

Olathe South High School AP English Language & Composition Summer Assignment

May 2025

To Incoming AP English Language & Composition Students:

Welcome to AP English Language & Composition! We are excited to work with you and help you earn college credit by taking the AP English Language & Composition Exam in May 2026.

The workload in Honors English I & II was designed to prepare you for this college-level class, so if you were enrolled in Honors English, no doubt you are used to the challenging expectations of the AP program, experiencing homework most every night. If you have not taken an Honors English class in the past, we trust you are up for the challenge and are ready to take your English skills to the next level. Summer reading keeps you actively engaged in the learning and critical thinking processes that are part of our program. Moreover, it is your opportunity to make a favorable first impression by thoroughly performing the tasks assigned. Examples and rubrics for each of the assignments are included so that you know how you will be evaluated. Examine them carefully before you begin each assignment.

Include your name and a page number in the header on each page of the following assignments:

- ◆ **Rhetorical Devices Reference Guide:** Compile a list of rhetorical devices with definition, example, and use/function. A sample is provided in this packet. Feel free to access online sources and cut and paste the definitions and examples—it's a guide. **The commentary in the use/function column, however, must be your original work.** Submit your reference guide to Turnitin.com by **11:59 p.m. on Thursday, June 26.**
- ◆ **Dialectical Journals:** Read "The Public Statement by Eight Alabama Clergymen." In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. received this letter as a criticism of the peaceful protests he led in Birmingham, Alabama. King responded to this letter while imprisoned, the result of which is now known as "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." Read the letter and annotate it according to the directions on page 11 of this document. You will annotate directly on the summer reading assignment packet and turn in your annotations on Friday, August 15. Write/type two dialectical journals that address the rhetorical choices MLK uses to deliver his message to his audience. The first journal should focus on one passage from the first 5 pages of the letter, and the second journal should focus on one passage from the last 5 pages of the letter. The passage you select for analysis should be between 1-3 paragraphs in length. A sample journal is included in this packet so that you can study it for proper expectations and format. Submit your dialectical journals to Turnitin.com by **11:59 p.m. on Thursday, July 24.**

Enroll in the AP Lang Summer Assignments Turnitin.com class with the following information:

Class ID: 48096343

Enrollment Key: aplang

You are to work on these assignments individually and without use of resources (except for the first two columns of the Reference Guide). Plagiarism and the use of AI-generated material will result in a zero.

Deadlines are never to be taken lightly. With that said, students can complete the assignments within the first weeks of summer to ensure that they are not forgotten about or left to the last minute. Teachers will return assignments back to students the first full week of school, so not completing assignments on time will result in late feedback, putting students in a disadvantaged position and starting the year with a low grade. Know that our summer reading program is indicative of the rigor and expectations of AP programs all over the United States. We have made every effort to provide you with models illustrating what we expect your summer reading assignments to look like; therefore, we expect you to make the same effort to meet those expectations.

If you have any questions about the assignment before the school year is over, please visit with Mrs. Gibbens in Room 604 or Mr. Smith in Room 603. If you have any questions over the summer, feel free to email Mrs. Gibbens at mgibbensos@olatheschools.org and/or Mr. Smith at sssmith@olatheschools.org. ***If you will be out of town the days of the deadlines, submit your assignment ahead of time. Late assignments are subject to the late penalty of 30% deduction.***

We are looking forward to working with all of you!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Marci Gibbens & Mr. Skyler Smith

Mrs. Marci Gibbens & Mr. Skyler Smith
AP English Language and Composition

Assignment #1: Rhetorical Devices Reference Guide

Insert a table of three columns into a Word/Google document. For each of the following 14 terms, define the term, provide an example, and write 1-2 sentences of commentary that explains the use/function of the term.

1. allusion	5. aphorism	10. oxymoron
2. analogy	6. chiasmus	11. parallelism
3. anaphora (the rhetorical term, not the grammatical)	7. hyperbole	12. paradox
4. antithesis	8. irony	13. personification
	9. juxtaposition	14. rhetorical question

Reference Guide Example

Term/Definition	Example	Use/Function (Why does a writer choose to use this element?) THIS IS COMMENTARY (CM)
Euphemism. The substitution of a mild or less negative word or phrase for a harsh or blunt one	My mother passed away recently, leaving a void in my life that can never be replaced.	The writer's euphemism "passed away" softens the devastation experienced when losing a parent. Use the formula: The writer's (device) + VERB + _____. Your CM should refer specifically to the example you gave in the 2 nd column. <i>(This is the formula you should use when writing commentary in your Dialectical Journals in July)</i>
Anadiplosis. The repetition of the last word of one line or clause to begin the next.	"The general who became a slave. The slave who became a gladiator. The gladiator who defied an emperor. Striking story!" (Commodus in the movie <i>Gladiator</i> , 2000)	The character's anadiplosis emphasizes the way in which the main character's life came full circle, including the highs and lows along the way.
Antimetabole. The repetition of words in successive clauses, but in inverted order (e.g., "I know what I like, and I like what I know"). It is similar to <u>chiasmus</u> although chiasmus does not use repetition of the same words or phrases.	"Ask not what <i>your country</i> can do for <i>you</i> ; ask what <i>you</i> can do for <i>your country</i> ." John F. Kennedy	The writer's antimetabole highlights the importance of individual responsibility by contrasting most people's expectations that government should serve them with his suggestion that a person should ask to serve his government through public service.
PLEASE BE SURE TO INCLUDE SEVERAL TERMS ON EACH PAGE!		

Active verbs to use when writing CM:

- emphasize/highlights/accentuates/
- demonstrates/conveys/illustrates/reveals
- contrasts
- compares/likens
- portrays/characterizes/depicts
- evokes/effects/elicits

Rhetorical Devices Reference Guide Rubric

		Other Comments
Terms/Definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate definition of terms • 14 terms X 1 pt. = ____ 	
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate example of terms • Examples easily identified as illustration of terms • 14 terms x 1 pt. = ____ 	
Use/Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commentary explains why the writer chooses to use this device • 14 terms x 3 pts. = ____ 	
Formatting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide replicates the visual example provided (columns, table, etc.) • 10 points 	

Total Points Earned = ____

80-72 = A

71-64 = B

63-56 = C

55-48 = D

47-0 = F

Assignment #2: Dialectical Journals

“Letter from a Birmingham Jail”

Part 1: Annotations

1. Read “Public Statement by Eight Alabama Clergymen” (p. 12) and Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (pp. 13-22).
2. Find 5 claims/arguments Martin Luther King, Jr. makes in his letter response to the Eight Alabama Clergymen. In the right column, where an argument begins, write a complete sentence that states the claim. The claim must be written directly to the right of where it occurs in the text. Number each claim/argument. After identifying the claim, determine how much textual evidence supports the claim. A claim and its supporting evidence can be one paragraph, or it may extend to several paragraphs in length. Two (2) of these five (5) claims and their supporting passages will become your two (2) dialectical journals.
3. In the left column, highlight any phrases that reveal rhetorical choices that convey how MLK makes his claim. You may discuss the devices from the Rhetorical Terms Reference Guide you completed for June OR describe what choices/strategies MLK makes to reach his audience of clergymen that may not be confined to a rhetorical device.
4. In the right column, label each rhetorical choice next to the highlighted phrase with its term or a brief description of the choice.
5. Identify where the text that supports each claim ends. (Remember, the possible length of the claim and supporting evidence will be at least 1 paragraph but could be several. In other words, this would be the point in the letter where the speaker introduces a new claim or concludes his support for the claim you identified.) Determine the **TONE** (see the list of Tone Words on page 8 in this packet) that the rhetorical choices convey and **EXPLAIN HOW AND WHY** the rhetorical choices achieve this tonal effect and how they were intended to affect the audience of clergymen. (This commentary must be written directly to the right of where the claim and supporting evidence end: 2-3 sentences)
6. Optionally, fill out the SOAPSTone chart on page 7 to help you organize your analysis.

See page 5 for sample annotation.

Annotations are worth 25 points and will be turned in on Friday, August 15.

Annotation Sample

Passage	Annotations
<p>“Guilt, you may be thinking warily. Isn’t that what we’re supposed to feel? But guilt doesn’t go anywhere near far enough; <u>the appropriate emotion is shame—shame at our own dependency, in this case, on the underpaid labor of others.</u> When someone works for less pay than she can live on—when, for example, she goes hungry so that you can eat more cheaply and conveniently—then she has made a great sacrifice for you, she has made you a gift of some part of her abilities, her health, and her life. The “working poor,” as they are approvingly termed, are in fact the major philanthropists of our society. <u>They neglect their own children so that the children of others will be cared for; they live in substandard housing so that other homes will be shiny and perfect; they endure privation so that inflation will be low and stock prices high.</u> To be a member of the working poor is to be an anonymous donor, a nameless benefactor, to everyone else. <u>As Gail, one of my restaurant coworkers put it, ‘you give and you give.’</u></p> <p>Someday, of course—and I will make no predictions as to exactly when—they are bound to tire of getting so little in return and to demand to be paid what they’re worth. There’ll be a lot of anger when that day comes, and strikes and disruption. <u>But the sky will not fall,</u> and we will all be better off for it in the end” (220-221).</p>	<p>Claim #1 America’s low-wage, working class provides invaluable and unmatched service to the country and that the government, as well as the common man, must acknowledge the dedication through better compensation.</p> <p>emotionally-charged diction that elicits guilt</p> <p>juxtaposition in responsibilities and privileges between the working class and middle/upper class</p> <p>Direct quotations adds credibility to the argument</p> <p>allusion to the story “Chicken Little” whose characters assume the worst when they jump to conclude that the sky is falling</p> <p>Tone: insistent/direct Ehrenreich’s insistent tone demands that America’s middle and upper classes end their “dependency” “on the underpaid labor of others” so that the lower class no longer has to be an “anonymous donor” or “a nameless benefactor” to those in a higher socioeconomic class. Identifying the members of the working class as donors and benefactors connotes that middle- and upper-class America should show more appreciation for the rendered service. Instead, the working class often provides thankless services that underscore the low compensation they receive for those services. Socially conscious readers are more apt to respond to Ehrenreich’s message because of the guilt her words elicit in them.</p>

Part 2: Dialectical Journals

Analyzing the writer's rhetorical choices is the task of Free Response Question 2 of the AP English Language & Composition Exam: the Rhetorical Analysis. To help you understand and effectively analyze rhetorical choices and the impact the rhetorical situation has on those choices, you will write one dialectical journal over a passage from the first half of "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" and a second dialectical journal from the second half of the letter. Because a rhetorical analysis calls for an analysis of the writer's purpose in light of the rhetorical choices the writer makes, **each of your dialectical journals should begin with a topic sentence that contains both**

1. **a list of the writer's rhetorical choices and**
2. **a statement of the writer's purpose/message.**

Below is the Rhetorical Analysis Prompt from the AP Exam with "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" incorporated in to guide the focus of your dialectical journals.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was arrested and jailed on April 12, 1963, for leading a march in Birmingham, Alabama that protested the April 10 banning of anti-segregation protest activity in the city. While imprisoned, King wrote a letter, now known as "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," in response to eight Alabama clergymen who issued a public statement requesting that the ban be followed. Read the letter carefully. Write 2 dialectical journals that analyze the rhetorical choices King makes to convey his message to the clergymen.

In answering the above prompt in each journal, follow these requirements as you plan and write:

1. Examine the sample dialectical journal provided on pp. 9-10.
2. Choose 2 of the 5 claims you identified in the annotation exercise. One claim should be from the first half of the speech, and the second claim should be from the second half of the speech.
3. Create a 2-column table in Word or Google Docs, Times New Roman, 12-pt. font, single-spaced.
4. Type the paragraphs—claim and supporting evidence—from "Letter to a Birmingham Jail" in the left column. Type your analysis response in the right column. Insert a page break between the first and second journal.
5. Reread your chosen passage carefully to determine the writer's purpose and the choices King makes to reach his intended audience of clergymen.
6. State King's choices and message / purpose in the topic sentence. The message / purpose should be written in an independent clause. (See TS in sample journal.)
7. Write your analysis through the SOAPSTone lens. The SOAP represents the rhetorical situation components: the speaker/writer's background and beliefs, the occasion for which and in which the writer is writing, the intended audience, and the writer's purpose for the text. These components contribute to HOW the writer chooses to convey the message. Consider the questions on the SOAPSTone (p. 7) to guide you in composing your analysis.
8. Rhetorical Analysis focuses on HOW and WHY: HOW (rhetorical choices) does the writer convey the WHY (the message / purpose) to the audience? Again, the rhetorical situation provides clues to help us with that analysis. Notice that both the HOW and WHY are stated in your TS.
9. Your analysis should analyze at least 2 different rhetorical choices from the passage.
10. Your analysis should be at least one full column and must include embedded concrete details. You are welcome to extend your analysis beyond one column; ultimately, your analysis on the right should be longer than the passage on the left. While you are not required to follow the ratio of 1 CD: 2 CM, it is a good gauge to ensure that your commentary is twice as long as your evidence. The primary function of the commentary is to explain why the writer's rhetorical choices are effective in reaching the audience.

TIP: Rhetorical devices are a specific category of rhetorical choices. Feel free to analyze the devices you worked with for the Rhetorical Devices Reference Guide. However, you may find that the MLK claim you want to write about does not contain many rhetorical devices. In that case, you may want to broaden your search to rhetorical choices. Rhetorical choices are simply the decisions an author makes to convey the message to the audience. Notice how the sample journal's topic sentence lists the writer's rhetorical choices with an active verb and description of the choice ("eliciting guilt and shame in her audience").

SOAPSTone

***NOTE: You are not required to fill out this chart for each journal; it is intended to guide you in your analysis.**

Speaker / Writer	What is known about the speaker/writer?	
Occasion	<p>The time/place of the piece.</p> <p>Context: What is going on in the world as it relates to the piece and/or the writer?</p> <p>Exigence: What was the “spark” that moved speaker to write/act? How did this event impact speaker?</p>	
Audience	<p>The target group or individual to whom the piece is directed.</p> <hr/> <p>What qualities, beliefs, or values does the speaker assume the audience holds?</p>	<p>TARGET Audience:</p> <hr/> <p>LARGER Audience:</p> <hr/>
Purpose	<p>The reason behind the text. What SPECIFIC thing does the speaker hope to accomplish/want from the audience? (e.g. to condemn, to praise, to eulogize, to affirm to persuade, etc.)</p> <hr/> <p>Format: What type of reading is it? Essay, speech, etc. What impact does this format have on emphasizing the purpose?</p>	
Style	<p>What are the speaker’s most common rhetorical choices?</p> <hr/> <p>How do these choices advance the speaker’s ability to convey the arguments to the audience?</p>	
Tone	How do the tone shifts throughout the speech affect the audience?	

TS FORMAT: In (title), (the writer’s) (rhetorical choices) (ACTIVE VERB-see p. 2) to (the audience) that (purpose/message/universal statement).

LIST of TONE WORDS (grouped by synonyms)

Tone is the author's attitude about the subject/topic. The following list of words are adjectives that can be used to describe the author's tone.

- simple, straightforward, direct, unambiguous, candid
- indirect, understated, evasive
- admiring, worshiping, approving
- complimentary, proud, effusive
- abhorring, contemptuous
- strident, harsh, acerbic, angry, outraged, forceful, confident, inflammatory
- energetic, vibrant
- ironic, sardonic, sarcastic, mocking, sly, wry
- satirical, critical, caustic, bitter, cynical
- sharp, biting
- bitter, grim, cynical
- interested, sympathetic, pitiful
- indifferent, unconcerned, disinterested, apathetic
- impartial, objective
- humorous, playful, joking, frivolous, comical
- flippant, irreverent, facetious, self-deprecating
- impish, silly, sophomoric, childish
- resigned, reticent
- subdued, restrained
- fearful, horrific, terrified, panicked
- wistful, nostalgic, sentimental
- solemn, serious, somber, elegiac
- apologetic, penitent, ignominious
- recalcitrant, stubborn, rebellious
- apprehensive, anxious, pensive
- thoughtful, dreamy, fanciful, reflective
- ambiguous, uncertain, confused, ambivalent
- excited, exhilarated, exuberant
- ardent, fervent, zealous
- elated, contented, ecstatic, joyful, giddy
- incredulous, questioning, skeptical, dubious
- insistent, urgent
- pointed, incisive, poignant, pithy
- concerned, reassuring, sympathetic
- admonishing, censorious
- condescending, patronizing, arrogant, haughty, dogmatic, derogatory
- affected, lofty, bombastic, pretentious
- oratorical, dramatic, melodramatic
- scornful, disdainful, mocking
- audacious, bold, impudent, insolent
- provocative, seductive
- shocking, offensive, reprehensible, lurid
- didactic, instructive
- melancholy, despairing

Dialectical Journal Sample

Passage #1	Response
<p>“Guilt, you may be thinking warily. Isn’t that what we’re supposed to feel? But guilt doesn’t go anywhere near far enough; the appropriate emotion is shame—shame at our own dependency, in this case, on the underpaid labor of others. When someone works for less pay than she can live on—when, for example, she goes hungry so that you can eat more cheaply and conveniently—then she has made a great sacrifice for you, she has made you a gift of some part of her abilities, her health, and her life. The “working poor,” as they are approvingly termed, are in fact the major philanthropists of our society. They neglect their own children so that the children of others will be cared for; they live in substandard housing so that other homes will be shiny and perfect; they endure privation so that inflation will be low and stock prices high. To be a member of the working poor is to be an anonymous donor, a nameless benefactor, to everyone else. As Gail, one of my restaurant coworkers put it, ‘you give and you give.’</p> <p>Someday, of course—and I will make no predictions as to exactly when—they are bound to tire of getting so little in return and to demand to be paid what they’re worth. There’ll be a lot of anger when that day comes, and strikes and disruption. But the sky will not fall, and we will all be better off for it in the end.” (220-221)</p>	<p>In her nonfiction book <i>Nickel and Dimed</i>, Barbara Ehrenreich’s choices to elicit guilt and shame in her audience, highlight the dichotomies between social classes, and allude to a children’s story send a message to her readers who are concerned with workers’ rights that America’s low-wage, working class provides invaluable and unmatched service to the country and that the government, as well as the common man, must acknowledge the dedication through better compensation. Ehrenreich’s blatantly emotional diction makes her audience of middle- and upper-class America feel first guilt and then shame at their behavior. Making her audience feel guilty is not strong enough for her; rather, the “appropriate emotion is shame” “at our own dependency” on “the working poor” and in not granting them the title of “the major philanthropists of our society.” Ehrenreich’s career as an author and a political activist lands her in the middle class, so she is not necessarily exempting herself from experiencing that shame as well, but she can credibly be in a position of authority on this topic because she actually lived the life of the poor through her social experiment. She proves that these people do not have it hard just because of drug addictions and alcohol abuse but because of society’s view and treatment of them. Thus, her emotionally charged language works well to help members of her own social class and higher see the injustice that is currently the reality in America. To extend her argument, Ehrenreich’s insistent tone demands that America’s middle and upper classes end their “dependency” “on the underpaid labor of others” so that the lower class no longer has to be an “anonymous donor” or “a nameless benefactor” to those in a higher socioeconomic class. Identifying the members of the working class as donors and</p>

benefactors connotes that middle- and upper-class America should show more appreciation for the rendered service. Instead, the working class often provides thankless services that underscore the low compensation they receive for those services. Ehrenreich highlights the dichotomies between the classes by juxtaposing their lives as the working class “neglect their own children so that the children of others will be cared for; they live in substandard housing so that other homes will be shiny and perfect; they endure privation so that inflation will be low and stock prices high.” The sacrifices that the working class must make in order to make richer people comfortable are stark, and Ehrenreich seeks to make the inequality very clear so that her audience will have no doubt about the unfair decisions that the poor must make every day in order to survive. Ehrenreich ends her book with an allusion to the African-originated children’s tale “Chicken Little” or “Henny Penny,” in which the animal characters believe their doomed fate is sealed because the sky is falling. Of course the sky does not fall, and Ehrenreich contends that the world will not come to an end when low-wage workers demand their rights, but it will shake it up. The American majority must recognize the value the hard-working low-wage earners provide to our country, and Ehrenreich’s implied call to action is to support poor people in taking a stance to end their nickel and dimed position in society.

Rubric for Dialectical Journals

Each journal is worth 50 points (100 total) and will be graded according to the AP Rhetorical Analysis Rubric and converted to points using the following scale:

6 = 48-50
 5 = 45-47
 4 = 40-44
 3 = 35-39
 2 = 30-34
 1 = 0-29

AP English Language and Composition Scoring Rubrics (Effective Fall 2019)

Scoring Rubric for Question 2: Rhetorical Analysis (6 points)

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria				
Row A Thesis (0-1 points) 1.A 4.B	0 points For any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no defensible thesis. The intended thesis only restates the prompt. The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt. 	1 point Responds to the prompt with a defensible thesis that analyzes the writer's rhetorical choices.			
Row B Evidence AND Commentary (0-4 points) 1.A 2.A 4.A 6.A 6.B 6.C	0 points Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.	1 point EVIDENCE: Provides evidence that is mostly general. AND COMMENTARY: Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the student's argument.	2 points EVIDENCE: Provides some specific relevant evidence. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student's argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	3 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning. AND Explains how at least one rhetorical choice in the passage contributes to the writer's argument, purpose, or message.	4 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning. AND Explains how multiple rhetorical choices in the passage contribute to the writer's argument, purpose, or message.
Row C Sophistication (0-1 points) 2.A 4.C 6.B 8.A 8.B 8.C	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or develops a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation. Responses that earn this point may demonstrate sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation by doing any of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Explaining the significance or relevance of the writer's rhetorical choices (given the rhetorical situation). Explaining a purpose or function of the passage's complexities or tensions. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive. <i>This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the student's argument, not merely a phrase or reference.</i>			

September 2019

PUBLIC STATEMENT BY EIGHT ALABAMA CLERGYMEN

April 12, 1963

We the undersigned clergymen are among those who, in January, issued "An Appeal for Law and Order and Common Sense," in dealing with racial problems in Alabama. We expressed understanding that honest convictions in racial matters could properly be pursued in the courts, but urged that decisions of those courts should in the meantime be peacefully obeyed.

Since that time there had been some evidence of increased forbearance and a willingness to face facts. Responsible citizens have undertaken to work on various problems which cause racial friction and unrest. In Birmingham, recent public events have given indication that we all have opportunity for a new constructive and realistic approach to racial problems.

However, we are now confronted by a series of demonstrations by some of our Negro citizens, directed and led in part by outsiders. We recognize the natural impatience of people who feel that their hopes are slow in being realized. But we are convinced that these demonstrations are unwise and untimely.

We agree rather with certain local Negro leadership which has called for honest and open negotiation of racial issues in our area. And we believe this kind of facing of issues can best be accomplished by citizens of our own metropolitan area, white and Negro, meeting with their knowledge and experience of the local situation. All of us need to face that responsibility and find proper channels for its accomplishment.

Just as we formerly pointed out that "hatred and violence have no sanction in our religious and political traditions," we also point out that such actions as incite to hatred and violence, however technically peaceful those actions may be, have not contributed to the resolution of our local problems. We do not believe that these days of new hope are days when extreme measures are justified in Birmingham.

We commend the community as a whole, and the local news media and law enforcement in particular, on the calm manner in which these demonstrations have been handled. We urge the public to continue to show restraint should the demonstrations continue, and the law enforcement official to remain calm and continue to protect our city from violence.

We further strongly urge our own Negro community to withdraw support from these demonstrations, and to unite locally in working peacefully for a better Birmingham. When rights are consistently denied, a cause should be pressed in the courts and in negotiations among local leaders, and not in the streets. We appeal to both our white and Negro citizenry to observe the principles of law and order and common sense.

C. C. J. Carpenter, D.D., LL.D.,
Bishop of Alabama

Joseph A. Durick, D.D.,
Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Mobile, Birmingham

Rabbi Hilton L. Grafman
Temple Emanu-El, Birmingham, Alabama

Bishop Paul Hardin
Bishop of the Alabama-West Florida Conference

Bishop Nolan B. Harmon
Bishop of the North Alabama Conference of the Methodist Church

George M. Murray, D.D., LL.D.,
Bishop Coadjutor, Episcopal Diocese of Alabama

Edward V. Ramage
Moderator, Synod of the Alabama Presbyterian Church in the United States

Earl Stallings
Pastor, First Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama

Letter From a Birmingham Jail

April 16, 1963

MY DEAR FELLOW CLERGYMEN:

While confined here in the Birmingham City Jail, I came across your recent statement calling our present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom, if ever, do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would be engaged in little else in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine goodwill and your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I would like to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I think I should give the reason for my being in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the argument of "outsiders coming in." I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every Southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty-five affiliate organizations all across the South--one being the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Whenever necessary and possible we share staff, educational and financial resources with our affiliates. Several months ago our local affiliate here in Birmingham invited us to be on call to engage in a nonviolent direct action program if such were deemed necessary. We readily consented and when the hour came we lived up to our promises. So I am here, along with several members of my staff, because I have basic organizational ties here.

Beyond this, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the eighth century prophets left their little villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns; and just as the Apostle Paul left his little village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to practically every hamlet and city of the Graeco-Roman world, I too am compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my particular home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere in this country.

You deplore the demonstrations that are presently taking place in Birmingham. But I am sorry that your statement did not express a similar concern for the conditions that brought the demonstrations into being. I am sure that each of you would want to go beyond the superficial social analyst who looks merely at effects, and does not grapple with underlying causes. I would not hesitate to say that it is unfortunate that so-called demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham at this time, but I would say in more emphatic terms that it is even more unfortunate that the white power structure of this city left the Negro community with no other alternative.

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: 1) Collection of the facts to determine whether injustices are alive. 2) Negotiation. 3) Self-purification and 4)

Direct action. We have gone through all of these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying of the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community.

Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of police brutality is known in every section of this country. Its unjust treatment of Negroes in the courts is a notorious reality. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than any city in this nation. These are the hard, brutal and unbelievable facts. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the political leaders consistently refused to engage in good faith negotiation.

Then came the opportunity last September to talk with some of the leaders of the economic community. In these negotiating sessions certain promises were made by the merchants--such as the promise to remove the humiliating racial signs from the stores. On the basis of these promises Rev. Shuttlesworth and the leaders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights agreed to call a moratorium on any type of demonstrations. As the weeks and months unfolded we realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. The signs remained. Like so many experiences of the past we were confronted with blasted hopes, and the dark shadow of a deep disappointment settled upon us. So we had no alternative except that of preparing for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and national community. We were not unmindful of the difficulties involved. So we decided to go through a process of self-purification. We started having workshops on nonviolence and repeatedly asked ourselves the questions: "Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?" "Are you able to endure the ordeals of jail?" We decided to set our direct-action program around the Easter season, realizing that with the exception of Christmas, this was the largest shopping period of the year. Knowing that a strong economic withdrawal program would be the by-product of direct action, we felt that this was the best time to bring pressure on the merchants for the needed changes. Then it occurred to us that the March election was ahead and so we speedily decided to postpone action until after election day. When we discovered that Mr. Connor was in the run-off, we decided again to postpone action so that the demonstrations could not be used to cloud the issues. At this time we agreed to begin our nonviolent witness the day after the run-off.

This reveals that we did not move irresponsibly into direct action. We too wanted to see Mr. Connor defeated; so we went through postponement after postponement to aid in this community need. After this we felt that direct action could be delayed no longer.

You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches, etc.? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are exactly right in your call for negotiation. Indeed, this is the purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. I just referred to the creation of tension as a part of the work of the nonviolent resister. This may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word tension. I have earnestly worked and preached against violent tension, but there is a type of constructive nonviolent tension that is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need of having nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men to rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. So the purpose of the direct action is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. We, therefore, concur with you in your call for

negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in the tragic attempt to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

One of the basic points in your statement is that our acts are untimely. Some have asked, "Why didn't you give the new administration time to act?" The only answer that I can give to this inquiry is that the new Birmingham administration must be prodded about as much as the outgoing one before it acts. We will be sadly mistaken if we feel that the election of Mr. Boutwell will bring the millennium to Birmingham. While Mr. Boutwell is much more articulate and gentle than Mr. Connor, they are both segregationists, dedicated to the task of maintaining the status quo. The hope I see in Mr. Boutwell is that he will be reasonable enough to see the futility of massive resistance to desegregation. But he will not see this without pressure from the devotees of civil rights. My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. History is the long and tragic story of the fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups are more immoral than individuals.

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have never yet engaged in a direct action movement that was "well timed," according to the timetable of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the words [sic]"Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with a piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see with the distinguished jurist of yesterday that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."

We have waited for more than three hundred and forty years for our constitutional and God-given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jet-like speed toward the goal of political independence, and we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward the gaining of a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. I guess it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick, brutalize and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see the depressing clouds of inferiority begin to form in her little mental sky, and see her begin to distort her little personality by unconsciously developing a bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son asking in agonizing pathos: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross-country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tip-toe stance never quite knowing what to expect next, and plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"; then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience.

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, it is rather strange and paradoxical to find us consciously breaking laws. One may well ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws: There are *just* and there are *unjust* laws. I would agree with Saint Augustine that "An unjust law is no law at all."

Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine when a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of Saint Thomas Aquinas, an unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority, and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. To use the words of Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher, segregation substitutes an "I-it" relationship for an "I-thou" relationship, and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. So segregation is not only politically, economically and sociologically unsound, but it is morally wrong and sinful. Paul Tillich has said that sin is separation. Isn't segregation an existential expression of man's tragic separation, an expression of his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness? So I can urge men to disobey segregation ordinances because they are morally wrong.

Let us turn to a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a majority inflicts on a minority that is not binding on itself. This is difference made legal. On the other hand a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow that it is willing to follow itself. This is sameness made legal.

Let me give another explanation. An unjust law is a code inflicted upon a minority which that minority had no part in enacting or creating because they did not have the unhampered right to vote. Who can say that the legislature of Alabama which set up the segregation laws was democratically elected? Throughout the state of Alabama all types of conniving methods are used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters and there are some counties without a single Negro registered to vote despite the fact that the Negro constitutes a majority of the population. Can any law set up in such a state be considered democratically structured?

These are just a few examples of unjust and just laws. There are some instances when a law is just on its face and unjust in its application. For instance, I was arrested Friday on a charge of parading without a permit. Now there is nothing wrong with an ordinance which requires a permit for a parade, but when the ordinance is used to preserve segregation and to deny citizens the First-Amendment privilege of peaceful assembly and peaceful protest, then it becomes unjust.

I hope you can see the distinction I am trying to point out. In no sense do I advocate evading or defying the law as the rabid segregationist would do. This would lead to anarchy. One who breaks an unjust law must do it *openly, lovingly*, (not hatefully as the white mothers did in New Orleans when they were seen on television screaming "nigger, nigger, nigger") and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and willingly accepts the penalty by staying in jail to arouse the conscience

of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the very highest respect for law.

Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was seen sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar because a higher moral law was involved. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks, before submitting to certain unjust laws of the Roman empire. To a degree academic freedom is a reality today because Socrates practiced civil disobedience.

We can never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. But I am sure that if I had lived in Germany during that time I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers even though it was illegal. If I lived in a Communist country today where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I believe I would openly advocate disobeying these anti-religious laws. I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the last few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action;" who paternalistically feels he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by the myth of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of goodwill is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice, and that when they fail to do this they become dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress. I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that the present tension in the South is merely a necessary phase of the transition from an obnoxious negative peace, where the Negro passively accepted his unjust plight, to a substance-filled positive peace, where all men will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured as long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its pus-flowing ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must likewise be exposed, with all of the tension its exposing creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured.

In your statement you asserted that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But can this assertion be logically made? Isn't this like condemning the robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn't this like condemning Socrates because his unswerving commitment to truth and his philosophical delvings precipitated the misguided popular mind to make him drink the hemlock? Isn't this like condemning Jesus because His unique God-Consciousness and never-ceasing devotion to His will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? We must come to see, as the federal courts have consistently affirmed, that it is immoral to urge an individual to withdraw his efforts to gain his basic constitutional rights because

the quest precipitates violence. Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber.

I had also hoped that the white moderate would reject the myth of time. I received a letter this morning from a white brother in Texas which said: "All Christians know that the colored people will receive equal rights eventually, but it is possible that you are in too great of a religious hurry. It has taken Christianity almost 2000 years to accomplish what it has. The teachings of Christ take time to come to earth." All that is said here grows out of a tragic misconception of time. It is the the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually time is neutral. It can be used either destructively or constructively. I am coming to feel that the people of ill-will have used time much more effectively than the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people. We must come to see that human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right. Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy, and transform our pending national elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity.

You spoke of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. At first I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my nonviolent efforts as those of the extremist. I started thinking about the fact that I stand in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community. One is a force of complacency made up of Negroes who, as a result of long years of oppression, have been so completely drained of self-respect and a sense of "somebodiness" that they have adjusted to segregation, and, of a few Negroes in the middle class who, because of a degree of academic and economic security, and because at points they profit by segregation, have unconsciously become insensitive to the problems of the masses. The other force is one of bitterness, and hatred comes perilously close to advocating violence. It is expressed in the various black nationalist groups that are springing up over the nation, the largest and best-known being Elijah Muhammad's Muslim movement. This movement is nourished by the contemporary frustration over the continued existence of racial discrimination. It is made up of people who have lost faith in America, who have absolutely repudiated Christianity, and who have concluded that the white man is an incurable "devil." I have tried to stand between these two forces saying that we need not follow the "do-nothingism" of the complacent or the hatred and despair of the black nationalist. There is the more excellent way of love and nonviolent protest. I'm grateful to God that, through the Negro church, the dimension of nonviolence entered our struggle. If this philosophy had not emerged, I am convinced that by now many streets of the South would be flowing with floods of blood. And I am further convinced that if our white brothers dismiss as "rabble rousers" and "outside agitators" those of us who are working through the channels of nonviolent direct action and refuse to support our nonviolent efforts, millions of Negroes, out of frustration and despair, will seek solace and security in black-nationalist ideologies, a development that will lead inevitably to a frightening racial nightmare.

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The urge for freedom will eventually come. This is what happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom; something without has reminded him that he can gain it. Consciously and unconsciously, he has been swept in by what the Germans call the *Zeitgeist*, and with his black brothers of Africa, and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America and the Caribbean, he is moving with a sense of cosmic urgency toward the promised land of racial justice. Recognizing this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should

readily understand public demonstrations. The Negro has many pent up resentments and latent frustrations. He has to get them out. So let him march sometime; let him have his prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; understand why he must have sit-ins and freedom rides. If his repressed emotions do not come out in these nonviolent ways, they will come out in ominous expressions of violence. This is not a threat; it is a fact of history. So I have not said to my people "get rid of your discontent." But I have tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channelized through the creative outlet of nonviolent direct action. Now this approach is being dismissed as extremist. I must admit that I was initially disappointed in being so categorized.

But as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a bit of satisfaction from being considered an extremist. Was not Jesus an extremist for love -- "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you." Was not Amos an extremist for justice -- "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." Was not Paul an extremist for the gospel of Jesus Christ -- "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Was not Martin Luther an extremist -- "Here I stand; I can do none other so help me God." Was not John Bunyan an extremist -- "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience." Was not Abraham Lincoln an extremist -- "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." Was not Thomas Jefferson an extremist -- "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." So the question is not whether we will be extremist but what kind of extremist will we be. Will we be extremists for hate or will we be extremists for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice--or will we be extremists for the cause of justice? In that dramatic scene on Calvary's hill, three men were crucified. We must not forget that all three were crucified for the same crime--the crime of extremism. Two were extremists for immorality, and thusly fell below their environment. The other, Jesus Christ, was an extremist for love, truth and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment. So, after all, maybe the South, the nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.

I had hoped that the white moderate would see this. Maybe I was too optimistic. Maybe I expected too much. I guess I should have realized that few members of a race that has oppressed another race can understand or appreciate the deep groans and passionate yearnings of those that have been oppressed and still fewer have the vision to see that injustice must be rooted out by strong, persistent and determined action. I am thankful, however, that some of our white brothers have grasped the meaning of this social revolution and committed themselves to it. They are still all too small in quantity, but they are big in quality. Some like Ralph McGill, Lillian Smith, Harry Golden and James Dabbs have written about our struggle in eloquent, prophetic and understanding terms. Others have marched with us down nameless streets of the South. They have languished in filthy roach-infested jails, suffering the abuse and brutality of angry policemen who see them as "dirty nigger lovers." They, unlike so many of their moderate brothers and sisters, have recognized the urgency of the moment and sensed the need for powerful "action" antidotes to combat the disease of segregation.

Let me rush on to mention my other disappointment. I have been so greatly disappointed with the white church and its leadership. Of course, there are some notable exceptions. I am not unmindful of the fact that each of you has taken some significant stands on this issue. I commend you, Rev. Stallings, for your Christian stand on this past Sunday, in welcoming Negroes to your worship service on a non-segregated basis. I commend the Catholic leaders of this state for integrating Spring Hill College several years ago.

But despite these notable exceptions I must honestly reiterate that I have been disappointed with the church. I do not say that as one of those negative critics who can always find something wrong with the church. I say it as a minister of the gospel, who loves the church; who was nurtured in its bosom; who has been

sustained by its spiritual blessings and who will remain true to it as long as the cord of life shall lengthen.

I had the strange feeling when I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery several years ago, that we would have the support of the white church. I felt that the white ministers, priests and rabbis of the South would be some of our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of the stained-glass windows.

In spite of my shattered dreams of the past, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership of this community would see the justice of our cause, and with deep moral concern, serve as the channel through which our just grievances would get to the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed. I have heard numerous religious leaders of the South call upon their worshippers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the *law*, but I have longed to hear white ministers say, "follow this decree because integration is morally *right* and the Negro is your brother." In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churches stand on the sideline and merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard so many ministers say, "Those are social issues with which the gospel has no real concern." And I have watched so many churches commit themselves to a completely other-worldly religion which made a strange distinction between body and soul, the sacred and the secular.

So here we are moving toward the exit of the twentieth century with a religious community largely adjusted to the status quo, standing as a tail-light behind other community agencies rather than a headlight leading men to higher levels of justice.

I have traveled the length and breadth of Alabama, Mississippi and all the other southern states. On sweltering summer days and crisp autumn mornings I have looked at her beautiful churches with their lofty spires pointing heavenward. I have beheld the impressive outlay of her massive religious education buildings. Over and over again I have found myself asking: "What kind of people worship here? Who is their God? Where were their voices when the lips of Governor Barnett dripped with words of interposition and nullification? Where were they when Governor Wallace gave the clarion call for defiance and hatred? Where were their voices of support when tired, bruised and weary Negro men and women decided to rise from the dark dungeons of complacency to the bright hills of creative protest?"

Yes, these questions are still in my mind. In deep disappointment, I have wept over the laxity of the church. But be assured that my tears have been tears of love. There can be no deep disappointment where there is not deep love. Yes, I love the church; I love her sacred walls. How could I do otherwise? I am in the rather unique position of being the son, the grandson and the great-grandson of preachers. Yes, I see the church as the body of Christ. But, oh! How we have blemished and scarred that body through social neglect and fear of being nonconformists.

There was a time when the church was very powerful. It was during that period when the early Christians rejoiced when they were deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society. Whenever the early Christians entered a town the power structure got disturbed and immediately sought to convict them for being "disturbers of the peace" and "outside agitators." But they went on with the conviction that they were "a colony of heaven," and had to obey God rather than

man. They were small in number but big in commitment. They were too God-intoxicated to be "astronomically intimidated." They brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and gladiatorial contest.

Things are different now. The contemporary church is often a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. It is so often the arch supporter of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's silent and often vocal sanction of things as they are.

But the judgement of God is upon the church as never before. If the church of today does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authentic ring, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. I am meeting young people every day whose disappointment with the church has risen to outright disgust.

Maybe again, I have been too optimistic. Is organized religion too inextricably bound to status-quo to save our nation and the world? Maybe I must turn my faith to the inner spiritual church, the church within the church, as the true *ecclesia* and the hope of the world. But again I am thankful to God that some noble souls from the ranks of organized religion have broken loose from the paralyzing chains of conformity and joined us as active partners in the struggle for freedom. They have left their secure congregations and walked the streets of Albany, Georgia, with us. They have gone through the highways of the South on tortuous rides for freedom. Yes, they have gone to jail with us. Some have been kicked out of their churches, and lost support of their bishops and fellow ministers. But they have gone with the faith that right defeated is stronger than evil triumphant. These men have been the leaven in the lump of the race. Their witness has been the spiritual salt that has preserved the true meaning of the Gospel in these troubled times. They have carved a tunnel of hope through the dark mountain of disappointment.

I hope the church as a whole will meet the challenge of this decisive hour. But even if the church does not come to the aid of justice, I have no despair about the future. I have no fear about the outcome of our struggle in Birmingham, even if our motives are presently misunderstood. We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with the destiny of America. Before the pilgrims landed at Plymouth we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson etched across the pages of history the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence, we were here. For more than two centuries our fore-parents labored in this country without wages; they made cotton king; and they built the homes of their masters in the midst of brutal injustice and shameful humiliation--and yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to thrive and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands.

I must close now. But before closing I am impelled to mention one other point in your statement that troubled me profoundly. You warmly commended the Birmingham police force for keeping "order" and "preventing violence." I don't believe you would have so warmly commended the police force if you had seen its angry violent dogs literally biting six unarmed, nonviolent Negroes. I don't believe you would so quickly commend the policemen if you would observe their ugly and inhuman treatment of Negroes here in the city jail; if you would watch them push and curse old Negro women and young Negro girls; if you would see them slap and kick old Negro men and young boys; if you will observe them, as they did on two occasions, refuse to give us food because we wanted to sing our grace together. I'm sorry that I can't join you in your praise for the police department.

It is true that they have been rather disciplined in their public handling of the demonstrators. In this sense they have been rather publicly "nonviolent". But for what purpose? To preserve the evil system of segregation. Over the last few years I have consistently preached that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek. So I have tried to make it clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or even more so, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends. Maybe Mr. Connor and his policemen have been rather publicly nonviolent, as Chief Pritchett was in Albany, Georgia, but they have used the moral means of nonviolence to maintain the immoral end of flagrant racial injustice. T. S. Eliot has said that there is no greater treason than to do the right deed for the wrong reason.

I wish you had commended the Negro sit-inners and demonstrators of Birmingham for their sublime courage, their willingness to suffer and their amazing discipline in the midst of the most inhuman provocation. One day the South will recognize its real heroes. They will be the James Merediths, courageously and with a majestic sense of purpose, facing jeering and hostile mobs and with the agonizing loneliness that characterizes the life of the pioneer. They will be old oppressed, battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy-two year old woman of Montgomery, Alabama, who rose up with a sense of dignity and with her people decided not to ride the segregated buses, and responded to one who inquired about her tiredness with ungrammatical profundity; "my feet is tired, but my soul is rested." They will be the young high school and college students, young ministers of the gospel and a host of their elders courageously and nonviolently sitting-in at lunch counters and willingly going to jail for conscience's sake. One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters they were in reality standing up for the best in the American dream and the most sacred values in our Judaeo-Christian heritage, and thusly, carrying our whole nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in the formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

Never before have I written a letter this long, (or should I say a book?). I'm afraid it is much too long to take your precious time. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else is there to do when you are alone for days in the dull monotony of a narrow jail cell other than write long letters, think strange thoughts, and pray long prayers?

If I have said anything in this letter that is an overstatement of the truth and is indicative of an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything in this letter that is an understatement of the truth and is indicative of my having a patience that makes me patient with anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me.

I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith. I also hope that circumstances will soon make it possible for me to meet each of you, not as an integrationist or a civil rights leader, but as a fellow clergyman and a Christian brother. Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.

Yours for the cause of Peace and
Brotherhood,

Martin Luther King, Jr.