

DELIVERANCE AS A WAY OF CONFRONTING WITCHCRAFT
IN MODERN AFRICA: GHANA AS A CASE HISTORY

Opoku Onyinah

1. Introduction

Some scholars have rightly observed that the center of gravity of Christianity is shifting from the West to “the two-third world,” that is Asia, South America and Africa.¹ The reasons for this shift are varied and complex. However, the reasons for the growth of Christianity in Africa significantly include the way the Africans have attempted to deal with their threatening fears, especially witchcraft. Witchcraft has been a prevailing belief in African cultures and has continually posed problems for the African people groups.

Following Evans-Pritchard’s research in witchcraft among the Azande of Congo and his advancement of the misfortune or the explanation theory, the African phenomena of witchcraft have become prominent on the agenda of anthropologists. Significant are the works of J. Clyde Mitchell, Middleton and Winter, Max Marwick, Mary Douglas and others who theorized the function of witchcraft as a release of tension within certain types of African social structure.² The studies of S.

¹ Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Africa, 2000); Johnson Asamoah-Gyadu, “The Church in the State: The Pentecostal/Charismatic Experience in Ghana,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 2:1 (1998), pp. 51-57; David M. Beckmann, *Eden Revival: Spiritual Churches in Ghana* (London: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), pp. 9-10; David Barrett, “AD 2000: 350 Million Christians in Africa,” *International Review of Mission* 59 (1970), pp. 39-54 (39-40).

² J. Clyde Mitchell, *The Yao Village: A Study in the Social Structure a Nyanssaland Tribe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956); John Middleton and E. H. Winter, eds., *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa* (London: Regan Paul, 1963); Max G. Marwick, *Sorcery in Its Social Setting: A Study of the Northern Rhodesian Cewa* (Manchester: Manchester University

F. Nadel, M. Gluckman and Debrunner also demonstrate that witchcraft belief is the outcome of social instability such as famine, rapid change, oppression, and economic distress.³ Other works, such as Margaret Field's case studies and analysis of so-called witches in Ghana, reveal how witchcraft is rooted in the psychological reactions of those suffering from ill health, misfortunes, and inability to control their destinies.⁴

These interpretations led some anthropologists and missionaries to think witchcraft belief was only superstition to be dispelled with modernity. Thus Parrinder argues, "an enlightened religion, education, medicine and better social and racial conditions will help to dispel witchcraft beliefs."⁵ Unfortunately Parrinder lived to become "a false prophet" in the sense that, although an enlightened religion, that is, Christianity, has grown in African, belief in witchcraft has survived and even been revived.

The current studies on witchcraft in Africa such as those of Peter Geschiere, Birgit Meyer, Jean and John Comaroff show that the concept is no longer "traditional" but operates as a very important aspect of "modernity."⁶ In some of these presentations witchcraft provides images

Press, 1965); Mary Douglas, ed., *Witchcraft Confession and Accusations* (London: Tavistock, 1970).

³ S. F. Nadel, "Witchcraft in Four African Societies: An Essay in Comparison," in *Witchcraft and Sorcery*, ed. Max G. Marwick (London: Penguin Books, 1952), pp. 286-99 (286); M. Gluckman, *Customs and Conflicts in Africa* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1959), p. 101; Hans W. Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana: A Study on the Belief in Destructive Witches and Its Effects on the Akan Tribes* (Accra: Presbyterian Book Depot, 1959).

⁴ Margaret J. Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937); Margaret J. Field, *Search for Security: An Ethno-Psychiatric Study of Rural Ghana* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960).

⁵ George Parrinder, *Witchcraft: A Critical Study of the Belief in Witchcraft from the Records of Witch Hunting in Europe Yesterday and Africa Today* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1958), pp. 202-203.

⁶ Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (London: University Press of Virginia, 1997); Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999); Birgit Meyer, "Make a Complete Break with the Past: Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 27:3 (1998), pp. 316-49; Birgit Meyer, "Commodities and Power of Prayer: Pentecostalist Attitudes toward Consumption in Contemporary Ghana," *Development and Change* 29 (1998), pp. 751-76; Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, eds., *Modernity and Its*

of defining modernity through the local consumption of global commodities,⁷ they show how witchcraft is domesticated in personal violence⁸ and also how the phenomenon is involved in politics.⁹ For the African, such images are real and deadly. For example, Geschiere has shown how in Maka area in Cameroon the state courts have started to convict so-called witches.¹⁰ Furthermore, in her work among the Tonga speakers in Gwembe Valley in southern province in Zambia, where fathers are often accused of witchcraft, Elisabeth Colson has demonstrated how the accused do suffer and in one case a man had to hang himself to avoid such suffering.¹¹ In a recent election in Ghana, George Ayittey reported that one parliamentary candidate, professor Philip Kofi Amoah, complained after he had been hit in the face by a crow that some people were out to fight him spiritually because of the inroad to success he was making.¹² He continued that soon the professor complained of dizziness and died on his way to the hospital.

As was done in the past, protection from witchcraft activities has become a common concern. Formerly, such protection was sought from the priests of the gods or from sorcerers and medicine men. From the early part of the twentieth century, however, a variety of exorcistic activities (anti-witchcraft shrine) have dominated African states. Even when the colonial regimes suppressed witchcraft activities because they thought they hampered progress, they re-emerged within the Ingenious African Churches and later in a form of movement within the classical

Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

⁷ Parish Jane, "The Dynamics of Witchcraft and Indigenous Shrines among the Akan," *Africa* 69:3 (1999), pp. 427-47; Elizabeth Colson, "The Father as Witch," *Africa* 70:3 (2000), pp. 333-58.

⁸ Peter Geschiere and Cyprian Fisiy, "Domesticating Personal Violence: Witchcraft, Courts and Confessions in Cameroon," *Africa* 64:2 (1994), pp. 323-41; Comaroff & Comaroff, *Modernity and Its Malcontents*.

⁹ Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft*; Birgit Meyer, "Money, Power and Morality in Popular Ghanaian Cinema" (a paper presented at the consultation, Religion and Media, Accra, May 21-27, 2000).

¹⁰ Geschiere and Fisiy, "Domesticating Personal Violence," p. 323.

¹¹ Colson, "The Father as Witch," pp. 333-58.

¹² George Ayittey, "How Ghana Was Saved," *Ghana Review International* 77 (February 2001), pp. 17-19.

Pentecostal churches.¹³ As soon as one of these movements expends itself, another of a similar nature springs up with a larger following. As a result, at present, almost all churches include exorcistic activities, referred to as “deliverance”¹⁴ in their programs, since failure to do so amounts to losing members to churches that include such activities. Thus some scholars now observe the “Pentecostalization” of Christianity in Africa.¹⁵

The main agenda of this sort of Pentecostalization is deliverance, which is based on the fear of spirit forces, especially witchcraft. Jane Paris struggles with the right terminology for describing such a deliverance center at Dorman in Ghana. She calls it *aduruyefo* (medicine maker), but her presentation, including the warding off of evil spirit from so-called contaminated Bibles, involvement of intensive prayers and invocation of the Holy Spirit, indicates that she was talking about a Christian prayer center. She mistakenly thought that it was an anti-witchcraft shrine.¹⁶

This study will attempt to explore how deliverance ministry has replaced the anti-witchcraft shrines and the exorcistic activities of the African indigenous churches. Using Ghana as a case history, I shall evaluate this ministry to find out its positive and negative effects. Most of the research on which this paper is based was carried out among Ghanaian Christians between 1997 and 1999. These include interviews I conducted with pastors, exorcists, traditional priests, so-called witches and delivered witches. The data also includes a survey I conducted in 1999 among 1201 participants across Ghana concerning the belief in the traditional spirit-world. The survey showed relatively even distribution across educational, occupational categories and age. However, many people who filled out the forms were male from Pentecostal denominations. My prior experience as a Ghanaian Pentecostal pastor for more than twenty-four years also provides an access to such experiences.

¹³ By classical Pentecostal churches this paper refers to Pentecostals who put stress on speaking in tongues and may have either direct or remote relations with the Azusa Street revival.

¹⁴ Basically the term deliverance is used to include all the rituals involved in setting people free from demonic activities.

¹⁵ See Emmanuel Owusu Bediako, “Pentecostalism: A Solution to Africa’s Spiritual Needs?” (M.Th. thesis, Christian Bible College, Rocky Mount, NC, USA, 1999); Allan Anderson, *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrenceville, NJ: Africa World Press, 2001).

¹⁶ Parish Jane, “The Dynamics of Witchcraft,” pp. 432-33.

2. Christianity in Ghana

Although the initial attempt to evangelize Ghana by the Roman Catholic Mission in the fifteen century had been a failure, Christianity had firmly been established in the mid 1800s through the enterprising missionary activities of the Basel Mission (1845), the Bremen Mission (1847), the Wesleyan Methodist (1840), and the Catholic Mission (second attempt in 1880).¹⁷ A recent survey conducted by Operation World and published in 1993 shows that 64% of Ghanaians were Christians.¹⁸

As an effort to evangelize and civilize the indigenous people, on the one hand, the missionary taught that the belief in the spirit-forces such as the gods, fetishism, dwarfs, and witchcraft was superstitious. Yet, on the other hand, they also presented the devil and demons as the power behind these spirit-forces.¹⁹ By the introduction of a personalized devil and the association of the gods with demons, the missionaries strengthened the belief in witchcraft, yet they failed to provide for the holistic needs of the people. For the Ghanaian, these images were real life-threatening forces.²⁰ Many people held that the power of the gods and the other spirit

¹⁷ Ralph M. Wiltgen, *Gold Coast Mission History 1471-1880* (Techny: Divine Word Publication, 1956); Hans W. Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), pp. 7-100; J. Kofi Agbeti, *West Africa Church History: Christian Missions and Church Foundations 1482-1919* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), pp. 3-112; Peter Bernard Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity: A Study of Religious Development from the 15th to 20th Century* (London: Edward Arnold, 1986), pp. 7-26, 41-42, 57-62.

¹⁸ Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World*, 5th ed. (Carlisle: OMS Publishing, 1993), p. 241.

¹⁹ The evidence points that whenever the missionaries went, they opposed, often successfully, almost all features of Ghana customs and religion without having given much consideration to them. For discussing on the missionaries' encounter with the Ghanaian people, see F. L. Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); Noel Smith, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 1835-1960: A Younger Church in a Changing Society* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1966); Harris W. Mobley, *The Ghanaian's Image of the Missionary: An Analysis of the Published Critiques of Christian Missionaries by Ghanaians 1897-1965* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970).

²⁰ Hans W. Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana: A Study on the Belief in Destructive Witches and Its Effects on the Akan Tribes* (Accra: Presbyterian Book Depot,

forces, which could be used either for good or evil purposes, operate through human intermediaries, namely, traditional priests. Yet the human intermediaries often allied themselves with witches. Witches were thought to feed on human flesh and drink human blood, inflict material losses on people, infest diseases on people, and make people ignoble through their misdeeds. Consequently, all misfortunes were thought to be the work of witches.²¹ Therefore people became preoccupied with finding out from the traditional priests the supernatural causes of misfortunes if initial attempts to find a cure failed. Tutelage under the gods was thought to be the best way of protection. Thus as Kalu says of the logic of Igbo of Nigeria's covenant making²² and as Meyer observes about the images of evil among the Ewes of Ghana, these life-threatening forces can be considered representations of particular fears that, in turn, are centered around the Ghanaian cultural hermeneutics.

Since the missionaries were unable to do deal with the situation satisfactorily, there emerged a prophetic ministry in Ghana which announced a new dawn of Christianity whose fulfilment was seen in the African indigenous churches, called spiritual churches in Ghana.²³ Healing and exorcism were central in their services. Although these churches attracted a lot of adherence, there were weaknesses, such as lack of theological framework and accountability from the ministers, which led some to become involved in some questionable practices such as exploitation and immorality.²⁴ They caused a decline and paved a way for the popularity of the classical Pentecostal churches.

1959); Wolf Bleek, *Marriage, Inheritance and Witchcraft: A Case Study of a Rural Ghanaian Family* (Leiden: Africa-Studiecentrum, 1975); Margaret J. Field, *Search for Security: An Ethno-Psychiatric Study of Rural Ghana* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960); T. C. McCaskie, "Anti-Witchcraft Cult in Asante: An Essay in the Social History of an African People," *History of Africa* 8 (1981), pp. 137, 125-54. T. C. McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 133-34.

²¹ But good witches could turn all the destructive acts reported above into good deeds for those they love.

²² U. Ogbu Kalu, *The Embattled God: Christianization of Igboland, 1841-1991* (Lagos: Minaj Publishers, 1996), pp. 29-49.

²³ This paper will use the term spiritual churches in reference to these churches.

²⁴ For instance, see Albert Watson, "Menace of Spiritual Churches," *Daily Graphic* (Accra, May 1976), p. 5; Jessie Jones, "Don't Condemn the Power of the Spiritual Churches," *Christian Messenger* (Accra, November 1971), p. 5; Peter P. Dery, "Traditional Healing and Spiritual Healing in Ghana," *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 4:4 (1973), pp. 53-64 (53-54); David M. Beckmann, *Eden Revival:*

2.1 Pentecostalization of Christianity in Ghana

The origins of classical Pentecostal churches²⁵ in Ghana can be traced back to apostle Anim, who upon receipt of a magazine called *Sword of the Spirit* from the Faith Tabernacle Church²⁶ in 1917, began preaching healing in Christ. Consequently, a new movement began. His desire to know more about the baptism of the Holy Spirit finally linked him with the Apostolic Church of Bradford, England, which sent James McKeown to assist him in 1937.²⁷

Anim's stance on medicine later caused a split between him and McKeown. Whereas McKeown believed in the use of medicine in addition to prayer, Anim rejected all types of aids including medicine.²⁸ Eventually, Anim named his group "Christ Apostolic Church," while McKeown's group remained as the "Apostolic Church." McKeown's church, the Apostolic Church grew faster. But this was later split in 1953 and again in 1962. The churches established by Anim and McKeown, the Apostolic Church and the Church of Pentecost, the Christ Apostolic

Spiritual Churches in Ghana (London: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), p. 55. Paul S. Breidenbach, "Maame Harris Grace Tani and Papa Kwesi Nackabah: Independent Church Leaders in the Gold Coast, 1914-1958," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 12:4 (1979), pp. 581-14 (599). "Beware of These Gospel Mercenaries," *Christian Messenger* (Accra, September 1981), p. 2.

²⁵ By classical Pentecostal churches this study refers to Pentecostals which put stress on speaking in tongues and have their origin either in Britain or USA.

²⁶ Faith Tabernacle Church was not a Pentecostal movement in the strictest sense, but combined an emphasis on healing with its primary aim of cultivating and protecting the inner holiness of the sect as a distinctive community. For further reading, see Turner and Peel who give a good background of this sect. Harold W. Turner, *History of an African Independent Church I: The Church of the Lord (Aladura)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 10-26; J. D. Y. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 63-71.

²⁷ Peter Anim, *The History of How Full Gospel Church Was Founded in Ghana* (Accra: CAC, n.d.), p. 8; Christine Leonard, *A Giant in Ghana: 3000 Churches in 50 Years: The Story of James McKeown and the Church of Pentecost* (Chichester: New Wine Press, 1989.), p. 27; Thomas N. Turnbull, *What Hath Wrought: A Short History of the Apostolic Church* (Bradford: Puritan Press, 1959), p. 85.

²⁸ Leonard, *A Giant in Ghana*, p. 34.

Church, and the Assemblies of God,²⁹ were the main Pentecostal churches in Ghana until the 1970s.³⁰ The Pentecostal practices of deliverance have been developing gradually since 1937.

These developments have been necessary, since originally classical Pentecostalism had not been encouraging deliverance ministry, which has been a very important issue of African traditional religions. Although, the British sociologist Stephen Hunts observes, “the growth and appeal of deliverance has come with the expansion of the ‘classical’ Pentecostal movement at the beginning of the twentieth century,”³¹ at this period the emphasis was on speaking in tongues as an initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and also as a powerful weapon for evangelism. Healing and exorcism were to accompany the Holy Spirit baptism.³² From this perspective, some early Pentecostals opposed those

²⁹ The Assemblies of God entered Ghana as early as 1931, but their impact was not felt until 1980. The reasons, which Leonard gives for this failure, include their inability to adopt the Ghanaian culture and their use of western style of life. Leonard, *A Giant in Ghana*, p. 125.

³⁰ For works on the origin of Pentecostalism in Ghana, see Robert W. Wyllie, “Pioneers of Ghanaian Pentecostalism: Peter Anim and James McKeown,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 6:2 (1974), pp. 109-22; Leonard, *A Giant in Ghana*; Kingsley Larbi, “The Development of Ghanaian Pentecostalism: A Study in the Appropriation of the Christian Gospel in the 20th Century Ghana Setting with Special Reference to the Christ Apostolic Church, the Church of Pentecost Etc” (Ph.D. Diss., Centre for the Study of Christianity in Non-Western World, University of Edinburgh, 1995).

³¹ Stephen Hunt, “Managing the Demonic: Some Aspects of the Neo-Pentecostal Deliverance Ministry,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 13:2 (1998), pp. 215-30 (216).

³² For example, see Warren Newberry, “Signs and Miracles in Twenty-First Century Pentecostal Missiology: Continuation, Domestication or Abdication” in *The 30 Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* (2001), pp. 656-74; Allan Anderson, “Signs and Blunders: Pentecostal Mission Issues at Home and Abroad in the Twentieth Century,” *Journal of Asian Mission* 2:2 (2000), pp. 193-210; Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), pp. 18-24; Benny C. Aker, “The Gospel in Action,” in *Signs and Wonders in Ministry Today*, eds. Benny C. Aker and Gary S. McGee (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1996), pp. 35-45; Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 79-80; Charles W. Conn, *Like a Mighty Army: A History of the Church of God* (Cleveland: Pathway Press, 1977), p. 92; Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1970), pp. 47-55.

who attempted to make deliverance a specialty.³³ The Ghanaian Pentecostal churches held a similar position until the visit of the Latter Rain team from the USA to Ghana (and Nigeria) in 1953. The Latter Rain movement bore many similarities to the early Pentecostal movement that originated at the Azusa Street revival, yet it emerged with the aim to revitalize Pentecostalism, since they felt that Pentecostalism was experiencing a current dryness of faith.³⁴ Among other things, the Latter Rain laid emphasis on deliverance and was opposed to the establishment of human organization.³⁵ After their visit, lay prophets and prophetesses emerged who began to exorcize people from afflicted spirits. But some misunderstanding between them and the leadership made their ministry short-lived. By the end of 1958, all those lay exorcists had left the classical Pentecostal churches to establish their own ministries. They led the exorcistic activities in Ghana in the 1960s.³⁶

Two trends developed within Ghanaian Christianity during the 1970s and 1980s, which eventually led to the formation of a “distinct theology.” First, the books and cassettes from some western preachers, especially Americans, including Oral Roberts,³⁷ Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Reinhard Bonke, and later Benny Hinn, were used to enhance the preaching of many ministers. Often sermons by the pastors in Ghana and other parts of Africa were derived from materials drawn from these ministers, especially Roberts’ seed faith principle, which is centered on

³³ Hunt, “Managing the Demonic,” p. 217; Carter, “Demon Possession and the Christian,” p. 19.

³⁴ M. Richard Riss, “Latter Rain Movement,” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 532-34 (532).

³⁵ For further reading on the movement, see M. Richard Riss, “Latter Rain Movement of 1948,” *Pneuma* 4 (1982), pp. 32-45; M. Richard Riss, *A Survey of Twentieth Century Revival Movements in North America* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988), pp. 105-24; Riss, “Latter Rain Movement,” pp. 532-34; Peter Hocken, *Streams of Renewal: Origins and Early Development of the Charismatic Movement in Great Britain* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), pp. 25-29; James E. Worsfold, *The Origins of the Apostolic Church in Great Britain: With a Breviate of Its Early Missionary Endeavours* (Thorndon: Julian Literature Trust, 1991), pp. 210-310.

³⁶ These churches include the Church of Christ, Spiritual Movement and Divine Healing Church, see George De Wilson, *Biography of Prophet John Mensah* (Cape Coast, n.d); Larbi, “The Development of Ghanaian Pentecostalism,” pp. 329-42.

³⁷ He visited Ghana in 1987.

prosperity and Hagin's faith healing. The second trend (during the later part of 1980s) flowed from an interest in books and cassettes (both video and audio) which seek to increase people's awareness of demons and how to exorcize them.³⁸ Prominent among these materials are the books and cassettes of Derek Prince,³⁹ who visited Ghana in 1987 on the ticket of the Ghana Pentecostal Council.⁴⁰

Prince asserts that a person can be a Christian, baptized in the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues, yet still have demons, ancestral and other curses in one's life, until the Holy Spirit reveals them to be dealt with.⁴¹ He offers reasons for this theory.⁴² Dwelling heavily on Matthew 11:12, among other quotations, Prince argues that casting out a demon or renouncing a curse can be a lengthy process, and it is only forceful men who can lay hold of it.⁴³ Prince's stance is similar to some ministers like Basham,⁴⁴ Dickason,⁴⁵ Kraft,⁴⁶ Koch,⁴⁷ Bubeck,⁴⁸ Wimber,⁴⁹ and

³⁸ These include Kenneth Hagin, *Demons and How to Deal with Them* (Tulsa: Kenneth Hagin Evangelistic Association, 1976); Morris Cerullo, *The Miracle Book* (San Diego: Morris Cerullo World Evangelism, 1984); Rebecca Brown, *He Came to Set the Captives Free* (Springdale: Solid Rock Family Enterprises, 1991) and Emmanuel Eni, *Delivered from Powers of Darkness* (Ibadan: Scripture Union, 1987).

³⁹ Derek Prince is British and was educated at Eton and Cambridge. He held a fellowship in Philosophy at Cambridge from 1940 to 1949. His books that will be examined include: D. Prince, *Blessings or Cursing* (Milton Keynes: Word Publishing (1990); *From Cursing to Blessing* (Lauderdale: Derek Prince Ministries, 1986); *They Shall Expel Demons: What You Need to Know about Demons: Your Invisible Enemies* (Harpenden: Derek Prince Ministries, 1998).

⁴⁰ The Ghana Pentecostal Council comprises most of the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in Ghana.

⁴¹ Prince, *Blessings or Cursing*, pp. 9-10, *From Cursing to Blessing*, pp. 8, 28, 36-37; *They Shall Expel Demons*, pp. 155-69.

⁴² For example, on demons, Prince states that demons might be in a person before one became a Christian. Moreover, demons might enter a person after he/she has become a Christian. He uses such passages as 1 Peter 5:8-9; 2 Cor 11:3; Luke 19:27 to support this claim (e.g., *They Shall Expel Demons*, pp. 158, 162-63). On ancestral curses, Prince bases his assumption on Exodus 20:5 (*Blessing or Cursing*, pp. 16-25). Prince quotes lots of scriptural passages to support his view on other curses; these include Deut 27:15-26; Jer 17:5-6 and Zech 5:1-4 (e.g., *From Cursing to Blessing*, pp. 22-26).

⁴³ Prince, *Blessings or Cursing*, pp. 190-98; *They Shall Expel Demons*, p. 235.

⁴⁴ D. Basham, *Can a Christian Have a Demon?* (Monroeville: Whitaker House, 1971) argues why he believes a Christian can have a demon.

MacNutt.⁵⁰ This view is significantly different from classical Pentecostals' who had refused to accept the possibility of a Christian being possessed by a demon.⁵¹ However, since Prince's theory appeals to the Ghanaian worldview, some Pentecostal as well as some other Christians have accepted it. Consequently, some Christians, both intellectuals, and non-intellectuals began to reinterpret these teachings in culturally relevant ways and put them into practice. What was going on in Ghana was also taking place in other parts of Africa.⁵² The outcome of this reformulation is what this paper refers to as "witchdemology."

⁴⁵ C. Fred Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), p. 175 clearly states, "I have encountered from 1974 to 1987 at least 400 cases of those who were genuine Christians who were also demonized."

⁴⁶ C. H. Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels* (Kent: Sovereign World, 1993), p. 66 declares, "the evidence that Christians can be (and frequently are) demonized is so conclusive that we can be dogmatic about asserting it."

⁴⁷ K. Koch, *Occult Bondage and Deliverance* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1970); *Demonology Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1973).

⁴⁸ M. Bubeck, *The Adversary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987).

⁴⁹ Cf. J. Wimber and K. Springer, *Power Evangelism*, new ed. (London; Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), pp. 168-69, 176-77; see also *Power Healing* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

⁵⁰ Francis MacNutt, *Deliverance from Evil Spirit: A Practical Manual* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995), p. 76 argues, "if sin lives within me [a Christian] and robs me of my freedom of action, is it inconceivable that an evil spirit might not also be infesting that corner of my being?"

⁵¹ W. K. Kay, *Inside Story: A History of British Assemblies of God* (Mattersey: Mattersey Hall, 1990), p. 337; K. Warrington, "Healing and Exorcism: The Path to Wholeness," in *Pentecostal Perspectives*, ed. K. Warrington (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), pp. 147-76 (173).

⁵² Symons Onyango, *Set Free from Demons: A Testimony to the Power of God to Deliver the Demon Possessed* (Nairobi: Evangel, 1979); Heaven U. Heaven, *How to Cast Out Demons or Evil Spirit* (Lagos: Heaven and Blessing Books, 1985); Kaniaki and Mukendi, *Snatched from Satan's Claws: An Amazing Deliverance by Christ* (Nairobi: Enkei Media Service, 1991); Iyke Nathan Uzora, *Occult Grand Master Now in Christ* (Benin City: Osabu, 1993); Sunday Adekola, *Understanding Demonology* (Ibadan: Scripture Union, 1993); Leonard Umunna, *Victory over Temptation, Part 1, Origin of Temptation and the Way out* (Lagos: WordPower Communication, 1999); Zacharias Tanee, *Delivered from Demons* (Yaounde: IGH, n.d.); E. O. Omoobajesu, *My Experience in the Power of This World before Jesus Saved Me* (Lagos: Omoobajesu, n.d.).

The paper uses the term “witchdemology” instead of the usual western terms “demonology” and “witchcraft,” because first, the traditional definitions of the terms “demonology” and “witchcraft” do not fit into the Ghanaian situation.⁵³ Second, the understanding and practices in the Ghanaian context, as will soon be presented, is a synthesis of both the western and the Ghanaian concepts, especially that of the Ghanaian traditional religions where the witch is always the focus.⁵⁴ Thus the term “witchdemology” is used in this paper to describe the beliefs and practices of deliverance ministries in Ghana. These include witchcraft, demonology, ancestral curses, and exorcism.

The theology of “witchdemology” is strongly based on the Ghanaian cosmology. To throw more light on this, I shall call on data from the survey I conducted in 1999 of 1201 participants. For the question, “Is witchcraft real?” 91.7% said yes, 7.7% said no, and 0.7% were not sure.⁵⁵ Of educational background, 100 % of all those who held a first degree said yes, while 85% of those who did not have any official schooling said yes and 15% said no.

⁵³ For example, as stated elsewhere, in the West the definition of witchcraft includes the worship of Satan and the practice of magic and sorcery: Jeffrey Burton Russell, *A History of Witchcraft* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), p. 8; H. E. Wedeck and W. Baskin, “Witchcraft,” *A Dictionary of Spiritualism* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1971), p. 364; Hans Holzer, “Introduction” to *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Witches, Demons, Sorcerers, and Their Present Day Counter Parts*, ed. Rossell Hope Robbins (London: Cathay Books, 1974), pp. 12-27 (18). The definition of demonology also includes “malevolent spirits having supernatural powers and dedicated to destruction,” “Demonology,” *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology*, pp. 195-96 (195). See also A. Merriam-Webster, *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, eds. Federick C. Mish and others Based on *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary* (1898 ed.; Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1984), p. 338.

⁵⁴ Ghanaian terms usually used is witchcraft: *bayie* (Akan), *aye* (Ga), *adze* (Ewe), and *anyen* (Fanti). Meyer, “‘Delivered from the Powers of Darkness’,” p. 237. Cf. T. C. McCaskie, “Anti-Witchcraft Cult in Asante: An Essay in the Social History of an African People,” *History of Africa* 8 (1981), pp. 125-54. Steve Brouwer, Paul Gifford, and Susan D. Rose, *Exporting the America Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 178.

⁵⁵ For the male respondent 91.3% said yes, 8% said no and 0.7% were not sure. With the female respondent 92.1% said yes, 7.2% said no and 0.7% were not sure.

The terms “witch” and “witchcraft” are used synonymously with the terms “demon,” “demonology,” and “evil spirit.” Demon possession is described as when a demon comes to live in a person without consent. It is considered a covenant of soul and spirit without his or her permission. Witchcraft is taken as an advanced form of spirit possession. From this background, it is assumed that almost all traditional priests are witches.

Based on some of the writings of Pentecostals, such as Dickason, Kraft, and Hagin, the origin of demons is linked with the fallen angels.⁵⁶ It is held that these beings (fallen angels) with disembodied spirits, found themselves in rivers, seas, mountains, rocks, trees, and in humans, and that these have become the gods of the Africans. All Africans are therefore under a curse, because their ancestors worshipped the gods.

Ancestral curse is a new “doctrine” which has emerged with the theology of “witchdemonology.” Although this concept has its basis in traditional beliefs, the emphasis was not based on curses, but on blessings.⁵⁷ Yet, the Pentecostal concept of the ancestral curse is the belief that the consequences of the sins committed by the progenitors are recurrent in their family lines. The effects of these curses in a person’s life include chronic diseases or hereditary diseases, mental breakdowns, emotional excesses, allergies, repeated miscarriages, repeated unnatural deaths such as in suicides and accidents, continuing financial

⁵⁶ Aaron K. Vuha, *The Package: Salvation, Healing and Deliverance* (Accra: EP Church of Ghana, 1993), p. 36; Opoku Onyinah, *Overcoming Demons* (Accra: Pentecost Press, 1995), pp. 7-10. Cf. Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 24; Kraft, *Defeating the Dark Angels*, p. 19; Hagin, *Demons*; Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology: A Study of Spiritual Forces at Work Today*, 5th ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1994), p. 42.

⁵⁷ People who were venerated as ancestors, the living dead, were those who led a prospering and meaningful lives; these people, thought to be closer to *Onyankopong* (the Supreme Being), were to intercede for the living. For people who broke taboos, offended the ancestors, or committed specific sins could bring curses upon the state, but sacrifices were offered to appease the responsible gods and thereby retract the curse forever. See Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect* (Tema: Asempa, 1976), p. 34; J. S. Pobee, *Towards an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), p. 44. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (London: SCM, 1973), pp. 178-88; L. Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), pp. 46-57; M. L. Daneel, *Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, vol. 1 (Hague: Mouton, 1971), p. 100; Allen H. Anderson and Samuel Otwang, *TUMELO: The Faith of Africa Pentecostals in South Africa* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1993), pp. 27-39.

insufficiencies, frequent breakdown of marriages, abnormal behavior such as extreme anger tantrums or extreme reservedness.⁵⁸

Linked with the origin of demons/gods and ancestral curses is the strong belief in the territorial spirit, specifically promoted by the “third wave” theologian, Peter Wagner.⁵⁹ This is the notion that the demons assume a hierarchy with powers of greater and lesser ranks having specific geographical assignments. The proponents of “witchdemology” have assumed that the real sources of African problems are the controlling powers of various territorial spirits such as poverty and idolatry. This is to say that African’s problems do not just depend upon scientific and modern development. Taking a cue from Wagner some African scholars such as Oshun and “evangelist” Nwankpa have stressed the need to wage “spiritual warfare” against these spiritual enemies to break free the African continent.⁶⁰

It is believed that there are signs, which hint that a person is demonized or a witch. One of the surest signs proponents of this ministry offer is that such people are especially uneasy in the presence of “spiritual people.”

There are many ways through which demons are said to enter people and be passed on to their families or others. The terms for this process is

⁵⁸ Opoku Onyinah, *Ancestral Curses* (Accra: Pentecostal Press, 1994), p. 2. Cf. Adu-Boahen, *Deliverance from Demons*, p. 111.

⁵⁹ C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer* (Ventura: Regal, 1991); C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer: How to Seek God’s Power and Protection in the Battle to Build His Kingdom* (Ventura: Regal, 1992); C. Peter Wagner, ed., *Engaging the Enemy: How to Fight and Defeat Territorial Spirits* (Ventura: Regal, 1993); C. Peter Wagner, *Confronting the Powers: How the New Testament Church Experienced the Power of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare* (Ventura: Regal, 1996), Peter Wagner was a former Professor of Church Growth at Fuller Theological Seminary. By its excessive interest in demonic hierarchy, some scholars have rightly pointed out that the popular understanding of the character of contemporary spiritual warfare has been captured by the Peretti’s novel, *This Present Darkness*: e.g., Robert A. Guelich, “Spiritual Warfare: Jesus, Paul and Peretti,” *Pneuma* 13:1 (1991), pp. 33-64 (34); Harvey Cox, *Fire Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the of Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Cassell, 1996), pp. 281-84; Frank Peretti, *This Present Darkness* (Westchester: Crossway Book, 1986), p. 34.

⁶⁰ See Emeka Nwankpa, *Redeeming the Land: Interceding for the Nations* (Achimota: African Christian Press, 1994), p. 9; Chris O. Oshun, “Spirits and Healing in a Depressed Economy: The Case of Nigeria,” *Mission Studies* 25:1 (1998), pp. 32-52 (33).

demonic “doorway” or “opening.”⁶¹ Idolatry of any kind is said to be a major opening.⁶² Other demonic doorways which deliverance exponents assume, include: sinful deeds (Luke 22:3);⁶³ involvement in any other religion apart from the “one prescribed by the Lord,” that is Evangelical Christianity;⁶⁴ and any type of emotional pressure from childhood experiences (James 3:16).⁶⁵ It is also propounded that demons may enter human beings through emotional traumas like the death of a loved one, surviving in a car accident, or murder. Some believe those who watch such incidents on the television are also vulnerable to demon entry.

It is assumed that all evil acts have their demonic counterparts. For example, a demon of fornication enters the one who fornicates while the demon of lust enters the person who watches a pornographic video or pictures. While the Bible reveals the seriousness of sin and the need to

⁶¹ Vuha, *The Package*, p. 53; cf. Frank D. Hammond and Ida Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlour* (Kirkwood: Impact Books, 1973), p. 23; John Richards, *But Deliver Us from Evil: An Introduction to the Demonic Dimension in Pastoral Care* (London: Darton, 1974), p. 130.

⁶² Idolatry includes the worship of the gods (of family, clan, or any type), *abisa* (consultation with a deity), and *wo nom abosom* (coveting with a deity on behalf of the family, clan or people groups), receiving the ministrations of traditional medicine from an *okomfo* (priest), participation in a family gathering or a festival where libation is poured and sacrifice offered to the ancestors, having a name that is assigned to *obosom* (a god), such as *Bosompra* and *Bosompim*. Thus all the institutions and activities of the traditional cultures are seen as dangerous to healthy living, for they attract demons which can torture people’s lives. Biblical texts used to explain this include Exod 20:3-5; 1 Tim 4:1-2; 1 Cor 10:20-21.

⁶³ Visits to places considered “worldly” such as the disco and pop concert are classified as examples of these doorways. It can be a single sinful act or the persistent practice of it (habit) that opens the way for demons. For example, while it is held that a single act of adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, sexual abuse, or a premeditated lie may open the door for demons, it is the repeated acts of masturbation, fornication, pornography, exaggeration in conversation that open the way for demons.

⁶⁴ People who are involved in eastern religions, magic, *ouija* boards, and astrology are considered to open themselves to demons. Islam is considered a strong hold of Satan. Where dialogue is never an alternative, the best approach is to convert and deliver them from the “spirit of religiosity.” This assumption goes further to include non-Evangelical faiths like spiritual churches and the Roman Catholic Church.

⁶⁵ This includes pressures from homes where parents are in conflict with each other, children are rejected, and one or both parents are alcoholic, cruel, or abusive, especially sexually. Prenatal influences also are said to attract demons.

overcome it through Christ (e.g., Eph 4:25-32), this theology claims that all evil acts and experiences come from demons. The logical inference is that demons are at work during times of evil behaviors or sickness in the lives of both Christians and non-Christians.

The discourse so far indicates that anyone including Christians could be a witch, demon possessed, or inherit ancestral curses. It is purported that in addition to salvation, every African Christian needs deliverance from witchcraft, demons, ancestral curses, or diseases, before they will be set free. In my survey, when asked the question, "Considering the Ghanaian background, does every Christian need deliverance?" 55.1% said yes, 41.2% said no, and 3.7% had no idea. It is not uncommon for those who answered "no" and "no idea" to seek explanations in ancestral curses when they are faced with problems that seem to prolong and baffle their minds. Therefore, prayer groups have been formed within the churches to cater to this need. Within some churches, especially the Church of Pentecost, the largest Protestant church in Ghana (with over 920,000 in membership), residential Prayer centers have been established to accommodate the sick. Deliverance becomes a major activity in these churches.⁶⁶ In such centers, the leaders prescribe specific days of fasting and prayer to the clients. So-called witches are chained until they are delivered or otherwise.

2.2 Deliverance Session

There are two types of deliverance offered: mass and personal. Mass deliverance, which is our focus, begins like the normal Pentecostal type of service, but the focus is on testimonies and preaching about the works of demons and how God's power can set people free from them.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ For example, see Abamfo Atiemo, "Deliverance in the Charismatic Churches in Ghana," *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* 2 (1994-95), pp. 39-49 (39-40); Joshua Adjebeng, "Come and See Wonders at Sefwi Asafo," *Pentecost Fire* 89 (1989), pp. 7-8, 17-18; S. A. Arthur, "Deliverance," *Bethel News* 6 (n.d.), pp. 5, 7-10; M. Amuzu, "Witchcraft," *The Mirror* (Accra, October 25, 1997), p. 4; Rosalind I. J. Hackett, "Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation of Media Technologies in Nigeria and Ghana," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 27:3 (1998), pp. 258-77 (261); "The Church of Pentecost, Accra" (Report of National Prayer Camp Committee, June 1995).

⁶⁷ For example, witches who claim deliverance may speak of the atrocities they supposedly committed, show signs of witchcraft possession, and tell of how they were delivered. Others may speak of the successes in their lives, which, for them, are answers to prayers, divine interventions, or responses of deliverance.

Before the main deliverance session, some clients might have seen the exorcists already in their homes. Often a form with exhaustive questionnaires seeking information about the background of the person is required to be completed, after which an interview is conducted to find out the supernatural causation of problems. People who have seen the exorcists already as well as others who need deliverance are asked to move to the front of the congregation and form queues. The instructions differ from person to person. But often following Evangelist Tabiri's innovation of "breaking,"⁶⁸ instructions are given to participants to write names of parents and family members known to them and keep them for the breaking rituals.⁶⁹ After the initial instructions, the congregation sings with much expectancy, accompanied by clapping and musical instruments. The leader may then pray and also give instructions on how to pray. Prayer is often said repeatedly with gestures to "break" (*bubu*) "bind" (*kyekyere*), "bomb," "trample" on them (*tiatia wonso*), "whip with canes," "burn with the fire of God,"⁷⁰ "strike with the axe of God," "cast out demons" and "break" curses. As these are done with gestures, for example, *bombowon*, *shooto won* (bomb or shoot them) are usually followed by the sound *poo, poo, pee, pee* with the paper in their hands.⁷¹ Some leaders sell special canes at church for the purpose of caning the witches spiritually.⁷² The "blood of Jesus" and "the name of Jesus" are used repeatedly to rebuke witches and all evil powers. Meanwhile the team members move among the people and lay hands on them. As the prayer goes on people begin to sob, groan, shout, roar, fall down, and struggle on the ground. The leaders pay special attention to those who show such signs without falling down, by commanding and sometimes pushing them. Unlike the Charismatics, especially the Catholic Charismatics who, according to Csordas, consider falling down as resting in the Spirit,⁷³ falling down is interpreted here as a manifestation of

⁶⁸ Tabiri was a prayer-center leader who was officially ordained as an evangelist by the Church of Pentecost.

⁶⁹ After the rituals, such papers are burnt or destroyed as signs of breaking.

⁷⁰ Here *Onyamegya* (God's fire) is called from heaven to burn the witch.

⁷¹ For example, Alfred Owusu, "The Genesis of Bethel Prayer Camp," *Bethel News* 7 (n.d.), pp. 3-5 (4); Tabiri, "What I Mean by Breaking."

⁷² Note the action is done in the absence of the witch, which is believed to be the person's enemy. This means that though the action is done physically, none are whipped.

⁷³ Thomas Csordas, *The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing* (London: University of California Press, 1994), p. 272.

demons. Therefore, when one struggles or falls down, some of the team members continue to cast, bind, or break the power of evil in that person. When there is resistance, the leader engages in dialogue with the person, asking the name of the demon.

Sometimes people begin to speak in different forms, which indicates that some spirits have taken over. They become points of attraction and the leaders engage in active dialogue with them.⁷⁴

As the process of deliverance goes on, people may cough, vomit, or urinate. Through the teachings of deliverance proponents such as Prince, it has come to be accepted that demons may go out through any one of the orifices in the human body.⁷⁵ Thus these acts are considered as signs of successful deliverance.

The process may take two to three hours, until the commotion cools down. But this is not the end of the session. The leader may call those with specific needs and pray for groups in turn.⁷⁶

After this, the leader often requests testimonies of deliverance and healing from the members. Thereafter, the leader may instruct the participants to go out delivered. However, since it is claimed that a person needs constant deliverance, the leader may instruct them on how to do self-deliverance.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ For example, during one of the deliverance sessions I witnessed, a male voice spoke through a woman whom I shall call Agnes and said, "I am your father. I have attempted to give you witchcraft, because I love you and want to pass on my inheritance to you, but because you have committed yourself to the Lord, I could not do it." The leaders then commanded the spirit to come out. Although the spirit resisted them, it came out. Agnes finally said, "I am now free." Agnes Kusiwaa, Interview by Author, August 31, 1999, in Nkawkaw, Nigeria.

⁷⁵ Prince, *They Shall*, 233.

⁷⁶ For example, prayer may be said for traders to receive capital for good business, for farmers to receive rain and good harvest, for government workers to receive promotion and higher salaries, for broken marriages to be restored, for weak marriages to be strengthened, for single people especially women to get married, and for money for those in debt to be able to pay. Sometimes, when prayer is being said for money, people are requested to open their hands, stretch their clothes, or take up their coats to receive.

⁷⁷ With the self-deliverance, the person will have to be his/her own exorcist. The process is similar to the mass deliverance. The prayer of deliverance differs from a person to a person. However, often there is personal affirmation of one's faith in Christ; confession of any known sin; repentance of all sins, forgiveness of other people's sin; breaking with satanic contact; and finally a commanding prayer.

Clearly, the methodology for the deliverance session is a mixture of a wide range of practices, including African traditional, spiritual churches and biblical. For example, like the traditional shrines and the spiritual churches, psychology is implied in the confession of witches, the drumming and the repetition of the songs that builds up pressure on the people before deliverance is carried on. Again, like the spiritual churches, “magical methodology” is apparent in the repetition of the “prayer languages” during deliverance. In addition to these, the techniques of hypno-therapy are applied indirectly during the teaching and testimonies around demons and deliverance. The use of psychoanalysis is also evident in the questionnaires and the interviews conducted by the exorcists before and during deliverance. The fasting, prayers, and commands are the re-interpretations of some scripture verses and how Jesus dealt with the demonic.⁷⁸

3. Witchdemology: Emancipation or Servitude

3.1 Interpretation

The discussion so far shows that the theology of “witchdemology” gets its demonization foundation from the missionaries’ interpretation of African traditional beliefs and practices and other religions. Yet it departs from the missionaries’ interpretation, when it comes to the concept of power and deliverance where it derives its demonization strength from the ministries and materials of the North American deliverance exponents. Gifford observes, “undoubtedly the U.S. charismatic demonology has traditional African beliefs; but the demonology of Africa’s contemporary charismatic churches may well be getting its special character through the power of American literature.”⁷⁹ What comes out here is that in the attempts to appropriate foreign Christian materials for their use, the proponents of “witchdemology” are concerned about demonization, especially of the African traditional practices, and how to exorcize such demonized individuals, which they believe are threats to their successful living. Yet by putting such emphasis on demonization and deliverance, the proponents of this ministry have been too harsh on other religions and rejected their own cultures.

⁷⁸ E.g., Matt 17:21 (AV); Mark 5:1-20.

⁷⁹ Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose, *Exporting the America Gospel*, p. 170.

Many scholars such as Gifford,⁸⁰ Dijk,⁸¹ Marshall,⁸² Hackett,⁸³ and Schoffeleers⁸⁴ have observed this strong position which neo-Pentecostals have taken. Hackett, for example, describes this position as “somewhat merciless toward “traditional and ancestral beliefs” and practices.”⁸⁵ Meyer feels the scholars have played down the role which demonology played in the spiritual churches. She writes, “they drew a much stricter boundary between non-Christian religion and Christianity than earlier studies of such churches might suggest.”⁸⁶ But Meyer’s point is weak here, since continuously her works appear to communicate the Pentecostals’ “rigid stance towards traditional religion”⁸⁷ more than the scholars mentioned.⁸⁸

This paper identifies with those scholars who assess that neo-Pentecostals see more demons than the spiritual churches. The reason is, whereas both accepted the African worldview and dealt with it accordingly, the spiritual churches did not promote the issue of the ancestral curses, complete annihilation from festivals, and family

⁸⁰ Paul Gifford, “Ghanaian Charismatic Churches,” *Journal of African Religion* 64:3 (1994), pp. 241-65 (241-46); Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose, *Exporting the America Gospel*, pp. 151-78; Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London: Hurst & Company, 1998).

⁸¹ Rijk A. van Dijk, “From Camp to Encompassment: Discourses of Transsubjectivity in the Ghanaian Pentecostal Diaspora,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 26:4 (1992), pp. 1-25; Rijk A. van Dijk, “Young Puritan Preachers in Post-Independent Malawi,” *Africa* 62:4 (1992), pp. 1-25.

⁸² Ruth Marshall, “‘Power in the Name of Jesus’: Social Transformation and Pentecostalism in Western Nigeria, Revisited,” in *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa: Essays in Honour of A. H. M. Kirk-Greene*, eds. Terence Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan (London: Macmillan in Association with St. Anthony’s College, Oxford, 1993), pp. 213-46; Ruth Marshall-Fratani, “Mediating the Global and the Local in Nigeria Pentecostalism,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28:3 (1998), pp. 278-315.

⁸³ Hackett, “Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation,” pp. 258-77.

⁸⁴ Matthew Schoffeleers, “Ritual Healing and Political Acquiescence: The Case of Zionist Churches in Southern Africa,” *Africa* 1 (1991), pp. 1-25.

⁸⁵ Hackett, “Charismatic/Pentecostal Appropriation,” p. 261.

⁸⁶ Meyer, *Translating the Devil*, p. 174.

⁸⁷ Meyer, “‘Delivered from the Powers of Darkness,’” p. 244.

⁸⁸ Meyer, “‘Delivered from the Powers of Darkness’”; Meyer, “‘Make a Complete Break’”; Meyer, “‘Commodities and Power of Prayer’”; Meyer, *Translating the Devil*, pp. 153, 173.

gathering. For these spiritual churches, throwing away idols and stopping the worship of them was enough.⁸⁹ But neo-Pentecostals or proponents of “witchdemology” do not only advocate complete abstinence from traditional practices, they also see demons associated with them and “impose” deliverance for all its adherents.

From this perspective, that is the neo-Pentecostals’ emphasis on ancestral curses and deliverance, Meyer has postulated that, for neo-Pentecostals, to “become modern individuals” means breaking with the past.⁹⁰ By this Meyer identifies with many of the current anthropologists such as Comaroff and Comaroff, Geschiere, Colson and Parish whose works in Africa have demonstrated that “witchcraft is a finely calibrated gauge of the impact of global cultural and economic forces on local relations.”⁹¹ That this partly holds for the deliverance ministry in Ghana is seen in the fact that 23% of those who expressed the reasons for visiting prayer centers during my survey included those who wanted success at business or prosperity in another area. Yet make no mistake here, the quest for wholeness (e.g., prosperity, dignity, health, fertility, and security) has its basis in the Ghanaian cultures, yet within the cultures, such a desire was to enable one to support the extended family.⁹² Thus Meyer, as well as the above-listed anthropologists, does well to unearth the ultimate outcome of the deliverance ministry, that is,

⁸⁹ See, for example, Christian G. Kwami Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana: A Study of “Spiritual Churches”* (London: SCM, 1962), pp. 29-30; David M. Beckmann, *Eden Revival: Spiritual Churches in Ghana* (London: Concordia Publishing House, 1975); Robert W. Wyllie, *Spiritism in Ghana: A Study of New Religious Movements* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1980).

⁹⁰ Birgit Meyer, “Beyond Syncretism: Translation and Diabolization in the Appropriation of Protestantism in Africa,” in *Syncretism/Anti-Syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis*, eds. Charles Stewart and Shaw Rosalind (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 45-68; Meyer, “Make a Complete Break,” p. 102; Meyer, “Delivered from the Powers of Darkness”; Meyer, *Translating the Devil*, pp. 215-16.

⁹¹ Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, eds., *Modernity and Its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. xxviii; Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (London: University Press of Virginia, 1997); Elizabeth Colson, “The Father as Witch,” *Africa* 70:3 (2000), pp. 333-58; Parish Jane, “The Dynamics of Witchcraft and Indigenous Shrines among the Akan,” *Africa* 69:3 (1999), pp. 427-47.

⁹² Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values* (Accra: Sankofa Publishing, 1996), pp. 98-105; Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, pp. 31-44.

promotion of individualism as against the interest of the traditional extended family system. Nevertheless, this assertion does not take into account the main reason why many clients consult exorcists. As discovered through my fieldwork, the rationale behind consultation is often toward *abisa*, that is, the desire to find the cause of one's problems. Deliverance often becomes a remedy after diagnoses had been made.

Beside this point, the scholars mentioned and others including Kamphausen, Asamoah-Gyadu, and Meyer herself elsewhere see deliverance ministry as a response to modernity, where individual riches and foreign commodities are often seen as of demonic origin, which need to be exorcized.⁹³ Kamphausen, for example, notes, "the hermeneutical key to the decoding of the Pentecostal symbolic system seems to be implied in the concept of western commodities being of strange origin."⁹⁴ Thus "[becoming a] modern individual" cannot be the real concern of the deliverance advocates.

Consequently, there is a paradox in the neo-Pentecostal's concept of "witchdemology." On the one hand, they are seen as carrying the message of the missionaries by considering traditional practices as demonic, and on the other hand, they reject the missionary interpretation that belief in witchcraft and demonology is superstitious, and carry on the practices of anti-witchcraft shrines by exorcising anything which gives them cause to doubt their origins and authentication.⁹⁵ Thus "witchdemology" cannot be placed under modernity (or mission Christianity), neither can it be identified as pre-modernity (or traditional religion). Clearly it derives its strength from postmodernity, where part of the traditional religion and part of Christianity can peacefully coexist as a coherent theology.⁹⁶ "Witchdemology" is a synthesis of both. That

⁹³ Erhard Kamphausen, "Pentecostalism and De-Fetishism: A Ghanaian Case Study" (a paper presented at the International Theological Consultation of the Six Member Churches of the Bremen Mission, Ghana Ho, February 23-26, 1999); Comaroff and Comaroff, *Modernity and Its Malcontents*, pp. xii-xiii; Asamoah-Gyadu, "Renewal Within African Christianity," p. 276; Meyer, "Commodities and Power of Prayer."

⁹⁴ Kamphausen, "Pentecostalism and De-Fetishism: A Ghanaian Case Study," p. 9.

⁹⁵ It should be mentioned here that this notion does not only demonize western commodities, as sometimes such writings assume, but they also involve traditional things such the making of rasta hair. This is clearly demonstrated in the section, which deals with the demonic doorways.

⁹⁶ This assertion becomes apparent if various analyses of postmodernity by some scholars are taken into consideration. For examples, Lyotard highlights fantasy as

postmodernity is a possible way of explaining the acceptability of deliverance within the churches in Ghana is that whereas exorcism had been featuring prominent in the history of the churches in Ghana, it had not come into the limelight.⁹⁷ But within the postmodern world where “homogeneous plurality within fragmentation of cultures, traditions, ideologies, forms of life, language games, or life worlds”⁹⁸ is a key feature, deliverance with all its contradictions is welcomed. With the emphasis on biblical text,⁹⁹ therefore, the desire of the Pentecostals cannot be associated with just “[becoming a] modern individual.” Rather it can better be associated with what Cox calls “primal spirituality,” which he explains as the “largely unprocessed nucleus of the psyche in which the unending struggles for a sense of purpose and significance goes on.”¹⁰⁰ Cox rightly observes that this is found in Pentecostalism worldwide and also underlies original biblical spirituality.¹⁰¹ A nuance of Cox’s assertion, “the sacred self,” is what Csordas proposes as the center

a major feature, and Barnes sees myth as having acceptable place in this concept. Thus, deliverance with its fantasies and mythologies clearly has its strength from post-modern philosophy; Jean-François Lyotard, “What is Postmodernism,” in *Art in Theory: An Anthropology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 1009-1015(1009); Roland Barthes, “Myth Today,” in *Art in Theory*, pp. 687-93; Furthermore, writing of current anthropologists such as Geschiere, Jean and John Comaroff show that ambiguity, which is neither African or European, features prominent in modern African witchcraft beliefs. See, for example, Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (London: University Press of Virginia, 1997), p. 5; Comaroff and Comaroff, *Modernity and Its Malcontents*, p. xii; Peter Geschiere and Cyprian Fisiy, “Domesticating Personal Violence: Witchcraft, Courts and Confessions in Cameroon,” *Africa* 64:2 (1994), pp. 323-41; Colson, “The Father as Witch,” pp. 333-58.

⁹⁷ Top personalities who required deliverance before this era went for it underground. Cf. Omenyo, “The Charismatic Renewal,” p. 178.

⁹⁸ Philip Sampson, “The Rise of Postmodernity,” in *Faith and Modernity*, eds. Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden (Oxford: Regnum, 1994), pp. 29-57 (41).

⁹⁹ When the neo-Pentecostals speak about breaking the ancestral curses, they are talking about breaking the power of the gods that the ancestors worshipped, which, they think, is still causing evil in the present world as a result of the traditional practices. They do so by pointing to quotations such as Exodus 20:4-5 and Psalms 96:5.

¹⁰⁰ Cox, *Fire Heaven*, pp. 60-61, 81.

¹⁰¹ Cox, *Fire Heaven*, pp. 213, 228, 243.

of charismatic healing and deliverance ministry in North America.¹⁰² Thus Csordas sees an inquiring into the sacred and the search for meaning as the underlying factors of charismatic healing and deliverance ministry. Not coincidentally this sort of “primal spirituality” intersects with the African traditional spirituality. For example, in Ghana it goes well with *abisa* (consultation) and the rituals that may follow. Therefore, the theology of “witchdemology” has come to stay among Ghanaian and African Christianity.

3.2 Emancipation

The positive aspects of the theology of “witchdemology” are seen in several ways:

First, it offers its adherents the opportunity to oscillate between the traditional and Christian beliefs and practices. Here people are able to express their fears in witchcraft and other life threatening forces and seek protection from them. For those who think that ancestral spirits are hampering their progress in this modern world, they have the opportunity to be “exorcized.” Some people see this way of “deliverance” as cheaper than the expenses incurred in counselling that will be offered in the western concept.¹⁰³

Second, it offers women equal access to places of leadership within the classical Pentecostals, who have refused to ordain women into the pastorate. Women who exhibit some charisma can establish prayer centers.

Third, the proliferation of the deliverance ministry has caused the classical Pentecostals and other churches to reconsider their beliefs and practices. The prayer centers are characterized by many reports of miraculous phenomena as against few in the conventional church services.

Fourth, many new people, ranging from top government officials to the very low in society, join the Pentecostal churches and other churches through the “witchdemology” ministry.

¹⁰² Csordas, *The Sacred Self*, pp. 15-24.

¹⁰³ Cf. Kwasi Addo Sarpong, “The Growth of Prayer Centres in Ghanaian Christianity: The Quest for Health and Wholeness” (M.Th. thesis, Regents Theological College, 2000), pp. 116-18.

3.3 Servitude

The positive side of this theology of “witchdemology” does not, however, preclude a negative assessment of it. The negative aspects include the following:

First, accusations of witchcraft relinquish people from acknowledging the responsibility for their wrongdoing, their sins, and their inadequacies, and putting them on someone else, often a poor person, who becomes the enemy of the whole community.¹⁰⁴ Yet the Pentecostals claim to support the oppressive and the poor in society.¹⁰⁵ Thus Shorter rightly sees witchcraft accusation as “auto-salvation or self-justification.”¹⁰⁶

Second, the teachings on witchcraft and demons, coupled with testimonies from “exorcized witches” subject the congregant to pressures quite disproportionate to the phenomena described. Thus people are psychologically led to confess antisocial behaviors and nocturnal issues which baffle their understandings as witchcraft activities. These confessions can attract stigmatization from other members of society, and thus instead of deliverance and healing leading to liberation, the physical and psychological conditions of such people worsened and in extreme cases lead to death.

Third, many of the symptoms taken as witchcraft or spirit possession can be explained away by medical sciences.¹⁰⁷ In such cases repeated deliverances worsen the person’s condition.

¹⁰⁴ For example, although during my fieldwork, male who claimed that they were practicing witchcraft outnumbered female (eight against two), victims of exorcism are often women, children (especially girls) and maids.

¹⁰⁵ See Hanna Stewart-Gambino and Everlet Wilson, “Latin America Pentecostals: In Stereotypes and New Challenges,” in *Power, Politics, and Pentecost in Latin America*, eds. Edward L. Cleary and Hanna Stewart-Gambino (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998), pp. 227-46 (240); Robert M. Cecil, Jr., “Pentecostals and Social Ethics,” *Pneuma* 9 (1987), pp. 103-107; Cheryl Bridges Johns, *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy among the Poor* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 46-61, 138-40; Samuel Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos and Liberation: Toward an Hispanic Pentecostal Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

¹⁰⁶ Aylward Shorter, *Jesus and the Witchdoctor: An Approach to Healing and Wholeness* (London: Orbis Books, 1985), p. 96.

¹⁰⁷ For examples, seizures may be symptoms for epilepsy. Personality changes can be psychological malfunctions or mental disorders such as hysteria, schizophrenia, or paranoia. Habitual behaviors, such as sexual desire, anger

Fourth, the socio-economic factor in Africa causes many people to begin prayer centers just as means of financial support.¹⁰⁸ Since there is no training, certification, or formal recognition from a body of Christians required to begin a prayer center, charlatans and the unemployed who have strong personalities can easily claim spiritual encounters and begin centers with a profit motive in mind. Linked with this socio-economic factor are the deliverance teachings at the centers, which consider health and wholeness as the result of obedience to biblical principles on blessing, to the neglect of biblical principle of suffering (e.g., 2 Cor 12:7-12; Luke 13:1-5; Rom 8:35-39).

Fifth, by the demonization of all other faith apart from the Evangelical/Pentecostal's, in this pluralistic world, neo-Pentecostals deter healthy ecumenism and often cause unnecessary tension between Pentecostalism and other faiths.

Sixth, the process of deliverance which often involves breaking links with families eventually divides the traditional extended family system and promotes individualism.

Seventh, the theology of "witchdemology" reinforces the "primitive animistic" belief system that keeps communities in servile fearfulness and hampers progress. During my fieldwork there were many instances where people had stopped building houses in their hometowns for fear of witches.

Eighth, the uncritical approach adopted by both proponents and adherents of this ministry encourage dubious people to deceive others with their exaggerated or fabricated testimonies. People who attempt to challenge some of the testimonies are branded as sceptics. Beside, it is assumed that theologians cannot understand "spiritual things," and by implication cannot teach such people. The major problem with this is that such exorcists can lead genuine people to doom, just like the massacre of over 780 members of the Church of the Ten Commandments in Uganda in the year 2000 and other cult-inspired deaths elsewhere in the world.¹⁰⁹

tantrums, and extreme quietness may be temperamental traits or associated with past memories.

¹⁰⁸ This was very evident in my fieldwork as two of the center leaders interviewed claimed their call to the profession after they had lost their jobs.

¹⁰⁹ "Cult Massacre," *Metro* (local paper in Birmingham), July 21, 2000 puts the death toll at 780.

4. Conclusion

Deliverance in contemporary Africa has been shown to be based on the persistent belief in witchcraft and other spirit forces which has culminated in the formation of a theology called “witchdemology.” Using Ghanaian situations as an example, it has been demonstrated that the theology of “witchdemology” is based on the synthesis of both African traditional religion and Christianity. Important aspects of this theology were seen as the attempts to identify and exorcize demonic forces in people’s lives (whether in an individual’s life or at a corporate level) in order for them to succeed in the contemporary world. The complex problems that one encounters in evaluating this theology of “witchdemology” are evident after considering both the positive and the negative effects.¹¹⁰ On the one hand, it takes the culture of the people into consideration, by dealing with related beliefs and threatening fears in their newly acquired faith, through a synthesis of both old and new patterns. As Meyer concludes, “in contrast to the ‘mission-church Christianity’...[it]...offers the possibility of approaching in the safe context of deliverance what people seek to leave behind but still disturbs them.”¹¹¹ Gifford also concludes that deliverance is relatively harmless.¹¹² From this positive assessment, then, the theology of “witchdemology” represents a remarkable contribution to a paradigm shift in Christianity in Africa. In a way, it is a further attempt to contextualize the gospel to the African people, in addition to the efforts made by the independent churches and the exponents of African theology.

Nevertheless, assessment of the negative effects makes this ministry quite alarming. Its preoccupation with demons and witches shows that it is an affirmation of the old order. They appear to have fallen into the weaknesses of the anti-witchcraft shrines and some of the African independent churches. Similar to what Sundkler observes about the Bantu prophets in South Africa, their assertions and promises are “more high sounding than they are sound.”¹¹³ The approach may fit well into the African cultural milieu, but the emphasis is a threat to the progress of Christianity and modernity in Africa. In spite of rapid growth by their

¹¹⁰ Cf. M. L. Daneel, “Exorcism as a Means of Combating Wizardry: Liberation or Enslavement,” *Missionalia* (1989), pp. 220-47 (240).

¹¹¹ Meyer, *Translating the Devil*, p. 216.

¹¹² Gifford, *African Christianity*, pp. 107-108.

¹¹³ Bengt G. M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 236.

approach, they cannot bring the African out of the fear of witchcraft and other supernatural powers. This does not mean that this ministry should be suppressed. The discussion so far reveals that this ministry has been progressive among the African peoples. Suppression has never been successful. Rather this is to suggest that it is an incomplete ministry, which needs theological analysis of the spirit-world to complement it. This theological analysis, therefore, needs to be the concern of African Pentecostal theologians.