

## BOOKS

### The King Papers: A Mixed Review

This beautifully published first volume of the collected papers of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is a great resource for King scholars and those seeking to continue “the dream” of the great Civil Rights leader today. It is handsomely bound, rich in pictures and facsimiles, and wonderfully well-documented, including a fifteen-page chronology of his life and works, and a calendar of documents. From the standpoint of the beauty of the book *per se*, it certainly merits its designation as a “Centennial Book”: one of a hundred books published between 1990 and 1995 which will bear this special imprint of the University of California Press.

The volume is a valuable source of information about the young Martin Luther King. There can be no doubt about King’s “roots.” His father,

grandfather, and great-grandfather were all Baptist ministers. His grandparents, A.D. Williams and Jennie Celeste Williams, “transformed Atlanta’s Ebenezer Baptist Church from a struggling congregation in the 1890’s, into one of black Atlanta’s most prominent institutions.” Williams’ son-in-law, Martin Sr., succeeded him as pastor at Ebenezer, where King’s mother was church organist and choir director. Daddy King, as King’s father was known, was also a militant leader in the voter registration and Civil Rights movement of the late 1930’s and 1940’s, through his work in the NAACP and the Atlanta Civic and Political League.

The fact that King’s other (paternal) great-grandfather, Jim Long, was a slave whose principal occupation was to breed new slaves for his master, makes clear that King’s forebears had to go through Hell to get to where they finally arrived.

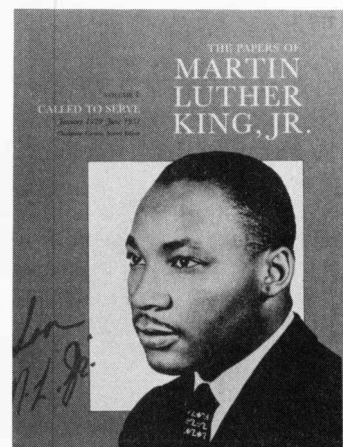
There can also be no doubt that, when King is presenting his own ideas, his search for truth is powerful and thorough-going. Witness one of the earliest chronological entries, dated August 6, 1946 (seventeen years old), his letter to the editor of Atlanta’s largest newspaper:

“I often find when decent treatment for the Negro is urged, a certain class of people hurry to raise the scarecrow of social mingling and intermarriage. These questions have nothing to do with the case. And most people who kick up this kind of dust know that it is simple dust to obscure the real question of rights and opportunities. . . .

“We want and are entitled to the basic rights and opportunities of American citizens. . . .”

#### Developing Religious Views

Since most of King’s childhood and schooling was involved in religion, through his parents’ influence and his attendance at the Crozer Theological



The Papers of  
Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Volume I: Called to Serve  
January 1929-June 1951  
Clayborne Carson, Senior Editor  
University of California Press,  
Berkeley, 1991  
484 pages, hardbound, \$35.00

Seminary, much of the volume is devoted to King’s religious views. This is one of the volume’s strong points, simply because the writings speak for themselves. While his papers are heavily influenced by the sociological jargon and existential drivel that passed (and passes) for religious instruction, his own quest for true religion is moving and powerful.

Throughout his youth he was torn between the formal, ritualized religion he rejected at thirteen years of age, and his quest for a true knowledge of God. In a 1948 essay written while at Morehouse College, King denounced merely formal religion in the following terms: “Real religion goes beyond a form of ritual; that is, it is not to end in recitation of prayers, offering of sacrifice and other outward ceremonies. Its aim is to please the deity, and if the deity is one who delights in charity and mercy and purity more than the singing of hymns, and the burning of candles, his worshippers will best please him, not by bowing before him, and by filling the church with costly gifts, but by being pure and charitable toward men.”

He sought for many years, as the

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volume adequately documents, an “intellectual” alternative to fundamentalism. This led him from Plato and the Neoplatonics to the real muck of existentialism and mysticism. Finally, as reflected in one of the last entries in the volume, in a paper on “Religion’s Answer to the Problem of Evil” in 1951, he found the path that eventually led him to the forefront of the Civil Rights movement:

“The ultimate solution is not intellectual but spiritual. After we have climbed to the top of the speculative ladder we must leap out into the darkness of faith. But this leap is not a leap of despair, for it eventually cries with St. Paul, ‘For now we see through a glass darkly; . . . but then shall I know even as I am known.’ The Christian answer to the problem of evil is ultimately contained in what he does with evil, itself the result of what Christ did with evil on the cross.”

#### Editorial Intent

For all Dr. King gave the world, he certainly deserves to be remembered by such a beautiful collection of his works. And the fact that his widow, Coretta Scott King, headed the Advisory Board of the research project which produced the collection, speaks well for the intentions of the project.

The resulting editorial product is dangerously flawed, however. It reads almost as though the editors *set out* to denigrate and slander King as an illiterate plagiarist.

One must ask why the editors chose not to edit the writings of an obviously poorly instructed student—whose life’s work contributed so much to humanity, no matter whether or not he could spell correctly. And why did they choose to document *ad nauseum* every instance of King’s student plagiarism? Surely, given his proven character in later life, this problem could not have emanated from an evil intent.

Nevertheless, the opportunity to come to know Martin Luther King, Jr. through his own intellectual struggles, as presented in this volume, makes it definitely a valuable resource, despite this major flaw.

—Marianna Wertz

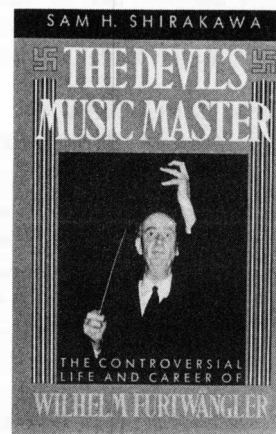
## Furtwängler’s Name Cleared—At Last

Reporter Sam H. Shirakawa of ABC News has done history, Germany, and Wilhelm Furtwängler (1886-1954), in that order, fine service, with his new biography of the great conductor. Anyone who wishes to save Classical music from its present near-death state should read this book.

Furtwängler, who began composing music and conducting in 1905, before he was twenty, was by the 1920’s rightfully among the premier conductors of Europe, for the extent of singing expression and contrapuntal construction he could draw from Beethoven and other Classical compositions. Anyone unfamiliar with him should purchase his Beethoven symphonies, especially, as Mr. Shirakawa notes, his first postwar performance of the Ninth (Choral) Symphony on July 29, 1951.

The book’s title refers to the vile campaign of lies against Furtwängler, run in the U.S. by the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith (ADL) and directed by the real pro-Nazis in Britain, because he did not abandon his country during World War II. For this, they called him Hitler’s conductor, “The Devil’s Music Maker.”

In fact, as Shirakawa’s preface notes: “When thousands of intellectuals and artists joined the exodus of Jews from Germany after the Nazis seized power, Furtwängler remained behind with the conviction that he could save the culture which produced Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, and others, from annihilation by the Third Reich. Despite his well-documented and astonishingly successful efforts to keep Jews part of German cultural life and his manifold endeavors to assist anyone who asked him for help through the Third Reich, saving hundreds from certain death, he was all but branded a war criminal and nearly framed at a de-Nazification trial at the end of the war. This even though Furtwängler never joined the Nazi Party and openly acted against the regime until its fall. . . .



**The Devil’s Music Master:  
The Controversial Life  
and Career of  
Wilhelm Furtwängler**  
by Sam H. Shirakawa  
Oxford University Press,  
New York, 1992

506 pages, hardbound, \$35.00

“Wilhelm Furtwängler was a creature whose overweening confidence in his own capacity to make a difference against one of the most malevolent forces the world has known, catapulted him far beyond the confines of his profession. That peculiar spark of hubris drove him into resistance, rebellion, and sedition, in defense of a culture being annihilated . . . and he became a leading figure in the Resistance inside Germany, despite later efforts to prove otherwise.”

#### Spark of Hope

Shirakawa documents how Furtwängler used every moment of the war to save lives and to try to give some small spark of hope to the German people, to present an actual alternative to Hitler. Many leading musicians fled Germany, and even some of Furtwängler’s friends, such as conductor Bruno Walter, criticized him for staying and “lending legitimacy to the regime.” But most Germans could not simply hop on a plane and find employment abroad.

Shirakawa quotes German pianist