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BRANHAMITES

by A. Scott Moreau

Introduction

In our last article on cults in Kenya, we noted that the influence and pervasiveness of the Jehovah's witnesses was greater than their size would indicate.¹ In this article we will introduce another group which has exerted an influence on the church out of proportion to their size. They are the followers of William Branham, known variously as Kenya Local Believers,² End Time Local Believers, Spoken Word Believers,³ or more simply Branhamites. Almost every Kenyan student at the Nairobi International School of Theology has had encounters with a Branhamite and found them to be extremely difficult to talk to without having to engage in a defense of the traditional Christian doctrine of the Trinity or of the baptismal formula "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit". Who are these Branhamites and why do they question Christians on these issues? Are they members of a cult needing to be won back to Christ or just followers of a Christian sect with some strange doctrinal teachings? Where did they get their teachings? What part does William Branham (who is now dead) play in their movement? How should the Christian respond to their teaching? In this introduction we will seek to answer these and other questions.

History of the Branhamites

A Product of His Environment

William Marrion Branham was born in Kentucky on April 6, 1909. His father being a producer of illegal whiskey in the hills of Kentucky, Branham missed many of the opportunities of education and environment common to typical American children. When he was still very young his family moved to a farm in the vicinity of Jeffersonville, Indiana. There Branham grew up among the rural poor, himself a victim of poverty. He relates that he rarely had shoes, and the clothes he wore were given to him by charity.⁴ In terms of formal education he never got past the seventh grade. When he was nineteen he went to Phoenix, Arizona. There he worked for several years on a ranch and began a career as a professional boxer. When his brother died, however, he returned home to Indiana. David Harrell vividly portrays the picture of Branham's life:

William Branham's personal life at that time was a study in the suffering and tragedy of the depression. At the height of his ministry, his halting tales of personal hardship generated a magical empathy with his audiences. He unashamedly told of having his easy chair repossessed by a finance company. With pathos he told of losing his wife and child when the Ohio River flooded in 1937. He was the poorest of the poor. He worked at different jobs before becoming an Indiana game warden, the position he held when he received the famous angelic visit in 1946.⁵

In examining Branham's sermons two things quickly become apparent. First, he was a sincere "down home" type of person, and not a slick, sophisticated manipulator of people. We have found no reason to question his integrity, honesty, or humility. Second, his lack of formal education is glaring in his unpolished, rambling, informal speaking style. This is not meant as an unnecessarily negative comment, but rather to show that he was not an eloquent and persuasive speaker who won people over by a polished professional approach. Branham was a man of the rural poor, and his audiences consisted significantly of people of that socio-economic standing.

Reported Supernatural Aspects of His Life

Gordon Lindsay, a friend of Branham's, noted, "The story of the life of William Branham is so out of this world and beyond the ordinary that were there not available a host of infallible proofs which document and attest its authenticity, one might well be excused from considering it farfetched and incredible".⁶

The supernatural events surrounding his life are reported to have begun immediately after his birth. In his testimony Branham relates that just after his birth when he was starting to cry, his father opened up a window, and while a robin was there singing, "that Light that you see in the picture come whirling in the window, says my mother, and hung over the bed".⁷

The first experience he personally remembers of the supernatural came when he was about three years old. He explains:

And I heard a bird, and it was singing up in a tree. And I looked up to that tree and the bird flew away, and, when it did, a Voice spoke to me. . . . That bird, when it flew away, a Voice came from where the bird was in the tree, like a wind caught in the bush, and it said, 'You'll live near a city called New Albany, Indiana.' And I've lived, from the time I was three years old until this time, within three miles of New Albany, Indiana.⁸

The next significant encounter came when he was seven. He was carrying water to his house (which had no plumbing) when a small whirlwind appeared. He stopped to look at it and then started back toward his house, when

. . . a human voice just as audible as mine is, said, 'Don't you never drink, smoke, or defile your body in any way. There'll be a work for you to do when you get older.' Why, it liked to scared me to death! You could imagine how a little fellow felt. I dropped those buckets, and home I went just as hard as I could go, screaming the top of my voice.⁹

Branham came to know the Lord in his early twenties through a Missionary Baptist Church. Around the same time he married his first wife, Hope, who died in the Ohio River flood. About six months later he felt called to preach and was ordained as an independent Baptist Minister. At his first revival in June of 1933, it was estimated that as many as three thousand attended a single service, and he reports that 130 were baptized.¹⁰ He explains another next significant encounter with the supernatural which took place while he was baptizing these new converts:

I was baptizing down on the river, my first converts, . . . and the seventeenth person I was baptizing, . . . I started to--to put him under the water. And just then a whirl come from the heavens above, and here come that Light, shining down. Hundreds and hundreds of people on the bank, right at two o'clock in the afternoon, in June. And it hung right over where I was at. A Voice spoke from there, and said, 'As John the Baptist was sent for the forerunner of the first coming of Christ, you've got a . . . have a Message that will bring forth the forerunning of the Second Coming of Christ.' And it liked to a-scared me to death.¹¹

After the revival Branham's supporters established a church which he pastored. The church flourished, but because he was not receiving any pay for his work there Branham and his family continued to face financial difficulties.

Shortly after this Branham was first exposed to the "Jesus Only" pentecostals by chance when he stopped at a revival meeting while returning home from a fishing vacation. He returned the next day and was asked to preach. After trying unsuccessfully to hide he came to the front to preach. As he was preaching about the rich man describing how that man was crying in hell, he was "taken over":

Then I cried. Something got a hold of me. My! Oh, my! After, I don't know what happened. When I kind of got to myself, I was standing on the outside. Then people got screaming and shouting and crying, and I, we had an awful time.¹²

Because of his mother-in-law's influence (and her fear of the pentecostals because they had such a poor social reputation), he did not accept invitations to conduct revivals in several pentecostal churches that came as a result of his sermon. He calls this "the worse [sic] mistake I ever made in my life, one of the worse [sic]".¹³ Harrell reports that Branham felt that his anointing left him for five years because of his decision to avoid the pentecostals.¹⁴

A few years later (in 1937) his wife became ill with pneumonia. While she was in the hospital Branham had a close brush with death in a flood. During this encounter he realized that he had been wrong in avoiding the pentecostals. His wife recovered from her pneumonia, but she and one of his two children died shortly after in the Ohio River flood. Just prior to her death his wife had agreed that they had been mistaken to avoid the pentecostals.

Finally, the continuing supernatural encounters became too much for Branham. He chose to go up into the woods and pray about them even asking God to remove them. It was while praying that he received his commission from the angel which was to guide him the rest of his life. Following is an extensive excerpt of the story as told by Branham.

Got a long towards . . . three o'clock in the morning. I was walking up and down the floor . . . And I set down there, and I thought, 'O God, why do You do this to me?' I said, 'And I--I--I don't want to be possessed of the Devil. I don't want them things to happen to me. Please God, don't never let it happen no more.' . . . And I set down on this little stool. And I just sitting, . . . And all at once, I seen a Light flicker in the room. . . And there it was, right in front of me. . . .

I looked around. And here it was above me, . . . hanging right like that. Circling around like a fire, kind of an emerald color, going, 'Whoossh, whoossh, whoossh!'. . . .

And I heard somebody coming, just walking, only, it was barefoot. And I seen the foot of a Man come in. . . . And when He come into the room, walked on up, He was a Man about . . . looked to weigh about two hundred pounds [roughly 90 kilos] . . . Now, I had seen It in a Whirlwind, I had heard It talk to me, but the first time I ever seen the image of it. It walked up to me, real close.

. . . I thought my heart would fail me. . . . After hundreds and hundreds of times of visitations, it paralyzes me when He comes near. It sometimes it even makes me . . . I almost completely pass out, just so weak, when I leave the platform many times. If I stay too long, I'll go completely out. I've had them ride me around for hours, and not even know where I was at. And I can't explain it. . . . He had a real deep Voice, and He said, 'Do not fear, I am sent from the Presence of Almighty God.' And when He spoke, that Voice, that was the same Voice that spoke when I was two years old,

all the way up. I knowed that was Him. . . .
 . . . He said, 'Do not fear, . . . I am sent from the Presence of Almighty God, to tell you that your peculiar birth . . . and misunderstood life has been to indicate that you're to go to all the world and pray for the sick people. . . and regardless of what they have. . . And He designated . . . cancer.' Said, 'Nothing . . . if you get the people to believe you, and be sincere when you pray, nothing shall stand before your prayers, not even cancer' . . . And I seen he wasn't my--my enemy. He was my friend. . . . And I said, 'Well, sir, I am a--I--I'm a poor man . . . I'm among my people. I--I live with my people who is poor. I'm uneducated. . . . And I--I--I would not be able, they'd not--they'd not understand me. . . . They--they wouldn't--they wouldn't hear me.'

And He said, 'As the prophet Moses was given two . . . signs, . . . to vindicate his ministry, . . . so are you given two gifts to a--vindicate your ministry. . . One of them will be that you'll take the person that you're praying for by the hand, with your left hand and their right, . . . and just stand quiet, and it'll have . . . there'll be a physical effect that'll happen on your body. . . . Then you pray. And if it leaves, the disease is gone from the people. If it doesn't leave, just ask a blessing and walk away.'

'Well, I said, 'Sir, I'm afraid they won't receive me.' He said, 'And the next thing will be, if they won't hear that, they will hear this.' Said, 'Then it'll come to pass that you'll know the very secret of their heart.' Said, 'This they will hear.'

'Well, I said, 'Sir, that's why I'm here tonight. I have been told by my clergymen that those things that's been coming to me was wrong.'

He said, 'You were born in this world for that purpose.' . . .

And I said, 'Well, Sir, . . . my clergymen told me it, that it was the--the evil spirit. . . .

And here's what He quoted to me . . . [At this point, Branham diverts into an explanation and examples of how mediums, spiritists, and astrologers always seemed to recognize that he was born under a special sign and that it was from God, while the ministers always told him that it was Satanic.]

And then that night up there when I . . . when He referred to that, I asked Him, I said, 'Well, why is it all them mediums and things like that, and them devil-possessed people, that always tell me about it; and the clergy. . . tell me that it's of the evil spirit?'

Now listen to what He said, . . . "As it was then, so it is now. . . . When the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ begin to take place, the ministers said, 'He was Beelzebub, the Devil, but the devils said, He was the Son of God, the Holy One of Israel.' . . .

And He referred to that. And He told me how that the ministry misunderstood it, and assured me that the ministry had misunderstood it. . . .

I said, 'Well, what about this, these things that happen to me?'

And, . . . He said, 'That'll multiply and get greater and greater.'

And He referred to me, telling me how Jesus did it; how that He come and He was possessed with a Power that could foreknow things and tell the women at the well, claimed not to be a healer, claimed to do those things just as the Father showed Him.

I said, 'Well, what kind of a spirit would that be?'

He said, 'It was the Holy Spirit.'

Then something there happened inside of me, that I realized that the very thing that I turned my back on was what God brought me here for. And I realized that it was just like those Pharisees in the days gone by, they had misinterpret the Scripture to me. So

from then on I took my own interpretation of it, what the Holy Spirit said.

I told Him, 'I'd go.'

He said, 'I'll be with you.'

And the Angel stepped into the Light again that began to come around and around, and around and around, and around His feet like that, went up into the Light, and went out of the building.

I walked home a new person.¹⁵

Branham began to heal people. Diseases caused his hand to vibrate and swell (a typical occultic form of healing, and not seen in the Bible as a method God uses to discern diseases and heal). F.F. Bosworth describes the vibrations in his hand:

Germ diseases, which indicated the presence and working of an 'oppressing' (Acts 10:38) spirit of affliction can be distinctly felt. When the afflicting spirit comes into contact with the gift it sets up such a physical commotion that it becomes visible on Brother Branham's hand, and so real that it will stop his wrist watch instantly. This feels to Brother Branham like taking hold of a live wire with too much electric current in it. When the oppressing spirit is cast out in Jesus' Name, you can see Brother Branham's red and swollen hand return to its normal condition.¹⁶

In addition to the vibrations in his hand, Branham claimed to see a ball of fire (or a light) circle the room and land on those he was to heal. He felt that it was the same light as that captured in the picture which is put in front of so much of the Branhamite materials (see below).

He was also given a gift of discernment, as Walter J. Hollenweger relates:

From then on Branham was never without the guidance of the angel. The angel gave him signs to help in his task. The most important was Branham's ability to name with astonishing accuracy the sickness, and often also the hidden sins, of people whom he had never seen. The author, who knew Branham personally and interpreted for him in Zurich, is not aware of in any case in which he was mistaken in the often detailed statements he made.¹⁷

In May of 1948, just as his ministry was beginning to receive worldwide attention, Branham suddenly announced that he was retiring for what "might be a year or it might be forever".¹⁸ Five months later the retirement ended as suddenly as it began. During his five month absence, however, the healing ministries of other pentecostals such as Oral Roberts had exploded. Many were now just as happy to follow those other healers as they were to follow Branham.

In January of 1950, a large revival was organised in Houston. At the last minute a debate was arranged between F. F. Bosworth (a close friend of Branham) and W. E. Best, a local Baptist minister who denied that miracles were for today. At first Branham decided not to go. As the meeting was getting started, however, the angel came to him and told him to go. He obeyed, though he sat away from the stage. A photographer was present for the debate and took many pictures. Those taken of Best, who posed in insulting positions, all turned out blank. One taken of Branham, who had been called up to the platform by Best, however, showed a light above his head. Followers of Branham had the negative substantiated as unretouched by an expert from the U.S. Federal Bureau literature as proof of God's hand on Branham.¹⁹

The early 1950s proved to be Branham's best years. He was viewed as the most humble of the pentecostal circuit preachers who was able to do the

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The Baobab tree is the EAJET symbol for the gospel in Africa. The good news of Christ, like the baobab tree, is ageless, enduring and firmly rooted in African soil.

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greatest miracles. Many flocked to his revivals. Harrell reports that Branham's miracles were attributed to the presence of the angel which had originally commissioned him:

Increasingly Branham became dependent upon the presence of an angel while ministering to the sick. He does not begin to pray for the healing of the afflicted in body in the healing line each night, wrote F. F. Bosworth, until God anoints him for the operation of the gift, and until he is conscious of the presence of the angel with him on the platform. Without this consciousness, he seems to be perfectly helpless. But when conscious of the Angel's presence, he seems to break through the veil of the flesh into the world of the spirit, to be struck through and through with a sense of the unseen.²⁰

By 1955 Branham's popularity began to wane. His lack of sophistication opened him up to people who would use him for their own personal gain. In 1956 the U.S. Internal Revenue Service investigated him on tax evasion and after years of legal negotiation his ministry settled out of court with a penalty of \$40,000. Branham had not purposefully avoided taxes; he had just been too careless and naive about not separating his personal and ministry finances. When he died much of this debt still remained unpaid.

In the late 1950s Branham's own followers were wondering why his ministry was faltering. In 1959 he announced that he would give up the discernment aspect of his ministry and devote himself exclusively to healing. His doctrinal teaching became more controversial, and he was shunned by more and more of his former supporters. He

. . . increasingly lent his influence to a small group of followers who compiled and canonized his teaching before and after his death. He may have been used, but his recorded sermons demonstrate that his followers did not pervert his later teaching. Branham reached at last that status of unique prophet which he believed was his destiny.²¹

It was during the later years of his ministry when some of the more bizarre aspects of his ministry began. Harrell reports:

He made a series of startling predictions, including a warning that California was about to 'slide into the sea.' His followers believed that the prophet had predicted that the destruction of the United States would begin in the year 1977.²²

Branham died on Christmas Day in 1965 after a car accident on 18 December. Many of his followers were convinced that he would rise from the dead because he had previously announced a great miracle evangelisation campaign to begin on 25 January the next year. His body was reportedly embalmed and refrigerated in expectation of his resurrection.²³ When the expected resurrection did not take place the burial was delayed until April in the hope of an Easter resurrection. Easter passed, and when it was clear that he would not come back to life he was finally buried. Later, one of his followers reported that the delay was in deference to his wife who was injured in the car accident, but "some had clearly hoped for Branham's return on Easter Day".²⁴

How did the Branhamites reach Kenya? They came here in 1970²⁵ as a part of their overall world-wide expansion which Harrell describes:

Branham's followers continued his work by printing sermons (over

two hundred of them, and 300,000 copies in circulation), and by supporting a regular William Branham Hour on the radio. Some of his disciples still believed he was 'the Lord Jesus Christ,' while others honored him as 'the last-days prophet' with the message for modern times. His taped messages were considered 'oral scripture'. Several independent churches, most notably the Branham Tabernacle in Jeffersonville, Indiana, and the Tucson Tabernacle in Arizona, remained active in furthering his message. Peary Green, the aggressive young minister of Tucson Tabernacle, visited over ninety foreign countries promoting the work, and his church sponsored a broad overseas program. Green listed over 300 pastors in the United States who believe Branham to be the prophet of Malachi 4. The Branham legacy of the mid-1970s was mostly these men and their followers.²⁶

Branham and the Pentecostal Movement

In trying to understand Branham and his followers it is critical that we properly place him in historical perspective. He was largely a product of the pentecostal movement that is said to have formally begun in Los Angeles with the Azusa Street revival in 1906.²⁷ This movement exploded on the American religious scene but was not without its growing pains. One of the most severe of these pains was a schism concerning the correct formula to use when baptising new converts. Some used the traditional Trinitarian formula ("in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost"), while others began to advocate a monadic formula ("In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ") based on their reading of the baptismal formula used in Acts. This eventually led to arguments over the nature of the Godhead, and is known as the "Jesus Only" or "Pentecostal Unitarian" question.²⁸ It first arose publicly in 1913 when a speaker at a revival mentioned that the apostles baptised in the name of Jesus only.²⁹ Within a year the pentecostal movement was embroiled in disagreement over not only the baptismal formula but over the nature of the Trinity. Adherents of the "Jesus Only" movement maintained that God is one person who has shown Himself to us in three modes or forms (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Furthermore, they taught that all who had been baptised "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" were not really baptised. The only valid baptism, according to them, was one done "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ".³⁰

By the end of 1915 this controversy threatened to take over the whole pentecostal movement.³¹ In 1916 those who held to the traditional teaching of the Trinity in the Assemblies of God (the largest pentecostal denomination at the time) gained control. They caused the denomination to issue official doctrinal statements which strongly affirmed the orthodox position. As a result some 156 "Jesus Only" pastors split off (out of the total of 585 denominational pastors) taking over 100 congregations with them.³² As Synan notes, however, this controversy was largely confined to certain portions of the United States. The pentecostal movements in Europe and Latin America remained largely untouched by the issue holding to the orthodox Trinitarian position.³³

In trying to come to grips with the teachings of Branham, it must be noted that he was part and parcel of the "Jesus Only" movement. His denial of the Trinity, therefore, was not a new doctrine developed by him but a doctrine which fit within the mainstream of the movement of which he played a leading role. Harrell points out:

Branham has long preached a rigid pentecostal moral code which became increasingly unpopular. He had no patience with bobbed hair, slacks, and other such fads and was rigidly opposed to women

preachers. On the other hand, he received a prophetic message allowing divorce, which offended some strict pentecostals. But the controversy centered on his distinctive theology which alienated all the organized pentecostal churches. First, he began to press his conviction that denominationalism was the mark of the beast. During his early years, Branham, according to some reports, had equivocated on this divisive question. He reportedly told some trinitarians that he agreed with them, but that he felt obligated to the 'Jesus only' pentecostals because they had supported him early in the revival. But, by the 1960s he was teaching openly the oneness position.³⁴

We will deal more extensively with the doctrinal aspects in the next section. Our main purpose here has been to place Branham and his teaching in proper historical perspective.

Basic Doctrines of the Branhamites

There are several significant areas of doctrinal teaching in which the followers of Branham differ significantly from the rest of Christendom. In this article we will present in more extensive form only the two most significant of those areas, though we will also list five other particularly interesting doctrinal distinctives of the Branhamites.

The Person and Role of William Branham

The first area of doctrinal difference involves the person and role of William Branham who is held to be a prophet who came in the spirit of Elijah. Though the Branhamites do teach that the Bible is inerrant, they add that we need "prophetic revelation" in order to fully understand it. Branham was the prophet with God's message, and it is the revelations that God gave to Him which clearly explain the truths of the Bible.

Foundational to this view is the Branhamite teaching (followed by some dispensationalists today) that the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 are to be interpreted as seven ages of the church. In this framework we are seen to be in the last of these seven ages called the Laodicean age. It is an age of apostasy and spiritual coldness. In addition "this age has both a Messenger and message before it expires"³⁵.

Followers of Branham say that the proof that this age has a messenger is to be found in Rev. 10:7 which says "But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished as He preached to his servants the prophets".³⁶ They teach that this seventh angel is NOT one of the angels who sound the trumpets (Rev. 8:1-11:19) but a man speaking ("the voice of the seventh angel") to the Laodicean age who speaks the word of God. This is the cornerstone to their claims of Branham's authority and place in the scheme of God.

Branhamites' Defense of Branham as the Voice in Rev. 10:7

The Branhamites cite three arguments in defense of their understanding of Branham as "the voice" in Rev. 10:7.³⁷ First, they maintain that Rev. 9:13 (the sixth angel sounding) and 11:15 (the seventh angel sounding) are the two heavenly angels.

Second, they ask if the seventh angel (referred to in Rev. 11:15) is the same being as here in 10:7. They respond to their own question as follows:

Notice that with the sixth trumpet the terrible woes that come

upon the earth in judgement. Notice in the seventh trumpet that Christ is set forth as taking His rightful kingdom. But in Rev. 10:7 the Messenger there is still sounding, and his sounding is declaring the mysteries of God to the church.³⁸

Third, they state:

Notice, too, that in Rev. 10:1-6 we do not have the Lord Jesus taking a throne but he is portrayed here as standing on earth with His head in heaven. . . This is exactly what Stephen said in Acts 7:47-51, . . . This is a picture of Jesus still building His church on earth . . . The message is still going out. It is the last days, however. Time will no longer be delayed. But He is still calling His people unto Himself, but not for long. Yes, this shows us very clearly that this one we call the seventh angel, is no spirit-being. He is a man. He is a MESSENGER, and since he is the last messenger, being the seventh messenger, he is the MESSENGER TO THE LADODICEAN [sic] AGE. SURELY WE CAN AND WILL KNOW HIM AND LISTEN TO HIM AS ATTENTIVELY AS DID THE EPHESIANS TO THEIR MESSENGER, PAUL.³⁹

Branham, of course, is seen as this messenger. While Branham himself did not clearly identify himself as the messenger, he left very definite clues that he was the one. For example, he "preached that his name would have the perfect number of letters (seven) and would have an ending like Abraham".⁴⁰

Brief Refutation

Concerning the question of "revelation" and the need for it today so that we may fully understand the Word of God, we respond as the church has responded through the ages: God's word is the final test of all such revelations, and those received by Branham must be tested in that arena. We may note further that if the "angel" to which he was so bound was a lying spirit (see discussion below), then those who follow Branham's revelations are following the wrong party!

The argument for Rev. 10:7 speaking of a future messenger other than the seventh angel can be refuted in one major point: The angel in Rev. 10:7 has not yet sounded. He is "about to sound" when the mystery of God is finished. The events of 10:1-6, etc. take place before the angel is about to sound, and thus 10:7 speaks of the same angel as 11:15. This is further verified when we realize that 10:7 is part of the oath of the Strong Angel (probably Jesus) found in vv. 5-7. It does not relate to actions concurrent with the events in 10:1-6 but to the future sounding of the angel. There is no need to see the angel in 10:7 as some "future messenger to the Laodicean age of the church".

Denial of the Trinity

The sound major doctrinal difference of the Branhamites from mainstream Christianity is the denial of the Trinity. As noted above, they do maintain that Jesus is God, but not that He is a separate person from God. He, the Father, and the Holy Spirit are thought to be the same person in three different forms.⁴¹

An Old Heresy

Keeping this teaching in perspective, we note that the "Jesus Only" pentecostal teaching is nothing more than a revival of an old heresy. It is in fact the resurrection of a branch of a school of teaching known as "monarchianism", so called because of its over-emphasis on the unity of God.⁴²

This school of thought had two opposing branches. On one side was adoptionism or dynamic monarchianism which followed the teaching of Theodotus of Byzantium who held that Jesus was a man who was divinely "energised" at His baptism. This school was influential in the late second and early third centuries.

The other branch of monarchianism with which the Branhamites may be identified was influential around the beginning of the third century. It is called Modalistic monarchianism, and is also known as modalism, sabellianism,⁴³ or patripassionism⁴⁴. Williston Walker summarises the teaching of Sabellius, one of the leading proponents of the movement:

[Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] are three names of the one God who manifests Himself in different ways according to circumstances. As Father He is the lawgiver of the Old Testament, as Son He is incarnate, as Spirit He is inspirer of the Apostles. But it is the one and the same God who thus appears in these successive and transitory relations, just as a human individual may be called by different titles to denote his varied roles.⁴⁵

Those who began to teach this did so out of a strong desire to avoid the polytheism of the pagan world but went too far in their assertions.⁴⁶ As the leading teacher of the movement, Sabellius was eventually excommunicated by Calistus (bishop of Rome) around 220 AD, and the teaching died down in the western branch of the church. In the fourth century, however, it reappeared in the eastern when Marcellus of Ancyra taught that:

in the unity of the Godhead the Son and the Spirit only emerged as independent entities for the purposes of Creation and Redemption. After the redemptive work is achieved they will be resumed again into the Divine Unity and God will be all in all.⁴⁷

Response

In challenging this understanding of the Godhead, the Gospel of John gives us the strongest evidence of any book in the New Testament. Millard J. Erickson notes:

The interdynamics among the three persons comes through repeatedly, as George Hendry observed. The Son is sent by the Father (14:24) and comes forth from Him (16:28). The Spirit is given by the Father (14:16), sent from the Father (14:26), and proceeds from the Father (15:26). Yet the Son is closely involved in the coming of the Spirit: he prays for his coming (14:16); the Father sends the Spirit in the Son's name (14:26); the Son will send the Spirit (16:7). The Spirit's ministry is understood as a continuation and elaboration of that of the Son. He will bring to remembrance what the Son has said (14:26); he will bear witness to the Son (15:26); he will declare what he hears from the Son, thus glorifying the Son (16:13-14).⁴⁸

Further, we may ask questions such as:

1. What does it mean that Jesus was 'with God' if He and God are the same person (John 1:1)?
2. Why did Jesus use the neuter term for "one" (which implies unity of substance) rather than the masculine (which would imply personhood) when He said, "I and the Father are One" (John 10:30)?
3. What did Jesus mean when He stated "The Father is greater than I"

(John 14:28; note the present tense of the verb)?

4. Why did Jesus promise to send us the Holy Spirit, if the Spirit is simply Jesus in another mode (John 16:7)?

5. Who did Jesus pray to if he was the same person as God (John 17)?

Finally, we will do well to note Erickson's summary of history's evaluation of the teaching of modalistic monarchianism:

The church in assessing this theology deemed it lacking in some significant respects. In particular, the fact that the three occasionally appear simultaneously upon the stage of biblical revelation proved to be a major stumbling block to this view. Some of the trinitarian texts . . . proved troublesome. The baptismal scene, where the Father speaks to the Son, and the Spirit descends upon the Son, is an example, together with all those passages where Jesus speaks of the coming of the Spirit, or speaks of or to the Father. If modalism is accepted, Jesus' words and actions in these passages must be regarded as misleading. Consequently, the church . . . came eventually to reject it as insufficient to account for the full range of biblical data.⁴⁹

Baptism Only in Jesus' Name?

Within the framework of denial of the trinity, the Branhamites teach that because Matthew 28:19-20 uses the singular "name" and not the plural "names", "Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" is simply another way to say "Baptize them in Jesus' name". In addition, they cite as evidence in their favour the fact that nowhere in Acts is the threefold formula used.⁵⁰

In response we first note that the Greek construction of Matt. 28:19-20 allows a translation of "Baptize them in the name of the Father, (the name) of the Son, and (the name) of the Holy Spirit" without any distortion of the original meaning. It does not force us to conclude that "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" is a single name of a single person.

Concerning the contention that baptisms in Acts were "monadic" (linked to one name only) as a contrast to the Trinitarian formula and that the only proper baptisms are those performed in the name of "the Lord Jesus Christ" only, we note the comment of D. A. Carson:

The term 'formula' here is tripping us up. There is no evidence that we have Jesus' ipsissima verbal [exact words] here and still less that the church regarded Jesus' command as a baptism formula, a liturgical form the ignoring of which was a breach of canon law. E. Riegenbach . . . points out that as late as the Didache, baptism in the name of Jesus and baptism in the name of the Trinity coexist side by side: the church was not bound by precise 'formulas' and felt no embarrassment at a multiplicity of them, precisely because Jesus' instruction, which may not have been in these precise words, was not regarded as a binding formula.⁵¹

Other Doctrinal Deviations

Rather than attempting to refute the rest of the doctrinal deviations of the followers of William Branham, we will simply note five of the more interesting ones here, leaving further investigation to the reader.

1. The original sin in the Garden of Eden was sex between Eve and the serpent which resulted in Cain's birth.⁵² Abel and Seth, however, were born

after Adam had intercourse with Eve. The two "birthlines" battled for generations, with the final result of Noah (a descendent of the "pure" line of Seth) marrying an impure wife (of the line of Cain). Since all mankind can be traced genetically to Noah's wife, we are all genetic inheritors of sin.

2. Hell is not eternal, though it lasts for 'aeons and aeons". Those who go to hell will suffer for a period of time and then cease to exist.⁵³

3. We go through "stages" of salvation: "You can be justified without being sanctified. And you can be sanctified without having the Holy Ghost; be clean, live a pure life, and have a form of godliness, and deny the Power of healing and speaking in tongues and the great gifts of God".⁵⁴

4. Only those who have been baptised with the Holy Spirit are the true bride of Christ. They alone will be caught up with Christ in the rapture; the rest of the redeemed will be left on earth to be martyred during the tribulation.⁵⁵

5. All denominational churches are "hybrids" (crosses between the godly and the satanic) and are thus sterile and doomed to eventual death. The Roman Catholic church is the "mark of the beast", and the Protestant church is the "image of the Beast".⁵⁶ In this framework, Branham stated:

All right, I predict that the two denominational groups, Pentecostal and the Evangelical groups, will work together in a denomination, will unite themselves together, and will become a member (all of them) of the Federation of the Council of Churches or the Council of Churches. They already belong to it--all of them. And there will come through them a forcing or a boycott, that will top everything but what belongs to that union of churches.⁵⁷

Basic Evaluation

Drawing any final conclusions about Branham and his ministry is difficult at best. Was he a charlatan who played on people's emotion for the power and prestige it gave him? Was he a believer who was deceived into manifesting occultic powers? The only obvious conclusion pointed to by the historical evidence is his sincerity and simplicity --he almost certainly was not a charlatan out for power, fame, and money.

On the other side his lack of education (especially any formal theological training) left him wide open to the arguments of those around him. As Hollenweger, translator for him in Germany, notes:

To be fair, one must take into account his extremely limited education and his inadequate English. He seems to have been aware of his limitations in this direction, and in his writings asks for indulgence because of his poor education. However generously he is judged, it must be admitted that his sermons were not merely simple, but often naive as well, and that by contrast to what he claimed, only a small percentage of those who sought healing were in fact healed.⁵⁸

Harrell, not quite as strong in his conclusion about Branham, states:

William Branham was preeminently the visionary of the healing revival. He lived in a miraculous world. Simple almost to the point of transparency, Branham ministered to a generation of credulous people, a man of his times. To a Pentecostal world that

craved marvels in the years immediately after World War II, he offered his sincerity and his fantastic array of personal spiritual experiences. To the modish charismatic movement of the 1960s, Branham was an outdated figure. He himself recognised he had little place there. He could not adapt to the new needs, nor compete with powerful organizations for funds. His lack of sophistication made him susceptible to those who wanted to use his reputation for their own financial or doctrinal benefit. Perhaps his death saved him from obscurity or further scandal.⁵⁹

Neither of these, however, seem to seriously consider the possibility of Branham being used as an unwitting (and unknowing?) tool of Satan and his hosts. In this regard the comments of Kurt Koch, a German who has had extensive experience in dealing with the demonic, are worth quoting:

Branham said to him [his interpreter in a German revival] one evening just before a meeting, 'Don't stand to the right of me because my angel stands there.' The interpreter asked him quite innocently, 'What does your angel look like?' Branham went on to describe a well-built man with dark hair who stood with folded arms next to him. He had to obey whatever the angel said to him.

On occasions Branham would arrive late at a meeting. When the interpreter encouraged him to try and arrive earlier, Branham replied, 'I can only do what my angel tells me to do. He's with me day and night and if I don't do what he says, I have no authority in my preaching. I can't even decide things in my own private life, and can only go out or see people if the angel allows me to.'

At the end of his meetings when people came to the front to seek healing, the angel had always told him who to lay hands on and who to send away. In fact Branham was merely a slave of his angel. . .

Although some of the more simple of Branham's followers might accept that his angel was a genuine angel of God, I find this impossible to believe myself. On the contrary, all the evidence points in the opposite direction. Angelic appearances in the Bible have an entirely different character to this. The angel's presence and the authority Branham received through the angel are very similar to the phenomena experienced by the healers of the spiritualistic churches in England and America.⁶⁰

Elsewhere Koch relates that another piece of evidence against Branham was that he was not

. . . able to perform cures when faced with born-again Christians who had committed themselves to the protection of Christ. When he spoke in Karlsruhe and Lausanne, there were several believers among the audience--myself included--who prayed along these lines: 'Lord, if this man's powers are from You, then bless and use him, but if the healing gifts are not from You, then hinder him.' The result? On both occasions Branham said from the platform, 'There are disturbing powers here. I can do nothing.'⁶¹

As another piece of evidence in determining Branham's source of power, a careful consideration of his testimony of the initial encounter with the "angel" who commissioned him and guided him for the rest of his life shows that at no time was the "angel" actually confronted in the name of Christ and required to reveal his origin (along the lines of I John 4:1-6). The answer to the question of whether the healings, miracles, prophecies, etc. were genuine or not does not give us any answer to the actual source of any powers shown in Branham's ministry. Scripture warns us against false prophets who are able to perform miracles or signs (Deut. 13:1-5 specifically warns against a person who

does perform a miracle and then leads people to worship other gods; see also 2 Cor. 11:14-15, 2 Thes. 2:7-11, and Rev. 16:14, which teach of Satan's power to do miracles and his strategy of disguising himself as an "angel of light"). Even the fact that Branham did his miracles "in Jesus' name" is not enough, for Jesus pointed out, "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform miracles?" (Matt. 7:22, emphasis ours). Our Lord's response is devastating: "I never knew you" (Matt. 7:23). Thus even if we can prove that many miracles were performed by Branham, and even if they were done in Jesus' name, we still have no proof that they were miracles borne of God. In fact the final test of a prophet of God (in the Old Testament sense which the Branhamites claim for their founder by calling him a prophet with the spirit of Elijah) is one-hundred percent accuracy (Deut. 18:18-22) and the leading of God's people to Him rather than to other gods (Deut. 13:1-5). Branham's record, while admirable in many respects, does not meet the first standard. This is especially noticeable in his prediction that the United States would be destroyed and the Millenium would begin in the year 1977 as noted above. This leads us to conclude that while we do not in the least doubt his sincerity we also do not accept the teaching that Branham came "in the spirit of Elijah" and that his sermons are not to be accepted as the "spoken word".

Conclusion: Responding to the Branhamites

At this point we may consider whether the Branhamites are a cult. As noted in the first article in this series, we define a cult in the theological sense as a group characterized by major doctrinal differences with orthodox Christianity.⁶² Within this framework we concur with Bob Larson's listing of the Branhamites as a cult.⁶³ We are left with one final consideration, which is the most difficult one of all that we may have discussed: How should we respond to a follower of William Branham so that we may be "with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25)?

It will be helpful to bear in mind the chief attractions of cults which include the appeals of authority, community, commitment, idealism, and experience.⁶⁴ As with the Jehovah's Witnesses⁶⁵ the key in turning a Branhamite from his group may be found in undermining the authority given to the teachings of William Branham. As Larson points out:

Even if God did confer spiritual gifts upon the life of William Branham, his current followers seem to have forgotten Paul's warning of I Corinthians 3. Christians are not to carnally adulate men no matter how dynamic or charismatic they may be. It is God who gives the increase and he alone deserves total devotion.⁶⁶

In light of the above discussion, several suggestions may be considered in confronting a Branhamite. First, we offer three suggestions of the negative side:

1. Bearing in mind that most Branhamites appear to relish an argument, and most have their side of the doctrinal issues memorised, we do not advise dogmatic arguments over issues such as the Trinity and the correct baptismal formula. Even if you are able to make a solid case, arguments on these issues will not deal with the authority question and will probably be a waste of your time.

2. Do not lose sight of the ultimate objective of winning a brother or sister back to the fold of the church. Your goal is not to win an argument but

to win a *person*.

3. Do not slight or ridicule the person or character of Branham. Even the tax judgement in the U.S. came not as a result of theft but lack of knowledge of the laws and lack of sophistication in financial matters on Branham's part.

Second, we offer five positive suggestions:

1. The follower of Branham needs to see love and acceptance from you, even though you do not agree with his teachings.

2. He needs to know that miracles, even miracles done "in Jesus' name", are not the complete proof of a ministry that comes from God (Matt. 7:21-3).

3. He needs to understand the power and tactics of Satan who will seek to deceive many with false signs (2 Thes. 2:7-11), and who disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14-15).

4. Once these realised he needs to admit that Branham *could have* been operating under authority and power from Satan (not purposefully, but as a deceived though genuine and sincere believer in Christ.) The whole story of the angelic commission and continued ministry in Branham's life is a key point for discussion in this regard as are the predictions concerning 1977. This part is critical; if you can at least get the follower of Branham to admit that the authority of Branham is questionable, you have established a foundation from which to continue discussion.

5. Once it can be shown that Branham was not a prophet in the spirit of Elijah, and his words are seen as the sermons of a simple humble man rather than the "spoken word", the doctrinal issues may be addressed. If Branham's authority remains intact his words and teachings cannot be effectively challenged, since they are thought by his followers to be direct revelation from God. Once his authority is shown to be faulty then his teachings may be evaluated more objectively. This we feel is one avenue of approach that may be used in seeking to turn a follower of Branham from the "error of his ways".

ENDNOTES

¹A. Scott Moreau, "Jehovah's Witnesses". *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 7:1 (1988): 10.

²David Barrett, ed., *World Christian Encyclopedia A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World AD 1900-2000* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 437.

³*op. cit.*, p. 725.

⁴William Branham, "My Life Story", sermon delivered at the Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, California on 19 April, 1959, reproduced in *Brother Branham* (Jeffersonville, IN: Spoken Word Publications, 1981), p. 23.

⁵David Harrell, *All Things Are Possible: The Healing and Charismatic Revivals in Modern America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1975), p. 29.

⁶Gordon Lindsay, *William Branham: A Man Sent from God*, p. 9; cited by Harrell, *All Things*, p. 27.

⁷Branham, "Life Story", p. 21. The "Light" that he refers to was captured in a now famous photograph which is used by the Branhamites to authenticate his ministry. The picture can be seen in *William Branham*, p. 10.

⁸*op. cit.*, pp. 22-3.

⁹*op. cit.*, p. 24.

¹⁰Harrell, *All Things*, p. 28.

¹¹William Branham, "How the angel Came to Me, and His Commission", sermon delivered in Chicago on 17 January, 1955, reproduced in *Brother Branham* (Jeffersonville, IN: Spoken Word Publications, 1981), p. 71.

¹²Branham, "Life Story", p. 39

¹³*op. cit.*, p. 40.

¹⁴Harrell, *All Things*, p. 29.

¹⁵Branham, "How the angel", pp. 73-80.

¹⁶F. F. Bosworth, "The Gifts of Healing *Plus*", quoted in Harrell, *All Things*, p. 37.

¹⁷Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*. London: SCM Press, 1972, p. 354.

¹⁸Branham, "How the Voice of Healing Received Its Name", quoted in Harrell, *All Things*, p. 33.

¹⁹For the picture, see *Brother Branham*, p. 10; *Twentieth Century Prophet: The Messenger to the Daodicean Church Age*, (Jeffersonville, IN: Branham Campaigns, n.d.), p. 4; and William Branham, *Conduct, Order, Doctrine of the Church*, a compilation of question and answer sessions held at the Branham Tabernacle in Jeffersonville, Indiana from 29 July 1953 to 30 August 1964 (Jeffersonville, IN: Spoken Word Publishers, 1974), p. 7. The report of the FBI concerning the negative is reproduced in *Brother Branham*, p. 11.

²⁰Harrell, *All Things*, p. 37.

²¹*op. cit.*, p. 163.

²²*Ibid.* See also Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, p. 355 and Bob Larson, *Larson's Book of Cults* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1982), p. 195. The original prediction is in Branham's *Seven Church Ages*, which, as a result of the failure of the prophecies, has become very difficult for a non-Branhamite to secure. Harrell reports that it is also found in Pearry Green, *The Acts of the Prophet* (mimeographed book; Tucson: Tucson Tabernacle, n.d.), chap. 6, p. 6 and chap. 12, p. 57.

²³Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, p. 354.

²⁴Harrell, *All Things*, p. 164.

²⁵Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, p. 437.

²⁶Harrell, *All Things*, p. 165.

²⁷See Nils Bloch-Hoell, *The Pentecostal Movement: Its Origin, Development and Distinctive Character* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1964), pp. 30-52 for a brief account of the revival and early developments of the pentecostal movement.

²⁸Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 153.

²⁹*op. cit.*, p. 154.

³⁰See Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, pp. 31-2 for a very concise account of the controversy.

³¹Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, p. 156.

³²*op. cit.*, p. 157.

³³*op. cit.*, p. 158.

³⁴Harrell, *All Things*, p. 163.

³⁵*Twentieth Century Prophet*, p. 12.

³⁶NASB; all Scriptural quotes are NASB unless otherwise noted.

³⁷The arguments presented here are taken from *Twentieth Century Prophet*, pp. 13-4.

³⁸*op. cit.*, p. 14.

³⁹*Ibid.*, emphasis theirs.

⁴⁰Harrell, *All Things*, p. 164.

⁴¹Extensive defense of the Branhamite position on this point can be found in William Branham, "Understanding the Godhead", an excerpt from *The Seven Church Ages Book* printed separately by the Branhamites. The copy in my possession lacks any publication data.

⁴²*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, "Monarchianism". The term "monarchianism" is derived from "mono" (one) and "arche" (rule or origin). Williston Walker gives an excellent and concise summary of the proponents and teachings of the two major schools in *A History of the Christian Church*, third ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), pp. 68-70.

⁴³Named after the most influential teacher of the school, Sabellius.

⁴⁴So called because this teaching led to the idea that God the Father suffered when He appeared in the form of Jesus and died; the term literally means "Father-suffering" (*New Dictionary of Theology*, "Monarchianism").

⁴⁵Walker, *A History*, pp. 69-70.

⁴⁶E. Calvin Beisner, *God in Three Persons* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1984), p. 58; see also discussion and the quote of Tertullian in Walker, *A History*, p. 68. Branham's defense of the unitarian teaching shows a similar concern. See, for example, Branham, "Understanding", p. 18.

⁴⁷*Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, "Marcellus".

⁴⁸Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), pp. 331-2.

⁴⁹*op. cit.*, p. 335.

⁵⁰See Branham, *Conduct*, pp. 177-191.

⁵¹D. A. Carson, "Matthew" in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), vol. 8, p. 598.

⁵²See Richard Gan, "The Original sin That Brought About the fall of man in the Garden of Eden: What Is It?", *Prophetic Revelation* 46 (September-October 1981) for a full exposition on this concept. We note here that the basic teaching is very close to that of the Unification Church (the Moonies). Branham goes so far as to speculate that the serpent was an upright creature which was the "missing link" between man and ape; see Branham, *Conduct*, pp. 79, 246.

⁵³Branham, *Conduct*, p. 247-50, 833.

⁵⁴*op. cit.*, p. 53.

⁵⁵*op. cit.*, pp. 52-6, 192-3, 607, 682, 1032, and 1167.

⁵⁶William Branham, "The spoken Word Is the original Seed", sermon delivered at the Branham Tabernacle in Jeffersonville, Indiana on 18 March 1962; reproduced in *The Spoken Word Is the original Seed* (Jeffersonville, IN: Spoken Word Publications, 1982), p. 65.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸Hollenweger, *The pentecostals*, p. 355.

⁵⁹Harrell, *All Things*, p. 165.

⁶⁰Kurt Koch, *Occult Bondage and Deliverance: Advice for Counseling the Sick, the Troubled and the Occulticly Oppressed* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1971), pp. 49-50.

⁶¹Kurt Koch, *Occult ABC*, Trans. Michael Freeman ([No City], West Germany: Literature Mission Aglasterhausen, 1980), p. 235.

⁶²A. Scott Moreau, "Introduction to Cults". *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 6:2 (1987):3.

⁶³Larson, *Cults*, pp. 194-7.

⁶⁴Moreau, "Introduction", pp. 10-11

⁶⁵Moreau, "Jehovah's Witnesses", pp. 20-22.

⁶⁶Larson, *Cults*, p. 196.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO
RESIDENTIAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN AFRICA

by John N. Ochola

The formulating pattern for evangelical theological education articulated in the *Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education* should go a long way towards streamlining theological education in Africa. Theological education is not just a school system. It deals with the divine destiny of humanity.¹ This paper lays down some crucial proposals for the implementation of the much talked about holistic or person-centered and truth-centered theological education in Africa. It does this by stressing that theological education, by its very nature must be spiritual, internal, practical and vocational, and that theological educators must measure to the biblically determined and professionally justified standard.

Theological education must give spiritual connotation to knowledge and its application. The extremes of intellectualism dangerously influencing the development of spiritual life as an ideal must be curbed. Thinking in terms of traditional academic patterns and standards of cognitive knowledge is not enough. Knowledge must be approached in terms of a virile service to God. To maintain spirituality in theological education, the following factors must be incorporated in the educational process.

Firstly, theological students must be subject to a rigorous standard of moral and spiritual requirements; anybody falling short should not qualify for graduation.

Secondly, spiritual opportunities in the daily schedule must be provided: chapel services must be mandatory, special emphases meetings revolving around revival, holiness mission prayer, and as well as other forms of Christian fellowship must be offered.

Finally, the services of a spiritual director should not be dispensed with. Every institution should have a spiritual director or dean of students whose work should be supplemented by other members of the faculty who takes a personal interest in the spiritual maturation of the students.

Theological education must make knowledge internal as well. The idea of learning something just for the purpose of passing examinations should not be entertained. What must be required is a real assent to truth. The ground of truth, the Bible, must be taken seriously. To come to a real assent the student must digest and internalize the grounds or reasons presented to him. He must be guided to discover the truth for himself. For this to happen the following principles must be blended into the teaching and learning methods.

Patterns of learning and training must encourage and facilitate self-directed learning.² Teachers must be on guard against the habit of making themselves and their textbooks authoritarian.

They should not deposit knowledge in the heads of students expecting them to learn it off by heart parrot-fashion, keep and guard it till they demand it back at the time of examination. If this is done, students will become passive and docile in matters of knowledge.³

Also, assignments should not be reduced to oral and written evidence of the student's ability to recall what certain authors have said,⁴ but rather as Bruce J. Nicholls suggests

More creative forms of assignments need to be explored. For example, a biblical book study could result in the class as a whole preparing a commentary for that book for a specific target audience such as high school students, factory workers, and so forth, with each student or group of students preparing different chapters. .

Again in thematic theological study, the integration of biblical material with Church history and contemporary case studies would help students to contextualize their studies for their future ministries.⁵

For practical courses like Church Administration, Church Growth, etc., guided field research and case studies should be incorporated. Lecture methods should be combined with opportunities for questions, personal reflections, dialogues, forums and seminars.

The knowledge gained by the foregoing methods of teaching and learning would then become deeply embedded in the effective domain of a student's life in such a way that affects his present and future belief, behaviour, feelings, and knowledge. He would then be able "to propose matters in a valid and convincing way to other human minds."⁶

Concurrent with the spiritual and internal aspects should be the practicality of theological education. Wilson W. Chow rightly observes that,

Seminaries should be different from schools of religious studies, patterned after the universality model, or even from professional training schools. There must be a functional integration between learning by precepts and learning by experience, between being and doing. The students are trained to be like Christ, to know the Word of God, and to do the work of the ministry.⁷

From this point of view, theological education is itself life and not just preparation for life. To attain this practicality two factors at least must be present in the educational process.

First, a laboratory/workshop approach to teaching and the learning process should be used. As an example and model to the student, the teacher must exemplify in his personal life the values and skills taught. On his part "the student should learn Christian living and service by precisely engaging in practical Christian living and service in the here-and-now learning situation."⁸ It must be stressed to the student that it is what he does now that counts.

Second, the institution must be keen to plan and supervise practical Christian ministries as

...part of the student's learning experience, and not merely provide cheap labor to local churches during the weekend.⁹

Lively chapel services should be planned and made indispensable for both the staff and students. These activities viewed as an integral part of a student's education should be executed with initiative expected of the student rather than from administrative coercion.

Theological education must decisively respond to the call that:

The times are weighted with unusual challenge and unusual opportunity, Everywhere the opportunities and challenges take on new and confusing forms. The times demand an urgent quest for the renewal of theological educational patterns, . . .¹⁰

Each theological institution should, therefore, clearly define patterns of ministry for its graduates and forge training schemes appropriate for them. Many theological institutions in Africa operate with a vague or less-clearly defined general goal of training people for pastoral work and its related disciplines, but how many of their graduates really joined the anticipated ministry?

Evangelical theological institutions have a well defined manifesto on theological education establishing an authoritative framework on which to work, but the same manifesto leaves room for each individual institution to deliberately design its own programme of theological education to suit the context in which it serves.¹¹ Therefore, each institution should identify a specific area of training and plainly define it. This definition can be implemented in the light of changing opportunities for service, modern technology and mobility.

The greater job choice possible in our society, coupled with more jobs appearing with special implications for the Kingdom of God¹² exerts pressure on theological education to go vocational. To illustrate, a situation already exists in Kenya where religious education has been made compulsory in the school curriculum. In such a situation the need for academically and spiritually qualified teachers must be met by our theological systems, otherwise the situation is bound to be exploited by those who treat Christianity as one of the many religions with detriment to the Church and many souls. Similar challenge exists in the areas of mass media communications, administration, social service, and cultural development to mention a few.

As a first step towards integration of vocational skills in theological education, ACTEA and, where provided, government accreditation must be speedily sought and adopted by each theological institution for their obvious benefits.

The success of integrated theological education proposed in this paper is only possible through a faculty dedicated to the task. The following standards are therefore suggested for teachers.

Apart from their academic responsibilities theological educators should not become spectators of the spiritual and devotional life of students; they must always be united in seeing that both the staff and student body are in a state of mission and spiritual preparedness.¹³ Philip J. Hughes' advice is timely here.

Much of the success of education depends on the actual relationship between the person who is being educated and the educator. Those who are being educated ... respond when genuine concern is shown for them as people and when interest is expressed in their own interests and situation. For this concern to be experienced as genuine, it must extend beyond the class-room and beyond class-time. If it is limited in the hours in which it is expressed or the situations in which it is experienced doubts will be thrown on its genuineness. Concern that is shown only in the class-room will not be understood to be concern for the person as a person - only as part of a role.¹⁴

Thus, each teacher should pray, play, and eat with the students, enquire about the students' needs, and give help and guidance not only by word-of-mouth but by personal example as well.

Each theological educator must get actively involved in Christian ministries both within and outside the academic community. He should be involved in evangelism, preaching, Bible study, counseling, or any other form of service his gifts may allow. By doing this he will gain a realistic knowledge of what Christian ministry is like in the context in which he serves, will hear the questions that are really being asked by the people, and will tailor his teaching methods and materials to suit these questions and needs.

Research, writing, and publishing obligations should be required of each theological educator. Solutions to problems affecting the Church can only be found within the community served. Through proper rational and intelligent research and dissemination of research findings the problems can be identified and resolved. It is time theological educators abandoned the habit of giving hypothetical answers based on deductions or theories derived from foreign scholastic systems and instead embark on research to provide authentic and effective answers to the needs of the Church.

If the spirituality, practicality, and vocationality of theological education advocated in this paper could help implement the agenda for the renewal of evangelical theological education in Africa and so commend the gospel, then those involved in the process of theological education are under obligation to fulfill their ministry with all earnestness and discretion by implementing the proposals.

ENDNOTES

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- ³Njoroge, R. J. *Philosophy and Education in Africa*. Nairobi: Transafrica, 1986. p. 158.
- ⁴Dickson, K. A. *Theology in Africa*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984. p. 220.
- ⁵Bowers, P., ed. *Evangelical Theological Education Today 1*. Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, 1982. p. 20.
- ⁶Parratt, J., ed., *op. cit.*, p. 39.
- ⁷Bowers, P., ed., *op. cit.*, p. 51.
- ⁸Lee, J. M., *The Shape of Religious Instruction*. Mishawaka: Religious Education Press, 1971. p. 19.
- ⁹Bowers, P., ed., *op. cit.*, p. 59.
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- ¹¹*Ibid.*
- ¹²Clowney, E. P., *Called to the Ministry*. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1964. p. 24.
- ¹³Wagoner, W. D., *The Seminary: Protestant and Catholic*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966. p. 48.
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PRELUDE TO WHITE DOMINATION OF THE CHURCH
MISSIONARY SOCIETY (C.M.S) NIGER MISSION

F. Anyika

Introduction

As the author of this paper succinctly observed,¹

The Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) Niger Mission is remarkable in being staffed almost entirely by Africans right from its foundation in 1857 to 1890 which marked the beginnings of its white domination.

Writing in the same vein, Emily Headland after surveying the activities of the Mission prior to 1890, declared:²

There is greater proportion of Native work in the Niger Mission than in any other African Mission, and experience has thus been gained with respect to Native Churches.

The purpose of this paper is to dwell on the circumstances which not only led to the introduction of a regular staff of British Missionaries in the field but also resulted ultimately in white domination of the Mission.

A Mission is Founded: Messages of Hope and Difficulties

After two unsustainable attempts in 1841 and 1854,³ to embark on missionary activity in Southeastern Nigeria, the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) of the Anglican Church at last commenced effective missionary enterprise in that region in the first half of the 19th century when on 2nd August 1857 a band of acclimatized Africans, who left Sierra Leone on 13th May 1857, began preaching the Gospel at Onitsha. The Mission that was born in consequence of this epoch-making enterprise went by the name of The Church Missionary Society Niger Mission with headquarters at Onitsha in Central Igboland. Included in this band of acclimatized Africans were the Rev. John Christopher Taylor and Mr. Simon Jonas both of whom were liberated slaves of Igbo parentage. In the party were also three catechists, a Yoruba Mohammedan and freed slave named Kosomo who was to be in Northern Nigeria the interpreter of the Rev. Samuel Adjai Crowther based in Lagos and appointed leader of the Mission party. Crowther's bold plan included carrying the Gospel from Igboland to the Moslems of Northern Nigeria.

In sending out these Africans to commence missionary enterprise on the Niger, the C.M.S. Missionary Committee looked up to the Sierra Leone Mission founded in 1804 to supply the labour force needed for the piloting of the new mission. To use the very words of the Editor of the main organ of the Society, *The Church Missionary Intelligencer*:⁴

We expect to hear of a great movement in Sierra Leone towards the Niger, and we trust there will be no restraint put upon it, no narrow feeling permitted, which would leave the Niger unoccupied.

As events continued to unfold themselves, it became increasingly clear that the Committee went too far in its expectation of staffing the new Mission with sufficient indigenous workers from Sierra Leone.

The harbingers of the Gospel at Onitsha were particularly pleased to observe that the people they had come to evangelize were very receptive to their message. Hear Taylor in his report on a Sunday service he conducted on 13th September 1857:⁵

I preached in the morning from Matt 30-34 to about 200 persons; in the afternoon to 300 persons from Isaiah XLIV 9-18. The Congregations were pleased with what they had heard. While I was speaking of the folly of idol-making and the superstitious rites of fetishism and the goodness of God, the word of God darted into their minds like fire, and they felt the force of that word Deliver me, for thou art my God. The time will come when the Tshuku (gods) of Abo and the Ibos in general shall fall down before the Gospel, as Dagon fell before the Ark. Their multifarious shrines shall give way for the full liberation and introduction of the Gospel to their forlorn, degraded, long-bewitched, but ransomed people of God.

The above is typical of the numerous thrilling reports from Onitsha which led Salisbury Square (the Headquarters of the C.M.S) to the belief that the Niger Mission was one of the finest of its foreign fields.

Meanwhile more missionaries from Sierra Leone had joined the Mission in 1858. They were the Rev. Cole and Thomas. Having endured, during their journey from Sierra Leone to the Niger, grueling experiences which exercised an unhappy influence on them, they were unable to withstand the difficulties and hardships engendered by the founding of the new Mission. The two men got chilled and disheartened and eventually returned to Sierra Leone before the end of the year without the slightest intention of returning to the field,⁶ thereby acting like the biblical John surnamed Mark. They told their brethren the most disconcerting stories about the Niger Mission, stories calculated to scare African Clergymen missionary enterprise. Not only were they from volunteering to go to the Niger for few mission stations understaffed, but in order to keep the Mission going Adjai Crowther was compelled to recruit whoever volunteered to serve in the Mission regardless of their character, and many of these volunteers like Romaine, Langley, Phillips, and During were poorly educated even though they were ordained priests. Some of them, as we shall soon see, had questionable characters.

By the close of 1859, information had reached Salisbury Square that all was not well with the Niger Mission.⁷ In 1860, regretted that it had not been possible to send white personnel to the Niger. It would appear that the situation on the Niger was getting worse, for three years later (1863) Salisbury Square expressed great sorrow that it had not been humanly possible to introduce white missionaries in the Niger Mission.⁸ Indeed from the various reports in 1863 to 1876, the Mission was like a Chinese dance, two steps forward and a step backward. The initial enthusiasm with which the Gospel was embraced had begun to fade. Salisbury square was scarcely aware of how slippery the ground had become for the Mission.

In August 1877 Bishop Crowther made a visit to the stations in the Niger Mission. He was accompanied by Mr. Ashcroft whom the C.M.S had employed as an industrial agent for West Africa. During that visit which took the Bishop to all the mission locations, Ashcroft observed several weaknesses in the Mission and sent a report to Salisbury Square. One of the weaknesses had to do with a serious lack of regular and thorough supervision of the Mission.

Indeed right from its foundation the Niger Mission had continued to suffer serious set-backs owing to the lack of enough supervision for which poor communication was largely responsible. The head of the mission, Bishop Adjai Crowther, had his residence in Lagos, a distance of over four hundred

miles. In visiting these mission locations on the Niger, he depended entirely on commercial vessels plying up the River Niger. More often than not these vessels went up the Niger only once a year during the rainy season when the volume of water was sufficient to carry sailing crafts. Though of indomitable character and imbued with a flaming spirit of evangelism, the most Crowther could do was to visit these stations only once a year, and there were years he was not seen at all.

Furthermore because the sailing of the commercial ships greatly regulated his movements, Crowther more often than not had not the opportunity to stay in the Mission and discuss with the missionaries as long as he would have liked to, for he had of necessity to move and stop whenever the craft moved and stopped. On several occasions, "he spent only a few hours at a station that needed the labour of weeks, and many days at another place where there was little to be done."⁹ There were even occasions when during his visits Crowther had not the opportunity to discharge his spiritual duties. The editor of the Church Missionary Intelligencer noted:¹⁰

Even when the Bishop was able to pay a hurried visit to a station, there were supplies to be landed, accounts to be settled, buildings to be examined with a view to repair, and many other secularities to be attended to, leaving often no time at all for the work of a Bishop in the Church of God.

Thirdly, because they knew that Crowther was most likely to visit them only during the wet season, the missionaries endeavoured to be up and doing during this period only in readiness for the visit and for the rest of the year; they exhibited a lax attitude in their work. The prevailing situation was therefore not the type that could augur good for the Mission.

Salisbury Square viewed this aspect of Ashcroft's report with great concern. In order to consolidate and extend the influence of the Mission and to ensure its effective super-vision, they provided the Bishop with a steamer to enable him to travel up and down the River Niger regularly. The steamer which was placed at the Bishop's disposal was named The Henry Venn in memory of the Rev. Henry Venn who was the Secretary of the C.M.S from 1830 to 1872.

The other aspect of Ashcroft's report had to do with the quality of the missionaries who, it should be recalled, were all Africans. Ashcroft accused these missionaries of moral debasement. The accusation sent Salisbury Square reeling in dismay. In order to ascertain the true position of the Mission detailed the Rev. J. B. Wood to go on the Niger for on-the-spot assessment.

Wood's Investigation and Report

An Englishman, the Rev. J. B. Wood, joined in 1857 the Yoruba Mission which was founded in 1843. He was not one of the pioneer missionaries to Yorubaland but certainly a contemporary of the founders of that Mission. He had laboured for eight years in Sierra Leone before coming to Nigeria. His first station was Asbeokuta where he had laboured in various capacities before his new assignment in January 1880.

Wood visited the various mission locations on the Niger, got in touch with the missionaries manning these locations, and held useful discussions with them in order to become informed first hand of their character, resourcefulness, dynamism, and achievements. On the completion of his investigation, he submitted a voluminous report on his findings. The report brought very serious charges against virtually all the missionaries. The missionaries whose conduct was found particularly deplorable included the Revs. Thomas C. John, J. Buck, C. Paul, and Messrs Joseph S. P. Johnson, P. Williams, W. F. John, J. Williams, H. Spencer, Jeremiah Johnson, and Garrick.

The Rev. Thomas C. John based at Ilokoja was accused of gross immorality. In Wood's report John was compelled by Bishop Crowther to marry his wife because the woman was with child by him. The Rev. C. Paul was charged with materialism because he had a piece of land for his own use. Mr. P. Williams based at Kipo Hill was accused of being very quarrelsome. He was also charged with being too deeply involved in commercial transactions. Mr. W. F. John based at Onitsha was accused of brutality and inflicting most barbaric injuries on an innocent Igbo slave girl. Mr. S. P. John was blacklisted for general unfitness for missionary enterprise. Mr. H. Spencer based at Asaba was also accused of deep involvement in trading transactions. Mr. Jeremiah Johnson was represented as wallowing in debt and also charged with immoral conduct.¹¹

Shocked by Wood's disconcerting report, Salisbury Square immediately instructed its Missionary Committee to send out a two-man deputation to confer with Bishop Crowther on the prevailing situation in the Niger Mission. The two men, the Revs. J. B. Whiting and E. D. Hutchinson, held their meetings (popularly referred to as the Madeira Conference) at Madeira. The Bishop was accompanied to the meeting by his son, Archdeacon Danderson and Mr. Boyle, the Catechist/Schoolmaster at Bonny.

Also present at the meetings was Mr. Ashcroft. The participants deeply regretted the absence of the Rev. J. B. Wood who could not attend for grave reasons.

The first meeting was held on Thursday, 10th February 1881 at 2 O'clock. But there were no serious deliberations. As Whiting and Hutchinson put it.¹²

The afternoon was spent in quiet intercourse, the opportunity being taken by each of us to ascertain fully what the feelings of our friends were in connection with the general character of the report of Mr. Wood, and how far their own personal knowledge supported or neutralized his judgements.

It was on Monday, 14th, that the Conference went into real business. Starting at 11 O'clock in the morning the meeting lasted till 5.30 p.m. The first job of the Conference was to determine whether the charges brought against the missionaries as contained in Wood's report were founded or not. If founded, they were to determine appropriate action to be taken. The absence of Wood created great difficulties for it was not easy to ascertain the sources of his information. The sources, if they were known, would have greatly enabled the participants to determine the truth of his numerous charges.

The cases of the missionaries brought to book were taken up one after another. Bishop Crowther deflated the charge of immorality brought against the Revs. Thomas C. John and S. Joseph. He marshalled out points to prove convincingly that both men married in strict conformity with the laws of the Church. Both the Bishop and his son disagreed vehemently with Wood on the charge of immorality brought against Mr. Jeremiah Johnson. In the words of Whiting and Hutchinson:¹³

With regard to Mr. Johnson of Brass, both the Bishop and Archdeacon Crowther stated that they had never heard of the report mentioned by Mr. Wood as to immoral conduct, and we felt that as Mr. Wood regarded the report as mere hearsay, it was not necessary to give any formal instructions to the Bishop on the subject.

The Bishop considered the charge of involvement in commercial transactions brought against Messrs P. Williams and H. Spencer to be

unnecessary. He argued that since the missionaries were provided with supplies and as trade by barter was by and large the prevailing system of buying and selling, the bartering of one commodity for another necessarily had to involve some trading transactions. The Conference agreed with him and was of the opinion that it was unnecessary for Wood to have brought that charge against any missionary whether ordained or not.

The charge of brutality and inhuman treatment of an Igbo slave girl brought against Messrs. W. F. John and J. Williams sparked off serious searching of hearts. Mr. W. F. John, the Conference discovered, was in fact no longer a missionary of the C.M.S during Wood's investigation. He was appointed a lay missionary by Bishop Crowther in 1875 and stationed at Brass. Some years later the Bishop dismissed him on grounds of immorality but later on took him into his own employment as a clerk and general assistant and stationed him at Onitsha where he committed the crime of which he was charged. Before the Madeira Conference was convened, John had been missed from the C.M.S and had returned to Sierra Leone. The Conference was unable to determine the extent of Mr. J. Williams's involvement in John's crime. In any case Mr. Williams had already tendered his resignation which had been accepted by the Bishop and like John had left the Mission.

With regard to Mr. P. Williams, the Bishop disagreed with Wood's assessment of his character. On the contrary, he described him as an energetic man, a great asset to the Mission and went ahead to recommend his advancement to the ministry. From what was heard, the Conference was inclined to believe the Bishop. It declared:¹⁴

Mr. Williams appears to be making good progress in the Igara language, and we are of the opinion that under kindly and wise superintendence, Mr. Williams may become a valuable Agent.

With regard to the charge of debt brought against Mr. Jeremiah Johnson, the Bishop explained in a most plausible manner how the debt arose from Johnson's non-acquaintance with the peculiarities of the barter system of trade when he first joined the Mission. The conference reasoned with him and suggested that a grant be given to Johnson to relieve him of his debt. But the Conference agreed with Wood that Mr. Jackson stationed at Kipo Hill was very quarrelsome and suggested he should be dismissed if his dismissal would not overtask the energies of his conferees.

The Conference had every reason to believe that Wood's report was greatly exaggerated. It deposed:¹⁵

There can be no doubt that many statements hostile to the Native Agents* are in circulation in the River; these are in many cases much exaggerated and bear the character or reflect the thoughts and feelings with regard to missionary work of those who make them. It will be seen that Mr. Wood in his report does not indicate his sources of information in any case, with the exception of one; indeed he speaks of these statements as evil reports current in the river. It appeared to us as possible that some of the information which reached Mr. Wood was of a questionable character.

On the other hand, the Conference observed that from every indication it was absolutely necessary to overhaul the Mission to ensure its consolidation and to accelerate the rate of expansion. It went on:¹⁶

* Salisbury Square usually referred to African Missionaries in the Niger Mission as Native Agents.

The present condition of things is due first of all to want of care in the original selection of the Agents and then in the lack of that constant and efficient superintendence which the special circumstances of the Niger Mission so urgently required. We feel therefore that the real remedy lies in placing the Niger Mission upon an entirely new footing and within the lines laid down in the instruction of the Committee. These instructions were read to the Bishop at the Conference and he expressed himself entirely satisfied with, and thankful for the arrangement suggested.

The Conference then went on to recommend as follows:

1. That all the Missionaries must keep away from trading.
2. That a Conference of missionaries with the Bishop as the Chairman should be formed immediately. The conference should meet either biennially or quarterly and its proceedings must be forwarded through the Niger Finance Committee to the Parent Committee.
3. That the Mission should be divided into two Districts. One District should embrace all the Delta Stations while the Second District should embrace all the stations from Ossomare down to Onitsha. An active Superintendent should be appointed for each District.
4. That a white man should be appointed general Secretary of the Mission. The appointee who should be of high educational qualification should not only act as the Secretary of the Niger Finance Committee but should also be the representative of the Parent Committee in the Mission.

The appointment of superintendents for the two Districts and a General secretary for the Mission was to ensure more effective supervision of the Mission, to give advice and stimulate energy, and to transfer to these men some of the functions hitherto executed by the Bishop. Indeed in a personal letter it sent to the Bishop, the Conference declared:¹⁷

It will naturally follow that in many matters in which up to the present time, the Agents have been accustomed to look to you for direction, they will now be advised or directed by the superintendents of the District or the Secretary of the Mission.

Salisbury Square endorsed the Conference's recommendations. First, the Niger Mission was split into two and two Superintendents were appointed for both. The first District going by the name The Upper Niger District was entrusted to the Rev. Henry Johnson while the Rev. Danderson Crowther (Bishop Crowther's son) was placed in charge of the other called The Lower Niger District.¹⁸ Both Danderson and Johnson were experienced African clergymen. Secondly, in 1882, the Rev. T. Phillips was sent out as the first English Secretary of the Niger Mission.

Phillip's term of office was short-lived, for he was invalided home in 1883. But before he left the Niger, he had visited the various mission locations and interacted with the missionaries manning these stations. What he saw and heard confirmed a lot of statements which Wood made as regards the conduct of many of these missionaries. Take for instance the case of the Rev. E. Phillips (not to be confused with the Rev. T. Phillips the white missionary secretary). He was stationed at Asaba. Phillips found him a drunkard - drunkenness being the very offence with which he was charged by Wood. Said Phillips concerning him:¹⁹

It would be almost impossible to place a young man here to assist him. None would be found to bear the jealousy and the coarse treatment which he would receive from this Agent. I found in settling his account with the United African Company that a large quantity of spirits were included in the supplies which tends to confirm the report of the Rev. J. B. Wood as to his habit of intoxication.

The Rev. J. Durning was a quiet apathetic man. He was stationed at Onitsha and was about sailing to Sierra Leone when Phillips personally got in touch with him. He applied to the Secretary for the reimbursement of the sum of 13^s6^d (the equivalent of 36 heads of tobacco) which he claimed to have paid to labourers for conveying his luggage from his house to the river-side (the port of embarkation), a distance of a quarter of a mile. The Secretary found the claim most unrealistic for as he reported:²⁰

At this place (Onitsha) a labourer receives 2 heads of tobacco valued at 8d for a whole day's work, thus showing that either he (Durning) appropriated some to his own purposes or that the natives have grievously imposed upon him the former. I have some proof the latter is most unlikely. I am sorry to see the amount of ingenuity and skill which he displayed when I reasoned with him on this matter, but there was as I have so frequently seen in these native Agents of the society an utter want of truthfulness where he thought truth would not serve his purpose.

Mr. P. J. Williams was the lay missionary in charge of Gbebe station. In October 1882, he applied to the Secretary for what he claimed to be the arrears of 12 months salary due to the station's interpreter. When the Secretary said he would like to see the interpreter, Williams explained that the man had left just three days before, but that he could receive it on his behalf. There appeared to the Secretary something suspicious in the way Williams replied to his enquiries and on investigation, he was told that there had been no interpreter at Gbebe for more than a year. When he confronted Williams seriously a few days later, the latter confessed that what he told him was all false. Mr. Williams had also told the secretary that he had made several evangelistic trips to the interior and gave a most interesting description of each trip. But the Secretary took these stories with a pinch of salt. He wondered:²¹

What guarantee can the Society have that he was ever a mile from his own house in the direction he speaks of or that there is a single word more of truth in these statements than in those made to me?

Mr. J. Thomas was a lay missionary working the station at Lokoja. He was advanced in years. Shortly after taking up work as the Society's new Secretary, Phillips received a letter from him asserting that he had never received certain supplies meant for him in July 1881, and demanded that the amount he paid for these supplies should be refunded to him. But on investigation, Phillips found that Thomas had received the supplies, his signature having been duly obtained at the time he collected them.²²

On 17th July 1883, the Niger Finance Committee held a top level meeting and resolved that the missionaries whose conduct fell below expectation should be dismissed from service.²³ The Resolution was immediately communicated to Salisbury Square. On the strength of the Reports from both Wood and Phillips and the recommendation of the Niger Finance Committee Salisbury Square was convinced that prompt action was absolutely necessary to save the Niger Mission from further deterioration. Accordingly, it instructed the Society's Secretary, Mr. Lang, to issue out letters of disconnection to those affected.

The missionaries disconnected were the Revs. J. C. John, I. Buck, and J. Daring and Mr. R. A. Fyne.²⁴ The reason advanced in every case was that the Society "had been constrained to realise the fact that your influence has not been and is not such as to give them any hope that it will be for the furtherance of the Gospel to retain you in the service of the Mission."²⁵ After the disconnection of these men new hands were recruited from Sierra Leone to replace them. The action taken by Salisbury Square was long overdue. On the reason why the agonising Niger problem was allowed to linger for so long before a solution to it was attempted, Hamilton and Touch who succeeded Phillips at different periods had this to say:²⁶

These steps ought to have been taken long before, but they (the authorities of the Society) were misled by those in authority in the Mission.

As already indicated, the Rev. J. Phillips who was the first European to work in the Niger Mission, was invalidated home in 1883. His place was taken by another European the Rev. J. Hamilton who became the second European to work in the Mission. His appointment as Phillip's successor was another attempt made by Salisbury Square to station a white man on the Niger as a source of strength to the Bishop in the administration of the Diocese.

The disconnection of the men mentioned above scarcely changed Salisbury Square's opinion of the Africa personnel on the Niger as revealed by the instruction delivered to Hamilton shortly before he proceeded to the Niger. Said the instruction, inter alia:²⁷

Your first and principal duty will affect the staff of our Native Agents. There is reason to fear that the character of several of the Agents still in the Mission's employ is far from satisfactory. In the present grave crises of the Mission, it is absolutely essential that every agent employed be above suspicion.

Hamilton sailed to the Niger in 1883 in company of Dr. Percy Brown. Brown was the first medical missionary sent to the Niger by the C.M.S. The two men took up residence at Lokoja. In July 1884, Mr. J. Burness joined the Mission. A seasoned mason, he was sent out primarily to take charge of the Mission's construction work as the following instruction given to him shortly before he left England for Nigeria reveals:²⁸

The dilapidated condition of the buildings at the several mission stations, and the absence of well qualified builders able to undertake the superintendence of the repairs of existing buildings and the erection of new ones has been a source of serious inconvenience and material loss to the Mission.

The Bishop's time has been unduly occupied in connection with the superintendence of the buildings. He as well as the Committee has felt the need of some qualified European to relieve him of this duty.

The Introduction of White Missionaries on the Niger

Although occasionally there were signs of progress, the position in the Mission remained basically the same for years after Wood's investigation. On 5th July 1887, for instance, the Rev. A. Robinson called for immediate energetic measures to wake up the Mission from its deep slumber.²⁹ In April 1888, the Missionary Committee, basing its information on a letter from Archdeacon Johnson, reported that things were really bad on the Niger.³⁰

The 1888 Annual Report on the Mission said, inter alia:³¹

The spiritual state of Onitsha shows little sign of improvement. Since 1883 there has been a painful declension in zeal. The Canker that is now eating out the spiritual heart of the Onitsha church is polygamy. From small beginnings, the evil is spreading with alarming rapidity and unless timely arrested, will prove the ultimate ruin of the church.

The 1889 Annual Report on the Mission was even more distressing. It observed:³²

The report from Onitsha is more discouraging than ever. Those who were formerly members and communicants of the Church, but who have relapsed into heathenism, have proved the too-successful instruments of the Tempter, and have by charges of disloyalty and by threats of violence, carried nearly the whole body of professing Christians into complicity with idolatry.

The projection of the Niger Mission by the avalanche of discouraging reports from the field as a fast-sinking boat was agonizing enough to compel the Society to take further measures to revamp the ailing Mission. After long deliberation, the Society came to the conviction that the only thing that would solve the nagging problem on the Niger was the introduction of white missionaries there. Said the Society's Committee of Correspondence in its resolution of 30th July, 1889:³³

Therefore the Committee feel that they must no longer hesitate to write English missionaries of spirituality and devotion to help in raising the Niger Mission to the spiritual level which is essential to real success.

The same resolution directed that appeal should at once be made for men specially qualified and willing to volunteer for such responsible work.

Bishop Crowther gave full support to the new arrangement. He agreed whole heartedly with Salisbury Square that the Niger territory required a large number of missionaries, that there was no way Sierra Leone could meet the manpower needs of the Mission, that owing to the death of personnel only few areas had been won for Christ and that the African missionaries needed greater supervision and encouragement. But the new arrangement did not go down well with these African missionaries who dismissed it as most unprogressive.³⁴

It is true that the society had sent to the Niger four Europeans. But all of them went out on special assignments and not primarily to discharge the normal functions of a missionary. By the beginning of December 1889, men had been invited to serve on the Niger as missionaries and men had been appointed to go out to work side by side their African brethren, while endeavouring to lead them on to more vigorous and spiritual methods of work.

Among the first to be appointed were Messrs W. G. Wilmont Brook, Eric Lewis, P.A. Bennett and the Revs. C. F. Harford Battersbury, F. N. Eden, and H. H. Dobinson. All these were sent out in the first months of 1890. Their going out marked the beginnings of a sustained effort to staff the Niger Mission with white personnel. In 1891, six were sent out, two of them being females. In December of the same year, Bishop Crowther died and a white man, the Rev. Joseph Sidney Hill was consecrated as his successor. Thus, the Superintendence of the Mission was entrusted to an expatriate thereby placing the destiny of the Mission completely in the hands of European personnel.

Coming out in December 1893 to assume office, Bishop Hill took with him as many as twelve missionary recruits. By the end of the decade (1900), not fewer than thirty-seven Europeans had left the shores of Britain for missionary enterprise in the Niger Mission.³⁵

While the number of white missionaries continued to increase annually, the number of African missionaries kept decreasing. Eden who became secretary of the Mission no sooner than he arrived in the field, had in August 1890 dealt ruthlessly with more of these African workers. Those on whom the axe fell included the Revs. H. S. Macaulay dismissed for laxity, C. Paul disconnected for unproductivity and non-aggressiveness in missionary work, S. J. Smart laid off for being unsatisfactory as a missionary and Mr. D. C. Strong sent on compulsory furlough and the question of his ordination deferred for allowing his congregation to yield to the temptation of idolatry. Indeed in the sacred returns for 1895 in respect to the Mission, the column for African missionaries was left vacant, an indication that there were most probably no more missionaries from Sierra Leone working in the Mission.

Summary and Conclusion

The Church Missionary Society Niger Mission was born in August 1857. For thirty-three years, the Mission was manned by Black Missionaries from Sierra Leone, some of whom were liberated slaves of Igbo stock.

To boost their ego, the missionaries for several years blew their achievements out of proportion, thereby giving a false image of the prevailing situation of things in the Mission and falsely leading Salisbury Square to the belief that the Mission was steadily gaining strength and increasingly making an impact on the modus vivendi of the indigenous population.

Truth is always the first casualty. But truth is stubborn fact and it vehemently refuses to yield to destruction. Thus when Hamilton visited the Niger in August 1877, he was able to discover that put on the scale of truth, many of the reports from the Niger to the Home base represented the lie of half truth if not the lie of boasting.

On the strength of the report submitted to it by Hamilton, Salisbury Square sent to the Niger one of the most experienced white missionaries in the Yoruba Mission the Rev. J. B. Wood for on-the-spot assessment. Wood's report indicated that for many of the missionaries, Christianity was simply a label and not a way of life. The first step taken to put the Mission on the right path was to divide it into two districts with Superintendents appointed for both Districts. Secondly an English Secretary was appointed for the Mission. Thirdly in a major personnel shake-off many missionaries were disconnected from the Mission. Fourthly and more importantly, the Society in 1890 embarked upon a policy of sending white missionaries to the field, and deemphasized the importance hitherto attached to Sierra Leone as the source of supply of workers for the Mission. It was the paucity of personnel and the incompetence of the African missionaries that necessitated the introduction of European missionaries in the field.

The sending of white missionaries to the field worked the desired miracle. The missionaries injected new spirit into every aspect of missionary enterprise. They pursued vigorously the work of consolidating the few Mission stations already opened and undertook series of evangelistic trips to the interior which resulted in establishing stations in many towns. For instance, stations were opened at Oba (1893), Ichi (1893) and Uruagu Nnewi (1893).³⁶ By 1897, Ogbunike, Akwu kwu and Onitsha-olona had been missioned.³⁷ By the end of 1900, many more towns like Nkpor, Anam, Awka and Ugbolu had been taken possession of.³⁸

The occupation of new areas at remarkable regularity, bore the imprint of the dynamism of the missionaries, which was reported of in virtually every annual proceedings during the decade (1890-1900). For instance, the following report sent to Salisbury Square by Archdeacon Dobinson in March 1896 is typical:³⁹

Some of those who were prominent in heathen dances and ceremonies cannot now be got by their old companies to take their part. In one case, the "band" has suffered because one of the chief pipe-players prefers to study book to blowing the pipes. A few days ago, a good number of the older men met together to discuss the state of affairs in their village. They came to the conclusion that things were going to the bad rapidly. Now they are falling back because their village was not forward as formerly in keeping up heathen festivals and dancings.

The wind of change which blew across the Mission for good during the decade can also be described statistically. In 1890 when white missionaries began joining the Mission, the Niger Mission has the following figures: 474 indigenous Christians, 151 indigenous communicants, 25 baptisms in the year, 6 schools and 186 scholars. But in 1899 when the Mission had already been placed completely in the hands of European missionaries, the Niger Mission had the following attractive results: 1740 indigenous Christians, 313 indigenous communicants, 97 baptisms in the year, 20 schools and 718 scholars.⁴⁰

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Jesus and the Witch Doctor
by Aylward Shorter
(London: Geoffrey Chapman, and Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985)
258 pages

"Visiting a doctor in the hospital has nothing religious in it, and as such a typical (person from my tribe) would prefer to see a witch doctor who would commune with the spirit world and then tell him what the problem is, to going to a medical doctor who gives some pills and tells him to swallow." So wrote an African student in a paper for a recent course in cultural anthropology. Not only Africans are put off by the mechanical and impersonal character of western medicine, westerners themselves and even doctors are calling for a "medicine of the person", to use the phrase of Dr. Paul Tournier.

In this book, subtitled "An approach to healing and wholeness," Aylward Shorter, a priest of the White Fathers order, deals with illness and healing from the point of view of third world cultures. The author is well equipped for such a task. He has had extensive missionary and teaching experience in three East African countries, including being hospitalized there for an illness of his own, and he has visited other countries, not only in Africa, but in South America and the Pacific. The book has many illustrations of illness and traditional healers and healing practices, most of them witnessed by the author himself.

Under the title of "The darkness of God," Fr. Shorter uses the first part of the book to explore the problems of illness, suffering, death, emotional and psychiatric disturbances, human evil, and demonic power. In the second part, "Light shines in the dark," the author considers various kinds of healing: scientific and pre-scientific medicine, magic, dreaming, divining, spirit-healing, and exorcism. In three closing chapters he gives his own suggestions for an effective healing ministry by the church. An informal essay-type style allows Fr. Shorter to include lively anecdotes and meditative comments which are useful and provocative. The book is not, however, a systematic treatment of the various kinds of illness and healing.

Central to the book is Fr. Shorter's concept of levels or categories of illness and healing: physical, emotional, psychic, social, moral, and religious which interact with one another. "It is important," he says, "not to treat any level in total isolation from the others, but it is also important not to confuse the categories (p. 132)." It is for such confusion of categories that he criticizes both African traditional healing and Pentecostal healing services. He advocates tracing the interaction of the various levels of healing and using them to help one another. "When the religious level is recognized," he adds, "there is an understanding that wholeness is ultimately the consequence of a new dimension of healing (p. 132)." Unfortunately, and this seems the greatest weakness of the book, the author offers little guidance for such tracing of categories.

The author believes in miracles and in the existence of Satan and demons. But the evangelical reader will be disappointed in his willingness to surrender many of the Biblical miracles to the axes of the critics. And there seems to be considerable reluctance in the way Fr. Shorter deals with the question of demon possession. He will allow prayers of exorcism but only in private. He has a concern, and it is a legitimate one, that public attention to the demonic may feed fears and even lead to popular hysteria. Some readers may be startled by his suggestion that in using saliva for several of his healing acts and in

his groans on one occasion, Jesus was adopting the methods of traditional healers of his day.

Evangelical readers will not accept the author's suggestion that the sacraments and pilgrimages may be important channels of healing. But they may be led to reflect that in Protestant churches the sacraments are too often presented only in terms of the individual's relationship to Christ, and that the dimension of community may need greater emphasis. There is merit in Fr. Shorter's thought that healing gifts in the church may best be exercised by basic Christian communities which worship together and visit and pray for the sick. He does not define these communities, but presumably they are composed mostly of lay persons and would correspond to the small groups being developed in some Protestant communions. The final chapter on "Organizing the pastoral care of the sick and disabled" is excellent and contains many practical suggestions.

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The Covenants of Promise
by Dr. Thomas Edward McComiskey
(Inter-Varsity Press, 1987)
pp. 259 7.50

Like many other books published in recent decades, the Covenant of promise takes a theological category and tries to add more "colour" to the original formulations. Covenant Theology is the subject of Dr. McComiskey's book, and in it he provides Covenant theology with a major "face-life" by expanding the description of the covenant of grace.

The major thesis of the book is that God's relationship to His people has a bicovenantal structure. There is a "covenant of promise" which is unconditional and contains God's commitments to His people. This covenant of promise is an enduring covenant that guarantees the inheritance of the saints in every period of history. There are, however, also administrative covenants which are conditional and temporal. These various administrative covenants serve to further define the promises contained in the promise covenant. They also regulate the obedience of God's people at different periods in history.

So what is the relationship of the covenant of promise and the administrative covenants posited here to the traditional divisions known as covenant of grace, covenant of works, and covenant of redemption? The author reminds us that the original formulation of Covenant Theology only provided two divisions, the covenant of grace and the covenant of works. Then in the progression of theological writing a third covenant was proposed known as the covenant of redemption. This later covenant was between God the Father and Jesus the Son. It provided for the redemptive sacrifice of the Son and comprises the basis then of the covenant of grace which is between God and His people. McComiskey indicates that this division between covenant of grace and covenant of redemption is unnecessary. The covenant of grace should include the relationship of God to Christ as well as to his people. Building upon Galatians 3:15-17 he states that the promises were made to Abraham and Christ.

Both stand in the same relationship to the disposition of the promise; Abraham functioned as both mediator and recipient. Since Christ is principal heir along with Abraham, the two functions must be exercised by him as well. We need not bifurcate the construct. (p. 185)

That makes Christ a party to the covenant of grace. In his system, therefore, there are two basic covenants, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace (pp. 180-188).

The covenant of works is categorized as an administrative covenant. However, it does not function in the same way as the other administrative covenants. Circumcision, the Mosaic Code, and the new Covenant all are administrative covenants; they are related to the overriding covenant of promise. They administer obedience to God in light of His promises. The covenant of works, on the other hand, administers obedience in regard to the special relationship in creation. While the author thus categorizes the covenant of works he then ignores it since it does not relate to the covenant of promise (pp. 213-231).

The bicovenantal structure presented by the author is most related to the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace is itself referred to by the author as a divine decree which establishes the promises found in the covenant of promise.

It is surprising that the importance of the covenant of grace is not universally acknowledged. It is the fundamental concept of redemption: the divine decree that set in operation the promise which spans all of human history. (p. 188)

Everything that comprises the covenant of promise is first stipulated in the covenant of grace. In fact the covenant of promise is in reality the historical expression of the covenant of grace and is not really separate from it.

The covenant of promise is first expressed in Genesis 12. It is the covenant which was made with Abraham. The covenant is restated to Abraham on several occasions in Genesis and then to David in 2 Samuel 7. It is comprised of the promise of offspring which in the first statement would be understood as physical children for Abraham. In its final expression it represents the people of God in every age. The second promise is of blessing for Abraham. The third promise is that Abraham's name would be great. The fourth promise is of blessing for those who favour Abraham and disfavour for those who do not. The fifth promise was that Abraham's descendants would occupy the land of Canaan. The promise of land is eventually expanded to give the people of God the whole earth. The sixth promise is divine blessing for Gentiles as well as Jews. The seventh promise is that the Lord would be God to his people. And the last promise was that kings would be descended from Abraham. Of course, the final application of that promise is the kingship of the Messiah.

The covenant of promise then is the historical expression of the covenant of grace. It is an eternal covenant in which God unconditionally commits Himself to those who trust Him and promises to them an inheritance. Though the basic tenets of the covenant of promise never change, they undergo expansion or amplification in each successive statement of the covenant. It begins with the promise of offspring referring specifically to physical children for Abraham but finds its full expression in all those who share Abraham's faith in God. The inheritance is seen initially as the land of Canaan but finally the whole world.

Obedience is never seen as a condition for the receipt of inheritance found in the covenant of promise. McComiskey stresses that the inheritance is received by faith. However, once acknowledging that a relationship does exist based on faith between God and His people, it becomes necessary for God's people to live in obedience. Obedience becomes the testimony of faith toward God. The obedience expected from God's people is stated in the covenants of administration. The expansion of the covenant of promise through the progress of history necessitates different covenants of administration for each period of history. The administrative covenant of circumcision served a very personal relationship to God. It was first designed to reflect Abraham's faith in God through his personal obedience. It served Abraham and then his immediate descendants. It was family oriented. Then as the offspring of Abraham grew to be a nation, God instituted a new administrative covenant, the Mosaic Code. When the people of God expanded again to become the church, God gave the New Covenant. The new Covenant contains basically the same expectations from the believer as the Mosaic Code, but now God enables the believer to obey by providing the Holy Spirit.

For those who adopt the structure of Covenant Theology, a question might arise concerning the inheritance offered in McComiskey's covenant of promise. Is not the final inheritance a heavenly one rather than an earthly one? If the covenant of promise only offers an earthly inheritance, is it temporal beginning with Abraham and ending with the earthly church? Is land the only part of the believer's inheritance?

Dispensationalists will marvel at the author's construction of administrative covenants (or dispensations?) within Covenant Theology. After all the basis of Dispensationalism is that there exist different and distinguishable administrations in God's dealing with man. (see Dispensationalism today, by Charles Ryrie, Moody Press, p. 29) McComiskey does give a warning in his introduction. "It is not intended to set forth a moderating position between dispensationalism and covenant theology." (P. 12) It is true that while he adopts at least four administrations (including the pre-Abrahamic period), he rejects other major tenets of Dispensationalism. For instance he does not maintain the separating of the church and Israel in God's dealings.

This work is intended as the first of three books to be written by McComiskey. These three are seen as foundational to a future theology of the Old Testament. It will be interesting to see him develop his concept more fully and relate it to other theological issues. It is hoped that future works, however, will be easier to read. The style and format employed in his first book make it difficult to follow his reasoning. His thesis should be better presented and explained before launching into detailed arguments and exegesis in support of it. The style is often repetitive and difficult.

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Ripening Harvest, Gathering Storm
by Maurice Sinclair
MARC/STL 1988

The early chapters of this book present a telescopic account of God's missionary activity in the Old Testament, through the birth and growth of the early church, and to the (western-initiated) missionary periods up to the present day. This remarkable feat was achieved in two chapters.

Chapter 4 provides a potted history of the remarkable growth of the church in the six continents - Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania, North America and South America - together with the cultural dimensions and missionary challenges they bring to enrich the catholic church. This is a "marathon" chapter, covering 63 pages, full of useful statistical information and the riches of the unity and diversity of the world-wide church. His concluding remark about the six continents is right on:

The world, as an arena of mission, includes all six continents: each vast, complex and different. In four, Europe, Northern and Latin America, and Oceania the overriding priority is re-evangelisation. With the gospel Europe needs a humble confidence, Northern America a healing unity, Latin America an intergral freedom and Oceania a reaffirmed identity. Africa, to a lesser extent now, but Asia still on a massive scale contain communities that have never been evangelised even superficially. Mission in Africa confronts almost every challenge simultaneously. page 156.

In Chapter 5, the reader is introduced to the writer as the missionary pastor with a deep passion for salvation and sanctification. The Christian reader is challenged to face up to the demands of the great commission. Whether he or she lies in a shanty town, a modern sector of a developing country, inner city or suburbia of a western country, or in a First/Third world village, he or she cannot get away from his or her God-given responsibility to be 'salt' and 'light' in that community. It is a most edifying (disturbing!) chapter which makes one feel like going out to help make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). This chapter is a beautiful commentary of the words of our Lord in John 15:16 - each Christian is born again to reproduce. There is a missionary opportunity in every situation a Christian finds himself in.

How can we truly be partners when one side is so strong and wealthy and the other is so poor and weak?

Sinclair quoted the question posed by a Mennonite missionary leader together with his reply, on page 212:

We need to take off our cultural blinkers and then we will discover how much our Third World brothers and sisters have to offer and how fully their gifts match our needs.

The essential message of chapter 6 is that partnership has to do with a change of attitude.

There is a call for new categories of missionaries on pages 224-227 in chapter 7: global locals, passport missionaries, mission partners, underground missionaries, missionary apprentices, unconscious missionaries. If you want to know who these are, you will have to buy the book!

The book ends on a note of apocalyptic realism:

If disaster must come, let it come only when men and women have done all they could to avert it (page 239).

There is a call to repentance and a renewed determination to allow the word of God to guide us.

CONCLUSION

Although the writer's target audience is the western church, certain parts of the book (especially chapters 4 - 5) will be of great interest and help to the church in the Two-Thirds World. The prospect of missionaries from the Two-Thirds World coming to assist the church in Europe to reach their large "fringe population of 300 million" (pages 133-134) sounds most exciting. Chapter 6 on Partnership, however, is weak because it fails to address structural and operational defects in Western missionary societies which make genuine partnership with the church in the Two Thirds world an elusive goal. Also, there is precious little in the book (apart from passing references to Bishop Ayayi Crowther on page 79 and Keshub Chandra Sen on page 118), to educate the Western church of the active role played by African, Asian, and Latin American pioneer missionaries in the growth of the church in their continents.

Maurice Sinclair has produced a useful handbook which I hope will inspire many to become active participants (instead of passive observers) in world mission. The book is worth a lot more than the tag price!

Yemi Ladipo

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