

Quest laboratory

Reflections on Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the fight against terrorism and poverty

‘What would King do?’

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Abstract. Reflections on Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the fight against terrorism and poverty: ‘What would King do?’ When faced with complicated moral dilemmas such as we presently face dealing with global poverty and the escalating war against Iraqi insurgency and global terrorism, humans in all cultures have the tendency to consult with their wise or spiritual elders considered to be philosophically gifted or divinely inspired. Hence, leaders of society consulting spiritual advisors for their insights and directives. In more contemporary terms we hear people in such moral dilemmas asking for example, “What would Jesus do?” Following this tradition, I want to ask and discuss in this paper, “What would Martin Luther King Jr. do?” with regard to two major issues: the fight against terrorism and poverty. The recent election of an African American to the Presidency of the United States of America lends extra topicality to the views below.

Key words:, moral dilemmas, Iraq, Martin Luther King Jr., terrorism, poverty, Obama, USA

Introduction

When faced with complicated moral dilemmas such as we presently face dealing with global poverty and the escalating war against Iraqi insurgency and global terrorism, humans in all cultures have the tendency to

consult with their wise or spiritual elders considered to be philosophically gifted or divinely inspired. Hence, we find kings, linguists,¹ and other concerned inquirers consulting the village elder, prophet, *shaman*, *guru*, and *abrewa* or grandmother etc. for their insights and directives. In more contemporary terms we hear people in such moral dilemmas asking for example, “What would Jesus do?” Following this tradition, I want to ask and discuss in this paper, “What would Martin Luther King Jr. do?” with regard to two major issues: the fight against terrorism and poverty. The recent election of an African American to the Presidency of the United States of America lends extra topicality to the views below.

On the question of the escalating war against insurgency and global terrorism I argue that given all the live options including supporting the war with the Just War Theory, King would oppose the war in favor of ‘Enhanced International Police Action’ (EIPA) Concerning the question of growing poverty, I argue that King would reject all plausible solutions including Social Darwinism, Socialism, and the Conservative and Liberal approaches in favor of ‘The Non-Violent Radical Comprehensive Intervention Approach’ (NVRIA). The wisdom in treating these two burning issues of our time together is best captured in the following quote by Predrag Cicovascki while reflecting on the causal connection between poverty and terrorism.

Life in poverty, hunger and illness are not sufficient to turn people into terrorists. But they do provide a fruitful soil that can feed this combination of mistrust, powerlessness and desperation that we almost always find as the motivating force behind terrorist actions.²

According to Jeffery Sachs, the author of *The End of Poverty*, Osama Bin Laden is trying to capitalize on Africa’s extreme poverty by calling for jihad on Africa.³ Not only does poverty lead to terrorism, fighting terror-

¹ *Editorial note:* The author refers here to the specific use of the term ‘linguist’ for senior court officials in West Africa.

² Cicovaski, Predrag, ‘On the Morality of Terrorism and War,’ *The Acorn: Journal of Gandhi-King Society* Vol. XII, No 2 Spring-Summer 2004, p. 9.

³ *TIME*, January 15, 2007. p. 65.

ism- as the recent reports of the cost of the war in billions of dollars have shown, can lead to or exacerbate national or personal poverty. Reuters reports that The Pentagon Iraqi War alone cost about \$8.4 billion a month in 2006 while the two wars have cost over \$503 billion from 2001-2007. This excludes the \$100 billion without withdrawal dates just approved by Congress.⁴ King would therefore prefer not to treat these separately but together as he did when critiquing the Vietnam War and its financial and human costs.⁵

Section I: What would King do on terrorism?

Given all that is known about King and his philosophy or guiding principles two options are worth considering: A Just War Theory Response and a Pacifist Response dubbed 'Enhanced International Police Action'

A. Just War Theory

In defending civil disobedience as a non-violent form of resistance to unjust laws and the Civil Rights Movement in general, King often used Natural Theory arguments and cited fellow Christian philosophical theologians such as Saints Augustine and Aquinas. For example, following Augustine he maintained that an unjust law is no law at all since it dehumanized people instead of dignifying them. Similarly, following Aquinas he defined and defended a just law as one that uplifts human dignity and squares with the law of God.⁶ So it is reasonable to assume that when it comes to the justification or support for war, King would naturally defer to the Just War Theory.

In what follows I hope to show that after a careful examination of the tenets of The Just War Theory, *justus antebellum* and *justus bellum*

⁴ 'Financial Cost of Iraqi War,' Congressional Research Service, www.Wakepedia.com.

⁵ <http://cm.worldnews>, 3/12/2007.

⁶ King, Luther, *Letters from Birmingham Jail*, 1968.

(the conditions for a just war and the conduct of a just war respectively,) King would reject the theory. In order for a war to be just, Augustine argued, three conditions are necessary. The first necessary condition is that the sovereign who declares and wages the war must have a legitimate authority.”⁷ Augustine quotes Romans xiii, 4 and Psalm lxxxi, 4 to justify the use of the sword symbolizing violence to maintain internal law and order within the state. By extension he argues, “... so too, it is their business to have recourse to the sword in defending the common weal against external enemies” and “to rescue the poor and deliver the needy out of the hand of the sinner.”⁸

The second necessary condition is that those attacked should be attacked only because they deserve it on account of some fault. Consequently, Augustine states, A just war is to be described as “one that avenges wrongs, when a nation or state has to be punished, for refusing to make amends for wrongs inflicted by its subjects, or to restore what it has seized unjustly.”⁹ In other words, those waging the war should have a rightful intention, so that they intend the advancement of good, or the avoidance of evil. For this reason, Augustine wrote,

True religion looks upon as peaceful those wars that are waged not for motives of aggrandizement, or cruelty, but with the object of securing peace, and punishing evil doers, and of uplifting the good.¹⁰

Judging from Augustine’s conditions, it would appear that King would support the war against terrorism since it satisfies both necessary conditions for justification:

First, it was declared by a legitimate authority, President Bush the Chief Executive and Commander with the support of the USA Congress. Some might object to this on the grounds of the controversies surrounding the Florida election and the unprecedented intervention by the USA

⁷ Boss Judith, *Analyzing Moral Issues*, (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2005), p. 632.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ *ibid.*

Supreme Court in 2000. However for the purpose of this essay, we can allow that the President is a legitimate authority by the Principle of Charity so we don't get distracted from answering the main question.¹¹ Second, (supporters argue) the cause is just since Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda deserve to be punished and the intention is to punish the evil perpetrators and to liberate those oppressed by the Taliban regime and Saddam Hussein.

Would King therefore consider the war on terror as justified? Not so fast. For over the years, the *jus ad bellum* aspect of Just War Theory has evolved to include three additional necessary conditions beyond legitimacy and just cause:

3. War must be the last resort.
4. There must be a reasonable prospect of success.
5. The violence used must be proportional to the wrong being resisted.¹²

The third condition is particularly problematic for anyone who wants to argue for the justification of the Iraqi War. For on President Bush's own admission, it was a war of choice since USA could have allowed UN inspectors to continue their inspection while the USA and Britain continued monitoring suspected sites and enforcing the No-Fly- Zone. King would therefore have to conclude that in light of the Just War Theory, the Iraqi War was unjustified.¹³ With the ongoing debate about troop surge after 4 years of incessant fighting and insurgent tactical and weaponry adaptability, even the most ardent supporters have to be skeptical of any reasonable prospect of success in Iraq.

The question of proportionality is equally problematic given the number of deaths on both sides, not to mention the destruction of infrastructure and the billions of dollars spent so far. For example, by USA count the number of USA troops killed in Iraq so far exceeds 3,400 and

¹¹ Critique by a PhD Candidate in Sociology, *Black History Month*, Feb. 28, FSU.

¹² Boss *o.c.* p. 633.

¹³ Cicovacki *o.c.* p. 25.

by UN estimates Iraqi civilians killed per day is 94 with over 34,000 killed in 2006 alone. Iraqi's internally displaced since the Samarra bombing according to the UN exceeds 470,000.¹⁴

In the light of the Just War Theory, the case of Afghanistan appears far more convincing than that of Iraq since it was intended to seek justice against Al Qaeda the self-admitted perpetrators of September 11 and to prevent them from following up their atrocities with a worse case scenario. All the same, King would recognize that war was not a last resort since the USA could have used a non-war option I referred to as the Enhanced International Police Action (EIPA) to arrest Osama Bin Laden and his accomplices.

B. Enhanced International Police Action

This involves permitting the police the options to call on other investigative agencies to use any necessary assault weapons, and call for military support when necessary in making arrests or defending themselves. The USA could have consequently avoided this protracted war that has seriously compromised her moral stature as a model of democracy and defender of human rights.

When it comes to fighting terrorists, many moral philosophers who used to support the Just Law Theory now question its moral status for a number of reasons including the blurring of the distinction between civilian and military and between combatant and noncombatant. The ever-present danger of resort to nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction by both legitimate governments and terrorists is another compelling reason why the Just War Theory itself is losing support.¹⁵

Given the increasing prospect of such monstrous harm, I believe King would also agree with the utilitarian argument by J.S. Mill that war is immoral because it causes (extreme) pain and diminishes happiness, and so another means should be found for resolving international conflicts. King would also agree with another British philosopher, Bertrand

14 CNN.com/worldnews.

15 Anscombe, Elizabeth, "War and Murder," in Boss, *o.c.* p. 648.

Russell whose experience and reflections on the devastation wrought on Europe and Japan by the First and Second World Wars led him to agree with Mill's argument and to conclude that the utter destructiveness of modern war, including the threat of nuclear war, is one of the best arguments against war.¹⁶

B. King and enhanced international police action

To determine what King would do in response to the war on global terrorism, we can examine his response to the Vietnam War. As the key Civil Rights leader seeing government support for passing Civil Rights laws, King was faced with the painful dilemma of whether to speak against the war as a pacifist and as the winner of Nobel prize for peace in 1964.¹⁷ King finally broke his silence and forcefully argued against the Vietnam War in 1968 when he said:

Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering people of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor in America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as an American to the leaders of my own nation. The great initiative in this war is ours. The initiative to stop it must be ours...¹⁸

To determine whether King would oppose the war on terror given his opposition to the Vietnam War we need to find the rationale for his opposition and their applicability to the current war(s).

C. Why did King oppose the Vietnam War?

When King broke his silence on the war and called for ending it, he an-

¹⁶ Boss, p. 633.

¹⁷ 'King's Painful Dilemma', by Bayard Rustin. New York Amsterdam News, March 3, 1967, quoted. in Tommy Lott, *African American Philosophy: Selected Readings*, (Upper Saddle River: N.J. Prentice Hall, 2002) p. 260.

¹⁸ Lott, p. 259.

nounced seven major reasons for bringing Vietnam into his moral vision.

1. War as enemy of poverty program at home:

King saw that there was a very obvious and facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle he and others had been waging in America. The Vietnam War he felt had become a major obstacle for the internal fight against poverty. For until the War there was real promise of hope for both black and white poor in the country through what was dubbed as 'The Poverty Program.' The experiments and hopes as well as the new beginnings King laments, were all broken and eviscerated as the Vietnam War escalated "as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war." To this, King adds prophetically as if he knew what would happen after 2002,

And I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.¹⁹

2. Proportion of Black death in the war

The more devastating blow to the hope for ending poverty for King came as more brothers and husbands of the poor were sent to fight and die in extraordinarily high proportion relative to the rest of the population. King lamented over the fact that black youth were sent 8,000 miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia when they had not found such guarantees for their own liberties at home. The irony was not lost on King when he observed that the same black and white boys legally forbidden to stay in the same classroom were legally bound to fight and die together in far away Vietnam.²⁰

3. Non-violence option for social change.

King introduces his third reason with an even deeper level of awareness

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Lott *o.c.* p. 255.

and passion by intimating that it grew out of his three years experience in the ghettos of the North. He explained how he was touched emotionally walking among the desperate, rejected, and angry young men. Molotov cocktails and riffles, King told them would not solve their problems. However, when he tried to offer them his conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through nonviolent actions, they asked – and rightly so –

“What about Vietnam... Isn’t our own nation using massive doses of violence to solve its problems and to bring about desired changes?”.

King admits that their questions hit home and were so disarming that he knew he could never again raise his voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without first speaking clearly to (what they considered to be) the greatest purveyor of violence in the world. King continued as he would do today,

For the sake of these boys, for the sake of this government, for the sake of the hundreds of thousands trembling under violence, I cannot be silent. My conviction (is) that social change comes most meaningfully through nonviolent action.”²¹

4. Commitment to save America’s soul

King recalls that the motto for the Southern Leadership Conference that he helped to form in 1957 was not just to fight for the Civil Rights, but “To save the soul of America”. Speaking against the war was therefore consistent with the motto and not a contradiction with his Civil Rights ambitions as some of his critics alleged. King went on to say,

Now it must be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war. If America’s soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read Vietnam”²²

America’s soul, King argued, can never be saved so long as America destroys the deepest hopes of men and women the world over. So it is imperative that those determined to save the soul of America through

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

protest and dissent, work for the health of the land.

5. Nobel Prize as a commission to work harder for peace.

As if the commitment of saving America's soul was not enough, another burden of responsibility was placed upon King in 1964 when he received The Nobel Peace Prize. Reflecting on the moral implications of Prize, King observed, "I cannot forget that the Nobel Prize for peace was also a commission to work harder than I had ever worked before for the brotherhood of man." This calling, King realized, took his responsibilities beyond national allegiances to work for global peace.

6. Commitment to Jesus Christ.

Speaking as a Christian and an ordained pastor, King observed that the relationship of the ministry to peace-making was so obvious that sometimes he marveled at those who asked why he was speaking against the war. This led King to ask rhetorically:

Could it be that they don't know that the good news was meant for all men--for communist and capitalist, for their children and ours, for black and for white, for revolutionary and conservative? Have they forgotten that my ministry is in obedience to the one who loved his enemies so fully that he died for them...? ²³

7. A vocation of son-ship and brotherhood.

Reflecting further on his spiritual and moral status as a Christian minister, King said he believed that God as our common Father is concerned especially for his suffering, helpless, and outcast children, and so he had come to speak for them. He did not take this obligation lightly (and would not like us to take it lightly because was convinced:

We are called to speak for the weak, the voiceless, for victims of our nation and for those it calls enemy, for no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brothers.²⁴

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *o.c.* p. 257.

D: What would King do about the ongoing war on terrorism?

Having examined the seven reasons within the historical context in relation to the present socio-political context, it goes without saying, in my judgment, that King would oppose the war just for the same reasons that he opposed the Vietnam War. King's opposition might be even more vociferous against the ongoing war given the prohibitive cost, the potential for a quick spread throughout the Middle East and Europe, and the possibility of escalation to the use of dirty bombs, if not actual nuclear bombs.

King's likely recommendations for ending the wars in Iraqi and Afghanistan

Beyond denouncing the Vietnam War, King made five recommendations to the Government in 1986 for ending the war from ending all bombing in North and South Vietnam to setting a date that we will remove all foreign troops from Vietnam in accordance with the 1954 Geneva Agreement.²⁵ Substituting Iraq and Afghanistan and related circumstances for Vietnam and its circumstances, King's recommendations for ending the Iraqi and Afghanistan wars would read:

1. End all bombings and the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan.
2. Declare unilateral ceasefire in the hope that such action will create the atmosphere in the Middle East and Afghanistan for a real negotiation for peace involving all stakeholders including all Arab countries, Islamic countries, and the United Nations.
3. Take the immediate steps to prevent other battle grounds in the Middle East by curtailing but not by surging or escalating the military build up in Iraq and Afghanistan and without any interference in Iran.
4. Realistically accept the fact that the Sunni and Shiite militias have substantial support among different segments of the Middle East and must thereby play a vital role in any meaningful negotiations

²⁵ *o.c.* p. 259.

for peace and in the future of Iraq's government.

5. Set a date for removing all American and other allied troops from Iraq and Afghanistan in accordance with the 1954 Geneva Agreement and UN resolutions against foreign invasion and occupation.

Critics tempted to reject King's call and recommendations as naïve should note the similarities between King's position and that of The Iraqi Study Group commissioned by President Bush himself in 2006, the position of the Democrats as well as the majority of Americans in recent polls.²⁶ That the insurgents are Arabs or Moslems will not make any difference to King's position on the war given his belief in the sovereignty of God as Father and in the Brotherhood of all people and his commitment to human rights and global peace as a Nobel Peace Prize laureate. And if calling for an end to this war is naïve then we should also call the paragon moral philosopher Immanuel Kant naïve for saying, "Even a race of devils if only they were intelligent enough, would eventually recognize the absurdities of war and turn against them."²⁷

Section II: What would King do about poverty?

The key to King's solution to ending poverty can be found in a sermon he preached at the National Cathedral in Washington a few days before his assassination, in April, 1968. In the sermon, King made this profound statement:

There is nothing new about poverty. What is new is that today we have the resources and the techniques to get rid of poverty. The question is do we have the will?²⁸

In other words, the solution to poverty is not productivity, storage, distri-

²⁶ CNN, Situation Room, March 14, 2007.

²⁷ Cicovacki *o.c.* p. 257.

²⁸ King, Birmingham, *o.c.*

bution nor the technology, but the choices that we and our leaders make. As explained by Howard Richards, to have a will to get rid of poverty in King's sense means, "to act on principles that are effective in getting rid of poverty."²⁹ Such principles require us to reject the socio-economic status quo as God-given destiny or inevitable consequence of the free market system, and to make significant sacrifices beyond ordinary 'Salvation-Army red bucket charity'. Such principles require cultivating and utilizing the virtues of patience and persistence and above all, openness to diverse conceptual and practicable solutions for minimizing poverty nationally and globally.

No one denies the existence of extreme or absolute poverty in the world including parts of the USA. The consensus however ends as soon as we begin to reflect on what to do about it. I will examine some of conventional solutions and the type King would prefer and why.

A. The Social Darwinist approach:

The notorious Social Darwinist solution to hunger has been defended by the biologist Garry Harding using the Life Boat metaphor and similar analogies. He argues that earth is like a Life Boat with a limiting capacity that has been reached. It is consequently as irrational and dangerous to increase population growth as it is to exceed the limiting capacity of a Life Boat. We can reduce population growth he argues either by reducing the birth rate through family planning methods or by allowing those who cannot feed themselves to die in accordance with the Darwinian process of Natural Selection or survival for the fittest. Using Nigeria and Bangladesh as examples of poor Third World countries with large populations and high birth rates, Harding argues that since such countries are capable but unwilling to control their birthrates, allowing the extremely poor ones like Bangladesh to perish without intervention has become an imperative.³⁰

²⁹ Richards, *o.c.* p. 57.

³⁰ Hardin, Garret, "The Case Against helping the Poor," *Psychology Today* (1974), pp. 38-43, 123-126, reprinted in James Sterba, *Morality in Practice*, Belmont C. A.

As a Christian and a humanist motivated by compassion King will certainly dismiss this solution to poverty as inhumane and lacking in imagination. They will contradict his firm belief in agape love, respect for human dignity, and belief in a God who provides “humanly impossible” solutions to human problems. In place of the Social-Darwinism he will defend the Demographic Transition Model as a justification in assisting poor countries. Sociological research on this model shows that extending appropriate education (especially for the girl-child) and technology, including enriched planting seeds to traditional societies, accelerate their development process from economic dependent beggar countries to self-dependent hopeful democratic countries within a generation.³¹

B. Socialist / Communist approach

The Socialist/Communist approach to ending poverty appears simple and attractive. It calls for the nationalization of the means of production and distribution and equal distribution of all resources by the state. However as the brief experiment in the New Testament Book of Acts chapter 4 and the 50 years of Communism in the Soviet Union and many other countries have shown, the system in its pure form is unsustainable. This is because the system does not provide adequate incentives for maximizing productivity or for promoting high level professional education and training essential for high productivity and profit. In order to achieve production quotas, classic Communism is forced to curtail human and civil rights in favor of institutionalized violence for spreading and sustaining its ideology.

King as a Civil Rights leader, an ordained clergy, and a champion of human rights will definitely reject the Socialist-Communist approach to poverty as unsustainable and incompatible with his values.

Wadsworth, 2001, pp. 77-84.

³¹ Singer, Peter, *Practical Ethics*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 16-44.

C. Conservative approach:

The conservative approach toward poverty can be discerned in this statement by Senator and presidential candidate John McCain: “Jesus said, ‘The poor you will always have with you.’”³² McCain made this observation when asked about how the Iraqi War was affecting the economic conditions of the poor in the country by Larry King. This remark which reveals a lackadaisical attitude towards poverty is certainly not what Jesus had in mind when he was correcting the distorted sense of priority shown by those who criticized Mary Magdalene for using an expensive perfume on his feet instead of giving the money to the poor. The kind gesture, Jesus explained, was a preparation toward his impending sacrificial death for salvation.

For religious and political conservatives like McCain the key to solving the problem of poverty is ordinary charity, but no radical intervention. John Hospers defends this socio-political conservative position by maintaining that beyond taxes paid for security taxes, especially for welfare, is money stolen from the rich and given to the poor. Like Alfred Nozick he maintains that it is not the business of government to redistribute wealth. Helping the poor for them is a matter of charity, and should therefore be left to individuals.³³

This conservative philosophy toward poverty is often explained in terms of the Adam’s Smith’s economic theory and the outworking of the laws of supply and demand. These scholars however often ignore the fact that Adam Smith was hoping that the profit from capitalism will ultimately benefit all people either through earnings by the working poor or charity from the rich. Smith believed that the natural sentiments of sympathy would guarantee the maintenance of civilized manners and morals as well as social safety net for beggars, orphans, and other needy people. He was hopeful that continuing to preach Judeo-Christian virtues of love

³² McCain, John, Larry King Show, May 2006.

³³ Hospers, John: ‘Libertarian Manifesto’, *The Libertarian Alternative* ed. Tibor Machan 1974, Nelson Hall, Inc. p. 27 reprinted in James Sterba, *Morality in Practice* (Wadsworth: Belmont, CA, 2001) p. 27.

for the neighbor would develop the moral sentiments necessary for sustaining the safety net.

While Smith shares King's vision of ending poverty, economic history has shown that charity alone even when backed by lively sermons is too weak to end poverty. John Maynard Keynes, another famous economist, argues that in addition to the invisible hand of the free market system, ending poverty requires the visible hand of the government. It will not only steady the shaky invisible hand of the free market system but can also deliver the poor from merciless, exploitative labor markets with starvation wages.³⁴

D. Liberal approach

The liberal solution to ending poverty as articulated by John Rawls in his *Theory of Justice* prescribes respecting the basic rights of all people and redistributing economic resources to the benefit of all, including the least advantaged in society.³⁵ Thus, it provides a safety net for society by expanding government assisted programs such as welfare for low income qualified citizens, unemployment benefits, and Medicaid. Affirmative Action and other social benefits are also extended as compensation for those who because of historical or existing conditions are less capable of competing fairly for the available social goods or the opportunities associated with the free market system.

The problem with the liberal approach is that while it is more reliable than charity for correcting the socio-economic inadequacies of the free-market system and for taking care of the poor, it is still not enough for significantly reducing poverty. In principle, the liberal approach can be said to have achieved its goal just by ensuring that educational and employment opportunities or minimal wages have been increased just a little bit by say 5%. But the purchasing power of the dollar might diminish and leave the poor barely better off than their prior condition. In spite

³⁴ Richards, *o.c.* p. 45.

³⁵ Rawls, John : *Theory of Justice*, 1971 in Sterba *o.c.* pp. 42-53.

of all the modifications such as the restrictions and conditions imposed by the Clinton's administration, many people become unduly dependent on the welfare system and are unable to achieve self-reliance.

King will therefore reject the liberal approach as well intended but not enough to end poverty. As an alternative to all the four options considered so far King, I believe, would prefer the following radical option.

E. Non-violent radical intervention approach (NVRCA)

'The Non-Violent Radical Comprehensive Intervention Approach' is derived from King's principal statement on poverty. "There is nothing new about poverty. What is new is that today we have the resources and the techniques to get rid of poverty. The question is, "Do we have the will?"³⁶ I could not agree more with Richards when he says, the statement is not only true but also represents an incisive indictment against the American society and modern society as a whole. In the post-Katrina world threatened by extreme poverty and hatred-induced terrorism, it is also a challenge to all people of goodwill and a call to immediate action to end extreme poverty locally and globally.

According to Richards, King's vision of ending poverty should be the goal not just of the poor and the nearly poor but even for the least generous among the most prosperous because this goal is conducive to the building of a culture of peace. "In a less violent world," says Richards, "everyone would be safer."³⁷ So intelligent affluent people are aware or should be aware that their interests and the interests of civility coincide.

King's indictment, Richard explains, implies that the continued existence of poverty in our times is in some way virtually an intentional crime committed by society against the poor. Since today society has the resources as King rightly assumes, and has not gotten rid of poverty, Richard submits, there must be some inadvertence, neglect, or some mis-

³⁶ King, *Birmingham*, o.c.

³⁷ Richards, o.c. p. 39.

understanding, if not a deliberate and conscious desire for it to exist.

Economic history and recent research by some leading experts indicate that King's vision for ending poverty is not an illusion. For example, Immanuel Wallerstein argues that in view of the economic and scientific progress of the last four hundred years, as much as 20% of the world's population has escaped poverty. Among the 80 % still in poverty the World Bank estimates that 20-25% is among the poorest of the poor. The successful strategies for escaping poverty include radical and comprehensive approaches for modifying the economics of the Smithsonian world or the free market system as happened in New England during Smith's own time and during the Roosevelt administration. Both of these measures led to greater economic equality than the country had ever experienced. America's Marshall Plan for Europe's economic recovery after the Second World War remains a paradigm case for modifying the free market system to the advantage of poor nations. Subsequently, European democracies have continued modifying their economic systems by taking measures for minimizing the gap between the rich and the poor with Sweden as one of the best models in ending (absolute) poverty.

The secret of Sweden's successful experiment can be found in the collaboration among business, labor, government, and civil society in creating and enforcing various strategies for bridging the socio-economic gap. For example, the retained earnings of corporations were used as the primary source of capital for new investments. To ensure that corporations had adequate capital they were also exempted from tax and supported with public funds. But unlike American Corporations, the CEO and other executives were not paid fabulous salaries and allowances or prohibitive pensions to ensure distributive justice as fairness for all. For the same reason, no windfall or unreasonable high profits were allowed. Consequently, the Swedish corporations began to do well not only nationally, but also internationally as the records of Volvo, SAAB, Electrolux and Erickson for example clearly showed.³⁸ Instead of distributing the profits exclusively among the CEO's or government officials, the

³⁸ *o.c.* p. 48

government made sure that workers also benefited from the profit by increasing their wages.

Determined to end poverty and socio-economic injustices, the Swedish government deliberately increased the wages of female workers which had been lagging behind that of their male counterparts. Although imperfect, the Swedish model represents a paradigm case globally for how governments working in collaboration with other stake holders could minimize poverty and improve the free market system.”³⁹

The Swedish model clearly vindicates King’s indictment against economies harboring unacceptable socio-economic gap between the haves and the have-nots. For it shows that the modern economy can compete successfully in world markets while simultaneously reducing inequality without risking capital or the seed needed for next year’s harvest. King would call all such measures to end poverty a reflection of the will to end poverty requiring “love in action’ as well as “a tough mind and a tender heart.”⁴⁰

Also while the profit motive is important for maximizing and sustaining productivity, it is wrong to assume that profit making is always necessary for sustaining the free market system of Adam Smith. After due reflection on the Swedish model and many other economic theories and policies, Richards recommends the adoption of two key principles: First, the principle of green and fair profit, meaning concern for the environment and human welfare should be the goal of all people and not just a few. Second is making the profit imperative less so by meeting human needs without it by promoting cooperative housing, car pooling, child-care sharing, neighborhood gardens, public bus company or rail passenger service, non-profit hospitals and schools that call for volunteers. Also when profits are made getting rid of poverty consists in capturing rents and profits and channeling them toward worthwhile causes such as educational scholarships for children of the poor and universal health care.

If King were alive today, he would be pleased to note that many

³⁹ *o.c.*

⁴⁰ Martin Luther King: *Strength to Love* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963) pp. 36-46.

prominent private citizens and foundations have caught his vision and have demonstrated not only a willingness to end poverty but have also executed nonviolent radical interventions to achieve this noble goal. Among such prominent philanthropists are Oprah, Bono, the Carter foundation and the Clinton Foundation.

In addition to her generous gifts such as buying cars for needy members of her TV audience, building completed homes for hundreds of people displaced by Hurricane Katrina in the New Orleans area Oprah has taken a giant step at ending poverty in Africa with the construction of a 40 million dollar boarding school for girls. Her vision is that the quality of education given them will make them responsible female leaders for South Africa and role models for the rest of Africa. Her focus on female education is justified by the educational wisdom of the Ghanaian philosopher of education Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey who said

‘If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation.’⁴¹

The world-famous musician, Bono, also affectionately dubbed ‘Africa’s unofficial roving ambassador’ has committed himself to ending both AIDS and poverty in Africa. In 2005 he launched DATA (Debt, AIDS, TRADE, AFRICA) in the USA and Europe on behalf of the suffering people of Africa afflicted by AIDS and absolute poverty. In 2006, Bono launched “Product code Red” by which he aims at collecting millions of dollars from participating businesses who have agreed to sell selected red-colored products on behalf of AIDS patients and the poor. This novel and comprehensive approach, he explains, is not aimed at charity, but justice from others toward Africa and accountability within Africa.⁴²

Another prominent person who has caught King’s vision is former President Jimmy Carter who founded The Carter Center in 1982. The Foundation is aimed at two main goals: promoting peace and preventing

⁴¹ Kwegyir Aggrey, ‘Speech at Wesley Girls High School’, Cape Coast, Ghana, 1951.

⁴² BBC NEWS, Saturday, 23 December, 2006.

human suffering. The two goals are intertwined because as the former president explains, armed conflicts extends beyond the pain of immediate victims, they threaten world peace and make it difficult for humanitarian aid in the form of food, medicine, and clothing etc. to reach their targets. He sums up his philosophy for the Center saying:

Whether the borders that divide us are picket fences or national boundaries, we are all neighbors in a global community... By preventing disease and suffering, promoting democracy, and nurturing hope and freedom, The Carter Center makes the world a safer, freer place for you and for me, and for our grandchildren.⁴³

Another former President who shares King's vision that poverty can be ended with radical intervention is President Clinton. Among other things, Clinton's Foundation and the Global Initiative which include such rich and benevolent philanthropists as the British entrepreneur-adventurer Richard Branson, Bill and Belinda Gates aim at developing solar electricity projects and opening new markets to combat global poverty. After the catastrophic tsunami in 2003, Presidents Clinton and George Bush senior raised \$1billion for victim-relief in Asia. The Clinton Center is also committed to designing programs for economically disadvantaged girls, implementing a blue print to lift villages out of extreme poverty, supporting Oxfam, the Heifer Project etc. and working toward achieving the U.N. Millennium Development Goals.⁴⁴ Mrs. Clinton supports her husband's initiative towards ending poverty when she campaigns for the Democratic nomination for the 2008 presidential election from a communitarian outlook reflected in her book, *It takes a Village* to raise a child as well as when she argues for universal health care for all USA citizens.⁴⁵

Conclusion

In light of the foregoing discussion, we can now answer the question:

⁴³ <http://www.cartercenter.org>.

⁴⁴ <http://www.clintonfoundation.org>.

⁴⁵ *US News & World Report* October 2, 2006. p. 15.

What would King do regarding the wars. On global terrorism I have argued that King would reject the Just War Theory and all other alternatives in favor of Enhanced International Police Action. On the question of global poverty, I have also argued that King would reject the Social Darwinist, Socialist, Conservative, and Liberal approaches, in favor of the Nonviolent Radical Comprehensive Approach. Now that we know how best to fight and win these wars from King's perspective, King's next question is: Do we have the will?