In discussing Communist theory in the early part of the sermon it was not clear to me whether you understood Communist materialism. The Communist theorists were definitely not materialists after the fashion of the Greek atomists. Marx's position was that the culture, thoughts, in fact, the whole life of man is conditioned (seems to use the word, determine, at times by the means of production by his relationship to {the} instruments necessary to the making of a living. This variety of materialism is very difficult to refute and is a very disturbing phenomenon. Whether a man stands in relation to the means of production as an owner or a mere user does make a difference in the way he thinks, acts, etc. It is exceedingly difficult to deny this and make it stick!

Most folk who speak of religion and the communist attitude toward it discuss the question out of context. What you said about the communist attitude toward religion was true. But you don't have a proper appreciation of the communist attitude toward religion until you read the history of the church in Russia. When you set Marx's attitude toward religion in the context of the history of the Christian church in Russia, the conclusion you reach is likely to be very sobering and will probably not make especially good sermonizing material.

Stalin would certainly not make the question of race a sub-point as you did on Sunday. With him it is a major point. It was he who as Commissar of Nationalities who wrote into the Soviet Constitution the proposition which makes the treatment of persons on the basis of race a national offence in the Soviets and it was he who argued that the Soviet Union would make a strong appeal to nations of the East—India, Japan, China, et al., if she established the reputation of dealing with all races on the basis of equality. Ref. to Stalin's book: "Marxism and the National and Colonial Question." I think there can be no doubt about it that the appeal of communism to the Eastern nations today can be traceable to a large degree to the Soviet attitude toward race. This is a strategic policy with Russia.

I have made these observations, but they by no means indicate a lack of appreciation for the fine job you did on Sunday.

Every good wish.

Sincerely,
[signed] Melvin Watson

ALS. MLKP-MBU: Box 117.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

Petition to the Boston University Faculty

18 September 1952
[Boston, Mass.]

Dean of the Graduate School Chester M. Alter granted King's petition to continue with course work although he had not yet taken the examination in German.
I am desirous of taking twelve hours toward the Ph D degree this semester in the Boston University Graduate School. My major field is Systematic Theology. At present I have completed twenty-eight hours toward the degree, and passed the French examination. I plan to take the German examination in October, 1952. I would have taken the examination before now, but I wanted to make sure that I had an adequate background in German before taking it. For the past two years I have been a close student of German. In the light of this I am fairly certain that I can pass the examination in October.

[signed] Martin L. King Jr.

ATFmS. MLKP-MBU: Box 117.

From H. Edward Whitaker

31 October 1952
Niagara Falls, N.Y.

Whitaker, King’s classmate at Crozer, writes about founding the first black church in Niagara Falls, New York.1 He refers to Walter “Mac” McCall and Samuel Proctor, both graduates of Crozer.2 Whitaker and his wife, Vivit, met King’s parents at a meeting of the National Baptist Convention.

Dear Mike,

How does it feel to be in school this year? Pleasant I am sure. It was my intention to have scribble a note before now, but this changing from the Center here has just about knocked me out. Things are beginning to settle down

1. Horace Edward Whitaker (1918–) received his B.A. from Virginia Union University in 1948 after being employed as an insurance agent in Virginia and serving in the army during World War II. After receiving his B.D. from Crozer Theological Seminary in 1951 he served as pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Niagara Falls, New York. In 1962 he returned to Virginia as pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Brooklyn and an area representative and minister for the American Baptist Churches. In 1971 Whitaker received his D.Min. from Andover-Newton Theological School. See Whitaker to King Papers Project, 13 April 1992.

2. McCall and King graduated from both Morehouse College and Crozer together, in 1948 and 1951, respectively. King met Samuel Dewitt Proctor (1921–) when Proctor visited Crozer to give a lecture. Proctor received his A.B. at Virginia Union University in 1942 and his B.D. at Crozer in 1945. In 1959 Proctor received his Th.D. from Boston University. After serving as pastor of Pond Street Baptist Church in Providence, Rhode Island, from 1945 to 1949 he became professor of religion and ethics at Virginia Union. He was promoted to vice-president in 1953 and president in 1955. In 1960 he became president of North Carolina A & T State University, where he remained until 1964. He then worked in the federal government and at several universities until, in 1972, he was called to the pastorate of Harlem’s Abyssinian Baptist Church after the death of its pastor, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. He has written several books, including The Young Negro in America (1966), Sermons from the Black Pulpit (1984), Preaching About Crises in the Community (1988), My Moral Odyssey (1989), and How Shall They Hear? (1992). See Proctor to King Papers Project, 18 November 1991.