

Martin Luther King, Jr. and America's Civil Religion

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The face of religious practice in the United States as it is presented and represented on the global stage today is full of a single countenance; at least it should be said that such an image constitutes the *American* view of its religious experience, if one considers not only what counts as news, but also in terms of the constellations and vectors of power that currently configure all aspects of political debate in American society. The powerful alignment of Fundamentalist Christianity, big petro dollars, and the right-wing vision of foreign and domestic policy exceeds the wildest dreams of the late Arizona Senator, Barry Goldwater, who, more than forty years ago, assured the Republic that “extremism in the defense of liberty” was “no vice,” or any of the other Republican stalwarts who could only have imagined the golden harvest of trifecta, with the three branches of government, until the most recent November elections of 2006, run by a single party—and with impunity. Until that election returned a Democratic majority to both branches of the US Congress, the legislative, executive, and judicial bodies were dominated by the Republican Party, or more precisely, by the ideological values of the contemporary Republican Party. The distinction that I am implying here between a current version of the Grand Old Party (GOP) and a traditional one is crucial to our problematic because the shift has so altered the American political landscape that the image of a figure standing on its head is not inexact to the confusion that it has engendered: The center of gravity of the new GOP runs through the heart of the old Confederacy, those slave-holding states from the middle of the eighteenth century to a little past the middle of the nineteenth, which regime was brought to a close in the blood and strife of civil war. But the old Confederacy reorganized its energies in an *industrialized* America by way of newer modes of agrarian organization in the tenant farming system, accompanied by the birth of “Jim Crow” and its strict division of the social order on the basis of race and the systematic pursuit of a domestic regime of terrorism in the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. The “New South,” as historians would come to call it, persisted for nearly another century, and remarkably, the “solid South,” which had been *democratic* from the formal end of Reconstruction in the Compromise of 1876, until Richard Nixon’s pursuit of the “southern strategy,” adopted to the post-1960s political world in the 1972 presidential campaign, was radically transformed—by Ronald Reagan’s election in 1980—into the “home” or “base” of the GOP. I have no memory of an American government of single-party rule,

but from the contested presidential election of 2000–2006, this is precisely the political configuration that we witnessed in the United States, as millions of Americans looked on the disastrous collapse of critique—a Democratic Party eager to fashion itself after the Republican victors, a left wing in full-bore retreat from confrontation, and an array of news services in uncritical alliance with the reigning ideology. This devastating spectacle of a homogeneous ideological front is fostered, in large part, by *televisual evangelism*, or “televangelism” is the operative neologism here, in which case religion has become as overwhelming and profitable an enterprise as any organization belonging to the technological/service sectors. How the revitalized religious industry works in the US today is a matter of urgent concern in and out of the American academy.

The uses to which religion has been put in the contemporary period—in brief, in service to the status quo, as an instrument of repression in the behalf of new “primitive accumulation,” we might say, could be regarded as one of several masks that religious institutions might don, though to speak of masks is not to deny the concrete material outcome of political choices made by religious organizations and bodies of believers; such choices include the evangelical vote for the party of the Bushes, for example, which provided the small, but crucial, margin of victory in the 2004 presidential election with staggering global consequence, from waning support, if not outright contempt, of the United Nations and its programs, to views on global climate change, human evolution, tax policy, and efforts to desegregate the nation’s system of public schools; regarding the latter, the charter-school movement has been given tremendous boost by growing doubt in the public mind about the efficacy of the common school. To speak of masking, then, is meant to signal the *substitutability* of social forms and motivations, which is certainly not to say that I do not prefer some forms to others, or that these punctualities cancel each other out and, for all intents and purposes, collapse on one another, nor is it to say that they have the same value field; by mask and masking, I mean to suggest that any historical synthesis takes place as a matter of *process*, as a relation of force, and that such syntheses are not given and inevitable, according to the logic of the Divine. Thus, the mask describes the face that a society assumes at a given moment, but not only that—the face best shows the play of light over surfaces, and more precisely, what a configuration of forces in a society looks like in a given historical juncture. In short, the spectacle of US religious practices takes us deep inside the tensions and contradictions of what certain critics and scholars have called “civil religion,” which in and of itself expresses a resolute impossibility—at once, what governmentality allows and organizes *and* what, within its very framework, escapes it. It is this latter, the exceeding the frame, the running over the frame, which necessitates the very element that it surpasses and requires its cooperation, that has yielded the dramatic meeting of church and state, of religion and governmentality, on the contemporary American ground.

I think that it is not so much a matter of church over state, or state over

church, and choosing which one will be dominant (as the argument is often cast), but, rather, how these forces *maintain tension* in a relationship that is *both* antagonistic *and* cooperative, or demonstrative of *cooperative antagonism*; in fact, what might be regarded as the historic standoff between church and state is precisely the posture that creates the problematic of “civil religion,” and if it is ever *resolved*, then that in itself might *not* be a desirable outcome so that some of us, at least, are vested in the very *lack of resolution* that borrows its energies from both arenas. Televangelism and its rapprochement with fundamentalist Christian expression would see itself in a dominant role as a latter-day version of what Henry Adams once called the “Church Militant,” but even within the faith community, there is, as there has always been, another view—and that is to say, the site of the *critique* of the church, from *within* it, as well as the church’s powerful indictment of powers and principalities; *this* church is *not* seen on television, for the most part, and for contrast, I would name it the *progressive* church, whose religious practices not only accompanied the mid-twentieth century movement in human and civil rights struggle in the United States, but also compelled and motivated it. One of its key components, the church of Martin Luther King, may well have provided the paradigm, or the *example*, in an ironical mimetic gesture, for a *counter* religious thrust that opposes it in virtually every particular, except that both would lay claim to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Of course, the contrast that I am drawing here is that between Fundamentalist Christianity and Progressive Christianity. Perhaps we could say early on that the former, in situating the state in the secular, which it tends to regard antagonistically, remains, by way of paradox, in close concatenation with *nationalistic* aims, at least nationalistic in its overlap with *natio*, or *gens* and tribes as Habermas describes it. (“Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe”).¹ The latter, in situating the state in the secular, which it tends to regard with *ambivalence*, wishes, by way of paradox, to *secularize* the church and extend the nation concept closer to the notion of *citizen*, who, in his *heterogeneity*, may or may *not* belong to the dominant “tribe” within a certain geostrategic order. It seems, then, that by bringing the fundamentalist and the progressive Christian witnesses onto the same “theoretic continent,” we see in bold relief what is at stake in the problematic of “civil religion.”

Sanford Kessler, in his text, *Tocqueville's Civil Religion: American Christianity and the Prospects for Freedom*,² enters this problematic with concerns that overlap and echo my own—what is at stake in America’s “culture wars” that have ushered in the dominance of the fundamentalists and the stage upon which these competing versions of *logology* (or “words about God”) unfold—but more than that, Kessler pursues an investigation of Tocqueville’s view on American religion and what we might learn from Tocqueville’s observations concerning the necessity of Christianity to the achievement of democratic freedom. As we know, Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, culled from his sojourn in the young Republic from May, 1831 to February, 1832, remains one of the key analytical

texts of an early American studies. Kessler points out that Tocqueville's empirical observations are embedded "in a broad theoretical framework" (2), and Kessler is interested in exploring that framework in order to probe the question of democratic freedom and its possibilities. Kessler also takes up the contrast between what I am calling here *fundamentalist* and *progressive* religious manifestations, but he adopts other syntax for it, while jettisoning the term "civil religion" because of certain difficulties—both semantic and conceptual—that it raises; he proposes instead "mainline Christianity" and "traditional Christianity"—after Tocqueville—locating the major difference between them in their respective situation of *moral authority*: as a general rule, the mainline faiths, he argues, "make the individual, rather than divine revelation, the ultimate arbiter of duty and truth" (9). As for "civil religion," Kessler defines it as a reference "to a religion (or elements of religious belief and practice) which purports to be theocentric, but in fact is designed to serve secular, as opposed to transcendent or otherworldly ends" (7). However contingent and partial these markings may be, I think we will find them useful in advancing a comparative frame between fundamentalist and progressive visions.

Martin Luther King's progressive witness, which demarks the highpoint of American religious expression, in my view, of the entire second half of the American twentieth century is by no means unprecedented in the annals of US church history; several nineteenth-century instances of it are signal in the long and difficult march from enslavement to freedom, perhaps no more poignantly executed than in the writings of Frederick Douglass and the 1845 *Narrative* with its vindication of the link between literacy and self-consciousness, the words of the living world and the words attributed to the Good News of the New Dispensation—behold, a slave becomes a man, the triumphant, self-stolen Douglass trumpets on free ground; the best evidence here is encased in the appendix of the *Narrative*,³ where Douglass calls the Christianity of the masters to account. But even before the epilogue of Douglass's famous work, David Walker's "Appeal,"⁴ penned nearly two decades before, challenges the official religion of the slave holder in a militant writing that crosses its stylistic wires with the *form* of the Declaration of Independence and a powerful polemic that exploits the force of the exclamatory and the comminatory at the same time that it commits its argumentative and suasive resources to biblical authority; Walker's "Appeal" begins with a "Preamble," addressed to the "beloved Brethren and Fellow Citizens," as many of the subsequent paragraphs adopt the intimacy of the epistle, as John and Paul, two of the principals of the New Testament's post-Christian era, address their "dearly beloveds" in letters to the small Christian communities, scattered about the rim and ruin of the Roman Empire, in the consummate tragedy of a Christ no long accessible in the flesh. Walker elaborates his passionate anti-slavery polemic in articles, noteworthy for their dramatic tenor and unflinching urgency. "But against all accusations which may or can be preferred against me," he contends at one point,

I appeal to Heaven for my motive in writing—who knows that my object is, if possible, to awaken in the breasts of my afflicted, degraded, and slumbering brethren, a spirit of inquiry and investigation respecting our miseries and wretchedness in this *Republican Land of Liberty*. (*The Norton*, 2nd ed., 229)

We catch strains of the Christian critique against the religion of the slaveholder in the work of Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, as well, in the founding of the African-Methodist Episcopal Church in the city of Philadelphia in the 1790s and in J.W.C. Pennington's anguished outcry, when he directly challenges the Bible on matters of slavery:

If you stand commended to the guidance of the Word of God, you are bound to know its position in reference to certain overt acts that crowd the land with curses. Take the last and greatest of the curses that I named above. Is the word of God silent on this subject? I, for one, desire to know. My repentance, my faith, my hope, my love, and perseverance, all, all, I conceal it not, I repeat it, all turn upon this point. If I am deceived here—if the word of God does sanction slavery, I want another book, another repentance, another faith, and another hope.⁵

Developing the rhetorical pivot of this sermon around a central dramatic interrogation—"Does the Bible condemn slavery without any regard to circumstances, or not?"—Pennington thunders these periods on 2 November 1845.

The church of social justice, then, sustained across the generational and racial divide so that its tenets and urgencies attract a plurality of locations, enters King's century, both in its organized forms and in its implicit acts and gestures, as one of the hallmark conceptual legacies of African-American historical apprenticeship, as well as American and New World religious witness, more generally speaking. The interesting surprise here, given the Pennington example, is that what I am calling here the words of social justice in a religious context are also riddled by the *prophetic* voice; how these tendencies are complementary and juxtaposed constitutes one of the deeper mysteries of progressive religious pursuit. In other words, I see no disparity of motives at work between the outpourings of the prophetic mode of address and the political leanings of the emancipatory ambition; in fact, there seems significant correlation between these aims. It is nothing less than the desuetude of what Ralph Ellison called "critical introspection," a crucial missing feature of national mental life, that today induces a collective amnesia of the prophetic mode—I would call it speaking "truth to power," to echo Michel Foucault, I believe—and this massive forgetfulness has reduced the achievements of the King pulpit and his era to memorials and shrines thought to be adequate substitutes for the powerful messages of civil disobedience and the philosophy and practice of *Satyagraha*—the "truth love force," as it translates into the imperatives of non-violence.

The long-going constitutional argument concerning church and state is fundamental to the founding of the United States, but in a negative sense, insofar

as the First Amendment to the US Constitution, echoing and reversing Article I of the document, specifies what Congress shall *not* do, and that is, “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ...”⁶ Appearing in the same context that is supposed to protect the freedoms of speech and of the press, the right to peaceful assembly, and the right to the redress of grievances, the “establishment clause” is ignored by fanatical judges, for example, who, in one Alabama case, would erect a monument to the Ten Commandments; large sectors of the US public accept the church/state divide that supports the view that one is, first, a citizen of a nation-state, that his first obligations are constitutional; and that the less the government has to say about organized religion and matters of faith, the better. Even though this dichotomy is not rigid, insofar as moral authority, for many, is still vested in the church and religious tenets, we are only now beginning to see the reformation of the *theocratic* ideal—a millionaire, for instance, opening a town in Florida, the British Broadcasting Company reported some months ago, and only Christian, conservative Catholics need apply for residency, we understand. Frankly, I would be very surprised if this project succeeded, but the very idea is striking nevertheless for our time.

While the term “civil religion” has been rejected by some scholars for reasons that vary across a range of misgivings, from what they would consider the distastefulness of the very idea, to definitional objections, others maintain that aspects of American Christianity express a greater number of anthropocentric notions than theocratic ones and that they manifest greater compatibility with secular morality than with biblical (Kessler 9). In a sense, it is difficult to evaluate what one is looking at in this case: I personally do not believe that Americans make up the world’s most fervent body of believers, though there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that I am quite wrong in my judgment—Kessler draws on some fairly amazing statistics in the early chapters of his work. For example, quoting from George Gallup and Jim Castelli’s *People’s Religion: American Faith in the 90s*, Kessler points out that ninety percent of Americans believe in God; eighty-eight percent never doubted the existence of God; ninety percent pray, eighty percent believe in miracles and divine reward and punishment, while a considerable majority “claim church membership, believe in life after death, and respect the religious authority of the Bible, deeming it the literal or inspired word of God” (11). Gallup and Castelli conclude from their survey that “the degree of religious orthodoxy found among Americans is simply amazing” (12). Interestingly, Kessler evinces evidence from the same data that would lead him to conclude that American religiosity, though widespread, is not very profound: large numbers of Christians in the US do not attend church and do not participate “in congregational affairs,” while “... only a small number ... read the Bible frequently, or possess even the most rudimentary knowledge of their faith” (12). If, then, traditional forms of Christianity require believers to know and to understand the central tenets of their faith, to submit unconditionally to

God's will as expressed in Scripture, and to act "on the basis of their religious commitments" (13), then Americans' failure to answer these prescriptions and live up to their professed creed would make their religious orthodoxy questionable, or not exactly "amazing," Kessler argues, in the ways that Gallup and Castelli might not have meant it in *The People's Religion*.

These ambiguous messages may be encouraging on the one hand, insofar as they signal a high degree of *suggestibility* on the part of the national population, and discouraging on the other, insofar as they point to a lack of sustained attentiveness to matters of conviction, whether they have to do with church and state, the Constitution and the Bible, or any other problematic that requires some thought. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that US publics in their impressive malleability are no more susceptible to religiosity than they are to consumerism and no more subject to either than the prevailing discourses of a given era. To that extent, the secularization and religion debate is actually taking place "elsewhere," even though the outcome, never decided once and for all, goes far to determine how we live our lives, from civil unions and the conflicts currently broiling around the question of gay marriage, to women and the choice debate.

In one of his earlier writings, Cornel West, American social critic, identifies the mid-twentieth century movement in civil and human rights as a sustained moment in the "triumph of political liberalism," pursuant to African-Americans' shift in political allegiance from the old Republican Party politics (between the period of the Civil War and its aftermath in the post-Reconstruction ear) to the Democratic Party and the installation of "New Deal" policies with the 1936 election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the American presidency. In *Prophesy Deliverance*,⁷ West, professor of philosophy and preacher, as well, analyzes black movement under the auspices of political liberalism and its impact on various social and historical phenomena, i.e., migration, urbanization, and proletarianization. For him, the emergence of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the black movement, more broadly speaking, marked "the most important black bourgeois liberal movement" of the twentieth century (142), although I believe that the implications of non-violent confrontation, in revising and correcting Ghandian political philosophy in its displacement to a different geostrategic and historical context, was a good deal more significant than a "black bourgeois movement." We would not deny that its local effects most immediately touched those elements of a given social formation most capably poised to take advantage of radical changes in public accommodations, for instance, or certain forms of social commerce, as well as the rupture in a whole repertoire of social, symbolic, epistemic, and semiotic violence that had come to demarcate the southern tier of the United States as a sustained exercise in the practice of domestic terrorism and lawlessness. The period of post-Reconstruction, from the Compromise of 1876, when southern lawmakers, in exchange for supporting the presidency of Rutherford B. Hayes, demanded the withdrawal of federal troops from southern territory, marks one of

the most dangerous and devastating chapters in the entire narrative of African-American life; it is fair to say that this period—a veritable “reign of terror”—lasted nearly a century and did not come to a close until the mid-sixties. It might be difficult to make a case for lynching, for example, as the practice of state-sponsored terrorism against African-American community and property, but it is noteworthy that while Civil Rights legislation would pass during the King era, an anti-lynching bill never succeeded in getting through the United States Senate. What I am suggesting here is that the political movement that King spearheaded as one of several activists of the years 1954–1973 was a broad and popular front of motives, impulses, projects, and personalities that did nothing less than extend the reach of democratic possibilities, break the stranglehold of a fairly vast conspiracy of collusive regional interests, going all the way back to the betrayal of Reconstruction aims, and that, for all intents and purposes, linked black movement in the United States to anti-colonial struggle around the world. From this angle, the movement to which King gives his name choreographed an exemplary dialogical moment between the *locus* and some space that might be called the “international” since, in its symbolic import, the collapse of the regime of power that defined American destiny for nearly a century after the close of the Civil War cannot be gauged only by its geographical determinants, but shifted, more precisely, the symbolic geographies of imagination that had been incarcerated as surely as any prisoner condemned for life.

Attempting to place Martin Luther King, then, within this complex calculus of radical revision, several writers, over the past three or four decades, have recreated the era as a *text*, more exactly, as a library of reference that positions a charismatic leader at the center of a maelstrom of forces. But Taylor Branch’s twenty-five year odyssey that has eventuated in a trilogy that began its journey in the 1980s with *Parting the Waters*⁸ is quite remarkable for its sheer massiveness. Recently completed with the publication of the third volume, *At Canaan’s Edge*,⁹ Branch’s project has been called by its author a “narrative biographical history” (*Parting the Waters*, Preface, xii), on which pages a version of the tale of American culture is portrayed from the founding of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama, in the late 1880s, to Martin Luther King’s accession to the pulpit of the church in the 1950s and incipient movement that gave birth to the 1960s and beyond. As I read him, Branch gracefully negotiates between the forest and the trees: in other words, one of the crucial threads of detail that he draws out is skepticism in the young King, the oldest of three children of a minister, who becomes well-to-do and an instance of the mythic “self-fashioned” man. This bent toward the skeptical impulse, later expressed as an interest in philosophy that will take shape around a theological core, leads the young King, after an undergraduate career at the famous college for black men in Atlanta, Georgia, Morehouse College, to Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, and from Crozer to the doctoral program in philosophy and religion at Boston University. Many of the strands of contradiction that seem to have

surfaced in the career of King the public man are evinced in the youthful figure who wants both to rebel against his father and imitate him. King is the ladies' man, who is also a devoted father and concerned husband, or the apparently *fearless* man, who trembles in his being on going to jail for the first time, or yet, the skillful strategist, reading his environment quite capably, and the leader paralyzed by fear on one occasion in the midst of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. In short, the figure that emerges in Taylor Branch's "King" is not "evangelical" at all, to say nothing of a fanatical man of God, and experiences little difficulty or hesitation in grasping the politics of the moment and what had to be done.

King was, therefore, oddly positioned in relationship to coeval Christian practices in the United States. This virtually strictly segregated Christianity, right across the denominational and regional divide, persists, up to that moment, in a veritable extension of an unjust social order that had made its "separate peace" with all the known forms of compromise, from the excesses and ravages of McCarthyism to the regimes of racism and the "white supremacist" doctrine that had in fact saturated the social order through and through. Even though King's witness was powerfully transformative, I think that we could say with a great deal of justification that the African-American ministry and the independent organization of the black church are, historically speaking, though not in every case, one of the critical sites of what Cornel West calls the critique of institutional racism; in its most progressive avatar, King's church—traced by historians of the African Diaspora from its earliest prototypical configurations to its diasporic transformations—was *heretical* to the Christian compromise with slavery, with apartheid, with coercive ignorance, and the entire repertoire of modes of "social death" that sustained the prevailing order. But many of the major literary and political documents of the literature have become canonical in part because they mark an *indictment* and *refusal* of the status quo—Frederick Douglass, as we mentioned earlier, as well as Harriet Jacobs, and untold numbers of witnesses raise their voice across the years in opposition to crimes against humanity. These traditions of writing express early responses to the failures of Christianity to offer a solution to problems urgently connected to the "here" and "now."

Some of the questions opened up by this cluster of contradictions will not be settled or resolved in this writing, but we might briefly sketch a handful of them: 1. With the King movement, the distinction between secularization and religiosity actually collapses in the sheer ambivalence of position occupied by church members in actual confrontation with agents of the state, i.e., police forces, recalcitrant governors, etc. In this case, we can speak of a church "in the streets," engaged in acts of historicity and change. A creator of one of the post-modern faces of African-American personality, the progressive church does not draw a line between those "in" the church—as in belonging to a congregation—and those outside its organized structures. To that extent, the progressive church offers a ground of mediation between believers, non-believers, atheists, and agnostics. In its eclectic appeal, related to an actual and

historic problematic, the progressive church of the King era bestowed on the latter the character of spontaneous, revolutionary movement. The Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), mostly made up of ministers, was founded with the express purpose of taking the message—the *applied* Gospel—to the streets. In the melding of street and pulpit, in protest against unjust laws, which one confronted with his/her body, in pursuit of non-violent response, the progressive church offers a living and material example of American “civil religion.” Had there been an overarching hieratic church government of the Protestant denominations, on an analogy with the Roman College of Cardinals, these movements could easily have been censured and its leaders ex-communicated from the church, but the Protestants’ relative lack of hierarchy, itself a reading on the democratic impulse, was complementary to the independent organization of King’s non-violent movement and the movements that followed in its wake.

2. It happens in this historic instance that the movement that originates in the church, that certainly depends on its infrastructure, its supports, and resources, exceeds the church and overruns its precincts. We could also say that the movement *extends* the churchly office. Moreover, the movement transmutes the rhetorics of the church into discourses that are at once practical and poetic, strategic and visionary at once, as King’s sermons and writings demonstrate. His celebrated “Letter from Birmingham Jail,”¹⁰ penned in 1964, actually recasted and reprised an earlier King sermon, “Paul’s Letter to American Christians” from 1956; the shift in context from sermon to epistle demonstrates the interchangeability of discourse (between world and church) that involves the parishioner in problems on the ground, rather than the beauties and promises of an afterlife. A similar kind of transmutation and displacement might be observed in King’s celebrated “I Have a Dream,” the speech delivered to the 1963 assembly of the “March on Washington.” Now canonical in the career of American literary and political documents, “I Have a Dream” crosses its wires, quite deliberately, with the demands of the political world and the imperatives of Christian witness and the spiritual life. Both documents can be examined in some detail in relationship to this premise.

While these queries cannot be solved here, they intimate nevertheless that the impoverishment of our critical languages, with their new binaries and orthodoxies, might not only cast an eye toward a critical inquiry on religion, but might also probe at a less dismissive length to whom the church—in its varied metamorphoses—now speaks.

Notes

1. Jürgen Habermas, “Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe,” in *Theorizing Citizenship*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 255–81; at 258.

2. Sanford Kessler, *Tocqueville's Civil Religion: American Religion and the Prospects of Freedom* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994).
3. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave Written by Himself* (New York: Signet, 1968), Appendix, 120-26.
4. David Walker, *David Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together With a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, But in Particular, and Very Expressly to Those of the United States of America*, excerpts in *The Norton Anthology of African-American Literature*, eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay; 2nd edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 228-38.
5. J.W.C. Pennington. *A Two Years' Absence, or a Farewell Sermon, preached in the Fifth Congregational Church by J.W.C. Pennington*. Nov 2, 1845, Hartford, 1845, 3-31; at 22-23. The Moorland-Spingarn Collection, Howard University, Washington, DC.
6. See Akhil Reed Amar, *America's Constitution: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 2005), Appendix, The Constitution of the United States, Amendment 1, 491.
7. Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982).
8. Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-63* (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1989).
9. Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years 1965-68* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).
10. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter From Birmingham Jail," in *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: A Signet Book, 1963).