

Alice Ogden Bellis
Supplement to "The Bible in African American Perspectives,"
Teaching Theology and Religion, October 1998.

Sample Syllabus for a Course on The Bible in African American Perspectives

Course Objectives:

To introduce students to African American perspectives on biblical interpretation and to consider issues of ethnicity in the Bible. The perspectives in this course could be integrated into introductory Bible courses rather than being taught as a separate course.

Textbooks:

Felder, Cain Hope. 1991. *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress.

Thurman, Howard. 1981. *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Richmond, Ind.: Friends United.

Waters, Kenneth L., Jr. 1993. *Afrocentric Sermons: The Beauty of Blackness in the Bible*. Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson.

Other readings on reserve

Requirements:

Class Attendance and participation

Midterm and Final Exam (Essays)

One ten-page paper (topic chosen by student in consultation with professor)

Class Format:

The class will be heavily discussion oriented. Students must be prepared to discuss the assigned texts.

Course Outline:

Week One: Introduction

Introduction of participants
Explanation of Syllabus
Reading Assignment for week two: Part I of
Stony the Road We Trod

Week Two: Methodology

Reading Assignment for week three: Part II of
Stony the Road We Trod

Week Three: Hermeneutics

Reading Assignment for week four: Read the article on race in any
recently published encyclopedia

Week Four: Race

Reading Assignment for week five: Part III of
Stony the Road We Trod

Week Five: Ethnicity in the Bible

Reading Assignment for week six: John W. Waters' "Who Was
Hagar?" in
Stony the Road We Trod

Week Six: Hagar

Reading Assignment for week seven: Randall Bailey. 1995. "'Is That
Any Name for Nice Hebrew Boy?' in Exodus 2:1-10: The De-
Africanization of an Israelite Hero." In *The Recovery of Black
Presence: An Interdisciplinary Exploration*, edited by Randall C.
Bailey and Jacquelyn Grant. Nashville: Abingdon.

Week Seven: Moses

Reading Assignment for week eight: Alice Ogden Bellis' *Helpmates,
Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible*, 103-4;

Stony the Road We Trod, 135–36, 156, 179–80, 204; and Gene Rice. 1995. "Africans and the Origin of the Worship of Yahweh." *Journal of Religious Thought* 50:27–44.

Week Eight: Moses' Cushite Wife

Reading Assignment for week nine: Cain Hope Felder, "Ancient Ethiopia and the Queen of Sheba," in *Troubling Biblical Waters*, 22–36; and Alice Ogden Bellis. 1994–95. "The Queen of Sheba: A Gender Sensitive Reading." *Journal of Religious Thought* 51, no. 2:17–28.

Week Nine: The Queen of Sheba

Reading Assignment for week ten: Gene Rice. 1979. "The African Roots of the Prophet Zephaniah." *Journal of Religious Thought* 37:21–31.

Week Ten: Zephaniah

Reading Assignment for week eleven: Randall Bailey's "Beyond Identification: The Use of Africans in Old Testament Poetry and Narratives," in *Stony the Road We Trod*, 165–184.

Week Eleven: The View of Africans in the Hebrew Bible

Reading Assignment for week twelve: Clarice J. Martin's "The Haustafeln (Household Codes) in African American Biblical Interpretation: 'Free Slaves' and 'Subordinate Women'" in *Stony the Road We Trod*, 206–231.

Week Twelve: The Household Codes

Reading Assignment for week thirteen: Lloyd A. Lewis' "An African American Appraisal of the Philemon–Paul–Onesimus Triangle," in *Stony the Road We Trod*,

Week Thirteen: Philemon

Reading Assignment for week fourteen: Howard Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited*.

Week Fourteen: Jesus

Reading Assignment for week fifteen: Kenneth L. Waters, Jr.'s Afrocentric Sermons.

Week Fifteen: Preaching from the Bible with African American perspectives

Bibliography

Bailey, Randall C. and Grant, Jacquelyn, ed. 1995. *The Recovery of Black Presence: An Interdisciplinary Exploration*. Nashville: Abingdon.

Bellis, Alice Ogden. 1994–95. "The Queen of Sheba: A Gender Sensitive Reading." *Journal of Religious Thought* 51, no. 2:17–28.

Blount, Brian K. 1995. *Cultural Interpretation: Reorienting New Testament Criticism*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress.

Cannon, Katie Geneva. 1989. *Interpretation for Liberation*. *Semeia* 47.

Cartwright, Michael B. 1993. "Theology and the Interpretation of the Bible in the African American Christian Tradition." *Modern Theology* 9 (April): 141–158.

Copher, Charles B. 1993. *Black Biblical Studies: An Anthology of Charles B. Copher: Biblical and Theological Issues on the Black Presence in the Bible*. Chicago, Ill.: Black Light Fellowship.

Cone, James H., and Wilmore, Gayraud S., eds. 1993. "Part III: New Directions in Black Biblical Interpretation," in *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Vol. II: 1980–1992*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis.

Crockett, Joseph V. 1991. *Teaching Scripture From An African–American Perspective*. Nashville, Tenn.: Discipleship Resources.

DeYoung, Curtiss Paul. 1995. *Coming Together: The Bible's Message in an Age of Diversity*. Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson.

Douglas, Kelly Brown. 1994. *The Black Christ*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis.

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. and Paula Matabane. 1995. *Africa in the Holy Land: Significant Connections*. Washington, D.C.: Biblical Institute for Social Change. Videocassette.

. and Lawrence M. Livingston. Forthcoming. *Scandalize My Name: Rethinking the Image of Blacks in the Bible and Society*. Washington, D.C.: Biblical Institute for Social Change.

Hoyt, Thomas, Jr. 1986–87. "The African–American Worship Experience and the Bible." *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 14 (Fall–Spring): 1–22.

Jackson, Rogers W. 1992. "The Future of the Fourth Gospel" [African American context]. *Currents in Theology and Mission* 19 (August): 277–80.

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Rice, Gene. 1972. "The Curse That Never Was." *Journal of Religious Thought* 29:5–27.

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. 1995. "Africans and the Origin of the Worship of Yahweh." *Journal of Religious Thought* 50:27–44.

Sanders, Cheryl J. 1995. "Black Women in Biblical Perspective: Resistance, Affirmation, and Empowerment." In *Living the Intersection: Womanism and Afrocentrism in Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Thurman, Howard. 1981. *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Richmond, Ind.: Friends United.

Waters, Kenneth L., Jr. 1993. *Afrocentric Sermons: The Beauty of Blackness in the Bible*. Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson.

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