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MY DREAM

By

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Creative Non-Conformist

Not long ago, I spoke at Duke University in North Carolina. Most of the people in the audience were white, I talked about the mandates of the gospel, and at the end of the speech, a young white theological student said:

"You know, Dr. King, I agree with everything you said. I believe in it even more since I've come into theological school and studied the meaning of the gospel."

On all of these issues, he said, "I just wish I could do something about it. But you know I'm the pastor of a white church about 80 miles away from here and if I said anything like this, if I even talked about brotherhood from my pulpit, they would kick me out."

I thought about this young man. I considered his dilemma and I said to myself: "Here is a man who forces himself to take abuse because the majority opinion is against him. He is afraid to become a creative non-conformist."

I think Ralph Waldo Emerson in his essay on self reliance was eminently correct when he said, "A man cannot truly be a man unless he can be a non-conformist". Long before Emerson wrote these words, the apostle Paul, in his letter to the Roman Christians said, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Paul was saying, in substance, don't fear to dissent, for if you're going to be a Christian, take the gospel of Jesus Christ seriously, you must be

in spite of this prevalent attitude, the words of the apostle Paul ring across the centuries: "Be not conformed to this world." In other words, we as Christians are called to be men of conviction and not of conformity. We are called upon to be men of moral nobility and not men of social respectability. As Christians, we are called upon to live differently, to be loyal ultimately and only to Jesus Christ, and to His ethical insights.

The philosopher, Nietzsche, once said: "Every man is a hammer on an anvil." Are you going to be an anvil, molded by the patterns of society? Are you going to be a hammer, molding the patterns of society?

To put it another way, what are you going to be, a thermometer or a thermostat? Go to your house thermometer, look at it hard. You discover that it does nothing but record and register the temperature. There's another instrument. When you push it a bit, if it's 70 degrees and you want it to be 80, you push it up a little. That's called a thermostat. It not only records and registers the temperature, but it regulates the temperature.

Many people fear nothing more terrible than to take a position which stands out sharply and clearly from the prevailing opinion. You know most people are cowards at this point, and they just follow the crowd.

Then, another tragedy of the modern world is that we have

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Paul was saying, in substance, don't fear to dissent, for if you're going to be a Christian, take the gospel of Jesus Christ seriously, you must be a dissenter, you must be a non-conformist.

Many philosophical sociologists would say in substance that morality is little more than group consensus, and folkways are the right ways. Some psychologists would say that the most ready and accessible path to personality and emotional adjustment is through acting like other people.

So everybody seeks to walk like everybody else; think like everybody else and act like everybody else.

Success, recognition, conformity are what we often find ourselves seeking, and we feel that the best path to success is the path of conformity. But

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Then, another tragedy of the modern world is that we have ended up in an age of jumboism. We worship that which is big — big buildings, big cars, big houses, big corporations. We find our greatest security in bigness, big cities. This has all but led us to believe that we are safer when we take a position that is in line with the majority. And so we end up astronomically intimidated. Many of our white brothers all across the south really feel deep down in their hearts that the Negro should have a place in the sun of justice in America, yet they remain silent because they are afraid that the majority around them will criticize them and that they will suffer social ostracism. (ANP Feature)