

To George W. Davis

1 December 1953
Boston, Mass.

Writing to his mentor at Crozer, King agrees with Davis's review of DeWolf's book, A Theology of the Living Church, and stresses the similarity between DeWolf and Davis.¹ King affirms that he remains a theological liberal: "I have come to see more than ever before that there are certain enduring qualities in liberalism which all of the vociferous noises of fundamentalism and neo-orthodoxy can never destroy."

Dear Dr. Davis,

I have just finished reading your review of Dr. DeWolf's A Theology of the Living Church in the "Journal of Bible and Religion" and thought it was an excellent review. It was quite interesting to get your reaction. It seems that my reaction to the book was well nigh identical to yours. As you probably know, Dr. DeWolf is my major professor and I have noticed all along that there is a great deal of similarity between your thought and his. Dr. DeWolf refers to himself as an evangelical liberal and as I remember, this is about the same position that you would hold. So you can see that it was not difficult at all for me to emerge from your classroom to Dr. DeWolf's. I found the atmosphere in both classrooms saturated with a warm evangelical liberalism.

Theologically speaking, I find myself still holding to the liberal position. I have come to see more than ever before that there are certain enduring qualities in liberalism which all of the vociferous noises of fundamentalism and

1. George W. Davis, "Reasonable Christianity," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 21, no. 4 (October 1953): 268-269. See L. Harold DeWolf, *A Theology of the Living Church* (New York: Harper, 1953).

3 Dec
1953

neo-orthodoxy can never destroy. When Schleiermacher stressed the primacy of experience over any external authority he was sounding a note that continues to ring in my own thought.² However, I must admit that in the last two years, I have become much more sympathetic towards the neo-orthodox position than I was in previous years. By this I do not mean that I accept neo-orthodoxy as a set of doctrines, but I do find in it a necessary corrective for a liberalism that became all too shallow and too easily capitulated to modern culture. At this point I have found your article, "Liberalism and a Theology of Depth" quite influential in my own thinking. Neo-orthodoxy certainly has the merit of calling us back to the depths of the Christian faith.

My work here at Boston University is progressing very well. Both Dr. DeWolf and the late Dr. Brightman have been quite impressed with my work. I must admit that my theological and philosophical studies with you have been of tremendous help to me in my present studies. In the most decisive moments, I find your influence creeping forth.

I have completed my residence work, and at present I am in the process of writing my Dissertation. So far, my Dissertation title is: "A comparison of the conception of God in the thinking of Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman". I am finding the study quite fascinating. If there are no basic interruptions, I hope to complete it by the end of the coming summer.

I have been intending to write you ever since I left Crozer, but like so many, I fell victim of that great thief of time, procrastination. I do hope that this letter finds you well. Please give my best regards to Mrs. Davis and your sons, and to the Crozer family in general.

Your former student,
[signed]
Martin L. King, Jr.

TALS. IGZ.

2. See King's essay for DeWolf entitled "A Comparison of Friedrich Schleiermacher's Christology with That of Albrecht Ritschl," 9 May 1952, MLKP-MBU: Box 112.