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It may not be on your radar screen, but the cult of William Branham poses an active threat to the cause of Christ around the world. Month by month, the Centers in the former Soviet Union receive pleas for assistance like these:

Your articles and research materials really help us to “contend for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints.” Here in the Caucasus the movement of latter-day prophet William Marrion Branham is growing. Please send me materials that examine the “prophet’s” words and deeds in the light of the Bible....

V.M., Stavropol region

I would like to see articles about William Branham in your newsletter, because my friend has joined the people who follow his teachings....The situation has not improved, but rather has gotten worse since that time. My friend doesn’t believe in the Trinity anymore....Please help me. Tell me how I should witness to my friend. I’m only now beginning to understand how tough it is to work with cultists and to bring them back to the Church. Your work is very difficult, but it’s greatly needed!

O.B., Kursk

What *is* Branhamism, and where does it come from? In February of 2002, CFAR Eurasia director Roger DeLozier and I took a guided tour of Voice of God Recordings (VGR), the Branham movement’s spiritual home. Rising from the rolling farmland of southern Indiana, VGR’s spotless, 64,000-square-foot plant is the unlikely nerve center of a cult that pumps heresy to hungry souls in over 160 nations.

VGR headquarters is part factory, part shrine — a monument to the American false prophet William Marrion Branham (1909–1965), who gained worldwide fame as a worker of “signs and wonders.” Following an alleged 1946 encounter with an angel in a secret cave, Branham came to view himself as a modern Elijah, God’s uniquely important and virtually infallible end time messenger. His unscriptural, divisive “Message” includes condemnation of the Trinity as a satanic doctrine, claiming that a large segment of mankind is the literal offspring of Satan (the “serpent seed”), and calling Christians everywhere to flee their churches to follow the sound of his voice.

Every word of Branham’s hundreds of sermons is obsessively preserved and lovingly transcribed — fractured grammar and all — as though it were Holy Scripture itself. During my tour of VGR I learned that its plant churns out appalling quantities of Branham books, tracts, tapes, and CDs in nearly three dozen languages — over half a million cassettes per year, up to 300,000 books per day. In 1998 the cult reported that:

Voice of God Recordings has printed and shipped to Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Moldova, Uzbekistan and other Russian-speaking countries over 3 million books and tracts. We have distributed over 400,000 [Branham] Messages to believers in Russia this year alone.

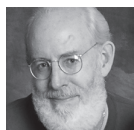
(Catch the Vision, December 1998, p. 2)

Other VGR publications boast that, as of 1999, there were “1,602 Spanish-speaking Message churches” (plus over “over 300 Portuguese-speaking”), and that Peru alone “has 240 churches following the Message and now receives more books and cassettes than any other country in South America. A total of 1,287,536 books and 103,777 tapes have been sent.” But for all the spiritual harm being done elsewhere in the world, perhaps the greatest damage is being inflicted in Africa, where translation is moving rapidly and hundreds of Branham cassette tape libraries supply untold numbers of Branham churches across the continent. (To give you just an idea, in September a single VGR shipment weighing over 23 tons left Indiana for South Africa, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.) Beyond this, VGR maintains 45 foreign offices and distribution centers!

Amazingly, VGR is just one of a host of cultic missionary groups bent on Branhamizing the world: Organizations with seemingly innocuous names like BrideHelp, Word and Work Ministry, Believers International, Bible Believers Missions, and Worldwide Missionary Outreach are sowing confusion in dozens of countries...including Cuba and communist China. (Check the Internet, and you’ll find elaborate sites glorifying Branham in nearly two dozen languages.)

Like so many spiritual diseases, Branhamism is more easily prevented than cured. Branham — who predicted that “1977 ought to terminate the world system and usher in the Millennium” — fails the tests of a prophet in Deuteronomy 13 and 18, and those who follow him ignore Jesus’ warnings of Matthew 7. (Sadly, some Branhamites say you can’t test Branham by the Bible because you can’t understand the Bible without Branham!) In Romans 16:17 the apostle Paul commanded the early church to “watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way.” Identifying and monitoring such groups in their many forms — and testing their claims by the Word of God — is at the very heart of apologetics research. And we must do more!

But thanks to your prayers and gifts, we recently sent a special updated warning and analysis of the Branham cult to nearly 2,000 evangelical pastors across Russia and Central Asia, and it will soon be sent to hundreds more! Will you help us to reach pastors, Christian workers, and lay believers in Africa, Latin America, and other lands where scriptural tools to resist the efforts of deceivers are in desperately short supply? 🌐



Paul Carden is the executive director of the Centers for Apologetics Research (CFAR), an international network of cult research and education agencies serving eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Latin America, and Africa. To contact him, write to paul@thecenters.org.

CFAR equips God’s people across borders and cultures for discernment, the defense of the faith, and cult evangelism. To learn how you can help, call CFAR at (949) 496-2000 or visit our web site at www.TheCenters.org.