

RELIGION

SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK: **PROVERBS Chapter 23 & 24**



From The Pulpit to the Pews

by Mattie Ann Callier-Spears
(Taken From 1 Timothy Chapter 5 & 6)

These passages of scripture, taken from the book of 1 Timothy, should serve as a guideline on "How a Good Christian Should Act on Everyday Circumstances."

Never speak sharply to an older man or woman, but plead with him or her respectfully just as though he were your own father or mother. Talk to the younger men as you would to much loved brothers. Treat the older women as mothers, and the girls as your sisters, thinking only pure thoughts about them.

The church should take loving care of women whose husbands have died, if they don't have anyone else to help them. But if they have children, these are the ones who should take the responsibility, for kindness should begin at home, supporting needy parents. This is something that pleases God very much.

The church should care for widows who are poor and alone in the world, if they are looking to God for his help and spending much time in prayer; but not if they are spending their time running around gossiping, seeking only pleasure and thus ruining their souls. This should be your church rule so that the Christians will know and do what is right.

But anyone who won't care for their own relatives when they need help, especially those living in his own family, has no right to say he is a Christian. Such a person is worse than the heathen.

A widow who wants to become one of the special church workers should be at least sixty years old and have been married only once. She must be well thought of by everyone because of the good she has done. Has she brought up her children well? Has she been kind to strangers as well as to other Christians? Has she helped those who are sick and hurt? Is she always ready to show kindness?

The younger widows should not become members of this special group because after awhile they are likely to disregard their vow to Christ and marry again. And so they will stand condemned because they broke their first promise. Besides, they are likely to be lazy and spend their time gossiping around from house to house, getting into other people's business. So I think it is better for these younger widows to marry again and have children, and take care of their own homes; then no one will be able to

say anything against them. For I am afraid that some of them have already turned away from the church and been led astray by Satan.

Let me remind you again that a widow's relatives must take care of her, and not leave this to the church to do. Then the church can spend its money for the care of widows who are all alone and have nowhere else to turn.

Pastors who do their work well should be paid well and should be highly appreciated, especially those who work hard at both preaching and teaching. For the Scriptures says, "Never tie up the mouth of an ox when it is treading out the grain--let him eat as he goes along!" And in another place, "Those who work deserve their pay!"

Don't listen to complaints against the pastor unless there are two or three witnesses to accuse him. If he has really sinned, then he should be rebuked in front of the whole church so that no one else will follow his example.

I Paul solemnly command you in the presence of God and the Lord Jesus Christ and of the holy angels to do this whether the pastor is a special friend of yours or not. All must be treated exactly the same. Never be in a hurry about choosing a pastor; you may overlook his sins and it will look as if you approve of them. Be sure that you yourself stay away from all sin.

Remember that some men, even pastors, lead sinful lives and everyone knows it. In such situations you can do something about it. But in other cases only the judgment day will reveal the terrible truth. In the same way, everyone knows how much good some pastors do, but sometimes their good deeds aren't known until long afterward.

Christian employees should work hard for their employers and respect them; never let it be said that Christ's people are poor workers. Don't let the name of God or his teaching be laughed at because of this. If their employers is a Christian, that is no excuse for slowing down; rather they should work all the harder because a brother in the faith is being helped by their efforts.

Teach these truths and encourage all to obey them. Some may deny these things, but they are the sound, wholesome teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ and are the foundation for a godly life. Anyone who says anything different is both proud and stupid. (Finale in next week's issue)

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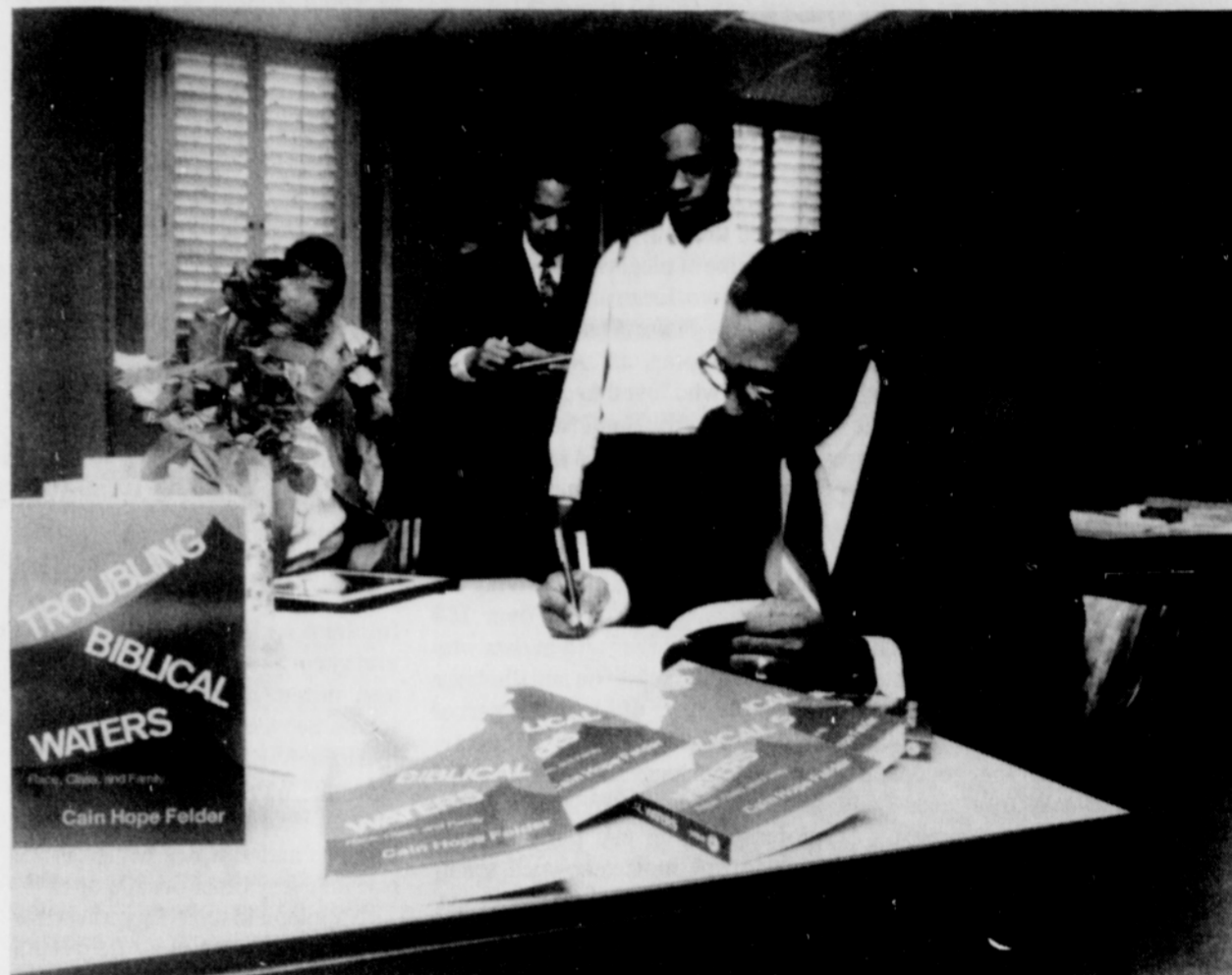
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How sweet the sounds of nature
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Where we have heard unknowing
The gentle voice of God.
Clay Harrison

Scholar Reveals Black Presence In Bible



by Henry Duvall
After eight years of research, Dr. Cain Hope Felder, a professor at the Howard University School of Divinity, has emerged with what has been considered a "landmark study" on blacks in the Bible.

"Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class and Family," recently released by Orbis Books of Maryknoll, N.Y., illuminates the presence of blacks in the Bible, providing "some sorely needed correctives....," says the author.

"The mistaken notion widely persists that the relation of black people to the Bible is a post-biblical experience," he notes. "Such historical distortions, created by Eurocentric scholars and missionaries to the detriment of blacks, have long been one of my concerns." The 233-page paperback, the author's first book, dispels various myths, especially the notion that blacks had no "substantive history" prior to 1600, says Felder in an interview.

"There is evidence of black influence in the shaping of biblical narratives thousands of years before Christ," he emphasizes.

In his book, the professor of New Testament language and literature says that after conducting studies in Egypt, he found the ancient Pharaohs of several Egyptian dynasties to be, for the most part black.

"Whether we call these Pharaohs black, Afroasiatic, or Negroid does not matter," he writes. "The substantive point is that they were not Caucasians."

He also points out in "Troubling Biblical Waters" that there is a strong presence of black people in the Old Testament. "Many of these passages attest to the greatness and power of African blacks participating in the salvation drama of ancient Israel," he maintains.

"It has always struck me as incredible that modern scholars have so much difficulty acknowledging the existence of black Jews before Jesus Christ." But he writes that the critical point is that "... if one considers the Hebrew exodus story as a historical event, we have to reckon with the fact that these liberated Hebrews were most probably a racially mixed stock of people -- Afroasiatics."

Felder also discusses the controversy surrounding the racial identity of the ancient Queen of Sheba, arguing in an entire chapter that evidence indicates that she was black and considered in some circles as "the queen of Egypt and Ethiopia."

"For centuries, Western scholarship (whether Jewish, Christian or Muslim) displayed a tendency to regard this queen as a legendary figure from South Arabia; usually there was also a strong implication that she was not a black African woman," he notes in the book.

Says Felder, who is also editor of the "Journal of Religious Thought" at Howard, "From all of the data surveyed thus far, it would appear that the ancient Queen of Sheba was indeed of Negro ancestry."

Studies in England as well as Egypt contributed to Felder's eight year research. His review of various literature has included several versions of the Bible in addition to a number of scholarly translations.

Asked why the black presence in the Bible has been ignored, the professor responds, "It's a subtle form of academic racism, which appears at times to be liberal, nominally Christian, but basically Eurocentric. It is engaged in falsification of history and undermines the whole notion of cultural and racial pluralism. We have consistently recast the personalities of the Bible into the likeness or images of the dominant racial groups of modern Western civilization."

The author also addresses the role of women in the Bible.

"There are commanding images of women in leadership roles. There is evidence in the New Testament that women have functioned as ministers."

Dr. Clarice J. Martin, a professor at the Princeton Theological Seminary, says Felder's book is "destined to change forever the way scholars, teachers, preachers, and all serious students of the Bible reflect upon, teach, and preach biblical narratives...."

"Troubling Biblical Waters" has been so well received that it is already in its second printing, according to Orbis Books, a small publishing house.

The book is primarily targeted to black church leaders and seminarians, as well as to the larger theological community, says Felder, who holds a Ph.D. from Columbia University. "I firmly believe that people need to 'trouble the waters' with perspectives and information not usually addressed by discrete theological curricula."

But the book is also intended to raise the level of discussion about the Bible among the laity, he stresses, maintaining that the laity has "a

hunger" for discussion beyond traditional Bible stories.

At a recent book party on the campus of Howard's School of Divinity, Felder greets students, scholars, clergymen and others who have come to buy his book. He has been at similar book-signing parties in such cities as New York, San Francisco and Dallas in addition to Washington, he notes.

Tim Lake, a 26-year-old Howard divinity student, says he bought Felder's book because it is "the most preeminent work of a black scholar in the area of biblical studies."

Ronald P. Jones, 39, chief financial officer at District of Columbia General Hospital, says, "You can't find much literature on religion and blacks." Adds the former student of the professor, who plans to return to divinity school, "The book will broaden my perspective of religion and give me a clear understanding of my role in a black ministry."

A woman at the party, who is struggling with five copies of the book in her arms, wants to examine his research on women as well as blacks in the Bible. "What I think he has done is lifted them out of the Bible and put them in a form that we can recognize," stresses Gloria Pendleton, 60, a retired federal government computer programmer, now a divinity student.

Says the Rev. Dr. Henry Ferry, a professor of church history at Howard, "I'm interested in what Cain has to say, especially because it illuminates the important aspects of early church history."

The author slips away from the autograph seekers and returns momentarily to his office, where four large book shelves containing an estimated 1,000 books loom over his desk. "All of these books are written by white people," he remarks. "You have black theologians and ethicists, but not many black biblical scholars. My book for the moment, unfortunately, is a lone voice."

Felder believes that one reason "Troubling Biblical Waters" is significant to the black community is that "black people are fundamentally people of the book (Bible)."

He explains in his book, "My intent is to 'trouble' the waters... and clear a new pathway that leads to the Bible as an indispensable tool for liberation -- sociopolitical and economic, as well as spiritual."

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