

Scholar reveals black presence in Bible

By HENRY DUVALL
Special to the Chronicle

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 or 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 published 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 of 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."

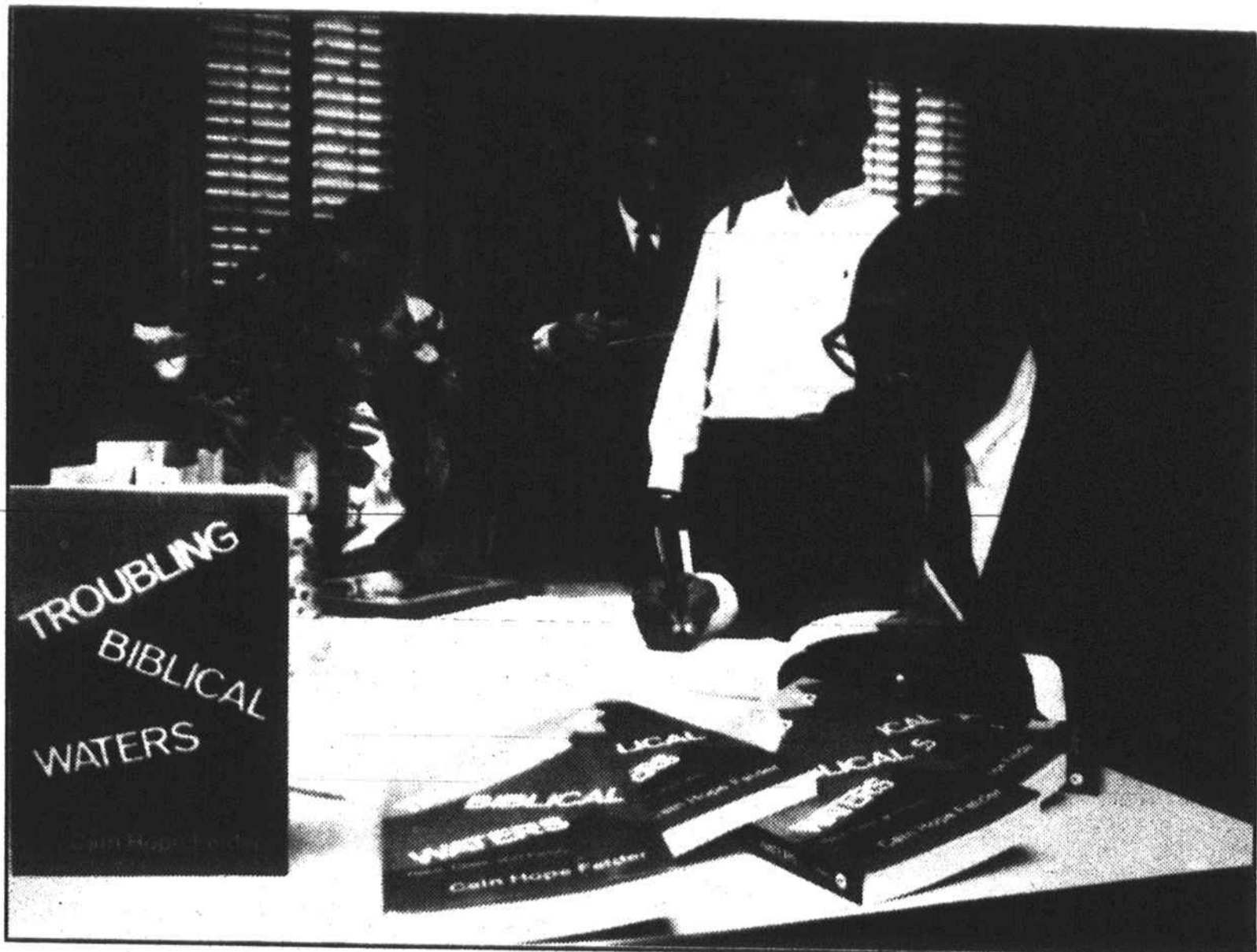
The author also addresses the role of women in the Bible. "There are commanding images of women in leadership roles. There is evidence in the New Testament that women have functioned as ministers."

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..."

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 black 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.



Cain Hope Felder of the Howard University School of Divinity signs autographs for his well-received book "Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class and Family." His book is considered "a landmark study" on blacks in the Bible.

Photo by Harlee Little

Open Door Apostolic Church celebrates 47th anniversary

Open Door Apostolic Church recently celebrated its 47th church anniversary.

Guest speakers for the celebration, held July 6 to 9, were Pastor Charlene Lewis, New Calvary Holiness Church in Mocksville; Elder Erwin McQueen, Friendship Temple Church of God In Christ in Greensboro; Bishop Lawrence S. Tate, New Faith Holiness Church; and Bishop Alonzo McCloud, Tabernacle of Faith Church.

A musical program, featuring several local and area choirs, was held July 22. Singers and choirs on hand for the celebration included the Maultsby Family Singers, Disciples of Faith, the L.S. Tate Spiritual Choir, the Fairfield Baptist Church Male Chorus, Thad Fisher and the Angels and the Calvary Hill Choir.

Elder Tony D. Williams was the host pastor; Mrs. C.L. Acker is the founder; and Bishop Tate is the executive bishop.



Mother Acker

Women's Auxiliary examines 'Challenge of Unfinished Task' during 76th session

The 76th annual session of the Women's Auxiliary of the High Point Educational and Missionary Baptist Association recently was held at New Calvary Baptist Church in Greensboro, with representatives from local and surrounding counties participating.

The pre-fellowship banquet was held at the Hilton Airport Hotel. Norris Ellington of Reidsville was crowned "King" for the 1989-90 period.

Annie Lewis of Winston-Salem was re-elected

president of the auxiliary. The Rev. J.T. Walker was nominated for Man of the Year honors.

The theme for the session was "The Challenge of the Unfinished Task in Christian Stewardship."

The theme song was "Look Where He Brought Me From."

The session ended with a candlelight service and memorials.

Women's Auxiliary of Rowan Baptist to hold 84th session

The Woman's Auxiliary of the Rowan Baptist Association will meet in Winston-Salem July 19 to 20.

The meeting will mark the organization's 84th session and will be held at First Baptist Church on Highland Avenue.

A banquet will be held on the

eve of the auxiliary meeting. Members of the Young Adult Missionary Department of First Baptist Church will host the banquet at Mount Zion Baptist Church.

The speaker for the banquet will be Dr. Lillie M. Jones, associate superintendent of the High Point City Schools.

The theme for the session is "Amending the Defectives."

Dr. Jay R. Butler is the moderator and Marian H. Bass is president of the auxiliary.

There will be planned programs throughout the session for youth, young adults and the senior departments.

Church Calendar

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• Pitts Memorial Missionary Baptist Church will hold weekly prayer services every Tuesday night at 7 and Bible study classes every Thursday night at 7. The teacher for the Bible study classes is the Rev. Henry Massey of Morning Star Baptist Church. Dr. B.H. Bonham Sr. is host pastor. For more information call 784-5737.

• PRO-Families services will be held at St. Peter's Church of God Apostolic every second Sunday of the month at 6 p.m. The focus will be on bringing back the strong family structure through prayer, education and fellowship. The program is free and open to the public.

• Noon prayer is held every Tuesday at St. Peter's World Outreach Center, 1031 N. Highland Ave. Morning Bible study is held every Wednesday at 10:30 a.m.

• The Saints Home Day Care Center is now accepting applications for children, ages 2 to 5. The day care center is state-licensed and certified. Hours of operation are 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. For more information call Mary Bitting at 721-1969.

• The St. Phillips Day Care Center is now accepting applications for the ages 2 to 5. The day care center is state-licensed and certified. Hours of operation are 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. For more information call Linda Wright 723-5270.

• There will be a free medical clinic operated by doctors from Bowman Gray and nurses from the Public Health Department held at First Baptist Church at Fifth and Spruce streets on the first Tuesday of each month. Private physicians also operate a free clinic held at Trinity Moravian Church on the first and third Thursday of each month. Both locations are open from 6 to 8 p.m. For more information call 724-7875.

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