The Revival Movement In Uganda: An Evaluation

Rev. James Ndyabahika

Answering critics of the East Africa Revival the author retells the story of this powerful awakening and examines the theology proclaimed by the Revival Movement in Uganda. He examines the teaching of the movement on Christ, conversion, the Spirit and the Word. He concludes that "critics need to be reminded that the revival movement is the work of God. Since Pentecost, God has been using revivals in spreading Christian renewal throughout the world. In this regard, the Revival Movement is not outmoded in our generation."

Introduction

In recent years, the Revival Movement (also known as the East Africa Revival) has been attacked from many quarters. Psychologists have directed their criticism at it saying that it employs emotional and brain-washing tactics; Liberal theologians have condemned it on the ground that its teaching is superficial and that it emphasizes partial truth; and sociologists have accused it of a social negativism.[1]

Although the style of these attacks and accusations seemed harsh and biased they have helped the movement reform some of its less healthy aspects.

Our purpose in this article is to explore four aspects of the Revival movement in Uganda. First we shall briefly look at the historical growth of the Revival Movement that spread through Uganda igniting the country with religious fervour.[2] Secondly we shall discuss the understanding of Jesus Christ and the cross in the revival movement. The *Balokole* (saved ones)[3] that in order to be a Christian, one has to accept Jesus Christ as his or her personal Saviour and this cannot be achieved without a clear understanding of sin, repentance, salvation and daily victorious living.[4] After repentance, they receive new life and go with new joy and fresh testimonies to tell other people about it. In his own way, Bishop Kibira refers to this new experience when he stresses that the only way to

be saved is to "go back" to the Bible and to the Apostolic faith.[5] Thirdly, the work of the Holy Spirit and its impact on the Movement will be noted. Finally the centrality of the Bible in the Revival Movement will be explored. This last point is essential to understand the revival for as Dr. Joe Church reported: "The Bibles were used till they fell to pieces."[6]

The Meaning of Revival

Festo Kivengere, spokesman of the *Balokole* Revival, gave a fitting description when he stated that a revival is not technique. It is a movement that cannot be contained, a renewal within renewal. Revival is an attitude towards the Lord, towards the Bible, towards the fellowship and towards the Spirit.[7] In terms of changed lives, the *Balokole* have acquired a reputation of high moral character for diligence and honesty.[8] Byabazaire adds that Revival is a movement of spiritual re-birth within the Church.[9] When a Church that is slumbering is reawakened, God makes stubborn hearts bow, old things new, kingdoms of darkness are destroyed, and persons of all ages are filled with a new peace.

A Revival is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the individuals enabling them to renew their commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ who in turn commissions them to witness to their country people and share with them the Pentecost experience they have achieved.

Revival renews true holiness. Nothing sinful can co-exist with God's people who experience God's holiness. The emphasis on "holiness" in the Revival Movement originates from the Keswick convention founded in 1875 in Britain in the wake of the Moody Revival.[10] The Keswick Conference became the meeting place for the Evangelicals and its emphasis on Bible Study, evangelism, mission, personal piety and victory over sin had a wide influence not only in Britain but to the world at large. In Britain it represented a profound and clearly identifiable school among the Anglicans. Of this, Stanley has written that it: "implanted in them a hunger for personal holiness and an expectation of revival as a norm which Christians should constantly be seeking to realize."[12] Commenting on Moody's teaching, Anderson says:

> Moody stressed that a man may be converted immediately, instantaneously. A man needs only to believe in Christ; when he believes in Christ, he can see in the Bible the promise, "whoever calls upon the

> name of the Lord shall be saved." So he is sure he is saved. And automatically there is a revolution in his life. The old habits die away.[13]

The Moody and Keswick teaching took for granted a conservative view of the scripture yet explicitly avoided any controversy. Today, the Keswick tradition continues in Uganda at the annual Keswick convention which began here in 1970.[14]

In summary the true marks of revival include: 1) an awareness of God's presence; 2) a new knowledge of the truth of the gospel; 3) a profound awareness of sin leading to deeper repentance and heartfelt embrace of the glorified, living and pardoning Christ; and 4) open and honest fellowship between Christians.[15]

The above marks of a true revival seem to validate the Revival movement in Uganda. Joe Church, a prominent early leader of the revival, adds that at the beginning it was a lay-led movement endeavouring to restore vitality in the Church.[16] Joe Church was representing a Mission which had little "clerical flavour" and never stressed the sacramental side of worship.[17] In fact, there can be no community movement unless the individuals are revived. In this regard, in revival, there are sets of shared convictions, biblical in character and Christian faith in practice. We can find all these features in the Revival which started in Rwanda before it spread first across Uganda, then into Kenya, Tanzania and other parts of Africa and even the world in the early decades of this century.

Historical Development Of The Revival Movement In Uganda

The *Balokole* Revival is not a sect or an independent church. It is not schismatic or subversive ecclesiastically and politically. It is a church movement operating within the Mainline and Evangelical Churches.[18] A review of the story of the Revival movement helps us to see this clearly.

Between 1875-1892, many people had joined the church but apparently without real commitment. They had become Christians because that was a profitable thing to do. Furthermore, the large influx of new members precluded the kind of individual care and nurturing that was possible in the earlier days when Christian believers were only a handful. Although the Church in Uganda was growing, its spiritual foundation was shallow.[20] In this regard, the root of the Revival Movement in Uganda goes back to the days of George Pilkington in the last decade of the 19th century. Pilkington, whose leadership was strongly coloured by the model of D.L. Moody's revival, was converted while a student at

Cambridge University. Although a very young man he became a devoted and dedicated evangelist.

When he came to Uganda in 1890, Pilkington found much he disliked in the Church. For example, he expected the Baganda Churchgoers to abandon *Waragi* (banana liquor), stealing and other non-Christian habits. He believed the mass movement to Christianity could not survive without a deep work of the Spirit and the true conviction of sin and repentance. His fellow missionaries too, were hard to live with. Pilkington was deeply troubled and was contemplating resigning from the mission field unless some dramatic changes took place. He confessed that he used to absent himself from the prayer meetings held amongst the missionaries.

At the beginning of December 1893, Pilkington felt it necessary to withdraw to seek personal renewal. This came after a period of three years of Bible translation" when he retired to the island of Kome in Lake Victoria in order to reconsider his vocation and calling."[19] After a time of prayer, fasting and Bible study, he learnt the great secret of the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit which enabled him to re-dedicate his life to Jesus Christ. Immediately, on his return to Mengo - Kampala, he organised a week-end prayer meeting through which a great Revival broke out.[21] Pilkington and his fellow missionaries began to put things right. Hundreds of people repented of their sins, they re-dedicated their lives to Jesus, and after being re-baptized by the Holy Spirit, they went out to speak to their neighbours about the saving grace of Jesus Christ. One of the most well known Ugandan evangelists was Apolo Kivebulaya who went as a missionary to Mboga in the present Republic of Zaire.[22] Others went to Sudan.[23]

By 1910 Revival had spread through Uganda and spilled over into Kenya, [24] where it was strong among the Anglicans, the Presbyterians and a few Roman Catholics. The impact of this revival was temporary and localized. Despite the initial impact it had on the Church, by the 1920s there were serious weaknesses to be observed in the Anglican Church in Uganda. Commenting on this, Joe Church writes of how

> The crowds of people flocked up to communion on Sunday with no idea what they were doing and how large number of baptised Christians who were going back to Polygamy and witchcraft and to the Worship of evil spirits. Christianity had just become a veneer to cover it all up and in many cases the only difference between pagans and Christians was that the pagans sinned openly and the Christians hid it.[25]

Many factors contributed to this deterioration. The Protestant Church in Uganda was taken as the established religion. According to historical records in Uganda, the Bishop of the Anglican Church ranked third after the Governor and the Kabaka.[26]

Anglican baptism followed by education, became the accepted route to social and political advancement. In the context of intense Protestant and Catholic rivalry, the Catholics' policy of mass baptism prompted the Anglican to follow suit and thus accelerated the spread of "too many dummy Christians" throughout Uganda. No matter how peopled lived, baptism was a ticket to heaven.[27]

Social upheavals also made life very difficult to some people. When the Railway linked Uganda with Kenya, a cash economy substituted the traditional bartering system and people were forced to work. At the beginning, lay evangelists preached the gospel voluntarily. However, as money gripped Uganda, the evangelists began to demand wages saying that "the labourer deserves his wages" (1 Tim. 5:18). Frictions also developed not only between the clergy and the laity, but also among the missionaries over the appointment of Willis as the new Bishop of Uganda.[28] When worldliness crept into the Church it brought in spiritual relapse, drunkenness, immorality, concubinage, belief in witchcraft and ancestral worship. Lastly, when the Church passed into the second generation in the late 1920s, the Churches began to show signs of spiritual malnutrition, stagnation and numerical decline.

The endeavour on the part of the church to revive those who had fallen below the standards of true Christianity centered around the need to be "born again." In this regard, most of the critics of the spiritual decline of Anglican Church in Uganda came from Rwanda Mission of Church Missionary Society which came into being in the early 1920s as an attempt to stand as a conservative evangelical group, committed to challenge modernism, formalism and liberal theology. The CMS Missionary in Uganda did not welcome these self-appointed critics of the Church Missionary Society.

It is important to note that the Rwanda Mission differed significantly from the Church Missionary Society. The evangelical group which held the CMS as their missionary society were alarmed at some of the doctrinal loopholes which allowed liberal theology into the mission. After discussion with the CMS, a decision was reached to form the Rwanda Mission within the CMS. Its members were significantly touched by the Keswick convention and its teaching on holiness. Commenting on this, Stanley says:

> The Rwanda Mission originated in the aftermath of the controversy which resulted in the secession of a large number of conservative evangelicals from the CMS. The Rwanda Mission was anxious to retain its ties with the CMS, but only on condition that its conservative doctrinal basis was safeguarded. The Mission was satisfied that it had received from CMS 'full guarantees' to safeguard the future of the mission "on Bible, Protestant and Keswick lines."[29]

The Bible was taken to be supreme in all matters concerning salvation. All missionaries of the Rwanda Mission were loyal to it and they put their whole trust in it. Their theology was Orthodox, Biblical and Christocentric. These were the people who planted the Church in Kigezi - Uganda.

The growth of the *Balokole* ("Saved Ones") Revival Movement in Uganda

The Revival Movement in Uganda is part and parcel of the Movement widely known as the East African Revival whose origin goes back to Gahini - Rwanda, where two co-workers, a European and an African longed to witness in the Church for Jesus Christ. They were soon joined by others for prayers, fasting, Bible study and walking in light; sometimes in small groups and sometimes in fellowship. A person became a member of this movement by accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour leading to a daily walking in His foot-steps. Assurance of salvation came through a deep religious experience which resulted in spontaneous confession of sins. Expressions such as running, jumping, weeping, trembling and groaning were observed.[30]

The exact starting time of the movement is not clear. Several sources mention 1928.[31] others mention 1929, while others take 1930s as the time of the outbreak of the movement.[32] Barrett, an ardent friend of the Revival, is of the opinion that since 1927, the Revival Movement has been spreading with power.[33] On this note; Kivengere is right when he says that it spilled over across tribal and national boundaries into all parts of Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and Ethiopia.[34] Gehman adds that through the revival teams, the brethren preached from place to place the saving message of Jesus Christ and the movement has remained a force within the life of many Christian churches throughout East Africa.[35]

The movement spread and grew fast before the start of the Second World War in 1939 and after it in 1940s. From Rwanda and Uganda teams of the Revival Movement carried the saving message to a thirsty world: South Africa (1944), Great Britain (1953), France and Switzerland (1953), Israel (1953) and Brazil (1958).[36] Those who did not become missionary evangelists carried out their missionary outreach in schools, homes, market places, parks, prisons and other places where people were gathered.

It is significant to note that the Revival Movement which has continued to spread did not become a separate sect. The *Balokole* have remained exemplary Christians within the Church except in some parts of Kenya and Tanzania. In the Anglican Church of Uganda, the credit goes to the great wisdom of Bishop Stuart who prevented an external breaking of the Revival from the Church. The *Balokole* and non-*Balokole* came to recognise and accept the Movement as part and parcel of the Church for the sake of unity. The *Bazukufu* (re-awakened) in Buganda and the Trumpetors or Praisers in West Nile have remained as the "salt" and the "light" within the Anglican Church of Uganda. The use of the metaphor "salt" is not difficult for the *Balokole* to understand. Jesus Christ defined it as one of the main spiritual features of his followers who were commissioned to go into the world to preach the "good news" about the coming of the Kingdom of God. The ability of salt to prevent good things from spoiling and to make them tasty corresponds to the Christian vocation to bring the world to a healthy moral state and to purify it from all evil and decay through works inspired by the Holy Spirit. A Christian who abides in the power of the Holy Spirit possesses a tremendously auspicious and grace-creating energy. Thanks to the "salt" (Matt. 5:13); "light" (Matt. 5:14); "good leaven" (Matt. 13:38); spiritual beauty; truth; and holiness which have penetrated into human society, transforming many souls and making people worthy members of the Church, of their nations and of the world as a whole.

In terms of duration, the Revival Movement continues to this day as a movement of renewal in the Church. Over the years, the movement has given a lead in the creation of African Christian hymns, making use of traditional patterns of singing with a variety of instruments. Although the Movement faced challenges and threats over the years, no doubt it is God's work. God who started it will, no doubt, bring it to completion.

General characteristics of the *Balokole* Revival

The general characteristics of the *Balokole* Revival are not far from those found in almost all other pietistic movements. The *Balokole* believe that the essence of Christianity consists in a personal relationship of the individual with God. They assert that one should receive personal assurance of salvation through the power of the Holy Spirit. They are against drinking beer, smoking, immodest dress and excessive ornamentation of the body. They emphasize the second birth and the fellowship between those who share such experiences. They believe in the priesthood of all believers. They have created three more distinctive characteristics; repetitive singing in choruses and dancing; public confessions of sin; and giving testimonies wherever they happen to be at any time.[37] Another trademark of Revival is "walking in the light" by which is meant both a following of the word of God as well as being transparent to one another. For members of the Revival this was the solution for exposing the deceitfulness and subtle attacks of the devil. Transparency, is a process of constant cleansing in the precious blood of the lamb of God. Ngorogoza gave his correct observation when he stated that some of the people who feared to repent shook until they lost their balance.[38]

Christ And Conversion In The *Balokole* Revival

Phrases such as "Jesus touched me" ,"I have accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour" or "I am saved" are frequently on the lips of the *Balokole* Brethren.[39] The Revival Movement attempts to be Biblical and Christocentric in its teaching and preaching (John 3:16, Eph. 2:6-10). It emphasized the descending line that God comes in Jesus Christ and the ascending line that humanity is brought to God by Jesus Christ. Outside observers who are familiar with the Movement have been impressed with its orthodoxy and Christocentric tendencies. Fallers in 1964 observed that the *Balokole* Revival Movement was a Movement "bent upon rescuing the Church from decadence and worldliness."[40] God who is holy is uncompromisingly opposed to sin. By sin, people are tainted and alienated from God in time and eternity. However, when they repent, they are restored to the family of God.

The *Balokole* teaching on sin, repentance and public confession offers a spiritual release, powerful enough to enable the people in Uganda to make an uncompromising break with their traditional beliefs and practices. The message

of revival makes it clear that sin could be removed by the blood of Jesus. Concepts such as "Calvary love", forgiveness and salvation are prominent in their preaching and teaching. These motifs come out more clearly in the Conventions. The Conventions have been the source of great spiritual inspiration for many thousands of Christians. A theme for the Convention is chosen according to the prevailing needs or problems of the country and the preachers centre their messages along the theme. The first three conventions held in Kabale every ten years since 1935 had only one theme, "Jesus Satisfies", as a statement (1935), as a question mark (1945), and as an exclamation mark (1955).

Let it be stressed that to the *Balokole*, the cross of Christ is a place of humility. Jesus at the cross defeated Satan and met the needs of the world. Jesus on the cross brought mankind back to the depth of the divine milieu. The cross brought reconciliation between people and God and between fellow human beings. "Once we have fully grasped the meaning of the cross, we are no longer in danger of finding life sad and ugly."[41] In this vein, when Jesus forgives people their sins, he works spiritual changes that lead to good physical effects. The work of Christ also stresses the eschatological hope, namely, the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the advent of God's judgement.

Conversion comes through repentance of sins and personal faith in Jesus Christ as a means to personal salvation. Salvation is conceived in spiritual terms as an attainment of eternal life in heaven. Tom Tuma asserts that Salvation was the central teaching in the early periods of the Church in Uganda. This doctrine was understood as the acceptance of Christianity followed, on their death by going to heaven. He went on to say that "Heaven was always contrasted with hell which was said to be the place where the non-Christians would go to be burned by an everlasting fire."[42]

While Samuel Kibicho is of the opinion that there is salvation outside of Christ through African Traditional Religion,[43] the *Balokole* believe that this is contrary to Biblical teaching. Together with other Evangelicals they emphasize that salvation is not found partly or fully outside Christ.[44] Salvation in Christ is a gift. God in Christ makes provisions for it.[45] In this regard, there is no other way to salvation. As Peter puts it: "Salvation is in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). From the beginning to the end salvation is the work of God's grace, through Christ. God came to humanity (Jn. 3:10) in order that humanity may be brought to God. It is a primary axiom of the *Balokole* that it is God who saves. In this vein, the prophetic Christ of Islam, the revolutionary Christ of Liberation Theology or the

silent Christ of African Traditional Religion is not recognised as the Saviour of the world.[46]

According to *Balokole* understanding, Salvation means a close relationship with God through Jesus Christ. In Magesa's words: "Salvation is like an open door leading into a room of festivity, or an avenue leading to a garden of fulfillment and contentment."[47] This is in agreement with the words of our Lord, Jesus Christ who said "I am the door, if any one enters by me he will be saved, and he will go in and out and find pasture" (Jn. 10:9). Understanding salvation as a once for all event contradicts Biblical teaching. Salvation may be understood in a progressive form: salvation as a past event (we were saved), as a present experience (we are being saved) and as an injunction that takes into account the future dimension (we shall be saved). If the past, present and future aspects of salvation are not strongly emphasized, *Balokole* revival is endangered. Salvation goes forward in a growing knowledge of God and enjoyment of his fellowship.[48] Admittedly, people are saved through Christ alone. Schonherr speaks to the same point when he says, "There is no other way of salvation, no African, Asian, American or European way, because there is no other Saviour beside Christ."[49] The point is that, the work of Christ can be understood only in the context of creation, fall, incarnation, death, resurrection and consummation (Jn. 1:-4; Jude 24; Lk. 1:26-38; Jn. 24:25-31). Christocentric revival recapitulates these aspects of Christ's life, actualizes the Church and anticipates the Kingdom.

A highly distinctive greeting of the *Balokole* is Christocentric in nature: the opening words of the chorus *Tukutendereza Yesu* (We praise you Jesus). This is faith in and through Jesus Christ. The greeting is usually followed by singing the entire chorus which is always in the Luganda language.

Tukutendereza Yesu (We praise you Jesus)
Yesu Mwana gwendiga (Jesus the lamb)
Omusaigwo gunaziza (Thy blood cleanses)
[or Glory, glory hallelujah, Glory, glory to the lamb]
Nkwebaza Mulokozi Oh, the cleansing blood
[I thank you Jesus has reached me].[50]

The *Balokole* have taken this song as their own which is a translation from the English hymn "Precious Saviour, Thou hast saved me." Finally, all the points we have raised cluster together in a single whole in Jesus Christ to tell the gospel story. The gospel has to do with the creation of a good world, its falling away

because of sin, the triumphant destruction of the power of sin and death through the death of Jesus, the re-creation of the world demonstrated by His resurrection and the anticipation of the consummation when the work of Christ will be completed. In a nutshell, this is the gospel that the *Balokole* emphasize, a gospel of substitution for sins and hope for the world. Without Christ, none is right with God and none has the right to come near God (Jn. 1:18). The sinner is made just because of the salvation event on the cross. In light of these, the Cross is the focal point of salvation.

The Holy Spirit In The Revival Movement

Although there has been some excesses in the course of the Revival in Uganda, the following are some of the distinguishing marks of the work of the Holy Spirit which are clearly present and the writer is able to conclude that what was and is taking place is undoubtedly from the Spirit of God.

Revival is the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on men and women who dedicate themselves wholly to God's service. For this reason the *Balokole* strive to maintain the unity of the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). This means, they take active steps to avoid division and friction between Christians. They refrain not only from being divisive, but also being passive. They strive to take active steps to keep Christians in the unity of the Spirit.[51]

While purification is the work of God's grace in a human soul, sanctification involves cooperation with God and this is impossible unless grace is combined with obedience. According to Kinoti, Christ sets the committed Christians free not only from the bondage of Satan but also from the bondage of harmful habits. Consequently, they cultivate the habit of constant repentance of sin and try to imitate Christ through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. They are saved by Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In actual fact the Holy Spirit creates faith in them. He creates certitude in their hearts on the basis of good and sufficient evidence.[52] They affirm that what is taught by the Holy Scriptures is taught by the Holy Spirit.

The object of the Bible in each of its pages is to point the *Balokole* to Jesus, and the goal is carried out on the subjective level by Jesus' spirit. Jesus said "But when the Counselor comes, who I shall send, to you from the Father, even the spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me" (Jn. 15:26).

The Holy Spirit continues to help them to understand the Bible, to preach the gospel and to pray to God. It is the Holy Spirit who initiates, continues and completes this work in every believer. They remind the mainline churches in Uganda that the main task of the Church of Christ is to bring its members out of the state of the "old nature which belongs to the former manner of life" (Eph. 4:22) to the state of the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness, so that the whole world may be transformed into the dwelling Kingdom of God where God can be everything to everyone (1 Cor. 15:28).

They are aware that the task of teaching and discipling all nations (Mt. 28:19-20) is a very difficult one. Yet by the suffering and death of Jesus Christ they are called and challenged to witness inside and outside themselves and by overcoming evil they promote the expansion of the Kingdom of God.

In their understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit they do not magnify the doctrine of the Holy Spirit that goes beyond the Bible. They do not talk more about the Spirit than about Christ. Their growth in spiritual wisdom and the knowledge of God is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit upon their lives and minds through the scriptures and spiritual wisdom and the knowledge of God is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit upon their lives and mind through the scriptures and no spiritual understanding is possible apart from this activity. The witness of the Holy Spirit is the effectual reason why the Bible has received final authority in all matters of faith and practice by the *Balokole* who are the special children of God.

To be born again with a new heart and a new nature is to be born of the Spirit. This is an inward change and a new birth from above. For example, Festo Kivengere, who was "a notorious drunkard" was rescued by the cross when he received Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour.[53] In this manner, if they testify that they are born again into God's family, then God's Spirit dwells within them.

The Spirit speaks in scripture. In as much as the Holy Spirit is given to the Church, believers must acknowledge the illumination of the Holy Spirit in the life of the whole Church. He gives the mind to see and hear His Word and understand the message effectively. Hearts must be prepared for the reception of divine truth. Weeping and shaking, dancing, singing and others actions are regarded as the outward signs of the work of the Holy Spirit. Emphasizing this, Kivengere said: "Imagine people lying on the ground weeping and crying and shouting and shrinking in the church."[54] The prayer of the *Balokole* is: "Open our eyes that we may contemplate the wonders of your law." (Ps. 119:18).

Briefly stated then, the *Balokole* Revival fellowship is an attempt to restore the New Testament Christianity of the Apostolic Church. Langford-Smith states:

> It would seem that the Spirit is bringing us back to more of a New Testament life and expression; to a simplicity, clarity and boldness in faith and witness, so easily lost in the complexities of ecclesiastical administration and theological research. But much simplicity does not necessarily imply shallowness or immaturity; on the contrary, it may well make possible true spiritual depth and growth.[55]

Among the results of the *Balokole* Revival are: the accession of new members to the churches; increased number of candidates for Church Ministry; a new spirit of missionary work; social purity and sobriety; filthy and indelicate languages disappearing; pure speeches restored; and in place of swearing and blasphemy, one hears prayers and praises. [56]

The Bible In The Revival Movement In Uganda

The fact that the *Balokole* Revival Movement is rooted in the Bible means that the Bible is the major source of their teaching and preaching. In fact the Bible is the most widely read book in Uganda and the most influential document that communicates with people the revealed truth. Without the New Testament the Old Testament is not fully intelligible. The relationship between the two is well summarised in the statement that the Old is revealed in the New and the gate to the Tree of Life closed in the Old Testament is opened forever in the New Testament. Many of the *Balokole*, both in rural and urban areas, have a copy of a well-used Bible. It is the most prized religious symbol in their respective homes. In some homes it is on the top shelf all by itself. If they do not possess a complete Bible, they at least have the New Testament in their own language or in the language they can understand.

Bishop Kivengere stressed that although the Bible was historically and culturally strange to the Africans yet it is the book which has brought more meaningful change than any other book. He went on to say that "it is a book full of revolutionary ideas." If you read it very carefully, you begin to protest against all categories of evil. In it there are such statements as: "hate evil" (Amos 5:15); "flee from evil" Ps. 34:14); or "hate the devil" (James 4:1) or "put to death

earthly passions" (Col. 3:5). He concluded emphasizing that these and many other statements are of revolutionary intent.[57]

All *Balokole* without exception hold to *sola scriptura* the conviction that the Bible alone is the written word of God and the only source of theological information. *Sola scriptura, solas Christus, sola fide* - Scripture alone, Christ alone, faith alone are the watchwords of *Balokole* theology.

The Bible's main purpose is to draw sinners to Jesus as their Saviour (Jn. 3:16), and the *Balokole* need to gaze upon him with such desire that through the Holy Spirit he comes alive to meet them and fill them with himself. The Bible is God's message to which they go in order to feed their hungry souls. For this reason, it is milk to nourish, meat to invigorate and water to cleanse. Through it God speaks not only to their minds but to their whole personality. Through it they find joy and delight in the warmth of God's love. Through it they encounter the word of God which is challenging, stimulating and exciting. Historical investigations and hermeneutical inquiries have demonstrated to them that scripture is Christocentric. Thus their theology is Biblical, christological, pneumatological and soteriological. In this regard, they do not take the Bible lightly but carefully investigate the text. Christ is the hermeneutical guide to the meaning.

The authority of the Bible is the watershed of their conviction and the basis of their decision making. Scripture constitutes the revelational data and to the *Balokole* it is the only deposit of the divine truth for moral and spiritual welfare of all people. Behaviour patterns are challenged and emotions and wills are touched. Thus, by the scriptures, God speaks to them (Ps. 33:4).

In a very timely reminder, professor Mugambi points out that the Bible contains Good News which cannot be hidden especially when it is about the coming of better times for the people of the world.

> If the Bible had not been the book of God, men would have destroyed it long ago. Emperors, Popes, Kings, Priests and Rulers; all tried their hand on it, they died but the Bible still lives. For this reason, acceptance of this Good News dictates that those who accepted it are compelled to share such message "Euaggelion" with other people. The work of God which they have to share is a stimulus which offers not only healing but also fulfillment and sets believers in search of the living God. Where scripture speaks, the *Balokole* speak because they are ambassadors of God's word. Where scripture is silent, they are silent.[58] This means the

> Bible is the objective standard by which subjective opinions are to be judged. At any rate, it is the best companion of all *Balokole* because of the great impact it has made in their lives. Thus, they respond in worship and praise.[59]

While the Bible has a normative authority shared by nothing else, it does not rule out reason, tradition and conscience. In fact, it is accepted as a library of 66 books which may not be easily understood. [60] As a loaf of bread, the Bible needs to be cut into slices for daily consumption. Spelling out this task more correctly McDowell maintains that there is no book which has been chopped, knived, sifted, scrutinized and villified as has the Bible. He went on and asked what book on philosophy, religion, psychology, classics that has been subject to such mass attack as the Bible? In spite of all these, he concluded that the Bible is still loved by millions, read by millions and studied by millions.[61]

The *Balokole* read it as intelligent people in the modern society. Although it is a library of books with a wide variety of authors and challenging themes, yet behind it lies a single divine author with a single unifying theme. They are aware of the reminder of the Apostle Paul to young Timothy that from childhood he had been acquainted with sacred writings which were to instruct him for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15-17). From a slightly different perspective, it is to this same issue that Martin Luther contended: "just as a mother goes to the cradle only to find the baby, we go to the Bible only to find Christ."[62]

The "*Balokole*" study the Bible and they are frequent users of scripture reading materials and helps. [63] Daily Bible reading is crucial to them because through it they discover the fundamental truths about God. Through it they get their marching orders from the Lord not from the voices of men. They are called upon to defend their faith against oppositions and their chief weapon is the Bible. It is the word of the Spirit with which they combat hostile ideas. In this regard the Bible's inherent beauty and spiritual worth possesses their minds and souls so that their feet are guided by its light and their hands are better equipped for spiritual warfare (Luke 11:28).

They believe that the Bible has a practical purpose and that is moral rather than philosophical or intellectual. They accept also that the supreme purpose of the Bible is not scientific but salvific. Salvation to them is freedom from sin and is understood in terms of holiness and righteousness. At a synod which met on 22 January 1935 at Namirembe, the subject of concern was the necessity of the new

experience and the new birth. Three questions were offered for consideration: 1) What is the cause of the coldness and deadness of the Uganda Church? 2) The Communion service is being abused by those who are known to be living in the sin yet are allowed to partake. What should be done to remedy this weakness? 3) What must be done to bring revival to the Church of Uganda?[64]

In the light of this, all Christians were asked to re-examine themselves and some questions were drawn up for this exercise: 1) Do you know salvation through the cross of Christ? 2) Are you growing in the power of the Holy Spirit, in prayer, in meditation and the knowledge of God? 3) Is there a great desire to spread the Kingdom of God by example, and by preaching and teaching? 4) Are you bringing others to Christ by the individual searching, by visiting and by public witness?[66]

Several people were asked to conduct Missions and to do visitation and witnessing. The response was favourable within the Church of Uganda. And the *Balokole* teams conducted missions at Kako, Hoima and in other places all over Uganda.

A quick glance in the hymn book which was written purposely for the *Balokole* in 1954 reveals the extent to which the Bible is significant in their worship and praise.

Kitabo Kya Ruhanga	Holy Book of God
Ninkikunda ne kyange	I love it because it is mine
Kingambira amazima	It speaks the truth
Kundi amunyabibi.[67]	That I am a sinner

This is not a direct or original translation, but it only depicts the understanding of the Bible by the Movement in Kigezi - Uganda. This hymn is taken from Golden Bells (Hymn 580, tune 349).

In summary, for the Revival brethren the Bible is a living book which speaks relevantly to them in the language they understand. The living Christ in the Bible speaks living words to living persons in living situations. It speaks to them and they do something about it. It convicts them and they repent.[68] For this reason, a regular contact with the Bible is essential and significant to the development of Christian life and Christian programmes. Thus, the Bible is the best companion to the Revival Brethren in Uganda in all circumstances.

Conclusion

Criticisms of the Revival abound. Some accuse it of being out of touch with the times. Others speak of hyper-emotional tactics. Still others state that its teaching and preaching is narrow and that its decisions made during the revival meeting are not genuine and lasting. Such critics need to be reminded that the revival movement is the work of God. Since Pentecost, God has been using revivals in spreading Christian renewal throughout the world. In this regard, the Revival Movement is not outmoded in our generation. On the contrary, there has been more renewal movement and mass evangelism in our time than ever before in human history. The misuse of a method does not necessarily invalidate the method properly utilised.

The writer joins Bishop Kibira in saying; We may only wish that the Lord sustains the East African Christian faith in Him and that the "glory, glory hallelujah" chorus sung all over that country may be sung until the Lord of the Church comes.[69]

Notes

[1]Eric Routley, "Evangelism and Modern Man" *Christian Century* (1959) 799-801; W.G. Mcloughlin, "The Revival of Revivalism," *Christian Century* 76 (1956) p. 743; Adrian Hastings, *A History of African Christianity:* 1950 -1975. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) p. 53: A. Miller, "When Revival Strikes" *Leadership* (1991) p. 24-25.

[2]Benon Turyahikayo-Rugyema, *Philosophy and Traditional Religion of the Bakiga in South West Uganda.* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1983) p.109-110.

[3]This word *Revival* is central in the vocabulary of the *Balokole*, a Luganda word for "Saved One" or *Abaka* a Kinyarwanda word for those ones on fire. *Abaishemwe* a Runyankole word for the "Saved Ones." Other areas in East Africa have similar words relating to the "Brethren," e.g. *Jo Mowar* in Luo, *Wakufu* in Swahili, *Ahonaku* in Kikuyu. The writer is adopting the now widely used word *Balokole* for all the "Saved Ones."

[4]Hannah T. Kinote, "Christology in East African Revival" in J.N.K. Mugambi and Laurenti Magesa (eds), *The Church in African Christianity.* (Nairobi: Initiatives) p. 67; Eresto Muga, *African response to Western Religion.* (Nairobi: East Africa Literature Bureau, 1975) p. 150.

[5]Josiah Kibira, *Church Clan and the World* (Uppsala, 1974) p. 99.

[6]Joe Church, *Quest for the Highest.* (Exeter, Paternoster Press, 1939) p. 114.

[7]Festo Kivengere, "The Revival that was and is" *Christianity Today.* 20 (1976) p. 874.

[8]Richard Gehman, "East African Revival," *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* (1986) p. 36; Mark Winter, "The *Balokole* and the Protestant Ethic - A critique," *Journal of Religion in Africa* (1983) p. 39.

[9]Deogratias M. Byabazaire, *The Contribution of the Christian Churches to the Development of Western Uganda 1894-1974.* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1978) p. 45.

[10]J.B. Webster, *The African Church among the Yoruba.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964) pp. 43-44.

[11]W.B. Anderson, *The Church in East Africa 1840-1974.* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1988) p. 37.

[12]Brian Stanley, "The East African Revival - African Initiatives within a European Tradition" *Churchman* 92 (1978) p. 10.

[13]Anderson, p. 37.

[14]Anne Coomes, *Festo Kivengere* (Eastborne: Monarch, 1990) p. 264.

[15]Dorothy E. W. Smoker, "Decision-making in East Africa Revival Movement Groups" in David B. Barrett, *African Initiatives in Religion* (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1971); Harbert Carlson, "The Holy Spirit and Revival," *Churchman* (1964) p. 82.

[16]Church, p. 194.

[17]Coomes, p. 43.

[18]Catherine Ellen Robins, "A study of Social change: Sectarian Withdrawal in the *Balokole* Revival in Uganda," *Occasional Research Papers.* Makerere University (1978) p. 5

[19]Roland Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa.* (London: Longmans, 1952) p. 184.

[20]Stanley, p. 6

[21]Tom Tuma, *Building a Uganda Church.* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1980) p. 33.

[22]John V. Taylor, *The Growth of the Church in Buganda.* (London, 1958) p. 100; N.Q. King, "The East Africa Revival Movement and Evangelism," *Ecumenical Review* 20 (1968) p. 159.
[23]E. Twesigye, "The Revival Movement of Uganda up to 1914," *Occasional Research Papers.* Makarere University (1975) p. 5.

[24]F.B.Welborn, "The Uganda Church and other Christian Movements" in Tom Tuma and P. Mutibwa. *A Century of Christianity in Uganda* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1978) p. 128.

[25]Church, p. 21.

[26]Kevin Ward, "Catholic Protestant Relations in Uganda: A Historical Study," *African Theological Journal* (1984) p. 178.

[27]James Katarikawe and John Wilson, *East Africa Revival Movement.* (M.Th. Thesis: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1976) p. 24.

[28]Richard Gehman, "East Africa Revival" *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* (1986) p. 37.

[29]Stanley, p. 10.

[30]Max Warren, *Revival and Enguiry.* (London, 1954) p. 118-121.

[31]M. Rostedt, "The Revival Movement in East Africa," *Africa Theological Journal* (1982) p. 66.

[32] Church, p. 22; Hastings, p. 52; Ward, p 113; Rugyema, p. 103.

[33]Barret, p. 82

[34]Kivengere, p. 875.

[35]Gehman, p. 44.

[36]Kinoti, p. 61.

[37]D.J. Stenning, "Salvation in Ankole," in Mr. Foster and G. Deitrlein, *African Systems of Thought.* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965) p. 258.
[38]Paul Ngorogoza, *Kigezi and its people.* (Kampala: East African Literature Bureau, 1969) p. 118.

[39]Magesa, p. 238.

[40]Lloyd, Fallers, *King's Men.* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964) p. 136.

[41]John T.B. Franzen, *Real faith for real people in a real world.* (Washington: Shiver Mountain Press, 1977) p. 136.

[42]Tuma, p. 61.

[43]Samuel G. Kibicho, "The continuing of the African Conception of God into and through Christianity with the Kikuyu Conception of *Ngai* as a case study," *Utamaduri: Journal of African Studies in Religion* (1980) pp. 9-19, especially pages 1 and 18.

[44]Norvald Yri, "Luther on Biblical Salvation: The hermeneutical key in his understanding of the Gospel," *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* (1983) p. 16.

[45]Tokunboh Adeyemo, "Is Everyone Saved?" in *Lion Handbook of Christian Belief,* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1982) p. 418.

[46]Laurenti Magesa, "I am Saved: The Ethical Dimension," *African Ecclesial Review* (1990) p. 81.

[47]N. Langford-Smith, "Revival in East Africa," *International Review of Missions* (1954) p. 81.

[48]Editorial: "What is African Evangelical Theology?" *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* (1983) p. 2.

[49]Hartmat Schonherr, "Concept of Salvation in Christianity," *African Theological Journal* (1983) p. 162.

[50]John S. Mbiti, *Bible and Theology.* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1964) p. 136.

[51]Church, p. 110.

[52]Kinoti, p. 67.

[53]Coomes, p. 102.

[54]Kivengere, p. 875.

[55]Langford-Smith, p. 81.

[56]Byabazaire, p. 45.

[57]Festo Kivingere, "Once again I am up and about: Praise Him", *African Voice,* (January-February 1987) p. 1.

[58]J.N.K. Mugambi, *The Biblical Basis for Evangelization* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1989) p. 7.)

[59]Kivengere, p. 875.

[60]Johanna Mbogori, "How the Bible is used in Africa", in Kenneth Y. Best (ed), *African Challenge.* (Nairobi: All African Conference of Churches, 1975) p. 112.

[61]John McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Vol. 1. (Bernadino: Here's Life Publishers, 1972) p. 23.

[62]David Field, "The Bible and Christian Living" in David and Pat Alexander, *Concise Bible Handbook.* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1973) p. 12.

[63]Zeb Kabaza, "Lessons from the East African Revival," *Involvement* 1 (1991) p. 24.

[64]George K. Mambo, "Revival Fellowship (Brethren) in Kenya" in David B. Barret (ed) *Kenya Church Handbook.* (Nairobi: Evangelical Publishing House, 1963) p. 116.
[65] Gehman, *op. cit.*

[66]Patricia St. John, *Breath of Life.* (London: Norfolk Press, 1971) p. 114.

[67]Hymn, p. 94.

[68]Kivengere, 1976:875.

[69]Kibira, p. 57.