



# The Influence and the legacy of the Latter Rain Movement on the Neo-Charismatic Movement

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Doi: <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.10313>

## Abstract

The focus of this paper is to point out some doctrines of Branham, the morning star of the Latter Rain Movement that left some impact on the current Neo-Charismatic Movement. Through the solid literature review which was undertaken, an investigation in the historical development of this movement, and its impact on the current Neo-Charismatic churches is interrogated to obtain the facts. The Neo-Charismatic Movement is a general term for independent charismatic formations that evolved after Pentecostalism that is these days dubbed Classical Pentecostalism. Since William Branham is noted for different teachings and practices pertaining to Pentecostalism, he is closely associated with the Latter Rain Movement of the forties and the fifties. There is no intention to lay out or elaborate on all Branham's dogmatic dictums and practices, but only six are selected to complete the research question of this paper. These doctrines are the restorationist theology, deliverance, fivefold ministry, anti-cultural establishment, extra-biblical prophecies, and personality cult. It is discovered through this research that all these doctrines or practices are familiar within the Neo-Charismatic churches, especially those known as New Prophetic Churches.

**Keywords:** Latter Rain Movement, Neo-Charismatic, Pentecostal, restoration, healing, doctrine

## Introduction

When the name, The Latter Rain Movement is mentioned, the first name that comes to mind is William Branham. He was born in Burkesville in Kentucky on the 6<sup>th</sup> April 1909. He was the eldest of ten children of Charles and Ella Harvey Branham (Harrel 1978:28). His family background is that of poverty growing up in one-room cabin, family always entangled with criminal activities. The father was an alcoholic with no religious interest. Branham Junior claims to have received some divine revelations at age three, and when he was seven years old, the family moved to Jeffersonville, Indiana, where he received a message that he believes was from God that he must avoid smoking and alcohol (Weaver 2000:22). At the age of twenty-three he was wounded in gun battle and was rushed to hospital. The family could not afford the hospital bill, but the members of Church Society and Ku Klux Klan volunteered to clear the bill – something he never stopped talking about throughout his ministry life (Duyzer, 2014:65-66).



He left home at age nineteen, travelling through Phoenix, Arizona, looking for better life. He ended up working in a ranch and tried his luck in boxing. The near-death experience after inhaling gas, led him to seek God, and through First Pentecostal Baptist Church in Jeffersonville, got converted and baptized by Roy Davis. This Baptist Church was Pentecostal, promoting divine healing and glossolalia, with strong proclivity towards Oneness Pentecostalism. Six months later, Davis ordained Branham as an Independent Baptist minister. The two became itinerant co-ministers.

Recently the South African Sunday Times newspaper's journalist, Paul Ash published that

the doctrine had been around since the 19th century, but it really took off in the great 1950s healing revivals, massive prayer-and-healing campaigns whose star attractions were evangelical preachers Oral Roberts and William Branham.

These two evangelists worked as a team, complementing each other but later disassociated from each other due to some reasons stated later in this paper.

### **Restoration Theology and the Neo-Charismatic Movement**

The general understanding of restorationism is the search for a pure and ancient form of Christian faith of the early apostolic church. It is the call to return to simple and pure Christianity of the New Testament. Its appeal is pursuing originality by returning to the spiritual habits of closer walk with God. Restorationists are of strong opinion that there is a strong revival specifically for this generation. There is a new discovery of the historically marginalised scriptural doctrines. Dead orthodoxy is re-awakened to scaffold believers towards higher and newer experiences. The proponents of restorationism believe that 'history is moving toward a spiritual climax where God's power will be poured out on the church as never before' (Moriarty, 1992:12). This climax is a new move, the final push for ecclesial empowerment before the eschatological return of Jesus Christ.

In some literature, restorationism is referred to as Christian primitivism. This term encapsulated the idea of endeavours to correct the shortcomings of the current church by appealing to the early or primitive church as a model for reconstruction of the current fallen church to her original New Testament pattern.

According to Foster and Dunnavant (2004), the restoration ideal as primitivism can be applied in four ways that different groups attempted to engross restorationism. First, there is Ecclesiastical Primitivism which focuses on restoring the ecclesiastical practices of the early or apostolic church (Foster & Dunnavant, 2004:635). It is of great interest to note that Reformers such as Zwingli, Calvin and large number of the Puritans advocated ecclesiastical primitivism (2004:635-636). Secondly, there is Ethical Primitivism which focuses on restoring the ethical norms and commitment to the early church's pattern of discipleship (2004:636). This fading radical movement is observed among the Anabaptists and the Holiness Movement. They emphasised the observance of the universal commandments such as the Sabbath laws and the Hebrew Calendar and some Judaistic legalities. They regard the Sermon on the Mount as ethical requirements warning against antinomianism. Thirdly, there is Experiential Primitivism, which focuses on restoring the direct communication with God and the experience of the Holy Spirit as it happened in the early church (2004:637). This is the basic tenet of Pentecostalism in all its various off-shoots results of Charismatic movement (2004:637-638). Finally, there is Gospel Primitivism that can be



traced in Martin Luther's theology. He was not a strict restorationist as he regarded church renewal or restoration as a human attempt, which is equal to works of righteousness (2004:638). Despite this stance, he was convinced that the gospel has been tainted or obscured by the Roman Catholic Church of the time (2004:638). His restorationist element is found in his rejection of traditions that were contrary to Scripture and opted for *sola scriptura* for the church (Allen & Hughes 1988:8). One needs to note Branham's view of Martin Luther's link to restorationism. He believed that Luther was the initiator of a new process that will lead to the restoration of the pure form of the Christian faith (Moriarty, 1992:54). He linked this process through other church figures and of course believed in eschatological fulfilment of restoration beliefs when Christ returns.

These models (primitivisms) are not mutually exclusive. They overlap, as one can see how the Pentecostal movement correlates ethical primitivism and experiential primitivism (2004:635, 637).

Weaver (2000: v-vi) points to the fact that of all of Branham's doctrines, restorationism continues to make an impact and influence on modern Christianity. This is also attested by Moriarty (1992:53) that restorationism in Branham's teachings is extremely significant and of profoundly influence on the modern Charismatic movement (1992:56). He constantly appealed to his audiences to unite and restore the fundamentals of the early Christian faith (Weaver, 2000: v-vi).

These teachings on restorationism were adopted by his contemporaries, consequently influencing the revivalists of healing crusades such as Oral Roberts, Kenneth Hagin, and later the Apostolic-Prophetic preachers and other groupings such as the Vineyard Churches, Toronto Blessing, Brownsville Revival etc. These restorationists promoted the restoration of apostles and prophets, signs and wonders, charismata, and spiritual warfare.

In modern Charismatic circles, the primitive church is labeled 'apostolic.' By apostolic, the reference is to a nonmainstream with historical lineage tracking back to the apostles and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:8-20). Generally, restorationism is a basic component of some Classical Pentecostal groups such as the Assemblies of God (Blumhofer, 1993:281), which has exerted itself in the modern neo-charismatic movement.

### **Ministry of Deliverance in Neo-Charismatic Churches**

Deliverance ministry has become synonymous with Charismatic manifestations of cleansing demoniacs of evil spirits that had either took residence in people's physical, psychological, spiritual and emotional beings; or are actively operating in people's lives (McCloud, 2015). This residency and activity are believed to have an authority to oppress the possessed. 'Deliverance rituals are meant to cast out evil spirits, helping people overcome negative behaviours, feelings, and experiences' (Csordas). Deliverance is associated with exorcism or cleaning. The process involves diagnosis, identifying specific demon operating in a person, expulsion, and some restorative suggestions to keep the demon at bay once it has left the person (Byron, 2016). Pentecostals and charismatics believe that the ministry of deliverance is specifically given to certain people as a special ministry for the welfare of the church or community at large. The exorcists believe they have a pattern and command from the New Testament (Silcock, 2013).

However, one needs to note that there are some thinkers who draw the distinction between exorcism and deliverance. They are of the conviction that exorcism involves some rituals, including sacramentals such as holy water, while on the other hand, deliverance involves some ongoing guidelines through some programmes. This is common within Roman Catholicism. Researchers such as McDonald (2013:546) and Euteneuer (2010:135) are of the opinion that deliverance ministries attempt to remove any influences that allow the demon's control over the person, yet the possessed is expected to cooperate with the suggested processes.



Branham's deliverance ministry was intertwined with his faith healing convictions. Faith healing was often the central teaching and phenomenon in his healing campaigns (Weaver, 2000:86). His healing emphasis was cued from Jesus, as he believed that the greater part of Jesus ministry centered on healing. Branham's voice also echoed utterances such as 'salvation for the soul and healing for the body' (2000:86). He was therefore, a continuationist, believing that the miracles of the New Testament, including charismata, are all still active and applicable for today. One of the points of departure from classical Pentecostalism was his belief that the source or the root of sickness is demonic activity to be overcome through faith. This belief is confirmed by Hayford and Moore (2006:168) that 'in Branham's theology, demons were the root problem of sin and sickness and deliverance was necessary for healings to occur.' Lack of healing was due to inadequate faith. This led to the controversial issue of having faith in faith rather than faith in Jesus the Healer. Despite this dogmatic stance, Branham's theology of healing was still within the mainstream of Pentecostal theology of his contemporaries such as Oral Roberts, Smith Wigglesworth and others.

Branham's deliverance ministry claims are also substantiated by his claims of personal encounters with a guardian angel. These encounters empowered him to diagnose illnesses, and to launch into warfare with demons and their activities. The conscious presence of the angel determined, directed and ----- his healing ministry. Only "...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" (Harrel, 1975:29). Resane (2008:49) correctly captures Branham's ministry that 'His message was people's deliverance, and this always intercepted by angelic visits.' However, he did not promote or expect the Angel to appear to any other person – colleague or a candidate for healing. His deliverance ministry was methodical and meticulous. "Deliverance from demons was all part of a Branham meeting. Before casting out evil spirits he would insist the congregation bowed their heads during the exorcism lest the spirits get in another person!"<sup>1</sup>

For Charismatic groups, especially the New Prophetic Churches, certain articles or objects such as crucifixes, holy water, anointing oils, handkerchiefs, including the Bible, are used as points of contact to minister deliverance.

This is popular with the Malawian prophet, Shepherd Bushiri, who according to Canny Maphanga of News24,<sup>2</sup> is in self-exile in his home country due to collision with South African law. In some cases, clerical collars, stoles, holy rods etc. are used.

### **The fivefold ministry in the Latter Rain Movement**

One of the doctrinal phenomena of the Neo-Charismatic churches is the promotion of church polity based on the so-called fivefold ministry. Resane (2008:51), who researched the New Apostolic Reformation, labels these churches 'Emerging Apostolic Churches.' In his research he asserts that:

The Latter Rain movement contributed enormously to the shaping and promotion of the church government based on the fivefold ministry of Ephesians 4:11 – the widely expressed church structure by the emerging apostolic churches of today.

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<sup>1</sup> Littlewood, D. posted on 27 Dec 2021 in <https://www.newlifepublishing.co.uk/articles/faith/william-branham-the-prophet-of-controversy/>

<sup>2</sup> Maphanga C. posted on 30 March 2021 in <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/bushiris-legal-team-seeks-to-have-sas-extradition-request-thrown-out-of-court>



The Latter Rain Movement broadly embraces the fivefold ministry, with special emphasis on the roles of the apostles and prophets. Allan Anderson (2004:52) highlights that the Latter Rain Movement is:

A movement purporting to 'restore' a fallen and 'cold' Pentecostalism to its former glory. This movement emphasized the restoration of the 'ministry gifts' of apostles and prophets to the church, spoken prophecies, and the independence of the local church, tending to shun 'denominationalism'.

Many restoration prophets such as Paul Cain, Bill Hamon, Kenneth Hagin etc. continue to cite Branham as their major influence. They can be regarded as his disciples who introduced the fivefold ministry concept into the Apostolic-Prophetic Movement (AP movement). This movement believes in the restoration of the fivefold ministry, and is rooted in the Charismatic movement and the so-called Third-Wave experience found in certain groups such as the Association of Vineyard Churches, the Toronto Blessing, Brownsville Revival etc. Their major emphasis is prophecy, which is always personal and largely extra-biblical.

Going through the literature on the Apostolic-Prophetic Movement, one is left with conclusion that it is indeed the continuation of the Latter Rain Movement. This movement states their purpose as to restore the ministries of prophets and apostles to the church. According to Wagner (1999) and Hamon (1997), the restoration of the five ministry gifts was to fulfill the purpose for which they were given. This is to equip and perfect the saints in Christ's image and ministry.

Their ministry is *kerygma* accompanied with personal prophecy to individuals. One observes this when watching a Congolese national running a church in South Africa, called Alph Lukau. Sometimes there is no *kerygma*, but emphasis on personal prophecies that are mostly detected to have been orchestrated. This is also pointed out by Ramantswana (2019:4) that this prophecy within the Neo-Charismatic churches:

is not associated with the written Word of God as divine revelation, but rather with direct divine revelation from God as channeled through the prophet.

The prophets go out in big numbers to prophesy over the national leaders. Politicians such as the late President Frederick Chiluba of Zambia, the late African National Congress stalwart, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, the leader of the second opposition party, Economic Freedom Fighters, Julius Malema, all went to Nigeria to be prophesied over by the late Prophet T.B. Joshua. As prophetic utterances mushroomed all over the world, the emergence of apostles marked by signs and wonders started manifesting. The Ephesian 4 text is invited to establish some form of Apostolic order through the establishment of the new ecclesial community governed by the fivefold ministry polity (Torres, 200).

### **Anticultural establishment in Neo-Charismatic churches.**

The next legacy that the Latter Rain Movement exerted influence on Neo-Charismatic churches is the anti-cultural establishments including anti-denominational structures. According to Weaver (2000:108), Braham increasingly condemned modern culture. This anti modern approach created a wedge between him and the then emerging Charismatic Movement. His anti-cultural stance is heard and felt in his condemnation of women (perceived to be immoral) and secular education, which he viewed as Satan's snare to lure towards rejection of the supernatural. For him education was also Satan's tool for obscuring the simplicity of the message (Bible) and messenger (Jesus Christ). He regraded embracing modern culture as the root of flourishing sins in the modern culture (2000:108). He publicly denounced cigarettes, alcohol, television, rock and roll, and all



sorts of worldly amusements. He opted for ascetic lifestyle denouncing wealth accumulation as greed that is in contrast with Jesus' lifestyle. Weaver (2000:109) tells us that when he was given a Cadillac, he parked it in a garage for two years out of embarrassment. He openly chastised evangelists who were promoting prosperity gospel. He condemned expensive church buildings, elaborate choir robes, exorbitant ministers' salaries, women's cosmetic make-ups etc. Instead he directed the church towards renewed eschatological bliss when Christ returns. His theology on women is chauvinistic, condemnatory, and full of hatred. He condemned their physical appearance, sexual drive and regarded their marital relations as misogynistic (2000:112). In fact, it is another research project to undertake on Branham's theological views on women. It is judgmental and male-biased theology, that to some extent has spilled over into the current Neo-Charismatic circles.

Anti-culture goes together with anti-denominationalism. From time immemorial, restorationists are marked with anti-denominational attitudes. Branham and many of his followers referred to denominations as the mark of the beast (Weaver, 2000:114, Harrel, 1978:163). He joined the anti-Catholic rhetoric of then classical Pentecostalism and certain branches of Protestantism which associated the mark of the beast with Catholicism (Weaver, 2000:115). The adherents of his teachings were encouraged to abandon their denominations as a demonstration of their loyalty to him and his message (2000:116-118). Continuous allegiance to one's denomination was equated with acceptance of the mark of the beast which may results in missing the rapture (2000:116-117).

The problem with this Latter Rain Movement's stance is that it was swimming against the tide. The anti-cultural and anti-denominational stance was propagated during a heavy surge and emergence of the Charismatic Movement with prosperity and health as the content of the *kerygma*. Remember his contemporary was Oral Roberts who was unapologetically a prosperity preacher, a point brought out by Hayford and Moore (2006:171) that 'Branham shunned wealth; Roberts was comfortable with prosperity.' Despite the Movement's marginalisation due to these ascetic promotions, some elements of these extremes are carried on in the modern Neo-Charismatic movement. For instance, one still hears of the calling for women to dress decently, and negative utterances directed towards the intellectuals and education. Many of Charismatic leaders are not theologically trained. They run mega churches, do signs and wonders, but on a larger scale intellectually poor. They can hardly reason their faith with the intelligentsia to substantiate their faith convictions. Unfortunately, some if not many, fail morally and ethically in their personal and ministry ethics.

The Neo-Charismatic churches, especially those of New Prophetic proclivities are known for many ascetic practices, evolving out of anti-establishments (governments, denominations, metanarrative such as Creeds, Liturgies etc.). Kgatle (2017:2) alludes to the fact that they spring in fact either from anti-establishment Christian Pentecostalism, or from evangelical tendencies that subscribe to rejections of any new inventions.

### **Extra-biblical Prophecies in Neo-Charismatic Churches**

One of the hallmarks of the Neo-Charismatic churches (New Prophetic Churches) is extra-biblical prophecies that are always personal and suspicious of orchestrations. Kgatle describes them better:

New Prophetic Churches in South Africa are known as a new form of Pentecostalism that is characterized by new prophetism, prophetic consultation, prophetic objects, forensic prophecy and prophetic deliverance.



Resane (in Kgatle, Nel & Banda, 2022:163) asserts that 'Personal prophecy has become a phenomenon among the neo-Pentecostal churches, and any church with claims of the gift of prophecy attracts multitudes.' These prophecies were dominant in the life and ministry of Branham. Although his prophecies were foretelling more than forthtelling, there are some elements of personal inclinations in them. Most of his prophecies were made public only after their happenings (fulfilments- a big question mark to their genuineness and authenticity). Through personal prophecies, they attempt to speak to the deep natural needs of people and claim the Spirit as the source of their spiritual revelations. Kustenbauder (2008:10) identifies these churches' attempt:

to speak to people on the most basic, existential level. They offer an encounter with God, in which healing from sickness and deliverance from evil are achieved by means of God's powerful Spirit.

In contemporary charismatic Christianity, the known prophets or promoters of prophecies include the likes of Gary Greenwald, Bill Hamon, Norvel Hayes, Ken Sumrall, John Gimenez, Emmanuel Cannistraci, and many others (Moriarty, 1992:97). Here in South Africa, the prophetic phenomenon has become common with Alph Lukau of Alleluia Ministry International in Johannesburg, Timothy Omotoso of Jesus Dominion International with branches in Durban, Bloemfontein, Gqeberha and elsewhere, Shepherd Bushiri of Enlightened Christian Gathering in Pretoria, Paseka 'Mboro' Motsoeneng of Incredible Happenings in the Vaal, Bishop Bafana Stephen Zondo of Living Waters Ministries International in the Vaal. Prophet November of Victorious Faith Ministries in Bloemfontein; and the list goes longer as there are many of these prophetic ministries in bigger or smaller settings.

The emergence of the prophetic movement emanates from the restorationist ideology that the Lord is restoring the lost office of the prophet back to the church. The Neo-Charismatic churches regard prophets with high esteem and their prophetic revelations are treated as authentic and authoritative. They are believed to have absolute rights to speak into people's lives, and in normal situations, their prophetic utterances are unquestioned and treated as absolute truth by the seekers (those prophesied on). According to Hamon (1997:124), these prophets 'have the right to prophesy direction, correction, guidance and new revelation to a person, church or nation.' In the same vein, Hamon continues to express the essence of 'personal' prophecies through and by the prophets that they are 'God's mouthpiece to speak whenever and wherever and to whomever God wants to personally express His thoughts, purposes and specific will' (1997:124). These prophets, according to Paulk (1985:140), are not just one method that God uses, they are the only method God uses to speak to this generation. They arise to remedy the problems or spiritual maladies that exist in the church today (Moriarty, 1992:97).

This kind of prophecy is not common within Classical Pentecostalism, since there, according to Warrington (2008:82), prophecy is seen as a gift given by the Spirit according to his will (1 Corinthians 12:11) and prophecies seen as 'those occasions when an individual, inspired by God, speaks spontaneously and extemporarily with an emphasis on edification and exhortation' (Canty, 1987:134). Classical Pentecostalism, unlike Neo-Charismaticism, offers personal prophecy with care and caution, and treated as a means of determining direction or confirmation in decision making and is primarily for encouragement (Canty, 1987:204). The Neo-Charismatic prophecy is personal in delving into people's private lives, using the African witchdoctor formulae of identifying witchcraft activities, spiritual bondage, lineage of curses, using the seeker's traces such as Identity Numbers, households or family descriptions; and points of contacts such as one's piece of clothing etc. This is a rationale behind the mushrooming of these churches on the African soil. Resane (2020:51) alludes to this when he asserts:

Africans like to know who their allies or enemies are. They desire to hear someone telling them mysteries that surround them. For them, spirituality



is a deeper connection with the spiritual world to behold the hidden mysteries in the unknown world.

These prophecies are accompanied by commercial articles enrich the prophets or his household. The articles come with a price and the seekers fall for them because they come as prophetic prescription. This is in consonant with African Independent Churches of validating or convincing the seeker that articles or object are not just a thumb-suck, but prophetically described. Take an example of Zion Christian Churches *taela e tsile ya re...* (prophetic instruction) or African Apostolic declaration of *leeba la re...* (the dove/spirit says). Ramantswana (2019:6) captures this that:

When the prophets pray for the people, make prophetic utterances, display divine power that brings about economic empowerment of the people and deliverance from various other forms of suffering, they also benefit economically in the process, as the people give money and offerings to the prophet or his or her ministry. Furthermore, the prophets have turned commodities such as stickers, oil, bangles and water into sacred objects that offer people divine protection against demons and forces of evil and transmit spiritual blessings.

In some cautionary highlights, Hamon (1997:189) agrees that charlatans or false ministers and those wrongly motivated will arise from within the prophetic movement to seek some opportunity to adopt personality cult or opt for commercial gains (2 Kings 5:20-27; 2 Chronicles 18). Spiritually, these false prophets escalate personal prophecy instead of personal prayer and hearing from God for oneself. Personal prophecy is never intended to be a 'quick fix' to replace God; and it should never be elevated to the same level of authority and inspiration as a metanarrative or a canon (1997:201). The same warning came through Peter Wagner (1999:117) that both Jesus and Apostle Paul warned against false prophets (2 Corinthians 11:13-14; Matthew 7:15, Galatians 1:9; John 10:12; 2 Peter 2:1).

### **Personality Cult and the Neo-Charismatic Pastor**

Personality cult has become one of the anomalies found within the Neo-Charismatic churches. The latest scholars such as Kgatle, Ramantswana, Dube, Banda etc. refer to this movement as New Prophetic Churches (NPC), where a leader or a pastor becomes a celebrant. The roots of this celebrity cult can be traced in Branham's followers towards the end of his life and after his death. He became a victim of 'the adoration of man' as his followers started to idolize him (Crowder, 2006:331). Some of his disciples claimed he was the 'Messiah.' 'Some thought he was God. Some thought he was a dupe of the devil. Some thought he was an end-time messenger sent from God, and some still do' (Kydd, 1998:180). They treated him as deity and even baptized and prayed in his name (Weaver, 2000:103). Some of his followers felt compelled to geographically build their homes closer to his home, subsequently erected a colony in Arizona, following Branham's move to Tucson in 1962 (2000:103). These followers manipulated him and took advantage of his lack of theological training. It is these followers that put him at the center of a Pentecostal personality cult. Branham condemned their belief and labeled it a heresy, but to no avail.

The prophetic movement, as commonly found in the Neo-Charismatic churches, elevate the pastor or founder to the level of celebrity or a 'messiah' image. Shingange (in Kgatle, Nel & Banda, 2022:101) is correct that 'They overtly demonstrate that they themselves have taken the place of Christ.' In many of these churches, personal prophecies take precedence over *kerygma* or *diakonia*. It is personal prophecies that make these leaders famous.

Their fame is enhanced by their faces on the posters, flyers and screens designed to promote their ministries. Their photographs hang on the walls



of their faithful followers' homes, car screens and bumpers. They sell gold pins that their followers attach to the lapels of their pin-striped suits. Artefacts and curios such as mugs, handkerchiefs, water bottles, etc., all carry their photographs; this comes at a cost with promises of anointing and blessings. Their designer suits and/or outfits reflect the regalia of royalty, and in some instances, they travel with a protocol fit for a head of state (Resane in Kgatle, Nel & Banda, 2022:168).

Celebrity cult pushes Jesus into the shadow and brings the preacher into the limelight. The preacher receives accolades of worship instead of God. Resane (2017:4) captures this: 'Celebrity cult in this context refers to the elevation of a leader to some high status of beauty, achievement, prestige and power.' This personality cult, sometimes called celebrity cult, is a threat to theology, and it puts Christology at the crossroads. Kgatle (2020:3) is correct that 'the main challenge is their theology of the position and authority of the pastor.' The pastor or any church leader who becomes a celebrant elevates himself to the throne of God. Hence, Dube (in Kgatle, Nel & Banda, 2022:182) decries this attitude that

Christ has in some religious groups been "replaced" by leaders in order to commit criminality and abuse their followers. Some religious leaders such as Alph Lukau, Shepherd Bushiri, among many others, project themselves as uniquely anointed by God; nothing they do can be questioned, so much so that they have, in fact, become like Christ.

It is a great concern within Christendom when a personality becomes a 'messiah' and *kerygma* becomes human-centered instead of Christ-centered. This concern is expressed by Resane (2017b:3) that: "...the Christian community is so quick to put them on pedestals; even more enthralled when they traverse and reverse the foundations of the Christian dogma." When Branham visited South Africa in the early 1950s', his miraculous healings were undeniable. The problem started when some of his followers elevated him to be an infallible prophet of God and vied for acceptance of his non-Trinitarian views into the wider Pentecostal dogma, especially the Apostolic Faith Mission which hosted him (Clark 2007).

It becomes a problem when God's message of hope becomes just a motivational talk for achieving gratification now.

## Conclusion

Problems arise as historically, rhapsodies of restoration ideologies emerged and submerged. Their ideologies surfaced and disappeared, just as this article points out about Branham's appearance on the stage, and disappearance behind the curtain. However, the audience is still left with some awe and continue to incarnate or promote his theological ideologies. This is evidenced in and through some manifestations in the Neo-Charismatic churches. Many teachings of the Latter Rain Movement continue to be practiced by some Pentecostal and Charismatic groups in the twenty-first century, especially within the Neo-Charismatic circles. Although the Latter Rain Movement's influence is felt within Pentecostalism in general, this influence took a deep dive within Classical Pentecostalism after the 1950's. This was partly due to Assemblies of God's confrontational strategies to the extremes within the Latter Rain Movement. This opposition was due to large number of leaders who seceded and joined the Latter Rain Movement.

Today, the influence of the Latter Rain Movement upon Pentecostalism as well as emerging Charismatic churches is growing phenomenally (Resane, 2021:16). Although the name has died out, the Latter Rain Movement continues to emerge under other designations, sustained by and within different Christian networks, drawing the attention of researchers and media. Its maximum influence spreads through mushrooming independent church ministries with no denominational



affiliation. Indeed, as Dager points out: "It became a hallmark of the Latter Rain Movement that innumerable independent churches sprang up with no denominational affiliation. This did not set well with the Pentecostal denominations, who lost many members to this "new thing."<sup>3</sup>

As pointed out, with few examples in this article, the significant influence of the Latter Rain Movement is conspicuous with the New Prophetic Churches that are mushrooming all over South Africa. The six doctrines or practices (restorationism, deliverance, fivefold ministry, anti-cultural attitudes, extra-biblical prophecies, and personality cult) as originated from the Latter Rain Movement had spilled over into the Neo-Charismatic Movement. The six practices are acted out differently by different leaders or groups. The bottom line is that the Latter Rain Movement's influence is still here within Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity as evidenced by the six doctrinal practices discussed in this paper.

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