

The children of darkness by stephen b. oates essay sample

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Introduction

'The Children of Darkness' written by Stephen Oates reflects the life of black slaves, specifically Nat Turner, which started in the year 1800 to come to a final blast by the early 1830s. It talks of the mystic, prophetic Nat Turner of Virginia's Southampton County... "an isolated, impoverished neighborhood located along the border in the southeastern part of the state" (Oates 97).

[1] Sure that he was 'divinely appointed', he made use of illegal religious meetings, getting astounding support from the local Negroes that he was truly appointed by Jehovah to complete a mission that can be likened to the mission set to the prophet Moses or to Ezekiel. As Jehovah ordered, "Slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women..." (Oates 101), so did he order that all whites around the county be slain on that 21st of August 1831. But there were a hundred thousand men in the militia force led by the whites, and the number of black people originally ordered to take hold of Nat's mission count to only a total of seven. Still, seeing signs in the sun and in the plants, woods and bushes around the farm, Nat believed that that was the appointed time set by Jehovah.

Main Body

The religious meetings conducted by black and white preachers around counties hold a significant position of the true reason why an insurrection took place during Nat's time. The "ranting cant about equality" (Oates 98) dug deep into the souls of the niggers, and as religion appears to be one of the most effective ways of attracting and getting support from the common

people, Nat Turner—who believed himself to possess divine, religious powers—spread the notion that he was truly a prophet sent by God to save His people. A ‘self-proclaimed’ prophet though, he was able to exert a powerful influence to the black population, especially that he was more learned, intelligent, passionate and perceptive.

He carried the mind and soul of a freeman yet carried with him the yoke of a black slave. He was devoted to fasting and prayer, yet misunderstood quite intentionally that God is exceedingly wise, such that He would *not* deal with the Hebrews more than five thousand years back the same way He deals with the Negroes of the 1800 A. D. The Bible has changed dramatically over centuries, and it has been renewed since the time of the New Testament, such that killing and slaying people are *not* the right course of acting ‘divinely’ during these days. Nat envisioned himself to be like Jesus—slain and slaughtered, crucified for the sake of the people—but this Jesus did not abuse or kill people before He was crucified to death. Nat’s mission is exceedingly *out of the way*, since he led rebels to kill their own neighbors and friends—even Travis whom Nat Turner himself considered to be “a kind master” (Oates 100). Religion has no part in the true nature of his mission, but social and political issues.

Conclusion

To view slain bodies “in silent satisfaction” (Oates 103) is ironically *not* the nature of a true, God-ordained prophet. More so, to be utterly drunk in the brandy cellar while completing the mission (Oates 103), or to go on hiding

while his companions are being captured (Oates 105), are also *not* the nature of a true, God-ordained and heroic prophet. For these reasons, it resulted to many black slaves associating and helping the white population around the county, as it appeared that what the rebels pursued to accomplish does not reflect a justifiable and positively acceptable kind of mission. What Nat Turner did successfully, though, was to inflict the society in terms of the importance of dealing with slavery systematically and more prominently, although more black people were slain—some of which were innocent—as a result of the white people’s hatred to the insurrectionists that spread blood around the area. Whether it is the work of a ‘solitary fanatic’ or the agitators and the black preachers, it appears that freedom and legal rights are, indeed, very difficult to achieve. Yet when people are in turbulence, and slave unrest leads its way to insurrection plots and public hangings, *the release of freedom and legal rights are about to defend its way.*

Book reference:

Oates, Stephen. “Children of Darkness.” Title of Book. Place of publishing: Publisher, year published.

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