is DeWolf's book off the press? Next week I will hear Gardner Taylor again, he'll be here for the Teacher's Convention. Bye now,

Your Friend,

[signed] Handy

TALS. MLKP-MBU: Box 117.

5. Donald Taggart Rowlingson (1907–) was professor of New Testament at Boston University from 1950 until his retirement in 1972; Edwin Prince Booth (1898–1969) was professor of church history at Boston from 1925 until his retirement in 1963; Allan Knight Chalmers (1897–1972) was professor of preaching and applied Christianity at Boston from 1948 to 1962. DeWolf's book *A Theology of the Living Church* was published by Harper in 1953.

Sankey L. Blanton to William R. Strassner

3 December 1952

President William R. Strassner
Shaw University
Raleigh, North Carolina

Dear President Strassner:

Thank you for your letter. I am emphatically of the opinion that King is eminently qualified to serve as Dean of your School of Religion. I would hope that it would be possible for him to accept the appointment and continue work on his dissertation while in residence with you. I am sure he is capable of doing that provided the regulations of the institution in which he takes his degree would permit. In fact, I think Mr. King has great ability and that he would do more for you while finishing the dissertation than the average man would do without any other duties besides.

I am sorry I could not reach you while I was in Raleigh recently.

Yours cordially,

Sankey L. Blanton

SLB:LK

cc: Rev. Martin Luther King

TLC. MLKP-MBU: Box 117.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

Notecards on Books of the Old Testament

[22 September 1952–28 January 1953]
[Boston, Mass.]
passages—particularly those from the books of Psalms, Jeremiah, and Amos—
King reveals his views about human nature, personal immortality, the nature of
divinity, and social ethics. In his examination of a famous passage from Amos ("let
judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream"), King notes
that "unless a man's heart is right, . . . the external forms of worship mean
nothing." Worship and ritual, King writes, can never be "a substitute for ethical
living." He argues that Christians have a special duty to strive for social justice.
"Whenever Christianity has remained true to its prophetic mission, it has taken a
deep interest in social justice. Whenever it has fallen short at this point, it has
brought about disastrous consequences."

God    (Amos)

5:21:24—This passage might be called the key passage of the entire book.¹
It reveals the deep ethical nature of God. God is a God that demands justice
rather than sacrifice; righteousness rather than ritual. The most elaborate
worship is but an insult to God when offered by those who have no mind to
conform to his ethical demands. Certainly this is one of the most noble idea
ever uttered by the human mind.

One may raise the question as to whether Amos was against all ritual and
sacrifice, i.e. worship. I think not. It seems to me that Amos' concern is the
ever-present tendency to make ritual and sacrifice a substitute for ethical liv-
ing. Unless a man's heart is right, Amos seems to be saying, the external forms
of worship mean nothing. God is a God that demands justice and sacrifice
can never be a substitute for it. Who can disagree with such a notion?

Social Ethics    (Amos)

Amos' emphasis throughout seems to be that justice between man and man
is one of the divine foundations of society. Such an ethical ideal is at the root
of all true religion. This high ethical notion conceived by Amos must alway
remain a challenge to the Christian church

Man    (Jer)

17:5.² "Cursed is the man who trusts in man . . ." For Jeremiah one of the
greatest of sins is the sin of trusting in man rather than God. He probably felt

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¹ Amos 5:21-24: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn
assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them:
neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of
thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and
righteousness as a mighty stream."
² Jeremiah 17:5: "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh
flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord."
that man was to weak and to finite to even approximate the infinite power of God. So it is the man who trusts in the Lord that is on sound footing.

This passage makes it plain that Jeremiah was opposed to any form of humanism in the modern sense. It might be well that those of us who are opposed to humanism in the modern world would speak out against it as did Jeremiah and set out to give a rational defense of theism.

It seems to me that one of the great services of neo-orthodoxy, notwithstanding its extremes, is its revolt against all forms of humanistic perfectionism. They call us back to a deeper faith in God. Is not this the need of the hour? Did not Has not modern man placed to much faith in himself and to little faith in God?

Sin (Jer)

4:22. Here it is implied that goodness is a foreign thing to human nature. In fact men don't even know how to do good. They are only skilled in doing evil.

We may question such a conclusion. Does man ever become so corrupt and wicked that he can have no conception of the good? I think not. It seems to be that no matter how low an individual sinks in sin, there is still a spark of good within him.

Evil (Jer)

12:1—Here Jeremiah inquires of God why the wicked prosper. This point disturbed Jeremiah greatly. Here we find a revolt against the Deuteronomic idea which asserted that prosperity always followed righteous and trouble or disaster followed wickedness.

Jeremiah was realistic enough to see that this didn't always follow, at least from a materialistic point of view. He saw that there were times when the wicked prospered and the righteous suffered.

We must admit that Jeremiah raises a significant question at this point. If God is justice there must somehow and sometime (somewhere) be a wedding of virtue and happiness. This doesn't always take place in life as Jeremiah so candidly points out. What then is the solution? It seems to me that the only solution to this problem is found in the doctrine of personal immortality. In another existence man will receive the benefits unattainable in this existence. Without immortality the universe is irrational and the justice and love of God are put in jeopardy.

3. Jeremiah 4:22: "For my people is foolish, they have not known me: they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge."

4. Jeremiah 12:1: "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?"
72—This whole psalm is a plea for social justice. There is expressed a deep concern for the needy and the oppressed. The oppressor is looked upon with scorn. He is to be crushed.

This emphasis found its greatest expression, excluding the fine work of the prophets, in the teaching of Jesus. Throughout his ministry he manifested a deep concern for the poor and oppressed people of his day. While somewhat extravagant, there is a healthy warning in the statement, Christianity was born among the poor and died among the rich. Whenever Christianity has remained true to its prophetic mission, it has taken a deep interest in social justice. Whenever it has fallen short at this point, it has bought about disastrous consequences. We must never forget that the success of communism in the world today is due to the failure of Christians to live to the highest ethical tenents inherent in its system.

AD. CSKC.

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5. Among the relevant passages in Psalm 72 is the fourth verse: "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

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Final Examination Answers,
Religious Teachings of the Old Testament

[22 September 1952—28 January 1953]
[Boston, Mass.]

In three of the five examination questions for this course, DeWolf asked his students to discuss different conceptions of God in the Old Testament. Affirming that there is rational evidence in the Old Testament to sustain belief in God, King notes that the writer of the book of Job questions that faith. "Why do the righteous suffer? In other words, how can a good God allow so much evil to exist in the world?" For King, the prophets Amos and Hosea offer the "most illuminating conceptions of God." "For Amos God is a God of righteousness who demands ethical actions from his children. . . . For Hosea God is a God of love, and even his justice is but an expression of his love." DeWolf gave King 94 points for the examination and an A – for the semester.

1. Probably the most rational evidence presented for belief in God in the Old Testament is found in Deutero Isaiah. He sets forth arguments to establish the validity monotheism. First he argues that Yehweh is the only being that can adequately predict the future. Secondly, he turns to the testimony of creation. This he feels is a fit testimony to the existence of one God. Evidence for God's existence in creation is a constant argu-