

Contributors to this Issue

Articles

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Book Reviews

Aylward Shorter, Jesus and the Witch Doctor --- Carl Becker, Jr

Thomas E. McComiskey, The Covenants of Promise --- Philip Torley

Maurice Sinclair, Ripening Harvest, Gathering Storm --- Yemi Ladipo

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

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. Pearry 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 Peary 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 Gaebelin (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.

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

- ¹Parratt, J., ed. *A Reader in African Christian Theology*. London: SPCK, 1987. p. 37.
- ²See *Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education*.
- 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.
- ¹⁰*Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education*.
- 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.
- ¹⁴Hughes, P. H., "Person-Centered Education". *Journal of Christian Education*, Papers 88, April 1987. p. 18.