SENIOR ESSAY

HOW TO TEACH THE BIBLE TO BLACK TEENAGERS OF TODAY

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By

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PREFACE

This essay is an attempt to share with the reader some of
the experiences and observations that have been gained during the
writer's endeavor to teach the Bible to black teenagers in the MetrAtlanta area. Many of the methods, techniques, and procedures
were of an experimental nature, The responses, and reactions of
one group were compared with another group of teenagers in the area

The writer is deeply moved and most gracious for the privilege of being involved in such an endeavor. Thank God for the ITC and for the churches in which I was able to share the experience.

The writer would like to thank the following persons for their love and kindness which were shown to him during the preparation of this essay. Special thanks to Dr. Jonathan Jackson, Dr. I. R. Clark, Dr. Bennie Goodwin, Dr. Enoch Oglesby, Mrs. Cassandra Norman, Reverend Joe Washington, the library staff of both ITC and Martin Luther King, Jr. Libraries. Very special thanks to Mrs. G. Wilkes, Mr. Thomas D. Rogers and Mrs. McGhee, the secretary to the registrar.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the writer for presenting this paper has four mainfactors involved. First, he writes this paper and has chosen this topic because as a result of his seminary education, he has gained new insights into the nature, objectives, and task of Christian education, and has found that many of the Christian educators in the local churches in the Metropolitan Atlanta area have not been so fortunate as he has to have shared in such a seminary experience. Secondly, the writer has chosen the area of Bible study because it is agreed upon by most, if not all, scholars in Christian education that the Bible is the foundational source book for obtaining the nature, objectives, and task of Christian education, as well as principles for Christian living. Thirdly, the writer has chosen to deal with the black teenager because It has been the black teenager with whom he has had the opportunity to work, and his concern grows out of the realization of the need for such a project report. Another reason for his concern with writing this paper on the black teenager is because most of the literature that we have pertaining to teenagers comes out of a white orientation, and he believes that some attention should be given to this particular group of people, since little or no literature has been especially designed for them. There is a considerable amount of material that has been written on Black History, The Black Family, Black Literature and

Folklore, Black Employment, Black Education, Black Nationalism, and the "American Negro" in general. There can also be found writings on Black Community Life, Leaders, and Organizations, and a lesser amount on Black Children, but the written material on the Black Teenager is almost nil. Fourth and lastly, this writer has chosen to deal with the black teenager because it is during this period of life that church "dropout" becomes a critical problem, and at this time, the individual probably has a greater need for understanding life (on his part and on the part of the adults) and for spiritual guidance, than at any other time. He holds that many black teenagers become church dropouts for several reasons; (1) Many of those who attended church and Sunday School during their childhood did so because of parental inonly. (2) The methods of teaching the Bible in the Sunday School is seldom altered to meet the needs or hold the interest of the black teenager. The writer contends that the black teenager is exposed to the latest methods and materials for instructional purposes in the public schools, while many of our churches are yet using antiquated methods of teaching. (3) Because in many instances the relevance of the Bible for the life of a black teenager is so vaguely exposed and/or obscure coupled with obsolete teaching techniques.

The writer feels that for the continued growth and development of the black church, it is necessary to meet the needs of the black

youth of our society, and the black teenager in particular. He further believes that a change in methods, materials, theology, and approach is necessary for the retention of those young people who are already in the church and for the drawing power of the church to convert new teenage members. Since change is, to his way of thinking, one of the factors of growth, and growth is evident of life, if the black church is to continue to live and grow, it must learn how to deal affectively with "change." Black teenage youth are probably more easily geared to change than any other age-group in the church.

This paper limits its attempt to the suggestion of methods and materials for teaching black teenagers of this generation and to this Metropolitan area. However, there are within this paper certain basic principles that could be applied almost anywhere providing that they are adjusted to meet the needs of the particular situation. The concern of the writer is not only for the black teenager who has already confessed Christ and is active in a church situation, but it is also for the black teenager who is not a church member and who is not a Christian.

Furthermore, it is the concern of this paper to explore some of the factors which the writer considers to be most relevant to the issue of a methodology for teaching the Bible to black teenagers. Foremost among these factors are (1) the nature, needs, and aspirations of the black teenager, (2) the usefulness of the Bible to help meet these needs and aspirations, (3) the preparation and ingenuity of the teacher in presenting a viable teaching-learning situation, and (4) a sound theological interpretation of the Bible that will enhance the on-going appropriation of the Gospel to the end of realizing responsible Christian witnesses for the world today.

One of the problems that the human being has to wrestle with is the question of "Who am I?" and, "What is the purpose of my being?" This seems to be a greater problem for the black teenager than probably any other age-group. He has many unanswered questions; many fears about life; and he is not sure of whether he is an adult or a child. It is the conviction of the writer that the Bible does have meaningful anweres to many of the problems of life and especially for the black teenager.

METHODOLOGY OF APPROACH

The methodology of approach in this essay shall be of a threefold nature. First, the writer shall present data gained from a questionnaire that was designed in an attempt to discover some ideas about
what attitudes the black teenager already held concerning religion and
the church in general, and more specifically the Bible. The questionpaire also sought to discover what questions black teenagers would
like to ask concerning the Bible and its relevance or meaning for their
lives. Secondly, the writer shall present an exposition of the experiences and observations gained while working with the black teenagers
in the First Corinth Missionary Baptist Church of Atlanta, Georgia.
Thirdly, the writer shall present an analysis of other written materials (books, articles, etc.) that have already been done on the subject
of the black teenager.

A. Evaluative Methodology

Whenever an educator engages in a teaching-learning situation, he enters that situation with certain aims and objectives in mind toward which he strives diligently. In order to measure his effectiveness toward reaching these aims and objectives, the educator must use certain tools. Many of these tools will be discussed later in the chapter - Definitional Methodology. However, at this time only two

concepts will be considered in an effort to evaluate the progress of this project report thus far.

1. Growth Evaluation.

One of the signs of life or effectiveness of a project or idea is growth. There should be growth physically, psychologically, socially, and spiritually, if the endeavor is indeed progressive. Since the time this project was begun, one class has increased its membership by 100%. The Junior High class that was formed under this program met only in the Summer Vacation Bible School. It had the largest enrollment of junior highs in the history of the Vacation Bible School in this church and the attendance was approximately 98% average daily. The writer has cited here only the evidence of physical growth. He feels that on a short range plan, physical growth is one useful determinant that can readily be observed. Though social, psychological, and spiritual growth may be seen in the individual on a short range plan, he believes that it is not sufficient enough to evaluate the total effort.

2. Endurance Evaluation.

Another sign of life and effectiveness of a project or an idea is its ability to endure. The class with the senior highs is still operating remarkably well with a co-leader and a student leader making outstanding contributions to the over-all tone of the class. Due to other obligations, the writer was able to work with the junior highs in the

Vacation Bible School only. Even so, after two successful seasons the anticipation on the part of the pupils themselves is high and signs are apparent of a continued increase in enrollment this summer.

The writer asserts that the most accurate means of interpreting the effectiveness of an endeavor are found in the "total result" of that endeavor. He is in agreement with J. L. Lobingier, who holds that the result is a test of the effectiveness of the teaching. And that the whole process has to do with changes in young people's thinking, and in their insights and attitudes and character, so much so that things happen which otherwise would not have happened. (If Teaching Is Your Job)

B. Definitional Methodology

The definition for how the Bible was used to teach black teenagers in this project is interwoven with the writer's theology of teaching the Bible. But here, the reader will find what procedure and materials were used. The theology behind this method will come later in the chapter on Theology of Teaching.

1. How we used the Bible.

In this project, the writer used both an objective and subjective study approach. It was his intention to present the Bible as it relates to the total of life's experiences. The writer proceeded with the conviction that the Bible should be taught in the same manner as any other

discipline. Thus, the nature, development, canonization, and meaning of the Bible was taken into consideration. It was also held as a guiding principle by the writer that the Bible must be approached from the standpoint of its basis for Christianity, and its basis for religious knowledge which is inevitably bound up in faith. H. D. Gray states it, in this way, "The requirements of the scientific temper must result in critical study of the Bible. Equally, the requirements of the religious spirit must be met....when each contributes to the other the scriptures become vital to our lives, science giving accurate verbal form and historic setting, religion interpreting the whole under the guidance of God's Spirit." 1 Though the writer preferred The Living Bible, Soul Food (Illustrated New Testament), and The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha (RSV) as basic texts, many other Bibles and translations were utilized in the course of study. Below is a lists of some of the Bibles that were consulted and examined:

The Living Bible paraphrased: Christianity Today (Text)
The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha (Text)
Soul Food: An Illustrated edition of the Living New
Testament (Text)

The Vulgate
The Great Bible
Rheims Douai

King James

American Standard Version

Revised Standard Version

The New English Bible (New Testament)

The Anchor Bible

The Amplified Bible

The Jerusalem Bible

Good News for Modern Man
The New American Bible
The Common Bible
The Hexaglot Bible

2. How we conceived the black teenager.

When this writer speaks of the black teenager in this report, he is referring to that young black person who was born in America during the period from 1956 to 1962. In this report he has dealt only with the black teenager who either resides in the Metropolitan Atlanta area or who is a student in this area. The writer would like to mention again that, though, the greater part of the project report deals with Christian, church-attending black teenagers, the full scope of his concern encompasses those black teenagers who are not church attenders and those who may be indifferent or completely "turned off" by the thought of the church and religion; needless to mention the Bible.

However, there is a great deal of discrepancy as to what ages should be included in the junior high level, and senior high level. For example, Alice Cornell in her book, <u>Teaching Junior Highs</u>, includes grades 7, 8, and 9 with corresponding ages 12, 13, and 14. There are those educators who have even included the 6th grader in the junior high group. The American Baptist (Churches) Board of Education places grades 10, 11, and 12 in the senior high level with corresponding ages 16, 17, and 18. The writer has divided the ages and grades up in this manner; junior highs - grades 8 and 9, with ages 13-15; senior

highs - grades 10, 11, 12, with ages 16, 17, and 18; Junior college - grades first and second year, with ages 18 and 19. The writer takes all of these ages and grades into consideration, but this report will focus greatly upon the junior and senior highs.

C. Chapter Methodology

1. Questionnaire on the Black Teenager's Attitudes.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to ascertain information from the black teenager that would supply us with some insight into what and how he feels about the whole area of religion in general and specific data concerning his attitudes and interest or disinterest in the Bible.

The method of procedure used to distribute the questionnaire to the black teenagers who were members of several churches, college campuses, public schools, boys clubs, and pedestrians on the streets of Atlanta. The purpose of the questionnaire was explained to them and they were asked to answer the questions as best they could. They were told that it was optional whether or not they wanted to fill in their names on the questionnaire as we were not necessarily interested in their personal identity.

In almost every questioning session, the teenagers were serious, sincere, and very co-operative. At the end of some of the sessions,

we engaged in open discussion about some of the questions that were on the questionnaire and about other questions which they may have had about religion, the church, and the Bible. Some of these discussions were taped.

The evaluation of the questionnaire was based on the response it received from the black teenagers. This response was in the writer's judgment, about 65 to 70% positive. Some of the questionees were "turned off" because, (they said), it reminded them of a test. For this reason, the writer began to have discussions at the end of the sessions. The discussions were more interesting to them; they did not have to write anything, we got better participation, and we were better able to capture the emotions of each person as he responded.

2. Experience and Observations with the Black Teenager:

The experiences and observations of the writer were acquired over a two year period of work at the First Corinth Missionary Baptist Church. Although, this church served as a home base for the writer's project, he capitalized on his relationships with the teenage members of the New Springfield, Pleasant Hill, and Union Grove Baptist Churches. The writer was also able to gain some experience and observations from the youth department of the General Missionary Baptist Sunday School and B.T.U. Congress of Georgia. In spite of the fact that the congress convened for only five days during the month of July

each year, the writer feels that the conventions afforded him with an invaluable experience.

Most of the black teenagers, in all of the above mentioned institutions, were very sincere and enthusiastic about their role in the church and the community. The writer found that the attitudes and general knowledge about the Bible were similar in all of the situations.

They all felt that the Bible was of great value for their but they did not understand the archaic language and they had great difficulty deriving its meaning for their present day situation. One of the complaints was that not anyone seemed to be able to help them at this point.

We, at First Corinth, organized a Bible Study class with senior highs and older members that met on Saturday evenings a 6:00 P. M. Most of the members of this class were also members of the Young Men's Bible class which met on Sunday mornings and was a part of the Sunday School. Another Bible Study class was formed with the junior highs in the Vacation Bible School. Some of these pupils were church members but the majority of the class was not.

However, one of the desires of the writer is to witness a Bible
Study class for black teenagers in some organization or institution outside the church. Since many black teenagers simply do not attend
church, the writer believes that they may be reached through some
other organization. For example, the YMCA, YWCA, Boys Club,

Girls Club, or an independent class that was privately organized. The writer asserts that no matter where they may be reached, if there exists a genuine teaching-learning situation, then, there will be some changing of attitudes and eventually a greater number of black teenagers committing themselves to Christian living.

3. The Theology of Teaching the Black Teenager.

A. The Nature of Theological Teaching.

In an attempt to teach the Bible to black teenagers of today, the theological perspective of the teacher is sure to come to bear upon the interpretation of the meaning of the biblical message for his present situation and daily living.

In the Encyclopedia for Church Group Leaders,
Gable states that "Every time a Christian teacher
teaches, he is dealing with theology.......Yet as he
tells about God and his ways of working in the world,
he is talking theology. As he leads his pupils into an
understanding of God's revelation, he relates theology
to life."
H. D. Gray asserts that "....when a Christian interprets the events of life whether natural, physical, or social, that Christian is doing or talking theology....And belief, when carefully thought out and stated

in orderly fashion, is theology. "3 R. C. Miller says that "Theology, which is the truth-about-Godin-relation-to-man, is the determining factor in the development of a philosophy of education, of techniques to be used, of goals to be attained, and of nature of the learners to be taught." James H. Cone states that "Christian theology is a theology of liberation. It is a rational study of the being of God in the world in light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ." For the writer, the nature of theological teaching is one of interpreting, defining, clarifying, and rationalizing the truth about God and His creation as revealed through Jesus Chirst for the liberation of mankind.

B. The Method of Theological Teaching.

The method of theological teaching involves the same principles as the method of teaching any other discipline. It is the belief of the writer that any method of teaching is theological if it indeed is workable and enhances the teaching-learning situation. Motivation, communication, interpretation, administration, and

teacher-pupil, pupil-pupil, relationships are all involved in any method of meaningful successful teaching. Thus, when a real teacher teaches, he must take into account the pupils, their nature and needs, his role, and the objectives set forth. When he has earnestly done this, he must have through meditation, revelation, and preparation had an encounter with God. The writer further holds that in a genuine teaching-learning situation, both the teacher and the students learn and teach. They must relate one to the other on the basis of mutual love and understanding.

Paul Losh, in his book, <u>Teaching Senior Highs</u>, contends that the teacher should be able to identify the motivating forces in the pupils' lives; and must see himself in relation to their world; and must strive to find creative means with which to break through the barriers of the "youth culture." This, he says, call for <u>creative teaching</u>; using all of the resources of methods and materials that are available. R. C. Miller writes ".....Method is primarily the way in which the teacher assists the pupil to connect his situation to the relevant subject matter." He continues.....

"there is no sure fire method, just as there is no guaranteed subject matter in a given situation."6

The writer used a variety of methods. He chose to use methods in light of the objectives he wanted to accomplish and in light of his ability to use the methods creatively. He was mindful to always work for total pupil involvement. The pupils themselves took an active part in the planning of the outline for the course of study. There were seven key concepts that guided the planning and preparation for the class sessions. Those concepts were; variety, involvement, activity, relationship, creativity, preparation, and evaluation. The writer related to the class more as a group leader than as an authoritarian.

Below is a list of some possible methods of teaching. The writer used some of these methods.

They will be identified by the asterisk.

Methods:

^{*}Question-and-Answer

^{*}Open Discussion

^{*}Audio-Visual Aids

^{*}Lecture (was used sparingly and with discretion)

^{*}Role Playing

Group Work

Panel Discussion
Symposium
Observation
Flat Pictures
Buzz Group
*Debate
*The Story
The Project
Film Strip
*Drama
Art
*Music
*Developmental
Problem-Solving
*A combination of some of the above

C. The Purpose of Theological Teaching.

Whereas, the writer found no difference in the method of theological teaching than the method of teaching any other discipline, he is convinced that the purpose of theological teaching differs tremendously from the purpose of teaching in other disciplines. The writer asserts that the purpose for theological teaching is to be able to understand the meaning of God's revelation in order to discern meaning of God's plan for our lives. He holds that the purpose of theological teaching is to make man aware of God and to set himself in right relation with God. The purpose, the writer believes, is to give meaningful answers to life's problems. Theological teaching purposes to

answer the questions; "Who am I?" and "What is the reason for my being?"

In the book, The Objective of Christian Education for Senior High Young People, one objective is stated as..."To stimulate study, discussion and sharing of ideas and reactions."

Cynthia Maus states that..."The goal of Christian education is to produce, through worship, instruction and expression, groups of trained, consecrated Christian lives dedicated to the task of building in this world the Kingdom of God."

For the writer, theological teaching and Christian education are inseparable. The Cooperative Curriculum Project states the objective of Christian education as:

"The objective for Christian education is that all persons be aware of God through his self-disclosure, especially his redeeming love as revealed in Jesus Christ, and that they respond in faith and love--to the end that they may know who they are and what their human situation means, grow as sons of God rooted in the Christian community, live in the Spirit of God in every relationship, fulfill their common discipleship in the world, and abide in the Christian hope."

CONCLUSION

The writer will conclude this paper by mentioning the written material that he was able to find concerning the black teenager and finally, present his recommendation for what he believes to be of value to the black teenagers of the Metropolitan Atlanta area in an endeavor to teach the Bible.

1. Written Material on the Black Teenager.

The little material that the writer found available was not necessarily useful in the formulation of this report. Most of the material was articles found in the popular magazines and a few were found in educational magazines. The articles dealt with subjects ranging from gang wars to towns where teenagers apparently migrate.

However, some of the articles were informative and the writer was able to make use of some of the data gathered. Of the materials found, the writer feels that two articles deserve to be mentioned at this time;

(1) "Black Youth And Motivation," The Black Scholar, vol. 1, no. 5,

March 1970. The article was written by Alvin Poussaint and Carolyn Atkinson, who delve into the psychological and emotional aspects of motivational as well as the physical and external factors. The article explains why black youth have to be motivated in a special way in the American society. Another version of this same article appeared in

The Journal of Negro Education, vol. 37; pp. 241-251 (Summer 1968).

In this edition, spelled out the various aspects of motivation in gemeral and illustrated how the black teenager (youth) consciously or unconsciously adapts to social situations.

The second article is by Martin H. Jones and his son Martin C. Jones. The article, "The Neglected Client," The Black Scholar, vol. 1, no. 5, (March 1970), does not deal exclusively with the teenager or even the black youth as such. It deals with blacks in general who have need of counseling. But the writer found the central idea of the article very relevant for anyone who would teach or counsel black teenagers.

2. Recommendations.

The writer would recommend that the ITC institute a Community Service Program, wherein a seminar or classes could be held
(weekly, biweekly, monthly, quarterly, or on a semester basis) encouraging the participation of interested persons (Sunday School teachers, Superintendents, administrators, etc.) in the Metropolitan Atlanta area.

Why? The writer feels that we (ITC) should have more community involvement, in order to better influence the community toward Christian commitment. The writer feels that if the church as a body is committed to reach out, and go out into the community and into the

world and minister, how much more so should the ITC as a body.

The writer has met many persons in the Metropolitan area who are seriously interested in learning how to become more effective in their church work, but who do not possess the necessary academic requirements that would allow them to matriculate as regular students at the ITC. The writer has also met scores of persons in the Metropolitan Atlanta area, including church workers, who are totally unaware of the ITC, its purpose, and its resources. Lastly, the writer believes that due to the location and/or situation of this unique black institution, the community of which it is a part could benefit greatly from a Community Service Program.

How? Extend the Field Work Program so as to allow ITC students to serve as "lead teachers" or "co-teachers" under the supervision of faculty members. Some of the sessions could be held on the ITC campus and others in various church situations or they could rotate. Summer sessions could be extended to allow for participation from interested lay persons. A certificate could be issued to verify the fact that the participant had met the requirements of the course.

NOTES

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- 2. Lee J. Gable, Encyclopedia For Church Group Leaders. New York: Association Press, 1959, p. 23.
- Gray, p. 15.
- 4. Randolph Crump Miller, Education for Christian Living. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956, p. 5.
- 5. James H. Cone, A Black Theology Of Liberation. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1970, p. 17.
- 6. Randolph Crump Miller, "How To Use The Bible," South East Asia Journal of Theology, Spring 1970, vol. 11, p. 82.
- 7. The Objectives of Christian Education For Senior High Young
 People. National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA.,
 1958, p. ii.
- 8. Cynthia Pearl Maus, Youth And The Church. Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1919, p. 183.
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