

**THE ORIGIN AND CONTROVERSY IN THE TEACHINGS OF THE LOCAL  
BELIEVERS CHURCH IN KENYA**

**BY**

**MUKUNA FRANKLIN NASITSAKHA**

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## DECLARATION

### Declaration by Candidate

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented in any other University for award of a degree.

Sign..... Date.....

Department of Religion, Theology and

**Franklin N. Mukuna**

**PG/MA/037/07**

Philosophy, Maseno University.

### Declaration by Supervisors

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors.

**Rev. Prof. Kasomo Daniel**

Sign..... Date.....

Department of Religion, Theology and Philosophy,

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,

Maseno University

**Dr. Ombachi N. Kipkorir**

Sign..... Date.....

Department of Emergency Management and Humanitarian Assistance

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology.

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## **DEDICATION**

This piece of work is dedicated to my children Jackson Junior, Hope Grace, Bosworth Banks, Sharon, Peniel, Franklin and Lena. I have made it for them and it is my prayer that this work remains an inspiration for them to scale the heights of academia.

## ABSTRACT

The Local Believers Church hereinafter LBC is one of the new religious movements (Neremos) in Kenya whose origin and rapid spread is not only a matter of public concern but also her string of teachings that run contra to what is conventionally held by other Christian churches. Further, LBC is believed to draw most of her influence from one American Pentecostal preacher William Marrison Branham whose movement and teachings were largely considered by most mainstream churches as a cult and heretical. It is based on this concern that this study examined the origin and controversy in the teachings of LBC in Kenya. The specific objectives were to; establish the origin and quick spread of LBC in Kenya, investigate the controversy in the teachings of LBC and to evaluate the influence Rev. Branham has on LBC. The study employed McClung's theory of Pentecostalism which states that salvation is a free gift of divine grace and that all Christian believers are ministers to each other in matters of faith. The study employed a blend of historical-descriptive research design. The study population comprised of all the pioneer members of LBC who joined the movement in the early 70s. However, their actual number is unknown since LBC does not keep membership records. The researcher purposively identified the first 10 pioneer members and using the snowball approach to sampling, a sample of 100 respondents was identified and interviewed. Primary data was collected using participant observation, in-depth oral interviews and semi- structured interviews while secondary data was obtained through document analysis from published books, unpublished theses, websites and libraries. Thematic and content analysis was used to analyze data. The researcher summarized and edited data collected through primary and secondary sources. The data was then coded to generate themes and categories which provided a basis for content generation. The findings revealed that LBC begun in the early 70's in Kenya coincidentally. The translations of the messages of Rev. Branham into Kiswahili and the revealed truth of the Bible as displayed by Rev. Branham played a central role in the spread of LBC in Kenya. The teachings of LBC indicate that the devil (Serpent) had sex with Eve leading to the birth of Cain. The teachings also reveal that there is only one God. Other teachings are that baptism is by immersion in much water in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and that women cannot lead or assume priestly roles in church. The study also found that Branham's teachings significantly determine how and what is taught in LBC churches. The study will significantly be a reference on future exegesis on doctrine. The study recommends that more messages by Branham be translated further to local dialects to increase reach of his teachings; LBC's clergy should endeavor to be more charismatic as Rev. Branham was. Further research can be done on the schismatic differences in LBC; the take of LBC members on their teachings and the impact of LBC's teachings on contemporary issues in a rapidly changing world.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACHS	African Church of the Holy Spirit
ATR	African Traditional Religion
BVM	Blessed Virgin Mary
BHS	Baptism of the Holy Spirit
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
DYM	Dini Ya Musambwa
KLBC	Kenya Local Believers Church
LMS	London Missionary Society
NT	New Testament
NEREMOS	New Religious Movements
OT	Old Testament
QC	Quaker Church
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
TAC	Traditional African Communities
VOGR	Voice of God Recordings

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

- Cult:** Refers to a new religious movement or other groups whose beliefs or practice are considered abnormal or bizarre.
- Doomsday cults:** An expression used to describe groups who believe in apocalypticism and Millenarianism.
- Reader:** An early African convert who joined the mission stations during the Missionary age seeking religious instruction.
- Church:** A gathering of two or three people who believe in the risen lord
- Pentecostalism:** A charismatic movement within Christianity, which believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

The constitution of Kenya (2010) allows for freedom of worship and religious expression. The resultant effect has been the wanton and almost uncontrolled proliferation of religious groups into the country. To this Mbiti (1986) laments thus;

Christianity in Kenya has mushroomed denominationally and the mushroom has turned into a messy soup. This excessive denominationalism is absolutely scandalous.

True to Mbiti's concern, there are over 4000 registered churches in the country and the number is still growing (<http://www.kenyaspace.com>. Thursday, 12/01/11). Most of these churches are New Religious Movements (Neremos) with a pentecostal persuasion. In Kenya, the Local Believers Church hereinafter LBC, the subject of this study, is one of them. In the recent past, LBC has greatly expanded in Kenya and is still growing by the day. To date there are approximately over two hundred fellowships across the country with around five hundred thousand adherents (Karuki, OI,5/10/10). Despite this growth, no in-depth study has been carried out about the movement. Such scenario agrees with Onkware (2004) that Kenya is a multi-religious society with a number of them yet to be studied and documented. To study and document the aspirations and teachings of these movements, is of paramount importance to the Kenyan nation since some of them, as Onkware (2004) continues to argue, have negatively affected society.

LBC is a modern day Pentecostal movement in Kenya. It is the largest group of the many fellowships across the country which adheres to the teachings of the late Rev. William Marrison

Branham of Jeffersonville, Indiana, USA. The movement believes that Rev. Branham was God's last prophet to this age who, like John the Baptist, was to forerun the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (Weaver, 2000); the start of the Great Tribulation and the eventual apocalyptic doomsday of Amos 4. They also believe Rev. Branham to be that 'Elijah' spoken of in Malachi 4:5-6; the Seventh Angel promised and spoken of in Revelation 10:7 and the fulfillment of St. Luke 17 (Stadslev,1952). These are serious claims that warrant thorough investigation hence the need for this study.

However, due to scant literature concerning this movement in Kenya, the researcher conducted a reconnaissance study on the movement between June 2009 to December 2010. He first attended LBC Sunday services, weddings and baptismal services in major fellowships of Nairobi, Nakuru, Mombasa, Kisumu, Kakamega and Eldoret. The researcher also perused books containing the message as preached by Rev. Branham. He also searched the net for information on Rev. Branham. It was established that the movement was registered in Kenya on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1975 vide certificate number 1447, with (real names concealed), Julius Mwapembe as chairman, Daniel Mwamuto as secretary and James Njoroge as treasurer. Beyond this, there is very little information one is able to get from the movement's file held at the Registrar of Societies, Attorney General's Chambers, Nairobi. This study revealed that LBC has neither a headquarter nor such organizational structures common in other churches. Each fellowship runs independently of the other. At the helm of each fellowship is the Pastor, deputized by one or more potential pastors, deacons (whose number would vary depending on the size of the fellowship) and below them a few Ushers and song leaders (Rules and Regulations of LBC, 1975). The movement has a strong following in Western, Nyanza, Rift Valley, Nairobi and Coast regions of the defunct provincial system of the Republic of Kenya.

LBC has the branch of the voice of God Recordings (VoGR) library in Nairobi which was established in the country in 1984. This library is charged with the responsibility of distributing message books, tapes and other materials of Rev. Branham in East and Central Africa. The pastors of various fellowships also hold regular annual conferences mainly in Nairobi to consult and possibly strike a balance on doctrinal matters. Despite such efforts, it was also established that LBC in Kenya is divided on interpretation of various doctrinal matters. There four main schismatic groups of LBC in Kenya. These are; the Word group, the Revival, the High Calling and the Polygamy group. Divisions in the Christian church in Kenya are not new. Onkware (2004), argues that the church as introduced in Kenya was seriously divided to an extent that many of them could not explain the essence of their divisions. He wonders how a divided Christianity could convincingly proclaim the message of peace and love. In the same vein how could a divided, sectarian LBC convincingly claim to be the custodians of the End-Time message of God to the world?

The reconnaissance study also established that LBC's stand point on most doctrinal matters sharply contradicts the stand point conventionally held by most mainline Christian churches. This is causing a lot of concern across the country. As a result, LBC has been labeled as a 'Cult' and her teachings 'Heretical' by most mainline churches and other critics (Kennah, 1963). It therefore ministers the question; can the teachings of LBC be trusted?

The reconnaissance study also established that LBC as a Nermos in Kenya borrows heavily from Rev. Branham. Rev. Branham's life and ministry was dogged in mystery (Jorgensen,2002; Weaver,2000). He claimed to have been born under a supernatural sign; at the age of seven, a mysterious voice from a poplar tree near their house instructed him never to drink, smoke or defile his body in any way for there was work set out for him to do when he grew older

(Branham, 1957). On 11<sup>th</sup> June 1933 as he baptized converts in Ohio River, a bright star descended from heaven to where he was and a voice was heard saying *'As John the Baptist was sent to forerun the first coming of the lord Jesus Christ, so your message will forerun his second coming'*, (Weaver, 2000; Cloud,1988). In the same year and month, Strom & Magnello (1996) and Jorgensen (2002) indicate that Rev. Branham was shown a series of seven visions which he claimed that they must come to pass before the end of the world. The visions involved;

1. He saw Benito Mussolini invade Ethiopia and eventually come to a disgraceful end. It happened.
2. He saw Adolf Hitler lead the world into the Second World War and eventually come to a mysterious end. It happened.
3. He saw the rise of Fascism, Nazism and Communism. He saw Fascism and Nazism fall while Communism flourished. It happened.
4. He saw the making of digital cars without steering wheels. It is happening (see figure 1 pg36).
5. He saw the moral degradation in the world characterized by women shaving their hair and wearing skimpy dresses. It has happened.
6. He saw a beautiful woman elegantly dressed and full of power elected president of the United States of America. It is yet to happen.
7. He heard a loud bang and when he turned to see, he saw the whole United States of America in ruins devoid of human beings. It is yet to happen.

It is instructive to note that five of them have come to pass exactly as he was shown. Could this be the reason why the movement is gaining root in Kenya with its apocalyptic appeal? What is attracting people to this movement formed the basis for this study.

In 1946, Rev. Branham began a prolific divine healing ministry that inspired hundreds other ministers to start revival ministries around the world (Hallonwenger,1972). This was what set the stage for modern day Pentecostalism. It such a powerful ministry that attracted a huge following not only in the United States of America (USA), but across the world. Lindsay (1948) offers that Rev. Branham operated under immense, strange, supernatural power that was not easy to fathom. Under the influence of this power, Rev. Branham seemed invincible; so powerful that he could tell the secrets of people's hearts and speak things into existence (Stadsklev,1952; Weaver,2000). This was where the danger, making this study to try to establish his influence over LBC, lay. This is because the 'Super Church' of India led by one Thomas failed to see the dividing line between mortal Branham and his immense supernatural powers. Consequently, they proceeded to worship him as 'God' and baptize people in his name (Thomas, 1969; Branham, 1961). This, Bruinsma (2008) that to impute infallibility,immortality and invincibility to a human being is not only naïve and ridiculous, but also dangerous. Seeing the movement has strongly established itself in Kenya, it would be of utmost interest to the Kenyan people to study this group and document their activities. This is because on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1978, one Jim Jones, the founder and leader of the People's Temple in Guyana, USA, a man initially associated with the ministry of Rev. Branham, led 918 followers of his movement to commit suicide, ostensibly, to quickly meet with the Lord Jesus Christ (Reiteman & Jacobs, 1982).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

This study aimed to address three main interrelated issues. Firstly, LBC is a post independence Neremos whose origin and reasons for quick spread in Kenya is obscure and undocumented. This is why this study sought to establish the origin and quick spread of LBC in Kenya.

Secondly, a reconnaissance study by the researcher showed that the teachings of LBC, just like those of Rev. Branham (the inspiration behind LBC), are considered by most mainstream churches as not only controversial but also heretical. It was therefore of utmost concern to this study to investigate the teachings of LBC with a view of establishing the areas of variance, if any, with conventional Pentecostal teachings. Finally, the movement seems to rely heavily on Rev. Branham. Rev. Branham was an enigma in life and a controversial preacher (Kennah,1963). His birth and early life were dogged in mystery (Weaver,2000). His preaching was and still is controversial (Cloud,1972). He inspired the founding of various revival ministries around the world (Harrell Jr.,1978;Osborn,1966). He also inspired the founding of rogue ministries like the People's Temple that was responsible for the death by suicide of its 918 followers in November 1978 (Reiteman &Jacobs,1978). This was why this study examined his influence on LBC.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

- i. How did LBC originate and quickly spread in Kenya?
- ii. Why the controversy in the teachings of LBC?
- iii. How is Rev. Branham influencing LBC?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

#### **1.4.1 General Objective**

To examine the origin and controversy in the teachings of the Local believers Church in Kenya.

#### **1.4.2 Specific Objectives**

- i. To establish the origin and quick spread of KLBC in Kenya.
- ii. To investigate the controversy in the teachings of KLBC

- iii. To evaluate the influence Rev. Branham has on KLBC

### **1.5 Justification of the Study**

Previous studies on Neremos in Kenya have often targeted movements whose geographical distribution across the country is limited to only one clan, tribe or region. Examples here include the East African Revival Movement (EARM) by Ong'injo (2006) which is predominantly Luo-Nyanza, Dini Ya Musambwa (DYM) by Nandi (2001) which is predominantly Bukusu sub clan of Western Kenya and the African Church of the Holy Spirit (ACHS) by Obwoye (2003) among the Idakho and Maragoli sub clans in Western Kenya as well. Unlike the examples above, LBC is not limited to any one clan, tribe or region but across the whole country transcending all tribes and regions. This made the movement unique hence the need to study it. Additionally, Most of these studies on Neremos in Kenya have often concentrated on the rise of pre-independence movements who seemed to agitate against colonial subjugation and missionary dominance in religious matters (Karanja, 1999). However, no study has been conducted in Kenya specifically addressing the rise of post-independence religious movements like LBC. Additionally, Onkware (2004) posits that there many more Neremos in Kenya that have not been studied and documented. Some of them like Mungiki, he continues to argue, have affected society negatively hence the need for this study.

The study has also contributed immensely to the body of knowledge on doctrine by delving into the controversial teachings of LBC.

The study has also formed a basis for further research by identifying gaps which were not within its scope.

### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This study was carried out in Kenya because LBC is an amorphous movement that has spread all across the country with no headquarters where one can access most of their records hence to achieve the study objectives and thereby present a fairly accurate and comprehensive thesis; it became necessary to sample respondents across the country. LBC also claims not to be a denomination hence each church or fellowship is independent of the other. As such, they neither have Bishops nor such uniform structures common in other churches where any one region sampled would represent the whole. This study did confine itself on the origin and controversy in

the teachings of the LBC in Kenya. It was not the concern of this study to find out who was right or wrong in the controversies.

### **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

Underlying this study was McClung's (1996) theory of Pentecostalism bolstered by the Berean example as expressed in acts 17:10-11 thus:

These were noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few (Acts 17:10-11).

Berea is one of the ancient cities in Asia Minor. The Bible records show that when Paul preached the word of God to them, they compared the things he taught them with what is written in the Bible. They also taught and encouraged one another to grow in the word. This behavior of the believers in Berea dovetails with McClung's argument that the fundamental doctrine of Pentecostalism is that salvation is a free gift of divine grace apart from deeds and efforts or ecclesiastical sanctions. That all Christian believers are ministers to each other in matters of faith; and the word of God must be the norm of faith and practice. McClung's theory further observes that the fundamental principle underlying the origin and practice of nermos is the conviction he calls the pneumatological view of God, envisaged as present in the power of the Holy Spirit, who reveals his will, guides amidst danger and fills persons with new power of prophecy, prayer, and healing. This conviction came in handy in explaining the origin of LBC since it makes the Bible become real and practical to the people. Humanity is attracted by what they see. Jesus Christ used miracles to attract attention. Rev. Branham's ministry was world famous because of the charismatic manifestations associated with it. This conviction was applied

to the operation of LBC in Nairobi Kenya, to establish the attraction to it. McClung theory further contends that Neremos seek deliverance from the power of evil and sickness rather than the guilt of sin. This is what he calls the practical view of salvation. The power of the Holy Spirit has always since the day of Pentecost, cleansed the recipients and alienated them from the guilt of sin. This conviction was applied on the early life of Rev. Branham to establish why it was dogged with mystery. The theory further establishes whether it was the hand of God in Rev. Branham early life, as he claimed, or it was the devil spirit working in him as some claimed. This gave a good foundation to delve into the controversial teachings of LBC.

McClung theory argues that all Christian believers are ministers to each other in matters of faith and the word of God must be the norm in all aspects. This was where this theory linked up with the people of Berea in the Bible times who when they received the word of God, they ministered one to another, searching the scriptures to find out whether those things were so. The same was applied to the teachings of LBC. If the teachings are about doctrine, the researcher's attempt to search the scriptures, the writings of the Church Fathers and any other relevant document with a view of shedding light on the same ought to produce a continuous theme from Genesis to Revelations. This theory, therefore, offers the guiding principle in data collection wherein specific information in line with the study objectives was sought, analyzed and presented as a thesis.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the literature the study collected that inform the knowledge already available in the field of research of this study. By identifying the knowledge already present, the study identified the gaps available in the literature that need to be addressed by the findings of this study. The presentation of literature in this chapter is in line with the objectives under study.

#### **2.2 Objective 1: The Origin and quick spread of LBCin Kenya**

Mbiti (1986) argues that Christianity is so old that it can rightly be described as an indigenous, traditional and African religion. He further contends that before the start of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Christianity was well established all over North Africa, Egypt and parts of Sudan and Ethiopia. It was a dynamic form of Christianity producing great scholars like Tertullian, Origen, Clement of Alexandria and Augustine of Hippo. These great scholars and theologians played a significant role in the shaping of the Christian Canon. It is also instructive to note that before the birth of Christ, Egypt (An African country) helped save Jacob and his family from a ravenous famine in Canaan (Genesis 42,43 and 44). Egypt therefore played a preservative role to the young nation of Isreal out of whom Jesus Christ was born. Much later in Matthew 3:13-16, Egypt played yet again another central role in preserving the boy Jesus from eminent extinction by King Herod. These examples rightly entrench Mbiti's (1986) position that Christianity is not alien to Africa. In a sense, it may be more African or has more African connection than it has western. This receptive attitude of the African peoples may as well be the explanation why the

faith is so widely accepted on the continent in general and Kenya in particular. It was on this basis that the origin and quick spread of LBC was studied.

Translations of the Bible into other languages have been known to play a central role in the spread of the faith on the African continent. Yet again the African continent played a first one in this area. Mbiti (1986) contends that the first translations of the Bible took place in Africa when the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek in Alexandria in the third Century BC. This was known as the Septuagint after its 70 Jewish translators. The same became a definitive Bible of the Early Church to the extent that nearly all the scripture quotations we find in the New Testament (NT) come directly out of it. The impact of the Bible translations into local languages in Africa in general and Kenya in particular was without measure. This, Mbiti (1986) contends thus;

It is no wonder then that the publication of the Bible translations is received with enormous joy by both readers and listeners alike and immediately becomes a crucial land mark in the history of the Church in any particular language area. Nothing is more decisive as a watershed than publication of scripture in a local language following the first introduction of the Christian message (pg 16).

If this was true then (when Christianity was introduced to Africa), it would be true as a factor in the proliferation of Neremos (LBC included) in Kenya today. The parallels on how the message of Rev. Branham was transcribed from the tapes and printed into local languages were pursued. Modern Christian work in what is today Kenya began in 1844 when Johann Ludwig Krapf and Johanness Rebmann working for the church missionary society (CMS) opened a mission station at Rabai (Temu, 1972). Krapf made the first Bible translation into Swahili language (Were, 1977). Colonialism together with its infrastructure development especially the building of the Uganda railway helped open up the interior of Kenya for intense missionary work (Temu, 1972).

This led to the establishment of mainstream churches in Kenya led by the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) making Christianity the predominant religion in the country at 83% (National Census, 2009). It is from these mainstream churches that a number of revival movements like the African Church of the Holy Spirit (Obwoye, 2003) and lately the KLBC have risen.

However, the missionaries were very selective on the Bible contents they taught. Such limited selection of material from the Bible either because of unavailability of scripture in local languages or because of unwarranted fears from the clergy creates a feeling of suspicion from the people. This breeds a desire to discover what is being covered. Hence, when the Bible was translated into local languages, it automatically initiated people into the mysteries of the Biblical truth and the mysteries of the Christian way. There are parallels here. Initially in the temple worship, it was only the High priest who could access the Holy of Holies (the inner court of the Temple where the Ark of the covenant was kept), but with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the curtain that separated the two areas split into two bringing into full view the Holy of Holies (Mathew 27:51). This meant that everybody could now, without hindrance, access God. This is the same thing Bible translations do. There are some churches that used to bar their laity from reading the Bible especially in the Dark Ages before the renaissance. However, with the reformation of Martin Luther with his 95 theses, this teaching was shattered. This clear access to the Bible made African Christians to begin to detect a basic discrepancy between missions and the scripture on what was the major points of conflict. Mbiti (1986) concludes;

The Bible becomes at once a living book, very different from other books. They see in their own language that between them and the Christian message there is no longer the authoritative missionary influence, instead, they have full access to the word of God in their own language without intermediary, without foreign accents and without grammatical errors, speaking with full force and authority. When the translations hit a particular language area, the Church therein

experiences its own Pentecost; the Church is born afresh; it receives the Pentecostal tongues of fire. The Spirit of God unlocks ears and the people hear the word of God speaking to them in the most persuasive form. Local Christians cannot remain the same after that (pg18).

This creates a thirst for the word of God in people's hearts, a yearning to hear more. On this Ong'injo (2006) observes that a revival breaks out characterized by thorough confession of sins to the person's wronged leading to intense feeling of joy and release. Then what follows is a thorough process of re-education through constant fellowship (this was what the people of Berea did to one another), continual confession of sins, reading the Bible, singing and listening to sermons. It is instructive to note that in 1927 at Kaimosi Friends Church, a group of Faithfull's thoroughly went through this process resulting in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as on the day of Pentecost (Burnham: 1975). It is indeed true that when people come together and confess their sins, turn away from their wicked ways, the God of Heaven responds as he promised in his word (11Chronicles 7:14). On this score, the Church today compares badly. Worship has become formal and nominal. Such a scenario, Ong'injo (2006) rightly argued that it creates a fertile ground for the rise of revival movements.

Another factor that has instrumentally entrenched Christianity in any culture the faith has spread to was persecution. To persecute is to torment or make unbearable the life or normal operations of somebody or group of people (OALD). The persecution of the Christian Church went beyond torment and mostly involved the shedding of blood through all possible means. After the ascension of Jesus Christ in AD 29, the Holy Spirit like a mighty rushing wind came upon the disciples gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1ff). There was a great revival never before witnessed. From then hence, a multiplicity of events followed, characterized by speaking in tongues, healing the sick, exorcising demons, discernments and more importantly, the

unprecedented growth of the Christian church (Ibid). As a result the new Christian faith greatly expanded in Jerusalem, Judea and even into the regions of the Gentiles. Soon intense persecution set in dispersing the new converts to the four winds. The martyrdom of Stephen resulted in the first widespread persecution of the Christian church (Acts 8:4). It was also the catalyst that led to the dispersion of the Christian teaching beyond Jerusalem and Galilee (Barret and Todd, 2001). It was worth nothing that though the church was still young and with many adversaries, she kept on expanding into new regions in a mysterious way. Persecution of pious Christian groups has travelled with the faith since the days of the Apostles (Church, 1981). The revival movement was not spared either. For example at Kabete in 1937, Barret (1973) and Karanja (1999) contend that the relationship between the Church leaders and the revival movement deteriorated so much that for some time they were forbidden from holding meetings inside Church buildings. The situation worsened that Obadia Kariuki (1985), a staunch member of the movement observed;

It was clear that the Church leaders did not want to understand our position or our new attitude to the Church. On the contrary, the decision was taken to forbid us meeting inside the Church, and in some places the decision was reinforced by the purchase of huge padlocks which were then used to lock us out of the Churches. But the air was fresh under the shade of a tree and the revival movement continued to grow (pg 58)

Despite all these, the Christian faith has succeeded to entrench itself as a universal religion, setting base in almost every county in the world. It has adherents in all the races of men, from the most sophisticated of westerners to the aborigines of the inhospitable deserts of Australia (Neil, 1964). Africa in general and Kenya in particular, are predominantly Christian. It is this resilience of the Christian faith to survive intense persecution and opposition even through the Dark Ages that still elicits great interests today. The revival movement was not an exception. The Uganda Martyrs in East Africa stand out as a vivid example of both an affirmation and defense of the

faith. They refused to give up their faith even if it brought them suffering, pain and death. Something had penetrated their entire being and that something was faith. The Uganda martyrs faced such situation. They chose to die for their faith since obedience to Christ superseded obedience to any other power. Robert Munyagabyanja a Uganda martyr of 1886 said thus before his execution;

I appeal to all of you gathered here to have firm minds. Never fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul....we are happy because in a short time we shall be in that place which Jesus Christ has prepared for us, no by ourselves, but withal those who love him, to happily await his coming. You who have seen us, go and tell our brethren that we have broken Satan's chains and that we shall soon be with our savior (Karanja, 1999, 23).

Modern Pentecostalism began in 1906 when a small Negro community led by W.J.Seymour in Azusa Street, Los Angeles, California experienced the BHS in a manner similar to that on the day of Pentecost (Burnham, 1975; Harrell Jr., 1975). This group of Pentecostals considered the movement a latter day restoration of the church's apostolic power, which emerged in the late 19th Century radical evangelical revival movements in America and Great Britain (Robeck, 2006). In Britain, Evangelist Dwight Moody and Sankey believed that a man who has come into contact with Christ automatically experiences a revolution in his life with the old habits dying away (Anderson, 1981). The revival movement got into Kenya in 1937 through the efforts of brothers Howard and Joe Church (Karanja, 1999). The chief dispersal point was schools especially Kabete School, St. Paul's Divinity School, and Kahuhia Normal School. The new converts who were mostly students had a great zeal to witness to others about the new faith sparking a chain reaction of conversion (Karanja, 1999). The reconnaissance study by the

researcher on LBC revealed that schools, colleges and universities played a central role in the spread of LBC in Kenya.

## **2.3 Objective 2: The controversial teachings of LBC**

### **2.3.1 God Head**

Researchers by anthropologists reveal that almost all the races of men, the most primitive among them included, have some knowledge of and belief in one supreme God (Neil, 1964). Neil (1964) continues to argue that even the pygmies in the vast forests of tropical Africa, though lacking in the rudiments of what we call civilization, have a clear sense of one God who is over all. In polytheistic religions like the African Traditional Religions (ATR), Mbiti (1969) argues that these supernatural beings (though many) are hierarchical in order and are charged with different responsibilities with one super being at the helm. It is important to note that though these gods are many, they are not co-equal as is the case of Christianity but have one super being who sits at the helm. In monotheistic religions like Christianity and Islam, the Bible and the Koran respectively, talk of the supernatural being who is the creator, provider, and controller of the universe. However, in Christianity, there are divergent views on the Godhead. Whereas some believe that God is one (Deutonomy, 6:4) a majority led by the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) believe in the Trinity. Trinity defines God as three divine persons which represents Father, Son and the Holy Ghost as distinctly co-existing in unity or co-equal, co-eternal and co-substantial or of one being (Catholic Encyclopedia, 1913). If this is the case, why is it that Judaism the precursor of Christianity and Islam strictly believe in one indivisible God? The exegesis on the Godhead as handled by this section in this study aimed to address such discrepancies.

The Christian belief in three Gods; Father, Son and the Holy Ghost became a fundamental doctrine at the Nicene Council in 325 AD. The council stated thus;

The teaching of the trinity is at the very heart and core of the Old Testament. It is every whit as much at the heart and core of the New Testament. The New Testament is just as much opposed as the Old Testament is to the thought that there are more Gods than one. Yet the New Testament with equal clearness teaches that the Father is God, and the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God and that these three are NOT three aspects of the same person, but three persons standing in a truly personal relationship to one another. There we have the great doctrine of three persons but one God (Grudem, 1994).

According to this doctrine, God exists as three persons but in one God, meaning that God the son and God the Holy Ghost have exactly the same nature or being as God the Father in every way (Grudem, 1994). Trinity therefore is a coined term. It is not found in the Bible. However it appeared to take a central position in the church liturgy during the Apostolic age, thereafter and even now. This doctrine further states that God is a single being that exists simultaneously and eternally as a perichoresis of three hypostases-person of the father (the source of eternal majesty), the Son (the eternal logos/word) and the Holy Spirit (the Paraclete or advocate). This position is equally confounding. It ministers the question of how exactly a single being can exist in three distinct persons at the same time. If that happened, then they become three persons and not one. This argument is emboldened by Fairbairn (2009) who asserts thus;

We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity. Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal such as the Father is, such is the Son and such is the Holy Spirit (Fairbairn, 2008, 48-50).

From the above excerpt, it is clear that there are three persons of the Godhead. This position sharply contradicts the Bible in Deuteronomy 6:4 that expressly states that the Lord our God is one. It becomes even more confounding when we consider the conception of Jesus Christ in Luke 1:35, that it was the Holy Spirit (the supposedly, third person of the Trinity) and not God

the Father, who was involved. This and many other scriptures in the Bible minister a number of questions revolving around the Godhead and the Trinity. The need for this exegesis.

Another view within Christianity that speaks of more than one God is called Binitarianism (Leith, 1992). Binitarianism is the view that there were originally two beings in the God head, that is, the Father and the Word. The concept of the Holy Spirit is alien to them. Hurtado (2003) consents and asserts that God is a person (the Father) and one being; and that Jesus is distinct from the Father, was preexistent with God and also originating from God without becoming a separate being from him, so that he is God (the Son). He (Hurtado, 2003) seems to root for Dualism in the God head. However, further reading of his book seem talk of the preexistence of the Holy Spirit that manifested God the Father to human beings and was the same that descended upon the disciples of Jesus on the day of Pentecost. He asserts thus;

The preexistent Holy Spirit which creates the whole creation, God caused to live in the flesh that he wished. The flesh...in which the Holy Spirit lived served the Spirit well, living in holiness and purity, without defiling the Spirit in any way.... This Spirit went out of God the Creator; and is the Creator: a person of God's being which also lived in Jesus and is the same given to men making them a new creation. The Holy Spirit is viewed as identical to the Son or uniquely embodied in him (Hurtado, 2003. 57).

This view is hard to reconcile with John 4:24 that expressly states that God is a spirit. This dual view of the Binitarians over the God head runs into headwinds when you also consider the birth of Jesus Christ (Mathew 1:18); that Mary was found with the child of the Holy Ghost. This thought also agrees with Jinkins (2001) that the conception of Jesus Christ had nothing to do with God the Father but the Holy Spirit. If they deny the existence of the Holy Spirit then, which spirit is this that was responsible for the birth of Jesus Christ? These were the issues this section was all about.

The Mormons, a sect within Christianity believe that the Father (Elohim) and the Son have perfect material bodies while the Holy Spirit does not have a body and is a spirit (Leith, 1992). The idea that God the Father has a distinct body from that of God the Son does not have any base in the Bible. This is because in John 10:30, Jesus claimed that him and the Father are one and in John 12:45 he asserts that he who has seen him has seen the Father. The “second” person of the Trinity was manifested on earth in the being called Jesus (John 1:14) and therefore in seeing this being was seeing God the Father, then God the Father did not have another body distinct from that of Jesus. Colossians 2:9 sums this up by asserting that what the entire God was dwelled in Jesus Christ bodily.

Sikhism, one of the minor religions of the world believes in a single God that has existed from the beginning of time and will survive forever (Babb, 2000). This position agrees with the Bahai Faith who also believes in a single imperishable God, the creator of all things including all the creatures and the forces in universe (Encyclopedia Brannica, 1988). To the Sikhs, God is genderless, fearless, formless, immutable, ineffable, self-sufficient, omnipotent and not subject to the cycle of births and deaths (Ibid). The characteristics of this God clearly agree with those assigned to God in most world religions especially Christianity. However, the only point of divergence is the Sikhs’ insistence on the singularity of their God as opposed to the Trinitarian position in Christianity. To suggest that God is genderless runs in the face of the Christian and Islamic belief that God is masculine. This divergence is what this study addressed.

Islam unlike Christianity, holds as most fundamental, its doctrine of strict monotheism called “Twahid.” The Quran describes God (Allah) as One and Only; the Eternal, Absolute; he begetteth not; a super being beyond all comprehension and does not resemble any of his creatures in any way. In essence, Islam strongly denies the Christian doctrine of the Trinity

together with the divinity of Jesus comparing it to pure polytheism. However, the Islamic belief that God does not resemble any of his creatures in any way runs contra to their belief that the first five books of the Bible are inspired by God. If this be the case where do they place the creation stories where God created man in his own image (Genesis 1:28)? Such contradiction was what informed this study.

### **2.3.2 Baptism**

Closely related to the Christian belief on the God Head and varied in the same measure is the Christian rite of Baptism. According to Green (1987), Baptism is the gateway into the people of God, the new Israel, as the people on whom God has set his seal. Just as one entered the old Israel by circumcision, one became a member of the new Israel through baptism. The Bible describes baptism variously. The doctrine of Baptism has its foundation in the Great Commission of Lord Jesus to his disciples in Mathew 28:19; “Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost....” In exercise of this commission on the day of Pentecost, Peter commanded the people to repent and be baptized in the name of Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). There seem to be a controversy here since most mainstream and some Pentecostal Churches argue that they would rather stick with Mathew 28:19 since it is what the Lord himself said than with Peter in Acts 2:38. However, in the entire NT, there is no record whatsoever where anyone was baptized using the name Father, Son and the Holy Ghost. Who is right or who is wrong is the controversy in this doctrine.

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica (n.d.), Baptism is, for the majority, the rite of admission almost invariably with the use of water into the Christian Church. According to Christian history, the first baptisms in the Bible were done by John the Baptist in the River

Jordan (Luke 3:7). Other baptisms recorded in the Bible were carried out by the Apostles of Jesus before and after his ascension (Acts 2:41). The rite as important as it, is practiced in many different ways as there are denominations. For instance, the RCC baptizes (read making sign of the cross on ones forehead) in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, as well as christening which is the baptism of infants (Wootten, 2002). On the other hand, a majority of the protestant denominations baptize people in much water in the name of the Father, and of the Son and the Holy Ghost, arguing that they are fulfilling the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ to his disciples in Matthew 28:18-19. It appears Christianity is divided on this doctrine hence the need for this study.

### **2.3.3 The Original Sin**

The doctrine of the Original sin transcends all known religions of the world. In African Traditional Religions (ATR) Mbiti (1969) argues that creation is the most widely acknowledged work of God in Africa and most parts of the world. Just like in Christianity and even Islam, Mbiti(1969), further contends that African ontology is basically anthropocentric in that man is at the centre of existence and African peoples see everything else in its relation to the central position of man. That creation is the work of God is in no doubt in Africa. He goes on to argue that human beings initially enjoyed a privileged relationship with God before “something” (explained variously by different African communities) happened. He posits;

Man was originally put in a state of happiness, childlike ignorance, immortality, or the ability to rise again after death. God also provided him with necessities of life either directly or through equipping him with the ability to develop them and man lived in more or less in a state of paradise (Mbiti, 1969, 41).

The Biblical tradition agrees and states in Genesis 2:15 that the lord took man and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and keep it. God also gave clear instructions on what to do and what not. He commanded him thus;

And the lord commanded man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest truly eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shall not eat of it, for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die (Genesis 2:16-17).

Man through the subtlety of the Serpent, disobeyed this commandment and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As a consequent, man was banished out of the Garden of Eden, the serpent was cursed to crawl while the woman was to suffer pain in child birth (Genesis 3:14-16). It is therefore no doubt that Eden was a paradise. Everything was put under the charge of man (Genesis 1:28). Man enjoyed very close relationship with God to the extent that in the cool of the day (evening) God would visit man and walk with him in the garden. What then caused the rift in this rather good relationship between God and man was the purpose of this section.

In most African Tradition Societies, the cause of the fall of man is explained variously. For instance the Ashanti (Mbiti, 1969), talk of God originally living in the sky but close to man. The mother of these men went constantly knocking against him with her pestle while pounding the traditional food “fufu”. To escape this knock, God went further up. The Bambuti on the other hand, claim that they were forbidden to eat the “tabu” and when they did, God left them. The Pare and the Chagga were forbidden to eat “eggs” and “ula yams” respectively but they disobeyed this order leading God to separate Himself from them. Notable in these myths is the striking resemblance to the Biblical tradition. This fairly agree with Neil (1964) that African people though lacking in the rudiments of what is called civilization, clearly, like the Bible and

the Quran, bring out the theme of disobedience to God's command and the "eating" of the "fruit" or other items. Consequently, the disobedience of man made him lose the privileged position he had with God resulting in death and suffering. Bruinsma (2008) agrees and opines that such stories give a clear impression that the African peoples have been providentially prepared for the proclamation of the gospel through their own traditions, views and conceptions. If the so called "primitive" or "uncivilized African peoples could explain the cause of the original sin with such striking resemblance to the "civilized west" then it means there must be a common ground shared by all humanity that need be established. This is what this study has attempted to do.

The Bible and the Koran- the Christian and Muslim holy books respectively, also teach a similar view. For instance, the Bible in Genesis 3 talks of the fall of Adam and Eve, the ancestors of the human race by the "act of eating the forbidden fruit." Majority of the Pentecostal Christendom consider the fruit mentioned in genesis 3 as a literal fruit and not anything else. They also consider the tree as a real tree as it is identified presently (Africa Center of Apologetics Research, 2013). Prior to that, the Bible explains that man had a close relationship with God (Genesis 2:18-25). The problem here is that most of the mainstream churches teach about the original sin by over emphasizing the consequences of the sin than the actual act. For instance, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) says thus:

By his sin Adam, as the first man, lost the original holiness and justice he had received from God, not only for himself but for all humans. Adam and Eve transmitted to their descendants human nature wounded by their own first sin and hence deprived of original holiness and justice; this deprivation is called "original sin." As a result of original sin, human nature is weakened in its powers, subject to ignorance, suffering and domination of death, and inclined to sin (this inclination is called "concupiscence").

When the word concupiscence is checked through the New Oxford Thesaurus of English (NOTE) dictionary, it means sexual desire, lust, sexual appetite, libido among many such amorous descriptions. If the CCC openly declares that the original sin resulted from an act of sexual desire, then one is left wondering why they talk about eating of literal fruits. This is the confusion that informed this study.

John Calvin in his book *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* held the notion that humans inherit Adamic guilt and are in a state of sin from the moment of conception. On the other hand Martin Luther as quoted by Tappet (1959), concurs by asserting that, the original sin is hereditary and is bestowed to human beings at the moment of conception. This agrees with Branham (1965) that the propagation of the human race through sex was not the original idea of God. It also dovetails with Psalms 51:5 that behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me. These are great Christian scholars and reformers whose view has held sway the Christian doctrine for a long time but they fail to expressly teach humanity what actually happened in the Garden of Eden causing the fall of man. This study presented the view of LBC on the same.

A number of scholars have made attempts at unraveling what actually caused the original sin and what the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was. According to Terrance (1993), the fruit of the tree is a symbolic allegory of the entheogenic mushroom *psilocybe cubensis* that when eaten is capable of bringing about the expansion of perception and cognitive awareness. Allegro John (1970) agrees and asserts that the forbidden fruit was some kind of mushroom. St. Augustine of Hippo (330-350) taught that Adam's sin is transmitted by concupiscence, that is, harmful desire, sexual desire and all sensual feelings resulting in humans becoming *Massa damnata*. He further claimed that this sin is passed on to the new born child through the parents who experience libido

or concupiscence. The word concupiscence as seen through the OALD means “the lust of the flesh or sexual desire.” In other words, St. Augustine is here authoritatively suggesting that the original sin may have resulted from a sexual activity. This line of thought strikingly agrees with what most young children ‘primitively’ grew up knowing what happened in the Garden of Eden.

St. Augustine as quoted by Ombachi in Onkware (2004), poses the question “How did evil come about? He goes on to answer that evil came about as a result of free will. This free will was first given to the Angels in Heaven, who, led by Lucifer (Satan, the chief Angel then), rebelled against God (Ezekiel 28:13-19; Isaiah 14:12-20). It was again given to humans but under the same influence of Lucifer, Man also rebelled against God (Genesis 3). He therefore concludes that the fall of Angelic and human beings was the origin of moral evil on sin resulting in natural evils of disease, earthquakes, storms and even death. Free will is a mental construction that is harmless unless it is backed by action. It is only by our actions that other people are able to know what we are thinking and thereby, deciding. Therefore free will alone without the action of what the free will resulted into cannot fully explain the origin of sin. This is where Ombachi’s treatise based on Augustinian theodicy, fails to pinpoint the actual cause for the fall of Man. It was the concern of this study to know what exactly happened in the Garden of Eden. What it entailed in the “eating” of the forbidden fruit.

#### **2.3.4 Marriage and Divorce**

The institution of marriage through which mankind has perpetuated itself dates back to creation. Marriage was instituted by God in Genesis 2:23-24 thus;

And Adam, this is said now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his Father and Mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.

This was the first union between man and woman, and, though not explicitly stated but overly implied, was monogamous. The first strain of polygamy in the Bible was by Lameck, the son of Cain (Genesis 4:23), who was, according to the Bible, the son of that evil one (1<sup>st</sup> John 3:12). The love, companionship and permanency of marriage at least, as long as the two live, is variously stated in the Bible.

In Islam like in Christianity, marriage was instituted by God (Allah) who in Sura Al-Nisaa vs3 states thus;

And if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphan-girls, then marry other women of your choice, two or three, or four but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one or (the captives and the slaves) that your right hands possess. That is nearer to prevent you from doing injustice.

Though not condemning monogamy, the Quran unlike the Bible, endorses polygamy but restricted polygamy. Al-Qaradawi (1960) states that Islam permits the Muslim to marry more than one woman in order to resolve some very pressing human problems, individual as well as social. Some of these issues Al-Qaradawi (1960) contends, include barrenness or chronic illnesses, a strong desire on the case of a man for sex and in cases where women outnumber men. In some cases, men who converted to Islam having married more than four wives are required to choose the best four and divorce the rest. The fate of the divorced women whether they had children or not is not well articulated. Both these traditions (Christian and Muslim), appear logical but fall short in practice. How is one expected to stick to a union that in all practical senses is not working just because the vow is “till death do as apart?”

In African Traditional Religions (ATR), marriage was without exception, normal, natural and fully expected (Mbiti, 1969). He further contends that in Africa, there were no bachelors or

spinsters for life. Everyone was expected to marry or get married especially after initiation. Consequently, failure to get married or marry was considered if not a taboo but a bad omen. With such perception in mind, divorce was minimal and every effort was made to avoid it. Strict customary laws helped sustain marriages and at the same time, lower divorce rates. However, in the modern society, customary law is in a sharp decline due to a number of reasons. This has seen a marked rise in spontaneous marriages and its attendant divorce rates (Yossef, 2005).

Religiously therefore, mainstream religion of the world held different views on the question of marriage. Whereas Christianity seem to favor monogamous marriages, severe cases of polygamy [as in the case of King David and King Solomon] were tolerated. Why this was so is a question of conjecture. Consequently, there seem to be a contradiction in the Bible as to whether marriage should be monogamous or polygamous.

Divorce has always accompanied the institution of marriage in all cultures and races of the world since the ancient civilization (Zanden, 1993). It was a pertinent and disturbing question in the Mosaic age way before the birth of Christ prompting Moses to appeal to God for counsel hence he advised thus;

When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and if it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he had found some uncleanness in her; then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed from his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate her and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; her former husband, which send her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the lord; and thou shall no cause the land to sin, which the lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance (Deutronomy 24:1-40).

The Pharisees confronted Jesus with the same question asking him whether it was lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause (Mathew 19:3). Today, marriage and divorce is still a disturbing question. However, the Bible in the excerpt above seems to allow for divorce and remarriage. It must also be noted that it vests power to divorce in the man and not the woman. The divorced woman is free to continue getting married to new husbands but cannot revert back to the first one. This position seems to contradict Malachi 2:6 where the Bible states that God hates divorce. However, in the New Testament (NT) especially the gospels (Mark 10:1-12, Mathew 5:31-32 and 19:1-11), divorce is not allowed in Christianity except on grounds of sexual immorality or uncleanness. The NT further puts a caveat on remarriage to all parties as long as either one is still alive. In essence, when a man marries a woman in the Christian tradition, he puts a yoke around his neck which is impossible to remove regardless of how miserable their life together may become. This Al-Qaradawi (1960) aptly opined that the greatest torment in life is a companion who neither agrees with you nor leaves you alone. No chance for remarriage is given because the vow is “till death do us apart” and equally no chance for divorce because the maximum is “what God has put together let no man put asunder.”

In Islam, Sura-Al-Talaq 65:1-2 states thus;

O prophet (and your followers) when you divorce women, divorce them at the prescribed period; and count that prescribed period; and fear Allah your lord; and turn them not out of their (matrimonial) houses nor shall they leave except in case where they are guilty of some open lewdness; those are limits set by Allah;.....who transgresses the limits set by Allah does verily wrong his soul; you know not perchance Allah will bring out thereafter some new situations (during the reconciliation process)

Divorce in Islam is permitted reluctantly as a step of last resort in Islamic law-Shariah. Like the Christian God- Allah hates divorce though it is lawful. Despite the lack of consensus within and

among the major religions of the world, divorce continues to devastate the institution of marriage like a bush fire. Divorce rates in the world have more than doubled. For instance, in the United States of America (USA), for every two marriages there is one divorce mostly due to frivolous reasons that border on the absurd (Zanden, 1993; Winslow, 2004). Cohen (2002) agrees and contends that more than one million children all over the world are exposed to divorce and over 40% of American children do not live with their biological parents; and about 35% live with their biological mother only and another 14% live with their biological fathers only while 11% live with step families, adoptive parents, foster homes and with other relatives. In Kenya, divorce rate like in the rest of the world, is on the alarming increase. Statistics indicate that 30% of the marriages consummated end up in divorce (Gihinga, 2005). He further contends that 28% of the people in Kenya seeking counseling services are considering divorce. Consequently, the rise in divorce results in the decline of the marriage institution which in turn churns out remarriage or the possibility of the same, fornications and other social ills condemned by the Bible.

The first strain of polygamy in the Bible was by Lameck the son of Cain (Genesis 4:23) Divorce was however, allowed by Moses in Deuteronomy 24:1 that:

When a man had taken a wife and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he had found some uncleanness in her; then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand and send her out of his house.

This is the basis upon which classical Judaism allowed the husband to write the wife a divorce document called “Get” which allowed the husband to part ways with his wife and both of them could remarry if they needed (Kolatch, 1989). In the RCC, which is arguably the largest single most Christian Church in the world, a marriage can be annulled by a competent ecclesiastical tribunal on the ground of consanguinity, one psychological state before marriage, dicut among

others, and the parties involved are all free to marry again. Most protestant churches seem to hold a similar view with a few variations especially in the Pentecostal organizations, out of which the ministry of Rev. Branham sprang out (Bradshaw, 2005).

### **2.3.5 The Service of Women in the Church**

The position and role of women in the Church is a subject dogged by a lot of controversy. Many scholars have attempted to write about this topic. However in reading through their literature one gets the impression that most of them approach the text with a specific agenda in mind, whether patriarchal or feminist. For instance, on one end of the spectrum, there are those who push for the inevitability of patriarchy by affirming that women are not allowed to teach or preach in the church or hold any authoritative position. The question of the position of women in the service of the church and particularly as relates to the authoritative fivefold ministry in Ephesians 4:11, has ignited great debate from theologians and researchers. Most mainstream protestant churches and Pentecostal organizations argue that the Day of Pentecost fulfilled the prophecy of Joel 2:28 thus, *“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your old men shall dream dreams your young men shall see visions.....”* gave mandate to all (Gender) to operate the fivefold ministry. Scofield (1996) argued that the word “prophesy” means to preach. Hence, if the daughters under the influence of the spirit would prophesy, then they would preach. This means they can be ordained as Pastors, Bishops and operate any Ministry.

The Apostle Paul in the NT has written extensively on this topic. His writings have however elicited much controversy with some scholars arguing that he was either a male Chauvinist or a woman hater since he wasn't married. Ramsay (1913) argues that Paul's position was understandable since he was merely a child of his age. Brown (1977) agrees and contends that Paul

though born in a Gentile world, was a true Jew, who did not see a woman, fit for any religious role. Jewett (1975) agrees and argues that Paul was influenced by his environment and training. Having been steeped in rabbinic learning under Gamaliel he thought of women as being subordinate to men for whose sake they were created. Barclay (1975) agrees with Jewett (1975) and contends that no one ever rose completely above the age in which he lived and the society in which he grew up. Consequently, Paul in his conception of the place of women in the church was unable to rise above the idea that he had known all his life. All these scholars seem to have approached this topic from a mindset that Paul was culturally influenced to make the pronouncements he did. In as much as these scholars are entitled to their opinion, it must be noted that the subject they were discussing stems from the Bible which in 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:20, is if no private interpretation. The Bible interprets itself. The Bible in Isaiah 3 12 said thus;

As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them, O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.

Branham (1957) agreeing with the above noted that when a woman took the lead in the Garden of Eden, a whole generation was lost. Nancy & Kaniaki (1991) seem to agree with the above by asserting that in Satan's Kingdom, women are the chief leaders and are often used by the devil to carry out his missions.

Christianity originated in a world of three cultures; Jewish, Greek and Roman. The first Christians were all Jews living under the authority of the Romans but speaking Greek and practicing Greek culture (Ong'injo, 2006). In all these three cultures, women were subordinate to men. It was the men who took the lead. The same was the case in most African communities (Mbiti,1969). Nandi (2001) agrees and argues that in the Bukusu culture, women were not included in the leadership activities because of the nature of their bodies especially regarding

menstruation. Here Nandi (2001) seem to agree with Evans (1983) who contends that women then were not eligible for leadership because most started a family at 16, or because of regular uncleanliness or because of a greater task of shaping the atmosphere at home and bringing up children in a spirit of warmth and mutuality. These reasons are valid but not convincing. They are at best speculative and may not be able to withstand the test of simple logic. This is because further reading of Evans (1983) reveals that these reasons are to validate the appointment of women into priesthood today. This position therefore ministers the question that if menstruating made women unclean then and consequently unfit to hold priestly office, have they stopped that now they can be appointed into priesthood? Are they not still being married off at an early age and bearing children as then?

The OT portrays male characters in control. All genealogies beginning with that of Adam in Genesis 5, lists only men. Foxon (1973) argues that many women are mentioned but most are shown in their relationship to men. For instance, Sarah and Abraham, Rebecca and Isaac among others. Quoting Jewett (1975), Ong'injo (2006) agrees and points out that women in ancient Judaism lived in the shadows of men rather than the light of life because the OT was a man's world and that the responsibility for the public practice of religion was upon them. This line of thinking fails to answer the question why in the first place was this responsibility to publically practice religion was not given to women from the beginning. Why is it that in most cultures women were not allowed to lead? What has changed then that there is a clamour for them to be incorporated in leadership?

Considering Exodus 23:17, 34:23 & Deutronomy 16:16-17, women were excluded in the instructions on pilgrimage to celebrate the great festivals. Further despite the fact that all Israel were the descendants of Abraham, a chosen people and a Holy Priesthood, only Levi, the son of

Aaron and his male descendants were chosen and consecrated for the service of the lord. The Levites (male) were the only ones allowed to serve as priests and not any other tribe (Leviticus 1:7). If God chose then, would he not choose today seeing that he (God) changes not (Hebrews 13:8)? Despite the above, some women in the OT are mentioned actively participating in the religious life of the people, assuming leadership positions, exercising gifts of prophesy as well as playing other religious roles without opposition. Examples here include Mirriam who played the role of prophetess (Exodus 15:20), Deborah who was a prophet, judge and warrior (Judges 4:4). Deborah even led the Israelites to victory against the Canaanites. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 22, Hildah, the Prophetess, was consulted by King Josiah when he wanted to carry out the religious reforms. These scriptures and the few examples above, when read in isolation can lend credence to the argument that women have a role to play in priestly service.

The other culture unto which Christianity arose was Greek culture. In the Greek tradition, women were restricted to the domestic sphere. For example Keener (1996) argues that Athenian women could not go to the market place because they were not supposed to be seen by other men who were not their relatives. This was the world view prevalent in the Greek culture at the time of the birth of Christianity. The Roman culture was not different either. Women in the Roman culture were subservient to men (Ong'injo,2006).

Whereas some ancient religions like the Egyptian and Greek religions had goddesses and priestesses (Barrow, 2011; Gillam, 1995) some like orthodox Judaism do not ordain women as rabbis (McGuckin, 2010). It is a paradox that although the RCC through Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter 'ordinatio sacerdotalis' argues that the church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women, the same holds the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM) in special regard and even teaches about her immaculate conception. However, the Holy See has not been

spared the external upheavals witnessed in the Pentecostal movement agitating for women pastors. In 1976, for example, the International Bible experts of the Pontifical Biblical Commission consented with a majority of 12-5, argued that there was no scriptural objections to the priestly ordination of women. This decision was however, overturned by the congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (Morrissey, 2006).

Islam on the other hand does not appoint women as Imams although some sects of the Sunni and Shia agree that a woman may lead a congregation of women alone in prayers (Rajan, 2008). Modern Christianity is divided on whether to ordain women into priesthood with some like Anglican Church of Australia (2012) and McGuckin (2010) arguing for women priests while others like Byrne (1999) and Raab (2000) are against women priests in the church.

Though male church leaders dominate the field, female bishops and pastors are common in many Kenyan churches. With the promulgation of the new constitution of Kenya in 2010, which empowers women coupled with the current trends globally, it has become imperative to examine how the teachings of some of these new churches, LBC included, view the position of women.

#### **2.4 Objective 3: The influence of Rev. Branham on LBC**

William Marrion Branham was born in 1909 in Kentucky, USA to Charles and Ella Harvey Branham (Lindsay, 1952). His birth and early life was characterized by numerous unfathomable and unprecedented (outside of Christ) supernatural happenings and visitations (Lindsay, 1952). A strange light appeared in the room at about 5 AM in the morning when he was born (Branham, 1959; Jorgensen, 1994). At the age of seven a voice from a Poplar tree near their house spoke to him admonishing him never to drink, smoke or defile his body in any way for there was work for him to do when he grew older (Ibid). This voice did not leave him, for it followed him wherever

he went to make sure he did not err. This made him nervous since he could neither understand himself nor what was happening in his life. What was astonishing is the fact that religious people told him that it was the Devil speaking to him (Branham, 1964). Due to abject poverty he was raised in, he dropped out of school in grade three. Despite all these, Rev. Branham in June 1933, according to Strom and Magnello (1996), saw a series of seven visions that he claimed must come to pass before the end of the world. It is instructive to note that in the fourth vision, Rev. Branham was shown tremendous increase in knowledge of science with super highways built with egg-shaped cars without steering wheels and the people inside playing cards as they cruise at high speed (Branham, 1959). Today, as shown in figure 4 pg 29 above, such cars have been built. In the same year and month as he was baptizing converts in the Ohio River, a strange light came from heaven to where he was and a voice was heard saying “ *As John the Baptist was sent to forerun the first coming of Jesus Christ, your message will forerun His second coming*” (Branham, 1959; Jorgensen, 1994; Osborn, 1966). This could probably be the attraction that is pulling people to LBC with its apocalyptic message supported by the visions he claims to have seen. This is one of the reasons this study sought to investigate the influence of Rev. Branham on LBC.

Cloud (1988) reveals that Rev. Branham began his divine healing ministry in 1946 after an encounter with the Angel of the Lord. Angels are God’s messengers whose chief business is to carry out God’s orders in the world (Graham, 1975). The Angel commissioned him thus:

I am sent from the presence of the Almighty God to tell you that your peculiar birth and misunderstood life has been to indicate that you are to take the gift of divine healing to the peoples of the world. If you will be sincere when you pray and can get the people to believe you, nothing shall stand before your prayer, not even cancer. You will go into many parts of the world and will pray for kings and rulers and potentates. You will preach to multitudes the world over and thousands will come to you for

counsel. You must tell them that their thoughts speak louder in heaven than their words (Jorgensen, 1994, 168).



*Figure 1: A type of the Self Driven Cars Rev. Branham saw in a vision in June 1933. It was vision number four that is being fulfilled today.*

(Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=the+self+driven+car>)

Buoyed by this Angelic visitation commissioning him to take divine healing to the people of the world, Rev. Branham began a prolific divine healing ministry in 1946 that had never been witnessed before setting off a spiritual explosion in the Pentecostal movement (Cloud, 1988). It must here be noted that as long as Rev. Branham performed miracles, raised the dead and discerned the thoughts of people, multitudes and even other religious leaders thronged his meetings. However, when he began to teach doctrine around the late 50s and early 60s, the multitudes greatly reduced as well as the cooperating ministers. A clear parallel can be drawn here. The Lord Jesus Christ when he began his ministry laden with signs and wonders, multitudes thronged his meetings (John 6:2). However, when he began to teach doctrine saying unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you, many of his disciples, the Bible records, left him (John 6:66). In January 1950, reports Jorgensen (1994) that while attending a series of meetings in Sam Houston, Texas, a rare photograph of Rev. Branham with a halo of light above his head was taken by a Mr. Ayers who worked with the Douglas Studios. A copy of this photograph is attached elsewhere in the thesis. (see figure 2 pg 38). This photograph was taken to one George J. Lacy, an examiner of questioned documents with the Federal Bureau of investigations (FBI) who examined it and declared it authentic. The signed testimony of Mr. Lacy is herewith attached on page 32 below.

However, there are those who thought that the Angel who seldom stood by Rev. Branham was demonic and not divine. Dyck ( 1984, p. 16) argued thus;

We believe Branham was influenced by demonic spirits. The bondage in which he lived was an occultic bondage. His powers were those of soothsayers...his healing powers were occultic. The voices which tormented him, the vibrations and swellings in his hand, the lights, and fiery balls which supposedly danced about the room during some of his healing crusades, the complete exhaustion he experienced after his meetings-all of these is evidence of occultic powers. And this is what men of God tried to warn him of, when

Branham met fortune tellers they even told him he was influenced by supernatural powers.

However, angelic visitations to people in the Bible is common place. Evangelist Billy Graham in his book "*Angles: God Secret Agents*" (1975. 18) argues that Angles are God's messngers whose chief purpose is to carry out his orders in the world. This therefore means that angels are real and are used by God to fulfill his will on earth. For example, Angel Gabriel's mission to Zechariah and Mary in the Bible are common Sunday school lessons. Consequently, it may entirely not be conspiratorial for one to claim intense angelic visitation as Rev. Branham did. However, it must be noted that Lucifer who is commonly known as Satan-the chief devil, was by



*Figure 2: Rev. Branham's Picture with a halo of light above his head photographed at Sam Houston U.S.A in January 1950 (referred in text on page 37)*

**(Source: The Revelation of the Seven Seals; 1967)**

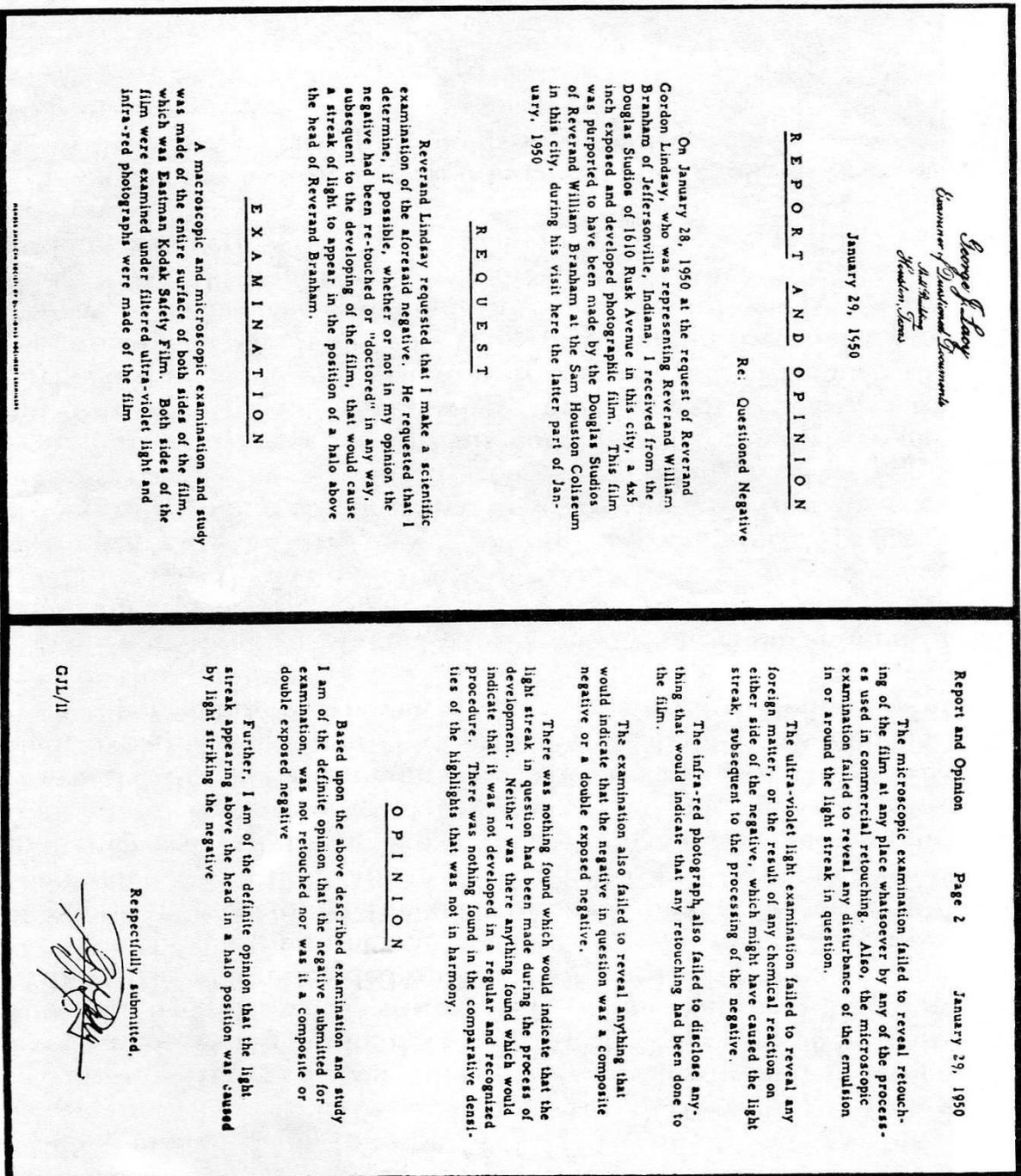


Figure 3: Mr. George J. Lacy's testimony on Rev. Branham's Picture with a halo of light

(Source: The Revelation of the Seven Seals; 1967)

Bible records, the chief angel (Isaiah 14:12-19). He led the first rebellion against God in Heaven influencing a third of God's angels with him. They were thrown down on earth and are actively capable of influencing human behavior (Ezekiel 28: 12ff). How then can one know whether the influence he/she is receiving is from God or from these evil spirits on earth was part of what this study attempted to tackle.

Most authors agree that Rev. Branham was a prophet and a great servant of God to this generation (Osborn, 1966; Hallonwenger, 1972; Lindsay, 1994). They further argue that Rev. Branham was the initiator of modern Pentecostal revival. His preaching and manner of ministering to the sick was unparalleled and stage setting as Harrell Jr. (1975) opined:

Most of the participants of the revival looked upon Rev. Branham as its initiator. Out of his massive union meetings in 1947, spread reports of hundreds of miracles and marvels. His preaching was halting and simple beyond belief but Rev. Branham became a prophet to a generation. He held audiences spell bound with tales of constant communication with God and Angels. Night after night before thousands of awed believers he discerned the diseases of the sick and pronounced they healed (Harrell Jr., 1975).

Rev. Branham at the peak of his ministry went around the world seven times and eventually visited South Africa in 1951 where he had immense acclaim (Stadsklev, 1952). In all the places he visited, Pentecostal churches sprang up in line with his persuasion. However, he died in 1965 before visiting Kenya and there is no record of any of his close associates ever visiting the country (Osborn, 1966). This therefore is the gap this study aimed to unravel by establishing how LBC, which claims foundation on Rev. Branham's teachings, started in Kenya.

The influence of Rev. Branham to the Pentecostal movement and even to other ministers was beyond measure and unprecedented (Hallonwenger, 1972). She contends that Rev. Branham was the pace setter of the healing revivals that broke out in the late 1940s and was the primary source

of inspiration in the development of other healing ministries. Rev. Branham inspired hundreds of other ministers to enter the faith healing ministry. One such minister was evangelist T.L. Osborn who testified thus;

As I watched Brother Branham minister to the sick, I was especially captivated by the deliverance of a little deaf-mute girl over whom he prayed thus: “Thou deaf and dumb spirit, I adjure thee in Jesus name, leave the child” and when he snapped his fingers, the child heard and spoke perfectly. When I witnessed this, there seemed to be a thousand voices speaking to me all at once in one accord saying over and over “You can do that...that is how Paul and Peter did it...it is My way” (Osborn,1975,164).

As a result, Osborn was never the same again. Under the influence and inspiration of Rev. Branham, he began a powerful divine healing ministry that has taken him to many parts of the world including Kenya. Perhaps it is through such evangelists that Rev. Branham’s ministry through LBC found its root in Kenya. However, a thorough investigation ought to be done.

The influence of Rev. Branham to people who came in contact with him was both positive and negative. As Osborn testified above, Rev. Branham positively influenced him to start a divine healing ministry that is renowned throughout the world. Harrell Jr. (1975) concurs and contends that Rev. Branham was so filled with the spirit of God that greatly narrowed the line of his humanity. He discerned the disease of the sick and with amazing accuracy, told people of their secrets (Ibid). Humanity had not witnessed such occurrences comparable only to the days of Jesus Christ especially with his (Jesus) encounter with Nathaniel and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 1:47-51; 4:17-18). Rev. Branham exhibited supernatural tendencies that confused people a lot. Soon some could no longer see the separating line and began adoring him as “God” and even baptizing people in his name (Kennah, 1963). His influence to people was therefore both positive and negative. For instance in 1978, one Jim Jones, the founder and leader of the

“People’s Temple”, a minister who once invited Rev. Branham to his church, led 918 followers to commit mass suicide to Guyana, USA (Reiteman & Jacobs, 1982, pg-10). They did this ostensibly to quickly meet with the Lord Jesus Christ. This was total fanaticism. However, Rev. Branham vehemently denied that he was God and threatened to quit if people continued to revere him as such. He argued thus;

And I heard a few more times. But it wasn’t so. And the other day in Canada a brother showed me a little ticken of athing he’s packed in his pocket, said “William Branham is our Lord, Baptizing in the name of William Branham.....if it had been my enemy I would have knowed it was a joke. But a precious darling brother came up to confess his sins and his wrongs and say his faith in me as being Jesus Christ..... and I got all kinds of letters that’s come in the last few days, and calls from different places, so, saying that I was Christ Brethren, that is a horrible, disgraceful, ungodly lie of the Devil! See? See, I am you brother..... and, because of that, it forces me to say I am leaving the ministry, is because that there is something arose up amongst the people that’s caused me to do it, that is, that I have been taken from my bracket of a “minister” or “brother” and being called Jesus Christ, and so call .... And that would brand me as an antichrist (Revelation Chapter five 1961, 23-28

If in life Rev. Branham was thought of as “God”, what would happen in his death? Many people especially Africans and to be specific Kenyans, revere the dead and accord them superhuman status. This, Mbiti (1969) argues is the root of ancestor worship in most African tribes. On this basis then it became of utmost importance to establish the influence Rev. Branham has on LBC

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This section gives details of the methodology that was used in carrying out this study. It gives information on research design, study area, study population, sample size and sampling procedures, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations.

#### 3.2 Research Design

In this qualitative research, the researcher adopted a historical- descriptive research design. This method was selected because Kerlinger (1969) and Borg (1996) point out that it enables the researcher to examine past events through available evidence, report the findings, formulate important principles of knowledge and arrive at solutions to significant problems in the research area. This design also enabled the researcher to establish a detailed description of how LBC begun in Kenya and the factors responsible for her rapid spread. Orodho (2003) argues that it is commonly used in preliminary and explorative studies like this one as it gathers information, summarizes, and interprets for purpose of classification. Saunders et al. (2009) agrees and adds that descriptive research is very useful for attitudes and opinions, which enable the researcher to identify the variability in different phenomena. Robson (2002) and Kothari (2004) concur and opine that, a historical-descriptive research design can be very useful in portraying an accurate profile of persons, events, or situations. They further contend that in a social science research like this, the researcher should endeavor to, as accurately as possible, describe people's behavior and report the events exactly as they happened without any alterations. Ball (1985) agrees and opines that such issues are well investigated through a historical-descriptive research technique. The researcher adopted this design to describe the phenomenon as it is on the ground.

### **3.3 Study Area**

This study was carried out in Kenya specifically targetting LBC churches in former Western, Nyanza, Rift Valley, Nairobi and Coast Provinces. Though LBC has a foothold in every part of this country, these five former provinces of Kenya account for the highest number of LBC churches in the country. These regions are believed to have more than a hundred and fifty churches with about three hundred thousand adherents (Karuiki, OI, 5/10/10).

### **3.4 Study Population**

According to Castillo (2009), a study population is a well defined collection of individuals or objects known to posses similar characterirtics. All individuals or objects within a certain population usually have a common, binding characteristics or traits. The study population comprised of all the pioneer members of LBC who joined the movement in the early 70s. However, their actual number is unknown since LBC does not keep any membership records. Nevertheless, most of these pioneer members are pastors, deacons or elders in the various LBC affiliate churches around the country. The researcher therefore considered Gorard (2003) who opined that in such studies where population targeted is large, difficult to reach or is only a subset of the larger population hence it is difficult to produce a sampling frame, snowball technique becomes necessary and is immensely useful. Consequently, once the snowball starts to roll, it continues to do so up to a point it stops. Hair et al. (2003) agrees and opines that the initial respondents are identified using probability methods and this procedure is ideal in facilitating locations of rare populations or those where a list does not exist. Through the reconnaissance study conducted by the researcher between the months of June 2009 to October 2010, the researcher identified 10 such members whom he interviewed. Thereafter using the snowball approach to sampling, the researcher requested them to mention any one pioneer member they knew of who was not on the researcher's original list. The process was allowed to snowball until saturation. At the time it stopped, the researcher had interviewed 100 respondents concerning the origin and teachings of LBC in Kenya. This

was because Muzvidziwa (2005) argues that snowballing enables the informants' network to reproduce itself to saturation.

### **3.5 Sample Size**

The sample size used in this study was 100 pioneer members of LBC comprising of 35 Pastors, 40 Deacons and 25 Elders. An elder in LBC is one whose chronological age in believing the message of Rev. Branham is long enough not to be a novice and who, for one reason or the other, does not qualify to serve as a pastor or a deacon. The researcher therefore considered Gay (1987) who suggests that for a descriptive study such as this one, 10% of the accessible population is representative enough. He further proposes that for a population of 0-100, the sample size should be 100%. For a population of between 101-1000, a sample size of 10% is sufficient and 5% for a population of between 1001-5000. Considering the fact that the target population of this study were unknown, hence difficult to produce a sampling frame (Gorard,2003), the researcher snowballed to 100 respondents who, according to Gay (1987) is representative enough.

### **3.6 Sampling Procedures**

Considering Castillo (2009), definition of a sample as a subset of the population hence the concept of a sample arises from the inability of the researcher to test all the individuals in a given population. The sample must therefore be representative of the population from which it was drawn and it must be of good size to warrant analysis. In this case the selected sample size allows the researcher to conduct the study to the individuals from the population so that the results can be used to make conclusions for the entire group. The sample size used in this study was 110 pioneer members comprising of 44 pastors, 41 deacons and 25 elders whose chronological age in the message spurned between 20-30 years. To arrive at this figure, the researcher purposively identified the first 10 respondents and interviewed them. Thereafter using the snowball approach to sampling, he requested them to mention any one pioneer member they knew of who was not on the researcher's original list. Gorard (2003) opined that in such studies where

population targeted is large, difficult to reach or is only a subset of the larger population hence it is difficult to produce a sampling frame, snowball technique becomes necessary and is immensely useful. Consequently, once the snowball starts to roll, it continues to do so up to a point it stops. Hair et al. (2003) agrees and opines that the initial respondents are identified using probability methods and this procedure is ideal in facilitating locations of rare populations or those where a list does not exist. The process was allowed to snowball until saturation. At the time it stopped, the researcher had interviewed 100 respondents concerning the origin and spread of LBC in Kenya, its teachings and the influence Rev. Branham has on the movement. Muzvidziwa (2005) argues that snowballing enables the informants' network to reproduce itself to saturation. The researcher employed exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling where the referred subject meets the time threshold of having joined the movement in the 1970s. This helped the researcher deal with sampling bias, which arose when initial subjects only nominated respondents well known to them or friends. On the other hand, exponential discriminative snowball sampling technique was also used to identify the specific respondents who were well informed about the origin, teachings and spread of LBC in Kenya. This, Gorard (2003) continues to argue helps the researcher be at least in control of the respondents referred to him.

### **3.7 Data Collection Methods**

In order to collect data, the researcher employed participant observation, in-depth oral interviews, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. These tools were selected on the strength of Spatz and Kardas (1940) who argued that they are effective in qualitative researches, which are characterized by results that are presented in narrative form.

#### **3.7.1 Participant observation**

Participant observation is a mundane method used by researchers especially when they want to gain first hand information, attitudes, behavior patterns and practices of the population under study without arousing any suspicions. According to Nandi (2001), the method enables the researcher to infiltrate the population under study without attracting much attention hence enabling him/her learn more about the

group before they realize that somebody is studying them. Initially, the researcher covertly participated in the services and ceremonies of LBC without attracting the attention of the surrounding members. The researcher attended Sunday services in LBC fellowships in major towns of Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Kisumu, Kakamega and Eldoret between June 2009 to December 2010. This method immensely boosted the researcher's understanding on the influence Rev. Branham has on the movement. Later he introduced himself to the leadership of the various churches he visited clearly stating his intentions. This method also proved quite handy in helping the researcher learn more about the teachings, practices and the general mannerism of the movement.

### **3.7.2 In-Depth Oral Interviews**

This technique was selected on the strength of Woodsong (2012) who argued that they are designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant's view on the research objectives. The researcher used this tool to interview the 10 pioneer members of LBC he had purposively identified. Here, the interviewee is the expert and the interviewer is the student hence, he is motivated by the desire to learn.

The researcher here must pose questions in a neutral manner, listen attentively and ask follow-up questions and probes when need arises (Woodsong,2012).

### **3.7.3 Semi-Structured Interviews**

The researcher also used semi-structured interviews that were administered face-to-face. The questions in the interviews were formulated such that the responses could adequately address the doctrine held by the church based on the major issues presented in the literature review. This tool was used capture information from the 100 respondents that were identified through snowballing. Barbour (1940) argues that semi-structured interviews are non-standardized and are often used in qualitative researches. Smith et al (1995) observes that researchers use semi-structured interviews in order to gain a detailed picture of respondents' beliefs, or perceptions or accounts of a particular topic. In doing this, the researcher is able to follow up particularly

interesting avenues that emerge in the interview and the respondent is able to give a fuller picture. This tool was selected because Spatz and Kardas (1940) argue that it allows the researcher to thoroughly investigate events, facts, and relationships that happened in the past. Kothari (2004) agrees and opines that semi-structured interview is orderly and encourages the researcher to probe the respondents' on issues, which may be relevant to the study. To confirm the accuracy of the information, the researcher posed similar questions to different informants and compared the responses. Most of the informants were immensely knowledgeable on the issues under study.

#### **3.7.4 Document Analysis**

This tool was used to collect data by reading secondary sources, both published and unpublished in libraries, the internet, and other archives. The researcher personally read books and documents regarding church history to establish the origin and main teachings of the Pentecostal Church. The sermons (published and unpublished) and writings of Rev. Branham were also read to get information concerning his doctrinal standpoint. The researcher visited several libraries and some of which were purely church based to excavate more information for the study. According to Kothari (2004), review of documents is crucial to a researcher by making available accurate and faster data. He further opines that documents are unobstrusive and can be used without imposing on participants. They can also be checked and re-checked for reliability.

#### **3.8 Data Analysis**

After collecting data through the aforesaid methods, thematic and content analysis was employed in data analysis. Data collected through primary and secondary sources was summarized and edited. The data was then coded to generate themes and categories which provided a basis for content generation that were useful in answering the research questions. The data was also

compared and contrasted to weed out biasness and contradictions. Finally, the data was then synthesized and presented descriptively.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

The researcher undertook the caution to first alert the respondents on the objectives and purpose of the study before interviewing them. In essence, all the respondents interviewed voluntarily accepted to participate in this study. Pseudo names were used in place of correct names. The researcher has also undertaken to neither falsify nor fabricate the data provided in the publication of this work. Any materials obtained from other researchers, scholars and authors were acknowledged and credited appropriately through citations. Finally, the researcher will make available the final copy of this thesis to whomsoever may want to scrutinize it.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results and the discussions attached to the results. The chapter is organized according to the study objectives that the research aimed to address. The findings were as follows;

#### 4.2 Objective 1:. The Origin and quick spread of LBC in Kenya

The first objective of the study sought to establish the origin and quick spread of LBC in Kenya. The findings collected from the interviews were presented as follows.

The researcher enquired how LBC originated and the factors responsible for her quick spread in the country. The collected findings were as explained. The study found that members of LBC interviewed conceive several theories that explain the formation of the movement.

The message of Rev, Branham came into Kenya coincidentally. No one knows exactly how the message books started getting into the country. This in itself agreed with McClung's (1996) theory of Pentecostalism that salvation is a free gift of divine grace. Hence it was the grace of God that somehow, without a major missionary activity as had been the case in the formative years of the Christian faith,that the message of Rev. Branham got into the country.

The early recipients of this message on the other hand behaved like the people of Berea (Acts 17:10-11), by comparing what they read and heard of Rev. Branham with what is written in the Bible. Soon, they discovered that there is a striking resemblance of what they had read and heard with what was written in the Bible. This made them to believe and at the same time, created a

desire in them to testify to other people. This network created a chain reaction of new conversions.

The new converts of the message of Rev. Branham were mainly University, College and High School going students (Gwandaru, OI 6/10/10). Karanja (1999), had rightly argued that the chief dispersal points for the Pentecostal message were schools and colleges and that the new converts were mostly students who had a great zeal to witness to others about the new faith sparking a chain reaction of conversions. These zealous young men and women witnessed the new message to one another just like how the people of Berea had done (Acts 17:10-11) and were ministers to each other just as McClung (1996) had argued. The same lived a chaste lives and became living testimonies to the rest of the world. This attracted many people even those who held leadership positions in mainstream churches who openly confessed that though they did not agree with the teachings of the new faith their children had acquired, but were living holy lives that should be emulated (Khabelwa, OI, 8/7/09). In a sense, these young converts had every likeable characteristics except their faith.

It was further established that the Christian Union (CU) in schools and colleges was very vibrant (Akweya, OI 6/7/09). It was through such forums that the young men who had converted to the faith used to teach the others about the new faith. Several conventions were also held like the December 1974 Nyahururu High School convention where one zealous young man Peterson Gwandaru preached on water baptism. In his sermon, he clearly emphasized the need for people to be re-baptized in much water in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Gwandaru, OI 6/10/10). He based his convictions on Acts 2:38 and 19). As a result, many people were converted and baptised adding to the number of believers. The other convention was held in December 1976 at Kisii Teachers Training College. At the end of this convention, one James Lasi (Deceased)

addressed the audience clearly stating that he had received a message that was so different from what is taught in the mainstream churches. He further stated that this same message greatly illuminated the Bible and made it be a new book. He finally gave the audience the address of the Branham Tabernacle and urged them to write the address in order to be supplied with the books containing this message. It was reported that many people took down the address and wrote to the Branham Tabernacle which responded with supply of message books into the country (Gwandaru, OI 6/10/10). This was one way the message books containing the teachings of Rev, Branham got their way into the country leading to the origin and spread of LBC.

That the message of Rev. Branham illuminated the Bible and made it easier for the people to understand concepts that were hitherto concealed or avoided by the mainstream churches (Kamau, OI 9/8/10). This contention agreed with Mbiti's (1986) position in literature review that the translations of the Bible made it become a living book and when the people are able to read in their own languages, they experience their own Pentecost with a resultant sense of release from bondage of sin and unbelief. This creates a thirst for the word of God in people's hearts, a yearning to hear more. On this Ong'injo (2006) observed that a revival breaks out characterized by thorough confession of sins to the person's wronged leading to intense feeling of joy and release. Then what follows is a thorough process of re-education through constant fellowship (this is what the people of Berea did to one another), continual confession of sins, reading the Bible, singing and listening to sermons. This Christian living brought instant results with signs and wonders following (Kamau, OI,9/8/10). This agreed with Burnham (1975) in literature review who had asserted that in 1927 and 1933 at Kaimosi Friends Church and Musanda respectively, the Quaker faithfuls confessed their sins one to another and remained in constant prayer and fasting resulting in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as on the day of Pentecost. It is

indeed true that when people come together and confess their sins, turn away from their wicked ways, the God of Heaven responds as he promised in his word (2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 7:14). On this score, the Church today compares badly. Worship has become formal and nominal. Such a scenario, Ong'injo (2006) rightly argued in literature review, that it creates a fertile ground for the rise of revival movements. The rise of LBC in Kenya was as a result of the cold, nominal worship practices common in mainstream churches.

McClung's (1996) position that the fundamental principle underlying the origin and practise of Neremos is the pneumatological view of God envisaged as present in the power of the Holy Spirit, who reveals his will, guides amidst danger and fills person with new power of prophecy, prayer and healing, was evident in the origin and quick spread of LBC in Kenya. The LBC early converts received the word of God with gladness and with an intense desire to discover more that was not made available to them in the mainstream churches (Gwandaru, OI, 6/10/10). This agreed with Mbiti's (1986) assertion that the missionaries who introduced Christianity in Africa, were very selective on the contents they taught. The same was picked up by the African clergy who were Mission trained. When the books of Rev. Branham started pouring in, the young men and women were eager to discover what was being hidden from them. This like Ong'injo (2006) had argued, created a thirst for the word of God characterized by continual confession of sins, reading the Bible, singing and listening to sermons. Consequently, the spirit of God moved among them with reports of healings, exorcising demons and speaking in tongues (Gwandaru, OI,6/10/10). This attracted more people to the new faith.

The researcher further submitted that one Mr. Barnabus Kariuki (O1 5/10/10) told him that in 1975 while pastoring a local fellowship of believers on the message of Rev. Branham in Nandi Hills, he met a teacher called Rugut who had believed the message of Rev. Branham.

Interestingly, this teacher had believed the message by reading one of his message books. He had found this book in the school library. How that book got there was a mystery. Through this testimony Karuiki and Rugut endeavored to make the first translation of Rev. Branham's message from English to Kiswahili. The distribution of this Kiswahili translation led to a great revival across western and Rift Valley Provinces leading to the founding of 23 local fellowships in the region. Due to rising number of fellowships and new converts across the country, LBC was registered in Kenya on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1975 vide certificate number 1447. There was high demand for the message books from Rev. Branham ministries. Seven leading pastors of LBC held a meeting in Nakuru. The main aim of this meeting was to address how local believers who needed to know the original message by Rev. Branham could access message books easily from the Branham Tabernacle in Jeffersonville, Indiana. It was out of this meeting that Brother Lasi (Deceased) visited the Branham Tabernacle and played an instrumental role in the Audio-translations of the taped Branham sermons into Kiswahili. In 1984, the Branham family comprising of Joseph, Rebecca and Billy Paul Branham visited the country. They helped set up the VoGR library in Nairobi. Through this library, Rev. Branham's message books started pouring like a flood resulting in more conversations and establishment of other local fellowships of LBC across the country.

Faith in God has always played a central role in the spreading the genuine Christian Church. The book of Romans 10:17 declare faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. This means that the more you hear the word of God, the more your faith grows. The reverse is also true. The less you hear the word of God, the little or no faith you develop. The Bible defines faith thus;

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen  
(Hebrews 11:1)

The centrality of faith cannot be underestimated. Hebrews 11:6 sums this up by stating that it is impossible to please God without faith. When the word of God was revealed to the Ethiopian Eunuch he never remained the same again (Acts 8: 27ff). Likewise on the day of Pentecost when the people heard the word of God, faith developed and three thousand of them believed and were baptized. Brother Peterson Gwandaru (01 6/10/10) observed that reading the messages of Rev. Branham opens up the Bible to the believer. In a sense, the Bible becomes a new book and one begins to see how like a jig-saw puzzle, the scripture links up one with another. Here, he agreed with Mbiti (1986) that the translations of the Bible into indigenous languages created a sense of intense optimism for truth. The Bible then at once becomes a living book, very different from other books. The reader is able to detect the discrepancies associated with the teachings of most mainstream churches and his faith is now anchored on what he/she has understood. He further opined that reading the messages of Rev. Branham seemed to illuminate the Bible and show an interlink of themes right from Genesis to Revelation. This, the respondent continued to argue, led to enhanced understanding and acceptability.

The perceived 'false' teachings and a type of nominal Christianity espoused by most mainstream churches provided a fertile ground for the origin and spread of LBC. Most of the respondents interviewed agreed that lukewarm Christianity, dormant faith and the infiltration in the church by pagan practices that do not conform to the word of God are the factors that made most people especially the youth to get dissatisfied. When the opportunity availed itself through the message of Rev. Branham, most youths embraced it. That the Christian church is infiltrated by pagan practices is not farfetched. Kagali (2014) had argued that the similarity between pagan

Tiriki circumcision practices and those of the so-called Christian circumcision practices was quite amazing. The Christian world and the pagan world have found common ground. A simple look at the so-called Gospel music today would attest to this. This position agreed with Karanja (1999) affirmation that the revival movement was a reaction to the nominal Christianity whose principle objective was not to make new Christian converts, but to raise those who were Christians to a new and higher level of Christian living. The preaching of the word of God had been pushed to the periphery and was assigned the least time. In most Churches, social matters and welfare are assigned prime time while a good preacher is one who takes less than ten minutes. "What gospel can one preach in ten minutes?" posed one of the respondents. Most of Rev. Branham's sermons lasted between 40 minutes to 2hrs and in them he could line up scriptures one after another in line with Isaiah 28:10. He then would pray for the sick and afflicted. In doing this, the people would witness the Bible in action as opposed to the endless narratives told in mainstream churches. This was very attractive to the youth who yearned for a transformative gospel.

According to one respondent, the mainstream Churches have always considered LBC as a cult. The respondent argued that though the message of Rev. Branham took a slow growth pattern in the early 70s, by 1977, the message had attracted hundreds of believers in Universities, Colleges and Schools around the country. However, the rate at which Rev. Branham's message was gaining acceptance across the nation did not impress some Mainstream Churches who considered them as "Spiritual Pick-pockets." Most of the believers of this message were school or college going young men and women whose new found faith ran at cross-purposes with that of their parents or guardians. Consequently, they were denied fees, locked out of their churches and

eventually excommunicated. They met for fellowship in private homes and as their numbers increased, they hired shop premises as their meeting points.

From these findings, it is evident that the formation of LBC resulted from exposure to the teachings of Rev. Branham contrary to how the other Pentecostal churches came to be-through revivals by missionaries (Karanja, 1999). After being founded, the growth of LBC movement significantly depended on schools where teachers and students contributed significantly. It is also evident that revival meetings and conventions were all held in school/college/university set ups and attendants were majorly students. This indicates a similarity to how other Pentecostal churches in Kenya were formed. The findings concur with those of Karanja (1999) that chief dispersal point for the Pentecostal message were schools and that the new converts were mostly students who had a great zeal to witness to others about the new faith sparking a chain reaction of conversions.

#### **4.3 Objective 2: The investigation of the Controversial Teaching of LBC**

The second objective investigated the controversial teachings of LBC. Here the researcher first established the controversial teachings and then shows where and how they differ with conventional Christian teachings. In doing this, the study confined itself only to those LBC teachings that have significant variations to those held by other Christendom. The findings collected were as presented in the subheadings that follow.

##### **4.3.1 Original Sin**

The question of the original sin stems from the Bible in the book of Genesis after the creation of man (Genesis 1-3). The Biblical tradition in Genesis 2:15 claims that God took man and put him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and keep it. This Biblical tradition agrees with Mbiti (1969) that

creation is the most acknowledged work of God in Africa and that the initial human beings were put in a state of happiness, childlike ignorance and immortality. The only difference as seen in literature review is that while the Bible talks of one man (Adam), (Genesis,2:16-17), the African traditions talk of a group of human beings. What is not in contention in both traditions is the fact that human beings were created by God and put in a paradise –like environment.

In Genesis 2: 16-17, God gave man clear instructions on how to behave in the garden. He commanded him thus;

And the lord commanded man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest truly eat; but of tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shall not eat of it, for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die (Genesis 2:16-17).

However, man in Genesis 3 disobeyed this command and fell by ‘eating’ the ‘forbidden fruit’. This narrative is quite similar to those held by many African tribes (Mbiti,1969). The same strikingly agrees with Neil (1964) that African peoples though lacking in the rudiments of what we call civilization, clearly bring out the theme of disobedience to God’s command. Adeniji in Bruinsma (2008) agrees and opines that stories like this clearly show that Africans have been providentially prepared for the proclamation of the gospel by their own traditions, views and conceptions. This therefore indicates that humanity seem to share a common heritage. Both traditions, as a consequence, agree that humanity lost their privileged position before God.

Rev. Branham, the study found out, taught that the original sin came to be by the act of the Serpent who committed adultery with Eve leading to the birth of Cain (Branham, 1965). He further claims that the woman was the fruit tree that was in the garden. He observes; *Ain’t a woman a fruit tree?.. Aren’t you the fruit of your mother?..that was the fruit that was forbidden to be taken!*. Rev Branham clearly indicates that the Serpent in the Garden of Eden was a

creature that was so close to man and the same beguiled Eve into a sexual relationship (Branham, 1965). This assertion agreed with Scofield's (1996) position the Serpent in his Edenic form was not a writhing reptile, for that was the effect of the curse, but was a creature that was so intelligent and close to man. Jorgensen (2002) agreed and opined that the Serpent in Eden was not a reptile but was a mammal who was so subtle. The word 'Subtle' when checked through the OALD mean 'having a true knowledge of the principles of life'. In a sense, the Serpent knew how life can be propagated through the act of sex. He therefore went ahead and did it. That it was sex that led to the original sin is a matter of common sense (Akweya, OI, 6//7/09 ). To prove this, Akweya argued that one has to examine the types of punishments that God meted out. To the woman, was the curse to suffer pain during childbirth and the serpent's closeness to mankind that he could mix his seed with man was utterly destroyed (Genesis 3:14-16). Nothing was said about the Mouth that supposedly, ate the fruit.

Considering Genesis 3:15, God said;

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shall bruise his heel.

Akweya (OI 6/7/09 ), further argued that both the Serpent and the woman had a seed. To the serpent was born Cain and to the woman was born Abel. These two were to be at cross purposes with one another (Vs 15b). This antagonism led to Cain killing Abel (Genesis 4:8). For the word of God to stand, Khabelwa (OI, 8/7/09 ), agreed with Akweya (OI 6/7/09 ) and argued that, this was the reason why Seth was born (Genesis 4:25) as another seed to the woman replacing Abel whom Cain had killed. This assertion agreed with Branham (1965) position that Cain was the seed of the serpent. It further agreed with Kabbalist Rabbi Dommneh West's assertion in Zohar 136 that both Adam and Nachash ( the other creature God had created without a soul and put in

the Garden of Eden), had sex with Eve and both got an offspring. He further contends that these offsprings took after the characteristics of their father. On this Adagala (OI 9/7/09) argued , was the reason why Cain appeared so rude before God when he asked him ‘ *Am I my brother’s keeper?*’

Many scholars and theologians have attempted to unravel what actually caused the original sin. Terrance (1993) strongly suspects that it was some kind of mushroom. Allegro (1970) agrees and posits that the same had the ability to expand perception and cognitive awareness. Mbiti (1969) had argued that many African tribes hold simillar views. St. Augustine of Hippo (330-350) holds a simillar view together with the CCC. They both view the original sin as caused by human ‘Concupiscence’ which the OALD defines as ‘ harmful desire, sexual desire and all sensual feelings resulting in humans becoming *Massa damnata*’ or mass of perdition. Gwandaru (OI,6/10/10) agreed and asserted that talking of something else is not only unscriptural but also lacking common sense. To qualify his position he argued that one has to look at the punishments meted out by God to the woman and the serpent to understand what actually took place in the Garden of Eden. Why, he posed, would God in all his wisdom punish the woman in child bearing yet it was the mouth that ate the fruit?...Why isn’t the eating of fruits today a sin and restricted like sex...you can pick any fruit and eat, but you can’t have sex with any woman you come across. It is sin to do so, but it isn’t sin to eat fruits. If the serpent was a reptile as we have traditionally been taught, then God’s comparison to cattle and beasts of the field is null. Additionally, of what difference would have been the curse to crawl if the serpent was a reptile already? In this, Gwandaru (OI,6/10/10), like many other followers of LBC, agreed with Rev. Branham that the serpent had sex with Eve resulting in the birth of Cain.

In Branham's teachings published in some of his books, He argues that the tree in the middle of the garden was the private parts of a woman (Branham,1965). Additionally, he argued that the devil eating the fruit means that the devil (Satan) had sex with Eve leading to the conception of Cain. He argued:

What did he do? He began making love to Eve. And he lived with her as a husband. And she saw it was pleasant, so she went and told her husband; but she was already pregnant by Satan. And she brought forth her first Son whose name was Cain the son of Satan (Branham, 1965, 98).

To justify his interpretation further, Branham claimed that a closer study of the Bible beginning at Genesis 5 which lists the genealogy of Adam, omits Cain and Abel as Adam's sons. He argues that Abel was killed hence his omission since he did not have children. However, Cain survived and had offsprings, thus, he ought to have been included in the genealogy but was not. Branham says the reason for not mentioning Cain in this genealogy is that Cain was not Adam's child (1<sup>st</sup> John 3:12). Rev. Branham further argued that Adam was created with God himself without sensation in His own image. He therefore was created a perfect son of God (Genesis 1:26-27). It would therefore be sacrilegious for the scripture to refer to Cain, if indeed he was the son of Adam, as the son of the evil one (1<sup>st</sup> John 3:12). The researcher considered the genealogy of Adam recorded in Genesis 5 to establish if Cain was listed and he was not. This genealogy begins with Adam as the first man created by God from the dust of the earth, then Seth, then Enos, then Cainan, then Mahalaleel, then Jared and then Enock (Whom the Bible records was the seventh person from Adam and he walked with God and did not die, for God took him away); (Genesis 5:24), Enock begot Noah who begot Shem, Ham and Japheth. It is imperative to note that Abel was not listed either. However, Abel died without off springs but Cain lived on, married

and had off springs. This ministers the question why he was omitted in the genealogy of his supposedly, father. The failure to list him lends credence to the argument postulated by Rev. Branham (2005) that Cain wasn't Adam's son. This assertion dovetails with (1 John 3:12) that Cain was the son of the "Evil One," that is to say, the same old devil that beguiled Eve in the Garden of Eden. This is because the scripture could not in (1 Corinthians 15:45) call Adam the son of God and then in another call him the "Evil One." Further prove to this was found in Jude 14 that indicates that Enock was the seventh from Adam. If Cain was considered, then Enock would have been the eighth and not seventh.

Substantively, continued review established other publications that held the same view of the original sin as that held by Rev. Branham. For instance, R. M. Jackson in his book; *The two laws of Eden* argued that the serpent spoken of in the book of Genesis 3 was not a worm or a snake as some believe, but he was the most intelligent creature of all the Animal kingdom endowed with the ability to carry out a vocal conversation with Eve (Branham, 1965). Scofield (1996) agrees by stating:

The serpent in his Edenic form is not to be thought of as a writhing reptile. That is the effect of the Curse (Gen 3:14). The creature which lent itself to Satan may well have been the most beautiful as it was the most subtle less than man ( 8).

Owen Jorgensen (2002) agrees and opines that suddenly mankind's first sin is lifted out of the category of myth and legend and placed firmly in the reality of human genetics. He writes;

In the beginning the serpent was not a reptile at all: rather, it was a mammal. The Bible calls it a beast. The serpent walked upright like a man. He was so close to man in intelligence that he could talk. The world subtle means "having a true knowledge of the principles of life." In Hebrew, the words crafty, smart, subtle and naked all came from the same root word.

The forbidden fruit in the midst of the garden was the carnal knowledge of human sexuality.....what actually happened in Garden of Eden was that Eve committed adultery with the serpent and became pregnant by him. Then she showed Adam what she had learned and immediately become pregnant with a second child by Adam. Nine months later she gave birth to twins: Cain who was the seed of the serpent; and Abel, who was the seed of Adam. (Jorgensen, 2002. 165).

Agreeing with the above Kabbalist Rabbi Dommeh West as quoted in the Zohar (136) argues that God created two Adams. To one He gave a soul to the other he did not. The one without a soul is the creature known in Christianity as the Serpent or Nachash in Kabbalist tradition. Rabbi Dommeh further argues that these two beings (Adam and Nachash) had intercourse with Eve and she conceived from both and bore two children. These children took with the characteristics of their fathers.

This is the argument that Rev. Branham claimed was given to him by revelation so that he could teach his followers. This presentation of the original sin according to Branham and LBC is significantly different from that believed by the other Pentecostal churches-that the tree and the fruit talked about in the original sin were literal tree and fruit, as we know them in the present world (Africa Center of Apologetics Research, 2013). As such, Branham's analysis of the original sin and his teachings on the same are contradictory to what other Pentecostal churches in Kenya believe. However, this standpoint carries with itself an amazing continuity with scripture and Biblical tradition.

#### **4.3.2 Godhead**

God according to the OALD is an "Object or spirit of worship". The Bible on the other hand defines God as a "Spirit"( John 4:24) which have no bodies. There are many such "objects of worship" as there are religions. In mainline Christianity for example, the doctrine of the trinity

was formulated during the conciliar era between 325 to 786 AD (Nandi,2001). This was affirmed by the Council of Constantinople in AD 381 that the Holy Spirit is a person equal to the Father and the Son. The concern of this section is to show how LBC views the deity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in line with how other Christian churches see the same.

All the adherents of LBC held that the Trinity is a fuss and that there is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4). Gwandarua (OI,6/10/10) argued that accepting the trinity is equal to implying that there are three gods, which is untrue. He emphasized that their teachings are the right ones because they only refer to God as one and that Jesus was God himself in flesh (John 1:14, Mathew 1:23) and the Holy Ghost is that self same God in Spirit form (John 14:16-17) who indwells the people of God. That the Holy Spirit is not another person but the same God, Khabelwa (OI,8/7/09) argued that God the Father is a Spirit (Genesis 1:2b, John 4:24). Since spirits don't have bodies, this God could not be touched nor seen. He continued to argue that this was the same God that revealed himself to Moses in the form of a burning bush (Exodus 3:2). The same led the children of Israel during the Exodus in the form of a pillar of fire during the night and a cloud during the day (Exodus 16:10)

Another respondent argued that there is only one God who manifests himself in three offices: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Here, this respondent, just like many other followers of LBC agree with Rev. Branham who argued that Father is not a name but a title. The same applies to Son (Branham,1965). Then he was born Emmanuel, God with us, the Son (Isaiah 7:14) and lastly, he came to dwell in his people as the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost (John 14:18)

Some of the scriptures the respondents quoted to support their teaching were John 16:28 *"I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the*

*Father.*” Other respondents presented another excerpt from the Bible, which they argued shows that Jesus was God in flesh. This scripture, they argued, is fulfilled when Saul was struck down by a flash of light on his way to Damascus in pursuit of the Christians who had fled there. And when he inquired who it was: the Spirit answered *“I ‘am Jesus whom thou persecuteth”* which confirmed that he (Jesus) was back in the original form of God the Father – the Spirit God.

According to the OALD the term God as used in Christianity, Islam and Judaism is the “Being or Spirit that is worshipped” and is believed to have created the Universe. The same dictionary defines the term “Spirit” as “Mind, feelings and Character” which are distinct from the flesh or have no bodies. Finally, OALD defines the Holy Spirit as “God in Spirit form” These definitions agrees with John 4:24 that God is a Spirit and therefore should not be thought of as a being with a human body. It further dovetails with Genesis 1:2 that it was the spirit of God (who is without form) that moved upon the face of the earth and is the that created the universe and all other creatures. This positions contradicts the assertion of the Nicene Council of 325 AD that God the Father is a personality with a body like God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (Grundem, 1994). Infact in all the Scripture there is nowhere God the Father is talked of as a personality. The position of the Bible, read together with the definitions above, seem to agree with the position of Rev. Branham that God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is the self-same person operating in three different dispensations at different times (Branham, 2005, 18).

Considering the birth of Jesus Christ, Gwandaruru (OI,6/10/10) opined that God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are not two distinct persons as Grundem (1994) had argued, but one being operating in three offices. This he said was because in many places in the Gospels, Jesus referred to a Father in heaven as his father. This is common belief in Christianity that there is a God in heaven who is Father of all including Jesus Christ. Logically, this God the Father should have

been the one responsible for the birth of Jesus Christ. However, Mathew 1:18 and Luke 1:35 below say a different thing altogether;

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise; when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together **she was found with child of the Holy Spirit** (Mathew 1:18).

And,

And the Angel answered and said unto her, **the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee;** therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35).

The Holy Spirit according to the Trinity is supposed to be the third person of the God head but as shown above, he was responsible for the birth of Jesus Christ. This begs the question where was God the father? Is there, therefore, a contradiction? This study did establish that there isn't because God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit is one and not three different persons. This is because one of the disciples of Jesus called Phillip one time challenged him to show them God the Father and Jesus answered thus;

Jesus said unto him, have I been so long time with you, and yet has thou not known me, Philip? **He that hath seen me hath seen the Father**, and how sayest thou then show us the Father? Believeest thou that not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works (John 14:9-10).

This scripture implies that seeing Jesus Christ is seeing God the Father. This position agrees with Colossians 2:9 that in him (Jesus Christ) dwelled the fullness of the God Head bodily. In that all that God was, lived in Christ Jesus. Hurtado (2003) agreed and postulated that God the Father who is a spirit chose a chaste flesh for himself and that this flesh lived in holiness and purity

without defiling the spirit in any way. This points to Immanuel-God with us (Mathew 1:23). To further prove that Jesus is God the Almighty, the researcher considered Philippians 2:9-10;

Wherefore God had also highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name: **that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth.**

It is not in dispute in most religions that God the creator of the Universe lives in heaven (Mbiti, 1969, 1986). Considering the excerpt above, it implies that if there is one in heaven called God the Father, then he would have no choice but to bow at the mention of the name of his son Jesus Christ. Logically, this cannot happen because the God that dwelt in Heaven was a spirit (John 4:24), the God that dwelt among men was made flesh (John 1:14) Jesus Christ and the God that dwells in men is the Holy Spirit-the Comforter who could not come to dwell in them as it happened on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 1ff), until Jesus Christ had ascended to heaven first (John 16:7). This view agrees with Hurtado (2003) in literature review that some early Christians conceived of the Spirit as going out from God the creator and was the creator Himself and was the person of God's being that lived in Jesus Christ. Jesus clearly noted that he and the Father are one (John 10:30, 12: 43) because all that God the father was dwelled in the Son, Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:9).

The researcher further considered John 14: 16 -17 thus;

And I will pray the Father and he shall give you snoter comforter that he may abide with you forever. Even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

It is worth noting that this comforter who was the spirit of truth [ which is the word, was God ] (John 17:17), and this word of God was with God in the beginning (John1:1), and that same word was God (John 1:1) and that same word was made flesh and dwelt among human beings (John1:14). This is the one the Bible refers to as Immanuel-**God with us** (Mathew 1:23). Additionally, this comforter is referred to as a “he” which is a personal pronoun and more interestingly, was with them at that time. In John 14:18, Jesus speaking about the same comforter chooses to use the personal pronoun “I” meaning it’s Him in the form of the Holy Spirit that would come upon the disciples.

Concerning the doctrine, Rev. Branham rejected the Trinitarian view of the Godhead and the oneness Pentecostal view. He taught that there is one God who is the Father, and that God Himself is a Spirit (John 4:24). He believed that the Holy Spirit and God the Father are the same thing but in different manifestation (Branham, 2005). He argued thus:

How can three persons be in one God? Not only is there no Bible for it, but it shows even a lack of intelligent reasoning. Three distinct persons, though identical substance, make three Gods or language had lost its meaning entirely. And I do not believe that there is three individual gods. I believe there is one God in three offices: Father, Son, Holy Ghost (Branham, 2005, 18).

Rev. Branham strongly held the opinion that the scripture is specific that there is only one God and not two or three (Deuteronomy 6:4). This one God was manifest in the flesh as Emmanuel (God with us) Jesus Christ (Isaiah 7:14) and is the self same one Paul talked about in 1 Timothy 3:16. *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, Seen of Angels, preached unto Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into Glory* (1 Timothy 3:16). According to Rev. Branham, Jesus Christ was God himself and

not the second person of the trinity. He, on many occasions argued, “Jehovah of the Old Testament is Jesus of the New Testament (Braham, 1974, 8).

### **4.3.3 Baptism**

Baptism in LBC involves immersion in much water in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Akaranga, OI, 11/10/10). This, he affirms, stems from what is called in Christendom as ‘The Great Commission’ of the Lord Jesus Christ recorded in Mathew 28:18-20 thus;

And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

Akaranga (OI, 11/10/10), further argued that in exercise of this commission, Apostle Peter full of the Holy Spirit (Acts, 2:14), which is the Spirit of truth (John 16:13), which is the word of God (John 17:17), that Jesus had promised his disciples would come to lead them into all the truth, commanded the people to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins (Act, 2:38). In a sense, Apostle Peter was hereby affirming that Jesus was God the Father (Isaiah 9:6); The Son (Isaiah 7:14); and was the Holy Spirit (John 14:18). Akweya (OI, 6/7/09) concurred by arguing that Jesus Christ was the embodiment of the whole Godhead (Collossians 2:9); *for in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*. This line of thought dovetailed with the teaching of Rev. Branham in his book; ‘*The identified Christ of all Ages*’ where he aptly posits that Jehovah of the OT is Jesus Christ of the NT.

Tiyo (OI, 8/8/09) strongly contested the various baptismal practices performed by a number of mainline Christian churches. Firstly, he went academic by asserting that baptism according to the Physics he learnt in high school, is to ‘Immerse an object into a liquid’. This agreed with the

OALD definition of baptism as ‘immersion of an object into a liquid’. Tiyo (OI,8/8/09), then wondered what type of baptism was this that is practiced by the RCC through sprinkling adherents with some water on the forehead. He also questioned the one practiced by the Quaker Church (QC) and the Salvation Army of writing people in the first and second book and making them stand in flags respectively. Gwandaru (6/10/10) agreed with Tiyo (OI, 8/8/09) and opined that, baptism as practiced in LBC in much water in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the right baptism, exercised in the Bible and is backed by scripture. He argued that Jesus was born a savior (Mathew 1:21) because he was Immanuel i.e God with Us (Mathew 1:23); Salvation to the whole world had to be preached in his name beginning at Jerusalem ( Luke 24:47), since there was no other name given unto men whereby they must be saved except the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). This is the same one Saul met on the way to Damascus and clearly identified himself as Jesus (Acts 9:5). Soon after, Saul was baptized by Ananias in the name of Jesus Christ and since then, he was never the same.

The Bible defines God as a ‘Spirit’ (John 4:24) ; the OALD concurs and defines God as used in Christianity, Islam and Judaism as the ‘Being or the Spirit that is worshipped’. This is the same Supreme Deity that Mbiti (1969) argues is called by various names as you move from one African community to the other. Nandi (2001) in his thesis on DYM among the Bukusu of Western Kenya, identifies this God as Wele Khakaba which means ‘God the Provider’. This then points to the attribute of God as a provider and therefore is not a name. Gwandaru (OI, 6/10/10) pointed out that God the spirit has a name whereby he identified himself among men. This name, he asserted is Jesus Christ since he was the son born of a virgin to be called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14); This Immanuel as seen in Mathew 1:23, means ‘God with Us’. This dovetailed with Isaiah 9:6 thus;

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor; The Mighty God; The Everlasting Father; The Prince of Peace.

Akweya (OI,6/7/09) posited that Jesus clearly said that he that had seen him had seen the Father. Many followers of LBC in Kenya opined that the scripture above affirms the deity of Jesus as that very God who created the heavens and the earth. Akweya (OI,6/7/09) posited that Jesus clearly said that he that had seen him had seen the Father and that is why they baptize people in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Opinyi (OI, 9/9/09) concurring, sought to line up scripture in an attempt to show that Jesus is Lord and savior. He said that the OT types the NT. When Moses lifted the brass serpent in the wilderness to save the Israelites from death from snake bites, it typed Jesus who in John 12:32 said, *If I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.* This, he continued, was fulfilled when Jesus was nailed on the cross of calvary culminating in Peter to boldly assert in Acts 4:12 thus;

Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

The respondents interviewed said that they believed that their church adopted the right meaning of baptism, which is one that involves immersion in much water in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They all agreed that it was revealed to Peter, the custodian of the keys to the Kingdom of God, that the name of The Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost is the Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, they affirmed since Pentecost, all those that were baptized were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and even those who had been baptized otherwise, had to be re- baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 19:1-6). One respondent said that new members who have not been baptized in this manner are required to be re-baptized in LBC in the right manner according

to scripture. This indicates that the congregants of this movement strongly believed in baptism in the manner they consider right-by immersion in water in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev. Branham's teaching concerning baptism is that it should be by immersion in water in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In response to the above, Rev. Branham argued that God was in Christ; the body was Jesus and in him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Branham: 1965). He further contends:

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are just Titles. They are not names that is why we baptize in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for that is a name not a title, it is the name of those titles just like you take a new born baby who is a Son and name him. Baby is what it is, Son is the title, and then you name him John Henry Brown (Branham, 1965, p.20).

Baptism as a religious practice in the Bible began with John the Baptist in the River Jordan (Luke 3:16, Acts 13:24). However, John baptized people telling them to believe on him who was to come after him (that is Jesus) (Acts 19:4). Jesus himself never baptized anybody but his disciples did. The other baptisms done in the Bible are recorded in Acts 2:38, 19:4, 9:18, and Acts 10:48. In all these cases, those who believed were baptized in much water in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what made Rev. Branham to boldly assert thus:

There is no one ever in the Bible baptized any other way. You show me one Place where one person was baptized in the name of the Father, Son, Holy Ghost; I'll raise my hand and say I'm a false Prophet. Those who had been baptized in a different way, Paul commanded them to be re-baptized again in much water in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Branham, 2005, 94).

These findings bring forth two important teachings about baptism according to Branham's teachings and LBC: that baptism must be by immersion in much water and it

must be in the name of Jesus Christ. Most Pentecostal churches also believe in baptism in immersion in much water as posited by Wootten (2002) hence, concur with LBC's teachings. However, most Pentecostal churches teach that baptism should be in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost (Wootten, 2002) hence contradicting the teaching by LBC.

#### **4.3.4 Marriages and Divorce**

Marriage in LBC is viewed with a lot of reverence because it is seen as a holy union instituted by God and typing the union of Christ and his bride (Khabelwa, OI, 8/7/09). They base this belief on the teachings of Paul. Due diligence is observed to ensure that those who are getting married have lived holy, chaste lives one with the other. Fornication and adultery are strongly prohibited and culprits are punished through excommunication. According to Adagala (OI,9/7/09), since LBC believes in the revealed word of God, then they are the new Israel. In the old Israel, Adagala continues to argue, no Israelite was allowed to marry a non Israelite. Likewise, no LBC member is allowed to marry a non LBC member. He emphasized this by quoting 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:14-16 thus;

Do not be yoked with unbelievers. For what does righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What doe a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and Idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: I will live with them and walk with them, and I will be their God and they will be my people

Respondents agreed that as presented in the Bible and the teachings of their leader, Rev. Branham, divorce and polygamy was not allowed to believers unless under special circumstances. One respondent asserted that as a believer, one is only allowed to marry one wife/husband. However, in cases where one had already married many wives before he knew

God, that person should be allowed to have the already married many wives even after salvation. This position sharply contradicts the Islamic position where new converts to Islam who had married more than four wives are supposed to choose the best four and divorce all the rest regardless of whether they had children or not. The respondent argued that their leader-Rev. Branham taught this, and them as loyal followers to his teachings, were strictly practicing his teachings. Another respondent, a LBC church leader agreed with this issue on polygamy but insisted that the intention is not to cause the already polygamous man to continue committing sin. He asserted that if the already polygamous man is told to divorce some women like in Islam, until he remains with one, he will be committing sin. Additionally, if he is allowed to continue adding on to the number of his wives even after salvation, he will also be committing sinful acts by intentionally going against the initial plan.

Additionally, one LBC branch leader noted that under serious circumstances where a married woman commits adultery, divorce is permitted as prescribed in the Bible. On having established that the respondents only agreed to one-wife/one husband, the researcher enquired whether all the respondents had adhered to that teaching. The collected findings showed that indeed all the respondents had only married one wife/husband. However, one church leader alleged that some leaders in his church had been involved in extra-marital affairs, which were equal to committing adultery-an act that Branham's message discouraged.

Rev. Branham in his book *Marriage and Divorce* (1968) seems to imply that a man is at liberty to marry again after divorcing his wife. He based on the conviction in Mathew 5:31-32: "*It has been said, whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committed adultery.*"

Branham argued that the man is at liberty to marry again but not the woman who is divorced. She cannot get married again as long as her previous husband is alive. Therefore, Branham stated:

See, she has got a living husband, so no man can marry her. Care what she does and who she is, she's got a living husband; there's no ground for her at all. But it's not for him, "cause is her" not him. Get it? You have to make the word run in continuity. See nothing saying he couldn't but she can't. See, "Cause is her" not him. That's exactly what the Bible says, "cause is her". It is not stated against him to remarry, but her. Why? Christ in the type (Branham, 1968, 34).

This quote together with the one in the following paragraph are, to some extent, responsible for the sectarian division witnessed in the Ministry of Rev. Branham in Nairobi Kenya particularly touching on the question of divorce and polygamy. Additionally, Branham taught the doctrine of polygamy as an accepted thing within his ministry as long as it was done before one got saved.

He argued that:

Then when the double covenant was made by man and woman, through Sex another covenant altogether (not the original covenant, but another covenant), was introduced? Polygamy in all. Then, after the beginning, polygamy was introduced both in man and its beasts, after the beginning- the fall. God now secondly, sets a new nature again by sex. God created the first without sex. Do you believe that ("Congregation Amen" – ed) Now it is another covenant with nature, He sets it in another order by sex. Second covenant, one male marry many females; one back deer, a whole harem of deers. Is that right? One bull a whole herd of cows; one rooster, a yard full of hens. Is that right? One David after His own heart, much five hundred wives... with a hundred children born to him in one year, with different women-A man after Gods' own heart. One Solomon, with a thousand wives. But notice now, it wasn't so from the beginning, but note it's after the beginning (Branham, 1968, 40).

It was established that this doctrine of polygamy was not a Kenyan phenomena but worldwide one. The entire Ministry of Rev. Branham in the world is sharply divided upon the question of polygamy verses those who believe in monogamy. Branham contended that the law of polygamy

was introduced by God to Man and nature after the fall in Genesis 3 and the stubbornness of the Israelites while in their camps to Canaan. He opined that after sin came in, then there was one man and a bunch of women, one David on the throne and five hundred wives and One Jesus Christ and Thousands times thousands members of his wife (Branham,1968). He however noted that it was not designed to be so from the beginning.

As such, Rev. Branham seem to put a strong case in favor of monogamy arguing that, that was how it was in the beginning and that there would neither be any polygamy nor divorce in the world to come (Branham, 1968). He opined that people have divorced and married again and are in polygamy because of misinterpreted theology. After preaching the revelation of the seven seals, Rev. Branham emphasized that there is no scripture in the entire Bible that allows for marriage after divorce unless your partner is dead (Branham, 1967, 71).

Finally, Rev. Branham taught that saints like Moses were permitted by God to allow the Israelites to divorce their wives by writing a bill of divorcement. He additionally argued that God allowed him to advice those already in the mess of Divorce, remarriage and polygamy, to go on as they are but sin no more. He said that this is revealed to him, as a prophet through supernatural cloud on Mt. Sunset (Fig.1.63) He argued thus:

None of you believe that this is true, and believe it to come from God! And by the vindication of His cloud and His message that has brought me this far, should not God upon the mountain permit me to do the same thing, to allow you to go on the way you are, and do it no more! Go with your wives and live in peace, for the hour is late...The coming of the Lord is not at hand, we haven't got time to break these things up. Don't you dare try to do it again. I 'am speaking only to my congregation. But if you are married...And God bore me witness on the mountain that I could say this supernatural revelation, because of the opening of the seven seals..., "Let them go on in as they are, and sin no more" (Branham, 1968, 44).

Branham also submitted that polygamy was one of the errors that ever occurred in church history through the seven church ages and was corrected by the messenger of Malachi 4 and Revelation 10:7 when he reveals the mysteries of the seven thunders contained in the seven seals. Rev. Branham argued that Seven Angels descended on Mt. Sunset in 1963 and revealed to him the mystery truths of the Seven Seals. After these supernatural revelations, that is when Rev. Branham preached the message “Marriage and Divorce” correcting all the errors committed in the church ages.

These findings also present that according to Branham’s teaching, divorce was allowed as long as a prophet of God permitted one to do it just as Moses allowed the Israelites. He also argued after man disobeyed the first covenant, God in the second allowed polygamy as his permissive will (Branham, 1965). Additionally, the findings show that since the beginning, polygamy was not allowed. Marriage only ought to be to one wife/husband. However, in case of divorce, Branham’s teaching note that only a man was allowed to divorce the wife, and in such case, the wife was not allowed to remarry but the man was permitted. These findings, to some extent agree while to another extent disagree with the teachings other Pentecostal churches hold on the issue of marriage and divorce as discussed by Bradshaw (2013). The disagreement is in the permission of polygamy and the punishing of the woman and leaving the man in case of a divorce. However, the agreement is in the fact that marriage is to one partner, as it was prescribed in the beginning and that divorce is not permitted except under serious fornication claims (Genesis 2:20-25).

#### **4.3.5 Role of Women in the Church**

The responses the study collected concerning women’s role in the LBC showed that women were not allowed to participate in any leadership roles in the church. They are also discouraged from attending church services while their heads are uncovered. However, the church leadership

allows them to participate in roles like soloist (singing) and playing instruments. They are also allowed to give testimonies or address the church's women groups. However, their addressing these women groups should only be on matters concerning women. Otherwise, on matters concerning the church, the church leadership, which involves men is the one tasked with addressing or delivering the intended message. In fact, one respondent noted that since he joined the church in late 70's, he has never seen a woman pastor or deacon in LBC. Men normally occupy all the positions.

Khabelwa (OI, 8/7/09) argued that the question of why LBC does not allow women pastors or leaders has its foundation in the Bible. He wondered why some Christian churches are eager to do what Christ himself did not do. To qualify this position, he argued that in choosing his disciples, Christ had 12 men (Luke 6:14-16), and when he sent out the 72, they were all men (Luke 10:1). He clearly pointed out that the Bible does not allow for women pastors. He pointed out 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:34-35, 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:1-2 and Titus 1:6 as some of the verses which clearly point out on male church leaders. Akweya (OI,6/7/09), agreed and went philosophical. He contested the argument of Ramsay (1913) and Brown (1977) that Paul gave the advise to women to keep silence in the churches because he was influenced by the culture of his time. True a that may be, Akweya (OI,6/7/09) reasoned, why wasn't the whole house of Israel given that responsibility by God since they were the descendants of Abraham? God chose only the male from the house of Levi (Numbers 4). In a sense, in the OT not all Israel could serve as Priests save for the house of Levi who were chosen and dedicated by God for that purpose. This position fully agreed with Rev. Branham who argued that God does not change his ways (Branham,1963). In his message ' The Evening Time Messenger' he asserts;

And the infinite God never changes his program. He must always stay with what he started with, that is the reason we can have confidence in what he says. He cannot change. If he saved a man on the basis of faith in God, the next man will have to be saved the same way.

That once he (God) has done something in a certain way, if he has to do the same thing again, he is bound to do it the way he did it the first time. He did not appoint them apostles then and he is not about to appoint them now.

Supporting the view that women ought to learn in silence in LBC churches and by extension, all Christian Churches, Kamau (OI, 9/8/10) argued that the pronouncements of God transcend all cultures. That the Almighty God as revealed by Rev. Branham is not bound by any situation, culture or season. He remains God; the unchanging one (Branham, 1963). Nandi (2001) had argued that the Bukusu culture did allow for women leaders because of the nature of their bodies. Ong'injo (2006) had echoed the same thing arguing that the culture from which Christianity arose (Jewish, Roman and Greek) did not allow for women leaders. Mbiti (1969), on the other hand, argued that in most Traditional African Communities, the male gender took the lead in all spheres of leadership agreeing with the sentiments above, Akaranga (OI, 11/10/10) quoted Isaiah 3:12 thus;

As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them; O my people they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.

He added that in the Garden of Eden when the woman took to the 'pulpit' and preached the word of God to Adam, a whole generation was lost and became what St. Augustine called 'Massa damnata' or Mass of perdition. He pointed out that the gospel she preached that day was from the devil because in Satan's kingdom, just like Koech & Kaniaki (1991) had pointed out in literature

review, women take the lead. If this was what transpired then, it means that humanity shares some aspects that are common to all. If the main religions of the world (Christianity and Islam) traditionally forbade women leadership, a fact that seem to agree with most cultures, then there must be something to it that this study is now revealing.

On enquiring whether women are allowed to be pastors, the respondents gave a unanimous response of disagreement. One respondent argued that according to the teachings in the Bible, women are not allowed to lead men or dress indecently hence their position. To substantiate another respondent, quoted the Bible: 1 Corinthians 11:13-15; 1 Timothy 2: 9; and Titus 2:5. Additionally, another respondent said that 1 Timothy 2:12 also prohibited women leaders in the church.

The study established that Branham had strict attitude towards women leadership and presentation in the church. Branham was not only opposed to women leading, but also opposed to women applying make-up, keeping short hair, dressing indecently, and disobeying their husbands. He argued that 1 Corinthians 11:13-15 advised against women keeping short hair, 1 Timothy 2:9 advised against dressing in a manner that is not modest, and that 2 Kings 9:30 discouraged the application of make-up. He also argued that the matter of women obeying their husbands was not negotiable for believers as it was clearly stipulated in the Bible e.g. in Colossians and in Titus 2). This position concurred with Ryrie (1978) who opined that Clement of Rome held a similar position. Clement, Ryrie (1978) contends that women should cherish their own husbands, obey and manage their households and not lead in the Church. This position seems to a large extent agree with Paul in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:11-12. Clement of Alexandria held a similar view by contending that women are being destined for childbearing and housekeeping. Clement therefore understood Paul to mean that a woman's

place is the home and that headship means that a woman cannot lead. He also added that 1 Timothy 2:12 disapproved women preachers in the church (Branham, 1965a).

Concerning whether women were allowed to sing, testify, prophesy, and speak in tongues, Branham held that they could do those activities but not preach. His argument was, whatever women engaged in at the church should not be seen to usurp men's powers. As such, they could only do tasks, which were gifted to them by God and did not offend their husbands or men leaders (Branham, 1965b). Church Father Tertulian, according to Talbert (1987) believed that the command to keep silent in the church prohibited women from prophesying. He asserted that this was because the devil used a woman as a gateway to bring death into the world.

These findings show that in LBC, women are not allowed to hold significant leadership positions. The only roles where their leadership is acceptable are those that are inferior (according to men), those involving leading fellow women, and those that men cannot do. The findings also show that as per the teachings of Branham, women are less able to lead. This, of course disagrees with the submissions of Scofield (1996) that given that women can prophesy, it means they can preach hence can be church leaders-bishops and pastors. Generally, the findings show that Branham's teachings concurred with those by Byrne (1999) and Raab (2000) while opposed those by Anglican Church of Australia (2012) and McGuckin (2010).

#### **4.4 Objective 3: The Influence of Rev. Branham on LBC**

The third objective investigated the influence Rev, Branham has had on the LBC churches in Kenya. The collected findings indicate that all respondents agreed that Rev. Branham significantly influenced their belief and way of life. For instance, majority of respondents argued that in most LBC churches in Kenya, the Sunday service begins with the faithful entering the

church quietly to take their seats as they listen to recorded sermons of the late Rev. Branham. This often played on radio tape recorders. Displayed on the walls of the churches are pictures of the late Rev. Branham. More significant of them is the picture of the late Rev. Branham taken in Sam Houston, Texas, bearing a halo of light above his head (Fig. 2 pg39), the “supernatural Cloud” on Mt. Sunset (Fig.4 pg. 84), and the baptismal service on R. Ohio in June 1933. From the service leader to the preacher of the day, frequent quotes from the message books of the late Rev. Branham are made. This is done alongside the Bible with an amazing level of agreement. The preaching is primed to dovetail with the sermons and themes of Rev. Branham. Gwandar



This ring-shaped cloud, at least 26 miles high and 30 miles across, appeared over Arizona, U.S.A., February 28, 1963, and is referred to by Brother Branham throughout these Messages on the Seven Seals.

*Figure 4: The Supernatural Cloud that appeared on Mt. Sunset in Arizona U.S.A, February 28, 1963*

**(Source: The Revelation of the Seven Seals; 1967)**

(OI, 6/10/10), argued that indeed Rev. Branham was the 7<sup>th</sup> Angel promised of God in Revelation 10:7 thus;

But in the days of the voice of the 7<sup>th</sup> Angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

Another respondent, a church leader, argued that most LBC believers base their practices and general behavioral patterns on the teachings of Rev. Branham, which are found in the book called *Conduct, Order and Doctrine* (C.O.D). In this book, Rev. Branham has attempted to answer various life and doctrinal questions sent to him by various people across the world.

A closer look at the teachings of Branham in comparison with what is taught at LBC churches reveals that Branham's teachings are a significant foundation upon which the doctrine and teachings of LBC are based. Members of LBC strictly follow the teachings of Branham and believe that he was the only prophet of the century directly sent to them by God. Some respondents even got emotional while sharing some of the reverend's teachings. These findings indicate the significant influence Rev. Branham has on some of the Pentecostal churches like LBC. The findings concur with Hallonwenger's (1972) observation that Branham's influence to the Pentecostal movement and to other ministers was beyond measure and unprecedented.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The findings show that LBC originated in Kenya coincidentally and has quickly spread to over 350 branches with about half a million adherents in the republic of Kenya. This was made easy due to the infiltration of books containing the message of Rev. Branham; the translations of the same into Kiswahili and the apocalyptic appeal of the message of Rev. Branham to the people. It was also established that the teachings of LBC are different to those of other Pentecostal

churches in Kenya hence, they are controversial. The findings also showed that LBC believers focus or base more on the message that Rev. Branham wrote, whether audio or written messages.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the summary of the findings the researcher collected, the conclusions drawn from those findings and the recommendations the study makes. The chapter also presents the recommendations for further study to fill outside-the-scope gaps identified by this research.

#### **5.2 Summary of Findings**

##### **5.2.1 Objective 1: The Origin and Quick Spread of LBC**

It was established that LBC was registered in Kenya on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1975. The movement began in Kenya coincidentally. However, it was largely due to infiltration of Rev. Branham's message book in the country coupled with their translation into Kiswahili. Later in 1984, the Branham family comprising of Joseph, Rebecca and Billy Paul Branham visited the country and helped set up a branch of the Voice of God Recording library in Nairobi. This library has played a pivotal role in the distribution of Rev. Branham's message books across the country.

It was also established that LBC spread rapidly in Kenya because of the strong prophetic message the movement had. The message of Rev. Branham dovetailed with the Bible and prophecy. This greatly convinced many people upon getting in contact with the messages. Many of these people were amazed at the ability of Rev. Branham to line up scripture one after another and create a running theme from Genesis to Revelation that was hitherto, hidden. This made the Bible become to many people like how Mbiti (1986) had stated, a new book.

### **5.2.2 Objective 2: The Investigation of the Controversial Teachings of LBC**

The study found out that Rev. Branham's teachings on the original sin was controversial. The main controversy arises from the interpretation of what the tree was, what the fruit was, and who or what the serpent was. The findings showed that the woman-Eve was the fruit tree and the serpent was not a literal crawling reptile but a mammal-like creature that committed adultery with the woman leading to the birth of Cain.

Concerning the Godhead, the study found out that Rev. Branham's teachings explain that there is only one God manifested in three offices of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Branham's teachings on Baptism emphasize that baptism must be by immersion in much water in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts,2:38) and not father, son and the holy spirit.

Concerning marriage and divorce, LBC holds the teaching as espoused by Rev. Branham that marriage is between one man and one wife. However, in some of his teachings Rev. Branham seemed to root for polygamy arguing that God allowed it after the fall of man in Genesis 3.

LBC's stand on women based on the teachings of LBC is that women are supposed to learn in silence (Branham, 1965) and they are not allowed to preach or usurp authority over men.

### **5.2.3 Objective 3: The Influence Rev. Branham has on LBC**

The third objective investigated the influence Rev. Branham has had on the LBC churches in Kenya. The collected findings indicated that Branham's teachings significantly determine how and what is taught in LBC churches. The findings also show that members of LBC strictly follow the teachings of Branham and believe that he was the only prophet of God to this age. The study also established that all his believers in Kenya look at him as the messenger of God and not God himself.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The study concludes that LBC begun in Kenya coincidentally. Rev. Branham's messages played a crucial role in the origin and growth of LBC churches in Kenya. Contrary to the foundation of other Pentecostal churches that depend on missionaries and mission work, LBC's start and growth was based on the messages alone. As much as the origin of LBC was significantly shaped by Rev. Branham's messages, mission work, evangelism, and conventions were instrumental in the spread and growth of the movement across the nation. The translation of Branham's message into Swahili also played a good role in the growth of LBC churches. It is also concluded that the factors that significantly led to the spread of Christianity are similar to those that are responsible to the spread of LBC in Kenya.

On the second objective, concerning the controversial teachings of LBC, the study concludes that Branham's teachings on the original sin which LBC has consequently adopted, is not only controversial, but also, difficult to understand. However, a keen study of the scriptures they quote seem to illuminate the question of the original sin in their favor. There is need for a deeper exegesis here.

It is also concluded that LBC's teachings on the Godhead is that God is one and manifests Himself in three offices of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. That God is a spirit which operated in the Father before the birth of Jesus; is the spirit of truth which is the word of God which in the beginning was God (John 1:1); and was made flesh and dwelt among men (John1:14)-Jesus Christ, and is the comforter (Holy Spirit) (John 14:18), that came upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost(Acts,2).

On Baptism, the study concluded that LBC's baptism is in much water in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and not, Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26), On marriage, LBC's teachings hold that marriage is a holy union between one man and one woman. Polygamy was only allowed in nature after the fall of man. Additionally, the study concludes that LBC's teachings hold that women should not serve in Church or appear to compete for leadership with men since the scriptures do not permit them.

On the influence Rev. Branham has on LBC, the study concludes that the foundation of LBC and its growth significantly depended on Branham's message. Additionally, Branham's messages give foundation to how and what is taught in LBC churches. Members also follow Branham's messages keenly and are almost fanatical in their adherence to him. However, it was also observed that though the movement's teachings elicit a lot of controversy, they have an amazing continuity with scripture and history. The need for deeper exegesis of these teachings is welcome.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

Given that the spread of LBC was very widespread when Branham's messages were translated to Swahili, the study recommends that more messages by Rev. Branham be translated further to local dialects to increase reach and growth of the movement. However, the messages should be availed with the necessary criticism so that people reading or listening to them can be able to make objective judgment as to whether to believe in them in totality or in part or whether to reject it altogether.

The study recommends that scholars on Pentecostal teachings take center stage in a thorough objective study of the controversial teachings of LBC with a view of shedding more light for the benefit of the Kenya people and the growth of the gospel.

Members of LBC should also take responsibility and educate themselves more on the teachings of Branham *vis a vis* what the Bible teaches. This education should have a goal of enabling members being able to defend well their beliefs based on the true Word of God. Additionally, the members ought to appreciate the fact that Branham was human, hence appreciate that there are things in which he probably made errors. This will make them objective followers of Branham's teachings rather than ignorant ones.

Throughout history, leaders (both secular and religious) have significantly influenced the people they lead. That Rev. Branham was a significant religious leader is no doubt. He like other world leaders amassed a fanatical following across the world. Some have gone to the extremes to worship him as God, a phenomena that was not observed in Kenya. However, this study found out that members of LBC in Kenya hold with a lot of reverence every word spoken by Rev. Branham. They listen to the tapes and read his message books on a daily basis. This study therefore cautions the followers of Rev. Branham in Kenya to be objective and realize that he was a human being and not God and therefore could make mistakes.

### **5.5 Suggestions for further research**

The study recommends that further research can be done in the following areas;

- i. The causes of schismatic differences in LBC.
- ii. The take of LBC members on their teachings.
- iii. The impact of LBC's teachings on contemporary issues in a rapidly changing world.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PIONEER MEMBERS OF LBC**

**TOPIC: THE ORIGIN AND CONTROVERSY IN THE TEACHINGS OF THE LOCAL BELIEVERS CHURCH IN KENYA**

#### **A] ORIGIN AND QUICK SPREAD OF LBC IN KENYA**

1. When did you believe this message?
2. How did you learn or come to know of the message of Rev. Branham in Kenya?
3. How did LBC come to be in Kenya?
4. What is the approximate membership of LBC in Kenya?
5. How far is LBC spread in Kenya?
6. What factors are responsible for this rapid spread?

#### **B] THE CONTROVERSIAL TEACHING OF LBC**

1. Outline the position of LBC on the following:
  - i) The Godhead
  - ii) Baptism
  - iii) The Original Sin
  - iv) The position of women in the church
  - v) Marriage and Divorce

#### **C] THE INFLUENCE OF REV. BRANHAM ON LBC.**

1. Who was William Marrion Branham?
2. When did you first hear of him?

3. How many of his messages have you read?

4. Do you believe everything he said in those books

## APPENDIX B

### LIST OF RESPONDENTS ( MOST OF THE RESPONDENTS DECLINED TO HAVE THEIR NAMES LISTED)

S/NO	NAME	DATE INTERVIEWED
1.	Jairus Akweya	6/7/09
2.	Wycliffe Khabelwa	8/7/09
3.	Solomon Adagala	9/7/09
4.	Robert Tiyo	8/8/09
5.	Hezekiah Opinyi	9/9/09
6.	Bro. John Kamau	9/8/10
7.	Barnabas Karuiki	5/10/10
8.	Peterson Gwandaru	6/10/10
9.	Bro. Paul	10/10/10
10.	Herman Akaranga	11/10/10

## APPENDIX C

### LBC CHURCH DISTRIBUTION IN KENYA

S/NO	CHURCH DISTRIBUTION IN FORMER PROVINCES	APPROXIMATE NUMBER
1	Western	50
2	Nyanza	25
3	Rift Valley	30
4	Nairobi	15
5	Coast	30
6	Eastern	20
7	North Eastern	10
8	Central	20

*(Source: Kariuki OI 5/10/10)*