BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATERS: CHARLES PAMLA
AND THE TAYLOR REVIVAL IN SOUTH AFRICA

DARYL M. BALIA

Unpaid Evangelist

Charles Pamla was born of Christian parents at Butterworth in the Transkei in 1834. His father, Mdingazwe, was the son of Zulu, a prominent chief of the Amabambo tribe in Natal. Mdingazwe had been forced to flee southward as a result of the Tshakan wars. He settled on land controlled by Chief Hintsa in the Cape Colony. Upon arrival there Hintsa changed his name from Mdingazwe, meaning a person with no fixed abode, to Pamla, a wanderer. Pamla and his wife were among the first to embrace Christianity under the preaching of John Ayliffe, who was stationed at Butterworth at the time. Charles Pamla was converted to Christianity early in life and was baptized by Rev. W. H. Garner. Soon he experienced a strong desire to study the Bible and preach the Christian gospel. Pamla had a brief scholastic education at a Dutch school in Nyara. It is said that while herding sheep Pamla would preach to the trees so as to give himself practice in public speaking. When his family moved from Peddie to Keiskamahoek, near King William’s Town, Charles Pamla became a class leader and lay preacher. Here he was to come under the influence of Robert Lamplough, who was stationed at Annshaw.

Pamla was accustomed to drinking home-brewed beer but was forced to abstain. A quarterly meeting decision forbade any Methodist from indulging in this “evil.” Pamla had a protracted struggle to convince his people about this and in the process made many enemies. His main task in the early years of his ministry was to act as interpreter for Lamplough. The art of interpreting was far from easy but Pamla excelled to the point of being an “unpaid evangelist” in this office. He even sold his farm and house upon entering the Native Theological Institution at Annshaw. Here Pamla availed himself of theological instruction and developed great gifts as a student and preacher. He was on his way to becoming an evangelist “Of commanding presence, of great natural gifts, fluent in speech, able to preach in five different languages.”

---

1Pamla’s biographical details, here and elsewhere, have been taken from his obituary in Minutes, Methodist Conference in South Africa, 1918, 10-11. Also from Ms. PR 1534 (East London Daily Dispatch, Saturday, November 4, 1922), Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, and from Gordon Mears’ Methodist Missionaries No. 2, Methodist Missionary Department, Cape Town, 1958. See Pam. Box 3.
It is said that by reading Wesley's sermons Pamla became convicted of his need for entire sanctification. He is reported to have said in this regard:

I had a sure trust that through the blood of Christ I would secure that blessing. One morning very early I went to prayer for this blessing, and while I was praying and trusting in the blood of Christ, I felt a small voice speaking through my soul, saying, "It is done, receive the blessing." The first thing I felt was ease from the different kinds of thought, ease from the world and from all the cares of the flesh. I felt the spirit filling my soul, and immediately I was forced to say in my soul, "For me to live is Christ." And I gave up my body, soul, thoughts, words, time, property, children, and everything that belongs to me, to the Lord, to do as he pleases.2

This "wonderful native" and "converted heathen" began to lead many people to the Christian faith, according to the annals of Methodist missions. Pamla labored for many years as an unpaid evangelist, mainly among Chief Kama's people in the Annshaw circuit. The 1865 circuit report serves to illustrate Pamla's role in the success of the Christian work here: "This circuit has prospered spiritually during the year. Discipline has been beneficially exercised. Conversions have resulted in several instances. The officers of the church have been much quickened. Three evangelists have been diligently employed [Pamla being one] in preaching at the heathen kraals, during the greater part of the year."3 Pamla was eventually allowed to candidate for the Methodist ministry in 1866.

An "Ever-Memorable Year"

The history of Methodism is a history of many revivals, and the evangelical revival of 1866 in South Africa under the inspiration of Charles Pamla and William Taylor was no exception. William "California" Taylor was a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America. He preferred the life of an itinerant evangelist rather than that of a settled pastor because he traveled extensively. He conducted revivals in Canada, India, Ceylon, Great Britain, and Australia, and he founded missions in various parts of Latin America. In 1884 he was elected missionary bishop of Africa by his church and thenceforth engaged in expanding missions in Liberia and Angola. During his many long voyages Taylor wrote extensively. Most of his income was derived from the sale of his books; he began receiving a salary only after his appointment as bishop.4 At the end of March 1866, Taylor and his wife landed at Table Bay to penetrate the southern part of "those barren wastes of Africa" with the gospel.

2E. Davies, The Bishop of Africa or the Life of William Taylor (Reading, Massachusetts: Holiness Book Concern, 1895), 34.
3An extract of the report was published in William Taylor, Christian Adventures in South Africa (London, 1867), 117.
Taylor commenced his revival services among whites at the Wesleyan church in Burg Street, Cape Town. The church was initially only half full, but for five days Taylor conducted services and delivered thirteen sermons. He proclaimed Jesus Christ as the Savior of sinners and then urged all who were desirous of “salvation in Christ” to kneel at the communion rail for prayer and instruction. Few came forward, and at the close of the services only twenty-one had given satisfactory evidence of their conversion. Naturally, Taylor was disappointed by these results, as he was accustomed to preaching in large churches to packed audiences with hundreds responding to his appeals. After he moved to Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage, the impact of the revivals still proved rather limited. Churches were small and helpers few. Taylor attempted to preach to blacks through an interpreter, but the result was discouraging. “I did not enjoy the service,” he said, “and saw but little indications of good coming from the effort.” Yet it was in this direction, as Whiteside observed, that “the greatest triumphs of his preaching were to be won.”

When Taylor arrived in Grahamstown, however, “the clouds broke, and resulted in a rising tide of mighty spiritual power and blessing.” On one occasion it was necessary for several panes of glass to be removed from the windows of Commemoration Church so that proper ventilation could facilitate salvation. Taylor believed that a great work of salvation could not take place without a good supply of oxygen. Taylor continued services there, and more than 120 offered themselves for membership in the Wesleyan Church thereafter. About 170 are known to have been converted during the revival. An unsuccessful attempt was made by Taylor to preach to blacks through an interpreter, but this was found to be “very slow business.”

The next round of revival services were held in King William’s Town. Despite the skill and power of the pioneer preacher, conversions were not many and apathy seemed everywhere prevalent. During the first week’s services, Lamplough and Pamla walked twenty-four miles with two other colleagues from Annshaw to “warm themselves at the fire” in King William’s Town. It was here that Lamplough introduced Pamla to William Taylor. While Taylor preached to whites, Pamla devoted several days preaching to blacks with “marked success.” It was reported that “During three services nearly eighty persons were converted.” Pamla seems to have engendered more responses to Christianity than Taylor, in King William’s

5J. Whiteside, History of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa (Cape Town: Juta & Company, 1906), 265.
6Ibid., 266.
7Ibid.
8Davies, 35.
Town at least. Even after Pamla left, the work continued and church membership rose by 136.9  

Together with Boyce Mama, a very eloquent and successful preacher, Pamla went to Mount Coke, and upon their labors there some seventy people professed to find peace in Christ. Taylor was obviously impressed. He had longed to preach to blacks but, as we have seen, he could make little advance through an interpreter. Now with the help of Charles Pamla, confidence in successfully preaching through an interpreter was restored. Taylor wrote: “Charles Pamla’s providential training for our great work together was going on quite independently of me, yet simultaneously with the progress of my work in another part of the Colony.”10 The scene was now set for a series of revivals South African Methodism had never before experienced.  

The revival at the Annshaw mission station commenced on June 14, 1866. The first sermon was preached in the afternoon amid “profound silence” from the audience. Taylor had intended it entirely for believers. Pamla translated throughout, and Taylor was astonished: “I believe Charles gave every idea and shade of thought as naturally and as definitely as if they had originated in his own brain.” Indeed, he seemed a “transparent medium” to Taylor, for Pamla possessed “a philosophic cast of mind,” could grasp “the most abstruse principles readily,” and “forgot nothing worth remembering.”11 The evening service commenced with the same congregation as in the afternoon. Of this service and Pamla’s role in it, Lamplough reported:  

I can only say it was as powerful as the first; indeed his [Taylor’s] appeals to sinners were overwhelming, and Charles Pamla was carried beyond himself, so that the sermon lost none of its power in passing through him. Towards the close of this sermon, Mr. Taylor sang . . . and to the surprise of all, not excepting Mr. Taylor, Charles interpreted the piece, and sang it, line after line, in a most marvelous manner. I never heard anything like it, and even Mr. Taylor, who had witnessed many surprising things, said afterwards that he really thought he had met with something new under the sun for once.12  

The sermon concluded with the altar call, and more than a hundred stood up. The “prayer meeting” then began with much prayer and singing, interrupted no doubt by the uncontrollable emotions of the people. This greatly disturbed Lamplough, who proposed to Taylor that the meeting be dismissed. Taylor replied that the Holy Spirit should be allowed to continue with those “struggling into the kingdom.” The meeting concluded  

---

9 Whiteside, 268.  
10 Ms. 1534.  
11 Taylor, 120, 451.  
12 See extract of a letter from the Rev. Robert Lamplough to the Rev. William Impey, dated at Annshaw, Middle Drift, August 7, 1866. Published in Wesleyan Missionaries Notices, October 25, 1866, 168.
at midnight, and more than seventy were reported converted.13 “But most wonderful,” said Lamplough, “was it to see how Charles Pamla seemed to understand the work, and what was necessary to be done. He and others soon brought order out of what appeared to be confusion and noise.”14

The next morning the church was again full, and a prayer meeting was held for two hours. Taylor preached and sang, and Pamla interpreted and sang as well. By the time Taylor left to go to Alice, more than 150 conversions had taken place at Annshaw.15 For several weeks after Taylor's departure, meetings were held twice a day. Charles Pamla, Boyce Mama, William Shaw Kama, and Joseph Tele continued preaching throughout the circuit and surrounding area, and conversions numbered in the hundreds.16 The most prominent feature of the work was the way in which these “native helpers” were used as evangelists. “Indeed,” wrote Lamplough, “the work has been in their hands, especially of Charles and Boyce, whilst I have not been used at all.”17 The series of revivals seems to have influenced the lay preachers, who were now reported to be “six times as efficient as they were before.”

The revival services continued at Healdtown with results equal to those at Annshaw. Taylor also visited in rapid succession the mission stations at Butterworth, Clarkebury, Morley, Buntingville, Shawbury, Osborne, and Emfundisweni, and then proceeded to Natal. At the Lesseyton station, Taylor was initially reluctant to preach since “It is a rule with me not to work in any charge in the absence of the pastor,” but under the circumstances he did not refuse. He observed that “there was not a white man on the station, but all the services were kept up, and good order

---

13Some Africans endeavored to account for the mesmerizing effect of Taylor's preaching. One theory was that “He had brought a medicine with him that made the people mad; he had sprinkled the communion rail with blood, and as soon as any native touched it he was bewitched; he blew in their ears and they were forced to submit” (Ms. PR 1534). Others took strong exception to their wives and children attending the revival services. Pamla was himself nearly beaten up on one occasion at the Amatola Basin when eighty people professed faith in Christ. He was a nephew of the Fingoe Chief Umhlambisa, and this fact saved his life. Wesleyan Missionary Notices, October 25, 1866, 171.
14Notices, 169.
15Ibid.
16These conversions involved renouncing polygamy. The Methodist missionary policy on polygamy was strictly adhered to. The missionaries maintained that “the essence of marriage was that two persons shall pledge themselves to each other, forsaking all others for the term of their natural lives. Consequently, a polygamist could not be admitted to membership in a Christian church. That the Lord Jesus Christ might pardon the sins of a polygamist was not doubted, but it was held that a Christian native, having a knowledge of Christ's works, was not fully obedient to the Great Master unless he separated from all his wives but one.” One polygamist was ordered by Lamplough during the revival to give up one of his wives. Neither Pamla nor Taylor succeeded in getting a single paramount chief converted, ostensibly because “polygamy proved to be the insuperable obstacle.” Whiteside, 269, 275.
17Notices, 170.
maintained in every order of society, under able administration of their 'headman,' William Bambana." Pamla had not accompanied Taylor to Lesseyton, and the effects were "horrible" for Taylor's preaching: "Oh, if I only had my Charles here!" Taylor, by his own admission, "began now to feel very uneasy, lest something might interfere to prevent his [Pamla's] coming." He furthermore confessed "how helpless I should be if he failed to come." Taylor took comfort in that he was "on the Lord's business" and that all necessary facilities and helpers would be provided.

While at Annshaw, Taylor had arranged for Pamla to accompany him as interpreter through "Kaffirland." Pamla did eventually join Taylor again, and the revivals continued. He brought with him a letter from Lamplough reporting that the "good work" was going on and that six hundred had been converted to Christianity since the revival services began. At Kamastone, Taylor preached a sermon of a philosophical nature on Christian perfection. Pamla's interpretation was so remarkable that the Rev. W. Shepstone, himself a linguist, was led to say that he had not supposed that the "Kaffir" language could convey the gospel so perfectly or that an interpreter could put so great a variety of ideas into English. It was perhaps this fact about Pamla's ability that led Taylor to say of him: "... and after interpreting my sermons twice per day for nearly two months, it became a work of supererogation for me to preach through him, for he could do it as well, or better, without me."

When Taylor moved to Natal, he concentrated his preaching among the white congregations. He could spare little time for the black population, and Pamla, we are told, "had to carry on the work amongst them almost entirely." Pamla preached at Maritzburg, Edendale, Durban, Verulam, and elsewhere. At Edendale it seemed as if the whole station would be converted. Other zealous black preachers carried the "glad tidings" of the gospel to the kraals in the Zwaartkop location, which up to Pamla's time had rarely been visited. District Chairman Frederick Mason recalled, "What was more important than anything else, our Native preachers and leaders learnt the sacred art of evangelizing, if one may call it so, and henceforth knew how to conduct revival meetings with vigour, judgement, and blessed effect." The resultant increase in church membership in Natal was great; in one year it rose from 1064 to 1551.

Many Methodists in Natal dated from this year (1866) "a wider and deeper
view of scriptural truth, a closer fellowship with Christ, a fuller sense of duty, a closer qualification for Christian work.”

In Durban Charles Pamla and William Taylor parted company. Pamla said that Taylor “took me by the hand, and with tears rolling down his face, told me he had hoped to remain in South Africa but God forbade him. The work he intended to do he entrusted to me to do by the power of the Holy Spirit. He also said that as Elijah’s mantle fell upon Elisha so his mantle would come upon me.”

Taylor and his family sailed for London in the aftermath of an “ever-memorable” year in South Africa. Pamla returned home, and on the way he stopped at Port Elizabeth to “establish a new cause.” It was reported that “a great and glorious revival” took place with many “confessing their sins and crying aloud for God’s mercy.” Pamla again proved himself to be the principal agent in sustaining the momentum of religious conversions among blacks and in ensuring that the revivals with Taylor were not a temporary excitement. In Whiteside’s words, “the conversion of sinners continued for a long period with almost equal effectiveness.”

**Explanation of Success**

It is a task of particular difficulty to ascertain the statistical growth of membership in the Methodist Church since the 1866 revival. To what extent did the revival contribute to Methodists becoming the largest Protestant denomination in South Africa? That conversions ran into thousands and that subsequent membership in the Methodist fold increased dramatically cannot be doubted. Every interest and agency in the church was strengthened, and in other communions as well. The foundations of religious life and work were laid, or relaid, or broadened, on which could rest, according to Mason, “the superstructure of a more vigorous Christian character and of more useful service in the kingdom of God.”

Taylor had actually had in mind the primary object of building, strengthening, and “purifying” the church. This purity was defined as abstinence from “Kaffir” beer, the practice of monogamy, obedience to the missionaries (who also exercised magisterial functions, punishing and fining “evil-doers”), and satisfactory behavior. Taylor noted that the practical effects of the revival were manifested among men of profligate lives, drunkards,

---

25 Mears, 18. Taylor said: “I had prayed that God would allow me to remain, at least a few years, to lead a victorious host of native evangelists into the interior of Africa, but I now saw that God would answer my prayer indirectly, by giving my mantle to my Elisha, and take me away, if not to heaven, to some other part of his vast dominions, where he may have greater use for me.” Taylor, 451.
26 Ms. PR 1534.
27 Whiteside, 275.
28 Mason, 222.
and profane swearers. Leaders in vice became champions of religion. Family feuds were resolved. Fraud was acknowledged, and quarrels ended.\textsuperscript{29} The "wall of heathenism" went down under the impact of the new spiritual blow, and Christian ministers were now endued with increased courage for their work. In Natal alone, the Colony was saved from the disastrous results that might have followed from the Colenso controversy.\textsuperscript{30} Methodist Christianity became bold, aggressive, and triumphant.

To what factor or factors within the Wesleyan Church itself can the remarkable success of the 1866 revival be attributed? "No doubt," says Mason, "the toils and trials and teachings of the previous years were the indispensable preparation for what actually took place. He [Taylor] could not have reaped, if others had not sown." It is equally true to say that the 1866 harvest could not have been gathered at such a particular time in its unique way without the employment of the "native helpers." The events in the Annshaw circuit confirm this. Lamplough, in reporting the progress of the work there after the revival, wrote to Taylor, "We have about twelve hundred in this circuit, formed into about eighty classes. This is by far the largest number of any circuit in South Africa, and I rejoice to say the work is still going on. Last week was a glorious one, more than one hundred and ninety entered into liberty." Again, the main reason for this "harvest" was immediately apparent to Lamplough. He continues: "God is greatly honouring Brother Charles Pamla. He has been the means of the conversion of about three hundred souls during the last six weeks. Others of our native brethren are also very useful in this good work, and it seems to me that God is plainly showing the Church that this is the instrumentality that he intends to employ in converting this continent."\textsuperscript{31}

Whether it was Taylor ("Oh, if I only had my Charles here!") or Lamplough ("indeed, I know not what I should do without them"), who offered the acknowledgment, the use of the "native agency" most definitely precipitated the collapse of "heathenism" and the establishment of the Christian faith in colonial South Africa, at least from the perspective of Wesleyan missions.

\textsuperscript{29}Taylor, 214.
\textsuperscript{30}Whiteside, 275-277, and Mason, 222. The Colenso controversy involved the radical Anglican Bishop of Natal, John William Colenso, who refused to accept that every custom of the "heathen" must be evil. He permitted the baptism of polygamists since polygamy was part of the Zulu social order and, therefore, not necessarily immoral. He did consider it immoral to ask converts to put away their extra wives. Colenso also believed that the Old Testament was not verbally inerrant and that all men and women are justified in Christ from the hour of their birth. He had always been a strong advocate for political and social justice. These views brought him into conflict with other clergy and Christians in Natal, resulting in Colenso being delated for heresy in 1863. See Peter Hinchliff, \textit{The Church in South Africa} (London: SPCK, 1968), 65-71, for a brief outline.
\textsuperscript{31}Extract of letter from Lamplough to Taylor, dated July 9, 1866. See Taylor, 219-220.
Would Taylor have reaped had Pamla not interpreted? It seems highly unlikely. Until their revivalist invasion into Natal, Taylor always preached and Pamla limited himself to the role of interpreter, which he fulfilled with great power and effect. Yet as Mason observed, "It is scarcely accurate to speak of the work of interpretation as being 'limited' in such a case; for the right rendering of the Gospel into the language of the people to whom it is addressed is one of the essentials of success." Taylor's failure to communicate the gospel effectively without "his Charles" has already been noted. In reviewing his mission in South Africa, Taylor further urged, "If my fellow labourer, Brother Charles Pamla, and a few others were set apart as were Barnabas and Saul for this work, and properly sustained in it, I believe the Holy Ghost will do a work through them that he could not do so readily through me." Taylor's abilities and successes must surely be recognized as of great importance, but, says Leslie Hewson, "that he should have made Charles Pamla a fellow-reaper was a fact of much greater significance."

As Taylor listened to the sermons of Charles Pamla, Boyce Mama, Joseph Tele, William Shaw Kama and many others, he is reported to have exclaimed, "These are men to evangelize Africa." During his stay in Healdtown, he wrote: "I would hail it as a privilege to lead a band of black native evangelists through the African continent till 'Ethiopia' would not only 'stretch out her hands,' but embrace Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Taylor's problem at the time, of course, was his implicit assumption that black evangelists needed his guidance and leadership. As we have already seen, Pamla and others were able to do the work of Christianizing their own people quite effectively without white supervision. Elsewhere, Taylor affirms his belief that the laborers should be "native Africans who would gladly submit to the general superintendency of the white missionaries."

Aside from his captivation to colonial paternalism, Taylor was ahead of his time in calling for the full use of "native helpers" in the evangelistic task. Wesleyan missionaries were until 1866 suspiciously hesitant in entrusting the preaching of the gospel to their new converts. They were more at home with the Moravian missionary policy, according to Whiteside, which was this: "When converts from among the heathen are established in grace, we should advise not immediately to use them as assistants in teaching, but to act herein with caution, and reference to the general

---

32Mason, 222.
33Mears, 19.
34Leslie Hewson, An Introduction to South African Methodists (Cape Town, 1950), 74.
35Whiteside, 278.
36Davies, 42.
37Mears, 19.
weakness of their minds and consequent aptness to grow conceited." Was the use of "caution" and "a slow hand" by the white missionaries not a safeguard to protect their power and status? Did these missionaries not feel threatened when they saw the "native helpers" doing their work with greater effectiveness? A Methodist report ten years later did, therefore, conclude that "There were many men who were kept back by a timid, if not a jealous hand." Or as Mason honestly admitted, "We are at fault for the slowness and hesitation shown between 1866-1880.

The impact of the 1866 revival did produce, though, a new awareness of a need to establish a "native ministry." A white missionary at Peddie in the Transkei took several young men and placed them at substations under his supervision. Lamplough was himself now convinced "that one thing God is showing us in this revival, is the necessity of laying hold of, and making effective, our native men... We do not want more English missionaries; give us these natives, and the work can be done,—yea, and well done."

A tentative start was made in 1867 with the establishment of a theological institute at Healdtown. The first entrants were Charles Pamla, James and Charles Lwana, and Boyce Mama. In 1871 they became the first blacks to be ordained by the Wesleyan Church in South Africa. The fears which the missionaries had about these men were proven groundless, as they excelled themselves in leading many to Christian conversion. They showed themselves to be "instruments of awakening" as soon as the work was put "in their hands."

Pamla himself went on to become the first black superintendent minister, having full authority in his circuit. Among his many endeavors, he ministered in Tsitsana, Butterworth, Etembeni, Peddie, and Horton, and was also appointed as connexional evangelist by the first South African conference of the Methodist Church in 1883. The effects of his powerful preaching knew no limit. Lamplough at a later date informed Taylor that between 600 and 700 were converted under Pamla's ministry during his five months' labor in the Peddie circuit. Pamla became noted for his evangelistic meetings, at which many came forward to confess faith in Jesus Christ. He had a reputation for carrying a stinkwood stick with which he would point accusingly at people as he urged them to repent. Particularly at Etembeni, Pamla demonstrated his "staying powers" and ministered

---

38 Quoted in Whiteside, 277.
40 Mason, 222.
41 Notices, 171.
42 Extract of letter from Lamplough to Taylor, dated August 7, 1867. See Taylor, 548.
there for nineteen years. Upon request, he had printed at his own expense a booklet on African customs and the Christian faith and also cooperated in the composition of a “native” hymn book. He retired in 1913 in the knowledge that over 25,000 people had been converted under his preaching, an achievement not many, if any, of his missionary colleagues could rival. On June 24, 1917, Charles Pamla died at the age of 83, having served the Methodist Church as unpaid evangelist and ordained minister for almost sixty years.

A Secondary Form of Resistance?

It is true that the tremendous momentum of religious conversions among blacks in 1866 cannot be explained solely by the arrival of William Taylor in South Africa. The activities of Pamla and his colleagues in securing conversions before and after Taylor’s work have already been noted. Even during the revivals, it was the use of the “native agency” that accounted for most of the conversions among blacks. Taylor undoubtedly influenced Pamla and company with his evangelical method and technique, especially since he was the Billy Graham of the day. Pamla’s skill and dedication as a preacher was certainly a contributory factor in occasioning the collapse of “heathenism.” But his work and that of other unordained “native agents” had been going on for some time before 1866. In reviewing the revival services, Whiteside notes that “few of the converts were from the raw heathen. Most of them had for years been listening to the preaching of the Gospel.” In advancing his argument that the revival was rather “a reaction to past failures and a search for new options in the future,” Mills believes that the main explanation “is to be found in the situation and difficulties of the mass of Africans.” If “the times were favourable to a revival of vital religion,” as Whiteside has similarly observed, a closer look at the socio-political and economic context is paramount. The years preceding the revival (1863–1865) were disastrous in

43 Mears, 25, and Ms. 15,709, Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.
44 Mears, 27. Most of the converts would have been blacks, though whites were not excluded. In fact, Pamla once had an Englishman converted in his house one night. Whites desired to hear him preach in English, and at Tsomo in 1872 he reported having eight English members. See extracts of letters from the Rev. Charles Pamla to the Rev. Robert Lamplough, Grahamstown, dated May and July, 1872, Wesleyan Missionary Notices, October 1873, 171–172.
45 Whiteside, 273. J. Du Plessis, following Taylor, put the total number of black conversions during the revival at about 6000. See his History of Christian Missions in South Africa (London: Longmans and Green, 1911), 298–299.
46 Mills, 113.
47 Mills, 114. Mills seems unaware that his basic thesis of secondary resistance was advanced as early as 1961 by J. R. Coan in his Expansion of Christian Missions of the AME Church in South Africa (1896–1908) (Hartford: Hartford Seminary Foundation, n.d.).
48 Whiteside, 264.
the history of the Cape Colony. They were dark years characterized by drought, disease, and death. Cattle were stricken in thousands by lung-sickness, and sheep perished with the drought. It is said that people became bankrupt by hundreds, and financial ruin was the "sad rule of the day."49 The full effects of the "Kaffir" War of 1852 had still not dissipated. Thus, in addition to earlier enormous losses of land, Africans were now finding themselves economically devastated, politically powerless, and spiritually barren in the new situation. Frustration and desperation must surely have set in as the time proved most opportune for a "religio-magical" intervention. Onto this tormented soil the 1866 revival cast its salvific net, promising forgiveness for past sins, deliverance from present woes, and eternal bliss in the life to come.50 It is therefore not without reason that William Taylor saw his mission as bringing light to a dark world and was for his troubles called "Iskunisivutaya" (Burning Stick or Torch).51

The substantive response to the onslaught of white settler colonialism in the first half of the nineteenth century was military resistance.52 Blacks suffered great losses of land, cattle, and population as this primary response proved a failure. The "religious" or secondary form of resistance came to the fore in 1857 with the "cattle-killing" episode. This represented a desperate attempt on the part of the Xhosas to control a deteriorating situation by recourse to supernatural powers. The leaders who were diviners of more or less traditional patterns pressed their followers to "plug into" religion in resistance to the colonial onslaught. "Salvation" was sought beyond the means and confines of traditional religion. The 1866 revival involving Pamla and Taylor may similarly be viewed as a revival movement where prophets pressed their hearers to a "massive reorientation in thinking" for the future. The black recipients of the gospel were for the most part people demoralized by military defeat and economic disaster and overwhelmed by the new large-scale society.

49 Ms. PR 1534.
50 Mills thinks that a significant feature of the revival was its post-millennial orientation, in which the second coming of Christ would follow rather than precede the millennium. He goes on to demonstrate Taylor's commitment to such a belief (107-108). In Pamla's case, this would also seem to be true. Most of his preaching during the revival centered on a call for Africans to forsake their past and "enter into liberty" and find "everlasting peace." Almost always his converts are described as having "found peace." In a confrontation with a leading "heathen" spokesman, Mawomba, Pamla asked him to read Romans 5:3, "... but we glory in tribulations also." Taylor, 554. Years after the revival, Pamla was telling Lamplough, "You will get your reward ... in the new world." Pamla's letter dated December 23, 1902, Etembeni, Ms. 15,407. Shortly before his death, Pamla wrote: "I am waiting for the coming of the chariots of my King, and I shall be caught up into heaven and see the face of His servant." Mears, 27.
52 My emphasis here is on "substantive," yet the responses of accommodation and receptivity figured prominently as well, particularly with regard to the missionaries.
which they did not quite understand or adapt to easily. The sermons of the revival offered the possibility of salvation—the regaining of a sense of dignity and self-esteem, the promise of an egalitarian society, as well as the expectation of eternal life. Blacks were coming to realize that Christianity and "civilization" were normative for one's acceptance into the evolving large-scale society. Only through conversion to the new faith was the gateway opened for one to share the benefits and advantages of that society. In Mills' words, "Africans were attempting to take advantage of very important psychological, sociological and ideological functions of Christian revivalism in coping with change and uncertainty." 

Conclusion

It has been established in this article that William Taylor's success in preaching to blacks in South Africa was due in large measure to his use of Charles Pamla as interpreter. Pamla went on to become a leading clergyman in the Methodist Church while Taylor found himself catapulted into international prominence as a revivalist, resulting in invitations to preach in the Caribbean and India. It has also been shown how religion functioned as a most important bridge in the African transition from preoccupation with small-scale society to participation in the new large-scale society. This bridge was erected and sustained by a pioneer African missionary who literally led thousands into membership in the Methodist Church. Indirectly, a more fundamental problem raised by the "heathen" about the revival has been responded to: "Our complaint is not that the people are being converted, but that so many are converted in so short a time."

In her concern with the sort of changes that occur in traditional pagan theology as African societies expand in scale, Monica Wilson mentions how "the idea of personal causation is extremely tenacious. When misfortune hits them directly men find it hard to believe in impersonal causes, or to accept any dogma of chance, but, as their society increases in scale, they begin to interpret other people's troubles, or their own lesser troubles, in impersonal terms. The field in which natural causation is accepted extends. One reflection of this is the rising attendance at hospitals and clinics in Africa: people accept the ability of western-trained doctors to cure or alleviate many diseases, though not all disease." Religion and the Transformation of Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 41. Is it possible to view the rising attendance of Africans at mission stations and churches as an indication of their acceptance of the ability of missionaries and their western-trained recruits (Pamla would be one) to solve their problems in a "religio-magical" way? One commentator has in any case described the revival as one of "magic results." See Bundy, 203.

Mills, 121.

From extract of letter from Pamla to Taylor, Newtondale, July 18, 1867. See Taylor, 553.