There are times when we need to know that God is a God of justice. When evil forces rise to the throne and slumbering giants of injustice emerge in the earth, we need to know that there is a God of power who can cut them down like the grass, and leave them withering wretched like the green herb. When our most tireless efforts fail to stop the surging sweep of some monster of oppression, we need to know that there is a God in this universe whose matchless strength is a fit contrast to the sordid weakness of man. But there are times when we need to know that God is a God of love and mercy. When we are staggered by the chilly winds of adversity and battered by the raging storms of disappointment, when through our folly and sin we stray into some destructive far country and are frustrated because of a strange feeling of homesickness, we need to know that there is Someone who loves us, who really cares, who understands, and who will give us another chance. When day grows dark and nights grow dreary we can be thankful that our God is not a one-sided, incomplete God, but he combines in his nature a creative [synthesis] of love and justice which can lead us through life's dark valleys into sun-lit pathways of hope and fulfillment.

25 Cf Psalm 37:2

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

Draft of Chapter II,
"Transformed Nonconformist"

[July 1962–March 1963]
[Atlanta, Ga.]

Originally titled "Mental and Spiritual Slavery," this sermon was composed during King's early years assisting his father at Ebenezer. He later revised the sermon and gave it this title. King maintains that the church's sanction of social evils such as race discrimination and economic exploitation demonstrates that it has "more often conformed to the authority of the world than to the authority of God." He chastises the church's tendency to retreat "behind the isolated security of stained glass windows" and rebukes ministers who have "joined the enticing call of conformity." In contrast, King praises "the early Christians" as "nonconformists in the truest sense" but warns that "nonconformity is always costly" and "may mean losing a job. It may mean having to answer to your six-year old daughter when she asks, 'Daddy, why do you have to go to jail so much?'"

1 King's announced sermon topic at Ebenezer on 7 September 1952 was "Mental and Spiritual Slavery" ("Rev. King, Jr. Will Deliver Last Summer Sermon Sun.," Atlanta Daily World, 6 September 1952). He also delivered "Mental and Spiritual Slavery" at Dexter in May 1954 (pp. 167–170 in this volume)

“And be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” Romans 12:2

“Do not conform” is difficult advice for anyone living in the modern world. The pressure of the crowd is constantly pouring upon us with torrential force. Our minds and feet are unconsciously conditioned to move by the rhythmic beat of the drums of the status quo. So many forces in our world are saying if you want to live a respectable life, just conform. Don’t take a stand for unpopular causes, and don’t allow the glaring search light of public opinion to catch you standing in an isolated minority of two or three. Choose the line of least resistance. Conform. Even some of our intellectual disciplines are attempting to convince us of the necessity of conforming. Some philosophical sociologists have gone so far as to tell us that morality is merely group consensus, and that the folkways are the right ways. Certain psychologists would go so far as to say that the best way maladjusted people can solve their problem is to learn to conform to this world. If they only think and act like other people, they will achieve mental and emotional adjustment. So success, recognition, conformity are the bywords of the modern world. Everybody seems to be seeking the anesthetizing security of being identified with the majority.

But in spite of this prevailing tendency to conform, we as Christians have a mandate to be nonconformists. The Apostle Paul, a man who knew the reality of the Christian faith, counseled us, “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” We as Christians are commanded to live differently. We are called to be people of conviction and not conformity, people of moral nobility and not social respectability. We are called to a higher loyalty, to a more excellent way.

Indeed, every true Christian is a citizen of two worlds—the world of time and the world of eternity. We find ourselves in the paradoxical situation of having to be in the world and yet not of the world. As Paul said in another letter “We are a colony of heaven.” The Christians to whom Paul was writing understood that figure, for their city of Philippi was a Roman colony. Whenever Rome wanted to Romanize a province, it took a small colony of people and planted them there to spread Roman law, Roman culture, and Roman customs. These people stood as a powerful, creative minority spreading the gospel of Roman culture. Even though they lived in

3 The preceding four sentences were condensed in the published version “Many voices and forces urge us to choose the path of least resistance, and bid us never to fight for an unpopular cause and never to be found in a pathetic minority of two or three” (King, Strength to Love, p 8)

4 The preceding two sentences were altered in the published version “Some psychologists say that mental and emotional adjustment is the reward of thinking and acting like other people” (p 8) Will, “Men Who Live Differently,” p 5. “Some of our philosophical sociologists have gone even further and have told us that morality is only group consensus. In sociological lingo, this means that there is little difference between folkways and morals. In plain language, it means that you tell the difference between right and wrong by a sort of Gallup poll method of finding what the majority thinks. The answer of certain psychologists to all maladjusted people is, similarly, to learn to conform to this world. If we only will dress and act and think like other people, then we shall be happy and mentally healthy.”

5 Cf. Philippians 3:20 (Moffatt)

6 Fosdick, The Hope of the World, pp 5–6 “Do you remember what Paul called them in his letter to the Philippans? ‘We are a colony of heaven,’ he said The Philippian Christians would understand that
"TRANSFORMED NONCONFORMIST"

["And be not conformed to this world: but be ye trans- formed by the renewing of your mind." Romans 12:2.]

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[But in spite of this prevailing tendency to conform, we as]
another country their ultimate allegiance was to Rome. While this analogy has its weaknesses—if for no other reason than that it is placed in the framework of a system that has become a symbol of injustice and exploitation, viz., colonialism—it does point out the responsibility of the Christian in an unchristian world. We are sent out as pioneers to imbue an unchristian world with the ideals and way of living of a higher order and a more noble realm. Even though we live in the colony of time we are ultimately responsible to the empire of eternity. In other words, as Christians we must never give our ultimate loyalty to any time-bound custom or idea of earth. There is a higher reality at the heart of our universe to which we must be conformed—God and his kingdom of love.

This command not to conform comes not merely from Paul, but also from our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. He was the world’s most dedicated nonconformist. It was nonconformity that led him to Pilate’s judgment hall. It was nonconformity that caused him to be nailed on a cross between two thieves. His ethical nonconformity still stands before the conscience of mankind as a nagging reminder of a higher order and a more ennobling (nobler) destiny. When an affluent society would drive us to believe that happiness consists in the size of our automobiles, the impressiveness of our houses, and the expensiveness of our clothes, Jesus reminds us that “a man’s life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” When we would yield to the temptation of a world rife with sexual promiscuity and gone wild with a philosophy of self-expression, Jesus tells us that adultery is sinful and that “whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery in his heart.” When we refuse to suffer for righteousness, and choose to follow the path of comfort rather than conviction, we hear Jesus saying “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.” When we in our moments of spiritual pride feel that we have reached the peak of moral excellence, Jesus says to us, “The tax collectors and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.” When we, through compassionless detachment and arrogant individualism fail to be concerned about the needs of the underprivileged, we hear the Master saying, “if ye do it unto the least of these, ye do it unto me.” When we allow the spark of revenge in our souls to rise to flame proportions and live our lives with a burning hatred for our enemies, Jesus says to us

figure, for their city of Philippi was a Roman colony. When Rome wanted to Romanize a new province, it took Roman people and planted them as a colony in the midst of it. There, as a powerful minority, they stood for Roman law, Roman justice, Roman faith, and Roman custom, leaven in the lump of the province, until the whole province was leavened.”

7 Fosdick, The Hope of the World, p. 6. “They were a minority thrown out, as pioneers, in the midst of an unchristian world to represent the ideals, faiths, and way of living of a nobler realm until the earth should be the Lord’s and the fulness thereof.”

8 The preceding five sentences were condensed in the published version. “This command not to conform comes, not only from Paul, but also from our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, the world’s most dedicated nonconformist, whose ethical nonconformity still challenges the conscience of mankind” (p. 9)

10 Cf. Matthew 5:28
11 Cf. Matthew 5:10
12 Cf. Matthew 21:31
13 Cf. Matthew 25:40
“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that persecute you.” When we would seek to build our nations on military power and put our abiding trust in a policy of massive retaliation, Jesus reminds us that "he who lives by the sword will perish by the sword." Everywhere, and at all times, the love ethic of Jesus will stand as a radiant light to show up the ugliness of our stall conformity.

In spite of this impetuous demand to live differently, we are producing a generation of the mass mind. We have moved from the extreme of rugged individualism to the even greater extreme of rugged collectivism. Instead of making history we are made by history. The philosopher Nietzsche once said that every man is a hammer or an anvil. That is to say every man either molds society or is molded by society. Who can doubt that most men today are anvils continually being molded by the patterns of the majority? One great preacher has used the difference between the thermometer and the thermostat to point up the problem. The thermometer merely records the temperature. If it is seventy or eighty degrees, it registers that and that is all. On the other hand the thermostat transforms the temperature. If it is too cool in the house you simply push the thermostat up a little and it makes it warmer. In other words, the thermometer is an indicator simply registering what is; the thermostat is a regulator which transforms the is into what ought to be. It is tragic, indeed, that most people, Christians in particular, are merely thermometers indicating and registering the temperature of the majority opinion, rather than thermostats serving to transform and regulate the temperature of society.

Millions of people fear nothing more terribly than to take a position which stands out sharply and clearly from the prevailing opinion. The great ambition of the average person is to take a position that is so ambiguous that it will include everything and so popular that it will include everybody. Along with this has grown an inordinate worship of bigness. We live in an age of “jumboism” where men find security in that which is large and extensive—big cities, big buildings, big corporations. This worship of size has caused many to fear being identified with a minority idea. There are those who have high and noble ideals, but they never reveal them for fear of being different from the majority. There are many sincere white people in the South who privately oppose segregation and discrimination, but they never take a public stand against it for fear of standing alone. There are millions of peo-

14 Cf. Matthew 5:44
15 Cf. Matthew 26:52
16 Frederick Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, p. 123. “Ye know only the sparks of the spirit but ye do not see the anvil which it is, and the cruelty of its hammer!” In the published version, King quotes Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Hyperion (1892) “In this world a man must either be anvil or hammer” (King, Strength to Love, p. 10)
17 For this illustration, see Henry Hut Crane, These Prophetic Voices, pp. 26–40
18 Eugene Austin, “The Peril of Conformity,” The Pulpit (October 1952), p. 13. “Millions of Americans fear nothing more terrible than to be identified with a position that stands out, sharp and clear, as different, setting them apart from other men. Increasingly the typical ambition of the ‘middle-brow’ is to belong to something that is big enough to swallow up individual differences, ambiguous enough to include anything, and popular enough so that everybody will want to belong.”
19 Fosdick, The Hope of the World, p. 4. “Again, this truth of Jesus is deflected from many modern minds because of our worship of bigness. One of my friends calls it ‘Jumboism’.”
ple in our country who are tired of the arms race and deeply disturbed by the fact that the “military industrial complex” often shapes the policy of our nation, but they will never take a public stand against it for fear of being in a minority stance.  

There are countless millions of loyal Americans who honestly feel that “Red China” should be a member of the United Nations, but they dare not say it for fear of being called a Communist sympathizer. There are thousands, yea millions of people in this country who, in spite of believing in capitalism, have come to see that it must undergo a deep seated change and that there must be a better distribution of wealth, but they would never take a stand for this position for fear of being called a bad name.  

In the realm of personal morals, there are numerous young people who have developed undesirable habits, not because they wanted to, not even because they enjoyed them, but because they were ashamed to say “no” when the rest of the group was saying “yes.” Everywhere we turn we find only a dearth of people who have the audacity to express their convictions publicly. Most people allow themselves to be “astronomically intimidated.”

We can see the disastrous possibilities of this blind conformity that has engulfed our nation. It leads to a suspiciousness of any individual who still insists on taking a stand for what he believes. Indeed, this is exactly what has happened. So great is our suspicion of these people that we recklessly curb their civil liberties. If a man believes vigorously in peace and is foolish enough to say it and carry a picket sign in its behalf, he is liable to be called before the Senate Committee on Internal Security. If a southern white person sincerely believes in the American dream of the dignity and worth of human personality, and is daring enough to invite a Negro to his home and joins the Negro as an ally in his struggle for freedom, he is in danger of being called before the House Un-American Activities Committee. He most certainly must be a Communist if he believes in brotherhood.

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21 In the published version “A legion of thoughtful persons recognizes that traditional capitalism must continually undergo change if our great national wealth is to be more equitably distributed, but they are afraid their criticisms will make them seem un-American” (pp. 10–11).

22 The Senate Committee on Internal Security was created by the McCarran Act of 1950, passed over a veto by President Harry Truman, and required communist organizations to register with the Attorney General. The committee targeted civil rights and anti-war groups among others that they labeled communist-front organizations.

23 Established in 1938, the House Un-American Activities Committee became a standing congressional committee in 1946 and became known for its investigations into communist activity in the late 1940s and 1950s, particularly in the film industry and in labor unions.

24 The preceding paragraph was altered in the published version “Blind conformity makes us so suspicious of an individual who insists on saying what he really believes that we recklessly threaten his civil liberties. If a man, who believes vigorously in peace, is foolish enough to carry a sign in a public demonstration, or if a Southern white person, believing in the American dream of the dignity and worth of human personality, dares to invite a Negro into his home and join with him in his struggle for freedom,
That great American, Thomas Jefferson, said on one occasion “I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man”\textsuperscript{25} In these days of McCarthyism, John Birch Societies and White Citizens’ Councils, these are rather dangerous words, and if Jefferson were alive today and lived these words out in real life situations, he would be investigated by numerous congressional committees.\textsuperscript{26} We have allowed the light of independent thinking to grow dim, and the lamp of individualism to burn slowly out.\textsuperscript{27} If we continue to go down this dangerous path of thought-control, business-control, and freedom-control, we will land inevitably in a dark abyss of fascism

Nowhere is the tragic tendency to conform more evident than in the church. The church has often been an institution serving to crystallize and conserve the patterns of the majority opinion. \textit{We find it all too often blessing a status quo that needs to be blasted and reassuring a social order that needs to be reformed}. The mere fact that slavery, racial segregation, war and economic exploitation have been sanctioned by the church is fit testimony to the fact that the church has more often conformed to the authority of the world than to the authority of God. The church is called to be the moral guardian of the community, yet it is so often the preserver of that which is immoral and unethical. The church is called to take a stand against social evils, but it so often remains silent behind the isolated security of stained glass windows. The church is called to lead men to the highway of brotherhood and summon them to rise above the narrow confines of race and class, but it is so often found comforting men in their prejudices and giving their theories of racial exclusiveness biblical and religious sanction.\textsuperscript{28}

Even we preachers have often joined the enticing cult of conformity. We, too, have often yielded to the success symbols of the world, feeling that the size of our ministry must be measured by the size of our automobiles.\textsuperscript{29} So often we turn into showmen, \textit{distorting the real meaning of the gospel}, in an attempt to appeal to the whims and caprices of the crowd. We preach soothing sermons that bypass the weightier matters of Christianity. We dare not say anything in our sermons that will question the respectable views of the comfortable numerals of our congregations. \textit{If you want to get ahead in the ministry, conform! Stay within the secure walls}.  

\begin{flushright}
\textit{He is liable to be summoned before some legislative investigation body. He most certainly is a Communist if he espouses the cause of human brotherhood} \textsuperscript{5} (p 11)
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{25} Jefferson to Doctor Rush, 23 September 1800, in Memor, Correspondence, and Miscellanea, From the Papers of Thomas Jefferson, vol 3, ed Thomas Jefferson Randolph (Charlottesville, Va. F Carr, 1829), p 56

\textsuperscript{26} The John Birch Society is an ultraconservative organization founded in 1958 to fight the perceived threat of communism in the United States. Among its activities during the 1960s was the distribution of literature attacking proposed civil rights legislation.

\textsuperscript{27} The preceding two sentences were altered in the published version “To the conformist and the shapers of the conformist mentality, this must surely sound like a most dangerous and radical doctrine. Have we permitted the lamp of independent thought and individualism to become so dim that were Jefferson to write and live by these words today we would find cause to harass and investigate him?” (p 11)

\textsuperscript{28} In the published version “Called to lead men on the highway of brotherhood and to summon them to rise above the narrow confines of race and class, it has enunciated and practiced racial exclusiveness” (p 11)

\textsuperscript{29} In the published version “parsonage” replaced the word “automobiles” (p 12)
of the Sanctuary. Play it safe. How many ministers of Jesus Christ have sacrificed truth on the altar of their self-interest, and, like Pilate, yielded their convictions to the demands of the crowd.

We need to recapture something that the early Christians had. They went out aglow with a radical gospel. They were nonconformists in the truest sense of the word. They never allowed their actions to be shaped by the mundane patterns of this world. They were willing to sacrifice fame or fortune or life itself for a cause they knew was right. They were quantitatively small but qualitatively big. In those days Christianity was powerful. It stopped barbaric evils like infanticide and brought an end to the bloody gladiatorial shows. Its views on war were clearly known because of the refusal of every Christian to take up arms. At that time the church was still a numerical minority. But then it began to grow in numbers until it finally captured the Roman Empire. Gradually it became so entrenched in wealth and worldly prestige that it began to dilute the strong demands of the gospel and to conform to the status quo of the world. Ever since that time the church has been like a weak and ineffectual trumpet making uncertain sounds, rather than a strong trumpet sounding a clarion call for truth and righteousness. If the church of Jesus Christ is to regain its power, and its message its authentic ring, it must go out with a new determination not to conform to this world.

The hope of a secure and livable world lies in the disciplined and dedicated nonconformists, set not on the preservation of any status quo, but set on building, with God's help, an order of justice, peace, and brotherhood. The world has always moved forward on the feet of its nonconformists. It was the nonconformists who stood forthrightly against slavery. It was a nonconformist like Socrates who, having drunk the hemlock, paved the way for academic freedom. It was the nonconformists who fought for popular education and the freedom of scientific research. It was the nonconformists that fought for religious liberty. In any cause that concerns the progress of mankind put your faith in the nonconformist.

In his essay on "Self Reliance," Emerson says that a man is not a man unless he can be a nonconformist. The Apostle Paul reminds us that a Christian cannot be truly Christian unless he is a nonconformist. The Christians who blindly accept the opinions of the majority and who out of fear and timidity follow a path of expediency and social approval are really mental and spiritual slaves. In the words of James Russell Lowell:

They are slaves who fear to speak, for the fallen and the weak,
They are slaves who will not choose, hatred, scoffing, and abuse,
Rather than in silence shrink,
From the truth they needs must think,

30 Cf Mark 15:15
31 Socrates (469–399 BCE) was sentenced by an Athenian court to carry out his own execution by drinking hemlock
32 Ralph Waldo Emerson, Self Reliance (1841) "Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist"
They are slaves who dare not be,
In the right with two or three\textsuperscript{33}

Now let us make it clear that non-conformity in itself may not be good. There is a type of bad nonconformity which has neither transforming nor redemptive power. There is no saving value in being a non-conformist for its own sake. Often being a nonconformist represents just a form of exhibitionism by people who could not get attention in any other way. So Paul gives us the formula for constructive nonconformity in the second half of the text “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” In other words nonconformity can only be creative when it is controlled and directed by a transformed life. In order to be a constructive nonconformist we must accept a new mental outlook. We must so open our lives to God in Christ that he makes us new creatures. Jesus’ phrase for this experience was the new birth. So only when we have been born again can we be true nonconformists\textsuperscript{34}. We are called upon not merely to be nonconformist, but to be transformed nonconformists.

If we go out merely to be nonconformists we are in danger of becoming cold, hardhearted, and self-righteous\textsuperscript{35}. Someone has said “I love reforms but hate reformers.” So often reformers are nonconformists who have not been transformed. Their revolt against the evils of society often causes them to become annoyingly rigid and unreasonably impatient. They talk about unselfish righteousness in the most self-righteous way. They talk about God’s love in the most hateful way. It is only through an inner spiritual transformation that we find the strength to revolt vigorously against the evils of the world and yet remain humble and loving. The transformed nonconformists will never fall into the sort of patience which is an excuse for doing nothing about social evils and individual sin. On the other hand his very transformation saves him from the irresponsible words which estrange without reconciling and the hasty judgment which is blind to the necessity of social process. The transformed nonconformist will recognize that social change cannot come overnight, but he will work as if it is a possibility the next morning.

The most pressing need of this hour is a dedicated circle of transformed nonconformists. Today our planet teeters on the brink of atomic annihilation. Dangerous passions of pride, hatred, and selfishness still sit contentedly on the throne of our lives, and wounded truth and love are still lying prostrate on the rugged hills of nameless calvaries. Men are still genuflecting before the false gods of nationalism and materialism. If our world is to be saved from its pending doom it will come not through the complacent adjustment of the conforming majority but through the creative maladjustment of a nonconforming minority. If the world is to be lifted from the morass of confusion and chaos it will be done by

\textsuperscript{33} Lowell, “Stanzas on Freedom” (1892)
\textsuperscript{34} Cf John 3 3–7
\textsuperscript{35} The preceding four sentences were condensed in the published version “This experience, which Jesus spoke of as the new birth, is essential if we are to be transformed nonconformists and freed from the cold hardheartedness and self-righteousness so often characteristic of nonconformity” (p 19).
men who have succeeded in standing above the world so that God can lift it through them.

Professor [Julius Seelye] Bixler reminded us some years ago of the danger of overstressing the well-adjusted life 86. Everybody is passionately seeking to be well adjusted, nobody wants to be maladjusted. There is probably no word in modern psychology that is used more than the word maladjusted. It is the word most frequently on the lips of the child psychologist. In a sense we must all seek to live the well adjusted life in order to avoid neurotic and schizophrenic personalities. But there are some things in our world to which all men of good will must be maladjusted until the good society is realized 37. As for me I must confess that there are some things to which I'm proud to be maladjusted. I never intend to become adjusted to the evils of segregation and the crippling effects of discrimination. I never intend to become adjusted to the moral degeneracy of religious bigotry and the corroding effects of narrow sectarianism. I never intend to adjust myself to economic conditions that will take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few. 38. I never intend to become adjusted to the insanities of militarism and the self-defeating effects of physical violence.

The world is in dire need of a society of the creative maladjusted. It may well be that the salvation of our world lies in the hands of such a creative minority. We need men today as maladjusted as the prophet Amos, who in the midst of the injustices of his day could cry out in words that echo across the centuries: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream;" as maladjusted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who, in the midst of an order from King Nebuchadnezzar to bow down and worship the golden image, said in unequivocal terms "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, but if not we will not bow," as maladjusted as Abraham Lincoln who had the vision to see that this nation could not survive half slave and half free, as maladjusted as Thomas Jefferson, who in the midst of an age amazingly adjusted to slavery could scratch across the pages of history these profound and eloquent words "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," as maladjusted even as our Lord who, in the midst of the intricate and fascinating military machinery of the Roman Empire, emerged from a wilderness temptation to establish a political kingdom by [strikeout illegible] firmly saying: "Get thee behind me Satan," and reminded his followers that "he who lives by the sword shall perish by the sword." 39. Through such maladjustment we may be able to call an already decadent generation back to those things which make for peace.

36 Fosdick, The Hope of the World, p 112. "Professor Seelye Bixler, of Harvard University, has lately made some shrewd comments on our new psychological talk about the well-adjusted life."

37 The preceding five sentences were condensed in the published version. "Everybody passionately seeks to be well-adjusted. We must, of course, be well-adjusted if we are to avoid neurotic and schizophrenic personalities, but there are some things in our world to which men of goodwill must be maladjusted." (p 14)

38 The published version refers to "economic condition that deprive men of work and food" (p 14)

39 Cf Amos 5 24, Daniel 3 17–18, Luke 4 1–13, and Matthew 26 52
Now there is a warning signal. Honesty impels me to admit that transformed nonconformity is always costly, and it is never altogether comfortable. It may mean walking through the valley of the shadow of suffering. It may mean losing a job. It may mean having to answer your six-year old daughter when she asks, "Daddy, why do you have to go to jail so much," Well, this is it! But after all this is what we as Christians are pledged to do. We are gravely mistaken if we feel that Christianity is a religion to protect us from the pain and agony of mortal existence. Christianity has always insisted that there is a Good Friday before every Easter, and that the cross we bear always precedes the crown we wear. It has said in unmistakable terms that to be a Christian one must take up his cross, with all of its difficulties, all of its agonizing and tragedy-packed content, and carry it until that very cross leaves its marks upon us and redeems us to that more excellent way which can be opened up only by suffering.

In these days of world-wide confusion, when the forces of evil have risen to gigantic and ominous proportions, there is a dire need for men and women who will gird their courage and do battle with all their hearts, souls and minds. We need Christians who will say as John Bunyan said to his jailor when, after he had spent twelve years in jail, he was promised freedom if he would agree to quit preaching. "I am determined, Almighty God being my help and shield, yet to suffer, frail life shall continue so long, even till the moss grow over my eyebrows, rather than to violate my faith and make a continual butchery of my conscience."

We must make a choice. Will we continue to march by the beat of the drums of conformity and respectability, or will we listen to the beat of another drum in the distance and with a heroic daring of the soul set our feet to move by its echoing sounds? Will we be so bent on worldly success and social acceptability that we will march only by the music of time, or will we risk crucifixism, abuse and being out of step with the majority in order to march by the soul-saving music of eternity? The challenge faces us today more than ever before. "Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds."
In the top margin of this page of his outline for “The Goodness of the Good Samaritan,” King notes, “The story begins in a theological controversy and ends in a description of first aid at a roadside. It arises in a question of eternal life and works out to a payment for room and board at a hotel” (28 November 1960).