

6.0 CHAPTER SIX: 'JESUS THE HEALER' MINISTRY

6.1 Introduction: Patience's Life History

Patience Nuhu was a Muslim convert to Christianity.¹ Her father, Tanko Kumbo² (now late), came to Wukari in the early 1960s. He was a renowned diviner, sorcerer and herbalist in Wukari in the mid 1960s through the early 1980s. People within and outside Wukari visited him for divination and treatment, especially charms, amulets and talismans for protection. Besides, he treated diverse sicknesses such as madness and demon possession, among others. He often held an annual ceremony to thank, propitiate and appease his healing spirits so that they might not fail him.³

Patience Nuhu is a teacher by profession.⁴ She got married to Nuhu Agbu in 1994 and divorced in 2003 due to family problems. An interview with Patience⁵ reveals that her life has been permeated with 'spiritual experiences'. First, right from her pre-teens (age 10 and below), she played the role of a 'spirit medium' and 'seer' because most of what she had been telling her parents manifested accordingly. She maintains that whenever she was sent to the divination room by any one of her parents, the forces through which her father operated failed in their functions. But any day she did not go to the room, the forces operated normally. This strange coincidence made her parents afraid of her and they described her as a 'spirit medium' and a 'seer'. She adds that her father once testified that the spirit in her was more powerful than his own. She feels that God picked her from the family to prove to her father that she has more power than he does. She claims that although her father treated diverse diseases, he could not deal with cases of 'occult powers and witchcraft'. Second, from the age of twelve onward, she started experiencing different trances and receiving different auditions

¹ Gabriel Zeba Gamseri, Interview, 16 October 2009, CRCN Kufai-Haske Jalingo; Exodus M. Adi, Interview, 10 November 2010, Takum. Patience revealed to me that her conversion to Christian faith led to diverse challenges such as attempted poisoning. When all these failed, her parent hounded her from the family as an outcast for seven years. She survived by living with one friend or another throughout those years. However, she had reconciled with her father before his death and led him to Christ. Agbu, Interview, 9 March 2010, Jalingo.

² Kumbo is one of the Jukun clans. They are popularly known by the Wápan of Wukari as 'Kpanzon'. The name 'Kumbo' is attached to his name because he came from a village, 'Kumbo', about 75 km east of Wukari. It is situated between Takum and Mararraba. Bulus Danladi Hinkon, Interview, 5 October 2009 & 26 September 2011, Wukari; Gamseri, Interview, 16 October 2009.

³ Gamseri, Interview, 16 October 2009; Adi, Interview, 16 November 2010.

⁴ Educational qualifications: Grade Two (1986), Government Teachers' College, Wukari; National Certificate of Education (NCE, 1991), College of Education, Jalingo; and Bachelor of Education (B.Ed, 2008), University of Jos. Adapted from her typescript *Curriculum Vitae*.

⁵ Patience Nuhu, Interview, 22 February 2011.

and voices (usually in esoteric language) revealing to her diverse intended actions such as death and sickness in Wukari community.

Her assertion that the ‘power of God’ in her supersedes that of her father may have various implications. It is possible that she learnt that from her father over time through accumulative observations and then gradually developed what she learnt. It is also possible that the father passed on to her the expertise knowingly or unknowingly. If so, she may be reconstructing the methods using innovations. In fact, some anonymous respondents acknowledged that her physical method of healing engagement (as will be discussed later) is similar to her father’s.⁶ However, she developed it further with many colourings. For example, I was told that her father always employed confrontation, harassment and molestation when dealing with spirit possession.⁷ It is possible that Patience translates this in her physical approach to healing, particularly chaining and beating children, in the course of her exorcism.

She adds that even after her conversion to the Christian faith, her pre-Christian power or ‘gift did not cease but slightly transformed with the Christian impact’.⁸ This time, she would use the name of Jesus to neutralise the forces that the father was employing in his divining apparatus. She maintains that whenever she went into the divination room, she would pronounce phrases such as ‘I destroy any demonic power in this room’.⁹ Whenever she did this in her pre-teens, the forces were neutralised. One day, her father told her that his spirits asked him to pass his gifts on to her because she was brave and could handle them properly. She refused, though, claiming that she would be serving two masters and would therefore die early. But her father assured her that his spirits would love her and she would make money. Still, she stood her ground that Jesus would provide all her needs.¹⁰ She concludes that her father gave her ‘all blessings’ before he died. The phrase, ‘all blessings’, could have diverse implications; in her explanation, it meant the restoration of the battered father-child relationships in the course of changed faith. Nevertheless, it may also mean that the father consequently imposed all his healing spirits on her through foods or unconsciously. It is difficult for her to say categorically that she inherited the spiritual powers of healing from her father. In any case, she still uses similar physical methods as used by her father during a

⁶ Anonymous, Interview, 26 September 2011, Sohwa-Wukari & 31 May 2012, Wukari.

⁷ Hinkon, Interview, 5 October 2009 & 26 September 2011.

⁸ Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010 & 22 February 2011.

⁹ Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010 & 22 February 2011.

¹⁰ Interview with Gamseri confirmed that she narrated same intention of the father to him. Gamseri, Interview, 16 October 2009; Adi, Interview, 16 November 2010.

healing exercise. However, she constructs it with innovations, believing that Jesus becomes the source of her power and not spirits, as was the case in the pre-Christian understanding. She is attempting to convert the old spirits.

Patience converted to the Christian faith in 1983 by Dawuda Kazon at the Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS) during her teacher training days at Government Teachers' College, Wukari. She initially confronted Kazon vehemently when he tried to reach out to her with the Christian gospel. But when she got back home that day, she lacked peace and had a sleepless night. It was there that she had a personal encounter with 'Jesus Christ'. In her experiences she notes:

I saw someone wearing a white garment and his face was so bright that I could not bear to see his face. The person called me three times and disappeared intermittently every hour with the words: "I am the Lord whom you are persecuting. Come, I would like to send you". The person's last and final call referred her to read Revelation 3:20.¹¹

Being a diehard Muslim and due to experiences from her father's practices, she thought it was a demon confronting her. So, she conducted the Muslim ablution and prayer to extirpate the demonic forces. Afterwards, her thoughts continued to oscillate between 'It is a true voice calling me for a mission' and 'It's a demon leading me astray'. She was confused and did not know whether to accept or reject the message. It was as if in her mind, rejecting the commission would relieve her from the inexplicable attack from her Muslim folk. However, the voice persisted. This conviction made her attend the College Chapel one Sunday in July 1983 for worship. Fortunately, the preacher, Mr. Caleb S.O. Ahima (now President of the CRCN), titled his message, 'Born Again'. When at the end of the sermon Ahima gave an altar call, Patience submitted her life to Jesus Christ.

News of Patience's conversion quickly reached her father, who came with some Muslim folk to deal decisively with her for renouncing the faith. The Muslim folk took her to an isolated place and interrogated her, but she did not deny that she had become a Christian. Consequently, they described her as an outcast and banned her from associating with Muslims.

After Patience's conversion, she joined the Deeper Life Bible Church as her denominational affiliation. According to her narration, after this episode, she continued to hear voices daily

¹¹ Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010.

telling her of the evil plans of the Muslim folk. Her parents and other Muslim acolytes made several attempts to harm her, but the voices always revealed to her before the intended evil plans could be carried and also told her about a way out.¹² The attacks were becoming so unbearable that she left her father's house and stayed with friends, moving from one house to the other for seven years.

Patience claimed that towards the close of the seventh year, a voice commanded her to return to her father's house. However, it also warned her of impending challenges ahead of her. When she returned, she started with three days' fasting. She experienced more attempts to poison her. Whenever such attempts were made, the voice always came with a warning: 'Do not eat the food or drink the water' and she always followed the advice of the voice. At a point, she became dumb for six months. In another period, a voice instructed her not to step out of her room but to remain indoors. After the exercise she realised that the Muslim folk had set a concoction right at her doorstep so that she might walk over it and be entrapped.

In Patience's early Christian commitments, she started with hospital evangelism, especially prayer-healing. Voices normally guided her on praying with patients in Wukari General Hospital, indicating the name of the patient, the ward and the bed number. She would get to the patient without seeking any further guidance from people. She would disclose to the patient her intended mission and then pray with him or her.¹³ In most cases the patients received healing, she claimed.

Patience's prayer-healing gifts developed alongside those of her husband, Nuhu Agbu, after their marriage in 1994.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the situation slightly changed when both of them started the ministry. The pertinent situation at the time was occult initiation of pupils and

¹² Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010 & 22 February 2011, Jalingo.

¹³ Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010.

¹⁴ It is not clear who among them (wife or husband) pioneered the establishment of the ministry. Patience claims to have been the initiator. However, conflict between her and her husband led to their divorce in 2003, the reasons being that she had more spiritual endowment; she became popular; but was barren. In contrast, her husband, Nuhu Agbu, debunks her claims, maintaining that he was the initiator of the healing ministry. He added that his wife, Patience, persuaded people that she had more spiritual endowment and gradually manoeuvred popularity. Sometimes, she would leave for healing mission without his consent. In the midst of all this, she started flirting in her so-called healing mission. He tried all he could to make his wife submit to him, but to no avail. This led to a divorce in 2003. Presently, Patience is on her own, managing this ministry. Her husband, on the other hand, established a separate ministry. Nuhu Agbu, Interview, 23 October 2009, Mile-Six, Jalingo; Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010 & 22 February 2011. Interviewed with their first two resident Pastors at CRCN Kufai-Jalingo revealed that the husband was the initiator but the wife has an aggressive spirit, was very zealous and pulled crowds to herself claiming she was the pioneer. Gamseri, Interview, 16 October 2009; Adi, Interview, 16 November 2010.

students by their peer groups, a growing menace that had been causing havoc in society. There were cases of mysterious and unexplainable incidents and sudden deaths of parents, most of whom were high ranking government officials and people of integrity. The episode was so alarming, including despair, depression and uncertainty. Both Patience and Nuhu believed that these misfortunes were the works of malignant forces working through pupils and students.

The belief in supernatural forces – good and bad – that can control people and events is widespread across faiths and cultures. It is traditionally believed in some African societies that such forces can be acquired voluntarily or involuntarily through foods.¹⁵ The substance is either consciously swallowed or unconsciously implanted in the initiate. From either of the ways, the substance is a sign of contract or treaty with the initiator. The gift has to be reciprocated. The diagnosis of such a possession is based on obsession with mystical causalities and personal experiences. Biological causes linked to climate change, environmental hazards, epidemics and inadequate medical facilities, among others are perceived as offshoots of the spirit possession.

Some faith-based ‘healers’ and ‘pastors’ [in Africa and African immigrants in the United Kingdom] have drawn from traditional beliefs and reconstructed a new interpretation which seeks to interpret *who* and not *what* is the cause of woes. Any breakdown in the familial social structure, economic downturn, inexplicable misfortune, sickness and death¹⁶ is generally blamed on others. The exorcists modified the traditional ideas of spirit possession

¹⁵ Daniel A. Offiong, ‘The 1978-79 Akpan Ekwong Anti-Witchcraft Crusade in Nigeria’, *Anthropologica* Vol. XXIV (1982), pp.27-42 (32-38); Justin Bahunga, ‘Tackling Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief’ pp.14-19 (14). Accessed 4 July 2013, freepdf.org/pdf/every-child-journal-safeguarding-tackling-abuse-linked-to-faith-or-belief-83104762; J.A. Molina, ‘The Invention of Child witches in the Democratic Republic of Congo, London: Save the Children’ (2006), p.11. Accessed 31 May 2013, http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/docs/The_Invention_of_Child_Witches%281%291.pdf;

Aleksandra Cimpric, ‘Children Accused of Witchcraft: An Anthropological Study of Contemporary Practices in Africa’ (UNICEF WCARO, Dakar April 2010), pp.1-55 (11,12). Accessed 5 July 2013, freepdf.org/pdf/children-accused-of-witchcraft-78458510.html; UNICEF ‘The Causes and Prevalence of Accusation of Witchcraft among Children in Akwa Ibom State’ (June 2008), pp.1-31 (7, 14). Accessed 4 July 2013, freepdf.org/the-causes-and-prevalence-of-accusation-of-witchcraft-among-children-in-akwa-ibom-state-62572984.html; UNICEF, ‘At a Glance: Nigeria-Cases of “Witchcraft” Rising in Parts of West and Central Africa’. Accessed 14 November 2012, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nigeria_55301.html.

¹⁶ Eleanor Stobart, ‘Child Abuse Linked to Accusation of “Possession” and “Witchcraft” – Research Report by Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2006), pp.1-32 (19). Accessed 4 July 2013, freepdf.org/pdf/child-abuse-linked-to-accusation-of-possession-and-witchcraft-34441792.

with a focus on Christian demonology.¹⁷ In their interpretations, they ignored biological factors, but focused more on explaining the spiritual or mystical causalities. This has been a common scenario in the Niger Delta region, southeast Nigeria,¹⁸ the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)¹⁹ and among African immigrants in the UK.²⁰

In the Niger Delta region, for example, the oil firms subjected the society to large-scale air, land and sea contamination, which in turn affected the health conditions of the dwellers.²¹ The dwellers failed to understand this scientific factor. They rather tried to find out the mystical causalities of their woes. In so doing, they approached some self-styled faith-based ‘pastors’ of the emerging deliverance ministries for explanation of their multiple mishaps. Most of these ‘pastors’ whom I may call ‘modern spiritists’, or ‘modern diviners and seers’ are quick to reconstruct new interpretations of misfortunes which always links with mystical causalities. These people have a potential profit-motive and they see ministries as lucrative business.

¹⁷ J. LaFontaine, ‘Child witches in London: Tradition and Change in religious Practice and Belief’ in J. LaFontaine (ed.), *The Devil’s Children – From Spirit Possession to Witchcraft: New Allegations that Affect Children* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp.117-128 (119-120).

¹⁸ Uwen Essia, ‘The Social Economy of Child Witch Labelling in Nigeria: The Case of Akwa Ibom State’ in *Science Journal of Psychology* (2012), pp.1-11. Accessed 4 July 2013, <http://www.freepdfb.org/pdf/the-social-economy-62572988.html>; Odimegwu Onwumere, ‘The Unending Child Witch Phenomena in Akwa Ibom’. Accessed 4 July 2013, [Freepdfb.org/the-unending-child-phenomenon-in-akwa-ibom-62572977.html](http://www.freepdfb.org/the-unending-child-phenomenon-in-akwa-ibom-62572977.html); Report on Accusations of Witchcraft against Children in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria’ pp.1-37. Accessed 31 May 2013, <http://www.experts.com/content/articles/gfoxcroft1-Accusation-Witchcraft-Against-Children.pdf>.

¹⁹ Danielle Gram, ‘Child Witches and Witch Hunts: New Images of the Occult in the Democratic Republic of Congo’ in *Harvard Humanitarian Initiative* (April 2011), pp1-65 (47). Accessed 4 July 2013, [freepdfb.org/child-witches-and-witch-hunts-new-images-of-occult-in-59730922.html](http://www.freepdfb.org/child-witches-and-witch-hunts-new-images-of-occult-in-59730922.html); Kevani Kanda, ‘Branded a Witch... My take on the BBC3 Documentary’. Accessed 8 July 2013, http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b01swd7g/Branded_a_Witch/; J.T. Eberhard, ‘Children Accused of Witchcraft by the Tens of Thousands in the Congo’. Accessed 31 May 2013, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/wwjtd/2013/05/children-accused-of-witchcraft-by-the-tens-of-thousands-in-the-congo/>; <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/articles/469216/20130520/branded-witch-bbc-democratic-republic-congo-kindoki.htm>.

²⁰ Richard Hoskins, ‘BBC3 Newsnight: Link between Belief in Spirit Possession, Witchcraft and Religion’. Accessed & Transcribed 6 July 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlvwgVkJpac>; Stobart, ‘Child Abuse Linked to Accusation of “Possession” and “Witchcraft”’; Perdeep Gill, ‘Safeguarding Children and Beliefs in Spirit Possession and Witchcraft’. Accessed 4 July 2013, [freepdfb.org/pdf/safeguarding-children-and-beleiefs-in-spirit-possession-and-witchcraft-30653968.html](http://www.freepdfb.org/pdf/safeguarding-children-and-beleiefs-in-spirit-possession-and-witchcraft-30653968.html); Juliana Oladipo, ‘Britain’s Witch Children: Reporter Feature Exclusive’. Accessed 11 June 2013, <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/dispatches/articles/britains-witch-children-reporter-feature>; ‘Dispatches: Witch Children in the UK – Channel4’. Accessed 9 July 2013, <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/dispatches/articles/witch-child-in-the-uk/>; ‘Britain’s Witch Children’. Accessed 13 June 2013, <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/dispatches/episode-guide/series-67/episode-1>.

²¹ ‘Child-Witch Branding in Nigeria’. Accessed 31 May 2013, <http://www.worldpulse.com/node/50624>.

In the DRC, for example, unending civil wars, poverty and diseases bedevilled the society.²² The recruitment of child-soldiers in the course of civil wars made children brave.²³ Many parents died in the course of wars and the children thus outnumbered the elderly.²⁴ Children stayed with their guardians and stepparents, and the guardians were unable to cope with the cost of living. The social stresses and economic strains made the guardians and stepparents believe that children could be maleficent to the entire familial social structure. When revivalist churches established on the basis of mystical revelation of the ‘pastors’ came on the scene, the ‘pastors’ railed against *kindoki* spirits as the cause of the society’s woes.²⁵ *Kindoki* spirits were used to explain all ‘evil’ events, and children became the scapegoats of parents, guardians and revivalist ‘pastors’. The parents believe in the ability of the ‘pastors’ to respond to their multiple problems. The ‘pastors’ confirm and legitimise their suspicion by accusing the children of being possessed by *kindoki* spirits, causing family woes. They then claim to have the ability to exorcise the *kindoki* spirits, but for rogue monetary purposes. Kevani Kanda, a Congo-born Londoner, speaking in a BBC documentary,²⁶ has uncovered how such self-styled ‘pastors’ engaged in violent exorcism to extract confessions and extirpate *kindoki* spirits from the allegedly ‘possessed’ children. About 50,000 children held in revivalist churches passed through violent exorcism. The revivalist ‘pastors’ hybridise primal religious beliefs with Christian beliefs in terms of battles between good and evil.²⁷

For the African immigrants in the UK, the situation is extremely difficult with unemployment, harsh economic challenges,²⁸ social deprivation, health issues, familial disintegration and other stressors.²⁹ Since parents and guardians could not cope with their own challenges, they blamed their children for causing them. Richard Hoskins, a sociologist

²² Kanda, ‘Branded a Witch... My take on the BBC3 Documentary’; Eberhard, ‘Children Accused of Witchcraft by the Tens of Thousands in the Congo’; ‘Branded a Witch’ Children Accused of Witchcraft BBC Full Documentary 2013;

²³ Cahn, ‘Poor Children: Child “Witches” and Child Soldiers in Sub-Saharan Africa’, pp.413-456.

²⁴ M. Waddington, ‘“Child Witches”, Child Soldiers, Child Poverty and Violence: Street Children in Crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo’, Report by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Street Children in its Mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo’ (2006), p.10. Accessed 31 May 2013, http://cfsc.trunk.net/uploads/Publications/Child_witches_child_soldiers_child_poverty_and_violence_street_children_in_crisis_in_the_DRC.pdf.

²⁵ Cahn, ‘Poor Children: Child “Witches” and Child Soldiers in Sub-Saharan Africa’, p.414.

²⁶ Kanda, ‘Branded a Witch... My take on the BBC 3 Documentary’.

²⁷ Cahn, ‘Poor Children: Child “Witches” and Child Soldiers in Sub-Saharan Africa’, p.447; Danielle Gram, ‘Child Witches and Witch Hunts’, pp.17, 19, 23.

²⁸ Oladipo, ‘Britain’s Witch Children: Reporter Feature Exclusive’; Hunt, ‘Why is Child Abuse Tied to Witchcraft on the Rise?’ *The Guardian*, 18 January 2012; ‘Dispatches: Witch Children in the UK – Channel4’.

²⁹ Stobart, ‘Child Abuse Linked to Accusation of “Possession” and “Witchcraft”’.

in UK, revealed on BBC 3 Newsnight³⁰ programme that self-styled ‘pastors’ justified social stresses and economic strains as caused by evil spirits and *kindoki* carried by children. The rogue pastors operated behind closed doors – homes, garages and schools – without any government control and regulation. They accused children of possessing *kindoki* spirits and asked parents or guardians to pay for exorcism. The recorded exorcism films are sold on the market.

In the Niger Delta of Nigeria, the DRC and among the African immigrants in the UK, guardians, parents and stepparents have been bypassing the evangelical ministers to consult self-styled faith-based ‘exorcists’ for interpretation of their misfortunes.

Both electronic and print media have extensively documented these issues suspecting, accusing and abusing children of spirit possession or *kindoki* (witchcraft). This study seeks to focus on the issue of spirit possession (or rather, occult practice), a ‘modernised’ form of witchcraft.³¹ Spirit possession-like witchcraft in traditional belief, is said to be one of the major causes of misfortune, sickness and death.³² In many African countries, the pendulum of accusation of old women and consequent ordeals is being swung³³ to the scapegoating of children by parents, guardians, stepparents and self-styled faith-based ‘exorcists’.³⁴ The

³⁰ Hoskins, ‘BBC3 Newsnight: Link between Belief in Spirit Possession, Witchcraft and Religion’.

³¹ This study will use the terms ‘witchcraft’ and ‘occult power’ or ‘spirit possession’ interchangeably. However, the slight shift between the two is that unlike witchcraft which could be inherited from the bloodline, occult power is believed to be acquired or imposed voluntarily or unconsciously through substances. The issue of ‘inheritance’ [in terms of ‘witchcraft’] will not be stressed as ‘acquired’ [in terms of ‘occult power’].

³² E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (London: Clarendon Press, 1937), p.53; Aleksandra Cimpric, ‘Children Accused of Witchcraft: An Anthropological Study of Contemporary Practices in Africa’ (UNICEF WCARO, Dakar, April 2010), pp.1-55 (14). Accessed 5 July 2013, freepdfb.org/pdf/children-accused-of-witchcraft-78458510.html.

³³ Oliver Duff, ‘Tanzania Suffers Rise of Witchcraft Hysteria’ in *The Independent*, 28 November 2005, Accessed 9 July 2013, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/tanzania-suffers-rise-of-witchcraft-hysteria-517157.html>; ‘Gender and Witchcraft Killings in Tanzania’ *Tomric Agency* 27 March 2000. Accessed 9 July 2013, <http://www.thelizlibrary.org/site-index/site-index-frame.html#soulhttp://www.thelizlibrary.org/brett/brett009.htm>; Elom Dovlo, ‘Witchcraft in Contemporary Ghana’ in Gerrie Ter Haar (ed.), *Imagining Evil, Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* (Trenton, NJ/Asmara, ERITREA: African World Press, 2007), pp.67-92; M. Adinkrah ‘Witchcraft Accusations and Female Homicide Victimization in Contemporary Ghana’, *Violence Against Women*, Vol.10, No. 4 (2004), pp.325-356; ‘Kenya Mob burns 15 Women to Death over Witchcraft’ *AFP*, 21 May 2008 http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=080521153625.1jzzvn1&show_article=1; ‘Stop Violence Towards Older Women’, *HelpAge International*, 14 June 2007 [online]. Accessed 13 November 2013, <http://www.helpage.org/News/Latestnews/lyj3>.

³⁴ Bahunga, ‘Tackling Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief’ p.14; Stobart, ‘Child Abuse Linked to Accusation of “Possession” and “Witchcraft”’, p. 25; R. Brain, ‘Child Witches’, in M. Douglas (ed.), *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London: Tavistock Press, 1970), p.178; Leo Igwe, ‘Child Witch Killings and Africans’, Accessed 17 April 2013, <http://www.randi.org/site/index.php/swift-blog/2000-child-witch-killings-and-africans.html>; Children Abused, killed as Witches in Nigeria – *cnn.com.mp4*, Accessed & Transcribed 9 July 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrvHYHzDDIs&feature=endscreen>.

accused children are usually subjected to various forms of victimisation, leaving them with lasting trauma, stigma, discrimination and neglect by the family and community. The children are hounded away from their families. They are denied access to health care, education, family care and support. The children most vulnerable in this accusation are those who lost their parent(s) and had been displaying deviant behaviour while staying with their guardians, or stepparents.³⁵

Indeed, such parents or guardians are ignorant of the fact that the children's strange behaviour, mood disorders and other abnormalities are part of normal child development which is sometimes complex and dynamic. It is unfortunate for guardians or stepparents to suspect their children to be the cause of their woes. Bypassing the evangelical ministers and consulting self-styled exorcists for explanation, confirmation and legitimisation is maleficent. The exorcists for profit-motive reconstruct a new interpretation of social stresses and economic strains³⁶ which exonerates guardians, stepparents and foster parents, while scapegoating children. The interpretation of the self-styled exorcists always obliges them to hybridise traditional beliefs with extreme Christian tenets.³⁷ They also claim to have the ability to exorcise evil forces through spiritual warfare, subjecting the accused children to violent exorcism.³⁸ Obviously, they are making much fortune in the 'exorcism' as they exploit the gullible parents and guardians. Like the self-styled exorcists and revivalists 'pastors', this ministry also hybridises primal and extreme Christian tenets. This chapter seeks to argue that the hybridisation of the religious beliefs by this ministry is based on the personal obsession and personal experience of the exorcist, an obsession which distorts both traditional and Christian beliefs. To understand this conclusion, the researcher seeks to trace the life history of the exorcist, social circumstances, emergence of the ministry, as well as the

³⁵ Stobart, 'Child Abuse Linked to Accusation of "Possession" and "Witchcraft"', pp.11, 15, 20; Gram, 'Child Witches and Witch Hunts', pp.6-7.

³⁶ Max Marwick, 'Witchcraft as a Social Strain-gauge', in *Australian Journal of Science* Vol. 26 (1964), pp.263-268; UNICEF 'The Causes and Prevalence of Accusation of Witchcraft among Children in Akwa Ibom State' (June 2008), pp.1-31 (5,15). Accessed 4 July 2013, freepdfb.org/the-causes-and-prevalence-of-accusation-of-witchcraft-among-children-in-akwa-ibom-state-62572984.html.

³⁷ Gram, 'Child Witches and Witch Hunts' p.17; 'Witch Child Documentary – Channel4 (2008)'; Gram, 'African Witch Children Pt. 3'. Accessed and Transcribed 9 July 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d82BKZhPPVE>; Harrison, "'Child-Witches" of Nigeria Seek Refuge'.

³⁸ Daniel DeFraia, 'Nigeria Introduces Law to Protect "Witch" Children'. Accessed 31 May 2013, <http://www.globalpost/dispatches/news/religios/africa/nigeria/121101/nigeria-introduces-law-protect-witch-children>; 'Return to Africa's Witch Children'. Accessed 6 July 2013, <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/return-to-africas-witch-children>.

interpretation, procedures and methods of exorcism. Impacts and setbacks will be considered, followed by comments and conclusions.

6.2 Occult Practice, a Modernised Form of Witchcraft

Over time, Jalingo (northern part of Wukari) has been experiencing environmental hazards, in particular intermittent floods³⁹ and epidemics. Other circumstances are poverty, inadequate health facilities, sudden death, educational backwardness, unemployment, political instability and retrenchment, among others. On the one hand, people are unable to cope with social stresses and economic hardships. On the other hand, the oscillated modernity generated a quest for power, fame, popularity and prosperity. The situation interspersed between backwardness and foreseeing progress with its untold competition. Poverty and inadequate health facilities recorded a death toll, especially of vibrant and influential people in the society. These scenarios called for prayer cells in homes by individual families after supper for God's intervention. These prayer commitments circulated the information that rich people via their children in schools mostly inducted children into occult practice. The common means of induction is said to be through children offering food items to their peer groups. In this way they took or drained the life-force of other influential people in the society. It is said that the giver would return disguised as an animal in the night demanding the payback of a more precious and loved human being. It is believed that the initiators always lure their victims with promises of all sorts of assets (Prov.1:8-19) if they would sacrifice their parents or guardians. The initiates ignorantly succumb to the demands.⁴⁰

The common factors are family hardships and deviant behaviour of children, especially aggression, self-isolation, truancy, rebellion and disobedience. Although change in behaviour or mood disorder is part of child development, it was given serious spiritual interpretation as initiation or induction into occult practice. A few rhetorical questions arise: Could it be that

³⁹ Jalingo Local Government in Taraba State consists of undulating plain interspersed with mountainous ranges. It is drained by two major rivers: Mayogwoi and Lamurde which took their source from the mountain ranges in Yorro Local Government Area (LGA) and emptied their contents into the Benue River. The society often experiences flash floods during heavy downpours. Two extreme flood events affected the society on August 7, 2005 and August 14, 2011. Many houses were destroyed, farms washed away, people lost their lives and others displaced, See E.D. Oruonye, 'Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of Flash Flood in Jalingo Metropolis, Taraba State, Nigeria', *International Journal of Environmental Science*, Vol.1, No. 3 (2012), pp.135-140.

⁴⁰ Comments by various participants at the three-day prayer and fasting organised by Priscilla Jolly Nyame. Adapted from Video CD record, 21-24 August 2003, NTA Jalingo.

parents and guardians were not giving their children adequate care and support? Were religious instructors in schools playing their roles by giving adequate moral instruction? Were they really acting as appropriate role models to pupils and students in the schools? These are for the ministry areas where parents, teachers and government failed, thus contributing to the occult initiation of pupils and students.

An analysis of the video documentary carried out by the National Television Authority (NTA) Jalingo⁴¹ reveals two basic factors that led to the said induction into occult practice. First, in the home, the parents or guardians who were mostly civil servants were negligent and had lukewarm attitudes towards regulating and controlling the deviant behaviours of their children.⁴² Parents or guardians had little or no time for family morning and evening devotions. Children would leave and return home at will; children would walk in and out with strange children unknown to their parents; children would bring new things such as food, cloth and other items to the home; children would return from school and often refuse to take their lunch; children would return from play in the evening and refuse to take supper. In all these instances, parents failed to take control measures. In most cases, moral education in the home was left in the hand of one parent, especially the mother. Second, in the schools, the level of moral and religious education was deteriorating. This was because of unqualified religious instructors whose lives were not worth emulating by the pupils and students.⁴³ This opened Pandora's Box for peer groups to cast spells on other children.

Fundamental to the problem was the fact that the parents had failed in carrying out their parent-child responsibility of spiritual formation. In the school setting, the teachers had little or nothing to offer the pupils and students as role models due to their inadequate qualification. There were no adequately conducive teaching-learning tools and facilities. Therefore, the parents, the teachers and the government failed terribly in their obligations. Still, it is possible that the church was not really involved in the moral formation of the children through the children's Sunday schools.

⁴¹ Video CD record, 21 – 24 August 2003, NTA Jalingo.

⁴² Danji Aji, Interview, 18 October 2009, Jalingo.

⁴³ Yakubu S. Garba, Interview, 17 October 2009, Jalingo.

6.3 Emergence of ‘Jesus the Healer-Prayer’ Ministry

With the above pertinent circumstances, there was a desire for an intercessory ministry that would mediate and exorcise occult practices. This was perceived as a mystical problem requiring a truly spiritual approach, and not one that a hospital or traditional herbal homes could address.⁴⁴ This called for a ministry that focused on extirpating occult initiations in order to safeguard the lives of people that would direct the affairs of the society.

‘Jesus the Healer-Prayer Ministry’ was started in 1999 by a married couple called Patience Hajara and Nuhu Agbu. Their focus was on pupils and students, fifteen-year-olds and below who were allegedly caught up in occult practices. The couple believed that the child-occult initiates are the major causes of family and social woes, death and retrogressive lives. The couple started with two days’ fasting and thanksgiving in the family. This was to seek the ‘will’ and ‘power of God’ in interceding and extirpating occult powers.⁴⁵ Later the children in the family joined them after supper. In their meetings, they carried out activities such as singing, praise and worship, Bible study, Scriptural exhortations and prayers. It is said that in the course of praise, worship and prayer sessions, children passed through diverse ‘spiritual experiences’, writhing, flailing and vomiting different things.⁴⁶ The couple scheduled five days for their weekly activities: Mondays, fasting; Tuesdays, deliverance; Thursdays, fasting, teaching and Bible study; Fridays, night vigil; and Saturdays, singing and preaching.⁴⁷

The fundamental aims of these activities were to counteract the evil forces attacking the society through the pupils and students. With time, the house of the couple became a deliverance centre.⁴⁸ Between 2000 and 2002, information about this ministry spread fast to bordering towns in the north, east, south and west. There were three major factors: first, electronic media, especially the documentary by NTA Jalingo, intermittent television broadcast, video clips. The primary aim of the NTA among others was to inform the public about the emerging evils in the society through induction of children and consequent woes on the family and the society. Second, the oral discourse by eyewitnesses and transmission to others about the practices of the ministry and confessions extracted from children to being occult practitioners. Third, they taught that, among other things, child deviant behaviour was

⁴⁴ Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012, Jalingo.

⁴⁵ Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010.

⁴⁶ Hassana Abuse, Interview, 20 February 2012, Jalingo.

⁴⁷ Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010.

⁴⁸ Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010.

the main sign and symptom of occult initiations. Some eyewitnesses of the confessions made by children inducted into occult practice disseminated the information to others over and over again, thus intensifying the fear and apprehension of spells that the victims might cast on the other members of the family and society. Families from the immediate and mediate neighbourhood became suspicious of the changing behaviour and mood disorders of their children.

In the subsequent segment, I will be dealing with the teachings of the ministry about the operation of occult powers through children aged fifteen and below, information accessed from the NTA videos, oral dissemination of information about the child-occult initiates and supplementary explanations from the ministry officers.

6.4 Teachings: *Modus Operandi* of Child-Occult Initiations

Occult powers are the spirit beings who work mysteriously at various times and in designated places all over the world. These spirits are believed to dwell in the rocks, mountains, stones, wood, trees, forests, groves and rivers, among others.⁴⁹ It is believed that an occult guild is like a social club, but maintains long-lasting diabolic and demonic covenants for the present and latter generations.⁵⁰ Only initiates and potential initiates visit their domain. The occult initiates promise their followers success, good fortune and prosperity if they are loyal and always meet required demands. On some occasions, they demand that their subjects nominate the one they love most as ‘an inheritor’ to continue the covenant after their demise. This led many child-occult initiates to submit the names of beloved parents or guardians. Eventually, the nominated person dies mysteriously.⁵¹ In no circumstance can the initiate back out of the covenant. Backing out is tantamount to exposing their mysterious dealings in their guild. The forewarned repercussion is either incessant pestering or sudden death.

Occult powers in every society are said to have their particular domain. This ministry frequently refers to rivers as the domain of the occult forces. Each domain has an ‘altar’

⁴⁹ An overview of what occult operation entails, briefly stated by the leader of ‘Jesus the Healer-Prayer Ministry’ Video CD Record, 21- 24 August 2003, NTA Jalingo.

⁵⁰ John Caleb & Elisha Nehemiah, Interview, 13 February 2012, CRCN Station Wukari; Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012.

⁵¹ Video CD Record, 28 July 2003, NTA Jalingo at the 3-day prayer and fasting by both Muslim and Christian Women Affairs in Jalingo.

where initiates meet to commune and receive guidance under the ‘supervising spirits’. The initiates draw their spiritual powers from the ‘altar’ to harm others and to prosper in society.⁵² The site and type of ‘altar’ depends on the place of habitation of the supervising spirit. Members take potential initiates there for initiation. Sometimes the occult powers exploit images such as artefacts – pictures, woodcarvings, metal sculpture and statues placed in the homes – as decoration for their operation.⁵³ Once the fabricators, usually initiates, dedicate these items to occult powers, they cease to be mere ordinary objects.

Moreover, the occult powers are believed to take control of business places and farmlands. They ruin businesses and cause infertility of the land.⁵⁴ This misfortune could be reversed (to fortune, progress, favour and blessing) if prayers are said over the sand taken from business places and soil from farmlands.

An erstwhile child-occult initiate reveals that children have spouses in the occult realm and cause physical marital breakdown.⁵⁵ This usually starts with instability in the marital commitments where either of the couple is married to a ‘spirit spouse’. In some cases, the initiate might have given birth to ‘spirit children’ with a ‘spirit spouse’. The child-occult initiate would be causing either of the physical spouses to have endless nightmares of familiarity with someone to the extent that he or she wakes up in the morning with wet pants from the spilled semen or wet beds. In this case, either of the ‘spirit spouses’ will be attacking the real physical spouse because of jealousy and rivalry. In a similar vein, the ‘spirit children’ will be attacking the physical children through deteriorating health conditions because of rivalry and competition for inheritance. Beyond this, ‘spirit children’ often cause barrenness and rampant miscarriages, painful menstruation, regular complications and death-threatening conditions in relation to childbirths, and impotence or male dysfunction.

The ministry officers add that child-occult initiates also cause prolonged bachelorhood and spinsterhood, lesbianism and homosexuality, and even widowhood.⁵⁶ The issue of bachelorhood and spinsterhood comes out clearly when, for example, almost all preparations for marriage are in place, and there is a sudden separation between the intended married couples without apparent reason. If such happens, there is rivalry and jealousy between the

⁵² Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012.

⁵³ Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010.

⁵⁴ Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012.

⁵⁵ Hassana Gideon, Interview, 16 February 2012, Jalingo.

⁵⁶ Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012.

spirit and physical spouses, on the one hand; and jealousy and inheritance between the spirit and physical children on the other hand. This rivalry sometimes affects economic progress. The physical children would hardly be able to manage the assets of their late parents and hardly get established in good businesses. In this case, the ‘spirit children’ might have either whisked the inheritance away from the legitimate physical children, and/or diverted their father’s wealth and attention away from them. The officers stress that this is one of the basic reasons why legitimate children sometimes would hardly retain the wealth of their deceased parents. If the business prospers, it will later face a disaster that would ruin the business or take away the inheritor(s) of the business one after the other.⁵⁷

On lesbianism and homosexuality, those who had once engaged in spirit lesbian or homosexual practice, and later marry in the physical realm will hardly remain in the marriage commitment. This is very common where wealthy women and men of forty (40) years and above still unmarried, have many young ladies and gentlemen under their care. These ladies and gentlemen are their ‘spirit spouses’ whom they always have familiarity with in the spirit realm.⁵⁸

In the case of widowhood, the ‘spirit spouse’ would kill either of the physical spouses because of jealousy and for sacrifices.⁵⁹

It can be deduced from the above beliefs revealed by an erstwhile child-occult initiate and from supplementary information from the ministry officers that all social problems connected to marriage are linked to the machinations of occult forces. Admittedly, evil takes various forms. However, the implication here is that God intends *all to marry and give birth*, but occult powers have been thwarting this plan. The ministry has clouded its mind to such an extent that biological causations have become irrelevant in these circumstances. The ministry has justified incidents and events on the basis of mystical causalities. This is an over-statement because it exonerates people from fault, ignorance and wilful practices that may adversely affect child bearing. This is not to deny the fact that evil spirits may work behind such incidents. But to make a balance of the issue, other aspects must be taken into consideration, and not be necessarily or exclusively over-spiritualised. Over-spiritualisation instils fear and apprehension in the bid to create fame and popularity for negative purposes.

⁵⁷ Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012.

⁵⁸ Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012.

⁵⁹ Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012.

While plagues are generally believed to be a natural evil, the ministry considers that the child-occult initiates work behind plagues. For example, they use pests to destroy farm produce. The ministry officers deduced from their obsessions, experiences and the confessions made by children and assert that child-occult initiates normally disguise themselves as birds and withdraw or burn the produce. It is further believed that on some occasions, they disguise themselves as animals and trespass through the middle of the farm, causing mischief. The wind that follows them will then carry away the produce of the farm.⁶⁰ The officers explain that this is the basic reason why one may farm a large portion of land and do all the necessary maintenance, yet it yields hardly anything. The ministry always encourages praying over the farmland and anointing it before farming and planting. While it is good to commit everything to God's protection, this ministry does not consider climate change and environmental hazards as contributing factors to this circumstance. Scientific causes are relegated to the background while mystical causalities are upheld. The ministry here either reverses natural evil for moral evil or claims that moral evil uses natural evil to deteriorate progress.

Besides, child-occult initiates are said to be the ones causing the sudden death of family members in the prime of their lives. Sometimes a family member would be wealthy in his early life, but die a mendicant.⁶¹ This view presupposes that the wealthy will remain wealthy and the poor will remain poor. This is an extreme view that blames failures on occult powers. Not all that started well must end well. Sometimes it is because of a lack of planning and management, uncontrolled stresses and strains in life experiences.

Moreover, the ministry teaches that child-occult initiates often employ omens between 12:00 midnight and 2:00 am for their nefarious gain. 'Omen' in this case refers to incidents in peoples' lives related to animals, objects and plants which are often associated with evil spirits.⁶² The child-occult initiates disguise themselves as owls hooting in the night, or as an animal or someone walking on the ceiling or roof of the house. Sometimes one hears a sound as if someone is spreading sand on the roof or ceiling. It is said that these are means of taking away wealth from the life or hand of a person. Still sometimes the child-occult initiates

⁶⁰ David Gambo Tsokwa, Interview, 16 February 2012, Jalingo.

⁶¹ Nuhu Masinja, Interview, 22 February 2012, Jalingo.

⁶² Some of the incidents are colliding with a stone, muscular spasm in the arm or palm, quivering of the upper eyelid, baby crying or dog barking or digging a hole, or fowl clucking in the night with unexplainable cause, an owl perched on a house or nearby tree hooting in a dream, or fighting with a monkey and kicking a leg on the ground, among others.

disguise themselves as a familiar animal chasing a person in a nightmare.⁶³ The ministry conceptualises nightmares as mechanistic evil devised by occult powers to bring despair, depression and hopelessness. Anything can happen in the night but it would be a sweeping generalisation to link all events and incidents to mystical causes. Indeed, nightmares could be a reversal of daily activity, positive or negative; that is, causal happenings which do not need any spiritualisation. A nightmare could therefore be a natural phenomenon which surfaces when a person engages in extreme thinking, or is passing through a neurotic disorder or has a high fever.

Drug addiction among children is one of the social problems among peer groups. Children take mind-altering substances to be bold, brave and maintain popularity. The ministry believes that the child-occult initiates also work behind such mind-altering substances to inflict the children with deviant behaviour. For example, a few common forms of substance abuse in the society are applying petrol on the handkerchief and inhaling; grinding dry lizard faeces and inhaling; applying rubber solution on handkerchief and inhaling; and diluting penicillin in a bottle of Coca-Cola and drinking.⁶⁴ These in some cases result in mental derangement which requires psychiatric attention. The ministry teaches that these are mechanisations of occult practices. But this conclusion exonerates children from moral misconduct and blames occult forces for the breach.

Another teaching commonly stressed by the ministry is that occult powers implant diverse animals (lizards, snakes, flies) and objects (golden rings, sponge, iron) into the stomach of child-occults initiates to give them power to operate. The Efik and Ibibio of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, the DRC society and the Azande of the Anglo-Egypt share this perception that spiritual spells can be given to someone through food or other objects which help exude the soul from the body to wreak havoc on others.⁶⁵ This ministry believes that rings are symbols of initiation, iron is a source of courage, lizards are sources of power, sponge is a means of

⁶³ Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012; Angyunwe, Interview, 10 February 2011; Aji, Interview, 9 February 2011. See also A. Oepke, 'Ö vap', [dream] in Geoffrey W. Bromiley (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume* (Database 2007 WORDsearch Corp), p.693; 'Dreaming', in Robert Banks & R. Paul Stevens (eds.), *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity* (Database 2003 WORDsearch Corp.), p.310; 'Dreams' in Walter A. Elwell & Philip W. Comfort (eds.), *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Database 2006 WORDsearch Corp.), p.391.

⁶⁴ Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012.

⁶⁵ 'Child-Witch Branding in Nigeria'. Accessed 31 May 2013, <http://www.worlpulse.com/node/50624>; see also UNICEF Report of April 2010. Cimpric, 'Children Accused of Witchcraft: An Anthropological Study of Contemporary Practices in Africa', p.19; Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, p.7; Offiong, 'The 1978-79 Akpan Ekwong Anti-Witchcraft Crusade in Nigeria', pp.32-38.

undermining progress, snake bites and cats are fast killers, flies take away one's spirit.⁶⁶ The objects and animals are messengers of attack by occult spirits. However, if they discover that the initiate intends to back out, they will turn the items to harm them. The victim will feel excruciating pain in the stomach.⁶⁷ As would be discussed later, the ministry leader does not lay hands for exorcism but holds the stomach by the side ribs and shakes thoroughly while in exorcism, this is believed to be a way of ejecting all animals and objects implanted in the stomach. It is also believed that occult powers always attack and secrete the soul of a victim in a designated place, although the victim may be physically alive.

From the foregoing discussions on occult operations, it is explicit that the ministry believes occult operations to be behind all misfortunes, sicknesses and death. The occult is therefore the underlying cause of life-challenging situations. Even though the ministry seems to understand that biological causes, environmental hazards, natural and moral evils contribute to adverse challenges, it conceptualises that they are only agents whereas the ultimate cause is occult power. The ministry therefore glosses over scientific aspects but raises the role of mystical causalities to the highest. This mind-set rather spiritualises everything based on belief, obsession and personal experiences. This does not deny the fact that evils work through diverse ways but giving spiritual meaning to all events and incidents is the main problem. Further, the live interview and recordings by NTA Jalingo aired intermittently generated massive support and care, on the one hand, and fear and apprehension, on the other hand. People always believe in the spells that the occult power might cast on other members of the family. There is widespread belief and hysteria over the threats of occult power. As a result, both the media and oral dissemination highlight the confessions of the occult initiates. For this people are misled into misinterpreting and misapplying events and incidents, thereby scapegoating children. To confirm and legitimise their suspicion on the purported child-occult initiates, they take (the alleged occult children) to the ministry for diagnosis, to extract confessions and to rid them of the evil spirits. From record, rarely does an alleged child who is brought to the ministry escape the accusation of occult initiation. The accused child-occult initiates are held in the ministry⁶⁸ for some time, until the evil spirits have been visibly and

⁶⁶ Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012.

⁶⁷ Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012.

⁶⁸ This is a prototype of 'in-patients' or conventional 'medical admissions' for close observation and medication. These children are seen to have critical spiritual problems that need to be addressed spiritually through prolonged exorcism. Others whose problems are not seen as critical attend the ministry's programmes from their homes.

successfully adjured. The next segment seeks to explore how this ministry determines occult initiation and the consequent ways of getting rid of the evil forces.

6.5 Procedures for Effective Exorcism

6.5.1 Fasting

This ministry believes that fasting gives spiritual strength and divine impartation for exorcism. The ministry stipulates fasting at various time frames and at designated mountains, especially the tallest mountain behind the Federal Medical Centre, Jalingo. The ministry considers the summit of the mountains as being God's preferred dwelling place. This ministry draws from the Jewish religious consciousness that the summits of the mountains were places of favourable and profound contact with God.⁶⁹ Yet the experience of God's power is not confined to the mountains. God acts everywhere, both in the depths as well as on the heights. God worked with His people in the desert, too.

The ministry asserts that fasting on the mountain gives empowerment, a foresight of what will happen and how to avert the situation.⁷⁰ In the belief of the ministry, a mountain is a place of godly manifestation, and where godly consent is sought and power bestowed on the devotee. The ministry intercessors climb and descend the mountain during scheduled fasting periods. The perception of the ministry is that any fasting intending to achieve the required goal needs a solemn place. The devotee during fasting must refrain from using all social amenities, for example, switch off all handsets; abstain from bathing; desist from brushing the teeth and washing of the face.⁷¹ It is believed that attachment to water in this period of exercise will lead to relaxation and sleep, while cutting off from all kinds of socialisation will help the devotee to focus attention on serious spiritual engagement. This ministry is saying that God is associated with mountains as His sacred places of power, spiritual impartation and mysteries. In the mountains, the devotee gets information and messages on how to deal with various cases of sickness. This ministry seems to draw from the traditional African

⁶⁹ Pascal Fossouo, 'Primal Religion and the Cosmos: Religious Significance of the Mountain as a Source of Theological Reflection and Field of New Evangelism', *Journal of African Christian Thought* Vol.11, No. 2 (December 2008), pp.49-56 (51-52).

⁷⁰ Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012.

⁷¹ Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012.

religious belief which shows that designated places such as mountains, hills and sacred sites are regarded as places of wonder and divine impartation.⁷² The ministry uses the months of March and April for forty days of fasting to receive strength.⁷³ In the claims of the intercessors, the aftermath of the exercise is power to force demonic forces into immediate submission.

The ministry seeks to stress that fasting is paramount for any exorcist who wants to withstand the power of evil forces and wage effective spiritual warfare. This is because exorcism is not done by physical might. The emphasis is on the procedural aspects of exorcism, namely, discipline, focus, alertness and readiness for spiritual warfare. The claim of the ministry presupposes that there would be no spiritual impartation without a fast in the mountains.

It is an over-estimation to simply confine spiritual impartation and empowerment to the mountains. It presupposes that the mountain is the reliable location of divine presence and manifestation where exorcists need to go to receive spiritual impartation. The danger here is that people in quest of power, fame and popularity also go to the mountains to acquire mystical power for their nefarious gain.

6.5.2 Diagnosis

The leader of the ministry bases her diagnosis of occult initiation on dreams, visions, trances and audition. First, in her assertion, the dream is prominent in guarding and guiding her in detecting whether or not the sickness is occult machination.⁷⁴ Second, she claims that when clients are brought to her, she normally would discern that a child is an occult initiate according to the voice she may be hearing. She would look keenly into the eyes of the child and touch the upper left side of the chest, then point an accusing finger directly into the eyes

⁷² Harold W. Turner, *History of an African Independent Church*, Vol.II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p.62; Christian G. Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana* (London: SCM Press, 1962), p.94; H. Weman, *African Music and the Church in Africa* (Uppsala: n.p., 1960), pp.104-111; G.C. Parrinder, *Religion in an African City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), p.124.

⁷³ In 40 days of fasting – 1 March to 10 April – the ministry's adherents fast 3 days in each week: Monday, Thursday and Friday. The last day closes with a night vigil. Sometimes if they fast 2 days each week: Monday and Friday or Saturday, the last day closes with night vigil. If the closure is on a Saturday, the whole day is spent in intercession for travellers, sick people in the hospital and bereaved people. Whenever the ministry foresees an intensive work of exorcism, the leader embarks on 3 days of dry fasting. The dry fasting gives more strength to command demonic powers. The ministry believes that demonic powers often disguise themselves as lizards, goats, snakes, birds, etc. Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012.

⁷⁴ Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012.

of the alleged initiate, saying, ‘You are in the occult! I saw you when you were disguising yourself as ... (guessing by mentioning animals and objects). Is it not so? You must confess if not I will tie your hands and legs, throw you into the heat of the sun and whip you ruthlessly’.⁷⁵ Occasionally, she would touch the chest to feel the heartbeat. These are indications of being initiated into the occult realm.⁷⁶

Patience’s diagnosis generally involves harassment, confrontation and hypnosis, instilling fear and hysteria in the clients. On two occasions, forty one (41) and seventy seven (77) children between ages ten and fifteen suspected to have been initiated into occult practice were brought from across bordering towns and villages. She used the same methods of diagnosis in detecting the occult initiates. All of them were detected to have been initiated and were held in the ministry for two weeks to be exorcised of the occult spirits. Apart from the physical abuse, such children were forced to wake up between 12:00 midnight and 3:00 am for prayers. They were also forced to fast for several days. These children were forced to confess to being initiated into occult practice. Many of them under duress started shaking and uttering startling and incoherent words.

Asked why she employs keen observation and harsh confrontation, Patience says that ‘The observation is not with the ordinary eye but with a spiritual one which detects evil and confronts it. The forces are normally hard to bend over if approached in a polite manner. Besides, it is a spiritual warfare with spiritual forces; an exorcist cannot afford to make friends with evil spirits. Most importantly, this is the way I am guided by the ‘Spirit’ to prepare grounds for exorcism.’⁷⁷ Her diagnosis involves observation, touching and confrontation or instilling fear to extract confessions before exorcism. These are her obsession.

There is a problem with her diagnosis: What constitutes an occult initiation (or spirit possession)? Which symptom shows that a child is an occult initiate? If she is deducing from Scriptures as her role model, spirit possession manifests in diverse ways. In Mark 1:23-27, for instance, unclean spirits speak through a possessed person. Jesus and his disciples simply command the unclean spirit out by a word of authority. From Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Mark 9:25; Luke 4:35; Luke 8:26-39; Luke 10:17 and Acts 16:16-18, spirit-possessed people

⁷⁵ Observation, Jalingo, Jesus the Healer-Prayer Ministry, over periods of time.

⁷⁶ Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010.

⁷⁷ Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012.

display unusual behaviour, for example, superhuman strength (Mk. 5:4), self-inflicted wounds (Mk. 5:5) and unconscious shouting (Mk. 5:7). Three things are discernible: evil speaking through the man, clairvoyance and supernatural ability to know secret things. In Mark 9:17-18, the evil spirit causes a convulsion and violently controls the person's movement.

In summary, the biblical signs of demon possession include voices speaking through a person; superhuman strength; self-harm; clairvoyance; muteness; a force violently controlling a person and convulsion. In this ministry's diagnosis and labelling of occult initiation, none bears the signs of occult possession. The exorcist uses her observation and reconstruction to decide whether or not a child is possessed. All her intention is to legitimise and affirm the suspicion of parents or guardians. She has to manipulate ways of extracting a confession so as to create fame and popularity. Her method of diagnosis is similar to that of African health practitioners. It is possible that she learnt the confrontational methods over time from her father who was a diviner, herbalist and spirit medium.

6.6 Means and Methods of Exorcising Occult Powers

Exorcism is defined as 'the act of driving out, or warding off, demons or evil spirits from persons, places or things which are liable to become instruments of their malice'.⁷⁸ It is an act of expelling evils using solemn pronouncement.⁷⁹ In exorcism, the healer casts away, adjures and expels evil powers using the Word of God [and/or through other related elements]. The perception is that souls of people are being secreted in designated places and in other animate and inanimate objects. Occult forces often disguise themselves as animals and objects such as house flies, lizards, donkey, dogs, snakes, cats, rats, frogs, vultures, owl and golden rings, among others.⁸⁰ Exorcism extirpates these evil forces and delivers the initiates.

⁷⁸ Jack B. Yali, 'Evil Spirit and Exorcism: Christian Tradition', in Boer & Ityavyar (eds.), *Wholistic Health Care: Medical and Religious Dimensions*, Vol.1 (Jos, Nigeria: CHAN Wholistic Health Care Project, 1994), pp.121-126 (p.123).

⁷⁹ Sinclair B. Ferguson & David F. Wright (eds.), *Dictionary of Theology* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1988), pp.244-245.

⁸⁰ Patience, Interview, 22 February 2010, Jalingo.

6.6.1 Confession

Exorcism is always absurd once the initiate admits and confesses the evils he engaged in. Once the leader perceives that the accused delays in acknowledging his or her waywardness, she will draw the person's attention to pertinent incidents in life experiences, especially repercussions from carrying out occult practices. Her perception is that the initiate is guilty and need to confess. She stresses so much the nature of hell fire – the second death, judgment and final damnation – if the initiate fails to confess. Confession brings deliverance if done from a contrite heart.⁸¹ From observation, she always guides the confessions using probing questions such as: Who initiated you? What did the initiator give you? Where do you normally go for your meetings in occult realm? In which form do you normally go for the meeting? What do you usually eat and do there? What benefits have you received thus far? What promises have they given you? What did they tell you about the end of this practice? With perseverance and pressure a child will start disclosing some seemingly terrible practices carried in the occult domain.

On the other hand, if the child fails to confess, the leader will go ahead with the exorcism. The child may flail and writhe on the ground. In a few cases, the child may unconsciously utter the evil deeds that were carried out. On examination, after regaining consciousness, the child would hardly repeat exactly what he said during the exorcism. On the third level, there are instances where the child would stay mute and conceal his or her so-called evil deeds. It is here that the leader would employ horrific physical abuse to extract a confession.

6.6.2 Chaining and Beating

Chaining and beating are forms of physical abuse commonly employed by self-styled healers of emerging movements which have caught the attention of the media for a decade or more.

In 'Jesus the Healer-Prayer Ministry,' the exorcist employs horrific physical abuse. She usually ties up the purported child-occult initiates naked and exposes them to the heat of the sun, inserts olive oil into their eyes and forces them to look directly to the sun. Some often

⁸¹ Observation, Jalingo, Jesus the Healer-Prayer Ministry, 16 October 2009, 16 November 2010 and 26 September 2011.

withstand the physical challenge and refuse to confess until she whips them thoroughly.⁸² The leader claims that she employs this method to extract confessions and extirpate evil forces.⁸³ She maintains that ‘I am punishing the occult children in the physical world, so that when they get back to the spirit world they will still fear me.’ This is a practice embedded with selfish motives. She adds that ‘the harassment and confrontation I am employing against them in the physical world will hinder them from revealing anything against me in the spirit world.’⁸⁴ On the one hand, she employs the method out of anger against the occult practice, and, on the other hand, out of sympathy and empathy for the victims. She aptly states as follows:

I flog children because when I hear someone will die, and somebody here testifying that he or she will eat or use the victim as a payback of the meat he or she had eaten, and that he or she will not leave it; it makes me sympathise with the victims. The question that often comes to my mind is, How will I release this innocent person from the hand of the perpetrator of this evil? The voice often guides me on flogging as a means of immediate release of victims from the hand of the perpetrator. Moreover, those who revealed that they are in the occult, often explicitly reveal that they have tied some people under the water or under a bridge or tree or in the mountain. Hearing this, I out of anger, sympathy and empathy will in turn chain and flog the perpetrator in the physical so as to release those that he or she has chained in the spirit world. I thought [as revealed to me through voices] that is the best model of dealing with that pathetic issue....⁸⁵

The difficulty in ascertaining the validity of this physical method is the lack of clarity about the person she is chaining and beating. Is it the person or the evil spirit in the person? If she is flogging the spirit, the spirit is invisible, non-confined and not controlled by human agency. Thus, one cannot handle spirit with flesh, let alone deal with the spirit ruthlessly. If she is flogging the initiate, is it the way to remove the spirit in him or her? Is the person to be blamed or the evil in the person? These issues are not adequately responded to. The only claim is that she does it based on the command of ‘voices from God’.

⁸² Some of the site participants told me that not all are guilty of being initiated. These ones persevere until she flogs them. Moreover, the acclaimed confession is because of the pain they are passing through. Hence, the only way to be released is to pretend, as it were, to confess committed evils. In contrast, those that confess as early as they are thrown into the sun are really genuine victims of occult initiation. Obviously, there are notorious evil forces that withstand confrontation, both physically and spiritually. Moreover, deliverance is neither a single exercise nor a one-day exercise. However, the leader tends to make it a single day exercise, which is why she employs the physical way. Observation, Jalingo, Jesus the Healer-Prayer Ministry, 24 February 2007.

⁸³ Observation, Jalingo, Jesus the Healer-Prayer Ministry, 24 February 2007.

⁸⁴ Gamseri, Interview, 16 October 2009; Adi, Interview, 16 November 2010; Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010 & 22 February 2011.

⁸⁵ Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010 & 22 February 2011.

Her physical abuse of children whom she purports to be occult initiates is a violation of human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 5 states: ‘No one shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment’.⁸⁶ She also violates the Child’s Rights Acts as started clearly in the ‘Convention on the Rights of the Child’, 20 November 1989; Article 2 Par.2 and Article 19 Par.1:

Art.2 Par.2:

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child’s parents, legal guardians, or family members.⁸⁷

Art.19 Par.1:

States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.⁸⁸

She inflicts similar physical abuse on so-called mentally insane children. She ties mad children to one of the pillars in the corridor and beats them (if they are fierce and prove to be stubborn). She however believes that mad children who continue to resist might have taken mind-altering substances. On this she would advise the guardians or parents to take them to the psychiatric hospital for treatment.⁸⁹ The chaining and beating of mad people was part of her father’s treatment procedures for warding off evil forces. This is a common practice in the traditional medical system.⁹⁰ Moreover, one of the African Indigenous Churches, notably the Celestial Church of Christ, casts out malevolent spirits by physically beating the ‘power.’⁹¹

The problem with this method is that if she is renewing the practice in Christian terms, as she claims, she would have to use the words of command as Jesus and his disciples, without

⁸⁶ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights [as adopted by United Nations General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948]. Accessed 28 July 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>.

⁸⁷ <http://www.icrc.org/applic/ih/ihl/ihl.nsf/ART/540-860003?OpenDocument>, Accessed 27 July 2013.

⁸⁸ <http://www.icrc.org/applic/ih/ihl/ihl.nsf/ART/540-860020?OpenDocument>, Accessed 27 July 2013.

⁸⁹ Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010.

⁹⁰ Anthony Iffen Umoren, *Jesus and Miracle Healing Today* (Iperu-Remo, Nigeria: The Ambassador Publications, 2000), p.45.

⁹¹ Albert Aduloju Agbaje, ‘The Celestial Church of Christ’ (Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation. Obafemi Awolowo University, 1986), pp.153-55; Jacob Kehinde Olupona, ‘The Celestial Church of Christ in Ondo: A Phenomenological Perspective’, in Rosalind I.J. Hackett (ed.), *New Religious Movements in Nigeria* (Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1987), p. 67.

physically causing harm to the possessed, for the new source supersedes the former sources. The fact that she is still employing the old method implies that she is still using the old forces. In this case she is hybridising primal religious practice with Christian colourings. It therefore follows that she is operating at the boundary of Christianity.

6.6.3 Prayer and Anointing Oil

Many Christian religious bodies employ the laying-on of hands to exorcise evil powers in a sick person, for example, African Initiated Churches (AICs), Charismatics and other Faith-Healing movements.⁹² However, this ministry does not employ the laying-on of hands in its exorcism endeavours. The ministry leader believes and teaches that all items that the occult forces use to deal with people such as broken pottery, iron, snake, lizard, golden ring and sponge are all planted in the stomach. The stomach is the storeroom that harbours those dangerous animals and harmful objects. Therefore, the leader always gets a sick person to lie down between her two legs, bends over the sick, holds the stomach by the rib sides with her two hands and shakes strongly while exorcising the occult items planted in the stomach.⁹³

Once she does this for some time, the sick person will become weak. She would then give a sip of olive oil, raise the hands one after the other, and slap ten (10) times from the shoulder joint down to the palm of the hand. The sipping of the olive oil is to help emit the entire poison in the stomach. She would move out of her bending position calling the sick person to sit up unaided. She would then fetch half a bucket of cold or warm water, apply some quantity of anointing oil, squeeze soap into it, use a sponge and stir the water while praying, 'Jesus, turn this water to become fire and blood to repel all evils deposited inside the body, in Jesus' name. Amen'. The prayer is based on the belief that the water usually turns into the blood of Jesus Christ and will burn as fire, repelling the evil forces deposited inside the body. She claims that 'The child-occult initiates will not see the water as colourless but as completely blood and fire. Whenever they bathe with the water, it will be burning them like

⁹² J.O. Ogunsusi, 'The Approach of the Cherubim and Seraphim Movement to Sickness and Health from a Wholistic Perspective', in Boer, Jan Harm & Dennis A. Ityavyar (eds.), *Wholistic Health Care: Medical and Religious Dimensions* Vol.1 (Jos, Nigeria: CHAN Wholistic Health Care Project, 1994), pp.100-105 (104); J. R. William, 'Laying-on of Hands', in Stanley M. Burgess & Eduard M. Vander Maas (eds.), *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), pp.834-836.

⁹³ Observation, Jalingo, Jesus the Healer-Prayer Ministry, 23 July 2003.

fire devouring all the evil items in them'.⁹⁴ She would then bathe the sick child. After the bath, she would put some drops of anointing oil into the eyes of the child to close the spiritual eye from seeing spiritual things. The blinding of the 'spiritual eyes' is the means of weakening the strength of the occult power. She does this in the belief that evil forces work in the physical and spiritual simultaneously.⁹⁵

The similar practice is carried out by the revivalist in Congo which is more a catastrophic chaos. The Congolese revivalist 'pastors' believe that everything connected with *kindoki* is inside the stomach and ought to be removed. They would lay the 'possessed' child backward and stamp the stomach with the right leg from the chest down to the navel. They would then stab the stomach with unsterilized knives and press hard, then suck out, as it were, removing the *kindoki* from the stomach. Consequently, they would put a piece of meat believed to have supposedly come out of the stomach of a child. About 2,500 children were stabbed like that in a year.⁹⁶

A similar method of applying substances into the eyes of the spirit-possessed is being carried out in Nigeria's Niger Delta region, particularly in Ibaka fishing village, by a self-styled 'bishop', Sunday Ulup-Aya. In many instances, he applies drops of sap into the eyes of children branded as being possessed.⁹⁷ In the DRC, some revivalist 'pastors' in Kinshasa put chilli pepper into the eyes of the possessed as a means of exorcism.⁹⁸ In the African community in the UK, for example, Child B had chilli peppers rubbed into her eyes by her mother and aunt.⁹⁹ It seems the application of the sap or chilli pepper is to blind the 'spiritual eyes' of the children as upheld by Patience. Again, this also may cause complications in the eyes.

⁹⁴ Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu & Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012.

⁹⁵ Observation, Jalingo, Jesus the Healer-Prayer Ministry, 24 August 2003.

⁹⁶ Dilly Barlow (narrator), 'Witch Child Documentary – Channel4 (2008). Accessed and Transcribed 7 July 2013, <http://www.thegreatplanet.com/witch-child-channel-4-documentary>.

⁹⁷ 'Child-Witch Branding in Nigeria' Accessed 31 May 2013, <http://www.worldpulse.com/node/50624>; David Harrison, "'Child-Witches' of Nigeria Seek Refuge". Accessed 4 July 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocena/nigeria/3407882/child-witches-of-nigeria-see-refuge.html>; Barlow (narrator), 'Witch Child Documentary – Channel 4 (2008)'.

⁹⁸ Barlow (narrator), 'Witch Child Documentary – Channel 4 (2008)'.

⁹⁹ 'Branded a Witch', Children Accused of Witchcraft BBC Full Documentary 2013, Accessed and Transcribed 8 July 2013, <http://www.thegreatplanet.com/witch-child-channel-4-documentary>; 'Kindoki Accusation and Deliverance'. Accessed 4 July 2013, <http://gatesheadforchrist.wordpress.com/2012/06/02/kindoki-accusation-and-deliverance-2/>; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-17040111>; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2005/jun/04/ukcrime.children>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kRqrGHA-Azs>.

In some situations, the ministry intercessors would stand and surround the initiate from some metres away. Without touching the initiate, they would raise one hand while praying and exorcising the evil forces. When the ‘power of God’ descends on the initiate, he would turn around several times and then fall down. The leader would then conclude the deliverance by holding the stomach (as described above) and praying.¹⁰⁰ The leader employs either of the two ways based on the situation at hand. The child would then rub the olive oil all over his or her body to guard against evil spirits.¹⁰¹ The sipping of the oil is meant to cause the victim to vomit poison, while bathing with the anointed water is to repel evils deposited on the body. The ministry typifies anointing oil as the blood of Jesus and water as the symbol of cleansing.

The ministry does not consider madness as merely biological imbalance (though it could be a factor),¹⁰² but as caused by occult forces.¹⁰³ Madness is always conceptualised as a spiritual encounter.¹⁰⁴ The ministry leader believes that the loopholes that brought about the spiritual encounter are guilt, evils committed, sin and disobedience to God mostly by the victim. The infraction makes God withdraw His guidance and protection, giving space to the evil powers to gradually encroach and cause mental derangement.

This ministry always prays between 12:00 am and 3:00 am. The basic reason for praying between such times is due to experiences and confessions made by converts – erstwhile occult initiates.¹⁰⁵ First, the testimonies revealed that the evil forces often schedule their activities between 12:00 midnight and 2:00 am in their secret domains. They usually finish such obligations by 2:00 am. Beginning at 3:00 am, the delegates start returning from their places of assignment. According to them, perseverance in any spiritual encounter at this time always weakens the strength of the evil forces and destabilises their evil activities.

¹⁰⁰ Observation, Jalingo, Jesus the Healer-Prayer Ministry, 22 February 2011.

¹⁰¹ Observation, Jalingo, Jesus the Healer-Prayer Ministry, 23 July 2003.

¹⁰² Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010; Musa Emmanuel Dantani, Interview, 8 March 2010, Wukari; Bitrus Samaila, Interview, 8 February 2011, Wukari; Martha C.J. Sabo, Interview, 15 February 2011, Wukari.

¹⁰³ Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010.

¹⁰⁴ Musa, Interview, 8 March 2010.

¹⁰⁵ Musa, Interview, 8 March 2010; Patience, Interview, 22 February 2010.

6.7 Impact of the Ministry

The ministry ignites spiritual discipline, especially zealously in terms of prayer and fasting.¹⁰⁶ The ministry officers always avail themselves to their clients and attempt to address their concerns through prayers. It is not necessary for the mission-founded churches to emulate their profit motive, but if ministers of the mission-founded churches adapt their depth of commitment, their members will hardly stray from the sheepfold.¹⁰⁷

The ministry also gives educational support and care to orphans and widows¹⁰⁸ particularly those children who have been neglected by their parent(s) and/or those whose surviving parents could not afford their fees. The ministry also has charity relief for widows who are weak. It is believed that failure in elective positions and economic misfortunes are part of occult operations. Thus, politicians who are looking for elective positions patronise the ministry, seeking prayers for success in elective positions, security and protection. Business people who always face economic downturn patronise the ministry to ask for prayers for success.¹⁰⁹ It is difficult to decipher the inner conviction, intention and desires of the ministry officers. It is possible that their expressions are the direct offshoot of their inner conviction. However, one thing that the mission-founded churches need to emulate from the ministry is its seeming attempts to assist clients or health seekers.

6.8 Setbacks in the Ministry

The problem of this ministry started with its closed-door exorcism. The couple, Patience Hajara and Nuhu Agbu, though strong members of the Youth Fellowship, started the ministry in their house in 1999. Their church affiliation council, CRCN Kufai-Haske, approached

¹⁰⁶ Dan-Maigona, Interview, 7 October 2009.

¹⁰⁷ Philemon G.A. Garjila, Interview, 7 October 2009, Wukari; Moses Y. Fisseh & Ezekiel B. Sallah, Interview, 4 March 2010, CRCN Gindin Dorowa, Wukari; Isaiah J. Magaji, Interview, 17 February 2011, Sonyama Suite, Wukari.

¹⁰⁸ The record of 'Jesus the Healer-Prayer Ministry' shows that Patience is supporting seventeen students from primary to secondary schools. The orphans are basically those who were accused of killing either their fathers or mothers, and have been denied access to education and health care, as well as care and support from the family. These children, although still staying with guardians, were psychologically hounded from their families and were facing trauma, stigma and abandonment. In some cases, the guardian or stepparent is not able to support and care for the child. The ministry also supported and cared for widows who were unable to cope with the demands of earning a livelihood.

¹⁰⁹ Patience Nuhu, Bestine Yakubu and Mary Paul, Interview, 16 February 2012.

them several times to bring the ministry under its auspices but to no avail.¹¹⁰ Instead, Patience and Nuhu preferred to use the new branch building, CRCN Nukkai,¹¹¹ for the ministry. However, the council saw that she could hardly regulate and control the beliefs and practices, and so turned down their request. The couples' persistence to be independent of the church oversight led them to keep the ministry in their house. As the ministry progressed with its programmes, the issue of accusation of occult practice, chaining and flogging¹¹² the purported occult initiates caught the attention of the populace. One of the families whose children were accused and beaten took their children to another prayer healer in Jalingo, Evangelist Bala Zhema. The evangelist prayed over the accused children and adjudged them innocent.¹¹³ This issue became serious between Patience and the accused family, and came close to litigation. The society started questioning the nature of her faith-based movement. The society sees that such physical abuse may eliminate life, constitutes a violation of human rights and is subject to litigation. The church resists such an approach because it believes that if the power she claims to have possessed is from God, she would have asked and waited for the Holy Spirit to arrest the situation rather than attempting an immediate result through physical abuse. Moreover, the church argues that nowhere in the Scriptures did Jesus chain and flog the demon possessed. Jesus rather prayed and delivered them. From where, then, does she draw her biblical injunction for the practices? An interview with the first resident minister of the LCC Kufai-Haske Jalingo revealed that the council wanted to regulate the practices, but Patience protested, saying, 'I have been called and given the gifts of exorcism by God, and I am doing what God is directing me to do. I am therefore working solely with God's power'.¹¹⁴

In June 2006, the news of her practices reached the General Church Council (GCC), the highest decision-making body of the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN).¹¹⁵ The Jalingo Regional Church Council (RCC Jalingo) was asked to investigate Patience's practices

¹¹⁰ Adi, Interview, 16 November 2010.

¹¹¹ Patience, Interview, 9 October 2010.

¹¹² Only Patience Hajara has been employed this abuse of human rights. Nuhu never engaged in such a practice although they were leading the ministry together. After their separation, Patience continued with this practice. Nuhu went and established his own ministry, but did not employ such methods.

¹¹³ Adi, Interview, 16 November 2010; Dawuda D. Kure, Personal Communication, 12 November 2010, CRCN Station Wukari.

¹¹⁴ Adi, Interview, 16 November 2010.

¹¹⁵ The issue bypassed other church administrative channels: the Local Church Council (LCC) and Regional Church Council (RCC) to the General Church Council (GCC) when the issue of Musa Emmanuel Dantani, a ministry dealt with in Chapter Three was discussed. The two ministries share similar charlatan attitudes. The aim was that the church down to the grass root regulate, control and monitor such emerging movements.

and accusations thoroughly and report to the GCC.¹¹⁶ In December 2006, the GCC, on receiving tentative reports about her practices, mandated the RCC to suspend her from all spiritual activities in the church. The GCC asked the LCC through the RCC to closely observe her practices until an in-depth investigation was concluded.¹¹⁷ In a report on its investigation presented at the June 2007 GCC, RCC Jalingo stated that Patience's practices took the form of prayers with a thorough beating of children as a means of extracting confessions and expelling the power of Satan, occult powers, evil forces and disease. The GCC advised RCC Jalingo to consult with her, regulate and control her ministry by bringing it under the auspices of the Church's oversight.¹¹⁸ The RCC through her local church leadership consulted with her, but she refused to consent.¹¹⁹ The GCC was bent on bringing her back to the fold.¹²⁰ It was at the June 2011 GCC meeting that RCC Jalingo reported on her remorse, she admitted her mistakes and agreed to change her model of exorcism.¹²¹ From 2011, she was allowed to continue operating the ministry in her house, but with a strong warning not to revert to the physical abuse. In most cases, she travelled out on invitation to carry out her normal exorcism style.

Another problem with her method of exorcism is the application of anointing oil into the eye of the suspected child-occult initiates to blind the spiritual eye while opening the physical eye.¹²² The belief is that if the spiritual eye of the occult initiates is blinded, the strength of their function is weakened. This is because evil forces work simultaneously in the physical and the spiritual. Applying oil into the eyes may result in ophthalmic complications. Consultation with an ophthalmologist revealed that temporary complications such as blurred vision, burning and prickly sensations, pain, tearing and infections of the eyes may occur if the oil is contaminated.¹²³ Today, it is now common to find brands of fake and diluted olive oil, just as it is difficult to find pure or original olive oil in the market or in patient medicine stores. People therefore blend various substances just for rogue monetary purposes, thereby affecting the wellbeing of ignorant and innocent people.

¹¹⁶ GCC Minutes dated 19 – 23 June 2006, GCC/420/2006.

¹¹⁷ GCC Minutes dated 11 – 15 December 2006, GCC/450/2006.

¹¹⁸ GCC Minutes dated 25-29 June 2007; GCC/475/2007 (i); GCC Minutes dated 5-9 November 2007, GCC/498/2007 (d).

¹¹⁹ GCC Minutes dated 14-18 July 2008, GCC/538/2008.

¹²⁰ GCC Minutes dated 10-14 November 2008, GCC/553/2008 (f); GCC Minutes dated 1-5 September 2009, GCC/566/2009 (iv); GCC Minutes, 16-20 November 2009, GCC/592/2009 (h); GCC Minutes dated 31 May-4 June 2010, GCC/619/2010 (D); GCC Minutes dated 15-19 November 2010, GCC/640/2010 (C).

¹²¹ GCC Minutes dated 13-17 June 2011, GCC/663/2011 (e).

¹²² Patience, Interview, 9 October 2010; Gamseri, Interview, 16 October 2009.

¹²³ Vida Ansah, Interview, 9 September 2013, Akropong-Akuapem, Eastern Region, Ghana.

6.9 Comments and Conclusion

The ministry holds strictly to interpreting mystical causalities in life experiences. It categorises herbal centres and treatment as virtual occult homes and purveyors of occult practices.¹²⁴ This ministry is ignorant of the fact that herbal treatment was the key health agent in the society before the advent of conventional medical practice.¹²⁵ It is possible that herbal practice is not perfect in itself but that should not be a yardstick to demonise and minimise its efficacy. The ministry is somewhat sympathetic to biomedical treatment, as its leader believes this is central in attesting the deliverance received. It does not employ evil spirits in its diagnosis and prescription. However, the ministry neglects the fact that God sometimes uses medicine alongside prayers to ensure various forms of healing. Sickness is not exclusively mystical but biological as well. The Bible is replete with cases where God heals using curative application of nature such as water, ointment, plasters, poultices, medicines, balms, splints, rollers, food, tonics, leaves, bandages, oil, wine, saliva, handkerchiefs, aprons, eye-salve, diet, and even mud.¹²⁶ Nature is a creation of God, and both herbalist and biomedics are drawing their means of medication from nature. The only thing needed is to turn everything back to Christ for conversion or transformation.

The ministry leader's claim of 'prior discernment' of occult cases in her diagnostic procedure is disputable.¹²⁷ It is possible that God from time to time endows his children with spiritual discernment to detect evils and evildoers, but this need not be taken to mean that it must be a daily occurrence. Some voices and visions are illusions and hallucinations. They are seemingly seen or heard but are not real. One could see or hear; one could think of seeing vivid images or hearing voices; and one could feel as if he is experiencing an unseen power.¹²⁸ The difficulty is that the acclaimed 'revelation' is diffused. Patience claims to hear voices speaking directly to her, see vivid visions of things in the spirit world and also feel the presence of the 'Holy Spirit' continually and simultaneously in her life. On certain occasions,

¹²⁴ Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010.

¹²⁵ Garjila, Interview, 7 October 2009; Angye, Interview, 9 November 2010.

¹²⁶ See Ex.15:26; 2 Kgs. 20:7f; Dan. 8:27; Lk.10:34; 22:50f; Acts 5:15f; Jas. 5:14f; Rev. 13:3; 2 Kgs. 5:14; Eccl. 10:1; Isa. 1:6; 38:5, 21; Jer. 8:22; 30:13; 51:8f; Ezek. 30:21; 47:12; Mk. 6:13; 8:23; Lk.10:34; Jn. 9:6; Acts 16:33; 19:11f; 1Tim. 5:23; Jas. 5:14; Rev. 3:18; 22:2.

¹²⁷ Joseph U. Rika, Interview, 13 December 2010, RCCN, Wukari.

¹²⁸ Rachel Julian, 'Spiritual Discernment in Psychiatric Patients', *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Summer, 1987), pp.125-130 (128).

a 'revelation' that comes with high pressure to be executed immediately has consequently been precarious and bleak.¹²⁹

Spiritual discernment needs to be understood as a process and not a single action. This is because false experiences may sometimes lure a person to think that the discernment is genuine. Genuine spirit discerners take action only after long-term reflection and examination. There is a danger here of reviving the role of the traditional diviner and seer, and of using diabolical means in the name of spiritual discernment. The ministry leader, in her claims of 'spiritual discernment', often instigates and intensifies fear by asserting that omens are occult agencies in the society. This makes people always live in fear of the movements of animals, plants and of the positions of objects while they scapegoat others. It also tempts people to always offer imprecatory prayers due to seemingly occult operations.¹³⁰ The ministry holds strictly to the traditional belief that we work and have our being in the midst of harmful powers. There may be evil in human society, but spiritualising everything is going to the extreme.

The anointing oil is another issue of concern. From observations and interviews recorded, I have discovered that the leader places the efficacy of the anointing oil as equal to, if not above, the role of the ultimate Healer, Jesus Christ. There is hardly any prayer offered without the application of anointing oil to drink, to apply in cold or warm bath water, and to rub all over the body to ward off evil. Jesus Christ is thus rated as the second source of healing. The ministry misleads the followers to believe thus: 'No anointing oil, no healing'. The anointing oil is no longer an element of healing but the ultimate source of healing. The leader once said:

Whenever I engage in exorcism and failed to apply anointing oil on my body either before or after the exorcism, I usually face spiritual attack, unless I kneel down there and then, and confess my sin. I will then feel, as it were, cold water running down my body from my head down to my feet. From there I will be revived and conscious again.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Setzer, 'How can I Determine When It is God Who Speaks to Me in My Inner Experiences?', p.47.

¹³⁰ Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010 & 22 February 2011; Bitrus Samaila & Joseph M. Vyonku, Interview, 8 February 2011, Wukari; Jonah Tsonatu, Interview, 7 December 2010, Wukari; Bulus Gani Adama, Interview, 17 November 2010, Takum.

¹³¹ Patience, Interview, 9 March 2010.

In conclusion, Nigeria is a multi-religious society, with its constitutional freedom of religious belief and practice. This issue of freedom of beliefs and practices has opened loopholes to fraudulent and rogue religious practices by self-styled faith-based healers. They claim to have been called and given the gift of deliverance. They misinterpret and misapply the Scriptures with a potential profit motive. They instigate the deterioration of family and community social harmony. They exploit vulnerable children and their gullible parents and guardians.

The media with essentially the goal of being the channel for the positive transmission of beliefs, values and norms that should enhance social harmony; rather tend to be the means of chaos and the disruption of family and social peace. Besides, the faith-based healers exploit the media for their personal benefit.

The Child Rights' Act which protects children against all forms of physical, mental and emotional torture was originally passed by the British government in 1943, and later revised and incorporated into Nigeria's Federal Laws in 1958. This Act again passed through various revisions before its final adoption in 2003.¹³² This Act lay dormant in many communities in Nigeria until the heinous crime against children in Akwa Ibom State which made the state domesticate it on 5 December 2008, thus making it a crime to accuse and abuse a child as a witch. The Act protects a child from birth to age sixteen. The law prescribes up to fifteen years of incarceration on those who accuse, torture and stigmatise a child of being possessed.¹³³ Other Nigerian states should emulate Akwa Ibom State by implementing the Act. This is because the problem of scapegoating children as the cause of family woes cuts across cultures and societies in Nigeria. Children are being victimised and murdered behind closed doors, and this is not reported, let alone documented. The ones we know or hear about are just a tip of the iceberg.

The issue of Nigeria being a multi-religious society with the freedom of beliefs should not be a guarantee to tamper with a person's social rights. Some of the self-styled exorcists go under cover to get powers from evil spirits to hypnotise and manipulate people. There is therefore the need to step up the control mechanisms against accusations and abuse. This will combat

¹³² Essia, 'The Social Economy of Child Witch Labelling in Nigeria', p.4.

¹³³ Essia, 'The Social Economy of Child Witch Labelling in Nigeria', p.4; Onwumere, 'The Unending Child Witch Phenomena in Akwa Ibom'; 'African Witch Children Pt. 5'. Accessed and Transcribed 9 July 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d82BKZhPPVE>; 'Angry Witches and Wizards Confront Governor Akpabio'. Accessed 6 July 2013, <http://www.nigeriamuse.com/20081117063855Zg/sections/general-articles/angry-witches-and-wizards-confront-governor-akpabio/>.

the long-term emotional and psychological abuse, victimisation, stigma, discrimination and neglect in the family and community.

The church and society need to control and regulate the activities of the modern exorcists. This is because they are instigating fear and apprehension in the minds of people. They are operating at the fringes of Christianity while making a huge fortune for themselves. This is not in any way condemning the mysteries, dynamisms, complexities and reality of evil in human society. However, the reconstruction of evil is simplistic, so that there is no circumstance without a direct link to mystical causalities or occult powers.

Stakeholders need to raise awareness that socio-economic breakdown, political vices and environmental hazards should not be interpreted exclusively within the framework of mystical causalities, especially spirit possession or child-occult initiations. They could have scientific factors and unrevealed godly intentions. The entire society should rally together in support to condemn the branding of children as being possessed without tenable evidence. Security agencies, the judiciary, religious bodies, human rights organisations, social activists, civil society, as well as local and state governments should re-assess the long-term stigma, discrimination and neglect of children due to witch accusations and abuse. They should strengthen the mechanisms for protecting children against physical, mental and psychological abuse. The self-styled faith-based ‘healers’, who over-spiritualise incidents and events or hybridise primal religious beliefs with extreme Christian tenets, should face the rule of societal norms and laws of the land. This is because the self-styled ‘healers’ are the major instigators of witch accusations and child abuse, causing untold harm to families and communities for their potential profit-motive.