

THE TRUTH IN KENYA

ITS BEGINNINGS AND GROWTH

November 1957 marked a turning point in my `Christian' life. I had been a Salvation Army Officer for many years, and was quite sure, of course to my own peril, that I knew enough about the Bible. Day in, day out I had preached about how wonderful it would be, when we enter into the mansions prepared for us in heaven - where everything good prevails, where there shall be no tears, no sighing, no death and many other "no's". I discovered how wrong I had been when I met Brother Percy Lander.

Brother Percy Lander had come to Kenya to call on a Bible student in the Mombasa area of Kenya, whose name was John Brown. Brown worked in a Post Office and was there when Brother Lander called. He was unable to leave his duties, but knew me as a religious man and suggested that Brother Lander should talk to me until Mr. Brown was able to close his Post Office. Brother Lander introduced himself to me and I saluted him in Salvation Army style. Small in stature, I concluded Brother Lander was a humble and wise old man. He spoke to me of his church - the Christadelphians, a long, strange, difficult name, as it then was to me. He insisted they were Bible believers - I thought I was too. When he mentioned what he styled `The things we stand for', I was indeed embarrassed. Brother Lander realised I had been interested in his talk and mentioned his beliefs. Among them were: there is one God; One Lord Jesus Christ; One Faith, One Hope, One Baptism (through water); and crowning them all, that Jesus was coming back again to set up his kingdom on the earth.

The last was to me obviously a white lie: how could I believe that? How could I accept the idea that I was not going to heaven? I was an Officer of the Salvation Army; I had taught this and believed it for many years. I felt uneasy in their company. Brother Lander however, didn't take chances. Taking out his old Bible, he quoted from it. I thought he was using a different Bible from mine, but with surprise I discovered it was the same as the one I used. I felt very much fooled. The conversation went on for three hours. When it came to an untimely end I felt more confused than I had ever been. Mr. Brown showed no further interest, but Brother Lander promised to send me some literature, which he did in December 1957. I could not make up my mind, whether to join this strange church in good time, and a period of silence followed until 1962. In that year I tried to contact Brother Lander again, but got no replies. The silence continued but the seed of Truth had been sown, anyway.

In 1968 I found an address in one of the booklets I had received and wrote to Sister Marjorie Hall. She put me on the Bible Correspondence Course, and when I finished it she asked me to see Brother Eddie Johnson, who was living in Uganda. Sister Marjorie wrote to him and in due course we got into touch with each other. We met twice in Nairobi and subsequently in Uganda, where I was baptised on 3 April, 1969. Now that my eyes were opened I started to preach the-Truth, first to my friends in various parts of Kenya. The first to accept were Brother Maundu (Makindu); Brother Kalunda (Mariakani) and Brother David Kilonzo (Mombasa). They were interviewed and baptised in Mombasa by Brother Johnson. Other baptisms followed quite soon, including my wife Florence, my son Epaphras and Brother Njoka (Kitui). When the Johnsons left, there were nearly 60 Christadelphians in Kenya. Now there are nearly 200.

I recall one time Brother Kilonzo and Brother J. Mutunga, who has since fallen asleep, were arrested and gaoled. They were asked for a statement to explain this new sect, who the leader was and its objectives. They referred to me and I was called upon to go

away with some CID officers to explain. The senior officer was a good man. I explained how I had found the Truth, so had left the Salvation Army to follow it, as the Bible requires. At that time I was with the police in Bungoma, but Brother David Kilonzo was in a police cell in Mombasa, 800 miles away. We have not been arrested by the police since.

Ecclesial Up-building

We give thanks to the brothers and sisters who have been to see us in Kenya. So far we have had the following: - Brother and Sister Eddie Johnson, Brother and Sister Stephen Sykes, Brother and Sister Philip Snobelen, Brother and Sister Jerome Loria, and Brother and Sister Leon Shuker. To encourage us we have had visits from Brethren Ron Heath, Peter Watkins, Stan Owen, Hubert Thorneloe, David Rowley, the late Arthur Clarke, Don Munger, Hans Widemann, Leslie Dawes and many others, to all of whom the brethren and sisters are indebted, as well as to others who have not been mentioned. In Kenya we welcome all who can aid us in preaching the word and encouraging us to persevere in the Lord's service. We still need the help of those able to stand up with us and teach.

The organisation is based upon traditional practices. So we have two senior elders - one in Western and the other in Eastern Kenya - and each ecclesia has an elder. There are regular meetings of the Ecclesial Elders and the Christadelphian Body is registered with and accepted by Government. At present there are six ecclesias with 'semi-permanent' buildings in which they meet. The Mombasa and Nairobi ecclesias meet in rented premises. The Webuye meeting has a building under construction and seven other ecclesial groups meet under trees, in the absence of roofed accommodation, to break bread and to preach. The Bungoma ecclesia, of which I am Recording Brother, has 34 members and 31 friends meet regularly for Bible talks and instruction. Two are due to be interviewed for baptism shortly. As I do not have my records by me, I am unable to enlarge on ecclesias and activities elsewhere, but the work goes on.

Welfare - Thanks

On behalf of the Kenya brethren and sisters, I express my thanks to the many who have understood our needs and assisted practically and by prayer. Maybe in countries like ours which are still growing, the needs are commoner and the problems greater; at present we have widows, orphaned children and some disabled members. We are glad to have help with welfare from the CBM.

Literature

To grow in the Truth we have needed and still need literature of various kinds. But I would like to say Thank You to the brethren and sisters (especially Sister Marjorie Hall) who have remembered this need and encouraged us in the work by making preaching and teaching material available to those of us who can benefit by it. It is well used and those who are educated are more effectively able to help those who are not. So we are all built up and encouraged in the study and preaching of the Word.

Bungoma Ecclesia, PHILIP WEKATI Kenya.