

Entertainment Lies Matter, Too

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Given 04-Jun-16; Sermon #1325c

This commentary was excerpted largely from an email that was forwarded to me by Jose Macatangay from the Philippines, and I thought that I would use it because it fits the subject I was on last week.

I have a confession to make at the very beginning. I have no doubt I grew up as a considerably naïve country boy. I can look back and wonder how my childhood could have been any better than it was. To me, I grew up in the midst of so many things I really enjoyed doing. Life was good to me.

However, since coming into the church in 1959, the blindfolds have been gradually removed by God. But in the last ten years or so, I have grown ever more outright appalled by the mountainous level of outright, in-your-face twisting of the truth done by public figures.

Just in the past week Donald Trump, complaining bitterly of the treatment he receives from the press, directly stated right in the face of a fairly large number of reporters present at his press conference that reporters in general are liars and that political reporters are incredible liars.

Last Monday evening, the television entertainment world featured a revival of the miniseries titled “Roots,” drawn from the book authored by Alex Haley. It was claimed when originally presented as the true history of Alex Haley’s ancestry.

The original miniseries was no small event in television history. It was aired in 1977. Some of you listening were not even born then. America had just passed through the socially tumultuous '60s and then the politically tumultuous Nixon years. Jimmie Carter was president. I was in my 45th year and was pastoring the Columbia and Walterboro, South Carolina

congregations. The Worldwide Church of God—nothing strange here—was going through another of its periodic tumults over doctrinal matters. I saw only a couple of the miniseries' chapters.

The Roots miniseries was no insignificant television event. According to statistics provided by the broadcasting industry, Roots is the most watched miniseries of all time. Apparently no other miniseries even comes close. It was viewed by more than half of American homes, and approximately 100 million people viewed Root's final episode. According to the *Hollywood Reporter*, its cultural impact alone triggered hundreds of college planned courses on Roots. In addition, according to the *Museum of Broadcast Communications*, more than two dozen U.S. cities held "Roots Weeks" to bring attention to what they considered a significant event.

At least some of the appeal of Roots' presentation to the public was that it was reported as the true story of Alex Haley's ancestry. However, the root of the presentation is that it was far from true and Alex Haley did not even write all the story.

Numerous investigative reporters have researched into the roots of Haley's authorship of the book. Before the decade of the 1970s closed, Haley was sued by white author Harold Courlander for plagiarizing his fictional book titled *The African*. After a five-week trial in federal district court, Haley acknowledged his plagiarism and stated he regretted taking various materials from *The African*—which was not true in the first place! He paid Courlander \$650,000, which is the equivalent of 2 million dollars today.

That is not the end, because another investigative reporter did some more digging. He found out that one Jewish writer named Murray Fisher, working for *Playboy Magazine*, did much of the writing for Haley. This is besides the other guy.

It gets even worse because by 1997, the Brits were alarmed. The BBC had produced a documentary on what I am telling you of now, and not a single PBS television station in America would show the documentary. They actively entered into hiding the revealing of a monstrous lie.

When the truth of these things were revealed, the book's publisher had no interest in revealing the truth, and Columbia University didn't rescind Haley's Pulitzer Prize. Even the federal judge in the plagiarism case asked Courlander—the one stolen from—to remain quiet because Haley had become so "important to Black people." Wouldn't you think having the truth would be better? But it tells you what truth means.

In *Roots*, the book begins with a historical lie. It begins with Haley's ancestor, Kunta Kinte, being captured by white Americans in an African jungle. But the slavers in Africa at the time the story begins were not Europeans or Americans. They were Muslem Arabs and other Black tribes. Some Hispanics and Portuguese were involved in transporting the captured Blacks by ship to America. It was not until reaching American shores that Americans entered into direct participation of slavery.

There is nothing wrong with learning about slavery in America. It is a fact. It was entered into as a business. As it was done, it was a violent injustice to those Blacks. But it wrong to learn only about slavery *in America* because it skews one historical perspective. Slavery is one of this world's oldest business practices and has been practiced virtually everywhere for virtually all time. It is not just an American thing.

I wonder: Are our teenagers also taught in this nation's schools that it was the white, Bible-believing Israelitish Europeans and Americans which were the first nations in history to end slavery as a business practice? You know they aren't being taught that, don't you?

Roots, because it is fiction through and through but sold to the public's mind with an aura of truth, has impressed serious race-baiting lies on the American Black consciousness. It is, according to Black journalist Stanley Crouch, "One of the biggest con jobs is U.S. literary history."