

REF JSP

Southeastern News

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
Wake Forest, North Carolina 27587

P. O. Box 712
Phone (919) 556-3101

RODNEY V. BYARD
Assistant to the President

Home: 536 N. Wingate St.
556-1485

January 4, 1983

PROFESSOR IS PRISONER OF HOPE

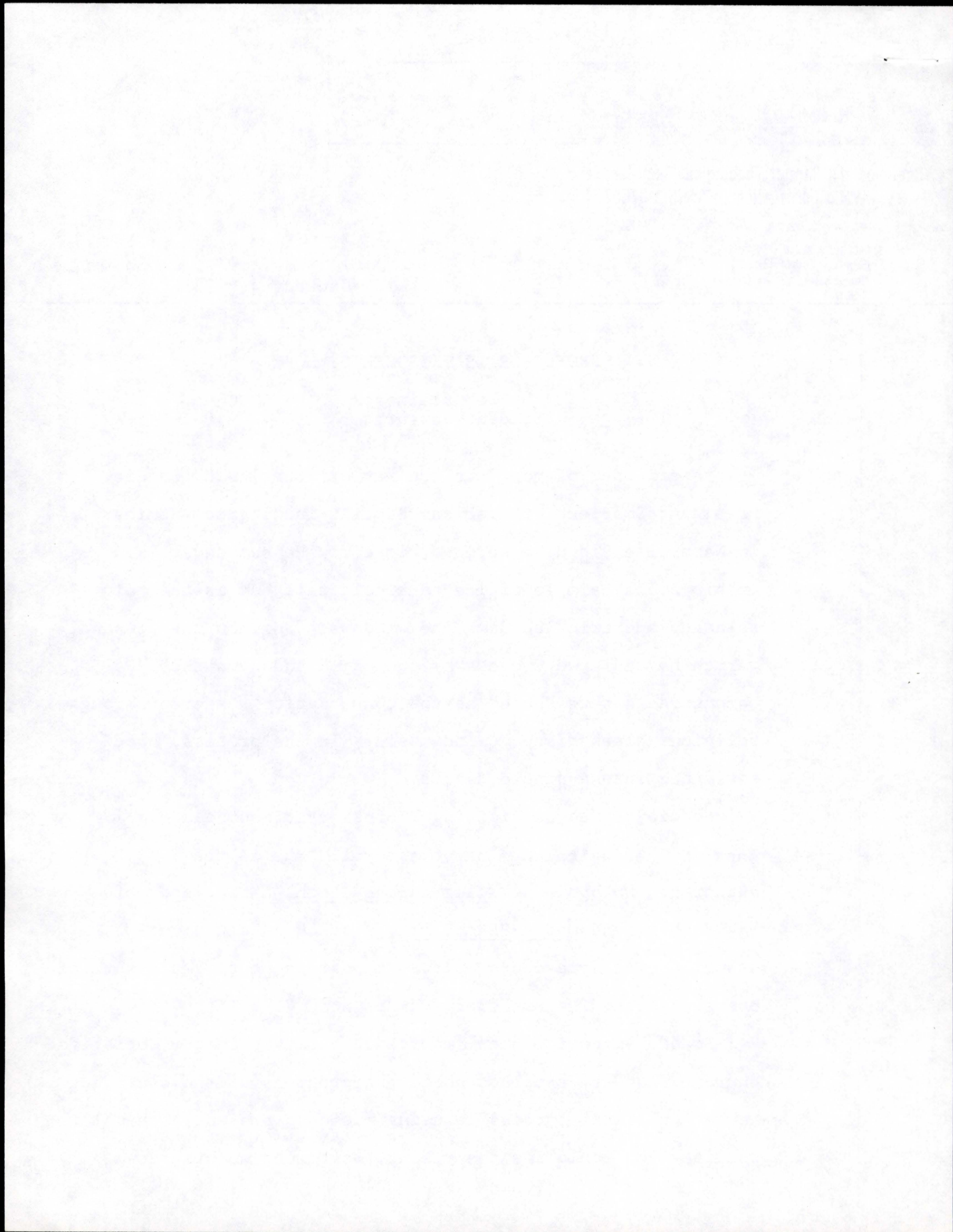
By Bob Stainback
Student Newswriter

"A prisoner of hope" is the way Dr. Charles E. Boddie, President Emeritus of American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville, Tenn. described himself. He sat and talked in his small, simple office on a cold fall day as the rain splashed and trickled down the windows. Somehow the personal warmth he radiated drove away the chill and dampness. He demonstrated that "hope" as the conversation wandered through religion, black history, and music. In the process, Boddie wove them into a single fabric.

Boddie served as Visiting Professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary last fall. He is the author of two books, A Giant in the Earth, a biography of his father, and God's "Bad Boys", a study of eight outstanding black preachers. At Southeastern he taught a special course called "The Preacher and His Song."

Boddie emphasized the importance of music in the Christian church. And as he talked about the progress of the class he taught and their success in using music to present a chapel service, you could see the rising excitement on his face

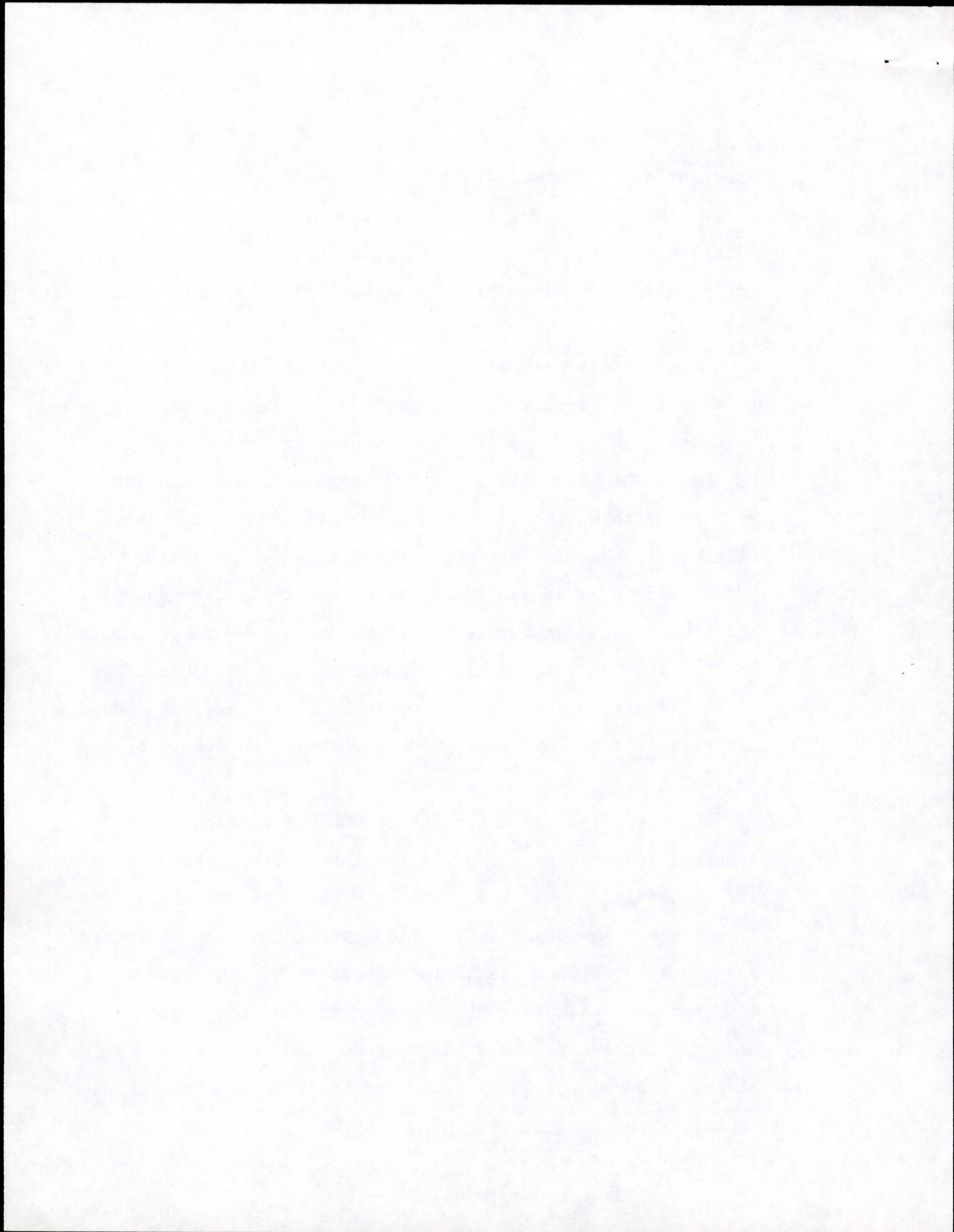
-more-



and hear it in his voice. He said the black spiritual has progressed from a song of "tribulation", to one of "jubilation", and now to one of "liberation", reflecting the stages of American history in which the spiritual has existed.

"Liberation" naturally imparts hope for the future, and Boddie believes there are grounds for feeling that way. He doesn't see any significant advances in the near future, but feels that change will come through a gradual process. He doesn't think integration can be easily defined or neatly packaged. "What is this word 'integration'?" he asked. "We've got to go beyond integration to intelligent good will and live." When asked whether there would be more cooperation and integration between his fellow black and white Baptists in the future, Boddie said it would be inevitable. He added, "It doesn't make any sense any other way." However, this, too, will be gradual, he explained.

But there is reason for hope. Boddie recalled aloud some of his experiences during the integration struggles of the 1950's and 60's, particularly those in Nashville, Tenn., where American Baptist Theological Seminary is located. Serving as president there since 1963, he has met some of the giants of the civil rights movement and seen history made. But the experience which seems to have made one of the biggest impressions on him occurred in Rhodesia and South Africa.



In 1970, Boddie was asked to serve in the African Baptist Evangelistic Campaigns sponsored by the Southern Baptist Convention in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. He preached for five weeks in South Africa, but it was far from an easy time. It seems that the South African officials were as paranoid then about their apartheid system as they are now. They purposely concealed the fact that Martin Luther King, Jr., had been a preacher as well as a civil rights leader, preferring to picture him as a radical. When Boddie mentioned King's ministry in a sermon to black South Africans, the authorities were angered and began to watch his movements more closely.

But this wasn't the end of Boddie's problems in South Africa. When his wife tried to join him there a few weeks after his arrival, she was lengthily interrogated by the authorities before they would let her into the country. Dressed like any other middle class American woman, it seemed that she did not fit their stereotype of black women.

Turning to other current world problems, Boddie said he still believes in the non-violence advocated by Martin Luther King, Jr., And that extends itself to the question of nuclear weapons. "I'm a pacifist," he said. Preferring to put his faith in God instead of guns, he said, "There's a power greater than nuclear." Once again the prisoner of hope was shining through. And the rain had stopped falling outside.

