

Black Love Affair with the Bible

By Norm R. Allen Jr.

According to a story reported in the May 14, 2014 issue of *The Challenger* of Buffalo, Black people take the Bible more seriously than most other groups. The American Bible Society's fourth annual State of the Bible survey found that African Americans were more "Bible friendly" than other groups. African Americans were leaders in the use of technology in perusing the Bible, and they read the Bible more than other groups.

African Americans were leaders in accessing the Bible with cell phones and computer tablets and downloading Bible apps on their phones. Moreover, they reported a higher percentage of frequent Bible readers than other groups in the last year. The survey was conducted by the Barna Group for the American Bible Society.

How's this working out for us? Obviously, there are theological, sociological and historical implications of these findings. If God exists, and Black people are closer to God than other groups, a reasonable person would expect Black people to be better off than less godly groups.

However, such is not the case. Despite Black people's constant prayers, belief in faith healers and reliance upon the Bible, we continue to get sicker and die sooner than our less godly counterparts. We continue to suffer from violence more than those less likely to read the Bible. We continue to be on the bottom rungs of the socio-economic ladder.

When White conservatives maintain that God is on their side, they cite as evidence their wealth, power, control of natural resources, military might, etc. On the other hand, the best that religious Blacks can do to argue their case is to assert the belief that God has helped us to *survive* the White supremacist onslaught. Seriously? Is this the best that an all-powerful God can do for those that have been his most loyal followers? This all brings to mind the late Black philosopher William Jones' question, "Is God a White Racist?"

How is this obsession with the Bible serving Black people scientifically? We continue to be on the bottom scientifically. The 2009 National Assessment of Education Progress found that 71 percent of Black high school students scored below the basic knowledge level in science. Only four percent were proficient. Only 10 percent of Black fourth graders were proficient. If we spent less time on the Bible and more time reading science books and downloading science apps, we just might be able to work our way out of this predicament.

The Bible is filled with passages condoning sexism and homophobia, and the Black community is not immune to these evils, to say the very least. In Africa, especially in nations such as Uganda and Nigeria, homophobia is even much more pronounced than in Black America. It would seem that less Bible reading and more emphasis upon legitimate human rights would be the antidote to this madness.

This all raises another important question: Why are less religious nations doing so well? The economies of China and Japan are booming. Scandinavian nations continue to lead the world in quality of life indicators. Europe continues to be peaceful and prosperous. Black religious fanatics

continue to claim that Black people suffer because we have turned away from God (despite all evidence to the contrary, such as the aforementioned Barna survey.) Yet other nations that have turned away from God are doing quite well. What's up with that?

Many Blacks continue to claim that God guided Blacks through the abolition of slavery and the success of the civil rights movement. However, all of the success that we have had can be explained in terms that are clearly and strictly human. Human beings abolished slavery when they spoke, organized, fought, bled and died to end it. There was nothing at all magical or mysterious about it. This is how people make progress.

Similarly, during the civil rights movement, human beings organized, sang, marched, went to jail, bled and died for their freedom. There is no evidence that any God had anything whatsoever to do with the success of that movement. No miracles of a religious nature were reported by the media or any other credible source.

There are two more questions that we need to answer. 1. When is God going to destroy America, as the Nation of Islam (NOI) has been predicting since 1930? 2. When will Black people actually get to the Promised Land, wherever that might be?

Bible friendliness does not seem to be serving Black people very well. A perfect God should have blessed us many times over by now. Yet we still suffer like no other people. Maybe it is time for some Black *hostility* toward the Bible for a change.