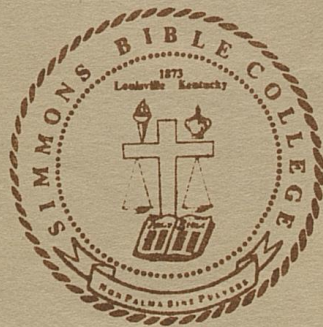


# First Founders' Day Lectures

**Simmons Bible College**

1811 Dumesnil Street  
Louisville, Kentucky 40210

**November 1-2, 1983**



**Reverend B. F. Green, D. D., Moderator**  
*The General Association of Baptists in Kentucky*

**Reverend A. R. Lasley, D. D., Chairman**  
*Board of Trustees, Simmons Bible College*

**Reverend W. J. Hodge, D. D.**  
*President*

**Reverend K. W. Cosby, Chairman**  
*Simmons Founders' Day Committee*



# Opening Session

Tuesday, November 1, 1983

11:00 A.M.

Dr. W. J. Hodge, Presiding

Congregational Singing

Scripture and Prayer ..... Dr. H. D. Cockerham, Pastor  
Zion Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky

Statement of Purpose ..... Dr. W. J. Hodge

Words of Welcome ..... Dr. B. F. Green, Moderator  
The General Association of Baptists in Kentucky

Dr. A. R. Lasley, Chairman  
Board of Trustees, Simmons Bible College

Offertory Appeal

Introduction of Lecturer ..... Rev. Henry Jones, Pastor  
Consolidated Baptist Church, Lexington, Kentucky

Solo ..... Mrs. Mary Virginia Beasley

## *"On Preaching"*

Dr. W. A. Jones, Jr., Pastor

Bethany Baptist Church, Brooklyn, New York

Solo ..... Mrs. Mary Virginia Beasley

Workshop Information ..... Rev. K. W. Cosby

Closing Hymn ..... *"Blest Be The Tie That Binds"*

Benediction

Lunch 12:30 P.M.

## Tuesday Afternoon Session

2:00 P.M.

### WORKSHOPS

#### A. RESOURCES FOR PREACHING

Panelists—Dr. K. L. Moore, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Frankfort, Kentucky and  
Chairman of the State Mission Board.

Dr. A. Russell Awkard, Pastor, New Zion Baptist Church, Trustee,  
Simmons Bible College.



**B. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN THE BLACK CHURCH**

Panelists—Rev. Claude R. Royston, Pastor, Greater Salem Baptist Church; Trustee, Simmons Bible College.

Dr. Anthony Brooks, Pastor, Seventh Street Baptist Church, Henderson, Kentucky.

**C. MUSIC MINISTRY IN THE BLACK CHURCH**

Panelists—Dr. J. C. Pyles, Pastor, Pleasant View Baptist Church; Instructor, Simmons Bible College.

Rev. Phillip L. Hodge, Sr., Pastor, Eastview Baptist Church, member, Publishing Board, American Baptist Newspaper.

**D. COPING WITH GRIEF**

Panelists—Dr. Andrew Lester, Professor of Psychology and Religion; Author of Pastoral Care in Crucial Human Situations, Sex is More Than a Word, It Hurts So Bad, Lord!, Understanding Aging Parents and Coping With Your Anger: A Christian Guide.

Dinner 4:30 P.M.

**Tuesday Evening Session  
7:00 P.M.**

**Rev. K. W. Cosby, Presiding**

Congregational Singing	
Scripture & Prayer .....	Rev. Clark Wright, Pastor Mount Nebo Baptist Church, Shallowford, Kentucky
Announcements	
Offertory Appeal	
Introduction of Speaker .....	Dr. G. M. Smith, Pastor Evergreen Baptist Church, Lexington, Kentucky
Music .....	The Edward Singers

***“The Black Church In Contemporary Society”***

**Rev. Charles H. Smith  
Washington, D.C.**

Music .....	The Edward Singers
Remarks	
Closing Hymn .....	<i>“Blest Be The Tie That Binds”</i>
Benediction	



**Wednesday Morning  
November 2, 1983**

**Alumni Breakfast (Free)**

Holiday Inn  
4110 Dixie Highway  
8:30 A.M.

10:00—10:50 A.M.

*“How Simmons May Best Serve Our Churches”*  
The President and Pastors

**Wednesday Morning Session  
11:00 A.M.**

Rev. K. W. Cosby, Presiding

Congregational Singing

Scripture and Prayer ..... Rev. Ronald Bobo, Pastor  
Bates Memorial Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky

Announcements

Offertory Appeal

Introduction of Speaker ..... Dr. G. M. Smith, Pastor  
Evergreen Baptist Church, Lexington, Kentucky

Solo ..... Mrs. Mary Virginia Beasley

*“The Black Church in Contemporary Society”*

Rev. Charles H. Smith  
Washington, D.C.

Music

Remarks

Closing Hymn ..... *“Blest Be The Tie That Binds”*

Benediction

Lunch 12:30 P.M.

**Wednesday Afternoon Session  
2:00 P.M.**

Workshops (see Tuesday afternoon session for description)

Dinner 4:30 P.M.



**Wednesday Evening Session  
7:00 P.M.**

**Dr. W. J. Hodge, Presiding**

Congregational Singing  
Scripture and Prayer . . . . . Dr. Thurmond Coleman, Pastor  
First Baptist Church, Jeffersontown, Kentucky

Announcements  
Offertory Appeal  
Music . . . . . The Ensemble  
Introduction of Speaker . . . . . Rev. Henry Jones, Pastor  
Consolidated Baptist Church, Lexington, Kentucky

Solo . . . . . Rev. Phillip Hodge, Sr.

***“On Preaching”***

**Dr. W. A. Jones, Jr., Pastor  
Bethany Baptist Church, Brooklyn, New York**

Music . . . . . The Ensemble  
Remarks  
Closing Hymn . . . . . *“Blest Be The Tie That Binds”*  
*Benediction*

**Founders’ Day Committee**

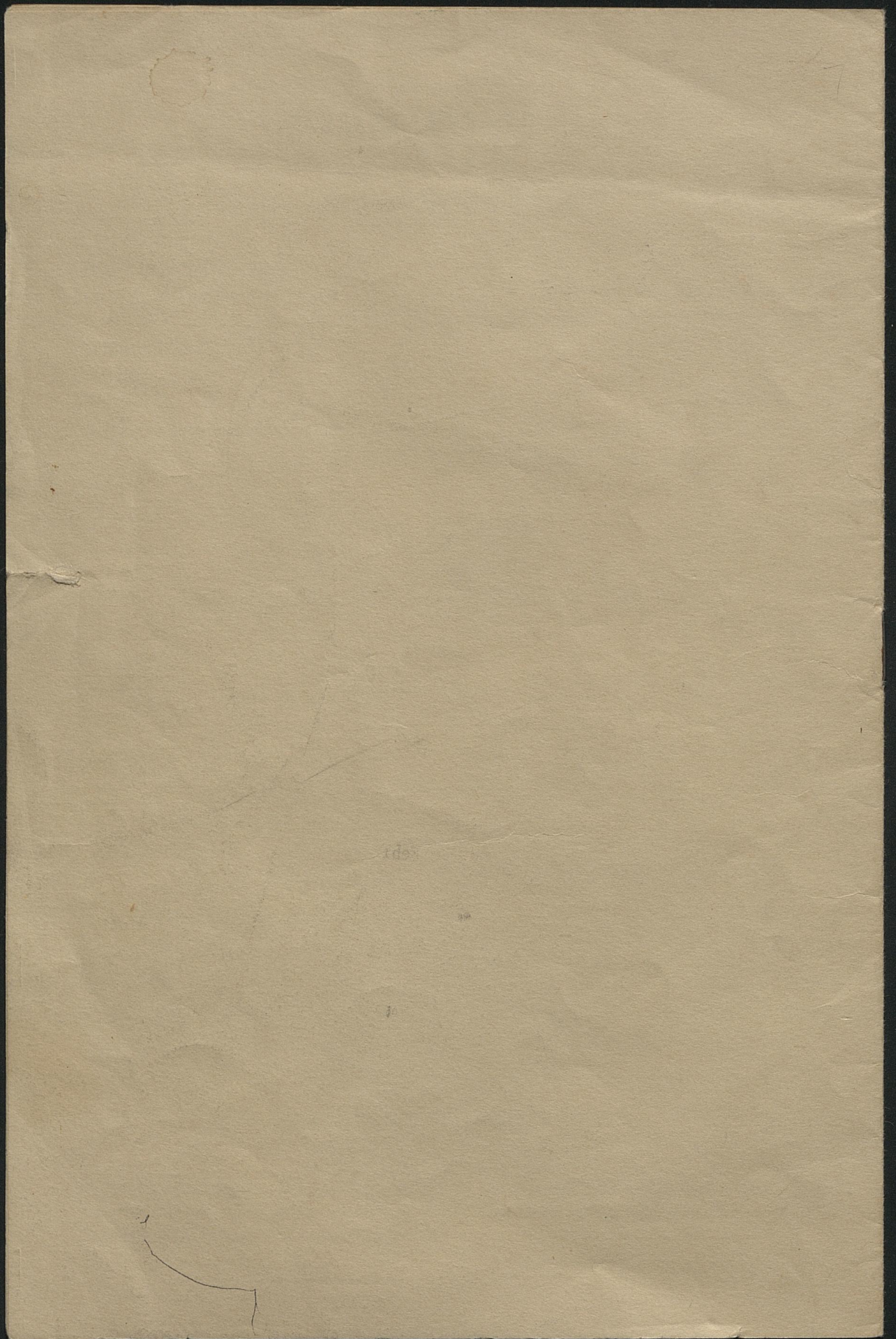
Kevin Cosby, Chairman  
Henry W. Jones  
H. Reece  
C. Mackey Daniels

G. M. Smith  
A. R. Awkard  
K. L. Moore  
W. J. Hodge

\* \* \* \* \*

Pre-Registration: Friday, Oct. 14-31st, at \$10.00 per person. Late registration, Nov. 1-2, 8:30 a.m.—10:30 a.m., \$15.00 per person. All registration at the school. Make all checks payable to Simmons Bible College for Founders’ Day.







FOUNDER'S DAY LECTURES

SIMMONS UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY 11/1/83

The Role of the Black Church in Contemporary Society

Delivered in Honor of The Late Dr. T.H. Smith  
by his son, Charles H. Smith, Pastor Emeritus of the  
First Baptist Church of Huntington, West Virginia;  
Political Director of the John Glenn Presidential Cam-  
paign Committee.



## INTRODUCTION

President Hodge, members of the faculty, Board of Trustees, student body, and that great body of angels from across the Commonwealth of Kentucky, it is a unique privilege for me to be in your presence today. Your invitation for me to speak on this, your Founder's Day, and in honor of my sainted father, Dr. Thomas H. Smith and Dr. Miller, sets a high mark in my catalogue of rewarding experiences. Flanked by two of Kentucky's great pastors, my dear brothers, Dr. G.M. Smith and Dr. Horace Ray Smith, who stand as visible testimony of my father's spirit, I am indebted to them for the fellowship and wisdom and service to Kentucky.

Simmons University was a sacred word in my home. My eldest sister, Mary, was graduated from its College of Arts and Sciences. My father received his B.Th. in 1934. Dr. Charles Parrish, Sr., who served this institution from 1918 to 1931, was born on a plantation, a few miles from Lexington, and came to Louisville with \$1.00 in his pocket and a burning desire to get an education. He was given the job of janitor at Simmons, and seven years later was graduated as valedictorian of its first college class. On April 8, 1931, he was funeralized at the Walnut Street Baptist Church. His life had impacted my father's theological and spiritual development to the extent that I was named after him, being born four days after his death.



Each of the eight living children in the Smith family have been able to build our lives on a platform, provided by our parents, Tom and Helen Smith. And all eight join in the chorus and acclaim:

"May God be the glory for the things He have done."

The overall theme of these two lectures is:

"The Role of the Black Church in Contemporary Society."

May I suggest that we examine and determine a biblical basis for any role that will subject to activities pursued in these distressing times. A revisit of these cornerstone premises is a must, particularly at a time when far too many people and institutions are retreating from the historical, non-transferable role of the church, who must at all times, fight the satanic and subterranean forces of this world.

In that masterful metaphor recorded by Matthew, an element of authenticity, as well as accountability, is implied for the church:

"Ye Are the Salt of the Earth,  
Ye Are the Light of the World"

Matt 5:13-14

Therefore, let the church be the church. The church has a contract signed and sealed and being properly monitored and administered by the Holy Spirit. Its terms and conditions cannot be renegotiated by sages of each passing generation.



Some would lead us to believe that we can have a contract without conflict. The devil is still operative in the marketplace, attempting to dominate this period of history. We must therefore have a vision of this world, as well as a vision of our Father's House. We are the children of the earth, as well as the children of destiny. Because we are victims of an irrepressible constraint known as "a call," we must constantly retreat to the mountaintop to recapture the vista, the view, the perspective, the relationship of the physical to the spiritual. Jesus would consider this focusing, determining the mission, assessing the resources, strategizing and formulating the plan and timing the activities.

This retreat will allow us to look again at this beautiful, magnificently-crafted world in which we live. We, like the Psalmist, must always have a vision of it and be constantly reminded:

This is my Father's world  
And to my list'ning ears,  
All nature sings, and 'round me rings  
The music of the spheres.

This is my Father's world  
I rest me in the thought  
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas  
His Hand the wonders wrought.

This is my Father's world  
O let me ne'er forget  
That though the wrong seem oft so strong  
God is the Ruler yet.  
This is my Father's world.



The battle is not done;  
Jesus who died shall be satisfied  
And earth and heaven be one.

Babcock

We, as leaders of the oppressed, must never allow ourselves to slip unconsciously into the notion that this land, this nation, this earth belongs to any special, privileged group. We too often resign ourselves to allowing the majority to possess the land, establish our values, carve out our turf, and manipulate our involvement. We must say over and over again:

"This is my Father's world."

God created the heavens and the earth; He employed the Spirit to move on the face of the water. Light, darkness, seas, grass, herbs, trees, and the stars that sparkle in their diadems, all were planned and executed by orders given in the archives of Heaven. It was God who said,

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the seas, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them".

Gen 1:26-27



When any group, race, or creed, or form of government, inhibits our people from participating equally in the dominion, it is in direct violation of Heaven's edict.

The word "dominium" comes from the Latin noun dominium. It means sovereign or supreme authority; the power of governing and controlling. Nowhere in the Scriptures will you find this power relegated to a particular race, creed, or color. To premise our discussion, the biblical basis must go back to the dawn of creation and to man's earthly mission: to become stewards of God's magnificent creation. It is man's insatiable thirst to be superior one over the other, and to allow Satan to distort his mind with delusions of race superiority that have triggered generations of hatred, oppression, poverty, and greed.

The golden strand of Messianic hope runs throughout the Old Testament, promising a deliverer to those that have been victims of the "dominion mania". Those who have been oppressed by rulers of the darkness of this world. The promise of the Old Testament was a Child, a Deliverer, a Balm in Gilead, a Rock in the weary Land, a Fortress, a Wheel in the middle of a Wheel, a Bridge over deep Waters, a Shelter in the time of Storms, a Healer, a Waymaker, a Light in Darkness, a Bright and Morning Star, a Savior who can protect within and without.

The appearance of Christ, the Promised One to the oppressed, was born symbolizing his identification with the oppressed, the segregated, the down-trodden, the poor, the underclass. He was born in a stable,



and cradled in a manger (equivalent of a ghetto alley) because there was no room for them in the inn. There was a housing shortage and lack of medical services. Jesus continued his symbolic identification in order to send the proper signals by submitting himself to the conditions of sinners when he asked John the Baptist to baptize him. God suffered his Son to be led up into the wilderness for a pre-conditioning seminar. It too was designed to send signals to a world ready to engulf Him in its "dominion maniac sickness." This sickness would seek to divert Jesus from the reality of his mission with the poor. However, Jesus' refusal to turn the stone into bread, or to worship the tempter, or to throw himself from the pinnacle of the Temple (Luke 4:3-12) may be interpreted as the Master's refusal to identify himself with any of the available systems of oppressive, self-glorifying power. The message was to be clear. He was the "suffering servant."

The experience in the wilderness was a private encounter with the Master's greatest adversary, Satan. However, Jesus was bent on making a public declaration as to Who sent Him, Why He was sent, What was His message, and for whom. The Master went home to Nazareth, where He was brought up. Nazareth, the Newark, New Jersey; the Harlem, New York; the Watts of Los Angeles; the South Side of Chicago; the Dewease Street of Lexington. Nazareth, the poor, downtrodden, forgotten, under-class inhabited city of Galilee. It was there that Christ issued His MISSION STATEMENT:



"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Luke 4:18-19

Let us always be mindful of the For Whom:

\*Brokenhearted

\*Captives

\*Blind

\*Bruised

The New Testament Church (ecclesia) is the one and only ordained, Spirit-directed community whose MISSION is to carry out the mandate of Christ, one of liberation.

Now that we have established the biblical basis for the role of the Black Church, or should we say the New Testament Church, let us all join Charles Wesley in his immortal words:

A charge to keep I have  
a God to glorify  
Who gave His Son my soul to save  
And fit it for the sky

To serve the present age  
My calling to fulfill  
O may it all my pow'rs engage  
To do my Master's will

Arm me with jealous care,  
As in Thy sight to live  
And O Thy Servant, Lord, prepare  
A strict account to give.



Let us take a look at the Black Community to ascertain whether it qualifies to be classified as a recipient of the Good News and liberation theology. Let us further question if the Black Church has a distinct role to play in the life of the oppressed community. Let us come to grips with the stark reality that Black Americans are slipping further into an underclass caste system.

While we build new churches, convene thousands of church-related meetings where millions of dollars are spent in hotel rooms and facilities and preach and sing to each other, our Black Community is a victim of institutionalized genocide. Allow me to revisit the definition of genocide. GENOCIDE: the use of calculated, systematic means to bring about the extermination of a racial, cultural, or political group. If you feel that this word is too strong, let us examine raw statistical data that comes from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, published in July, 1983.

#### THE POOR

Statistics from the latest surveys reveal setbacks influenced by high Black unemployment, sharply increased divorce rates, and a rise in family households maintained by Black females. The disproportionate impact on Blacks of the economic downturn beginning in 1974 has effectively brought to a halt the momentum of overall social and economic improvement apparent at the beginning of the decade. The gap between Black and white income continues to widen. Black median income is only 58% of white income. Yet we pay 100% of our tax assessment and there is no discrimination of prices in the



supermarkets and department stores other than the carrying charges we are forced to pay for buying now and paying later.

#### FEMALE HOUSEHOLDER

The number of poor Black families with a female householder doubled since 1969 and account for 70% of all poor Black families in 1981.

#### OUT-OF-WEDLOCK BIRTHS INCREASE

Although the proportion of births occurring to unmarried mothers increased for both Black and white women during the last decade, more than one-half of the births to Black women (55%) occurred out-of-wedlock, whereas only 11% for white women during the same period. Out-of-wedlock births are generally unplanned, and they often interrupt or deny schooling and opportunity for young women to acquire marketable skills. Thus, the link between illegitimate births to teenagers and economic adversity is strong. Low educational attainment is likely to result in marginal employment or no employment at all, and the incidence of poverty rises substantially as the age at which women become mothers falls. These consequences bear more heavily on the unwed teenage mother than upon the father, for it is generally the mother who assumes greater responsibility for the child. Young Black mothers are encountering problems because they lack the resources to repair the damage done by a poorly-timed birth. Far too many of these young parents must be associated with dependence on public assistance and other kinds of economic adversity. Studies show that teenage childbearing, particularly when it occurs out-of-



wedlock, has a negative effect on the future economic well-being of the mother:

#### EDUCATION AND POVERTY

Poverty and the future well-being of children in these disadvantaged families headed by women are intertwined. Children from poor families are more likely to fall behind in school and to drop out altogether. Not only does this foreclose the possibility of finding employment that pays well, but it may also make it difficult for our women to find any employment at all for prolonged periods. When discrimination in employment is added, as well as restrictive disincentives latent in the welfare support system, further aggravated by Reagan's reduced funding, our Black women and their children, are certainly the poor that the Master came to deliver.

#### HEALTH

Let us examine just a few statistics from the National Center for Health as to the "major causes of death" rates in 1980, by race. These death rates are per 100,000 U.S. residents.

CAUSE OF DEATH	BLACK MALES	WHITE MALES
Cancer	223.4	125.5
Liver Disease	30.3	15.5
Diabetes	17.0	9.2
Homicide	69.2	9.9
Suicide	12.2	18.5

Poor people cannot afford to be sick when hospital cost is \$300.00 per day. A doctor's office visit starts at nearly \$45.00. Blacks



cannot afford emergency health care. "There is considerable evidence that racial/ethnic factors continue to influence patterns of health care in ways that are not in the interests of the groups affected. These patterns are consistent with the belief that minority groups are still exposed to discrimination in this country, although little direct evidence is available." (Health Care in a Context of Civil Rights, p. 60) For poor women and their children, however, preventive and other health services are often untimely or beyond reach. Reagan's Administration has targeted practically every income maintenance and health and nutrition program (i.e. Medicaid, food stamps, food programs for women, and children CWIC) for additional budget cuts. Genocide is systematically destroying a group.

#### JOBS

Our people are poor because substantial barriers exist for employment. 43% Of Black women earned less than \$10,000 a year last year. Many fully employed women heading households remain poor, although they worked every day. Black women are still by and large segregated to low-paying jobs. New AFDC eligibility requirements have had an adverse effect on the working poor. In some states, it is a recipient's advantage to quit work in order to increase income and maintain Medicaid rights. Over 50% of youth cannot find jobs. Our Black college graduates are employed at the same rate as white 18 year old high school graduates. Our Black men have been sacrificed in the job market place. Overall unemployment rate in the Black community is double that of the white community. There is an interesting parallel



between the rate of death and the percentage of unemployment.

#### MILITARY SERVICE

Blacks represent 32% of the enlisted personnel in the Armed Forces: 20% in the Marines; 15% in the Air Force; and 11% in the Navy. However, Black officers reflect only 4% of the Armed Services. The services become a haven for employment, but a disgrace for leadership opportunities.

#### HOUSING

Although the last twenty years can attest to new housing for the rising middle-income blacks, the home ownership rate for Black households is 48%, compared to 68% for white households. Affordable housing requires two working in a household, and then some more. Our inner cities are bombed out ghettos where greedy landlords refuse to reinvest income for maintenance. Our city housing stock is a national disgrace. When we consider the fact that 56% of Black families now reside in central cities, 14% in the suburbs, and 22% in rural areas; when we further consider that jobs are out in the suburbs; that transportation inhibits city-dwellers from reaching the jobs; that the tax base for support systems have left for the suburbs on "white flight;" then it becomes quite obvious how ghettos are created and blame is transferred back to those who are victims. Racism forced the masses of Blacks to the inner cities; Racism forced the jobs out to the suburbs; and Racism defeats levies for mass transit systems.



### THE BLACK FAMILY

The family cycle has been one of the sanity-preserving constants in our struggle. It provided a sense of continuity, a haven, a repository of traditions and values. The old and the young were closely united. The Black family structure is threatened. In 1982, the divorce ratio was highest for Blacks, particularly women. In 1982, the combined divorce ratio for both Black men and women (220 per 1000) was about double that for white men and women (107 per 1000). In 1970, the divorce ratio for Black women stood at only 104 per 1000 married couples. The Black home is being threatened.

### CRIME

Sad to report that Blacks occupy 60% of the penal institutions throughout the country. Is there any relationship between the prison enrollment and job opportunities?

#### Black Youth Sub-Ghetto

Large communities of our youth, robbed of adult heroes, role models other than their parents; hooked on fads, fashions, and peer pressure; are disenchanted. Families with the young are increasingly flung in the arms of the only other people available to them -- other children. Can the church play a role outside of its sanctuary doors in the lives of this community?

### ANALYSIS

We have painted a dim but real picture that the church must understand. However, defining the problem is an easy way of looking at it squarely. The question is, Why? How did this happen? How are such conditions to be explained?



I do not believe that the problems in the ghettos of our cities -- the overcrowdedness, the harsh evidences of poverty and despair, are caused by the blacks who inhabit our cities, or by the black poor, or (for that matter) that these problems are the result of an influx of under-educated, culturally backward, over-sexed minorities. Sure, there are problems, and the ghettos where our people are consigned to live have a whole lot of them. Bad Housing, Massive Unemployment, Delinquency, Drug Addiction, Crime, Inadequate Provision of Health and Education.

But black people did not create or cause the problem of poverty; we did not invent juvenile delinquency. In fact, most of our youth are not delinquents. We did not organize -- and do not control -- drug trafficking syndicates. We predominate in the prisons but we do not have a monopoly on criminal behavior. We are, however, more likely to be arrested, charged severely, prosecuted with certainty and with efficiency. Every "T" is crossed; every "i" is dotted in prosecuting the Black; except when it isn't necessary to do so. Sometimes, the criminal justice system -- the way it is administered -- doesn't require efficient prosecution respecting Blacks on trial. We get convicted anyway because, as Malcom X told us, the white community looks upon the black community as a community of criminals, so the guy must be guilty of something.

It works -- or doesn't work -- the other way, too. When Blacks seek justice against whites -- against those whites who shoot down our children; who bomb our churches; who burn crosses on our lawns. How often does the brutal policeman go unpunished?



How difficult it becomes for the D.A. to persuade the grand jury to hand up an indictment! How often the petit juries are all white! How often they refuse to believe the black victim innocent of any wrongdoing! Race prejudice gets in, and sits down in many of our courtrooms...and workplaces...and schoolhouses...and police stations ...and governmental agencies.

There it is: the most relevant definition of the black experience in the urban ghettos -- stark and subtle -- overt and hidden -- open and shut -- sophisticated and brazen white racism.

The problems of the cities today, to borrow a phrase from W.E.B. DuBois, is the problem of the color line. It is the problem of the dual society -- the dual economy -- the dual system of justice -- the duality of the American democratic showcase.

The black youth is not dumb. He is not naive. He has both his eyes open. He doesn't have to be told why he doesn't have a job. He knows. What he doesn't know is how long it will be before society takes his plight seriously. How long it will take to have a job.

He's not fooled by hypocrisy. He notes the negative, niggardly attitudes toward welfare for the needy and poor and the generosity for the Lockheeds, Chryslers, and the hefty tax breaks for the rich. He doesn't need a Ph.D. to know that people are playing political games and cheating him of his present and future. He knows that the opposition to affirmative action -- to contracts designated for



non-whites -- is a thinly disguised effort to keep the money flowing into the white community.

There are self-help measures to be taken, and we've been taking them. But for every step in the right direction, the Black -- by a Supreme Court ruling -- by an intemperate Congress -- by an act of a foolishly fickle electorate -- by the lack of a full commitment from a President -- can be stopped in his tracks, self-help notwithstanding.

Black people, contrary to popular opinion, can find their way to the closest suburb. They can find their way to the quality housing in their own city; they can even be able to afford that house or apartment, and still be turned away. Thus, by a single individual's act of prejudice, progress for the race can be stopped or frustrated. When this prejudice is pervasive, Blacks are consigned to and contained in the areas of least viability, and their movements are constantly monitored -- if not controlled -- by whites and the power structure: the banks, lending institutions, the entities of decision-making respecting mortgages and zoning. I'm always fascinated by how quickly, upon the outbreak of a civil disorder, the police can cordon off an entire Black community.

Poet Pauli Murray put it so bluntly:

"The sons of slave traders still deal in double-talk,  
'tho they've swapped the selling block for ghetto and gun.  
They've swapped the selling block for ghetto and gun. The Kerner  
Commission in 1968 put it plainly:



"White society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it. White institutions maintain it. White society condones it."

I wish that this analysis of conditions could be different, but the conditions for the masses of blacks and poor in our cities have not improved from what they were in 1967 -- the year of the riots.

I challenge you to be bold in your recommendations for accelerating the desired social change. Consider again what Roy Wilkins told us some twelve years ago: "White people think equality means being kind to their cooks."



In our previous statements, we have attempted to establish a Biblical basis for the Black Church's role in the life of its people. Our people are oppressed. They are wounded. They feel powerless. Black institutions are faltering every day. I ask you:

- \*Can our civil rights organizations deliver us?
- \*Can our Black colleges deliver us?
- \*Can our community groups deliver us?
- \*Can our new generation of Black elected officials deliver us?
- \*Can our African brothers and sisters deliver us?
- \*Can our new cadre of professionals deliver us?
- \*Can our fraternal orders deliver us?

All of these components in our community can be supportive, and should target their MISSION in an effort to revive our support systems.

However, none of them are bound by a covenant, sealed in blood and accountable in judgment.

The church must revisit its MISSION. "YE ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH. YE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD." The Black church must season the Black home with values, its youth with love and respect. The Black church must give hope to the oppressed community. It cannot escape judgment criteria for its stewardship.



"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was ahungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; Naked, and ye clothed me. I was sick, and ye visited me. I was in prison, and ye came unto me.' Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, 'Lord, when saw we Thee ahungered, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed Thee? or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee?' And the King shall answer and say unto them, 'Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' "

Matthew 25: 34-40



## LECTURE II

### THE ROLE OF THE BLACK CHURCH IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

To serve the present age  
My calling to fulfill  
O may it all my pow'rs engage  
To do my Master's will

In our first lecture, we sought to establish the following points:

1. A biblical basis for the role of the church in its concern for the life and welfare of its people on this earth.
2. A vivid, data base, description on the state of Black Americans and long range implications.
3. An analysis as to why this ugly picture exists and what systems are in place to perpetuate them.
4. The ultimate challenge of the Church's accountability.

That brings us back to the last verse of Charles Wesley's immortal hymn:

Arm me with jealous care  
As in Thy sight to live  
And O Thy Servant, Lord, prepare  
A strict account to give.

We, as Black Church persons, come out of one of the richest traditions ever recorded in the annals of human history. There is no institution in the western civilization that can boast of its patriarchs and matriarchs any more than we proudly can.



They pioneered and cut a high way of progress through ravages of slavery, the farce of emancipation, the retreat of the reconstruction era, through the forced legal segregation period, which ended initially in 1954 when the Supreme Court of our land declared the doctrine of separate but equal unconstitutional. We as Black Church persons are called on today to "serve this present age." Let not our arrogance rob us of the power of history which hath bequeathed a testament pregnant with resources upon which we can draw from and build there upon. Far too often we are prone to compete with the past in a desperate drive to establish the present. Our past must become our frame of reference from which we can refine a perspective fit to facilitate this present age and healthy enough to position God's people rightly in the overall providential arrangement of the future.

#### HISTORICAL BLACK CHURCH

The Black Church has been the most important institution in the Black Community. In addition to its role of affirming life's mysteries, exploring the depths of our spiritual roots, and being the source of our appropriate values, the Black Church has been our main support system for survival. The Black Church in America represented the first sustained protest against a racist society. It was that body of Christians who dared to affirm that Christ was a liberator. The early Black Church realized that Heaven and the other world came out of slavery and into freedom land. Spirituals we love are freedom songs as well as giving a Christian witness. The founding patriarchs of the Black Church were creative and exceptional



theologians without the exposure of theological education. It was the Church that sustained Black survival and sanity. Being excluded from White Society, it developed its own society. Programmed for self-hate and disunity, it developed its own community and spun off systems to sustain the larger Black community. It developed in its own community a quality of love, cooperation and self-respect. Prohibited from participating in the social, economic and political life of the nation, the Black Church build an all-inclusive institution which provided

- \* Social Life
- \* Economic Necessities
- \* Political Participation.

The Black Church provided an alternative when the White Society was saying No. An oppressed and segregated community leaned on the Black Church. The Black Church became a political party, social club, a strategy and planning core, a place to be somebody, a community inside the community, a rebuilder of dashed hopes, a base for Freedom movements, leadership development forum, educational promotion, stimulator of economic development, a platform to articulate a philosophy of self-help and self-determination, and a rock in a weary land, a shelter in the time of storm. The Black Church is the most powerful institution available to us. It is independent. It has people, organization, talent and history. It is a sleeping giant. However it is suffering from a lack of will to be contemporary. The present Black Church oftimes confuse a modern church with a contemporary church or a church that can effectively impact



a contemporary society. Contemporary means being able to apply ultimate reality and faith to real, live, current conditions.

The word contemporary comes from the Latin word tempus (time). Alive, exist now, or occurring at the same time of persons or things. Many churches today confuse being temporary with the word modern. Modern is something new, novel, recent or up-to-date. Many pastors suffer from the delusion that when they have achieved the status of having a modern church with the state of the art in electric music, sound equipment, video system, transportational equipment, show case Sunday School rooms, and show piece kitchens, that they have it made with the "NOW" generation. Let us remind you that modern is no substitute for contemporary. You modernize equipment, buildings, and gadgets. But when the Black Church plays a role in Contemporary society, it is alive, now, meaningful to its present needs. Jesus communicated to his listeners in contemporary terms, i.e., parables, metaphors, similes. The gift to be contemporary was a gift of the mothers and fathers of the Black Church. Their talent went far beyond their training and exposure. They had interpreted and applied their faith. They co-opted from their oppressors the best they used for their children and transformed it alive in the life of their Black, enslaved, neglected children. Our race is co-opting the worst and rejecting the best.

One classical example of the role of the church in a contemporary



society is the role of Black Kentucky Baptist Churches in founding Simmons University. The Black Contemporary Society at the announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1865 needed tools of education to be free indeed. The Founding Fathers and Mothers recognized that education, learning, skills and knowledge were their passports to authentic citizenship.

Between 1856 and 1880, Black Churches operated 32 schools and all but one were in the Confederacy. I believe that Mission was biblical. Our fathers had a remarkable talent to identify, define and develop an appropriate and effective response to the needs, the pains and possibilities of Black folks. This is being contemporary. So much of what we are doing and saying answers questions.

"NOBODY IS ASKING ANY LONGER"

The mandate to live -- not in the past, not in the future -- but to serve sacrificially means we must meet the present needs, build a whole new set of strategies and structures.

Now my Christian friends, let us take a candid look at our present age. It is wrought with multiple changes. Changes in our world since the great days of the Black Church have been so rapid that we are suffering from its shock waves. Contemporary society is suffering from the "disease of change". The rate of change has been so fast that they overpowered the direction of change. It appears that too much change so quickly in our lives can bring stress and disorientation. The roaring current of change has been so powerful that it has overturned institutions,



shifted values and attempted to shrivel our roots.

The Black Community has never regained its support system lost when its Black High Schools were closed under the pretense of desegregation. It lost its tight neighborhood when equal housing opened doors for our folk to purchase anywhere; it lost its small businesses when they were invaded by large chains or franchise businesses. The revolutionaries of the '60's left us with an element of remarkable hope which led Blacks to trust in the future of America. However, racism dug in and became insidious; schools resegregated themselves; blacks were forced into inner cities and a repressive President was elected to the White House.

I declare unto you that the Black Church is all we have left that can deliver our people from genocide and self-destruction. The role of the Black Church must begin with a reformation from within if it is to serve its people during the present age. Sunday morning gimmicks, stage posturing, exhibitionism, pulpit abuse, and power struggle will not serve the needs of the present age. Meetings and more meetings, singing and more singing are not going to meet the needs described in our first lecture.

Clergy must preach to lift up the hopes of Blacks and reinforce the fact that:

"This Is My Father's World"

They do not and must not accept ghetto existence or mentality.



Their souls have been purchased and are not competent. Their minds are not to be imprisoned. The Black Church must not only declare the good news but share in the plight of its people. It must take risk and be heard.