Editorial Note

King submitted the following ten documents as part of the seventeen chapters included in his book of collected sermons, Strength to Love ¹ He originally discussed producing this book with Harper Brothers publishing house in 1957 but, due to his commitments to the Montgomery Improvement Association, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and to his pastoral responsibilities, was unable to complete work on the sermon drafts until early in 1963. King's sermon file and the collection of his papers at Boston University's Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center contain numerous drafts of each sermon he prepared for submission to the press. King first wrote out each sermon in longhand and his secretary, Dora McDonald, typed these drafts, which King amended by hand and then sent to Melvin Arnold, his editor at Harper. Those drafts were returned with comments, King further amended the edited drafts and resubmitted his revised versions for the book. The documents reproduced here represent the first typed draft that King sent his publisher and hence demonstrate close to the original language found in these sermons.

Arnold and Charles Wallis, another Harper's editor, made substantial changes to these drafts in the course of editing the manuscript. Most of their revisions were at the level of copyediting. However, these editors also modified King's words out of a concern that his prose was too hard-hitting or, in some cases, politically too radical. Arnold expressed similar worries about King's reputation when he edited Stride Toward Freedom, King's 1958 memoir of the Montgomery bus boycott. "I learned what the enemies of freedom and liberalism can do. Therefore, I made—and am now making—every attempt to see that not even a single sentence can be lifted out of context and quoted against the book and the author."² In particular, Arnold and Wallis muted King's criticisms of colonialism and capitalism, and his statements opposing war and the arms race.³ Their treatment of King's sermons significantly altered the tone and, in some cases, the intent. The editors' major textual deletions have been restored in the ten documents presented here and are printed in a different font. Other significant editorial changes appear in document footnotes.⁴

King ultimately agreed to these changes. He strove to have his spiritual message accessible to a wider audience, one that was already familiar with his political oratory, and to reinforce his identity as a religious figure as well as a social activist.

¹ We are publishing the first typed draft versions of ten of the seventeen chapters that appeared in the first edition of Strength to Love. Six of the remaining homilies are represented in this volume by transcriptions of audio-recorded sermons that King delivered as a mature preacher. "My Pilgrimage to Nonviolence," the final sermon published in the book, appears in the book, appears in earlier volumes (Papers 4 473–481, and 5 419–425). For the published versions of all seventeen sermons, see King, Strength to Love (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

² Arnold to King, 3 May 1958, in Papers 4 404.

³ For examples of these statements, see King, Draft of Chapter VIII, "Death of Evil Upon the Seashore," and Draft of Chapter IV, "Love in Action," July 1962–March 1963, pp. 489–491 and 490–491 in this volume, respectively.

⁴ See p. 468 for a sample of the copyediting alterations made in the first typed draft manuscript. Text enclosed in square brackets represents deleted or rewritten material. Insertions and other text changes are penciled in above and below the typed text line.

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5 The asterisk indicates that the first typed draft of the chapter is not included in this section