

YES, JOHN G LAKE WAS A CON MAN: A RESPONSE TO MARIUS NEL

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ABSTRACT

This response to Marius Nel's 2016 article (in *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* no. 42, 1, 62-85) uses primary source material to refute his claims that John G Lake, the initiator of Pentecostalism in southern Africa, was an upstanding man of God. A wide array of American and South African sources show that Lake invented an extensive but fictitious life story, while also creating a similarly dubious divine calling that obscured his involvement in gruesome killings in America. Once in South Africa, he used invented "miracles" to raise funds abroad for the Apostolic Faith Mission. Before long, he faced many accusations of duplicity from inside his own church.

Keywords: John G Lake; Apostolic Faith Mission; Charles Parham; Parhamite; John Alexander Dowie; Marius Nel

In recent years I have published or put online several articles making the case that John G Lake, the initiator of Pentecostalism in southern Africa and the founder of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), was a fraud.¹ I have argued that Lake's career as a con man began when he was a member of John Alexander Dowie's church in America in the 1890s, and that his astonishingly successful 1908 Pentecostal mission was undertaken to distance himself from killings perpetrated by his Pentecostal sect in Zion, IL. Once in South Africa, Lake and his missionary party used the faith healing techniques that Dowie had perfected to build up the AFM. While doing so, he trained a number of Africans to use these methods, and in doing so inadvertently

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- 1 Morton, B, "'The Devil Who Heals': Fraud and Falsification in the Career of John G Lake, Missionary to South Africa," *African Historical Review* 44, 2 (2012): 98-118; idem, "Shembe and the early Zionists: A Reappraisal," *New Contree* 69 (2014): 73-92; idem, "John G Lake's Formative Years: The Making of a Con Man," https://www.academia.edu/7005594/John_G_Lake_s_Formative_Years_1870-1908_The_Making_of_A_Con_Man.

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set the stage for the explosion of Zionist Christianity across the region as evangelists such as Isaiah Shembe adopted his methods.

In 2016, Marius Nel, who is considered by the AFM to be a major authority on the church's history,² wrote an extensive critique of my work in *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. Nel maintains that my historical methods are “dubious and unacceptable”, that “no primary research was done” and that I have “an unacceptable practice of making conclusions without proof”.³ He repeatedly says that there is not “any evidence” for anything I say about my research on John G Lake. At other times, when he does accept that I have source material, he rejects its impartiality. Nel insists that there is no need for any revision of our view of Lake. In a crucial section of his paper, he outlines the basic features of Lake's career and references Wilford Reidt's *John G Lake: A Man Without Compromise*,⁴ as a source of unimpeachable information. Reidt's biography, along with Gordon Lindsay's *John G Lake: Apostle to Africa*⁵ are the main sources on Lake that Nel has used in his own writings.⁶ Essentially, in his querying of my work, he is maintaining that these two works are both reliable and authoritative.

There is a wide range of issues (apart from John G Lake and research done on this topic) about which Nel and I disagree – some of which will be taken up in passing as specifics are discussed. In essence, our worldviews are too different to be reconciled. I believe that faith healing is simply a complicated technique to stimulate the placebo effect in a religious context, and I have written in detail explaining this viewpoint.⁷ Nel, on the other hand, believes that faith healing is evidence of God's direct response to human prayer. I argue that the Pentecostal movement was created and perpetrated by individuals, whereas Nel believes that the Pentecost was divinely inspired and that numerous miracles accompanied its growth. I maintain that every miracle claimed by John G Lake is bogus, while Nel maintains that “the list of miracles that occurred under his ministry are too numerous to record”.⁸ Overall, I will approach Lake and South African Pentecostalism through a materialist perspective, while Nel uses the theology of the AFM as an analytical tool.

If these differences in outlook are so basic, one may ask what the point would be in responding to the views of Nel. Because Lake is such a crucial figure in the

2 He was commissioned to write the church's history for its centenary in 2008 – I. Burger and M. Nel, *A Fire Falls in Africa: A History of the Apostolic Faith Mission in South Africa, 1908-2008* (Pretoria: Christian Art Publishers, 2008).

3 M. Nel, “John G Lake as a Fraud, Con Man, and False Prophet: A Critical Assessment of a Historical Evaluation of Lake's Ministry,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, no. 42, 1 (2016): 67, 68, 79.

4 W. Reidt, *John G Lake: A Man without Compromise* (Tulsa: Harrison House, 1987).

5 G. Lindsay, *John G Lake: Apostle to Africa* (Dallas: Christ For the Nations, 1972).

6 See Burger and Nel, Chs. 3-4; Nel, 66-8.

7 Author, “John Alexander Dowie and the Invention of Modern Faith Healing, 1882-89.”

8 Burger and Nel, 38.

development of southern African Christianity, I believe it is important for readers to see my viewpoint through a lens that is not distorted by Nel's myopic summarisations. As someone who has been a published historian for two decades, I instinctively seek out new sources of information on any topic that I become interested in. My case is made with new primary sources that Nel seems to be unfamiliar with. Since much of Nel's refutation of my material is based on him asserting the validity of the older Reidt and Lindsay narratives, the bulk of this paper is based on primary sources that show them to be utter fictions.

About five years ago, I began to investigate Lake as I was looking for a topic that connected the state of Indiana (where Lake's mission party was based and where I reside), and Africa. After being drawn to the Lake story, I began to investigate local source material. I started off reading sources such as Reidt and Lindsay, as well as Lake's own writings,⁹ all of which Nel believes are authoritative, but found quickly that the information they contained was unreliable. Lake, I found, was rarely at the places he claimed to be at. Much of his established autobiography was contradicted by material I was examining. What I came to realise was that Lake was consciously fabricating a whole back story about his life and experiences. He began doing this on arrival in South Africa¹⁰ and continued to do so afterwards. After Lake's death in 1935, Reidt and Lindsay, both members of his entourage, continued to perpetuate his legend while engaging in their own faith healing campaigns. They also invented new stories about him. I did not set out to find this, but now see no reason to view John G Lake and his successors as anything other than congenital and extravagant liars.

A quote purportedly made by Cecil John Rhodes about Lake, serves as an example as to why I realised Lake was a charlatan; an example that also illustrates Nel's blind spots:

Cecil John Rhodes: "His message has swept Africa. He has done more toward South Africa's future peace than any man."¹¹

Nel believes that this quote is true, since he cites it word for word in his AFM history.¹² What I would like to ask Nel is this: If your own historical methods are so rigorous, and mine are so "dubious and unacceptable", how could you possibly believe that this quote is legitimate? Cecil Rhodes died in 1902, six years before Lake ever set foot in Africa.

9 Two sources contain most of Lake's own writings: C. Blake, ed., *John G Lake's Writings from Africa* (Xulon Press, 2005); and R. Liardon, ed., *John G Lake: His Life, His Sermons, His Boldness of Faith* (Minneapolis: Kenneth Copeland Publications, 1994).

10 See Blake, 140-50.

11 Liardon, 236.

12 Burger and Nel, 38.

LAKE EXPOSED IN THE AMERICAN PRESS

I start my response to Nel's article by referring to court cases and exposés of Lake's activities following his return to America in 1913.

Lake was twice conclusively shown to have been involved in impersonating other individuals. On the first occasion he was arrested and convicted for impersonating a police officer.¹³ The second instance involved a newspaper exposing Lake for having dressed up as an Arab faith healer. After advertising his services as "Abdul Ben Shinandar", he sought out customers seeking a faith cure. When a newspaper exposed the scam, Lake was publicly humiliated.¹⁴

Another arrest that Lake faced was for fraud. In 1921 he was arrested for selling his church members worthless securities. As one of these members of his congregation said, Lake "used his church work to promote his various mining schemes with the idea of first gaining the confidence of people through the common ground of religion and then selling to the congregation stock in which he was interested".¹⁵

During these same years, Lake claimed to have effected over 100 000 faith healings in the American north-west. Yet a number of these healings were proved to have never occurred. In 1921 Lake repeatedly prayed and laid hands on a girl with a broken leg, and maintained that she had been healed. However, X-rays of the girl showed that her leg was still fractured. Had she not received standard medical treatment, she would have been crippled for life.¹⁶ Later on, in 1924, a girl who testified to having had her hearing restored by Lake was shown not to have been deaf in the first place.¹⁷

These varying reports paint a troubling picture about John G Lake, to say the least. He was willing to defraud his own congregants for money by selling them worthless stocks and bonds. He was willing to say that he had cured severely injured children, even though he had not. Additionally, he was willing to use children to testify to cures that had never occurred. Lake was also willing to dress up as a "Mohammedan" in order to effect faith cures for paying customers, even though he was a Christian.

Starting in the 1890s, continuing through his 1908-13 South Africa sojourn, and for the rest of his life, this same pattern of fraud, deceit, and callousness continued. A wide array of primary sources demonstrate this.

13 "Rev Mr Lake Arrested," *Oregonian*, 25 August 1921.

14 *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 21 and 25 November 1933.

15 "Healers Accused of Blue Sky Fraud," *Oregonian*, 24 July 1921.

16 "X-Ray Belies Healing," *Oregonian*, 27 November 1921.

17 "Grandma Says Girl Made to Hear Wasn't Deaf," *Spokane Press*, 23 July 1924.

LAKE'S EARLY ADULthood

Starting from his arrival in Indianapolis from Chicago in late 1907, through his time in South Africa, and later on, Lake created a whole new autobiography for himself that bore minimal relation to his actual activities. He did this for several reasons. One was to augment his mystique as a Man of God and a faith healer. Additionally, he did it to hide unsavoury details about his past.

Lake claimed that as a young man he attended a Methodist seminary in his wife's home town of Newberry, Michigan,¹⁸ before leaving for Chicago. He said that after his ordination he was offered a pastorate at Peshtigo, Wisconsin, but turned it down to move to the new industrial suburb of Harvey, south of Chicago, where he founded the *Harvey Citizen* newspaper and was its editor.¹⁹

The evidence that he lied about all these events is overwhelming. Most importantly, there is no record of any seminary in Newberry, Michigan, and nor was John G Lake in Newberry at any time between 1888 and 1891.²⁰ His absence in the local newspaper is very telling, since the Methodist church's activities were reported on almost every week. Additionally, John G Lake's name cannot be found listed as a minister in any of the Illinois Methodist Conferences, nor for Methodist conferences in Wisconsin and northern Michigan. Anyone with a cursory knowledge of Methodist practices in this period would know that each Methodist conference, or region, published a full list of its Ministers (including those transferring and prospective ministers "on trial") each year.²¹ Lake is never mentioned. In short, Lake never attended seminary, and he never had a position in the Methodist church in the Wisconsin, Illinois, or Michigan area.

What was John G Lake doing instead? In 1888 a "butcher" named John Lake appears in the Chicago city directory for the first time, and reappeared in 1889. Is this John G Lake? Perhaps. Lake's father was a butcher, so it is conceivable he and his brother Fred (also listed in various city directories as a tailor) moved to Chicago together. The same "John Lake butcher" does not appear in the Chicago directory in 1890, which was roughly when Lake moved to Harvey, Illinois. Lake definitely did live in Harvey, which can be verified from a newspaper notification in mid-1891

18 Nel says that Lake never claimed to have gone to seminary in Newberry, but in fact a letter to the editor, "Science Plus Bible," *Spokane Press*, 16 July 1924, says this. My view is corroborated by Burpeau, *God's Showman: A Historical Study of John G Lake and South African/American Pentecostalism* (Oslo: Refleks, 2004), 27-8.

19 Lindsay, 3; Reidt, 14.

20 *Newberry News* from this period can be viewed on microfilm at the Michigan Library, Lansing MI.

21 Relevant documents from Wisconsin are located at Wisconsin United Methodist Church Archives in Sun Prairie, WI. The Illinois and Michigan records are both online (accessed 18 October 2016): <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008699935>; <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=mecmiconf>

that he was returning to northern Michigan for his summer vacation.²² He was not, however, working for *The Harvey Citizen*, the newspaper he claims to have founded and edited. Having checked all extant copies,²³ I can assert that the newspaper makes no reference to Lake of any kind. He was clearly not the editor, and he is not listed on the newspaper masthead. Nor was he a founding or early member of the local Methodist church in 1891, when he was allegedly considering an offer to take a pastorate in Wisconsin.²⁴ So what was Lake actually doing? In 1914, Lake made reference to roofing and construction work he did while in Harvey,²⁵ so this must have been how he was supporting himself. Lake did not stay long in this Chicago suburb. Instead, he moved back to Chicago, and a “John G Lake”, occupation “carpenter”, is listed in the 1892 city directory. He would reappear in 1893 and 1894 editions as well.²⁶ This is definitely the one and only John G Lake, with no other Chicagoans of his era sharing this name. Moreover, the 1900 census lists his occupation as “carpenter”.²⁷

During this early period in Chicago, Lake was dressing up as a minister. His photo, which can be seen in Kent Burpeau’s biography of Lake,²⁸ shows him dressed up as one with a Bible in hand. Why is he doing this? Since I have demonstrated that he was not, nor could have been, a Methodist minister, then he obviously was impersonating one (as he later impersonated others). My view is that Lake was doing this for John Alexander Dowie. By the early 1890s Lake was associated with Dowie – as he noted: “I knew him from the beginning.”²⁹ During this exact period, John Alexander Dowie was using fake ministers in his faith healing services in Chicago. Dowie typically began his services by having people testify that he had healed them. On many occasions, he also then brought in ministers, doctors, or lawyers to verify the healing testimonies that had been given. In Chicago, for instance, Dowie’s publications show that the “Rev Doc McKaig”, the “Rev Lyman Palmer”, and the “Rev George Wellcome” testified to healings at Dowie’s services in the early 1890s.³⁰ These men are obvious fakes, because they never existed! Modern databases such as *Ancestry.com*, which make use of censuses and a wide range of other demographic data, show that all these so-called men of the cloth never lived in the United States, let alone in the Chicago area. Therefore, since Lake was not a minister but was

22 See R.R. Donnelly & Co, *Chicago City Directory*, 1887-9; *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, 5 July 1891, mentions Lake as a Harvey resident. Chicago city directories can be viewed at the Chicago Public Library.

23 The *Harvey Citizen* can be read on microfilm at the Illinois State Library in Springfield, IL.

24 See *Our History, 1890-1968* (Harvey: First United Methodist Church, 1968).

25 Burpeau, 26.

26 R.R. Donnelly & Co, *Chicago City Directory*, 1892-4.

27 US Census 1900, Michigan, Chippewa, Sault Ste Marie, Ward 02, District 002, entry for John G Lake.

28 Burpeau, frontispiece.

29 Liardon, 217.

30 *Leaves of Healing*, 1st Series. (1891): 226–7; 264, 269–71.

dressing up as one, he must have been impersonating one for Dowie, particularly since he was a member of his church at the time. It is worth noting that Lake himself used impersonators to give healing testimonies at his own services throughout his career.³¹

As the 1890s progressed, Lake continued his association with Dowie after he left Chicago for his hometown of Sault Ste Marie, Michigan. His family members are listed many times in Dowie's publications from 1895–1902 in connection with various healings that they claimed to have received from him and other Zionists. Almost all of these healings beggar belief and are highly implausible. Mrs Lake claimed to have been healed from curvature of the spine, diphtheria, and consumption by Dowie in the mid-1890s,³² incurable "heart trouble" by her husband in 1898,³³ and then from both "erysipelas"³⁴ and "rheumatism"³⁵ by Dowie in 1899 and 1900. Then in 1900, after having been shot in an accident, in *absentia* prayers in Chicago led to the "vanishing" of the bullet that was lodged in her stomach.³⁶ At other times, two of Lake's infant sons, along with two sisters and brother, were cured when Dowie, *in absentia*, made "five tumours" disappear from their bodies, or else made such maladies as haemorrhaging gums and haemophilia disappear.³⁷

How likely are these accounts to be true? First of all, could a woman such as Jennie Lake, purportedly suffering from severe paralysis, rheumatism, curvature of the spine, tuberculosis, and erysipelas, give birth to six children, some of them during the exact years that she claimed these miracles occurred? Is it even statistically possible for a family such as the Lakes to suffer from so many life-threatening diseases in such a short period of time, let alone to be miraculously healed in every case? The most obvious explanation is that the Lakes were lying. Was John G Lake at this time willing to lie about healings that never took place? Definitely. In 1899 Lake maintained that he was involved in the healings of two young boys in Sault Ste Marie – an orphan named "Georgie Armor" and another youth named "Claude Stephens".³⁸ Once again, the problem with these alleged healings is that no individuals with these or similar names existed in Sault Ste Marie or anywhere else in northern Michigan at this time. In 1899 it was possible to get away with such fabrications, but with modern databases such as *Ancestry.com*, we can see that these individuals were not counted

31 For instance, in "The Church at Spokane," *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 29 June 1918 (an article that Reidt references as "May 4"), lists 267 individuals allegedly healed by Lake. The vast majority of these individuals never existed, as demonstrated by cross-referencing their names and addresses to city directories, censuses, and other demographic data.

32 *Leaves of Healing*, no. 9 (1901): 226-7.

33 *Sault Ste Marie News*, 4 August 1900.

34 *Leaves of Healing*, no. 5, 34 (June 1899): 650.

35 *Leaves of Healing*, no. 7, (1900): 441.

36 *Leaves of Healing*, no. 9 (1901): 226.

37 *Leaves of Healing*, no. 2, 25 (1896): 367; no. 3 (1897): 100; no. 7 (1900): 471; Riardon, 238-9.

38 *Leaves of Healing*, no. 5, 42 (1899): 839.

in the 1900 census, and nor did they leave a single trace of their existence anywhere for the rest of their lives.

LAKE'S SO-CALLED BUSINESS CAREER

A major part of Lake's charismatic appeal was his insistence that he had given up a lucrative career in business in 1907 to "turn all my attention to bringing men to the feet of Jesus".³⁹ Yet, despite Lake's claims to have built up major businesses in Sault Ste Marie and Chicago, contemporary records indicate he had a very, very modest career as a carpenter and salesman.

According to Reidt, Lake first built up an extensive "real estate business" with over \$90 000 worth of property following his move back to Sault Ste Marie in 1896.⁴⁰ These claims cannot be verified and border on the ridiculous, as contemporary reports demonstrate. The 1900 census lists Lake as a "carpenter",⁴¹ while Sault Ste Marie newspapers in the 1890s show that in the 1896–8 period he was buying single properties, investing money in them, and reselling – i.e. that he was a "house-flipper". The value of all these properties, which he owned one at a time, was under \$2 000.⁴² In comparison to other construction firms in the town, Lake ran a very small-scale one-man operation. He did not advertise his services in the newspapers, and nor did he bid on large public projects.⁴³ In an extensive review of the local real estate scene in 1900, Lake is not even mentioned although dozens of other contractors were.⁴⁴ Nor was he a journalist at this time either, despite his claims of founding the *Sault Times* newspaper (which Nel refers to as the "*Soo Times*"). There are no extant copies of this short-lived paper available, but reports in Sault Ste Marie indicate that this newspaper was founded by one "George Ferris", while no mention whatsoever is made of Lake.⁴⁵ Once again, the historical record shows that Lake was not doing what he claimed to be doing.

A host of varying sources from Illinois also demonstrate the falsity of Lake's claims to have been a wealthy businessman in Chicago. Lake claimed to have moved from Sault Ste Marie to Zion, IL, in 1901 to have become the leader of Dowie's real

39 Liardon, xxii.

40 Reidt, 14.

41 US Census 1900, Michigan, Chippewa, Sault Ste Marie, Ward 02, District 002, entry for John G Lake.

42 Housing contractors reported their activities annually. Lake upgraded one house per year in 1896 and 1897, with improvements of \$800 and \$1 000 done to the original properties. *Sault Ste Marie News* 19 December 1896; and 18 December 1897. He did not submit reports for 1898 and 1899.

43 *The Sault Ste Marie News* and the *Sault Ste Marie Evening News* from this period can be viewed on microfilm at the Michigan Library, Lansing MI. I have read through all editions from 1887–1901.

44 "Soo Real Estate," *Sault Ste Marie News*, 10 November 1900.

45 *Sault Ste Marie News*, 6 March 1897.

estate operations.⁴⁶ In fact, he was just a repairman in the maintenance department – as his colleagues noted later on.⁴⁷ After Dowie's empire began to crumble, Lake maintained that he moved on to bigger and better things:

In 1904 he moved to Chicago and bought a seat on the Chicago Board of Trade. At the time he handled Jim Hill's Western Canadian land and made a personal friend of this great railroad man and financier. The first day Lake opened his office he made \$2 500 on a real estate deal, and at the end of one year and nine months he had \$100 000 in the bank, real estate amounting to \$90 000 and also a \$30 000 paid up life insurance policy. Representing the Chicago Board of Trade he met Harriman and Ryan and others who were celebrated financiers. He was employed by Ryan to form a trust of three of the nation's largest insurance companies. Appointed manager of agencies he was offered by the company a guarantee of \$50 000 a year to continue in this business.⁴⁸

All of these claims are unfounded, with each detail being easy to disprove. In the first place, Lake did not move to Chicago in 1904, and is not listed in any city directories from 1905 to 1907.⁴⁹ Instead, he remained a resident of Zion as he owned a property in the city until he fled to Indianapolis in late 1907. As Lake noted in his diary: "[I]n October 1907 ... I was called at my home in Zion, IL."⁵⁰ Additionally, Chicago Board of Trade membership records from this period make no mention of Lake at all, either as a member or as a prospective member.⁵¹

If Lake was in fact not working in Chicago as a high-level financier, what was he doing? A host of records show that he was working as an insurance salesman and property broker north of Chicago in the town of Waukegan, which was connected to Zion by trolley. During 1906 Waukegan newspapers featured small advertisements placed by Lake. These advertisements show he was brokering properties for E.V. Orvis, the town's most prominent businessman. Lake also acted as an agent for the "People's Life Assurance Society". His very own advertisements show that this company was not formed by Ryan, Harriman and other "celebrated financiers", as he claimed, but by Elona G Nelson and Fremont Hoy.⁵² Although Lake also claimed

46 Liardon, 269.

47 "Deacon Harper" actually led the Real Estate Department – *Zion Banner*, 24 July 1903. Lake is identified as a maintenance worker by fellow workers in *Zion Herald*, 12 July 1907. These newspapers can be viewed on microfilm at the University of Illinois Library, Champaign, IL.

48 Liardon, 3; Reidt, 14-5.

49 R.R. Donnelly & Co., *Chicago City Directory*, 1905-7.

50 Blake, 140.

51 University of Chicago, Richard Daley Library Special Collections, Chicago Board of Trade Records: Series 1. I checked Boxes 202-227, from January 1903 through October 1907. Burpeau, 39-40, also found no records relating to Lake's claimed CBOT membership.

52 These advertisements ran regularly in the *Waukegan Daily Sun* from 1906 through early 1907. This newspaper can be viewed on microfilm at the Waukegan Public Library, Waukegan IL.

to have conducted business in lavishly-furnished offices in downtown Chicago, he actually worked out of extremely modest office space in Waukegan.⁵³

Having read through hundreds of newspaper articles about Dowie's Zion City, as well as his church's publications during this period, I can assert that John G Lake was not a prominent member of Dowie's church, and he is nowhere mentioned as being a wealthy member of it. Because Dowie's empire went into receivership twice and was financially bankrupt from 1903 onwards, the wealthiest members of the Zionists were all well known as potential saviours. Lake is never mentioned in this regard, even though he later claimed to have been rich at the time.⁵⁴

Nel maintains that I have no proof of Lake's financial or business status at this period, since I lack such documentation as bank statements. On the contrary, I have convincingly cited evidence of his modest occupations and status at this time, while also proving that his illustrious business career was a pure fantasy. According to Reidt and Nel, Lake made a "great sacrifice" to abandon his business career and follow the Lord in 1907. In fact, based on the documented evidence, he gave up absolutely nothing.

THE PARHAMITE KILLINGS AND LAKE'S CALL TO AFRICA

From the time of his arrival in South Africa, Lake maintained that he had two visions, which occurred in Zion in the summer of 1907, during which the "the voice" of the Holy Spirit instructed him to go preach in South Africa.⁵⁵ Although it is not possible to prove one way or another if he had such visions, I will confidently assert that Lake never experienced anything like them. The reason I am so sure of this is that it is historically well documented that during 1907 Lake's new Pentecostal community in Zion (called the "Parhamites") imploded during this time. In fact, the events that occurred were so horrific that Lake and his fellow Parhamites were forced to flee *en masse* from Illinois. Both Zionist and local secular newspapers called for popular justice to be meted out to the Parhamites, and in response they exited the state. Nel has strangely maintained that I have no evidence for any of this, even though Pentecostal scholars such as Goff have written about this episode.⁵⁶ Additionally, and amazingly, he maintains that I rely only on the "biased" Indianapolis press for

53 For Lake's claims about his Chicago office, see Liardon, 88-9. A photo of the office address that Lake listed in his advertisements is shown in Author 2014, 21.

54 A massive volume of clippings from Chicago newspapers relating to Dowie's church can be read in the Newberry Library, Chicago, IL, see Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion. Records, 1888-1974. Lake also never features prominently in church publications such as *Leaves of Healing* and the *Zion Banner*.

55 See Blake, 144-5.

56 See J. R. Goff, *Fields Unto White: Charles F Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Little Rock: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), 142-3.

information about these events. The reality is that the Parhamite implosion, which Lake and other Pentecostals such as F.F. Bosworth tried to cover up their involvement in, was covered by *numerous* local, regional, and national newspapers in the United States.

The Parhamites formed in Zion in late 1906, when the initiator of Pentecostalism, Charles Parham, went there in a bid to convert Dowie's members in the wake of the latter's disgrace and fall from power. Lake, still resident in Zion, converted to Pentecostalism and began speaking in tongues. After Parham abandoned the group in early 1907, William Seymour in Azusa Street encouraged Tom Hezmalhalch to move to Zion and lead the group. During the course of 1907, Lake rose in prominence among the "Parhamites", and by mid-1907 he and Hezmalhalch were visited by Seymour and were considered the joint leaders.⁵⁷

When reports of Charles Parham's arrest in July 1907 for soliciting sex from a teenage boy reached Zion, the Parhamites descended into a collective frenzy. This news should not have been surprising to them, since Seymour and his deputy Glenn Cook had warned them about Parham's tendencies not long earlier.⁵⁸ According to accounts in the Zion newspapers, the Parhamites became convinced that the "End Times" had begun, and held meetings featuring phenomena such as *glossolalia*, along with a range of ecstatic and sexual behaviours.⁵⁹ One member of the sect went insane and committed suicide.⁶⁰ Another nine of the Parhamites lost their sanity, which the Parhamites themselves described as "demon possession".

Lake and Hezmalhalch's involvement in subsequent events is difficult to untangle, largely because they were careful to never discuss the Parhamite killings for the rest of their careers. What is clear, though, is that the two failed in their attempts to use faith healing to expel these demons. "Now when Tom and I went up there [Zion]" said Lake in January 1908, "we didn't have much of the power of healing." Instead, the two had improved their skills more recently in Indianapolis. "One of the latest acquisitions, Lake says, is the power to heal the insane ... The ability to cast out this demon shows high power."⁶¹

With his leaders unable to put a stop to the possessions, Harold Mitchell, a fervent Parhamite, had a vision telling him "to cease work and travel through the world curing

57 Nel, 64, still claims Lake visited Azusa Street in 1907. This mistake has been repeated by several Pentecostal scholars due to the 1907 photo featuring Lake, Hezmalhalch, Seymour, and others. Seymour visited Zion in the summer of 1907, while Lake never went to Azusa Street until his 1909 fundraising expedition. See "The Latter Rain in Zion City, Ill." *Apostolic Faith* 1, 9 (June-Sept 1907): 1.

58 "Frenzied Religion," *Zion Herald*, 2 August 1907.

59 Ibid; "Fruits of Parhamism," *Zion Herald*, 20 September 1907.

60 "Another Zion Victim: Florence Ferrin Took Wood Alcohol and Then Drowns Self in Lake," *Antioch News*, 28 May 1908. This report refers to events in 1907.

61 "Gliggy Bluk Convention," *Indianapolis News*, 28 January 1908.

the sick and casting out demons”.⁶² In order to cure the “demon-possessed”, Mitchell used John Alexander Dowie’s techniques for expelling demons, which led to the deaths of at least three of the nine afflicted. Nel maintains that I only use newspaper reports from 1900 to document these deaths, but this assertion is incongruous. Dowie’s methods were described at length in 1900 in the press, when they led to the horrific death of one of his followers.⁶³ As did Dowie in 1900, Mitchell tied up those who were “demon possessed” and then denied them food, water, or any comforts. Next, in a bid to force the “demon” out, the afflicted had their limbs twisted and broken. Three individuals at least were killed in this way, including a boy who also had his throat slit. Because the Zion coroner was a Parhamite, in court “he admitted that he had buried many other bodies without notifying the proper authorities”.⁶⁴ In September 1907, though, the gruesome death of Letitia Greenhaulgh made national news. As her body was twisted by Mitchell and her Parhamite family, she had most of her bones, and all of her limbs and neck, broken before suffering an agonising death. This fatality was covered not just in Indianapolis, as Nel speciously suggests, but all over America.⁶⁵

Due to these killings the Parhamites had to fear for their own safety. “So strong was the feeling manifested against the fanatics that a mob at the coroner’s inquest ... threatened them with hanging.”⁶⁶ In response to an armed lynch mob being formed, the Parhamites formed their own armed vigilante group for protection.⁶⁷ As tensions escalated the Mayor of Zion, Wilbur Voliva, maintained that: “Parham, Tom [Hezmhalch], and Lake were responsible in a greater or less degree”⁶⁸ for what had happened, and called for these “Wizards and Necromancers of Hell” to be “driven from Zion.”⁶⁹ “They have put themselves outside of the rights of citizens. They are enemies of sane mankind ... They must move on.”⁷⁰ Meanwhile, the local secular press also called for the expulsion of the Parhamites. As the *Waukegan Daily Sun* subtly put it, “the entire sect should be driven out of Zion City and out of Illinois without mercy”.⁷¹

62 “Tortured in Rites of Fanatics: Dies,” *Chicago Tribune*, 21 September 1907.

63 See “Bound at a Dowie Home,” *Chicago Tribune*, 24 May 1900.

64 “5 Torturers of Aged Woman Held By Jury,” *Chicago Inter Ocean*, 22 September 1907. He later was censured by the Illinois authorities, see *Illinois State Board of Health Monthly Bulletin* 4, 3 (March 1908): 175.

65 A short selection of relevant newspapers: “Demon Firm, Woman Dies: Fanatics Kill Cripple Trying to Oust Devil,” *Los Angeles Herald*, 21 September 1907; “Fanatics Are Arrested for Torturing Invalid,” *San Francisco Call*, 21 September 1907; “Tortured in Rites of Fanatics: Dies,” *Chicago Tribune*, 21 September 1907; “Holy City Aflame,” *Oregonian*, 25 September 1907.

66 “Tortured in Rites of Fanatics: Dies,” *Chicago Tribune*, 21 September 1907.

67 “5 Torturers of Aged Woman Held By Jury,” *Chicago Inter Ocean*, 22 September 1907

68 *Zion Herald*, 20 September 1907.

69 *Chicago Tribune*, 23 September 1907.

70 *Zion Herald*, 20 September 1907.

71 *Waukegan Daily Sun*, 20 September 1907.

And so Lake and the Parhamites fled. Within a month, the newspapers reported that “you cannot find a Parhamite in town anymore”.⁷²

Lake never discussed the Parhamite killings thereafter, instead developing accounts of various visions that took place at this *exact time*. These visions, he said, instructed him to give up his business career and his wealth, and to spread the Pentecostal message in South Africa. The only remarks in Lake’s *oeuvre* that I can find relating to the Parhamite killings occur in the passage below, in which he and Hezmalhalch were called in 1907 to “pray for a sister who was an invalid and had been in a wheel chair for a number of years”.⁷³ After meeting the crippled woman, whose description matches that of Letitia Greenhough, Lake maintained that he became conscious of “currents of power running through me from my head to my feet, seemingly into the floor. These shocks of power came intermittently, possibly 10 seconds apart”.⁷⁴

At this point, Bro. Tom not yet having observed what the Lord had been doing with me, motioned me to come to pray with the sick woman. As I stood up, I was trembling so violently, I was afraid to put my hands upon her head. Knowing the honeycombed state of the bone in many Rheumatic cripples. I was afraid, lest the trembling of my body might dislocate the rigid neck ... As I touched her head, I could feel the currents of power shoot through me into her ... At that instant, a shock of power shot through me and down through the sister into Bro. Tom. He instantly dropped her hand and drew back, apparently not realizing what had happened.⁷⁵

This account, which was written early in his sojourn in South Africa, is to me evidence of Lake’s profound mercenary thinking. He had been forced to flee his hometown due to horrific killings perpetrated by his church members, which he covered up by claiming to have been called by God to preach in South Africa. Yet, on arrival in South Africa, Lake had no shame in proclaiming that he had cured a woman identical to the murdered Greenhough during his time in Zion.

Given all the many other of his fabrications that have been documented, it is a logical conclusion to maintain that Lake invented his calling to Africa to both cover up his expulsion from Zion and to convince Pentecostals to support his new objectives with monetary donations. After all, he was begging the entire Pentecostal world for financial support by January 1908.⁷⁶ In March these efforts succeeded when a wealthy California-based Pentecostal named George Studd provided sufficient

72 *Zion Herald*, 1 November 1907.

73 Blake, 140.

74 Ibid, 141.

75 Ibid, 142-3.

76 “Indiana Missionary Convention,” *Apostolic Faith*, no. 1, 12 (Jan 1908): 2.

funds for the group to buy 17 third class tickets to Cape Town, and the party left for South Africa in April 1908.⁷⁷

Any rational individual could accept that Lake's alleged callings to abandon his business career and start a mission to Africa were both inventions. These callings explained his and Tom Hezmalhalch's complete poverty on their arrival in Indianapolis and South Africa, while also shielding the events surrounding their expulsion from Zion. Very conveniently, the visions also made it incumbent for Pentecostals around Lake and Hezmalhalch to financially support them, while simultaneously ceding them leadership authority. Nor do Lake's two callings make any logical sense whatsoever. In the first vision, Lake is told to give up his business career and all his considerable wealth. Then, very soon after, he is told to organise a mission to Africa. Why would God not just instruct Lake to use his alleged vast wealth to go and evangelise in Africa rather than having him give all the money away first?

WAS JOHN G LAKE A FALSE PROPHET?

Major elements of Lake's preaching consisted of fabrications

As noted above, Lake's calling to Africa, which he claimed to have received in the summer of 1907, was surely an invention meant to obscure the Parhamite debacle. His so-called business career, also a major part of his personal testimony when he arrived,⁷⁸ was likewise nothing more than fantasy. The same could be said about the very first Pentecostal "miracle" in South Africa, to which Lake began testifying immediately upon arrival in the country.⁷⁹

When I got to Liverpool all my pennies were gone ... I knew that just as soon as we arrived in Cape Town there would be dock fees and transfer accounts and hotel bills, etc., right away. Mrs Lake and I held the matter before the Lord, and before we left the ship, while it was yet at the docks at Capetown, before the gang planks were put down, a passenger touched me on the shoulder and called me to one side. He handed me an American Express Order for £40, saying: "Boy, the Lord told me to give you that, and He has been telling me that for the last two and a half weeks." It paid all my expenses and landed us in Johannesburg.

This is obviously a recycled John Alexander Dowie "miracle" rather than an event that took place at the Cape Town docks. Dowie made use of a very similar story

77 See "Missionaries For Africa," *Pentecost* (August 1908): 2-3, 6-7; Author, "John G Lake's Formative Years," 31-3.

78 Blake, 143-5; *The Comforter* (Mar/April 1911): 3.

79 J.G. Lake to J. R. Flower, 30 April 1908, reprinted in *Pentecost* (August 1908): 6.

many times in his life to describe his first landing in America. His widely-distributed obituary from March 1907 described it thus:⁸⁰

Dowie landed in San Francisco in 1888, needing money. He needed \$250 and had just told his wife he had “asked God for it”, he said, when a man came along and put the amount in his hand. That was the starting point in his wonderful money-getting career in the Western world.

All these lies did not go unnoticed by Lake’s colleagues, some of whom were clearly upset by what Lake was doing. In January 1909, Louie Schneiderman, one of the original Lake party and a founding member of the AFM executive, resigned from the church. The official AFM minutes state:

Letter read from Bro. Schneiderman stating his reasons for having dissociated himself from the work. He pointed out that a great deal of very sad exaggerations in cases of healing had been made, that messages had been given not by God, etc. and that the name of God was dishonoured thereby. The Council discussed the letter at some length. It was felt that there was only too much truth in the letter.⁸¹

So the senior AFM membership itself acknowledged the “truth” that lies and “exaggerations” were being used by the church.

Although the AFM executive said it was determined to reduce its reliance on exaggeration following Schneiderman’s resignation,⁸² Lake nonetheless continued his chicanery. No better example illustrates this than the Zoutpansberg evangelising mission of July 1909. Earlier that year, the AFM sent Lake’s protégé, Elias Letwaba, to organise the Zoutpansberg mission,⁸³ and then “as soon as there came a lull in the revival fervor, Letwaba reminded Lake of the original plan that they should all move northwards”.⁸⁴ Pentecostal sources show that the mission was a disaster. Full of confidence, Lake organised a party of 17 that failed to heed advice about the conditions they would encounter “and moved northward full of plans and hopes for the evangelisation of the Northern Transvaal”.⁸⁵ After some initial successes “there came a sudden check. One after another of the party became indisposed and then

80 The original version of this obituary is “Dowie Passes Away with Only One Friend Near,” *Los Angeles Herald*, 10 March 1907. Dowie’s own account of these events maintains that he received the money from a stranger in a hotel after having landed in San Francisco with \$75 on hand, see *Leaves of Healing*, no. 7 (1900): 499.

81 Apostolic Faith Mission Archives, Johannesburg (hereafter AFM), “Minutes of the Apostolic Faith Mission Executive Committee, 1908-14,” entry for 22 January 1909

82 Ibid. Nel maintains that all exaggerations stopped after this meeting, a statement that I vehemently reject.

83 “Minutes of the Apostolic Faith Mission Executive Committee, 1908-14,” entry for 18 February 1909.

84 Burton, *When God Makes a Pastor*, 73.

85 Ibid.

thoroughly sick ... Accounts differ as to the number of deaths that took place”.⁸⁶ Among the dead was Lake’s new fiancée, Ada White, who perished of malaria.⁸⁷ Instead of accepting the blame for having taken an ill-prepared party into malarial territory, Lake instead transferred it onto members of his church:

Lake is said to have explained the matter by saying that others, in talking about the girl and grieving her spirit, had prevented him from “praying up her faith”. It was all, ran the argument, “in the spirit”, and others of the faithful having a bad spirit towards her, had prevented him from “praying up her faith”.⁸⁸

The entire party returned unsuccessfully, and Letwaba was left to work in the Zoutpansberg alone without much progress having been made.⁸⁹ At first, Lake made minimal reference to this tragedy. Rather than explaining the failure and deaths associated with the expedition, he instead maintained that good work had been done: “A dead child came back to life when our native evangelists prayed seven hours after its death.”⁹⁰ “A choir of angels had appeared [at a service], many dying were healed, and when I went there they came rejoicing to show me that God had helped them.”⁹¹ Using the events to appeal for financial help from American Pentecostals, Lake noted that “if we only had £200 to buy an ox-wagon outfit how much better we could get along, so much better and faster”.⁹²

Later in the year, Lake and Hezmhalch went to America to raise funds for the AFM, and travelled as far as Azusa Street to meet William Seymour and George Studd. By this time, as part of their fund-raising efforts, their accounts of the Zoutpansberg mission had transformed it from a disaster into a massive triumph for God. According to the new version, four people had been raised from the dead, one of whom was a Chief’s daughter. As a result, Elias Letwaba had become the “spiritual father to 30 000”.⁹³ Meanwhile, the story of William Duggan, who died on the expedition, was embellished – he was alleged to have had, in a mammoth and ultimately fatal prayer session lasting two and a half months at Louis Trichardt “300 people healed of fever, 75 cases of cripples healed, and 13 cases of withered hands and arms”.⁹⁴ In later years, the story was added to even further:

86 Ibid, 73-4.

87 Others who are named as dying by William Burton include Jack Armstrong, Albert Amm, and William Duggan. Lake referred to further deaths in W.C. Anderson, *Adventures in Religion: Messages of John G Lake* (Meridian, ID: Standsure Ministries, 2002), 14, and mentions 12 in Liardon, 47.

88 “Choosing to Die,” *Rand Daily Mail*, 7 July 1909.

89 Burton, 75.

90 “Letter from Bro. J. G. Lake,” *Confidence* no. 2, 8 (1909): 185.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.

93 “God Has Visited Africa,” *Apostolic Faith*, no. 11 (Nov-Dec 1909): 1.

94 Ibid, 3.

In 1910 the African fever ravaged the Waterburg and Zuitkansberg districts. In less than a month, one quarter of the black and white population died. All agencies of every character were called into action ... I went down there with assistants; four of these died ... After studying the epidemic situation in South Africa I came to the conclusion that a special message was necessary. I went 100 miles to a telegraph station and spent \$40 on a telegram to Louis Botha, Prime Minister of Transvaal, outlining the situation. The next day I received a telegram from him saying, "100 ox-wagons with their attendants on the road with orders to follow your instructions ... On my return to Johannesburg, I was invited by Botha to visit Pretoria. While there, the Transvaal Parliament passed resolutions recognizing my services".⁹⁵

This ludicrous narration can be proved false in many ways. First, although Lake often claimed to be a friend of Louis Botha, the two did not know each other, as is shown by government correspondence.⁹⁶ Next, there are no Transvaal records showing any assistance to Lake, and nor was any resolution ever passed. Finally, it is worth noting that Lake had already admitted, just after the debacle, that he had no ox-wagons whatsoever at his disposal.

Once again, we see Lake covering up fatal tragedies in which he was complicit, and then transforming them into fantastic stories for evangelising and fund-raising purposes. Lake's late 1909 fund-raising trip to the United States netted him well in excess of \$2 200, according to those who gave him the money.⁹⁷ Are these fund-raising activities the actions of an honest man, or of a "false prophet"?

Charges made by senior AFM members and the AFM Full Gospel Church schism

Lake's nefarious actions were noticed by many in the AFM, and they led to serious discord in the early AFM leadership. Between mid-1909 to early 1911, many accusations were made against him. In my opinion, the evidence shows that the AFM leadership was driven apart by tensions over Lake's dubious methods. Nel, using a very similar set of source material,⁹⁸ is sympathetic to Lake's own view that his accusers were inspired by either satanic forces or by jealousy. Nel also argues that Lake and Hezmalhalch had differing personalities and styles, which ultimately drove them apart.

⁹⁵ Lindsay, 35-6.

⁹⁶ See NASA SNA 448 3606 Private Secretary to the Prime Minister. Louis Botha's Secretary had no idea who Lake was, and there is no record of any relationship of any kind between the government and the AFM.

⁹⁷ Blake, 133. Lake put the figure at over \$3,000, see Liardon, xxvii.

⁹⁸ The three main sources of information are Lake's diary, the AFM executive minutes, and newspaper summaries of court appearances made by Lake and his accusers. Nel has made use of the first two but not the third.

AFM records show that two members of Lake's original mission party, Hezmalhalch and Schneiderman, believed him to be guilty of serious misconduct. Additionally, four other members of the AFM Executive accused him of similar misrepresentation. Other AFM documentation contained in a now-lost "book" also refers to supporting accusations made by the three most senior-ranking African Overseers, as well as by other senior AFM members. The names of these senior-ranking accusers are Archibald Cooper, Gerald Kretzma, W.J. Kerr, Elias Letwaba, John Morwane, and Andrew Oliphant. Hezmalhalch, Cooper, and Kerr were members of the first AFM Executive Council, while Kretzma was elected soon afterwards. Letwaba, Morwane, and Oliphant were the AFM's first "Native Overseers". Four additional accusers of note, all laymen, were George Bowie, J. J. Mosalli, E. M. Scurrah, and W. P. Gillis.

Throughout late 1909 and 1910 this group laid out a wide series of charges against Lake. Initially, various AFM members mailed out letters to Pentecostal newspapers⁹⁹ and bodies in America and England. As a result of "disquieting news received from these leading brethren", AFM finances suffered, since both the J. Roswell Flower faction of the American Pentecostals and the British Pentecostals stopped funding Lake.¹⁰⁰ His letters to these groups were no longer printed, and fundraising and publicity were instead given to his accusers. Only the Azusa Street Pentecostals continued to support Lake and the AFM thereafter.¹⁰¹

During 1910 Lake's adversaries talked to many AFM members to gather further information, and a set of charges were compiled into a "book" made available to the entire AFM Executive (none appear to survive). Based on descriptions of the accusations made, we know that Lake was accused of financial improprieties, failing to send promised funds to African AFM ministers, of "exaggerated reports" of miracles and healings, and of being "dictatorial".¹⁰² Additionally, we know that he was accused of consorting with spiritualists. For instance, he arranged a séance in early 1909 to communicate with his recently-departed wife in order to obtain her "permission" for his rapid engagement to his fiancée Ada White.¹⁰³ It would also appear that he was accused of "the vilest possible action" [rape?] towards a member called "Mrs L", and was blackmailed.¹⁰⁴

99 See "South Africa," *Confidence*, no. 11, 9 (September 1909): 209; "South Africa," *Confidence*, no. 11, 12 (December 1909): 281.

100 Pentecostal publications such as *Bridegroom's Messenger* and *Confidence*, which had previously solicited donations for Lake, stopped doing so after October 1909.

101 Blake, 131-5.

102 Ibid, 133-5.

103 This information comes from two sources: "Choosing to Die," *Rand Daily Mail*, 7 July 1909; AFM Archives, "Minutes of the Apostolic Faith Mission Executive Committee, 1908-14," entry for 18 June 1909. Lake's version is in Liardon, *John G Lake*, 132-4.

104 Cf. Blake, 166, 173.

In late 1910 Lake's accusers tried to oust him. In October the "book" of accusations signed by Bowie and Gillis was sent to the AFM Executive. Because a lot of the material therein came from Tom Hezmalhalch, the latter was asked to verify his statements.¹⁰⁵ At a subsequent meeting on 11 November, Hezmalhalch requested that he be allowed to speak when his fellow accusers were present, and the matter was postponed.¹⁰⁶ Within a week Bowie made an appearance at an AFM Sunday service. After being given permission to testify by Hezmalhalch, Bowie, who referred to Lake as "an untrue man", was forcibly ejected from the hall by Lake and then charged with disturbing the peace.¹⁰⁷ Hezmalhalch thus tried to bring fellow accusers forward, but they were prevented from speaking. At a later court hearing, Bowie "accused Brother Lake of being a deceiver".¹⁰⁸ Hezmalhalch, called to testify, noted that: "[I]t had all occurred because accused was in possession of facts that Lake did not want to come before the congregation. This was a well-known fact."¹⁰⁹

The result of all these accusations was the purge of Tom Hezmalhalch. He was first stripped of his role in the AFM Executive. After further refusing to retract his support of Bowie and Gillis and maintaining his insistence on Lake's "sin and hypocrisy", Hezmalhalch's demotion was eventually confirmed in March 1911.¹¹⁰ It is true that Hezmalhalch was given several opportunities to explain and bring further evidence of his charges, and that he failed to do so. He maintained that he wanted his fellow accusers to join him at an Executive Meeting, which they never did. As a result, he stayed mum. After March 1911 all AFM members were instructed to stop discussing the charges, while records relating to them were destroyed. Having reviewed the evidence, I cannot give much credence to Nel's argument that a personality clash was behind this split. I would argue that Hezmalhalch, who knew all along about Lake's fabrications, could no longer stomach the guilt of being associated with him. It is also reasonable to assume he kept quiet to avoid undermining the AFM, which he had helped to found.

With their accusations quashed, several anti-Lake AFM members formed the Full Gospel Church, and were joined by the former AFM Treasurer, H.M. Turney, who had resigned without explanation in early 1910. This new Pentecostal body seceded with several congregations in the Pretoria region, and is now the second-largest Pentecostal body in South Africa.¹¹¹ Nel is wrong to maintain that the rupture did not result in the loss of any AFM members, although, with the Full Gospel

105 AFM Archives, "Minutes of the Apostolic Faith Mission Executive Committee, 1908-14," entry for 14 October 1910.

106 Ibid, entry for 11 November 1910.

107 "Row in a Rand Church," *Rand Daily Mail*, 18 November 1910.

108 "Bother Among the Brethren," *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 November 1910.

109 Ibid.

110 AFM Archives, "Minutes of the Apostolic Faith Mission Executive Committee, 1908-14," entry for 18 November 1910, 12 January 1911, and 2 March 1911.

111 C. M. Robeck, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 279.

archives not being open at present, it is hard to assess the size of the schism. In the 1920s, a reunification effort was attempted. Archibald Cooper, during these discussions, maintained that he was sorry about the 1911 split but “denied having withdrawn from any of the charges made against the character of Bro J. G. Lake”.¹¹²

CONCLUSION

I believe that I have, with a wide range of sources, convincingly shown that John G Lake was a fraud. His biography and “miracles” were faked, and he likewise misrepresented the activities of the early AFM to the world. Numerous contemporary sources of data from a wide variety of locations and individuals indicate this. Due to the independent nature of these sources and their publication close to the time of the events in question, any scholar of basic historical methodology would agree that they are far more likely to be accurate than those generated decades later by members of Lake’s entourage; such as Reidt and Lindsay.

This article contends that Nel is simply misguided in his attempts to defend the AFM faithful from my arguments, and to insist that my research evidence is groundless. Five members of the AFM Executive Council – none of whom, like Lake himself, was ever involved in financial fraud or impersonation – agreed with the findings of my research in the early days of the church. To be convinced that I am mistaken about Lake, would require independent corroboration showing for instance that Lake attended seminary, that he founded newspapers, or that he was a rich businessman in Chicago. It would most certainly require official government documentation or other independent verification of Lake’s many putative “miracles” in South Africa. However, the accepted methodology of historic research, as applied in my study, proves that no one will be able to provide these materials, because they do not exist.

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