times when as need to know that God is a God of love and mercy. When we are staggered by the chill winds of adversity and the battering storms of disappointment, when through our folly and sin we stray into some destructive far country and are frustrated because of a strange [homesickness?], we need to know that there is Someone who loves us, who understands, and who who can will give us another chance. When days grow dark and nights grow dreary we can be thankful that our God is not a one-sided incomplete God, but he combines in his nature a creative synthesis of love and justice which can lead us through life's dark valley to sunlit pathways of hope and fulfillment.

AD: CSKC Sermon file, folder 17, “A Tough Mind and a Tender Heart”

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

To William E. Newgent

20 October 1959

[Montgomery, Ala.]

In a 12 October letter, a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) asked King for biblical citations used by segregationists “to back up their stand.” King directs him to two passages, cautioning that their use is “a glaring misrepresentation of what the Scripture teaches.”

Mr. William E. Newgent

17-67th Avenue, S.E.

Washington 27, D.C.

Dear Mr. Newgent,

This is just a note to acknowledge your letter making inquiry of the passages of scripture that the segregationists use in an attempt to justify their position. One argument that they used is that the Negro is inferior by nature because of Noah’s curse upon the children of Ham. As you well know, this is a misinterpretation of an incident that is recorded in the Book of Genesis. The 17th Chapter and 26th Verse.

1 William Edgar Newgent (1914–2001) had previously written King a 20 April 1956 letter during the Montgomery bus boycott because he was concerned by reports that King had been asked to resign his Dexter pastorship. In his reply to Newgent, King responded that his congregation backed him “one-hundred per cent” (King to Newgent, 26 April 1956, in Papers 3:229).

2 In an undated handwritten outline King maintained that Christian ministers must “speak out on the segregation issue” because some individuals “attempt to justify segregation on the basis of the Bible” (King, “Why the Christian Must Oppose Segregation,” 1954–1964).

3 King refers to Genesis 9:24–25 “And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.”

4 “And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.”
of the Book of Acts is used also. It is the last part of this verse that is used which states "and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." You may read this whole passage and see it is a glaring misrepresentation of what the Scripture teaches. These are but two of the many arguments that are used.

Yours very truly,
Martin L. King, Jr.

To Samuel McCrea Cavert

27 November 1959

[Montgomery, Ala.]

Responding to a request by Pulpit Digest for a sermon on race relations, King declines, explaining that he had not had an opportunity to write out a complete sermon on this topic for several years.

Dr. Samuel McCrea Cavert
PULPIT DIGEST
159 Northern Boulevard
Great Neck, New York

Dear Dr. Cavert:

Thank you for your very kind letter of November 18, requesting me to submit a sermon that would be appropriate for either Race Relations Sunday or Brotherhood Sunday to appear in the columns of PULPIT DIGEST.

First, let me say how deeply grateful I am to you for inviting me to submit a sermon to such a significant publication. Unfortunately, however, I do confront some problems concerning the possibility of submitting the type of sermon you request.

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1. Cavert to King, 18 November 1959. Samuel McCrea Cavert (1888-1976) received a B.A. from Union College (1910) and an M.A. in philosophy from Columbia University (1914). In 1915, he obtained a B.D. from Union Theological Seminary. That same year, he was ordained as a Presbyterian minister. He served as general secretary of the Federal Council of Churches from 1921 until his retirement in 1954, when it was known as the National Council of Churches. In 1959, King accepted Cavert's invitation to join the Advisory Board of the journal's Religious Book Club (King to Cavert, 28 January 1959). Pulpit Digest contains sermons and articles to assist ministers in sermon preparation.

2. Race Relations or Brotherhood religious services focus on raising public awareness on race and other social issues. The National Council of Churches began sponsoring an annual Race Relations Sunday in 1922 to acknowledge the importance of interracial relations. King prepared a 10 February 1957 Race Relations Sunday message for distribution by the Council titled "For All—A Non-Segregated Society" (in Papers 4:123–125).