor, King observed how “the peasants watched and cringed as [Premier] Diem ruthlessly rooted out all opposition,

to Dr. King, I would observe that for Freud, sex, or libido, is inseparable from aggression, as in narcissistic self-gratification, and thus the human impulse to “repeat”—i.e., the “death instinct”—which itself lay behind human aggression.

15. King, *The Trumpet of Conscience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 26.

16. Kenneth Cauthen, *The Impact of American Religious Liberalism* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1962), 134.

17. King, “Drum Major Instinct,” 267.

18. King, *The Trumpet of Conscience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 23.

supported their extortionist landlords and refused to even discuss reunification with the North." The war dispossessed the peasants of their land, herded them into concentration camps and demoralized them with bombing campaigns and the contamination of drinking water.¹⁹ Dr. King denounced the war to uphold his "commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ" rather than the aggression of his country.²⁰ He held that the United States has been under the illusion that God has elected it to play the role of the redeemer nation. To quote him in reference to the war in Vietnam: "God didn't call America to do what she's doing in the world now. God didn't call America to engage in a senseless, unjust war, [such] as the war in Vietnam. And we are the criminals in that war. . . . And we won't stop it because of our pride, and our arrogance as a nation."²¹

For Dr. King, America's hubris undermined his Poor People's Campaign, his anti-poverty initiative that marked his transition from the struggle against racism to a broader-based struggle against both racism and the marginalization of the poor. He envisioned that the poor would pitch tents in the nation's capital and eventually shut down the government until it took exhaustive steps to alleviate poverty. Shortly after his assassination, the poor did camp out in the nation's capital. They called their encampment the Resurrection City, which signified that poor people could rise from the degradation imposed on them by a system partial to the wealthy—a system based in part on the historic, Puritan-based notion that "white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant America" has revealed the new creation's character provisionally.²²

As I see it, that Protestant view bears an affinity to Hegel's notion of universal history, in which the strongest and fittest embody the Spirit of the Ultimate.²³ Whereas Hegel, however, held that the Ultimate had actualized itself through a certain natural selection—a certain "unconscious instinct"²⁴—the American Calvinists, the Puritans, believed that God had elected them more so than any other group to be the chosen people.²⁵ As historian Forrest Wood points out in his award-winning *The Arrogance of*

19. *Ibid.*, 27.

20. *Ibid.*, 25.

21. King, "Drum Major Instinct," 265.

22. Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 170-71.

23. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover, 1956), 15. Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, qua universal history, is a well-respected epistemology for many. For me, however, it continues to legitimize the nullification of Africa, the violence of the Atlantic slave trade, and the brutal christianization of African people in the Americas in asserting that European civilizations reveal "the form of God."

24. *Ibid.*, 73.

25. Moltmann rejects any such historical claim, arguing "God's decision about the salvation and damnation of human beings is not already revealed in Christ, nor is it revealed in the gospel. It is revealed provisionally in history, in faith and disbelief, but finally only at the Last Judgment" (*Coming of God*, 246).

Faith, the Puritans held that “the children of Israel may have been the original Chosen People, but God favored all who believed in Christ; and to be a Christian *and* an American was to be the best of all possible worlds.”²⁶ The Puritans had thought that England would be the new Israel, but apostasy there made an exodus to the true promised land, America, necessary. In settling North America, the colonists deemed their vanquishing of the native people and chattelization of the Africans to be God’s very own work—to signify the freedom given to the Anglo-Saxons by God.

According to another historian, Eric Foner, “British North America defined freedom less as a political or social status than as a spiritual condition.” To be free was to subdue the carnal man—a mastery central to the colonists’ sense of the new creation’s this-worldly character. “Servitude and freedom,” writes Foner, “were mutually reinforcing, not contradictory states, since those who accepted the teachings of Christ simultaneously became ‘free from sin’ and ‘servants to God.’”²⁷ “God,” however, was virtually synonymous with white privilege. Non-whites—the enslaved Africans for instance—symbolized sin, the “carnal man,” and thus the sanctity of white authority. How problematic, then, is Wolfhart Pannenberg’s view that “seventeenth-century Christians arriving in America found the courage to build even their political life on the premises of freedom and equality”!²⁸ It is rather the case, to quote Foner, that *slavery* shaped “the identity, the sense of self, of all America. Constituting the most impenetrable boundary of citizenship, slavery rendered blacks all but invisible to those imagining the American community.”²⁹

Writing in the late-eighteenth century, Jonathan Edwards the younger exemplifies this visualization of the American community—which does not reflect God’s Providence but an egoistic drum major instinct—in his attempt to make amends for slavery in terms that would keep the American community “pure.” To quote Edwards:

The facts plainly show what the whites in the West-Indies and the southern states are to expect concerning their posterity, that it will infallibly be a mungrel [sic] breed, or else they must quit the country to the Negroes whom they have hitherto holden in bondage. . . . If therefore our southern brethren, and the inhabitants of the West Indies, would balance their accounts with their Negro slaves at the cheapest possible rate, they will doubtless judge it prudent to leave the country, with all their houses, lands

26. Forrest Wood, *The Arrogance of Faith: Christianity & Race in America from the Colonial Era to the Twentieth Century* (Boston: Northwestern, 1990), 209-10.

27. Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 3-4.

28. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 121.

29. Foner, 38.

and improvements, to their quiet possession and dominion; as otherwise Providence will compel them to much dearer settlement, and one attended with a circumstance inconceivably more mortifying than the loss of all their real estates, I mean the mixture of their blood with that of the Negroes into one common posterity.³⁰

Dr. King undermined that view in his efforts to dismantle America's segregated structure, its irrational fear of miscegenation, and its competitive drive to amass wealth.

As he made clear, Providence has never made it imperative for Americans to choose segregation over the propagation of a so-called "mungrel breed." For Dr. King, God wants liberty and justice for all. King thus realized that the legacy of slavery—the product of the perverted use of the drum major instinct—has fostered both the ideology of white supremacy and poverty by virtue of having laid the foundation of capitalist privilege. Indeed, Dr. King thought the "slave heritage [could] be cast into the dim past by our consciousness of our strengths and a resolute determination to use them in our daily experiences." He asserted that "power is not the white man's birthright," and that the oppressed themselves must force social change through "a planned, deliberate campaign to organize [power] under [the group's] own control."³¹

In following Dr. King, a drum major for righteousness, the black masses were willing in unprecedented ways to *suffer* the terrorist tactics of those committed to a certain "common posterity." That was something new. What is more, millions of Americans, especially the poor, recognized the integrity of Dr. King's leadership as he himself was willing to die for what he called a new world. I understand this newness to mean that the kingdom of Christ and the new creation to follow it have the character of resistance to evil and the death it brings until today. Implicit in this end-time defiance is the conviction that justice for all is so immortal—so eternal or infinite—that those willing to die for that principle "shall reign with" Christ, "for he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim 2:12-13).

Think for instance of Medgar Evers, who was assassinated in Mississippi in 1963. Think also of Denise McNair, Cynthia Wesley, Addie Mae Collins, and Carol Robertson—the four little girls killed by a terrorist bomb that same year. Although those girls were not activists, they are martyrs who bring to light the evil that so many braved in ways unprecedented in our history. Surely we can construe Dr. King's eulogy for them as the hope for "a future of Christ in the resurrection from the dead" and

30. Quoted by Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (New York: Norton, 1977), 543-44.

31. Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 157.

in “the giving [of] life to our mortal bodies” (Rom 8:11).³² According to King, they “did not die in vain. God still has a way of wringing good out of evil.”³³ Certainly, their resurrections would bestow a *time* free from anxiety over death—which Moltmann defines as “a tarrying and abiding in the felicitous moment.” And as a prelude to the universal restoration of all things, this felicity would have definite political implications. As Moltmann points out:

No one participates in the messianic struggle of Christ against the powers of destruction and annihilation without a hope for such a “fulfilled time” in a victory of life of this kind. Anyone who lives in necessary contradiction to the laws and powers of “this world” hopes for a new world of correspondences. The contradiction suffered is itself the negative mirror-image of the correspondence hoped for.³⁴

The hoped-for correspondence heralds the new creation because the resurrection from the dead, coincident with the *Parousia*, will end the apocalyptic struggle and usher in the restoration of all things. Before the new creation, then, I hope to see the resurrection of martyrs such as Martin Luther King Jr., who personified the this-worldly character of the new creation as he fought against the evil anthropology that has burdened recent history.

Surely it is clear by now that Dr. Moltmann has helped me to understand my mother’s statement—*I’m looking for a resurrection*—in terms of a certain millenarianism; but I should say something about the distinction between Moltmann’s pneumatological understanding of the new creation’s this-worldly character and Dr. King’s compassionate, anthropological understanding. The distinction does not pose a serious problem for me because the perspectives are complementary.

For Moltmann, the Holy Spirit is so native to our resistance to evil that it is not always easy to distinguish the two. A biblical source of his view is Paul’s usage of *pneuma*, which signifies both the Holy Spirit and our human spirits (Rom 8:16). According to Moltmann, the human spirit does not refer to “some higher spiritual principle,” but to the “psychosomatic totality of the person.” When a person, then, hungers and thirsts for righteousness, and suffers harm to his or her flesh for the sake of righteousness, he or she is in spiritual solidarity with God’s own Spirit who sighs with that person for the new creation.³⁵ Dr. King made a similar point: God is especially close to us when we confront evil—and suffer as a result. Dr. King tells us in his “Pilgrimage to Nonviolence” that “the suffering,

32. Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 200.

33. King, “Eulogy for the Martyred Children,” in *Testament of Hope*, 221.

34. Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 200.

35. Moltmann, *God in Creation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 101.

frustration and agonizing moments" of resistance to evil had drawn him close to God. King, however, construes God's spirit as "personality" rather than the Third Person. "To say God is personal," explains Dr. King, "is not to make him an object among other objects or attribute to him the finiteness and limitations of human personality; it is to take what is finest and noblest in our consciousness and affirm its perfect existence in him. It is certainly true that human personality is limited, but personality as such involves no necessary limitations. It simply means self-consciousness and self-direction."³⁶

Surely, though, God is more than the perfection of human virtue. (Indeed, Dr. King's view of personality brings Feuerbach's critique of the *via eminentiae* to mind.)³⁷ I wonder, in addition, what happens to an individual's self-consciousness and self-direction when the forces of evil *prevail*, when the individual, the "psychosomatic totality," is apparently destroyed by evil? I detect, moreover, some ambiguity in Dr. King's sense of the resurrection. Sometimes he indicates that the resurrection *symbolizes* the Beloved Community and the human personality that can bring it about, while at other times he appears to assert that the resurrection *is* the eschatological event.³⁸

If the resurrection were but a symbol, then God would not be personal enough, for only the resurrection *from the dead* would vindicate Dr. King's drum major instinct. If Christ's resurrection were but a symbol, for example, the cousin I lost in Vietnam would be gone forever. The memories of the times we spent together in Danville and Brooklyn would die when I do. If our destiny is to sink into the earth forever and ever, moreover, then, given the way things *are*, the universal historians would have the upper hand. Hegel would be right—the only viable theodicy would be "attained only by recognizing the *positive* existence, in which that negative element is a subordinate, and vanquished nullity."³⁹ Historically, and even today, socioeconomic realities reveal that African peoples' existence is negative—and many apologists for history as we have known it see that as no great injustice. If, reason the universal historians, blacks had been fitting hosts for "Spirit," our image would be reflected in so-called high culture

36. King, "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence," in *Testament of Hope*, 40.

37. See Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1989), 38.

38. See John J. Ansbro, *Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Making of a Mind* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1982). Here, Dr. King writes: "The resurrection is a symbol of God's triumph over all the forces that seek to block community" (195). Cf. King's "The Current Crisis in Race Relations," in *Testament of Hope*. There, he writes that "Good Friday may occupy the throne for a day, but ultimately it must give way to the triumph of Easter. Evil may so shape events that Caesar will occupy a palace and Christ a cross, but that same Christ arose and split history into A.D. and B.C., so that even the life of Caesar must be dated by his name" (88).

39. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 15.

and all that it represents with respect to civilization and Christianity. In other words, many today agree with Hegel that “what has happened, and is happening every day, is not only ‘without God,’ but is essentially His Work.”⁴⁰ For them, the hegemony of Euro-Americans alone reconciles “Spirit with the History of the world.” Hegel predicted as much in his universal history: According to Hegel, America is “the land of the future, where, in the ages that lie before us, the burden of the World’s History shall reveal itself.”⁴¹ The fact remains, though, that countless people have been chewed and spit out by this History.

Let me reiterate: I find that universal history exemplifies the egoistic side of the drum major instinct and is thus analogous to the notion of pre-destination that has sanctified white privilege in America. I would much rather uphold Dr. King’s view that the *imago Dei*

is universally shared in equal portions by all. . . . There is no graded scale of essential worth; there is no divine right of one race which differs from the divine right of another. Every human being has etched in his personality the indelible stamp of the creator. Every man must be respected because God loves him. The worth of an individual does not lie in the measure of his intellect, his racial origin, or his social position. Human worth lies in relatedness to God. An individual has value because he has value to God. Whenever this is recognized, “Whiteness” and “Blackness” pass away as determinant in a relationship, and “Son” and “Brother” are substituted.⁴²

Yet these claims—“there is no graded scale of essential worth . . . no divine right of one race which differs from the divine right of another”; that one has value because he or she “has value to God”; “and that this means that ‘Whiteness’ and ‘Blackness’ pass away”—are ahistorical at the moment.

Don’t get me wrong. It will be forever to Dr. King’s credit that he clarified the “instinct” that cherishes life rather than destroys it. In his “A Christmas Sermon on Peace,” he writes:

It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. We are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality. . . . We aren’t going to have peace on earth until we recognize this basic fact of the interrelated structure of all reality. . . . We are all one in Christ Jesus. And when we truly believe in the sacredness of human personality, we won’t exploit people, we won’t trample over people with iron feet of oppression, we won’t kill anybody.⁴³

40. Ibid., 457.

41. Ibid., 86.

42. Ansbro, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 23.

43. King, *Trumpet of Conscience*, 71-72.

For me, however, it is important to make clear that the Spirit of Christ's resurrection alone enables one to assert that "we are all one in Christ Jesus." It is the resurrection that has established the sacredness of human personality and not vice versa. What is more, the resurrection alone enables one to see that Dr. King's claims—*we won't exploit people, we won't trample over people with iron feet of oppression, we won't kill anybody*—signify the coming millennium. The bearer of that promise is the Spirit who has brought "Jesus up out of death."⁴⁴

I, then, can only uphold the sacredness of personality and its this-worldly character with a pneumatology that signifies the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the resurrection, who moves persons to resist the evil that nullifies the oppressed even as I speak. The Holy Spirit enables my spirit to hope that God will rid creation of evil in the "Thousand Years' reign of Christ, 'the kingdom of peace,'" which is "indispensable for every alternative form of life and action which will withstand the ravages of the world here and now."⁴⁵ I thus expect more from a personal God than the mettle to defy principalities and powers. I expect to live and not die. I refuse to accept that hateful men and women can destroy the earth with their aggressive weapons of mass destruction. I refuse to accept that all those lives that have been lost as result of that hateful drum major instinct have futures only in the mind (1 Cor 15:16-19). If they, themselves—*themselves!*—are gone forever, then the cause of Martin King and others like him has been vanquished, and I would have to conclude that there is no God but the apotheosis of egoistic privilege.

As it is, I can say with Dr. Moltmann that "those who suffer martyrdom in history should be promised a future in history. . . . It would be a confutation of their martyrdom if God were not to show his power at the very point where, for him and with him, they suffered in his helplessness, and if God were not to assert his rights in the very situation in which they were executed."⁴⁶ May the coming millennium—the this-worldly prelude to the restoration of all things—make it so!

On the eve of his assassination, Dr. King asserted that he had seen the "glory of the coming of the Lord." He said that he had seen the promised land, the coming kingdom of Christ. Dr. King said that he might not get there with us. I am sure, though, that he will be one of those belonging to Christ who will welcome us. Like my mother, I am looking for a resurrection. In the future, I imagine that Dr. King will address us as he did in the past, but this time standing next to Jesus in the place prepared for Dr. King. And this time his words—*free at last, free at last; thank God Almighty, we are free at last*—will signal the reality of his dream and the imminence of the new creation.

44. Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 65.

45. Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 201.

46. *Ibid.*, 152.