

**Proposal from an experientialist perspective for
educators involved with learners affected by the
occult in Mkhuhlu**

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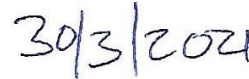
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DECLARATION

I, **Vusimuzi Goodman Nkuna** declare that this dissertation is my own original work compiled for the purpose of the aforementioned qualification and I have never submitted it to this or any other academic institution before.



VG NKUNA



DATE

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ABSTRACT

Existing scholarship on children's participation in the occult predominantly focuses on adolescents with limited reference to preadolescent children. However, anecdotal evidence from non-academic literature from an African context reveal that many African children introduced to occult practices and participation at a very young age. Hence the researcher identified a need to conduct a study that aims to develop theological guidelines that may be used by educators of Christian faith to care for primary school learners affected by the occult. Through the use of autoethnography, Grounded Theory Method and Osmer's model of practical theological reflection, this study confirmed that preadolescent children of primary school age do participate in the occult.

Conducted in Mkhuhlu community in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa, the study used autoethnographic data to describe the manifestation of the occult among primary school learners in Mkhuhlu community and the ways used by educators of Christian faith to respond to the situation; utilised academic literature and published testimonies of former African occultists; and academic literature to interpret why this situation is happening; developed normative principles based on the exegesis of relevant pericopes from both the Old Testament and the New Testament; and then developed theological guidelines that may be used by educators of Christian faith to care for learners affected by the occult.

Key findings from the study reveal that African children join the occult from as young as eight years of age and Christian educators discover them through voluntary self-confession, peer whistle-blowing, incidental disclosure and learners' mystical encounters during school hours. On interpreting why learners are involved in the occult, the study revealed that these practices are passed on from one generation to the next and permeates itself within the same generation through socialisation, social learning, experiential learning, bullying and delinquency. Exegesis of relevant biblical pericopes determined that all occult practices are sinful before God and alienate practitioners from God and will not spend eternity with him. For this reason, the researcher argues that educators of Christian faith should respond to the situation in ways that are aligned to biblical principles that will reconcile affected learners and their families to the Trinitarian God. These are articulated in the caring guidelines which comprise a recommended caring process, principles, practices, systems and institutional arrangements.

ABSTRAK

Bestaande navorsing oor kinders se betrokkenheid by die okkulte as meestal beperk tot die adolossente met beperkte verwysing na die pre-adolossent. Daar is egter anekdotiese literatuur uit nie-akademiese bronne vanuit die Afrika perspektief wat verwys na baie Afrika kinders wat ingelyf is in die okkulte en aktief daaraan deelneem vanaf 'n baie jong ouderdom. Gevolglik het die navorser 'n behoefte geïdentifiseer om navorsing te doen met die doel om teologiese riglyne te bepaal wat deur Christen opvoeders gebruik kan word om hierdie jong leerlinge wat in die okkulte verval het te berader. Deur die gebruik van Outotegnografie, die Gegronde teorie metode, en Osmer se model van praktiese teologiese oorweging word bewys dat pre-adolossente wel aan kultus bedrywighede deelneem.

Die studie is bedryf in Mkhuhlu gemeenskap in die Mpumalanga provinsie van Suid Afrika. Die studie gebruik outotegnografiese data om die manifestasies van die okkulte in laerskoolleerling na te vors, en die metodes wat deur die Christen beraders gebruik word om hierdie kinders te help. Daar is ook gebruik gemaak van akademiese literatuur, gepubliseerde verslae van voormalige Afrika okkulte bedrywers. Die literatuur is bestudeer om vas te stel waarom hierdie fenomeen in Mkhuhlu voorkom. Normatiewe beginsels is vassgestel gebasseer op die eksegeese van verwante Skrifperikope uit die Ou en Nuwe Testamente. Daar is toe teologiese riglyne ontwikkel wat deur die Christen opvoeders gebruik kan word in die berading van hierdie kinders wat in die okkulte verval het.

Sleutel bevindinge van die navorsing het gewys dat Afrika kinders so jonk as agt jaar in die okkulte verval het en dat die Christen beraders hulle opgespoor het deur vrywillige self-bekentenis, maats fluitjie-blasers, insidentele bekentenis, en leerlinge wat mistieke optredes in die klas openbaar. Oor die vraag waarom kinders in die okkulte verval is het die navorsing bewys dat hierdie gebruike deur geslagte voortgedra is en dan manifesteer as swak sosialisering, boelie en jeugmisdaad. Eksegeese van die Bybelse perikope bewys dat okkulte aktiwiteite is 'n sonde voor God en vervreem hierdie beoefenaars van God en hulle sal nie die ewigheid by Hom wees nie. Vir hierdie rede voer die navorser aan dat berading moet gedoen word volgens skriftuurlike voorskrifte wat die geaffekteerde leerling en sy ouers sal versoen met die Drie-enige God. Hierdie aanbevole riglyne betrek die beradingsproses, beginsels, stelsels en die posisie van die verskillende opvoedkundige instellings

KEY WORDS

Occult, caregiving practices, experientialism, apologetics, theological guidelines

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission Church
AIC	African Independent Churches
ATR	African Traditional Religion(s)
CPSC	Council for Pastoral and Spiritual Counsellors
GTM	Grounded Theory Method
OT	Old Testament
NT	New Testament
SAPRA	South African Pagan Rights Alliance
SRC	Sotho Reformed Churches
UN	United Nations

DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Affected learner	A learner who is either involved in the occult or tormented by other people's harmful acts of the occult.
Caregiver	A Christian teacher or Christian minister actively involved in caring for children affected by the occult
Care recipient	A learner who is receiving attention of the caregiver
Care seeker	A learner who is in a situation that warrants caregiving
Caregiving practices	All actions undertaken to support learners affected by the occult which are based on scripture, Christian tradition, teacher's reasoning and theology of the Trinitarian God.
Christian educators	Qualified teachers who are adherents of the Christian faith.
Episode	An incident encountered in line of the situation of the occult.
Occult	A group of activities related to the desire and practice of hidden knowledge such as witchcraft, Satanism and magic.
Practitioner learner	A learner who is involved in the occult.
Primary school learner	A child attending school in any grade between Grade 1 to Grade 7.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.1 Background and introduction

The researcher developed an interest to study the occult among primary school children from his personal involvement during childhood, exposure to it in his family and the community of Mkhuhlu, and family members' involvement in caring for affected primary school learners in the area. He also observed how his family's conversion from African Traditional Religion to pentecostal Christianity has enabled them to develop Bible-based caring practices that they use to care for affected young people and their families. They developed these practices in their own life experiences as and when they had to repel powers of witchcraft. The outcome of their encounters with these powers has given them an experience which they often share zealously with other people. Of note is that family members who are in the teaching profession have found the opportunity to replicate this experience at schools whenever a situation arises as one of the approaches to commend the gospel (McGrath, 2012:19).

The incidents of children confiding in their Christian educators that they are involved in the occult and want to abandon it are commonly found in schools where the researcher's family members teach. With their faith in the deliverance power of Jesus Christ, they all feel the urge to help these children to get out of these practices. However, this help is sporadic and lacks guidelines. For this reason, the researcher felt the burden to do an empirical study which would develop some caring guidelines that could be used by Christian educators involved with affected children at school. As this drive emerged from personal experience with the aim of seeking to solve a community issue, it was inevitable for him to use autoethnography in data collection (Walton, 2014:xxxii).

This chapter presents the full research problem, outcome of the literature study, research question and objectives and the research methodology followed in conducting the study. In the next section the report enhances the background to the study by describing key concepts that are central to the study.

1.2 Key concepts

1.2.1 Description of the *occult*

The word '*occult*' has its etymological root in the Latin adjective "*occultus*", which means hidden or secret (Bogdan & Djurdjevic, 2013:1). Kanco and Holliday (2000:68) perceive it as a

“supernatural perception from sources other than God”. For them, this constitutes secretive and hidden knowledge or wisdom that is beyond human understanding (Kanco & Holliday, 2000:68). Congruent to this perspective, Bogdan and Djurdjevic (2013:1) affirm that it is a branch of human activity with an orientation towards hidden aspects of reality. For them these aspects are “commonly inaccessible to ordinary senses and activity” (Bogdan & Djurdjevic, 2013:1). As such it covers a multiplicity of referents such as “what is concealed, obscure, mysterious, secret, sinister or forbidden” (Kiernan, 2006:5). These comprise a series of practices grounded in the theory of esotericism (Granholm, 2005:21). Many Pentecostal Christians maintain that these practices fall outside the realm of established religion and promise things that the Christian church forbids (Martin *et al.*, 2008:21). Based on these definitions, the occult includes practices such as witchcraft, magic, sorcery, divination and Satanism.

1.2.2 Experientialism

The term experientialism is crucial and relevant to this study as the research has been conceived from the researcher's and his family's experience with the occult in the family, broader community and at schools. More importantly, their zeal to want other people to experience the deliverance power of the Holy Spirit makes this term indispensable to this study. As it is one of the core concepts in the discipline of apologetics, experientialism can be well understood within the context of the description of apologetics. McGrath (2012:14) perceives apologetics as a discipline that helps Christians find a way of explaining faith in terms that make sense to people outside the church. Likewise, Graham (2017:7) posits that apologetics is essentially a question of how to engage with a non-Christian interlocutor in order to persuade that person of the validity of Christian faith and practices. Apologetics achieves this goal through defending, commending and translating the gospel to them (McGrath, 2012:19). It applies different approaches to realise this. These approaches include fideism, presuppositionalism, veridicalism, combinationalism and experientialism, just to cite a few (Morley, 2015:10-23).

As this study was implemented using autoethnography which emphasises the narration of personal experience, cross-reference to the findings in the literature study, experientialism became a logical approach of apologetics to be considered in assessing the caring experience of the people who care for children affected by the occult. Experientialism emphasises experience as grounds for affirming the existence of God and the reality of Christianity (Morley, 2015:19). In this regard, such experience includes factors such as answered prayers or providential care which are viewed as the only basis for belief. Morley (2015:20) notes that people who support this perspective believe that their own experience is not enough to convince the next person, but

others must have their own experience in order to be convinced. In this study, the researcher and family experienced the saving power of salvation since 1980 when senior family members received salvation. Their conversion to Christianity cultivated some Christian practices that they use to repel the influence of the occult in their lives which they now replicate among affected learners. The positive results achieved became an experience that they want others to experience as well.

In their caregiving practices, the researcher and members of his family incidentally apply experientialism since they were not trained in Christian apologetics. In this incidental application, those that are educators commend and defend the gospel through testimonies amongst fellow educators and putting their faith in action by praying for affected learners. They do this because they have had a personal encounter with the Trinitarian God. Vlastuin (2016:2) posits that this encounter gives Christians the deepest motive to share the gospel with other people that they may participate in the same love, redemption and trust. In this way, these caregiving practices provide an experience to tell the story of God's actions in human history through their experience-based testimony (Smit, 2015:3).

1.2.3 Caregiving practices

Caregiving practices could be well understood by moving from the premise of Christian practices. Swinton and Mowat (2016:20) describe Christian practices as values, beliefs, theologies and other assumptions which form part of the Christian communal activities. For them, these practices should be understood within the context of the church and the reign of God as a reflection of the church's attempt to participate faithfully in the continuing practices of the Triune God's redemptive mission to the world (Swinton & Mowat, 2016:23). From this premise, these caregiving practices could be described as a bouquet of acts of compassion to people in need of care that are informed by God's perpetual redemptive mission to humanity and the entire creation. Central to this study are the Christian practices directed at caring for primary school children affected by the occult.

The preliminary observations of the practices that the researcher and his family use to care for affected learners reveal that they encompass prayer, fellowship, healing and empowerment of care seekers as instruments of gaining deliverance from exhaustion in occult practices. These practices are consistent with what Magezi (2016:5-6) enlists and discusses in his reflection of African caring practices within Pentecostal churches founded and led by Africans.

The observations further point out that these caring practices offered by the Christian educators of Mkhuhlu focus on "healing people spiritually, mentally, psychologically and physically" as this is prevalent within the African communities (Baloyi, 2014:8). This is consistent with Magezi's

(2016:5) conclusion that within the African context, many African Pentecostal Churches' caregiving is concerned with addressing the spiritual causes of misfortune or ill-health. One of these causes of misfortunes as perceived by African Pentecostals are destructive powers of the occult in the form witchcraft. Baloyi (2014:9) notes that many Pentecostal Christians repel these powers through prayer.

1.2.4 Proposal

For the purpose of this study the term proposal refers to the caring guidelines to be developed at the end of the study. Its content will emerge from research data collected through autoethnography and exegesis of relevant OT and NT passages which will be sustained and validated by established theological concepts from the field of apologetics. The key components of the proposal will include: the caring process, principles, systems and institutional arrangements.

1.3 Problem statement

The researcher's personal experience with the occult in Mkhuhlu reveals that children's involvement in occult practices may start at a younger age than at adolescence. Yet, scholarly literature has over the past years mainly focused on adolescents (Reichert & Richardson, 2012:49), resulting the crafting of concepts such as "Adolescent Satanist" to demonstrate this narrow focus (Dyrendal, 2008:75-78). In this regard, researchers such as Klonsinski (2004:86) attribute adolescents' participation in the occult solely to the quest for their own identity. This narrow focus and its resultant conclusions disregard facts such as participation of preadolescent children and the role of socialisation in passing on occult practices among family members, particularly in the African culture as experienced by the researcher during childhood.

While the researcher and other children bear witness to childhood participation in the occult in Mkhuhlu, this subject has received little scholarly attention in South Africa. Over the years, the study of the occult in South Africa mainly revolved around situations such as witch hunts, ritual murders and occult economies (Geschiere, 2006a:219; Geschiere, 2006b:50; Petrus, 2011:2; Baloyi, 2014:1; Harnischfeger, 2000:99; Comaroff & Comaroff 1999:285). All these studies focussed on adults and never paid attention to primary school learners' involvement in the situation except citing the role of the youth in the murder of people suspected of witchcraft and destruction of their property (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1999:287). Similar studies were conducted in the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality but with none of them paying specific attention to the geographic area of Mkhuhlu, which is part of this municipality. Such studies include among others,

various investigations conducted by Izak Niehaus in Greenvalley area of the former Lebowa homeland (Niehaus, 1993:498-530; Niehaus, 2005:190) and Jonathan Stadler's inquiry into witch hunts in the former Mhala District of the then Gazankulu homeland (Stadler, 1996:87-110).

Besides the limited focus on adolescent children and adults, existing literature also illustrates a lacuna in the field of child theology in general. Child theology in this instance can be loosely defined as theological views and faith practices through the eyes of and life experiences of children (Grobbelaar, 2016a:63). The aforementioned lacuna on the lack of literature in this regard has been expressed by some academics such as Grobbelaar (2016b:vii) who alludes that literature on child theology has been absent from an African context as most of the literature in this field is from American or British-European origin. Furthermore, this scholarly authorship covers a number of areas but does not include content on the occult among primary school learners. This discovery suggests that there is a contextual gap in the theologies of childhood in general and the study of the occult in particular.

In addition to the gaps discussed above, literature also reveals that scholarship in the area of theologies of childhood is relatively recent, as Grobbelaar (2016c:13) discusses that the scholarly interest in this field has only begun to emerge from within theology and religious studies in the twenty-first century. In this regard, this study will fill the gap in scholarly research on the occult among primary school learners, and extends the study of the occult to Mkhuhlu and relate the situation from the experience of a former child occultist, thereby enriching knowledge in child theology. It will specifically contribute to the field of apologetics by crafting a theory that will be used in caring for young children affected by the *occult*. This theory will also help commend and translate the gospel through experientialism.

1.4 Preliminary literature study

Literature review is done either as a study on its own or as a first phase of an empirical study (Mouton, 2001:86-91) and may be organised in various ways such as schools of thought, chronology, themes or hypotheses. For this research, literature study features throughout the project as the first phase of the study and secondary data source. With insight from Hart's (2018:31) enumeration of twelve purposes of literature review, this review mainly focuses on determining what has been done and what ought to be done in the study of this situation to fill the identified gaps. In summary, the review acknowledges the inadequacy of child theology in literature on the occult; affirms the complexity of the phenomenon of the occult; explicates the dilemma related to freedom of religion; elucidates the challenges related to inconsistent Christian views on matters related to the occult; highlights the usefulness of pentecostal Christianity in

addressing the occult and illuminates the complexities emanating from the principles applied in caring for minor children.

1.4.1 Child theology inadequacies

The problem statement highlights several gaps in and inadequacies of child theology in general and on the subject of the occult in particular. It acknowledged that this field is relatively young as it emerged in the twenty-first century (Grobelaar, 2016c:13) with limited scholarly authorship from the African content (Grobelaar, 2016b:vii) and had predominantly focussed on adolescents (Wheeler *et al.*, 1988:548; Dyrendal, 2008:75-78; Klonsiski, 2004:86; Reichert & Richardson, 2012:49). Of primary interest in this study is lack of scholarship on pre-adolescent children's involvement in the *occult*. While this limitation is a weakness in child theology, insight gained from the literature on adolescents creates an opportunity for academic inquiry on the matter focusing on pre-adolescent children.

Considering what has been the focus of scholarship in this area among the adolescents, another limitation of the current literature seems to be on the scope of the investigation if narrowed down to their involvement in the occult. The researcher found that the prominent area of investigation has been on the drive or motive for adolescents' participation in the phenomenon. These motives include a range such as mere curiosity; a quest for power; escapism and status symbol (Wheeler, Wood & Hatch, 1988:548); a desire to instil fear in others (Dyrendal, 2008:75); and identity issues (Klonsiski, 2004:86).

From the findings on the reasons of adolescents' involvement in the occult, it could be construed that adolescents' participation in the occult is voluntary in order to achieve those goals. This assertion discounts the possibility of the involvement of coercive tactics to get some children to participate, disregards the fact that other children are socialised to be occultists by their family members and prejudices those who get initiated through mysterious means beyond their control. These are just a few prevalent drivers of the proliferation and sustenance of the occult identified by the researcher in the community of Mkhuhlu and his clan. These varied reasons for participation in the occult are further complicated by the complexity of the description of the occult itself, its evolution and prevalent variants. In addition, there are different perceptions on what is undesirable occult practices by many adherents of the Christian faith.

1.4.2 Complexity of the occult

The occult is a complex phenomenon to comprehend because of a number of factors as highlighted in the previous section. Of note is the multiple ways in which people perceive and describe it, and the various forms through which it manifests itself. As defined in 1.2, the term is derived from the Latin adjective "*occultus*" which means hidden or secret, the term "occult" attracts various definitions. Bogdan and Djurdjevic (2013:1) describe it as a branch of human activity which is oriented towards hidden aspects of reality. Kiernan (2006:5) comprehends it as "what is concealed, obscure, mysterious, secret, sinister or forbidden" among ordinary people. From this description it is evident that the occult entails some knowledge "hidden in non-communicable discourses of secrecy" (Bogdan & Djurdjevic, 2013:2). Therefore, it may be deduced that the occult is generally viewed as part of human experience which is real but hidden from many people. Consequently, as it is something secret and/or forbidden and those who are not privy to it could easily discount its existence (Kiernan, 2006:5).

In addition to the complexity rooted in its obscurity, it is also complicated by contextuality, as Bogdan and Djurdjevic (2013:5) argue that it develops differently in different cultural and social settings. This implies that some aspects of the occult may infiltrate society in some culture to an extent of comprehending some of its practices and teachings as acceptable even among people of Christian faith. For instance, among people of Christian faith are those Africans who fully distance themselves from witchcraft while others seek protection from witchdoctors (Semenya & Letsosa, 2013:3; Baloyi, 2014:1). This matter could stifle attempts to care for children who are tormented by spirits that lay a claim on them because of their parents' religious practices such as children's dedication to ancestral spirits at birth. With promotion of freedom of religion, some children might want to break free from these practices but may be held back by submission to parental authority.

1.4.3 Freedom of religion dilemma

Pluralism relates to the coexistence of people as individuals, groups and communities with different interests and ways of life. Religious pluralism by definition refers to the multiple belief systems, religions and faith communities. This ordinarily brings about tension due to ambition for supremacy. In recognition of this tension, governments as well as the United Nations (UN) have enshrined the concept of religious freedom, with the UN going to the extent of establishing a special rapporteur for freedom of religion and belief in order to alleviate religious intolerance and discrimination. For Pretorius (2012:1) the proclamation of freedom of religion is an attempt to end "discrimination, religious supremacy, abuse and violence that has typified religion through the ages".

The above exposition of religious freedom by Pretorius is in a way an attempt to promote neighbourliness. For Vorster (2016:8) neighbourliness thrives on preconditions such as respect for other cultures, worldviews, religions and social status. The articulation of these concepts of freedom of religion and neighbourliness by Vorster and Pretorius respectively denotes that Christians should treat people of other faiths or no faiths with respect to personal choice. This implies that caring for affected learners should also acknowledge that some of them and/or their families might not be amenable to Christian practices even though they could be willing to be set free from the occult, whereas others might not want to be set free at all.

1.4.4 Inconsistent Christian views

The recognition of religious pluralism attempts to end religious intolerance and also intends to magnify people's awareness of multiple faith formations. This plurality is also evident and pervasive even among people of Christian faith. It manifests itself in a form of the existence of different denominations such as Evangelicals, Protestants, Orthodox, Pentecostals, etc. Admittedly even among Christians of the same denomination, homogeneity is regularly non-existent, as Marshall (2014:140) rightfully argues that even if people are part of the same religious group their beliefs are diverse.

The diversity of beliefs within the same religious groupings makes the benefits of freedom of religion more complex and faith-based interventions in the problem of the occult a daunting task. As Christians learn to tolerate the realities of non-Christian religions, some corporate and individual Christians uphold elements of other religions. For instance, Semanya and Letsosa (2013:3) have discovered that for fear of being bewitched, members of the Sotho Reformed Churches (SRC) consult witchdoctors. This is in direct contradiction to many African Pentecostals' conviction in the power of prayer to protect people from witchcraft (Baloyi, 2014:6; Lindhardt, 2009:48). For instance, pursuant to this belief many of them pray over their newly acquired assets such as cars and houses for protection from witchcraft (Baloyi, 2014:6).

These internal inconsistencies are bound to influence the church's involvement in the addressing of the occult. Although many Pentecostals do acknowledge that witches are people "who possess supernatural, occult or mysterious powers to cause misfortune or injury to others" (Levack, 2015:2), they claim their protection from the authority proclaimed in the gospels (Mk 16:17-18 & Lk 10:19). This is contrary to some members of the SRC members who acknowledge the existence and powers of witchcraft and yet subject themselves to similar powers for protection.

1.4.5 Relevance of Pentecostal tradition

The above discussion gave an example of contradictory Christian views among different traditions within the same faith and personal choices among adherents of the same Christian tradition (Marshall, 2014:140). In the midst of these inconsistent views, Baloyi (2014:6) posits that Christians of Pentecostal orientation rely on Christian practices to repel the dangers posed by the occult. This assertion is supported by Rio *et al.* (2017:4) who posit that Pentecostals have designed a form of evangelism that might be termed confrontationist in this regard. This form of evangelism has as its foundation a direct attack on the power of the invisible realm itself through spiritual warfare, spiritual mapping, discernment, and healing. These assertions make pentecostal Christianity a theological tradition relevant in the formulation of the pragmatic strategy to addressing the occult, particularly because the researcher also subscribes to this tradition.

Despite the above presuppositions, literature also reveals that pentecostal Christianity is not a homogeneous tradition. For instance, in his evaluation of what distinguishes pentecostalism from other Christian traditions, Nel (2014:297) proves that this tradition consists of a “bewildering variety of Pentecostal churches” which differ in views on issues such as participation in secret societies. Due to the multiplicity of differing views within this tradition and its concomitant evolution, it is not possible to develop conclusive categories of its sub-traditions. Kgatle and Mofokeng (2019:3) cite a useful, yet inconclusive categorisation of this tradition into three sub-traditions, namely mission pentecostalism, African pentecostalism and Neo-pentecostalism. The regards this categorisation to be inconclusive because in some literature a different categorisation or naming convention is used. For instance, in the same paper Kgatle and Mofokeng (2019:3,5,7) also use missional pentecostalism interchangeably with denominational pentecostalism and Western pentecostalism, whereas some sources use classical pentecostalism and denominational pentecostalism interchangeably to refer to the same concept (Anderson, 2004a:1; Anderson, 2004b:4).

Regardless of these inconclusive different categories, this study upholds the importance of the general belief held across the pentecostal tradition regarding powers received from the Holy Spirit. Among other things, Pentecostals are generally known for their public rejection of the occult and reliance on prayer to overcome it as stated by Baloyi (2004:1). This demonstrable power of the Holy Spirit appropriated by Pentecostals has contributed to the growth of this tradition and has been integral to the development of the doctrine of divine healing and deliverance (Nel, 2008:385).

1.4.6 Influence of caregiving principles

Caring for others under the auspices of Christian faith is done with love and respect for the other. In this instance the educators of Christian faith assume the role of caregiver. As learners come from different backgrounds in terms of beliefs, the caregiver should be mindful of imposing his or her theology on them (Doehring, 2015: 86). Even in instances where they provide care to learners whose families are adherents of the Christian faith, they should be mindful of the diversity in denominational and individual views regarding what constitutes the occult and how to respond to life limiting encounters with the situation of the occult.

In addition to personal or congregational choice there are other ethical considerations for assisting minor children. The consent of parents or legal guardians is required before any action is taken to assist children with spiritual matters as parents have the right to aspire that their children's religious and moral education should conform with their own convictions (Pretorius, 2012:2). All these principles constitute ethical considerations in caring for learners. Considering that ministering in the public square is not the primary reason why these teachers are in these schools, the caring teachers are also confronted with the moral dilemma posed by maintaining a balance between time spent on caring and execution of their professional duties.

1.5 Status of research

1.5.1 Gaps in current literature

As alluded in previous sections, existing literature has shown some gaps in the area of limited scholarly literature on the occult among pre-adolescent children and lack of literature on child theology written from African scholarship and context. Although there is some scholarly literature on the subject in the West, it does not cover the local context in any way and most of the material is about adolescents. Western scholarship does not give a contextual account of the situation since the occult develops differently in different contexts (Bogdan & Djurdjevic, 2013:5). This implies that factors such as freedom of religion and inconsistent Christian worldviews from a South African perspective would also influence the development of the occult in the country. Even within the same country there are various cultures; therefore, the manifestation of the occult in one part of a province is likely to be different from another. This necessitates the need for conducting a localised investigation to ensure contextuality.

1.5.2 Conceptual framework

As described above, a literature review illuminates that little attention has been paid to the phenomenon of the occult among pre-adolescent children and the researcher acknowledges that it is an important area in child theology. It also confirms the need to produce localised literature

to be relevant to the context. This need is sustained by the fact that “scripture, tradition and church communities are not ahistorical but are affected by contexts” (Swinton & Mowat, 2016:25). In this instance it has also been acknowledged that even the phenomenon of the occult is contextual (Bogdan and Djurdjevic, 2013:5).

Based on Bogdan and Djurdjevic’s assertion that occultism is influenced by the context such as social, cultural and political environments, it is necessary to investigate this phenomenon within a clearly defined context. It means that the study considered the South African context and that of the local community where it was conducted. Some of the contextual issues considered were the religious, cultural, social, ethical and political environment. For instance, the abolishing of religious education in public schools in South Africa has handicapped the country as religious education could be offered to serve many purposes such as being an “agent of enfaithing, interfaith literacy or general education” (Lovat, 2019:161). These factors are covered in some sections of chapter two and chapter three.

1.5.3 Justification for an atheoretical approach

Inadequate literature on the study of the occult among pre-adolescent children impelled the researcher to consider an atheoretical approach. This is reflected in the methodological choice of a grounded theory blended with Osmer’s four tasks of theological interpretation. Grounded Theory Method is a logical choice as it uses an open approach whereby existing theories are not a starting point of the research but an end point (Flick, 2018:57). Likewise, GTM has enabled the study to generate theory that explicates the phenomenon under study from the perspective and in the context of those who experience it (Birks & Mills, 2011:16). Similarly, Osmer’s model of theological interpretation applied in this study provides a framework to equip congregational leaders to engage in practical theological interpretation of episodes, situations, and contexts that confront them in ministry (Osmer, 2011:2). In this instance, the guidelines serve as a pragmatic strategy developed from situation analysis and exegesis to equip Christian educators to appropriately care for affected learners.

Based on Osmer’s model which uses four tasks to resolve a congregational situation, namely descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative and pragmatic tasks (Osmer, 2008:11), the researcher will collect primary data on the situation (the occult among children) and the episodes (encounters of Christian teachers caring for them) within the context of religious pluralism at the school where they teach and use abduction and induction to develop a theory of dealing with it.

1.6 Contribution of the study

The results of this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding occultism with specific reference to pre-adolescent children and caregiving practices to be considered by Christian educators. They will also contribute to the field of apologetics by providing guidelines on how to commend the gospel among young children affected by occult practices in ways that are ethical and will simultaneously enhance the use of experientialism in commending the gospel among people of other faith or no faith. Therefore, the study will be valuable to both academic and practitioner theologians.

1.7 Research problem, question, aim and objectives

1.7.1 Research problem

The study of the occult among children has in the past mainly focussed on adolescents, neglecting younger children and current literature is mainly in the field of humanities. This prompted a need for a grounded theory study aimed at developing theological guidelines that may be used by Christian educators to care for affected learners while simultaneously commending the gospel in line with experientialism as defined in apologetics.

1.7.2 Research question

What lessons can be acquired from the experiences of educators involved with learners affected by the occult in Mkhuhlu in order to develop theological guidelines to equip them?

1.7.3 Further questions that arise from the research question

- a) How does the occult manifest itself among primary school children in the Mkhuhlu community based on auto-ethnographic experiences?
- b) How can the current situation of primary school children affected by the occult in the Mkhuhlu community be interpreted in the broader scope of how the occult manifest itself globally, on the African continent and in South Africa?
- c) What normative principles can be formulated from Scripture about Christians' attitude and behaviour regarding the occult?
- d) What theological guidelines can be developed that could be used to equip Christian educators in caring for primary school learners affected by the occult?

1.7.4 Research aim

The main aim of this study was to apply the grounded theory method to develop theological guidelines that could be used to equip Christian educators in caring for primary school learners affected by the occult.

1.7.5 Research objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- a) To discuss the empirical description of how the occult manifests itself among primary school children in the Mkhuhlu community based on an autoethnographic experience.
- b) To interpret the current situation of primary school learners affected by the occult in the Mkhuhlu community within the broader scope of how the occult manifest itself globally, on the African continent and South Africa.
- c) To formulate normative principles from Scripture about Christians' attitude and behaviour regarding the occult.
- d) To construct theological guidelines that could be used to equip Christian educators in caring for primary school learners affected by the occult.

1.8 Central theoretical argument

Christian practices used by Christian educators to care for primary school learners affected by occult practices in Mkhuhlu are likely to contribute to the development of theological guidelines that could be used to address this situation across many schools in the area.

1.9 Research methodology

1.9.1 Introduction

The study was conducted from the perspective of the pentecostal tradition. It employed autoethnography within the theoretical framework of experientialism as the research interest has emerged from the researcher's experience. It applied GTM blended with Osmer's model of theological interpretation to answer the research questions. As there is no theory of addressing the situation of the occult among primary school learners, the researcher deemed GTM to be appropriate as it enabled the development of data themselves and not existing concepts (Pieterse, 2010:105). Therefore, existing theories were not a starting point of the research but an end point (Flick, 2018:57). This implies that, from a GTM perspective theory is developed with data rather than theoretical concepts (Lee, 2016:44). It achieves this through the use of concepts emerging from the data. In this instance, the study developed theological guidelines from field data, which are cross-referenced to findings from biblical exegesis and available literature. As stated above, the guideline development process followed Osmer's model of theological interpretation based on the logical flow of his four tasks, namely descriptive-empirical, interpretive,

normative and pragmatic tasks (Osmer, 2008:11). In performing each task, data gathering, analysis and theory construction occurred concurrently (Flick, 2018:450).

Concomitant to Osmer's model and GTM, the study also used autoethnography in describing and interpreting the situation. Its use has enabled the researcher to incorporate his "individual experiences of life within the context of family, work, schooling and society" (Chang *et al.*, 2016:12). It further enabled the study to present specific knowledge about specific experiences rather than the general information on the subject (Adam *et al.*, 2015:21). Furthermore, Walton (2014:xxxii) acknowledges that autoethnography has become an increasingly important form of writing at higher degree level when a researcher seeks to address an issue of importance that has emerged for him/her out of personal experience.

1.9.2 Data collection, analysis and interpretation methods

Swinton and Mowat (2016:69) define research methods as specific techniques that are used for data collection, analysis and interpretation in order to answer the research questions. In this section, the report summarises the methods which were used to answer each research question.

To answer the question "how does the occult manifest itself among primary school children in the Mkhuhlu community?", the study applied an autoethnographic description of the researcher's experience as an affected primary school child, that of his own child who is now an adult and of family members that care for affected learners. The description is based on self-published books where his experiences, observations and some of his conversations with family members were transcribed (Nkuna, 2016; Nkuna, 2014a; Nkuna, 2014b & Nkuna, 2014c). In this study, the research consulted this self-published material to extract and consolidate episodes involving twenty-three affected primary school learners. The data from these episodes were sorted thematically and interpreted using theoretical concepts from sociology, anthropology and psychology to answer the question "why is it happening?" (Osmer, 2008:11).

To answer the question "how can the current situation of primary school children affected by the occult in the Mkhuhlu community be interpreted in the broader scope of how the occult manifests itself globally, on the African continent and in South Africa?". The study used intra- and interdisciplinary literature study, such as African studies written from the paradigm of the occult, testimonies of Christians who were once involved in or affected by occult practices during childhood. The process includes a descriptive-empirical narrative of the situation which has been

organised thematically, followed by the use of academic concepts to explain why the occult is able to be imparted to children and this pattern is sustained for generations (Osmer, 2011:2).

To answer the question on “what normative principles can be formulated from Scripture about Christians’ attitude and behaviour regarding the occult?”, the study applied a grammatical historical exegesis study of relevant pericopes found in Scripture. These pericopes were sourced from both OT and NT using key words in electronic Bible applications. Relevant scholarly articles were also sourced for review from Google Scholar.

Findings documented in the first three tasks were used to address objective 4, i.e. to develop theological guidelines that can be used by Christian educators in addressing the situation. The guidelines entail “open-ended action, guiding models and rules of art guidelines” that must be implemented in a non-mechanistic manner in response to the situation (Osmer, 2005:xvi).

For data analysis and interpretation across all four research objectives, the researcher applied elaboration by looking for contradictions in content that is grouped together or establishing if there is a need for developing sub-themes from the data as suggested by Terre Blanche and Kelly (2002:144). This process involved developing and rearranging sub-themes to a point of theoretical saturation characterised by an ultimate stop of emergence of new concepts from the data (Urquhart, 2013:9).

1.9.3 Sourcing of academic literature

To source academic literature in the first instance, key words already identified in the research proposal were used to do an online search. In the next step, further academic literature was sourced online using the names of the authors cited in the foundational sources. This process stopped when no further new authors and/or related themes emerged from the content of the subsequent sources.

1.9.4 Use of autoethnographic data

As stated earlier in this report, the use of autoethnography stems from the researcher’s experience with the occult and his desire to contribute to developing theological guidelines to care for affected learners (Chang *et al.*, 2016:12). For this reason, in this study the researcher assumed the dual roles of researcher and participant (Chang *et al.*, 2016:22).

1.9.5 Autoethnographic sources

While in the past autoethnographic data were exclusively collected through observation and interviews, current literature affirms that documentary study is now recognised in

autoethnography (Flick, 2018:57; Marak, 2016:xxxviii). For this reason, the study used the researcher's self-published material summarised in the table below. As reflected in their emotive titles, these sources are not academic literature. Although they were not written for academic purpose, their content shows that the researcher had applied some elements of autoethnography, as he was "deliberate and systematic in data collection and analysis" when writing these books (Lemmer, 2012:549). While their content is not about the subject under investigation, it contains substantial text that is relevant to the study.

Year	Title	Summary of the contents
2014	Enough reasons to follow Jesus	The researcher's autobiography narrating his life before and after salvation. This includes his involvement in traditional healing with powers derived from the occult and leading ceremonies of appeasing ancestral spirits during childhood.
2014	Ten things that Christian should not discount in order to be successful in warfare	A thematic narrative of how the researcher and his family overcame specific hardships in life which they believe were spiritual attacks. It also goes at length to discuss and interpret how repentance from sin and fully reliance on God's healing power has delivered an eleven-year-old family member from torments by spirits that gave her powers to see in the supernatural .
2014	Catching the fire and remaining ablaze in Christ	A biography of the researcher's mother who received salvation in 1980. It includes how God used her to set her mother free from practising as a sangoma, diviner and traditional healer. It also cites examples of incidents of witchcraft in the area affecting both old and young people and how God sets those affected free.
2016	Raging war	It narrates episodes of how Christians overcome spiritual attacks orchestrated by

Year	Title	Summary of the contents
		fellow citizens using powers of witchcraft and food poisoning. It also highlights a substantial number of situations involving primary school children recruiting fellow learners to join the occult using various strategies, including practices used by teachers to help those who want to abandon the practice.

1.9.6 Choice of the research site

The selection of Mkhuhlu as the research site was informed by the choice of the use of autoethnography. The researcher chose to limit his study to the geographic area of Mkhuhlu because that is where he and his family have experienced the occult and predominantly cared for affected learners, even though they now reside in different locations in South Africa. This methodological choice is aligned to suggestions by proponents of autoethnography such as Crockford and Asprem (2018:5) who guide that the location where an autoethnographic study focuses is a delimited field site arbitrarily defined by the researcher to suit his/her purpose. A full description of Mkhuhlu as a research site is covered in the next chapter.

1.9.7 The researcher's position

Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2016:3) advance that research methodology is informed by the researcher's assumptions, interests and purpose. In this study the researcher chose methods that are rich in the application of an "interpretive approach to social reality and in the description of the lived experiences of human beings" (Holloway & Galvin, 2017:3). His use of Osmer's model of theological interpretation enabled him to develop theological guidelines that would capacitate caregivers to systematically engage in practical theological interpretation of challenges confronting them in ministry, while autoethnography enabled the study to present specific knowledge than the general information about the occult (Jones & Ellis, 2015:21; Chang *et al.*, 2016:12; Smith, 2010:1). The researcher made these assumptions on the use of this approach because as a Pentecostal Christian, his purpose and interest in conducting this study was to contribute in resolving a problem affecting society from his experience and that of his family members.

1.10 Ethical considerations of the research

As discussed in the methodology section, the study will use different data sources. Of significance in this section is the articulation of the risk and mitigations in relation to these data sources, the study about minor children and the use of family members as participants.

1.10.1 Risk level

North West University approved that the risk level for this study is minimal as it utilised the results of the non-academic studies that were previously conducted and self-published by the researcher. While the self-published material contains content, which is inclusive of the situation of the subject of the occult among young children, the research participants for these studies were adults who actively participated in caring for affected children. These factors are fully articulated in the following sub-sections.

1.10.2 Use of self-published sources

The self-published sources alluded to in the methodology are booklets that have been used for testifying to the saving power of the Triune God among Christian groups and were not for academic purposes. Owing to the sensitivity of the research topic, the researcher determined that revealing identities of affected children, their families, names of schools and identities of the occult groups that they belong to could subject the children to physical and/or psychological harm. Therefore, the researcher had from the onset withheld these details to mitigate that risk in the original text as published. The same practice was maintained even in this study.

1.10.3 Study about minor children

As mentioned in 1.10.1, while the study was about minor children, the research participants were not children but adults who had been affected by the occult during childhood and later as caregivers to affected children. The study also included the researcher's personal childhood experience and that of his own child who has now since become an adult. Due to historical evidence of physical harm or even loss of life due to witch hunts in Black communities in South Africa, the study has used pseudonyms to withhold the identities of all research participants and affected children in this report. Although he has also used a pseudonym in the discussion of his child's situation, he had also requested and received her written consent to use information involving her situation in the study.

1.10.4 Use of family members and their permission

As this is an autoethnographic study, the use of data involving the researcher's extended family members is inevitable. Information concerning family members' personal experience with the

occult is mainly based on the researcher's participant observation and from social discussions with affected family members and those involved in caring for affected learners. The account of the family members' involvement in caring for affected children is based on the researcher's participation in some of the caring sessions and conversations held with family members who care for affected learners. Consequently, this study poses limited bias as most of the data have been sourced through participant observation whereby even the researcher was not aware that he would use these data for academic research in future. For all work which has been published, the researcher received verbal consent from family members and has since received written consent from all for use in this study.

1.11 Concepts clarification

In this study the following key concepts are defined as follows:

Apologetics	A purposeful approach of commending, defending and translating the gospel.
Affected learners	Primary school learners who either carry out occult practices or are victims of acts of those who participate in these acts.
Christian teachers	Qualified teachers who are adherents of the Christian faith.
Caring practices	Various deliberate actions undertaken to help affected learners, e.g. prayer and counselling.
Experientialism	An approach used by Christians to witness among people of other faith or no faith which emphasises the role of personal experience in convincing them about the validity of Christian faith.
Grounded theory method	A method that uses empirical data as a starting point for theory construction as opposed to building theory from existing concepts.
Occult	A group of activities related to the desire and practice of hidden knowledge particularly witchcraft, Satanism and magic affecting primary school children.
Pentecostal Christianity	A Christian tradition that vigorously appropriates the power of the Holy Spirit and prayer for healing and deliverance of people believed to be under oppression by the devil.

Primary school learner	A child attending school in any grade between Grade 1 to Grade 7.
Theological guidelines	Principles, systems, process and institutional arrangements rooted in Scripture and theological reflection.

1.12 Classification of chapters

The dissertation chapters are outline as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction, problem statement and research methodology
This chapter provides the background to the study, articulates all methodological issues, confirms and clarifies ethical issues.
Chapter 2: Manifestation of the occult among primary school learners in Mkhuhlu
The chapter entails the empirical description of the manifestation of the occult among primary school children in the Mkhuhlu community. It provides contextual description of Mkhuhlu as a research site, presents the researcher's personal experience with the occult, his child's situation, how affected primary learners are discovered, how young children are drawn to the occult, ways used by Christian education in caring for affected learners and theoretical interpretation of caregiving practices.
Chapter 3: Interpretation of the situation from the broader scope of the occult
The chapter offers an interpretation of the manifestation of the occult among primary school learners within the broader scope of its manifestation globally, in the African continent and in South Africa. It covers an in-depth analysis of the definition of the occult, unpacks its complexities, narrates its manifestation across the three geographic contexts listed above and discusses the theoretical interpretation of why young African children are affected by the occult the way it happens.
Chapter 4: Normative principles about the occult from Scripture
It provides normative interpretation from Scripture about Christians' attitude and behaviour toward the occult based on the outcome of the exegesis of the OT and the NT pericopes. It presents the analyses of each relevant pericope of the OT and draws a summary of OT principles, and does the same with NT pericopes. It then provides a synthesis of biblical principles about the occult and the last section discusses the significance of these principles to contemporary Christianity.
Chapter 5: Theological guidelines for caring for affected learners

It presents the proposed theological guidelines that could be used to equip Christian educators in caring for affected learners. It starts by providing a critical overview of Osmer's meaning of pragmatic strategy in his model, followed by an explanation of what is applicable to this study from the entire concept of pragmatic strategy. It then provides an outline of the guidelines which includes caring principles, process, systems and institutional arrangements.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter draws conclusions on the entire study by critically reviewing what it has achieved.. These conclusions focuss on the central theoretical argument, research objectives and methodological issues. It then summarises its limitations and offer recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 2: MANIFESTATION OF THE OCCULT AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN MKHUHLU

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the descriptive-empirical question “how does the occult manifest itself among primary school children in Mkhuhlu?” As this study has been triggered by the researcher’s personal experience with the occult in this area, the descriptive empirical task covered in this chapter will also include his personal experience, own child’s situation and contextual issues relevant to the occult in Mkhuhlu. These sections will serve as a precursor to the broader scope of what is happening in primary schools concerning the occult in this area. This approach is aligned to the use of autoethnography which involves the study of self, writing about individual experiences of life within the context of family, work, schooling, and society and interpreting the meanings of these experiences (Chang, Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2016:12).

Following the exposition of the above contextual issues, the chapter presents a narrative of how affected learners are discovered by the educators and how these learners were drawn into the occult. The latter part of the chapter discusses an account of how Christian educators care for affected learners, challenges that they face and theoretical interpretation of these caring practices. Before embarking on this descriptive empirical task, the chapter summarises the methodology used to gather, analyse and interpret the data that produced these findings.

2.2 Methodology

As the entire study has adopted Osmer’s model of theological interpretation, this chapter solely focuses on the descriptive empirical task. For Osmer (2008:4), this task involves gathering information that enables the researcher to discern patterns and dynamics of the situation including its episodes and context. He stresses that often this information is gathered informally (Osmer, 2008:5). The researcher has henceforth used his personal experience and self-published material from data which he collected in conversations and formal interviews with educators and director interaction with affected learners in his capacity as a minister. The application of these methods in autoethnography is supported by other researchers such as Crockford and Asprem (2018:5) who promote the use of “participant observation fieldwork in which researchers live among their subjects” in addition to interviewing key informants.

The use of autoethnography in this study is relevant as the research interest emanated from the researcher's personal experience. Consequently, the researcher plays a "dual role of researcher and research participant" by including his own experience and that of his family in the study (Chang, Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2016:22). This approach enriches the study as it also enables the study to present specific knowledge about specific experiences rather than the general information on the subject (Jones & Ellis 2015:21).

As the original texts and interviews are presented in different themes in the researcher's self-published writings, it took an elaborate analysis and interpretation of the text and audio clips to develop themes relevant to this study without altering the original content and context. In this process the researcher maintained the use of a dual role a researcher and research participant but chose to present his personal experience in the third person. He avoided telling his experience in the first person because "telling a story in the first person can run a risk of too much attachment to self and a certain set of memories" (Denshire, 2013:836). In addition, the researcher also chose to use pseudonyms for all children whose situation is under discussion in this report and the names of their schools are also withheld as a clarified in Chapter 1.

2.3 The situation in Mkhuhlu community

2.3.1 Geographical location

Proponents of the use of ethnography emphasise that in this kind of study, the researcher should consider time, place and depth (Crockford & Asprem, 2018:5). They suggest that the researcher should spend enough time in the research site and conduct a qualitative study which is in-depth in nature. Regarding place, Crockford and Asprem (2018:5) suggest that the location where the study focuses is a delimited field site arbitrarily defined by the researcher to suit his/her purpose. For the purpose of this study, Mkhuhlu community encompasses all settlements that are serviced by the Mkhuhlu Circuit of the Mpumalanga Provincial Department of Education. These settlements fall under the defunct Mhala District of the then Gazankulu homeland within the jurisdiction of the Hoxani Traditional Authority and the Mkhuhlu Town Council, respectively. The area is in the southern part of the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality in the Ehlanzeni District Municipality, Mpumalanga province. The researcher chose this location because he was born and raised there and has conducted different qualitative studies there. With this background, he has in-depth knowledge of the place and its relevant cultural aspects because he has spent enough time there.

2.3.2 Socio-political background

The description of the socio-political background of the area is important in this research as well because occultism is influenced by factors such as social, cultural and political milieu (Bogdan & Djurdjevic, 2013:5). As mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, this place falls within the then Gazankulu Bantustan which was created for the Vatsonga tribes led by a Mutsonga prime minister. Consequently, the area is predominantly populated by Xitsonga speaking people within pockets of Swazi and Northern Sotho ethnic groups. From this description, it is clear that the study is conducted among African indigenous people and all the respondents, including the researcher, are Xitsonga speaking people while the affected children come from all three ethnic groups.

The Gazankulu can be loosely translated to mean the *Great Gaza* which is derived from Mozambique's Gaza province. The logic behind naming this place after Gaza Province suggests that this area has historical ties with the Tsonga people of Mozambique. Previous research conducted in this area concurs with this claim as it suggests that many residents of this area share language, culture, beliefs and kinship ties across the border with Mozambique (Polzer, 2004:3). The researcher observed that this kinship is also reflected in their shared beliefs in the occult and cultural practices. The exploration of this relationship is relevant to this study because one of the schools that has a high number of affected children is in the area which was historically established to host Mozambicans who fled the war during the 1980s. Furthermore, the researcher worked with this Mozambican population during that period, actively participating in receiving them and later in the 1990s participated in serving as part of the research team conducting an academic inquiry into their welfare in the country. This created an opportunity for the researcher to witness cases of the occult which he now narrates in this study to give context to the phenomenon.

Another point to note regarding the cross-border relationship is the hospitality of the locals towards the Mozambicans who fled the war. It is on record that while the apartheid government withheld refugee status from Mozambicans who fled their country during the war in the 1980s, those who arrived in the territories of the now obsolete Kangwane and Gazankulu without any formal refugee status were received and hosted by locals (Dolan, Tollman, Nkuna & Gear, 1997:69). This phenomenon exposed the researcher to this relationship because he lived in one of the host communities where he assisted his traditional leader grandfather with receiving Mozambicans, and later became part of a research team that studied the plight of the immigrant Mozambican population living South Africa at that time (Polzer, 2004:29,17).

2.3.3 The situation among Mozambican refugees

While this study's primary focus is on young children, it also had to assess the situation among residents of Mozambican descent in general for a few reasons. Firstly, as alluded to earlier in the report one of the schools with a high number of incidents of occult activities hosts many learners of Mozambican ancestry as it is adjacent to a settlement of former refugees. Secondly, this settlement requires special profiling to illustrate the cultural linkages with other settlements inhabited by locals. Lastly, as co-host, the researcher has memories of claims and counterclaims of witchcraft activities in this area of which he remembers some of them.

The episodes covered in this section are based on the researcher's exposure to this community during the days of his grandfather's reign as a traditional leader in this area, fieldwork among them and current involvement in ministry in the area. During the reign of his grandfather in the area, the researcher directly interacted with Mozambicans in several ways. Upon arrival, he used to assist his grandfather with capturing details of the families and individuals in a note book, directing them to the designated settlement, occasionally observing tribal court proceedings, and he attended school with their children as they were immediately enrolled in local schools.

A few cases that the researcher recalls were those that were brought to the tribal court for resolution by the local traditional leader. These were reported and resolved at his grandfather's homestead where he also lived as part of an extended family. As the tribal court proceedings were held under a tree at the traditional leader's homestead, the researcher occasionally sat close to the court to listen to the proceedings. Some of the memorable cases involving Mozambican immigrants which he recalls, are two cases of witchcraft which affected the community. One of these was about a claim of malicious use of witchcraft powers to stop the rain. As the immigrants were residing in makeshift structures, heavy rains were a problem as they used to destroy these structures. Consequently, there were claims that some of them used witchcraft to stop the rain. Some residents of the Mozambican settlement approached the researcher's grandfather to report a case of a man who allegedly used to perform rituals that stopped the rain each time rain clouds gathered in the sky. As it was difficult for the community to prove these claims the court merely gave him a fine and a verbal warning.

A second case was about claims of a person who deployed a crocodile in the local rivulet. A member of the same immigrant community reported that he saw a person carrying a small clay pot in which was a small lizard. He allegedly witnessed him releasing it into the water whereby it instantly turned into a crocodile. The case was also dismissed by the traditional leader as the claims could not be substantiated.

Reports of occult activities in this immigrant community were not limited to the 1980s but continue to spiral even to this day. Although many of them have been successfully integrated among locals, they never left their cultural activities including witchcraft. Others have allegedly used witchcraft to become successful entrepreneurs. One such entrepreneur had to flee the area and his property was destroyed by arson by an angry mob. This was after he allegedly lured his sister's son to the bush where he cut the boy's genitals off while the boy was still alive. Family members discovered the boy while still alive and he told them what happened before he died. The family had long suspected him of ritual murders and now had evidence that led to his fleeing the place before his property was destroyed.

2.3.4 Prior studies of the occult in Mkhuhlu

As part of the literature study, the researcher searched for literature on the study of the occult in this area but could not find any material pertaining to Mkhuhlu area. The articles found are about studies conducted in the entire Bushbuckridge municipal area or some other parts of the municipality. These studies were mainly focused on witchcraft among adults with no attention to participation by children. For instance, the work of Izak Niehaus focused on the phenomenon of the witch-hunt among the Sotho speaking population in the Greenvale area of the former Lebowa homeland (Niehaus, 1993:498-530), while Jonathan Stadler did similar work in the former Mhala district of the then Gazankulu homeland (Stadler, 1996:87-110). While both studies were undertaken in geographical areas that are part of the current Bushbuckridge Local Municipality where Mkhuhlu belongs, they fall short of three elements. Their focus is limited to witchcraft amongst all forms of the occult; young people are viewed mainly as aggressors used in the witch-hunt, but they pay no attention to their involvement in the occult as practitioners; and none of the two studies paid specific attention to Mkhuhlu as demarcated in this study.

Based on the above findings from the literature study, this study is likely to fill the stated gap in the following manner. Its focus on how affected children are assisted and opposed to presenting them as aggressors. It uses a proportionately smaller community to get an in-depth understanding of not just witchcraft but a broad spectrum of the phenomenon of the occult. Although this report is critical of the above-stated limitations, the researcher is fully aware that each study is bound to have limitations. Despite these limitations, these studies are valuable. For instance, Niehaus provides a thought-provoking observation of witchcraft. His findings suggest that the form of the occult prevalent in this area is witchcraft; it is commonly perceived a form of the occult practised by persons who inherited the power and the inclination to harm from their mothers as well as those who deliberately acquire malevolent substances and skills (Niehaus, 2005:190). Niehaus

further postulates that local people associate witchcraft with the use of poisons, potions and familiars to cause harm, misfortune, illness, and death. Examination of the broader phenomenon of the occult among very young children in the next section confirms that some children are involved in the occult; how this truth is revealed to Christian caregivers; how these children come to practise it; and how it affects both practitioners and victims.

2.3.5 Autoethnographic study

The facts that the researcher was born and grew up in this area, and previously participated in another social research in this area makes him meet several characteristics of an ethnographer. He is familiar with the culture and language of the study population. His lifelong experience with the local culture and incidents of the occult in the area as a child and later as caregiver, makes him a participant observer and part of the subject of study. His passion for the subject had culminated in his documenting and publishing four books with different themes which include narratives on the subject. The titles of these writings depict some evocative autoethnographic qualities while their contents are analytic in style as each book is organised thematically rather than chronologically. These books have been summarised in chapter 1.

The researcher wrote all these books before enrolling for formal theological studies, therefore all the content is written in simple language but grounded in Scripture. Where necessary he uses biblical texts from both Old Testament and New Testament to illustrate continuity of God's involvement and interest in the lives of humans.

The content of all these writings is based on the outcome of a combination of participant observation, interviews and personal experience. All these writings have been officially registered and submitted to the National Library of South African legal deposit centres. The researcher makes available soft copies to anybody on request, gratis.

2.4 Researcher's occult experience

2.4.1 Childhood personal involvement

The researcher was born in an extended family in Calcutta village, Mkhuhlu in 1968. Since then until 1980 his family were adherents of the African religion, specialising in venerating ancestors. As the eldest son in the household, he was entrusted with performing some of the rituals during worship ceremonies in the household at an early stage. In addition, he served as an assistant herbalist to his paternal grandmother. The two worked together in administering healing to barren women using occult powers. His grandmother received directions from a spirit who appeared to her in a dream. Part of the instruction was that each consultation should be sealed by sacrificing

a chicken which was brought by the “patient”. All these happened during the time the researcher was in primary school.

2.4.2 Black witchcraft in the family

In addition to the above experiences, the researcher witnessed family members of primary school age getting tormented by people involved in witchcraft. In the late 1970s he witnessed how Lourens, his biological brother and a cousin were afflicted through eating meat given to them by an elderly family member in full view of other children (Nkuna, 2014b:42). On this day, they had accompanied their mother to a feast hosted at her family of origin. During meal time, an elderly family member brought a bowl full of roast beef with two pieces of meat held between fingers in one of her hands. She took the pieces and gave one to Lourens and another to the cousin. She then commanded them to eat the meat quickly before the researcher’s maternal grandmother saw them. They did as commanded but complaining that the meat had a strange taste. After consuming that meat, the two of them vomited and lost appetite for beef instantly. Although the cousin recovered from this ordeal some weeks later, Lourens has since that day lost appetite for beef and other red meat perpetually. Each time he tried it, he used to vomit until he stopped trying.

It was no coincidence that Lourens was led to stop eating red meat through occultic acts of this woman as she was later linked to other incidents. Some of them involve her interaction with the researcher’s mother while he was still a child. During this stage, the researcher’s mother had at least two encounters with her. She once visited this elderly woman and they shared a bed at night during the visit. One night while in bed, the researcher’s mother felt some creature joining them in bed and it started gnashing its teeth. She cried out loudly and then the creature started pulling her away from the woman and the woman held her by the hand and they used the researcher’s mother to wrestle violently.

The chain of weird situations experienced by the researcher’s mother from this woman ended after the former accepted Jesus Christ in 1980 (Nkuna, 2014a:8). This was after the woman appeared to her in a dream one afternoon. In this encounter she saw the woman trapped in a bright light. Subsequently when the two met in the physical, the woman confronted the researcher’s mother saying, “you born again Christians derive witchcraft powers through this salvation of yours” (Nkuna, 2016:85).

2.4.3 Black witchcraft in the community

The above torments from people with powers of witchcraft were very common and had tormented many other members of the researcher’s family. In one instance a neighbour, famous for

practising black witchcraft brought the researcher's paternal grandmother a dish of beef stew which the latter suspected was poisoned. Upon receipt, she kept it until the neighbour was gone and then served it to a dog which died a few hours after consuming it (Nkuna, 2014b:40). On a different day, the same neighbour served the researcher's paternal grandmother a piece of cow tongue at a family feast (Nkuna, 2014b:39). The latter pretended that she would eat it later. She then examined the meat and noticed that it was poisoned. To confirm her evil intentions, this neighbour told fellow women at a water point that some families are resistant to witchcraft. This was said in the presence of the researcher's paternal aunt on a different date.

There are numerous cases of the situation of the occult among members of his family of origin during childhood which are worth sharing but the researcher had to prioritise only those above. This choice was made in order to focus on the situation among contemporary primary school learners in the area. But before discussing those, the report uses the next section to highlight the situation of the researcher's daughter.

2.5 Own child's situation

2.5.1 Discovery

Incidents of the occult among family members are not limited to the researcher's family of origin but also manifested in his family of procreation. These include his two daughters' habitual torments by spirits and their ability to see in the spirit. In this section of the report, the focus is on one of them, Shukurani, because these occult tendencies in her life were discovered while she was at preschool and continued to haunt the entire family throughout the years of her primary education. Her family started noticing some unfamiliar tendencies a few days since birth. Since the first day, she resented to sleep in her bed (Nkuna, 2014b:78). Instead, she was only comfortable to sleep if sharing a bed with another family member, particularly her parents. When she turned four years old, she started experiencing traumatic spiritual encounters at night, particularly from midnight and early hours of the morning. These included seeing living creatures and hearing voices that disturbed her sleep. Due to the family's previous exposure to the occult, her parents believed that this was a spiritual matter. Consequently, she was taken to several pastors for prayer. These attempts and consultation with paediatricians did not change her situation (Nkuna, 2014c:65).

A full discovery from what was going on in her life manifested just before she turned twelve when the researcher gave his life to Christ. After accepting Christ, he immediately introduced family devotions every evening before going to bed. The effect of this practice was noticed a few months

after it was introduced, as certain acts were observed in her. During prayer she started behaving strangely, e.g. oscillation or crying (Nkuna, 2014c:29). When asked why she was doing that, she said she just lost control of herself. A breakthrough happened one day when her father was in a private prayer during a month long fast. While her father was in prayer, she also went to pray for herself, commanding all spirits that were tormenting her to leave her. This culminated in a spontaneous manifestation of demons in her which ultimately disclosed why all these things were happening to her (Nkuna, 2014c: 22). The manifestation was witnessed by the family after she had summoned them while she was partially aware that she was losing control of herself. Some of the things the spirits disclosed are that they entered her at conception, because every second child in her blood line belongs to them and they entered this family 201 years ago after a female ancestor murdered her own child (Nkuna, 2014b:30).

2.5.2 Ability to see in the spirit

In the discovery narrated above, other things of interest happened. One of them is that as the family was praying for her, her ability to see in the spirit heightened. For instance, during this state of demon possession she was able to detect when one of the family members is angry due to frustration. Anger was caused by violent feats that she went through during prayer, and random kicking and beating of family members during the process. In addition, she also depicted the ability to do divination. During the process, the unclean spirits in her divulged that they one day entered the researcher's colleague to make him poison his lunch, an incident that the researcher did not share with the family and even forgot about at the time of this spiritual warfare (Nkuna, 2014b:115-116).

The display of her ability to see in the spirit was not a once off thing. Another incident happened during prayer when demons manifested in her. This time these spirits were mute. Consequently, she communicated messages in writing. The manifestation all started just before dinner as she was narrating how a spirit with a Mohawk haircut came to torment her at night and during the day the same spirit appeared and subdued her (Nkuna, 2014b: 122-124). During the same scene, the spirits disclosed that they were operating under the code 228666 (Nkuna, 2014b:123).

In addition to the above display of supernatural acts, while in full consciousness she occasionally shared stories of her discoveries in the spirit. For instance, one day she told her father how some creatures, which she just called things used to take her to some scary mysterious places at night. Although she refused to give details of this experience, it seems as if this act involved astral projection as she narrated that sometimes it was difficult to re-enter her body when she came back from these spiritual trips. On another day she confessed to the family that on the property

that they were renting there were several altars belonging to some oriental gods. She pointed at certain sites on the property alleging that they are altars which were shown to her by spirits.

It took the researcher's family about three years of consistent prayer and fasting to finally win this spiritual warfare. Due to this exposure, the entire family is determined to help other families who are affected by the occult or demonic attacks.

2.6 How affected learners are discovered

2.6.1 Voluntary self-confession

Self-confession refers to a learner who is involved in the occult voluntarily telling others that he/she is a member of an occult group or admits being practising some form of occult. For it to be characterised as a self-confession it should happen voluntarily with the person not in an altered state of consciousness. A few occult practitioners among learners voluntarily disclose their involvement in the occult to caregivers for several reasons, such as when the learner wants to quit and seeks prayers or during a casual chat to the caregiver for no apparent reason which caregivers believe is due to intervention from the Holy Spirit (Nkuna, 2016:49).

One of the cases in which a practitioner confessed to the caregiver which is assumed to be exposure invoked by the Holy Spirit. It happened on a normal school day, during break that Kholiwe, a Christian educator and caregiver was approached by Sipho, a learner in her school. He told her that he is involved in the occult. He then pulled out of his school bag a book with pictures of snakes. This learner opened the book and showed her one particular snake and told her that he uses it as a means of transport. He said that when he wants to travel, he activates it from the book and either mounts it or gets into its belly to travel to places on his mission. He narrated that he had been using it to travel to distant places and a trip from Mpumalanga to Cape Town takes about two minutes when using that snake (Nkuna, 2016:51).

2.6.2 Incidental disclosure

Incidental disclosure is another form of self-confession which mainly happens as a result of referral or parental interventions. They are incidental because they are not based on the child's deliberate need to confess. They occasionally emanate from instances whereby a parent or guardian takes the involved child to a caregiver to seek divine intervention with or without knowledge of the child's involvement.

For instance, a boy who for the purpose of confidentiality is called Nuyoma was brought by his mother to Rachel, a local pastor for prayer after he was apparently instructed by senior members of the secret society to kill his mother to acquire more powers but did not want to do so because

he loved her. The mother did not know anything about this until she took him to Rachel for prayer against poor performance at school. In an interview with Rachel, he confessed that he is a member of a local secret society that instructed him to kill his mother. He further said that he had a wife and children in the spirit, a story that the mother did not know before (Nkuna, 2016:87).

Another related case of incidental disclosure was experienced in a joint interview between Siku and his mother. Siku confessed belonging to a local coven and had been instructed to kill his mother in order to acquire more powers. At the time of the confession he had not decided to quit but the mother was scared to lose her life and wanted him to be set free (Nkuna, 2016:35-36).

Another form of incidental disclosure includes incidents that occurred between practitioners and victims on the school grounds. For instance, educator Kholiwe narrated to the researcher how Megan fell on the her forehead and bled profusely while playing with other children in the school ground. Not suspecting any mysterious acts, the teachers treated her to stop the bleeding. On a different day, this educator was approached by Londi who confessed to her that he is involved in the occult but wanted to abandon the practices. He further cited that he once caused Megan to fall and bleed because he was thirsty for blood. He said he does not drink water or any other beverages but blood. Mysterious actions that are detected through natural eyes are usually reported to educators by learners who witness the act in what the researcher describes as peer whistleblowing to be discussed in the next section.

2.6.3 Peer whistleblowing

Peer whistleblowing involves fellow learners reporting practitioners to teachers. This happens after the whistleblowing children had witnessed some strange behaviour from those involved in the occult. For instance, Educator Sonia came to know about Mubabatsi's involvement in the occult after she had introduced morning devotions in her class. The researcher recalls this situation from a casual conversation he had with Sonia in 2013. He recalls Sonia narrating this episode from a point of frustration due to what she perceived as an act of rebellion. At that time, she had developed a practice of randomly nominating a learner to pray for the class from time to time in the morning. One day she nominated Mubabatsi who refused. He confessed to a fellow classmate that he does not want to pray in class because he does not pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Instead he prays prayers that he always ends by proclaiming 666 not Amen. The learner reported the conversation to Sonia who then confronted the practitioner learner. Mubabatsi did not deny anything.

The whistleblowing process usually has several episodes. In another episode relating to Mubabatsi, one of his classmates informed Sonia that Mubabatsi is also known for stealing dogs in his township. As the learner had not given further details, Sonia presumes that the dogs are stolen for use in animal sacrifice.

Another whistleblowing incident involved victims of torture and initiation witnessed by Kholiwe. One of her learners' ring finger was bruised by Ryne, a practitioner learner during school hours (Nkuna, 2016:47). This learner reported the matter to the educator. On inquiring why he did that, Ryne said that he was inserting a spiritual ring which made the victims to join his "group", meaning the occult.

2.6.4 Mystical encounters during school hours

Strange encounters during school hours expose both practitioners and victims alike. The above case involving insertion of a spiritual ring is an example of many encounters which expose practitioners. For instance, Educator Sonia was once shocked by a disobedient child during regular class exercises. She gave the learners an exercise and when she collected the books, she discovered that Nathan did not do his class work. Instead, he used a red pen to draw a sword and a pentagram on the book cover. He also wrote the words "enter at your own risk" next to the two drawings.

The second encounter to be cited in this report is about Happy whose tendencies were discovered during a school trip. Educator Kholiwe was in the company of other educators in an overnight school trip with learners. While all learners were asleep, Happy behaved strangely just after 12 a.m. She woke up and started fidgeting as if she wanted to jump up, through the roof. The teachers called on the name of Jesus and the scene stopped. The child then fell asleep. When asked what was happening, she just smiled and said nothing. Kholiwe and the fellow educators believed that the learner's actions were a sign that she was about to go on astral projection.

Encounters involving victims are also part of whistleblowing and observation by educators. The ring encounter is just one of many. In addition to physical manipulation or torture, victims usually get supernatural encounters such as fainting or seeing things in the spirit. Two such examples were witnessed by Educator Sonia. In one incident which she witnessed in a school further afield, a thirsty Chido went to drink water from the school water tap before sitting for her morning examination paper where she fell and fainted. She was then taken to the sick bay (Nkuna, 2016:84). One teacher called her mother and while waiting for her to arrive, Christian educators started praying for her. Educator Sonia then approached her body and commanded the body to regain its potency and commanded "any devil" to leave her in the name of Jesus. The body

responded by shaking and she intensified her “deliverance” prayer until the child regained her consciousness. The educators then asked her what happened, and the learner narrated that she was going through an initiation process to become a *sangoma*. She was sent to training by her parents.

Another encounter observed by Sonia involves Zondiwe, another female learner. The researcher recalls this situation from a conversation he had with Sonia in 2019. Sonia narrated that one morning as she entered the classroom to deliver her first lesson, she noticed a child who seemed to be disoriented. Suddenly this child, Zondiwe started screaming and shouting in her indigenous language “here is she, help me”. Sonia then charged towards her to assess the situation. On noticing that she was disoriented she prayed for her in the name of Jesus until she regained her full consciousness. Sonia then inquired what was happening. Zondiwe told her that she saw an elderly woman who appeared before her at home stopping her from going to school the previous day.

Later in the day Sonia called her to the teachers’ office where she interviewed her in detail. Zondiwe told her that she is from a broken home and her paternal grandmother does not want her to attend school and she is the woman who always appeared before her. Sonia then shared this matter with her fellow prayer partners at school to raise awareness.

Another episode involving the same learner happened one afternoon while Sonia was in the library with her colleagues. While busy with her work, learners brought Zondiwe to the library for her attention. Zondiwe seemed to be in an altered state of consciousness. Sonia then invited a fellow colleague to pray for her and she recovered instantly.

2.7 How children are drawn into the occult

2.7.1 Cordial invitation

Cordial invitation refers to non-violent invitation to become a practitioner. Those who end up participating as practitioners do so consensually after realising its appeal to them. In this approach a person is not forced but joins at his/her will. Those who choose not to join are not obliged to give reasons. It is up to members of the occult to ensure that they make joining their society irresistible to the invitees. Cordial invitations usually follow a display of supernatural powers or trickery by practitioners but in some instances, a mere verbal invitation is enough. The invitation usually comes from family members who are already practitioners or peers in any environment, such as school or home.

In her day-to-day dealings with children affected by the occult, Rachel usually asks them how they joined the occult and gets different answers to the question. In many instances the answer is that they were invited by peers. Siku, who was brought to her for prayer by his mother, told both of them that he was invited by four local boys (Nkuna, 2016:36). The boys found him playing at home in the afternoon and told him that they would come and fetch him in the evening to go and meet their group. He consented and that evening he went to join them and has been a member since then.

Another local boy, Mfitshane, narrated a similar incident that led to his joining the same secret society in the same way. This interview is one of many sessions that Rachel had with Mfitshane and his mother. His parents have more than a decade of a cordial relationship with her as they used to go to her church. They reported Mfitshane's case to her after his mother had a terrible dream where she saw him trying to suffocate her (Nkuna, 2016:36). When she woke up, she had a bad feeling about it. They then arranged for a prayer meeting with Rachel. Just before the prayer, Rachel asked the mother to share the dream with them. Then Mfitshane confirmed that he was part of local secret society and was advised to kill his mother in order to get rich.

2.7.2 Involuntary conscription

This category usually involves violent or non-consensual recruitment from peers or family members. In this category, the recruit is a powerless victim who seems not to have any option but to participate. An example of such situation is the story of Ryne which was discussed under peer whistleblowing above. In this case, Ryne forced some classmates to join the occult by bruising their fingers as discussed (Nkuna, 2016:85). Another form of involuntary conscription involves imposing initiation of children by parents. For example, Chido was sent for training to become a *sangoma* by her parents while she was simultaneously expected to attend school (Nkuna, 2016:84).

2.7.3 Cultural practices

Chido's case as discussed above does not only illustrate how minor children are channelled toward becoming occult practitioners but also demonstrates the role of cultural practices in passing on occult practices from one generation to the next. The researcher's exposure also serves as another example of the role of cultural practices in the proliferation of this phenomenon (Nkuna, 2014b:16). He was taught how to perform rituals and assisted in animal sacrifices at a young age.

Another example of cultural practices in line with the occult is dedication to ancestral spirits. An incident involving one of the researcher's children serves as a good illustration. This child was suffering from several afflictions and went to their local church for prayers. When the ministers laid hands on her she lost control of herself and entered into a trance whereafter she was taken to her paternal forefather's homestead. She narrated that as the ministers were praying for her, she saw a strong man sitting on a throne saying that he was not going to leave the life of this child as the child's family belongs to him. The strong man further said that this child's family has a covenant with him which is more than five hundred years old. Still in a trance, the child was shown an elderly woman taking her to the river to perform rituals by the river bank. Subsequently they both entered into the river where they were taken to a village underwater. In that village she was shown a family totem and was wedded to some man (Nkuna, 2016:86).

2.7.4 Mystical encounter

Children and adults alike are also lured into joining the occult through spiritual or supernatural encounters. These include their being presented with vivid images of riches backed by an audible voice inviting the unsuspecting child to join the occult (Nkuna, 2016:83; Nkuna, 2016:45-46). In some instances, it is due to a family covenants as discussed above.

One mystical encounter involves a learner who for the purpose of the study is called Frank whom the researcher met personally. As he was going through recovery from occult practices an incident happened. One day as he was riding a bicycle on a bridge crossing a local river a whirlwind overpowered him. The wind took him to a community underwater where he was shown lots of money and persuaded to come back to the occult (Nkuna, 2016:83). He confessed this incident to Rachel. This was not his first mysterious encounter. In another conversation with Rachel he narrated how he had spent about twenty-four hours in a community underwater (Nkuna, 2016:82). It happened one afternoon as he was playing with other boys next to the river that he was taken to the community underwater. There he was introduced to some underwater beings which taught him things he could not explain to Rachel. He confessed that after this encounter, he would regularly visit this community and other related underwater communities in other areas.

Encounters with whirlwinds or powerful winds seem to be prevalent in the mystical encounters. Kholiwe was once called on by a hysterical learner at her school to go to pray for Pretty (Nkuna, 2016:48-49). It came to pass that as Pretty went to the bathroom, she was attacked by a powerful whirlwind that brought her to the ground in front of other children. She immediately showed signs of an altered state of consciousness, culminating in the learners calling on Kholiwe who also summoned some help from fellow Christian educators. They prayed for Pretty until she regained

her consciousness. Although there was no evidence that this encounter had to do with recruitment to the occult, it adds to the challenges of children experiencing mystical encounters, such as entering into a trance due to supernatural encounters with spirit beings other than the Holy Spirit.

One of the research participants, Kholiwe also experienced a similar encounter in a blatant occultic recruitment endeavour which never materialised. This happened while she was doing laundry in the river in the 1980s. At that time, she had just accepted Christ after she was saved from torments by unclean spirits for a while. As she was rinsing her clothes something pricked her finger. Suddenly a bucket full of money emerged from the sand and a voice said to her “join us, you will get rich”. She confidently responded that she was not interested, and the bucket disappeared immediately (Nkuna, 2015:48).

This recruitment strategy is not limited to children and young adults. Some adults are also lured through mystical encounters, and this was how the researcher’s paternal grandmother was invited to herbalism (Nkuna, 2014b:14). She was reportedly visited in her sleep by her deceased mother’s spirit which inducted her on how to cure women barrenness. The spirit showed her the tree, how to prepare the charm and to administer it and then prescribed a chicken sacrifice. She then experimented with it and it worked. She then promoted it among her circles of people.

The three cases of mystical encounter do not only present another way people are invited to participate in the occult, but also reveal the power of a person’s will or personal choice. Young Frank did not fully resist the temptation because no adult in his household was able to disciple him; Kholiwe stood her ground because her entire family had just forsaken occult practices due to salvation through Jesus Christ; and the researcher’s grandmother gave in to the invitation because she saw nothing wrong then but, later abandoned it after accepting Christ.

2.8 Christian educators’ caregiving interventions

2.8.1 Informal evangelism group work

The study established that Christian teachers who participated in this study all belong to school-based informal groups of Christian educators who promote Christian practices in spreading the gospel while voluntarily addressing the occult situation among learners in their respective schools. The groups are viewed as “informal” because none of them have been officially registered with any authority, and they have no written constitution, founding statement, terms of reference and/or organisation structure. Through this arrangement, these educators have found ways of organising internal prayer meetings and managing referrals of affected children amongst themselves as well as to external caregivers (Nkuna, 2016:39,67-69).

These groups occasionally pray together, share testimonies and encourage each other when faced with challenges. Through this form of fellowship, they learn of each other's spiritual gifts, which then become useful in their caregiving. For instance, in the episode involving the collapse of Chido, which happened just before sitting for her exam paper, the group exercised their gifts. While in the sick bay with the unconscious Chido, some members prayed unto God for her resuscitation and Sonia took authority over the unclean spirit that led to the incident. This joint effort led to Chido regaining her consciousness, as discussed in the previous chapter. In addition to prayer activity, the register teacher had also called the child's parent to report the incident and invited her to come to the school. While waiting for the parent to come, the team interviewed Chido, wanting to find out more about the situation. From this incident, the study revealed that teamwork involved exercising spiritual gifts and offering professional help by different team members.

The experience with this informal network was also affirmed by Kholiwe who teaches in a different school. She narrated Happy's episode as covered in the previous chapter. It happened that as teachers went out on a school excursion, they had to spend a night with learners in one room. Happy showed signs which the teachers suspected were occultic. They observed an episode of what they perceived was an attempt by the learner to embark on astral travel. As narrated in the previous chapter, Kholiwe and her colleagues called on the name of Jesus and prayed for the child when she started jerking violently. This intervention ended this episode and the learner resumed her peaceful sleep.

Reflection on this system of the informal network highlights the advantages of cooperation amongst these caregivers. One of the most important advantages is that it fosters accountability. Caregiving in this environment happens in full view of fellow Christians, therefore, any ungodly practices are likely to be confronted by group members. Secondly, although informal in nature, group members build a reputation for their Christian ministry which is also acknowledged by non-members who occasionally refer affected learners to them for intervention.

2.8.2 Referrals

Referrals play an important role in the caring initiatives. Referrals serve the purpose of ensuring that affected learners receive care from capable and experienced caregivers who are equipped for the caregiving ministry. These referrals are divided into two forms, internal and external referrals. The internal form happens within the same school and manifests in two forms as well. In one form, learners or educators refer cases to members of the informal evangelism network,

and in another this takes the form of intragroup referrals among members of the informal network. In the previous chapter, the report narrated an episode of how learners took Zondiwe to Sonia for an intervention. This happened after the learners observed that Zondiwe had started behaving strangely just like the day she reportedly saw an image of a woman in class causing her to scream. In this instance, Sonia also used the advantage of the informal network to invite a fellow colleague to jointly pray for Zondiwe.

External referral entails soliciting support from caregivers from Christians who are not members of the school to which the child belongs. In this circle of caregivers, Rachel has been their external resource to refer affected learners. As discussed in the previous chapter, Rachel has a reputation for her availability to allow God to use her to care for people involved in or affected by the occult as she was used by God to get her mother out of practising as a *sangoma* (Nkuna, 2014a:2).

In executing external referrals, caregivers have always obtained the parent or legal guardian's consent to refer the child to Rachel, discussing the referral with her before-hand, and occasionally leading the learner and the legal guardian/parent to her during the first meeting. Examples of referrals to Rachel include the situation of Frank and Sassa, respectively. Frank was brought by her aunt to Rachel on referral from Kholiwe while Sassa was brought to her by Kathy, another educator who occasionally offer caring services (Nkuna, 2016:67). It is worth noting that Frank does not go to the same school where Kholiwe teaches but his situation was introduced to her by his aunt who works at the same school with her. All forms of intervention and referrals discussed in this report point to a need for the Triune God's intervention which is requested through prayer. This suggests that all caregivers cited in this report perceive prayer as a powerful form of intervention.

2.8.3 Prayer

The preceding forms of intervention have demonstrated that caregivers' reliance on God's deliverance power is anchored in prayer happening in different contexts. In acknowledgement of this presupposition, the caregivers take responsibility to pray for affected children, done in a group, in pairs or individually. Group prayers occur in two forms, namely as a corporate prayer meeting of members of the informal evangelism team/network based in the local school and in voluntary class devotions. Prayers in the informal network comprise a moment of sharing the word, singing a song or two, followed by a group prayer. This is typically viewed by the group as seeking God's intervention beforehand and in response to a situation that has already occurred.

In addition to group prayers as a response to a situation, caregivers also pray in pairs to offer remedial action to affected learners. Providing this intervention in pairs is done for accountability and for reinforcement. However, in case of emergency caregivers occasionally pray for affected learners individually, just like in the case of Zondiwe for whom Sonia had to pray in class as discussed in the previous chapter.

Execution of this intervention on an individual basis has proven to be equally effective in providing restorative relief to affected learners. For instance, Sonia had to pray for Faida alone in the presence of the learner's friend after the affected child came to her crying to ask for prayers to be set free from midnight visitations by a scary creature. In a different school, Kholiwe was also approached with similar request by Capstone who was being tormented by members of a local occult group after he decided to abandon the group (Nkuna, 2016:41). Capstone reportedly told Kholiwe that he was tired of the hectic life of the occult. He claimed that whilst still a member he used to embark on astral travel during school hours whereby his soul would leave his body in class and travel to distant locations to attend to occult business. He reportedly further testified that since moving to Kholiwe's class, members of his former occult group were unable to fetch him during school hours as they used to because the class is surrounded by a hedge of fire. He reportedly attributed this to Kholiwe's Christian practices. As a result of this "hedge of fire", members of his former group resorted to calling him from a distance outside the school premises. He then requested Kholiwe to pray for him so that he could cease hearing their calls. Just as in Faida's case, Capstone was also set free after Kholiwe had laid hands on him.

In addition to praying for affected children, caregivers also empower learners to pray for themselves. Both Sonia and Kholiwe have confirmed to have introduced morning prayer meetings in their respective classes in their schools. This has been received with mixed reactions amongst learners, particularly because they occasionally ask one learner to lead the class in prayer. Many learners receive it with appreciation whilst in some instances those involved in the occult reject it openly. For instance, in the previous chapter the report narrated how Mubabatsi who is suspected of involvement in the occult, reportedly told fellow learners that he resented the class devotions because he venerates a different deity which requires him to conclude his prayers with the proclamation of 666 instead of the name of Jesus.

2.8.4 Counselling

Most, if not all episodes described in this report, are traumatising to the learners. Consequently, lay counselling becomes one of the logical interventions offered by the caregivers. This report defines their counselling as "lay" because the caregivers do it outside of any professional or caring

code of ethics. During their narration in their respective informal conversations with the researcher, it became evident that their counselling covers asking basic information about the affected learner's family background, religious denomination and testifying to them how Christ can help them to overcome their challenges.

This intervention usually has about two sessions, depending on the situation. In cases where the learner approaches the caregiver for intervention, the intervention is preceded by what can be described as an intake session whereby the caregiver asks questions that will enable her to gather basic personal background information and the situation at hand, and the second session usually takes some form of follow-up some days later after the intervention to find out if there is any improvement. In emergency cases like that of Chido who fainted at school, counselling follows the intervention to establish the possible contributory factors to the episode.

It is in counselling sessions that the caregiver determines the next step to be taken, if required. In some instances, the next step could require further prayer sessions with the learner, referral or a joint interview with the parent or legal guardian. The study gathered that this area of intervention has a few limitations which if addressed might enhance the entire intervention cycle. Consolidated intervention processes will be covered in the next chapter which focusses on the pragmatic strategy to address the situation. Some of the limitations identified in this study include, caregivers' limited counselling skills and time constraints.

2.8.5 Family involvement

The caregivers are aware of ethical issues that they must adhere to within the context of their caregiving endeavour. They consider the fact that they are providing care to minor children within an environment regulated by legislation in relation to the learner-educator relationship and freedom of religion. While they usually take a risk in praying for the children without the consent of their parents or legal guardians in case of emergency, they usually engage with parents or legal guardians when they come across a situation that requires caregiving (Nkuna, 2016:68). In emergency situations they report the matter to the legal guardian or parent afterwards or during the intervention.

Parental or guardian involvement in the caregiving process also enriched the findings of this study by parents' reported confirmation of their children's involvement in the occult. In demonstrating the essence of this form of intervention, Sonia narrated a situation which was shared by one of the members of her informal network. Her colleague had to call in the parent after she witnessed a mysterious act in class whereby Gerald amused the class with some act of magic during school

hours (Nkuna, 2016:40). This learner caused some underwear to appear and levitate in class. As part of the intervention, the educator invited Gerald's father to discuss the matter at school.

During the discussion, Gerald's father affirmed that the family has noticed some strange things in Gerald's life that confirmed that he is involved in the occult. He narrated two episodes that shook him and his wife. He told the educator that one night while in bed they found themselves levitating in their bed in the bedroom. This made them suspicious that one of their children could be involved in some sinister practices. This was confirmed in another incident which he encountered one night as he arrived home from work at a time when all family members were in bed. As he arrived home, he found Gerald playing with some children outside the house. Given the time of the day, he became suspicious of this activity and as he entered the house, he went to Gerald's room to check if he was indeed not there. To his amazement he found him in bed. This situation was not explored further by Sonia at the time of the narration by her colleague, since the purpose was only to testify to the existence of occult activities among the learners which the prayer group should pray against in her school.

2.9 Theoretical interpretation of caring practices

2.9.1 Autonomous motivation

As part of their missional intervention, the caring educators have demonstrated some level of commitment to instil autonomous motivation among the learners in order to handle the problem of the occult among them. Hagger and Chatzisarantis (2016:360) sum up autonomous motivation as a drive to engage in activities "out of a sense of personal agency, for the interest and satisfaction derived from the activity itself, or its concomitant outcomes without any externally referenced contingencies". Caregivers achieve this objective by informally teaching learners to use Christian practices in order to empower them to trust in Jesus Christ for their defence against powers of the occult at schools and wherever they find themselves. They instil the learners' interest by demonstrating the power of these practices as and when they are required during school hours, e.g. praying for afflicted learners who then receive their instant restoration in some instances. In this way, the learners witness the potential for using Christian practices such as prayer as an activity to be undertaken out of a sense of personal agency in order to derive satisfaction from the potential positive outcome.

While the caregivers might be applying the concept of autonomous motivation unaware, studies have proven that it has many advantages such as leading to greater creativity, satisfaction and positive well-being among students (Kusurkar & Croiset, 2015:2). Although these findings are

from studies involving students in the field of medical education, the concept seems to be applicable even in fostering autonomous motivation among primary school learners. Just like in medical education whereby autonomy support shifts the responsibility of learning to the students by making them internalise the motivation through structured guidance (Kusurkar & Croiset, 2015:2), caregivers pray together with the learners and occasionally assign some of them to lead prayer as a form of structured guidance. The impact of this form of intervention has been observed in some learners' motivation to apply prayer outside of the school environment, e.g. when Faida encountered spiritual attacks at night she prayed to Jesus Christ. In some instances, learners get motivated to seek prayer as a solution to their situation because they have been motivated by its outcome in similar situations, e.g. in Faida's confirmation of how she previously tried to deal with the midnight visitations by some strange creature as cited elsewhere in this chapter. In this instance, autonomous motivation is twofold, motivation to pray for herself and motivation to approach her teacher to ask for prayers. The motivation to request prayers is not uncommon in the daily activities of other caregivers, e.g. Capstone's request for deliverance from the invasion of members of the occult group in her life during school hours, serves as another example.

Besides lessons learnt from medical education, this study took note of lessons from the application of the same concept in physical education to achieve similar results. In this instance, caregivers incidentally promote autonomous motivation toward the use of prayer by intentionally teaching learners to pray and applying it in their presence to bring about instant outcomes, such as instantly resuscitating children who fainted. In doing so, they affirm Hagger and Chatzisarantis' (2016:361-2) assertion that the concept of autonomous motivation is a trans-contextual model that can be applied beyond physical education as it can be used to explain the process by which motivation is transferred across educational and out of school contexts. In this instance, the educational context relates to among others educational contexts, religious education, spiritual formation, life orientation, etc.

2.9.2 Self-determination

A closer analysis of the findings in this study suggests that, in addition to fostering autonomous motivation, the caregivers' interventions also contribute to the learners' self-determination. According to Deci and Ryan (2004:5), the self-determination theory acknowledges that all individuals have natural, innate and constructive tendencies to develop an ever more elaborate and unified sense of self. For them, the development of this unified self requires individuals to forge interconnections among aspects of their own psyches and with individuals and groups in their social worlds.

The findings in this study reveal that some elements of the self-determination theory are applied in caring for affected learners. For instance, in the execution of their caring intervention teachers are mindful of the need for the learners to develop a unified self that will be consistent with their personal preferences. What the caregivers do is merely witnessing to Christ through prayer and discipling those who accept the gospel. Through their interventions, caregivers only contribute to the learners forging interconnections among aspects of their own psyches and groups in their social milieu without forcing it onto the learners. In this instance the realisation of the effects of the occult in the learners' lives drive some learners to seek the Triune God's intervention which gives them hope culminating in their finding a Christian identity. This Christian identity then becomes a unified self. This action culminates in these learners' establishing a relationship between their lifestyle and their social world.

In their witness to Christ among learners, caregivers are aware that children have a personal choice in developing this unified self which will shape their self-determination theology. One of the central assumptions of the self-determination theology is that the core self includes intrinsic integrative tendencies that motivate individuals to assimilate ongoing experiences into increasingly elaborated and integrated self-structures (Hodgins & Knee, 2004:87). Caregivers contribute to this development by empowering learners with Christian practices which they are free to take or ignore. Some learners seem to assimilate the experience of using prayer to combat the occult and thus integrate it into the self-structure. Self-structure in this instance entails among other factors "the child's beliefs about the world" (Miller 2006:28). Faida's experience serves as one of the examples that illustrate this presupposition. She experienced the saving power of praying in the name of Jesus Christ in her social world, and eventually attempted using it in repelling the unwanted visitations by the scary creature at night. Although this act initially seemed futile, Faida did not lose her trust in her Christian identity, but she garnered some motivation to seek external help within the body of Christ. Prayer and seeking Christ's intervention in her life have subsequently become integral to her self-structure.

2.9.3 Empowerment

Riddall-Leech (2003:8) describes children empowerment as "giving children skills and abilities to discipline themselves and to encourage them not to compromise between what they want and what society demands". For Riddall-Leech, in order to achieve this, adults should allow children to exercise self-discipline by offering them a choice in decision-making.

Although caregivers have not cited this theory during interviews or personal conversations with the researcher, they have applied it in so many ways. One such application is through giving the

learners the choice to use skills and abilities to apply prayer in times of distress. This tendency inculcates the discipline of using praying to the Triune God as a choice amid religious pluralism in contemporary society.

Religious pluralism provides an opportunity for all people to practise their religion as a personal choice within an environment of freedom of religion. In recognition of freedom of religion, caregivers do not impose their Christian values and practices on the learners but merely invite them to Christianity as one of many choices available to them. In instances where some children find Christianity not appealing to them, caregivers do not force them to accept it. For instance, when Mubabatsi refused to pray in class because he felt that the Christian prayer was in contradiction to his faith, Sonia did not force him to pray.

Caregivers allow learners to exercise self-discipline through offering them a choice in decision-making in all forms of their caring interventions. Mubabatsi's example on the choice of whether to pray to the Triune God or not is just one example in the area of prayer as an intervention. They also apply the principle of freedom of choice in referral. When caregivers identify a need to refer a learner to Christian minister, they ask the child's permission even before discussing the matter with his/her parent/guardian. Only under exceptional circumstances do caregivers act without the consent of the child, e.g. in case of a need for an emergency prayer where the child is incapable of providing consent like when unconscious. Seeking the learners' consent is not just an ethical consideration but also empowers them to choose what route to follow in their self-determination.

2.10 Summary

Through the use of autoethnography, this chapter answered the first research question by describing several aspects of the manifestation of the occult among primary school children in Mkhuhlu. These aspects were discovered through the use of autoethnography and within the framework of the descriptive empirical task of Osmer's model of theological interpretation. The researcher deemed it necessary to outline the methodology applied to accomplish this task at the beginning of the chapter. This was followed by discussing contextual issues in relation to the choice of the research site.

As the research interest for this topic emerged from the researcher's personal experience with the occult in his family and community, the use of autoethnography became appropriate to this study. Therefore, the researcher had to present his broader exposure and participation to the occult and his own child's situation before dwelling on the situation among learners in primary schools in Mkhuhlu.

Christian educators and ministers involving in caring for affected learners in the area have discovered ways in which they come to know of a child's association with the occult, either as a practitioner or victim. These ways include among others, some practitioner or affected learners reported to teachers by fellow learners and some practitioner learners voluntarily inform the teachers in the process of looking for assistance from them. Through participant observation and interviews with affected learners, it was also discovered that children who are involved in the occult are mainly drawn to it through several means. Some of these means include, cordial invitation from existing practitioners, mystical encounters with spirits, involuntary conscription and African cultural practices.

Manifestation of occult practices or attacks on the school premises necessitates interventions by educators of Christian faith. Some of the caring interventions that they use include, evangelism teamwork, prayer, counselling, referral to local church ministers and involving family members. The interpretation of this situation is done in the next chapter by looking at the broader scope of the occult globally from an African literature perspective which is then interpreted with the use of concepts from the humanities.

CHAPTER 3: INTERPRETATION OF THE SITUATION FROM THE BROADER SCOPE OF THE OCCULT

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided empirical evidence of the situation of the occult in the Mkhuhlu community. In alignment to Osmer's model of theological interpretation, this chapter now focuses on the interpretive task. For Osmer (2011:2) the interpretive task answers the question "why is this going on?" He suggests that undertaking this task should involve the use of concepts from social science to interpret and elucidate why certain things are happening. In this regard, this report uses literature from the fields of anthropology, sociology and psychology to interpret the situation of primary school learners affected by the occult within the broader scope of how the occult manifests itself globally, on the continent of Africa and in South Africa.

The chapter also serves as a comparative literature study to convey the knowledge and ideas that have been established in the current academic discourse about the topic (Coldwell & Herbst, 2004:31). Mouton (2001:86-91) guides that literature study can be organised in ways such as different schools of thought, chronology, themes or hypotheses. In this report it is organised in geographical chronology, namely globally, Africa and South Africa. Before getting into that discussion, it starts by a thematic exposition of the phenomenon, focusing on its definition and arguments on its complexities. The discussion of these elements explains patterns of the manifestation of the occult broadly. The latter part of the chapter uses theoretical concepts to explain why children participate in the occult and how is it sustained from one generation to the next.

3.2 Methodology

The main sources of data used in this empirical-descriptive task are both academic and non-academic literature. Academic literature has been used to define the phenomenon, to share some academic insight into its manifestation and for theoretical interpretation of why it is happening. Non-academic literature has been the major source of both autoethnographic and ethnographic data sets published by self-confessed Christians who either were ex-occult practitioners, victims, or were somehow exposed to it. The latter data sources account for a greater proportion of secondary data used to describe what is happening in Africa and Southern Africa. The use of these data sources is consistent with autoethnography as Flick (2018:57) clarifies that in

contemporary autoethnographic studies the use of documentary study is allowed, in addition to the historically acclaimed use of observation and ethnography.

Both academic and non-academic sources were sourced online and sampled using key words identified at the proposal stage. For academic literature, cited sources were subsequently consulted whereas non-academic sources did not have any snowball effect in the selection of further sources of their kind due to inadequacy of their references.

3.3 Definition of the occult

The word 'occult' has its etymological root in the Latin adjective "*occultus*", which means hidden or secret (Bogdan & Djurdjevic, 2013:1). Kanco and Holliday (2000:68) perceive it as a "supernatural perception from sources other than God". This later source further perceives it to be secretive and hidden knowledge or wisdom that is beyond human understanding (Kanco & Holliday, 2000:68). Congruent to this perspective, Bogdan and Djurdjevic (2013:1) affirm that it is a branch of human activity with an orientation towards hidden aspects of reality. For them these aspects are "commonly inaccessible to ordinary senses and activity" (Bogdan and Djurdjevic, 2013:1). As such it covers a multiplicity of referents such as "what is concealed, obscure, mysterious, secret, sinister or forbidden" (Kiernan, 2006:5). These comprise a series of practices grounded in the theory of esotericism (Granholm, 2005:21).

For the purpose of this study, the student perceives Kanco and Holliday's definition to be useful as it somehow dissociates this phenomenon from revelation from the Triune God. This perspective is shared by Walter Martin, Jill Martin Rische, Kurt van Gorden and Kevin Rische. For them, the occult moves outside the realm of established religion and promises things that the church forbids (Martin *et al.*, 2008:21). However, Bogdan and Djurdjevic (2013:1) posit that the occult concurrently shares a certain similarity with both science and religion but cannot be reduced to either of them". These varying perspectives on whether the occult is a religion or not and various definitions breed some complications that continue to characterise this phenomenon.

3.4 Its complexities

3.4.1 Disagreement on its religiosity

From the analysis of the above definitions, it is evident that the occult is a complex supernatural human knowledge acquired to enable people to engage in practices that are beyond people's natural abilities. Such practices include a combination of activities on which people hold different views on their usefulness in human life, e.g. magic, witchcraft, soothsaying, astrology, Satanism,

etc. This claim is supported by Kiernan (2006:6) who asserts that the spectrum of the occult is broad enough to cover aspects of what might otherwise be termed religion. For him, it is not only confined to what is dark and sinister. However, some practitioners of the one area of the occult, namely witchcraft, do not concur with Kiernan's assertion. For instance, Arcane Alchemy maintains that witchcraft is not a religion as one does not have to follow a specific religion to practice it, but it merely applies to what "you do, like ritual or spell work" which for them, is not necessarily a belief system. This is contrary to Gerald Gardner's assertion that witchcraft is a pagan, pre-Christian religion that had survived through the centuries as a secret tradition (Bogdan 2007:148). For Djurdjevic (2014:2) it is a religion as it constitutes "the human response to what people perceive as the sacred or real". This controversy is also prevalent within Satanism. For instance, Doyle (2017:96) discovered that there are groups who actively proclaim to be adherents of one form or another of Satanism as a religion whereas others such as rock music artists are actively involved in using imagery and signs that directly promote the veneration of Satan without deliberately engaging in direct worship or veneration.

3.4.2 Multiplicity of intra-movement perspectives

In addition to disagreement on whether it is religion or not, another complexity is in the multiplicity of its forms of practices or beliefs within the same area of the cultic movement, such as Satanism and witchcraft, respectively. A closer individual examination of the two movements reflects that any attempt to provide conclusive categories will be difficult to accomplish. Starting with witchcraft, there are different numbers of typologies as perceived by its practitioners. For instance, the Arcane Alchemy website defines ten types while the Wiccan Spells website identifies and describes fifteen types, in addition to the main division between white and black witchcraft.

The non-uniformity in the categorisation within the same current is not unique to witchcraft but in many other currents as well. To illustrate this assertion, the literary study has also revealed that Satanism is another complex area of the occult which scholars such as Granholm (2013:210) view as a value-laden term. Doyle White (2017:96) notes that within Satanism are various groupings that can be loosely divided into two categories. On the one extreme is a grouping that views Satan as a deity worthy to be venerated, e.g. members of the Temple of Set founded by Michael Aquino in 1975 (Granholm, 2013:217-218). The second category is the philosophical Satanism. Founded by Anton LaVey in 1966, the Church of Satan is the formative proponents of this category which portrays Satan not as a real entity, but as a personification of humanity's intrinsically animal nature (White, 2017:96).

3.4.3 Contextuality

Given the complexities surrounding the occult, it is inevitable to state that the manifestation of this phenomenon can be adequately understood contextually. This is a view also held by Bogdan and Djurdjevic (2013:6), who perceive occultism as a western esoteric current that has travelled around the world with different interpretations in these various contexts. Congruent to this assertion, Kiernan (2006:17) posits that the occult is resilient, versatile and adaptive to a variety of changing circumstances. In the next subsection, the report attempts to articulate the complexity of this phenomenon on three levels of its geographic presence of interest to this study, namely globally, Africa and South Africa. Its exposition at local level namely Mkhuhlu will be covered in the next chapter.

3.5 The occult globally

3.5.1 Historical context

Granholm (2015:722) indicates that most of the research on the occult has been conducted by historians and since the early 1990s their focus was mainly in the field of 'Western esotericism'. He further narrates that a significant proportion of such studies focused on older historical developments, with less attention to the recent expressions of esotericism (Granholm, 2008:50). It is also noted that scholarship is unable to give a universal contextual account of this situation since the occult develops differently and changes in cultural, political and social contexts while retaining many of the original elements of the nineteenth century French occultism (Bogdan & Djurdjevic, 2013:5).

There are several examples of how the occult has achieved the above feature. For instance, in Finland over the years the occult has taken diverse forms such as Neopaganism, Theosophical societies, magical religious groups, etc. (Sohlberg, 2008:204). This has been achieved, chiefly through established distribution channels of occult books through bookstores and internet platforms specialising in occult and esoteric literature (Sohlberg, 2008:204). This is contrary to the way it survives in Africa, whereby it is a belief system that has been entrenched for generations in African societies without the aid of such sophisticated channels (Kohnert, 2003:28). This is usually passed from one generation to the next using cultural and traditional means among the indigenous people, instead of conventional tuition. In other words, African occult has not been adequately researched and/or well documented in the academic environment.

3.5.2 Some of the key global contributors

2.5.2.1. Gerald Gardner

Gardner is known for creating the world religion of modern Wicca in the 1950s (Bogdan, 2007:3). He promoted witchcraft as a religion that survived through secret traditions, which were practised by people who organised themselves in covens. Bogdan (2007:145) describes this religion as a tradition that centred around the worship of two deities, namely a horned god and a goddess. His contribution to this phenomenon is distinctively recognised by naming one type of witchcraft after him, i.e. the Gardnerian witchcraft. Table 2-1 below presents a summary of the rest of the key global contributors as identified by the researcher.

Table 2-1 Some of the major contributors to the development of the occult globally

Name	Summary of the contribution
Aleister Crowley	Has played a prominent role in promoting magic
Alphonse Louis Constant	Extensively wrote on the theory and practice of the occult.
Anton LaVey	Founded the Church of Satan in 1966
Gerald Gardner	Is known for creating modern Wicca in the 1950s
Michael Aquino	Deflected from LaVey's Church of Satan to establish the Temple of Set in 1975
Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers	Was instrumental in the founding of the Golden Dawn in 1888
Swami Vivekananda	Has been credited for creating modern yoga

3.5.2.2 Aleister Crowley

Crowley created an elaborate system of what he called *Magick* and culminating in his presiding over the magical fraternity. Bogdan (2016:258) finds Crowley to be the most influential and most controversial magician of the twentieth century, as among other things, he identified himself with the Great Beast 666. Furthermore, Crowley expressed his intention of seeking to liberate humankind from Christianity, which he perceived as a repressive and superstitious system (Bogdan, 2016:258).

3.5.2.3 Alphonse Louis Constant

Better known as Eliphas Levi Constant wrote extensively on the theory and practice of the occult. Hence, he is often considered to be the chief instigator of the nineteenth-century occultism (Bogdan, 2007:16). Bogdan mentions that this form of the occult emphasises the personal religious experience directed at invocation and evocation of higher beings, gods or angels, culminating in an altered state of consciousness.

3.5.2.4 Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers

He was instrumental in the founding of the Golden Dawn, which had temples in England and France. Founded in 1888, the Golden Dawn combined into a meaningful whole, a corpus consisting of initiations, theoretical instructions and a good deal of practical work (Bogdan & Djurdjevic, 2013:4). Such practical work includes tarot, astrology, astral travel, invocations and talismanic magic.

3.5.2.5 Swami Vivekananda

Born as Narendranath Datta in India, Vivekananda was the teacher of yoga in the West and has been hailed as a creator of modern yoga (Singleton & Goldberg, 2014:17) His book, Raja Yoga was highly regarded by Aleister Crowley to a point of assigning it to his students as he found it excellent in foundational study of Hindu mysticism (Djurdjevic, 2014:23).

3.5.2.6 Anton LaVey

Born in the United States as Howard Stanton LeVey, Anton who was reportedly fascinated with the sinister, occult and bizarre, founded the Church of Satan in 1966 (Van Luijk, 2016:296). For LaVey Satan was a mere philosophical position which promoted that “man should live according to his natural desires”, not deity (Van Luijk, 2016:207). This philosophy is summarised in LaVey’s Nine Satanic Statements as expressed in the Satanic Bible. While there is not enough evidence of the Church of Satan involved in explicit occult practices, LaVey founded it based on his fascination about the occult. Therefore, his promotion of Satanism, though in a philosophical manner is found in his sacred book, the Satanic Bible which he wrote in 1969.

3.5.2.7 Michael Aquino

Michael Aquino broke away from the Church of Satan to establish the Temple of Set in 1975 (Granholt, 2013:2017). After serving the Church of Satan and playing an influential role for a while, Aquino and several other members became disgruntled with changes that LaVey introduced in 1975. According to Granholt (2013:217-218), during the same period he performed

a magical ritual with the intention to invoke Satan for guidance regarding a way forward on the matter, but instead he encountered an entity that identified itself as the ancient deity called Set. This marked the establishment of the Temple of Set which came to venerate this entity. As one of the founders of the preceding occult formations, Aquino also took responsibility for writing his institution's sacred book which is termed "The Book of Coming Forth by Night" which is structured as a message from Set (Granholm, 2013:218).

3.6 The situation in Africa

3.6.1 Background

Moving from the assumption that the phenomenon of the occult is complex, versatile and adaptive to cultural and political context, this part of the report discusses its manifestation in the continent of Africa. African scholars such as Obiwuru (2019:8) asserts that the phenomenon is very prevalent in Africa to a point that "there is no community or village in the entirety of Africa that is and/or was devoid of sorcery and magical pursuit". Incidents of accusing children of witchcraft in Africa are on the rise and literature on this topic is emerging slowly. In countries like Ghana, the prevalence of these incidents has contributed to many children accused of witchcraft sent to either witch camps, prayer camps, traditional shrines or others for exorcism (Agyapong, 2020:177).

The situation of the occult in Africa has generally attracted scholarly attention but little has been written in the field of children's involvement as practitioners. However, testimonies of Pentecostal Christians who have repented from the occult show that many witches and sorcerers had joined it at a very young age. In this section of this chapter, the report covers the influence of the African worldview in shaping Africans' involvement in witchcraft and shares a few testimonies of former occultists.

3.6.2 The influence of the African traditional worldview

The indigenous African people's worldview has for ages been influenced by their belief in the practice of the occult. Kohnert (2003:28) posits that many, if not most Africans at all levels of society regardless of their social strata, religious belief, education or environment do believe in magic and witchcraft and this belief system has been deeply ingrained for generations in African societies. As stated in the previous sections, this has been passed on from generation to generation through oral tradition, instead of the well-documented Western esotericism. Consequently, some of the elements of the belief system are viewed as part of the culture, e.g. the use of witchcraft powers in traditional healing is widely accepted as an African heritage.

The fusion between culture and the African traditional worldview has been critical in the pervasion of the perception of the occult among many indigenous Africans. For instance, in various African cultures, evil is generally perceived as the “work of evil spirits, witches, sorcerers or evil eye, broken taboos, oaths or even the deity or ancestors” (Adamo, 2011:4). In these cultures, people “recognize that this spirit world is inhabited by many spiritual powers” (Magezi & Magezi, 2017:3). It is therefore not uncommon for Africans to seek protection from evil using services of practitioners that they believe have more powers than those that have bewitched or put spells on them. This perception was witnessed by Martin Lindhardt in Tanzania. In his study of witchcraft in that country. Lindhardt (2009b:40) finds that Bantu people believe that they all have power which is somehow inherent in them, but it must be increased by God, ancestors or witchdoctors in order to succeed in resisting adversary bad powers of evil beings.

The African traditional worldview as summarised above culminates in its adherents seeking powers of the occult for survival and to dominate others, and few of them acquire these powers and pass the practice from generation to generation within the kinship or bloodline. The next section presents testimonies of Africans who were once practitioners of the occult and another who was saved from inheriting witchcraft from his genealogy.

3.6.3 Testimonies of former occultists in Africa

Many Christians who were involved in the occult have documented and published their testimonies which the researcher views as a contribution to apologetics. In his view, these testimonies seek to achieve two tasks of apologetics as described by McGrath (2012:19), namely commending and translating the gospel. They do this by narrating among other things, how they were drawn into the occult, at what age, how they were used to attack Christianity and how they were set free. All these testimonies also illustrate how these autoethnographers have experienced the power of the Christian faith over the occult.

As this study is of limited scope, the report presents testimonies of five people, namely Emmanuel Eni (Nigerian), Surprise Sithole (Mozambican), Sinthumule Ramabulana (South African), Yke Nathan Uzorma (Nigerian), and Samuel Kanco (Ghanaian). Their work is referenced accordingly in the narrative and fully captured in the reference list of the report.

3.6.2.1 Emmanuel Eni

Emmanuel Eni provides an account of his childhood as full of misfortune whereby he lost his parents and became an orphan as teenager (Eni, s.a.:4). This led to his living a destitute life that ultimately made him to remember one of his primary school mates who moved from a small town

to lead a well-off life in Lagos. At the age of 15, Eni moved to Lagos where he started cohabiting with a 20-year-old woman whom he befriended while they were in primary school (Eni, s.a.:4-5). While in this relationship, the woman invited him to join the occult which culminated in his becoming successful in business for a while.

Part of his testimony explains how he was used to attack Christian churches (Eni, s.a.:15-16). This did not last forever as in 1985 he encountered Jesus Christ and left the occult. For him this was a fulfilling moment characterised by many financial hardships coupled with spiritual attacks (Eni, s.a.:17-20).

3.6.2.2 Samuel Kanco

Samuel's testimony provides details of how his family of origin had hereditary witchcraft in their genealogy. He narrates that his grandfather was a head witch in their home village in Ghana and the entire family became "the established witch doctors' family in the area" (Kanco & Holliday, 2000:8). His grandfather passed on his powers to his father (Kanco & Holliday, 2000:24). Samuel's father took responsibility to pass on this practice to him as well, starting by introducing him to spirits in the forest and later to the marine spirits (Kanco & Holliday, 2000:17,27).

Just like in Eni's testimony, Samuel also narrates how occult powers are used to attack Christians or make them to backslide (Kanco & Holliday, 2000:67-68). The latter parts of his testimony share the story of his repentance and ministry. Of significance in his testimony is that he had been socialised to enter into sorcery before he was a teenager (Kanco & Holliday, 2000:11,17). In his household, occult practices were passed from one generation to another as his father received the powers from his grandfather and his father wanted to pass the tradition to him (Kanco & Holliday, 2000:24).

3.6.2.3 Yke Nathan Uzorma

Yke Nathan Uzorma claims to be a former grand master in the occult world but is now a born again Christian as captured in his book's title "Occult Grand Master Now in Christ". In terms of his testimony, his "first high initiation" happened at the age of seven (Uzorma, 2013:111). For him, becoming part of the occult was revealed through dreams whereby he used to see himself chatting with spirits which told him that he was their commander; and also told him that he was born to serve as a principal agent of invisible power but warned him not to disclose this (Uzorma, 2013:113). Subsequently, he went through several initiations to a point of earning the title he had until repentance.

Just like in the preceding testimonies, at some point he was actively involved in attacking Christians. As part of this assignment, he was given the role of what he calls “Astral Policeman” empowered to arrest Christians (Uzorma, 2013:174). In this role, he was expected to weaken ministers of the gospel which involved tactics such as infiltrating the Christian churches and posing as a born-again Christian. In order to be adequately empowered he had to read scripture from Genesis to Revelation a number of times. This enabled him to master the trickery of deceiving Christians.

3.6.2.4 Sinthumule Ramabulana

Born to a Christian family, Ramabulana’s parents are ordained pastors of the Apostolic Faith Mission Church (AFM) in South Africa (Ramabulana, 2018:ix). According to his testimony he accepted Jesus Christ while he was a teenager and was later ordained as pastor at AFM after completing his theological training offered at AFM.

With the proliferation of flamboyant “prophets” in South Africa, Ramabulana was lured into this lifestyle which led him to joining the occult. This all started when he established his ministry independent of the AFM and joined a network of these independent pastors whom he admired for their material possession (Ramabulana, 2018:22-33). After confiding to one of them about his desire to be successful in ministry, he was inducted on how the occult would give him powers, increase his church membership and where to go for such assistance. This culminated in his traveling to Nigeria to consult Okombo witches (Ramabulana 2018:47). There he officially joined the occult, received potions and charms that made him achieve all that he wanted. Thereafter, he also operated as a prophet as this is linked to the motifs of the prosperity gospel which culminated in the use of prophecy to make money. This affirms Mashau and Kgatle’s (2019:4) assertion that prosperity gospel preachers give prophecies with the rationale of appropriating benefits from the recipients of these prophecies. Although he had achieved his objective, he continued to travel the continent to acquire more powers in countries such as Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe.

After operating for a while as a false prophet he was arrested and imprisoned for allegedly getting involved in ritual murder. It was during his imprisonment in Kgoši Mampuru Prison, Pretoria, that he reconsidered his position and sought salvation from God (Ramabulana, 2018:161). This culminated in him being acquitted, and he subsequently rejoined the AFM where he was counselled, rehabilitated and readmitted to pastor a local church.

3.6.2.5 Surprise Sithole

Besides the above testimonies of those who were delivered from practising the occult is the testimony of the Mozambican charismatic pastor who was born to a family that was deep into the occult but through divine intervention he never practised it. In his book “Voice in the Night” Surprise Sithole (2012:13) confesses that involvement in the occult was hereditary in his family as his father inherited this practice from his grandfather, who even kept poisonous snakes that he used in rituals (2012:13). As a result of the family’s history with the occult, his parents wanted him to be initiated as traditional healer to a point of using coercion and bullying to try to achieve this.

The desperation of Surprise’s parents to get him into the occult was deliberate and well-orchestrated. He narrates that in several instances he experienced episodes of levitating in his “room as he tried to fall asleep” but when reporting this experience to his parents, they could not offer him any support. Instead, they responded by whipping him and beating drums trying to invoke the spirits as they believed that his levitation experience was a sign that he has been called to be a witchdoctor (Sithole, 2012:13).

The above ordeal ended at the age of fifteen when a voice commanded him to leave his parents’ homestead one night, otherwise he would die (Sithole, 2012:7). He obeyed this voice and left his country of origin and together with a friend crossed the border on foot into Malawi. After a few years of this separation from his family he learned that his parents were poisoned to death by a rival witchdoctor (Sithole, 2012:27). Since then until at the time of writing this research report, Surprise was in ministry with its headquarters in South Africa.

3.7 The situation in South Africa

This discussion of the situation in Africa has presented a broad overview of what is happening in the continent, and South Africa is not exempted from that. In this section, the report now presents a thematic account of the situation in South Africa. This structure is informed by the analysis of the situation in the country based on secondary data collected from academic literature.

3.7.1 Political context

Historically, the most highly vocalised and feared form of occult in South Africa, particularly among Black Africans in this country has been black witchcraft. Its prevalence and concomitant perceptions were heightened to a point of raising violent reactions from communities in the 1990s (Harnischfeger, 2000:99). It is during this period that a number of people suspected of involvement in it were executed and their properties burned (Baloyi, 2014:1; Geschiere, 2006a:219). This reached a crisis point in Limpopo culminating in the provincial government

appointing a Commission of Inquiry into Witchcraft Violence and Ritual Murders in March 1995, commonly known as the Ralushai Commission as it was chaired by Ralushai (Harnischfeger, 2000:99; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1999:285).

This violence was among the indigenous African people and had also triggered reactions from organisations involved in white witchcraft. One such organisation is the South African Pagan Rights Alliance (SAPRA). On its website, Damon Leff (2014:55) published an article condemning the witch-hunt. In this elaborate article, Leff claims that SAPRA members are self-proclaimed witches as they practise witchcraft, but he distances the organisation from African traditional beliefs and black magic, the practice which many of suspected witches were executed for.

The implications of the violence perpetrated against suspected witches in black communities in the 1990s had political connotations at the time. For Harnischfeger (2000:107), this violence somehow benefited the African National Congress (ANC) as he claims that “all forms of collective violence – be it arson attacks, school boycott, or plundering of shops – were regarded as part of a common struggle, for which the ANC claimed responsibility”. At a later stage, during the post-apartheid era the status of these ANC activists migrated to lawmakers as some of them were sworn into parliament. They then had to repel the same behaviour that they latently and deliberately used to mobilise political membership from these communities. Admittedly, this became a complex phenomenon to address. One of these complexities relates to the different views held by its electorate on the phenomenon.

3.7.2 Inconsistent views

Due to different beliefs, perceptions and opinions on the phenomenon, there is no universally accepted definition of witchcraft and the occult in South Africa. For instance, the execution and burning of people suspected of practising witchcraft highlighted above were informed by the conviction that witchcraft is conducted by an individual with harmful intent (Kiernan, 2006:12). This view is supported by Petrus’ (2011:4) observation that the African definition of witchcraft depicts it as essentially evil. While some people, like members of SAPRA confess to practise witchcraft but their version of witchcraft should ordinarily not be viewed as harmful because for them, it is a mere “mystery religion belonging to the new religious movement of Paganism” which they claim is contrary to the malevolent black magic (Leff, 2014:37:55).

In the political sphere, Harnischfeger (2000:100) narrates that pre-democracy legislators in South Africa perceived witchcraft as a merely imaginary offense and tried to impose this view on the black population as well. Regulation of this phenomenon through legislation seems to be still

problematic in this country even in the current dispensation. This is echoed by Peter Geschiere (2006b:219-220) who acknowledges that after the Ralushai Commission of Inquiry, a few initiatives were taken by the government of South Africa to deal with witchcraft. One of them was the voting into law the ways in which state officials can work together with the *inyangas*, of which its practical implications, he admits, are not yet clear (Geschiere, 2006a:220).

The inconsistent views highlighted in this section pertains to various definitions of witchcraft, and the political position of the government of the day. All these variable views contribute to the complexity and adaptability of the phenomenon in various cultural and political contexts. Another related complication is the prevalence of what has come to be termed occult economies which will be discussed below, under the socio-economic context of the occult in South Africa.

3.7.3 Socio-economic context

South Africa is one of the African countries that is synonymous with the concept of the occurrence of what has come to be known as occult economies. This phenomenon includes among other things, spiralling evidence of ritual murders, claims of some people turning other people into zombies that became rampant during the dawn of democracy (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1999:290). The term “occult economies” is used interchangeably with another term “witchcraft of wealth” (Geschiere, 2006b:50). Just like occult economies, the term witchcraft wealth is derived from the emergence of a new type of witches who no longer cannibalise their victims but transform them into zombies who have to work for them (Geschiere 2006b:50).

The emergence of the occult economies has resulted in the development of a cycle of witchcraft crimes in South Africa towards the end of twentieth century. Petrus (2011:4) postulates that during that era three forms of witchcraft related murders were prevalent, namely killing of suspected witches, ritual murders and “bewitchment” of others. In terms of the occult economies related crimes, people who believed in making money through this process murdered other humans for body parts, which they allegedly sold to some *inyangas*, who used them for many occult purposes. This is now commonly known as ritual murders. Then the next related crime involves communities retaliating by killing the ritual murderers.

3.7.4 Religious context

In its exposition of the complexity of the occult, this report highlights among other factors, incongruent positions regarding whether witchcraft should be regarded as a religion or not. Regardless of one’s position on the matter, it is evident that the occult has some influence on religion in South Africa. The influence is based on people’s fear of its powers and their reliance

on it for protection. This has contributed in it infiltrating the Christian faith in several ways. Three prevalent forms of interphase between witchcraft and the Christian faith have been established in this study. These are: contrasting positions on Christians' utilisation of its powers for protection; occultists' deliberate attempt to destroy the church as the body of Christ; and its catalytic effect on the perpetuation of false Christian churches.

On the contrasting perspectives Christians' reliance on powers of witchcraft for protection against evils, literature has discovered two trends in South Africa and elsewhere on the continent. Some Christians use powers of witchcraft for protection against evil (Semenya & Letsosa, 2013:3). Magezi (2016:5) expounds that African Independent Churches (AIC), particularly white garment churches or Zionists in South Africa blend prayer with the use of substances such as water and oil for healing and dealing with threats of witchcraft, which are also widely used by traditional diviners for the same purpose. These substances have always been used in Judeo-Christian faith traditions mainly for healing since ancient days but their simultaneous use by traditional diviners complicates their spiritual connotation. In the research's perspective this tendency culminates in religious syncretism between ATR and Christianity.

Contrary to the above tendencies, Baloyi (2014:5-6) elucidates that mainline churches predominantly view witchcraft as superstition, therefore they do nothing about it. His study also reveals that many Pentecostals believe in the power of prayer to protect people from witchcraft (Baloyi, 2014:6). However, it would be naïve to conclude that individual members of the same denomination hold the same beliefs about these issues as Marshall (2014:140) rightfully states that even if people are part of the same religious group their beliefs are diverse.

3.8 Theoretical interpretation of the occult in Africa

3.8.1 Socialisation

The term socialisation is defined in many ways. Berns (2007:612) defines it as a process through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills and character traits that are used in life through deliberate or spontaneous ways. For Camilleri and Malewska-Peyre (1997:43), it entails the totality of modifications produced in the individuals' relationships with their environment as a result of interaction with people. This process involves personality development of human beings in permanent interaction with their social and ecological living conditions as well as their physical and psychological disposition (Hurrelmann & Bauer, 2018:1). It may occur in environments or contexts such as at work, home, community, religious groupings, etc. In religion, it usually manifests as an interactive process through which social agents influence individuals' religious

beliefs and understandings, particularly if the source is a trusted and valued connection (Sherkat 2003:151). Regardless of one's conception of this concept, socialisation occurs through means such as imitation, identification, play, role playing, language acquisition, contact with books, media and other means of learning (Camilleri & Malewska-Peyre, 1997:44).

From the various definitions of socialisation, it is evident that it is one of many ways through which people are lured to the occult. This is supported by the summaries of testimonies of people who were involved or affected by the occult as presented in this chapter and the empirical data on the situation of the primary school learners in the previous chapter. Kanco's testimony discussed in this chapter attest to this assertion. Linked to the definition by Bens (2007:612), Kanco acquired occult "knowledge and skills through deliberate ways" imparted to him by his father (Kanco & Holliday, 2000:17,27). As stated by Sherkat (2003:151) that for it to happen in a religious environment, social agents particularly trusted ones play a role in the process, Kanco's father played the role of the trusted agent in socialising him to become a sorcerer. He had to "imitate and identify" with his fathers' practices in order to "develop the character" and practice of a sorcerer (Camilleri & Malewska-Peyre, 1997:44; Hurrelmann & Bauer, 2018:1). On his father's invitation he had to be initiated to perform mysterious acts and attend to occult ceremonies in order to be fully socialised to the occult (Kanco & Holliday, 2000:19-20,38).

The situation in Mkhuhlu also mirrors this form of socialisation. For instance, Mfitshane and Siku were initiated into the occult through invitation from fellow boys who were already involved in the occult (Nkuna, 2016:35-36). These experienced boys played the role of agents who invited them and imparted the understanding to them (Sherkat, 2003:151). Similarly, the researcher was socialised to becoming an assistant herbalist through an agent in a form of his grandmother (Nkuna, 2014b:16).

3.8.2 Social learning

As another way of socialisation, social learning plays a pivotal role in introducing primary school learners into the occult. There are various theories of social learning but for the context of this study the focus is on the work of Albert Bandura. In Bandura's (1971:2) perspective, social learning is about acquiring new patterns of behaviour through "direct experience or by observing the behaviour of others". In this study it was revealed that some learners entice others to join the occult by performing supernatural mysteries like levitating objects like pens. On observing these mysteries, those who are interested become curious and then want to try the trick. This culminates in their joining the occult in order to replicate the trickery among others. This is achieved through current practitioners creating an environment resembling an experiential world of observation,

trying out and evaluation (Pieterse, 1990:72). In this arrangement non-practitioners observe occultists performing their supernatural acts, become lured to trying them as well, and if from their evaluation find it fulfilling, they inquire about how to join.

The above psychological process confirms Bandura's (1971:5) presupposition that in the process of learning, most of the behaviours that people display are learned either deliberately or inadvertently through influence of examples or models. In doing so, learners imitate this behaviour. For Edinyang (2016:41) this imitation process has to do with the ability to replicate a behaviour or action. This usually has a model and the observer in place whereby the observer pays attention to the model, retains or remembers the behaviour or act of the model, replicates its, and ultimately becomes motivated to do it again in future (Edinyang, 2016:42).

As discussed under socialisation, the researcher and the two children who were cordially invited to participate in the occult learned the practice from existing practitioners. In this instance existing practitioners serve as models and these invitees assume the role of learners. In the researcher's instance, his grandmother was a model upon whom he depended to learn to practise whereas the two boys were influenced by the boys who invited them. The learners had to pay attention to their models and observe them perform the acts such as rituals and then replicated it. For instance, the researcher had to be taught to lead ancestral worship and perform rituals in those ceremonies at a young age (Nkuna, 2014b:20). In this way he replicated the act which he saw from his model. In so doing, social learning in the occult shares similar facets of social learning in other settings, namely observation and experiential learning. Similarly, Samuel Kanco who became a sorcerer on invitation from his father was also exposed to social learning as he had to observe experienced occultists performing mysterious acts which he learned and later performed (Kanco & Holliday, 2000:12).

3.8.3 Experiential learning

Related to social learning is the contribution of experiential learning in interpreting why the situation of the occult is happening among primary school learners. These two theories are not mutually exclusive. Through the social learning theory Bandura (1971:5) illustrates the role played by experience through observation in learning new behaviour or acts. Experiential learning emphasises learning by doing, not by observation. For Kolb (2015: xviii), experiential learning is learning from life experience, whereby direct experience and in-context action are the primary source of learning rather than thinking, analysis and academic knowledge.

Experiential learning as a theoretical interpretation of the occurrence of the occult among primary school learners is also applicable to children who are either cordially invited or inducted through cultural practices. In these two categories of how learners are recruited to the occult, it is evident that they do not use academic knowledge or analysis. In the cases of the researcher, his grandmother did not give him any written manual on how to perform rituals, but she only explained to him and showed him how to do it. As he physically did it, he replicated the experience up to a point of perfection. In all this, thinking became secondary to the actual act.

3.8.4 Bullying

The concept of “bullying” has been conceptualised globally as “acting in any way that threatens or hurts someone less powerful” (Rigby, 2003:584). This has been a prevalent trend in many cultures to get children to do as they are told by parents in the process of socialisation (James, 2004:3). From Rigby’s definition of bullying these tactics by parents are tantamount to bullying due to the imbalance of power between the two groups of human beings. Parents use power to threaten the powerless children.

According to Rigby (2003:584), bullying involves power imbalance between individuals whereby a powerful individual act in any way that threatens or hurts someone less powerful. In another definition, Sampson (2009:2) emphasises power imbalance whereby the victim cannot properly defend him/herself due to reasons such as, poor physical strength or less psychological resilience. In this regard this can happen between children or between a parent and a child. For instance, pre-adolescent primary school learners are likely to be psychologically vulnerable and physically smaller than their parents to be able to resist any forms of involuntary conscription to join the occult. The consequences of such power imbalance are illustrated in the case of Chido whose parents sent her for training to become a witchdoctor while simultaneously attending conventional school (Nkuna, 2016:84). While the caring teacher did not establish if she had consented to doing it, the psychological effect of her parents’ decision is reflected in her sporadic loss of consciousness ahead of writing examinations. As these episodes coincided with the school examinations they resulted in poor performance.

A similar incident of parents’ bullying a minor child to become a *sangoma* was covered in chapter two of this report, whereby Surprise Sithole (2012:13) was caused both physical and emotional hurt. According to the then young Sithole his parents used to beat drums and whipped him in an attempt to invoke the spirits in him. This form of tactics is prevalent in cultures where children are socialised to do as they are told (James, 2004:3). In such cultural milieu parents prescribe some kinds of behaviour and proscribe others. In this instance they prescribed the occult to the children.

Acts of bullying in line of involuntary conscription to the occult among peers were noted at a school where Kholiwe used to teach. Ryne, one of the learners involved the occult, was reported to the teacher after he used coercive wiles to initiate unsuspecting classmates to join his secret society (Nkuna, 2016:47). He went around the class bruising the ring finger of some of his classmates. When asked why he was doing that, he told them that those whom he has bruised are already wearing a supernatural ring that made them members of his society. Ryne's actions did not only threaten his peers' spiritual freedom, but he also inflicted physical pain on them. His peers are victims because they are less powerful on spiritual matters as they did not have occult powers before this forced initiation. All the four concepts used to interpret the reasons why primary school learners join the occult are externally focused. In other words, they seem to point to external human elements that lead to their joining the occult. Many findings presented in this report postulate that some learners are socialised by agents of the occult whereas others get inducted to join it voluntarily through social learning or experiential learning. On another end of the continuum others are bullied to the occult by agents. The following concept focuses on the consequences of the practitioner learner's conduct. These could also be regarded as a sign that illustrates that a learner is involved in the occult.

3.6.5 Delinquency

Delinquency is a generic term used to label a variety of petty offences committed by young individuals (Taylor & Workman, 2019:1). These may consist of antisocial behaviours which sometimes cause undue distress to other people. Gottfredson (2001:4) defines delinquency as a problem behaviour displayed by a minor, generally portrayed through inability or unwillingness to curb natural impulses to pursue pleasure or to relieve sources of irritation.

Based on these definitions, it is evident that some of the behaviours described in this report may constitute delinquency. In this instance delinquency does not explain why the occult is manifested among primary school learners but may be viewed as a signal that a learner could be involved in the occult. It should be noted that not all delinquent behaviour is fuelled by the occult. In this study, about two learners' behaviour has proven to be influenced by the occult. Ryne's bullying of other learners as discussed in the previous section serves as one example. Another example involves Mubabatsi's self-confessed tendency to deviate from praying in the name of Jesus but using the mark of the beast fits well under delinquency fuelled by the occult. His actions are not criminal but an offence that may cause undue distress to both Christian educators and learners. While the intention of his delinquent behaviour was not probed, it could be construed as an attempt to lure

other children to the occult. In this way open delinquency may also be used as a recruitment strategy.

While delinquency does not directly explain why the occult is manifested among primary school learners, it does so indirectly if examined in association with the rest of the theoretical concepts. From a social learning perspective, a practitioner learner's delinquent behaviour might look attractive to other learners. As they observe this learner committing petty offences, such as bullying others through verbal abuse, they might find it rewarding as such act demonstrates dominance and power. Some learners might then want to emulate him/her. In the process they could be led to seeking occult powers to be afforded equivalent influence.

3.9 Summary

The content of this chapter aimed to answer the question "how can the current situation of primary school children affected by the occult in the Mkhuhlu community be interpreted in the broader scope of how the occult manifest itself globally, on the African continent and in South Africa?" To answer this question, academic literature and published testimonies of former occult practitioners were used.

To clarify the meaning of the occult in the context of this study, definitions from both global academic scholars and African theologians were used. In addition, definitions by Pentecostal ministers were used. Academic literature provided an objective definition which revolves around people's access to hidden knowledge which is rooted in esotericism (Bogdan & Djurdjevic, 2013:1; Granholm, 2005:21). Definitions by Pentecostal Christian writers became specific about the fact that the occult is about accessing this knowledge from sources other than the Holy Spirit which is forbidden by the church (Kanco & Holliday, 2000:68; Martin *et al.*, 2008:21).

Literature also alludes that the occult is a complex phenomenon with multiple variants that are contextual. The multiplicity of its variants necessitated a discussion of the overview of key global players in esotericism. The complexity regarding lack of agreement in terms of its religiosity prompted the examination of its manifestation within the African context.

The discussion on the African context explored its influence on the African worldview. Adherents of pentecostal Christianity have been known to predominantly reject reliance on the occult for protection, instead those who were involved in it before repentance testify that it stands for subverting the Christian faith. This is shared among testimonies of former occultists covered in this chapter.

As part of the African continent, South Africa is no exception to the influence of the occult to the African worldview. An examination of the situation in the country reveal that within Christianity, there are various views on the use of occultic powers by believers. The analysis and interpretation of Ramabulana's testimony (2018:35-90) and the work of Magezi and Magezi (2017:3) reveal that this tendency results in religious syncretism.

The latter part of the chapter focused on theoretical interpretation of this complex phenomenon using concepts from social sciences. Work from different academics were used to define and describe each concept. Testimonies of former African occultists and the empirical description of the situation among learners from Mkhuhlu were tested against these concepts to answer the question of why this phenomenon is happening. The interpretation acknowledged the role of socialisation, social learning, experiential learning, bullying and delinquency in the furtherance of the occult in Africa. This task paved the way for the exegesis of Scripture to get God's position on the occult to determine what ought to happen when Christians come into contact with the situation. This will be covered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: NORMATIVE PRINCIPLES ABOUT THE OCCULT FROM SCRIPTURE

4.1 Introduction

Following the description of the manifestations of the occult among primary school learners in the Mkhuhlu community and how their educators respond to the situation in Chapter 2, the report provided a broader scope of the occult globally and in the African continent in Chapter 3. The empirical data in both chapters provided enough insight regarding the prevalence of occult practices globally and how it manifests itself among young children. In this chapter, the report examines Scripture to determine the normative principles that direct Christians' attitude and behaviour regarding the occult from Scripture. Since the study employs Osmer's theory of theological interpretation, this chapter seeks to answer the question of "what ought to be happening?" regarding the occult from the perspective of Scripture (Osmer, 2011:2).

To achieve this goal, the study mainly chose pericopes which describe the occult, God's position on it and what is expected of his contemporary Christian believers regarding it. This task is important as it attempts to discern God's reality for contemporary realities (Smith, 2010:107). In this regard, the book of Acts provides some of the situations whereby believers ministered to practitioners which set an example of how contemporary Christians could respond to the occult. The chapter excludes texts that show failures or successes of the occult in the Old Testament, such as in Exodus 7, 8 and 9 as well as in Daniel 2, 4 and 5 because of the limited scope of this study.

To address the normative task, the chapter starts by clarifying the methodology used to choose the pericopes and conducting the exegeses. Before analysing each pericope, the report provides a broad overview of the context of the Old Testament and that of the New Testament. The context section is concluded by describing the exegete's personal conviction regarding scripture and his Christian tradition and how these factors affect his exegesis. The pericopes of each Testament are analysed individually and concluded by a summary of applicable principles to the applicable Testament. The chapter then provides a synthesis of biblical principles towards the occult as drawn from both Old Testament and New Testament. The chapter is concluded by examining the contemporary significance of these principles. This is important as the researcher concurs with Smith (2008:175-176) who argues that biblical exegesis should be concluded by outlining the doctrinal and practical significance of the passage(s) to the modern context.

4.2 Methodology

To determine Christians' attitude and behaviour towards the occult, this report uses passages from both the Old Testament and New Testament. These Scriptures have been searched from academic articles on a similar subject and simultaneously searched from electronic Bible Gateway electronic application using keywords associated with different currents in the occult practices. The use of the word occult in the search of both categories of sources produced few results from academic literature and no results from Scripture. However, the use of the terms sorcery and witchcraft produced enough desired results from both sets of sources.

After getting a list of relevant pericopes, the researcher studied each passage to determine its relevance to the study, the context in which the text was written, the purpose and genre of the book, the literary purpose of the text during the occurrence and to ascertain its significance to contemporary Christianity. All these actions constitute the interpretation of Scripture which is founded in the hermeneutic that links the authoritative message of the text to the author's intention at the time of documenting it (Walton, 2017:4).

4.3 Context

4.3.1 The context of OT

The periscopes selected from the Old Testament presents an account of the Israelites while they were still under the Torah. God introduced the Torah after he had delivered them from Egypt. He used his servant Moses to introduce the Pentateuch to the Israelites while they were in the wilderness to serve as guidelines that prescribed how they should live in order to maintain his presence among them while simultaneously preserving his favour in their lives (Walton, 2017:105). The first generation of Israelites who experienced His deliverance power from slavery in Egypt witnessed countless signs and wonders which illustrated his presence. For instance, while they were still in the wilderness, He dwelled among them in the form of a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night (Ex 13:21), provided them with food in a supernatural way (Ex 16) and parted the waters of the Red Sea to enable them to cross and used these waters to destroy the Egyptians who pursued them (Ex 14:21).

Similarly, the later generations also experienced his presence in so many ways. For instance, their kings used to consult Him and received an instant response when they were supposed to go to war, and He used to speak to them through his prophets. All these were evidence of his supreme authority over creation which would ordinarily make them put their trust in Him, not the occult. While the books of the Old Testament were written by different authors, its main audience

was the Israelites. However, for Christians, the revelation of God to the Israelites had the authority to them then and in a perpetual logic to the contemporary generation of believers (Walton, 2017:4). Similarly, the Old Testament continues to present an expression of the character of God even to this generation of believers (DeRouchie, 2017:433).

The Israelites of the Old Testament were influenced by the religions of their neighbours or hosts. For instance, while in Egypt, they were exposed to various religions whose practices were despicable before the eyes of the Lord, e.g. magic, fortune-telling etc (Ex 7, 8 & 9; Gn 41). The later generation came into contact with and dwelled among nations which were involved in various forms of pagan religions, such as idol worship and human sacrifices (1 Ki 11:7; 2 Ki 23:10; Jr 32:35; Lv 18:21). All these influenced their attitude towards the occult. For this reason, God had to put a law in place to sanctify his chosen nation. Violation of the law against the occult was punishable by death. This system changed in the New Testament.

4.3.2 The context of the NT

The selected text of the New Testament presents a different milieu to that which is described above. While the above milieu presents the environment which was predominantly, if not exclusively applicable to the covenant nation, the New Testament environment applies to all nations. Its text provides an account of situations that occurred after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They present the works of the Holy Spirit against the occult through the first-generation apostles as described in the book of Acts and despise the occult through a message sent to the seven churches in Asia Minor as covered in the book of Revelation and to the Galatian churches as contained in Galatians 5. The apostles in Acts have lived with Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry, witnessed his works and received first-hand instructions face to face with Him. They, therefore, had the zeal to deal with the occult through the authority of the Holy Spirit who abode in them.

The New Testament era was characterised by spreading the gospel to nations further afield beyond the Promised Land. These nations were not subjected to the precepts of the Torah as they had no covenant with Yahweh but came to know Him through the new commandment of love as introduced through Jesus Christ in the gospels (Mt 22:37-38; Lk 10:27; Mk 12:30-31). Consequently, occult practices were not just prevalent amongst these nations but were integral to their faith to a point of being protected by their authorities as demonstrated in Acts 16 whereby the apostles were imprisoned after casting out a spirit of divination from a person.

Apostles in the New Testament proclaimed the gospel against the occult and use the authority of the Holy Spirit to set people from its practices as reflected in Acts 16. Unlike the Old Testament which applied the law that wanted to rid the nation of occult practitioners, the New Testament milieu promoted setting practitioners free from the bondage of the occult. In this way, the weapons used by the New Testament apostles to deal with occult practitioners were not carnal but spiritual (2 Cor 10:4).

4.3.3 Researcher's position

As this study has been conducted within the pentecostal tradition, the term Christian in this chapter relates exclusively to pentecostal Christianity. For the purpose of this study, this tradition should be construed to refer to Christians who exclusively believe in the existence of one Triune God and vehemently distance Christianity from any occult practices (Semenya & Setsosa, 2012:7). Furthermore, they believe that through the Holy Spirit, God still uses contemporary Christians to perform miracles and healings.

The use of the Old Testament and New Testament periscopes to determine “what ought to happen” in response to the occult by contemporary Pentecostal Christians is informed by the researcher's pentecostal convictions. In his conviction, he concurs with Smith (2008:170) that the “Bible should be interpreted literally according to the normal rules of communication and its text has one meaning which may have many valid applications but does not have multiple meanings”. Likewise, he acknowledges that while the truths of Scriptures are never-changing, witnessing to them happens in ever-changing human contexts (Ott *et al.*, 2010:266). This realisation informs how the researcher later synthesises the principles to be applied by Pentecostal Christians in the contemporary environment. He argues that Pentecostal Christian witnessing in the contemporary milieu requires the church to be both faithful to Jesus and appropriate to the people that it serves (Niemandt, 2014:42). This means adherence to the original message of the gospel while being mindful of some contemporary practices that could be a hindrance to it. The next sections provide an exegesis of relevant pericopes to show the original messages from Scripture regarding the occult which will be used as the basis for formulating a contemporary response later in the chapter.

4.4 Old Testament pericopes

4.4.1 Exodus 22:18

This book is part of the Torah and presents God's revelation to the Israelites, their deliverance from bondage in Egypt and subsequent development of his covenant with them in the desert

(Bible Gateway, 2016). After delivering the Israelites from bondage in Egypt, God had to put in place a legal system that would govern his covenant with them. The system outlines the laws which the Jews should obey and what should be done to those who violate them. In Exodus 22:18, Scripture captures the law which mandates the Jews to exterminate any person who practises sorcery. While it is written in the feminine as it states that “you shall not permit a sorceress to live”, it commands them to eliminate this occult practice amongst themselves. As it was common under the law, this capital punishment supposedly entailed Jews stoning to death anybody who practised sorcery or witchcraft.

From the severity of the punishment, God wanted to send a strong message to the nation of Israel that they were supposed to hear from Him, not from any contrary spirits. Semenya and Letsosa (2012:3) argue that any form of occult practice is the use of supernatural powers that are hostile to the power of God. This is very true as God was always with them and leading them throughout the wilderness appearing in a form of a cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night. He was also communicating to them instantly through his servant Moses.

Furthermore, any form of occult practice contradicts God's love for his people as its practitioners use it to cause harm to a neighbour and their property (Semenya & Letsosa, 2012:3). This is in a direct contraction of God's desire for his people to live in peace with each other. Therefore, God deemed capital punishment to be an appropriate way to deal with such vile people.

All of the above confirm that God is a jealous God who does not want those who put their trust in Him to show allegiance to other gods or spirits (Ex 20:3; Obiwuru, 2019:7). As witchcraft and sorcery are meant to cause harm to fellow humans, God finds it detestable before his eyes as it causes pain and suffering (Semenya & Letsosa, 2012:3). For this reason, occultists had to be removed from the face of the earth.

4.4.2 Deuteronomy 18:10 -12

Deuteronomy is also part of the Pentateuch which from its content could be rightfully said was written just before the Israelites entered Canaan (Bible Gateway, 2016). Its message is predominantly an appeal to the Israelites on how they should obey the Torah upon occupation of the promised land. For instance, in this passage, it warns them of a myriad of wicked customs which they will experience there. This entails a number of occult practices which include, witchcraft, sorcery, soothsaying, interpretation of omens, putting of spells and consulting mediums, spiritists or the dead as practices that those who trust in Him should not do. As the

Israelites entered the promised land they were expected to exterminate nations that they found there in order not to be lured to these practices, in addition to eliminating competition over access to the resources of the land.

As it is with many religions, the occult then and now also has practices that involve blood sacrifice. At the time of writing this law, God was fully aware of the human sacrifice that was practised by the inhabitants of the promised land. He then commanded the Israelites not sacrifice their children as this practice falls outside of his covenant with them. It is clear that as the source of life God only commanded them to offer animal sacrifice but forbade them from sacrificing fellow humans. If someone sacrifices his/her child, he/she is directly challenging the authority of the One who gave that life. It is not just displeasing before Him but appealing to contrary spirits who want to destroy humanity.

This periscope implies that God does not take kindly to any Christian who appeases spirits in any form including sacrificing humans. It further affirms that God is displeased with those who undermine his sovereignty and power by consulting mediums and spirits. He put this law in place to sanctify the Jews because He is holy, He wants everyone who abides in Him to be holy.

4.4.3 Leviticus 20:6

Leviticus is part of the five books of the Torah in which God instructs them how they should live as a chosen people (Bible Gateway, 2016). In this Scripture, God outlines to Moses specific penalties for violating the law. These penalties applied to the Israelites and strangers who dwelled in Israel (Lv 20:1). In this chapter, Yahweh starts by sounding a strong warning to those who dedicate their descendants to Molech. He tells Moses that such an offence attracts a death sentence whereby the people of the land would stone the offender to death. In verse 6, He proclaims a similar penalty when proclaims that He will cut off from his people anybody who turns to mediums and familiar spirits for any counsel. He equates such behaviour to prostitution. For this reason, it is clear that He cements his position as the only legitimate deity his people should look up to for any solution.

The allegory of a prostitute in this passage indicates that Yahweh is a jealous God who does not want to share his glory with any other spirit being. As it is commonplace that a prostitute sleeps with numerous men or women for financial gain, God saw no reason for Israelites to seek favour from other gods or spirit-beings because He is their provider. He had demonstrated this role of a provider over years while they were in the wilderness where He fed them with manna from heaven

(Ex 16). For Him, overlooking this historical relationship, it is a serious offence that attracted a death penalty.

4.4.4 Micah 5:12

The book of Micah belongs to a genre of Prophecy and its message proclaims God's judgment and deliverance (Bible Gateway, 2016). In this chapter, Micah prophesies about the coming of the Messiah. In verse 12 he proclaims God's saving power from evil. Through this prophecy, God also comes out strongly against the occult and says He will cut off any form of sorcery and soothsaying from among his people. He sternly promises to destroy these forms of the occult because He was fully aware that if He allowed occult practitioners to dwell among his people, many of them would be lured to them. Therefore, He had to relentlessly warn them against such practices and weed those practitioners out of the land.

The use of the word destroy in the passage shows that God is more powerful than the occult to a point of eradicating it. It also shows that ridding the nation of the occult is non-negotiable to Him. He plans to deal with it in ways that will even kill the knowledge of its practice such as soothsaying or casting spells.

4.4.5 1 Samuel 28:1–25

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel belong to the genre of narrative under the groupings of the prophets, and their content presents a period through which God introduced the monarchy which took over from judges to lead the nation (Bible Gateway, 2016). In this pericope, the book provides an account of its first king, Saul who was at this point overwhelmed by the enemy and became afraid to a point of consulting one of the remaining mediums in the land. For he had driven spiritists out of the land in honour of the word of the Lord but ashamedly turned to this one after he had sinned against the Lord. He went to consult this medium with a request to invoke Samuel's spirit for consultation.

Saul was aware that his actions were sinful and shameful before the eyes of the Lord and his followers. Consequently, he had to conceal his identity and consult this spiritist at night. Under this self-deception, he asked the spiritist to call the spirit of Samuel which he consulted. To his dismay, this spirit gave him bad news by confirming that God had departed from him and had stripped him of his kingdom because of disobedience. Among other things that the spirit told him was that he and his sons would be killed in battle with the Philistines, which came to pass.

While Saul was ordained by God to lead Israel, he became disobedient to a point of consulting a medium after the Lord had forsaken him. He became one example of people who were removed from the face of the earth after forsaking the way of the truth and relied on diabolical practices. What happened to him implies that God indiscriminately deals with those who disobey his commands unless they repent. Saul did not show any repentance even after he was confronted by the spiritist and the spirit during the consultation.

4.4.6 2 Kings 21:6

1 and 2 Kings belong to the groupings of prophets under the genre of narrative and present the history of the disobedient generation of nations of Israel and Judah, their wicked kings and how God used foreign kingdoms to punish them (Bible Gateway, 2016). In this passage, Scripture provides an encounter of a king who emulated Saul by provoking God to anger by practising the occult (2 Ki 21:6). Manasseh, king of Judah did most of the things that the Torah prohibits regarding the occult. The passage cites several sins that he committed and relevant to this study is the sacrificing of his son to Molech, practising soothsaying, the use of witchcraft and consulting spirits and mediums.

The Lord was enraged by this conduct. Since it was the king and a person in charge of the nation who committed these sins, the Lord punished the entire nation. Through his prophets, He proclaimed his punishment as to forsake them and deliver them into the hands of their enemies (2 Ki 21:14). It was not uncommon for the Lord to punish the entire nation when the king sinned against Him. For instance, He delivered the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines after Saul had sinned against Him (1 Sm 28) and in later years He sent a plague to kill seventy thousand people after David had taken a census of the people of Israel without his authorisation (1 Chr 21).

This Scripture passage illustrates that God expects all people to obey his commands regardless of their rank and stature in society because He is sovereign and above all creation. By punishing the entire nation due to the inequities of the king, God is sending a strong message to those who violate his commands in line of any sin including occult practices.

4.4.7 2 Kings 16:3

Just like Manasseh, Ahaz son of Jotham, king of Judah who reigned in Jerusalem for sixteen years also provoked God to anger through occult practices. In this passage, Scripture says that he did wrong before the eyes of the Lord and of relevance to this study is that he made his son to pass through the fire like the gentile nations which the Lord drove out of the promised land.

In addition to practising pagan religion, Ahaz also took silver and gold which were in the house of the Lord and in the king's collections and handed them to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria in exchange of his protection from the kings of Syria and Israel, respectively (2 Ki 16:7-8). This was another sign that he disregarded the Lord's commandments and had completely forsaken his faith in Yahweh. Consequently, he acceded to the demands of the king of Assyria to remove the Sabbath pavilion from the temple as well as the king's outer entrance from the temple.

Ahaz's behaviour reveals that when a person forsakes the ways of the Lord, chances are that he/she will sink deep into multiple sins as his belief in the occult and foreign gods also made him seek protection from a foreign king.

4.4.8 2 Kings 17:17

Hoshea son of Elah reigned in Israel during the same period that Ahaz was king of Judah. Just like Ahaz his counterparty in Judah, he also did evil before the eyes of the Lord. Some of the sins that they committed included his children to go through the fire, practising witchcraft and soothsaying (2 Ki 17:17). As a form of punishment that the Lord usually applied to disobedient kings, He handed him to the hand of the king of Assyria. This king dispossessed the Israelites of Samaria and settled other nations in its cities and the Lord also brought lions which killed several Israelites during the same period (2 Ki 17:24-26).

Just like prior pericopes discussed in this section, this Scripture reveals that the Lord detests occult practices and consistently punished those who submitted to it. As this disobedience was led by their kings, He had to punish the entire nation. As a loving God, He always had to send a prophet to ask them to repent. In this instance, they stiffened their necks and continued to do evil before his eyes, regardless of the severity of the punishment and the word that He delivered through his priest.

4.5 Principles from the Old Testament

4.5.1 Occult practices violate God's commands

The exegesis of the relevant Old Testament texts reveals that God has put in place laws that forbids his people to put their trust in the occult. The Bible even goes at length to specify what these occult practices entail, e.g. soothsaying, divination, consulting spirits of the dead and mediums, sorcery and witchcraft (Dt 18:10; Sm 15:23; 2 Ki 17:17; 2 Ki 21:6). Scripture had to specify these practices to ensure that people do not play ignorant but are well informed. As the

Lord has commanded not to engage in these practices, He even prescribed the penalty applicable to the violation of this command.

4.5.2 Occult practices attracted capital punishment

God takes violation of the command against occult practices in a very serious light. He prescribed that individuals who are found to be practising the occult should be stoned to death. Unfortunately, its practices pervaded the nation and were also adopted by some of the Old Testament kings. While the Lord could exterminate the entire nation, He chose to hand them to pagan kings who took them into exile. While in exile they were subjected to harsh treatment by these foreign kings. All these forms of penalties signify that God views the occult as wicked behaviour which deserves severe punishment.

4.5.3 The occult is wicked

Scripture condemns the occult like many other sins. In many passages where Scripture condemns it, it lists it along with other sins which God finds very detestable, such as idolatry and appeasing foreign gods by making their children go through the fire (2 Ki 21:6; 2 Chr 33:6; 2 Ki 17:17). As he is a jealous God, any act of submission to other deities or reliance on other spirit beings provokes Him to anger. This is understandable because the Israelites are his chosen nation through which He wanted to bless other nations (Gn 22:18). Through them, He desires to attract the rest of the nations to his lovingkindness. Therefore, when the Israelites prostituted themselves to foreign gods, they undermined this long-term objective. Consequently, they attracted harsh punishment from Him as described in the previous section. These included physical separation from this life or the promised land.

4.5.4 It alienates people from God

As occult practices are wicked, they alienated God's people from their Creator. Each time the Israelites sinned against God, He forsook them and allowed them to be taken into captivity as discussed above. This means that those who are involved in the occult cannot fellowship with God. In some instances, they even lose reverence to Him. For instance, in 2 Kings 16, King Ahaz took silver and gold from the Temple of God to use them to pay homage to a foreign king. His hope was then more in an earthly king than in the Lord who put him onto that throne. Instead of wanting to hear from God's prophets, Ahaz believed in occult powers for solutions in his life. This is contrary to God's plan which requires his people to be holy because He Himself is holy (Lv 19:2).

4.5.5 It makes people unholy

God wants his people to be consecrated from the rest. He desires to see them being holy. For this reason, people who were found to be practising the occult among the Israelites were supposed to be killed in order to rid the nation of this sin. If the entire nation was found to be involved in the occult and other sinful behaviour they were supposed to be taken away from the Holy Land and only came back after they had repented. This signifies that God does not want to share his glory with the devil.

4.6 New Testament pericopes

4.6.1 Acts 8:9-25

The book of Acts is generally viewed as belonging to the genre of autobiography or narrative, and it provides the history of how the gospel had spread from Jerusalem to the Roman Empire and how it simultaneously transitioned from its Jewish roots to the Gentile world (Bible Gateway, 2016). The spread of the gospel to the Gentile world effectively started after the great persecution following the stoning to death of Stephen in Acts 7. As the remaining apostles ran for their lives, they spread the gospel wherever they went.

As the apostles flee prosecution, Philip came across an established sorcerer in Samaria. Acts 8:9 describes that this occultist Simon surprised many people in the city by his sorcery. However, he accepted the gospel and was baptised during Philip's mission in the city. After his repentance, he joined Philip in his mission and witnessed signs and wonders as the apostles ministered to people in the area. He was astonished by how new believers received the Holy Spirit through laying on of hands by apostles and aspired to do the same. On seeing this, he asked the apostles to give him these powers and even pledged to pay for it, but Peter rebuked him strongly.

Simon's situation presents several points regarding Christian faith concerning the occult. Unlike in the Old Testament whereby God emphasised that those who practise the occult should be exterminated or driven out of the land, in this chapter the people reveal God's saving power to an occultist. Furthermore, it also reveals the commitment of a devout apostle who stands by God's command against the occult and refuses to assist Simon to acquire from the Holy Spirit in a corrupt manner. It is also evident that the power of the Holy Spirit is greater than that of spirits used in the occult as this is reflected by how Simon marvelled at the signs and wonders performed by the Holy Spirit through the apostles.

4.6.2 Acts 13:6-12

In the previous periscope, the report presented the story of a sorcerer who gave his life to Christ and joined the apostles in their mission. Acts 13 presents a contrary experience with an occult practitioner. When Paul and Barnabas were ministering in the island of Paphos, they met with Jewish sorcerer and false prophet called Bar-Jesus. It seems as if he was an influential person in the area as Scripture says that he was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. Contrary to Simon who received the gospel, Bar-Jesus wanted to prevent Sergius to receive it after the latter had sent for the two apostles to come and preach to him. Bar-Jesus tried to prevent them from seeing Sergius. This angered Paul who then proclaimed that he would lose his sight. Even after losing his sight he never repented, instead, he looked for someone to lead him the hand while Sergius believed after seeing what happened and listening to the teaching of the gospel.

The above account teaches Christians that in witnessing among occult practitioners, they might also be met with serious resistance. However, amid such resistance other people may give their lives to Christ. It further illustrates that the power of the Holy Spirit is greater than that of the spirits used by occultists as demonstrated in the situation of Bar-Jesus.

4.6.3 Acts 16:16-20

In this passage, Paul and Silas came into contact with a servant girl who was possessed by the spirit of divination which her masters used to make money out of her fortune-telling. She kind of interfered with their mission by following them around for many days telling people who these apostles were in the eyes of God and why they came to the area. Although all that she was saying about them was true, this annoyed Paul as a man of faith who knew that God detests the occult. He then commanded the spirit to leave the girl. The spirit departed from her instantly and their masters were displeased with this. This culminated in the two apostles hauled before the magistrate and ultimately sent to prison.

From this story, it is evident that taking the gospel to occultists may have negative ramifications. While it is good for the kingdom of God to set people free from the occult, those who benefit from it might respond with violence or lawsuit. The girl's deliverance was certainly aligned to God's will as she was freed from demonic possession and exploitation by her masters. However, her masters were displeased with it. Furthermore, as the apostles were incarcerated for this act, they never lost their faith in Jesus Christ. The passage also teaches Christians not to collaborate with the occult in their mission. While the evil spirit in the slave girl proclaimed the truth about these apostles' mission and their standing with God, it was fruitless before the eyes of the Lord because he finds divination detestable. Therefore, the apostles did not collaborate with her in their mission.

4.6.4 Acts 19:11-19

Paul spent time in Ephesus furthering the gospel among the people there. Several signs and wonders happened there and many people who used to practise magic repented and burned their magic books in full view of the community. One of the reasons why these magicians believed is that exorcists and sons of the priests tried to use the name of Jesus to cast out demons. They used wicked wiles applied in the occult to try and invoke the Holy Spirit or the name of Jesus only to provoke some violent reaction from unclean spirits who possessed people. For instance, in verses 14-16 when the sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest attempted to exorcise him in the name of the Jesus whom Paul preached, the evil spirits in him made the man assault them. After the above incident, both Jews and Greeks who heard about or witnessed this scene believed. In verse 19, Scripture says magicians brought their manuals and burned them in front of all to see.

Lessons from this passage denote that while ministering among people who believe in the occult, Christians may come into contact with those who do not want to accept the gospel but want to use its power for fame. In some instances, they may face dire consequences for doing that. Furthermore, the passage reveals that when occultists give their lives to Christ, Christians should work with them to publicly denounce the occult to a point of destroying their charms and books in the open, if necessary so that others may also believe. The attack on Sceva's sons by the demon-possessed man for using the name of Jesus to exorcise him is a sign that God detests fellowship between his name and the occult.

4.6.5 Revelation 9:20-21

The apocalyptic book of Revelation belongs to the genre of prophecy or allegory and its original audience was the seven churches in western Asia Minor (Bible Gateway, 2016). It gives hope to believers that they should persevere during the upcoming end times' persecution as God will overcome all evil.

Revelation 9 discusses three plagues which tormented humankind to a point of even wiping out a third of the population. In verse 20, it says those who were not exterminated by these plagues did not repent of their sin. Verse 21 lists murder, sorcery, theft and sexual immorality as some of the sins that they did not repent from.

The above-mentioned sins seem to be some of the seductive inequities that people find appealing and difficult to let go. This is evident of the escalating theft in a form of corruption in some governments of this world; sexual immorality in a form of people moving away from conventional

sexual relations that are ordained by God; and all forms of ruthless murders and seeking riches through occult means.

Sorcery has been cited in this passage just as an example of forms of occult practices which are despicable in the eyes of God. Verses 20 to 21 emphasise the need to repent from these sins. Emphasis on repentance in this regard denotes that unlike in Old Testament times when those who were practising the occult were supposed to be exterminated or removed from society by fellow humans, during the New Testament era God wants to see them converted to him. The consequences of non-repentance are narrated in the next pericope.

4.6.6 Revelation 21:8

In this chapter, John narrates about the new cosmos which he terms the New Jerusalem. He describes the splendour of this new heaven and earth where their inhabitants will experience no death, sorrow or any form of pain. In the same vein, he explains how he who sat on the throne told him that he will make all things new for those who persevered to inherit but warns unbelievers that they were destined to spend eternity in the lake of fire. In the same passage, the pericope cites several sins that will send people to this calamity of the lake of fire, such as murder, sexual immorality, sorcery and idolatry.

The inclusion of sorcery amongst the sins cited in this passage illustrates the Lord's disapproval of occult practices. It highlights that in his kingdom, God does not have room for occult practitioners. It means that occult practitioners are doing this in direct contravention of God's precepts. Therefore, they are committing a sin that is punishable by eternal death.

4.6.7 Revelation 22:15

The chapter starts with an exposition of the vision of a river of life which flows from the throne of God, and the tree of life whose leaves will bring healing to nations. In verse 14 it specifies that only those who obey his commands shall have access to this tree of life and the New Jerusalem. While believers will enter the city through the gates, verse 15 clarifies that there will be those who will be left out. It specifically cites sorcerers, murderers, idolaters, sexually immoral and liars among those who will be left out.

As cited in Revelation 21:8, Scripture includes sorcery amongst the sins that will make those who commit them not to spend eternity with God in his New Jerusalem. Likewise, these sinners will suffer the second death which is eternal torment in the lake of fire.

4.6.8 Galatians 5:19-21

This epistle by apostle Paul belongs to the didactic genre written to the churches which Paul planted in Galatia (Bible Gateway, 2016). Its overall theme is about dispelling the false gospel of circumcision and maintenance of the law of Moses for salvation as preached by some believers in the area after he had left. In this chapter, Paul also uses the opportunity to warn the Galatian believers of the consequences of sin, including occult practices. He lumps occult practices together with sins such as idolatry, murder, drunkenness and heresies as works whose practitioners will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Just like in Revelation, the epistle to the Galatians affirms the sinfulness of the occult and how it will prevent its adherents from spending eternity with God. In verse 21, Paul reveals that he had previously warned them about these sins which shows the severity of these transgressions. The concomitant punishment elucidates God's level of condemnation of these sins. Consequently, if Christians want to spend eternity with him, they should abide by all of his precepts, including resisting involvement with the occult.

4.7 Principles from the New Testament

4.7.1 Occult practices do not belong to Christianity

The New Testament pericopes presented a direct continuation of the Old Testament account of God's condemnation of the occult. As Jesus Christ came not to destroy the Torah but to fulfil it (Mt 5:7), it is not surprising that the New Testament continues to condemn the occult (Rv 21:8; Gl 5:19-21). As Christians have found their identity in Jesus Christ, they should also aspire to spend eternity with Him. If they do, they are expected to abide by his precepts which include distancing themselves from occult practices.

As New Testament Scripture also condemns occult practices among Christian believers, it means that these practices are forbidden in the Christian faith. While those who practice it are not subjected to physical harm as it was done in Old Testament times, Scripture promises them eternal death in the lake of fire (Rv 21:8).

4.7.2 Non-repentance from occult practices leads to eternal death

In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul took some time to teach the Galatian believers about the dangers of sin, inclusive of practising the occult. Paul was equally not ignorant of the diabolical effects of the occult to the people. This, he openly expressed in Galatians 3:1 when he blamed it for the pervasion of sin and false gospel among Galatian believers.

This assumption by Paul points to the evil nature of the occult. Consequently, those who engage in this evil practice will face the wrath of the Lord. As discussed in the previous section, if they do not repent Scripture says that they will face eternal torment in the lake of fire.

The reality of the occult in the contemporary environment culminates in some confessed Christians seeking protection from other occult practices like consulting witchdoctors (Semenya & Letsosa, 2013:3). The Bible condemns this practice since Jesus Christ has given Christians authority over the power of the enemy and to drive out demons (Lk 10:19; Mk 16:17).

4.7.3 Christians have authority over the occult

In the book of Acts, the apostles demonstrated that Christians have authority over the occult. In Acts 13:18 Paul, in the name of Jesus drove out the spirit of divination from the slave girl and in Acts 8:9, he struck Bar-Jesus with blindness after the latter tried to subvert the preaching of the gospel to Sergius Paulus.

The above events bear testimony to the truth that through the name of Jesus Christ, Christians have authority over the occult. This truth demonstrates that, regardless of the diabolical powers found in the occult, Christians should not approach occultists for protection. It further affirms that the name of Jesus is greater than occult powers.

4.7.4 It is deceptive

The book of Acts provides at least two situations of how occult practices may be used to deceive people. The divination spirit in the servant girl described in Acts 16 had accurate information about the apostle's purpose. Through the mouth of this girl, the spirit said that Paul and Silas were servants of God who were there to spread the message of salvation. This knowledge did not come from God as Yahweh cannot collaborate with the occult, but the revelation came from the devil. The accuracy of this divination illustrates that those who do not know the biblical truth about the occult are likely to be deceived to believe that the spirit in the slave girl was from God. If not discerned, such deception may result in people following the ways of the occult because of the knowledge it brings to humankind. However, with the knowledge of God's precept against the occult, people are then able to know that no matter how accurate and mysterious the supernatural abilities of the occult are, it is not of God.

The knowledge derived from the occult is also deceptive because it makes people venerate the practitioners and the latter also viewing themselves in high regard. For instance, before his repentance Simon of Samaria perceived himself as someone great during his days as a sorcerer

(Ac 8:9). This perception by practitioners may also contribute to their trying to subvert the preaching of the gospel. Elymas or Bar-Jesus in Acts 13 tried to use his influence on Sergius Paulus to turn him away from the faith. This kind of action is based on the practitioners and adherents of the occult believing that the occult is very powerful. Unfortunately, this is deceptive as Scripture has illustrated that the name of Jesus is more powerful than the occult.

4.7.5 It breeds pride and greed

The situation of Bar-Jesus in Acts 13 depicts pride in sorcery. His act of trying to prevent the proconsul from receiving the gospel may be deduced to mean that he did not want to lose his influence on Sergius Paulus. As a sorcerer and a false prophet who also used the name Bar-Jesus, viewed himself as the son of the Jesus or descendant of a saviour. Consequently, anyone who tried to convert the proconsul to another faith was interfering with his influence on Sergius

The case of Simon of Samaria who wanted to procure powers to perform signs and wonders from the apostles even after he had accepted the gospel as described in Acts 8:19 signifies that fame, greed and pride is prevalent among practitioners. He had the desire to perform supernatural wonders because he was used to people venerating him for a long time (Ac 8:11). Chances are that had one of the apostles acceded to his request, he could have used the gifts to extend his fame and make money from it as he could have also used money to get those powers.

A typical case of greed has been witnessed in the case of the slave girl whereby her masters regarded her as a resource to generate income through her soothsaying services (Ac 16:19). Therefore, they were displeased with her deliverance as it meant a loss of income for them. This implies that in some instances if not all, practising the occult is for making money in addition to fame. While from the perspective of the Christian faith setting someone free from possession by unclean spirits is victory, the slave girl's masters viewed it as loss of income. Chances are that many people who want to get out of the occult of this nature may also hesitate to do so because of the resultant financial loss.

4.8 Synthesis of biblical principles/truths

4.8.1 The occult practice is sinful

Both Old Testament and New Testament condemn the occult as sinful and detestable before the eyes of God. Any form of desire to seek supernatural knowledge and/or protection outside the confines of the Holy Spirit is associated with the occult (Semenya & Letsosa, 2012:3). Scripture includes among others soothsaying, divination, witchcraft and sorcery along with other sins as an

abomination before the Lord (Dt 18:10, Lv 19:26). Consequently, anybody who practises them is sinning against the Triune God.

4.8.2 It alienates humankind from God

As any occult practice is sinful, it separates humankind from God. This alienation is revealed in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, God says that people who are found guilty of this sin should be exterminated from his people (Ex 22:18) and the New Testament states that such people will not spend eternity with him (Rv 22:15). The case of Bar-Jesus in the book of Acts illustrates that this alienation is self-afflicted and may be chronic. He refused the gospel and tried to prevent Sergius to receive it as well, and he even stiffened his neck after losing his sight as a consequence. This means that God wants those who commit this sin to be removed from his sight unless they repent.

4.8.3 It invites severe punishment

Alienation from God as a result of this sin attracts God's punishment. In Old Testament time, those found guilty of this sin were supposed to be killed (Ex 22:18) while the New Testament states that they will face eternal death in a lake of fire (Rv 21:18). These forms of punishment are very severe both in the physical and spiritual. Through this punishment, God is sending a stern warning against this practice among humankind that He does not tolerate it.

4.8.4 It is provocative to God

The use of capital punishment in dealing with the occult in the Old Testament and the promise of eternal death in the New Testament denotes that it is detestable before God. Just like adultery, idolatry and any other sins, occult practices provoke God to anger. In the Old Testament, he used to send his prophets to warn people against such practices and the resultant punishment was evident in a form of allowing foreign kings to capture his people. In New Testament time he used his apostles to evangelise amongst the population with occult practitioners and occasionally demonstrated his authority over the occult through his apostles as it is demonstrated in the situation of Bar-Jesus in the book of Acts.

4.8.5 It breeds other evil

Involvement in occult practices usually contributes to the pervasion of other sins. In the Old Testament, when the Jewish nation was involved in occult practices, they usually blended it with other sinful behaviour such as idol worship, sexual immorality and traumatising their families by making their children go through the fire to appease Molech. This could also include defaming

God by giving away God's sacred treasures to pagan kings as king Ahaz did in 2 Kings 16:8. In the New Testament times, practitioners were greedy, full of pride, deceptive and in some instances tried to prevent the preaching of the gospel as demonstrated in the few situations cited in the book of Acts.

4.9 Contemporary significance

4.9.1 Any occult practice is still not part of the Christian faith

Scripture revealed that God detests the occult with all his heart and therefore put heavy penalty on those who will commit this sin. Over the ages, He has warned people against it. In the Old Testament, Scripture expounds God's commandments against occult practices and his resultant actions against those who practice it. The New Testament continues on a similar note by condemning it and spelling out that those who commit this sin will not inherit the kingdom of God but will spend eternity in hell (Rv 21:8). The consistent condemnation of the occult in both Old Testament and New Testament is a clear indication that God does not want Christians to partake in occult practices.

The above conclusion deduces that Christians should refrain from occult practices and should preach against it. Unlike in the Old Testament where God used prophets to warn people against occult practices and to call his people to repentance, He now expects us to partner with Him to spread the biblical truth about it as the New Testament apostles did.

4.9.2 Christians have authority over the occult

The Old Testament enlists practices that are associated with the occult and prescribes how the Israelites should treat those found guilty of this sin. The New Testament does not provide a prescript on how contemporary Christians should deal with those who practice it within their communities. However, it presents cases from which Christians can deduce the required action. The action that Paul took against the spirit of divination in the slave girl in Acts 16 illustrates that in contemporary Christianity, believers should deal with the spirit in the person and not the physical person. It also affirms that indeed Christ has given Christians authority over unclean spirits as proclaimed in the gospels (Lk 10:19; Mk 16:17-19).

Unlike in the Old Testament whereby God commanded the Israelites to stone the offenders to death, New Testament cautions Christians from using physical force in dealing with adversity, especially those of spiritual nature. Scripture teaches Christians that their weapons are not carnal (2 Cor 10:14) because they are not wrestling against flesh and blood but against spirit beings

(Eph 6:12). This implies that their authority is in the spirit and should be applied in that realm. Paul in Acts 16:18 provides an example of how such authority is used.

4.9.3 Belief in the occult blocks people's destiny

God's purpose is to see people serving Him and no other gods (Ex 20:3). Those who obey his commands will spend eternity with Him but those who sin, including occult practices, are destined to spend the life after death in the lake of fire (Rv 21:8). This means that a person who practices the occult and those who believe and submit to its powers block God's purpose in their lives and will not spend eternity with Him.

4.9.4 Scripture teaches Christians to be consecrated

The Old Testament teaches Israelites to separate themselves from the occult and the New Testament affirms this by teaching Christians that those who believe in the occult will spend eternity in hell. Therefore, Christians are expected to distance themselves from the occult in order to spend eternity with the Lord in heaven. Their God is holy, therefore, they are also expected to be holy.

In the context of this study, Christians living amongst adherents of the African Traditional Religions should be wary of copying some of their practices, such as consulting spirits of the dead, participating in divination and veneration of ancestors. Ancestral worship among Africans could be viewed as a cultural heritage, meanwhile, it is detestable before the eyes of the Lord. This implies that even in the context of African culture, Christians should abide by the Lord's commandment of not having any other god but Yahweh.

4.9.5 Christians should discern spirits

Discernment of spirits is also very important in this regard. The case of Bar-Jesus in Acts 13 presents a compelling need for Christians to use discernment in ministry. As described in the exegesis of this pericope, this occultist used sorcery and posed as a prophet to a point of using the name Bar-Jesus. The name Bar-Jesus can be loosely translated to mean "son of Jesus". His actual standing with God was revealed when he tried to obstruct the apostles to minister unto the proconsul. The researcher has observed that some occult practitioners among people of African descent pose as Pentecostal preachers meanwhile they rely on occult powers to lure people into their gatherings (Ramabulana 2018:57).

The situation of the slave girl serves as another example of why the discernment of spirits is important. The spirit in the slave girl made her proclaim the truth about the purpose of God in the

apostles' ministry. Some believers could have collaborated with her in their mission, but the apostles knew that God detests the occult. consequently, they had to set this girl free from demon possession. With the promotion of interfaith dialogue in contemporary society, Christians should be wary of compromising biblical precepts for dealing with the occult in favour of complying with concepts of interfaith dialogue.

4.9.6 They should minister contextually

The exegesis of the periscopes based on the Old Testament books reveal that the text was at that point addressed to a society that was expected to belong to one faith or religion. Besides, the laws governing Israelites at that time were based on their faith in one God. The New Testament periscopes present situations which happened at a time when the gospel was taken outside of Israel to other nations. Consequently, in Acts 16 after Paul had cast out the evil spirit which gave the servant girl occult abilities of divination, the apostles landed in jail for that. This means that occult practices were not viewed as an abomination in that country, therefore those who interfered with the practices were to face consequences.

From the lesson learnt about the encounter with the slave girl in Acts 16, it is quite evident that while Christians have a mandate to exercise their authority over contrary spirits, they have to understand the context of the situation in which they intervene. Factors that they have to consider include among others their obligation in the context of their relationship with God through Jesus Christ, the regulatory milieu of the country/community in relation to issues of faith and ethical conditions in ministering to certain groups like children.

Concomitant to awareness on regulatory environmental issues are ethical considerations. The issue of the slave girl in Acts 16 provides an example of some ethical issues that Christians may face in their mission. While the age of this slave girl is unknown, the consequences faced by the apostles infer that contemporary Christians may also face similar challenges when witnessing to minor children who have been driven to the occult by adults who want to benefit from their practices. For instance, a minor child who has been lured to becoming a sangoma might be willing to accept the gospel but remain in the occult for fear of rejection from the members of her household who are still responsible for her sustenance. However, this does not mean that Christians should not preach the gospel to such children. With the freedom of religion in the country and the absence of a legal framework on preaching to minor children, it means Christians may preach to minor children without their parents' consent.

4.10 Summary

This chapter used Scripture to provide God's position on the occult and spelt out the punishment reserved for those who practice it. Based on the results of the exegesis, the chapter also articulated the contemporary significance of biblical principles to modern-day Christianity.

It is worth noting that Scripture provides God's constant stance on this issue with little variance on how his people should respond to its practitioners between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Throughout Scripture adherence to the occult or its practices has been presented as sinful before God. In the Old Testament Israelites were expected to kill anybody who was found practising it while in the New Testament, believers used the authority in the name of Jesus Christ to cast out the evil spirit who gave powers to the practitioners. In the Old Testament, God used prophets to ask Jews to repent from the occult and failure to do that resulted in his sending them to captivity. In the New Testament, God used the apostles to preach the gospel among adherents of the occult, and those who repented became part of the team that preached the gospel. In the New Testament Scripture does clarify that those who do not repent will spend eternity in hell.

The biblical truth about the occult is important to contemporary Christians. Based on the principles outlined in this chapter, it is evident that Christians should distance themselves from any occult practices and should condemn it in their gospel. In the process of sharing, they should present the gospel of salvation with love to practitioners and exert the authority of Christ against the spirit in the practitioners, not in the physical person. With evidence from the book of Acts, Christians should have confidence that the Holy Spirit is more powerful than the spirits who operate in the lives of the practitioners.

CHAPTER 5: THEOLOGICAL GUIDELINES FOR CARING FOR AFFECTED LEARNERS

5.1 Introduction

The descriptive empirical task has unveiled the reality of occult amongst primary school learners in Mkhuhlu which was confirmed to be prevalent among other African children. It also described how Christian educators care for affected learners in this area. The prevalence of occult practices among primary school learners in Africa has been confirmed by the interpretive task which used published testimonies of Christians and academic literature to prove and interpret this assertion. The previous chapter used Scripture to determine normative principles that guide how Christians should perceive and respond to the situation of the occult according to God's precepts. These principles form an integral part of the theological guidelines which are formulated in this chapter. For this reason, they constitute what Pieterse (2012:106) terms a coherent structure of normative pronouncements derived from the gospel of Jesus Christ and its theological tradition.

The guidelines proposed in this have been developed following Osmer's framework of conducting a pragmatic task as a last stage in his model of theological reflection. It uses findings from the first three tasks to map out what he terms a pragmatic strategy which answers the question "how might we respond?" to the situation of the occult among primary school learners. The pragmatic task is about forming an action plan to appropriately shape the situation in a desirable manner (Osmer, 2011:2). The researcher acknowledges that Osmer's pragmatic task serves as a key guide to developing the theological guidelines that will help to shape the educators' caring practices. However, he equally acknowledges its deficiencies that have to be clarified before presenting the guidelines in this chapter. For this reason, the next section reflects on Osmer's pragmatic task to clarify the minor deviation from Osmer's original scope of the pragmatic task. This is followed by a discussion on the justification of the minor deviation. The latter part of this chapter will outline the proposed caring process, caring principles, systems and institutional arrangements.

5.2 Reflection on Osmer's pragmatic strategy

Osmer's pragmatic strategy comprises open-ended action, guiding models and rules of art guidelines that must be implemented in a non-mechanistic manner (Osmer, 2005:xvi). He suggests that the strategy must be open-ended because the context within which situations occur is dynamic and their concomitant individual circumstances are unique (Osmer, 2005:xvi).

Consequently, it could be defined as a high-level blueprint of how the caring interventions could be shaped to fully embody the normative principles discussed in the previous chapter.

Although this blueprint is crafted with open-endedness, it is guided by rules of art. The use of rules of art in this regard indicates that the pragmatic task is deliberate, and goal driven. For Osmer (2008:176), these rules of art are specific guidelines about how to carry out particular actions or practices. This means that whereas the actual actions might not be implemented in a mechanistic way, the guidelines on how to execute them should be specific and deliberate in order to achieve the desired goal. In this report the rules of art are termed principles, and the open-ended guide comprises a flexible five-stage caring process. Both principles and process suggested in this chapter are informed by the normative principles which are also blended with the outcome of the descriptive empirical task.

In his illustration of the application of this task in his classical model of practical theological interpretation, Osmer uses the concept of “leading change” within the context of the congregation (Smith, 2010:109). In so doing, he discusses three forms of leadership and dwells in detail on servant leadership and open systems model of organisation change (Smith, 2010:109). All these points were not necessarily relevant to this study therefore, the report has only applied aspects of Osmer’s pragmatic task framework that are relevant to the situation and left out what is not applicable. These applicable elements are limited to the principle of open-endedness and the rules of art as described in the previous paragraphs. To clarify the deviation, the report preambles the elements of the pragmatic task by discussing the justification of this deviation, followed by a synthesis of the role of grounded theory in strategy formulation.

5.3 Justification of the approach

As stated in the previous section, the literature study reveals that Osmer’s illustration of the pragmatic task is largely dedicated to crafting a strategic response to congregational challenges using an open-ended guideline. The rules of art applied in the process are therefore limited to examining and/or inculcating specific leadership competencies. In the context of this study, Osmer’s approach to undertaking the pragmatic task is therefore mainly valuable in providing a generic theoretical framework for developing a pragmatic strategy. The researcher concurs with Smith (2010:113) who postulates that the pragmatic task should have been designed in a way that serves as a framework for developing a theological theory of action based on the foundational tasks. This would enable the model to present a framework that would flow from empirical assessment to theoretical reflection that culminates in crafting a well-informed praxis. In Smith’s (2010:113) words, by so doing the task would be closing the circle of reflection from praxis through

theory and back to praxis. In simple language, this process entails a movement from practice to reflection on practice and back to practice (Swinton & Mowat, 2016:25-26).

In order to harness the advantages of Osmer's good definition of pragmatic strategy and the proposal made by Smith (2010:113), the report uses the findings from the three foundational tasks to determine an action plan to address the situation. In other words, the report develops a hybrid of Osmer's original intent of the pragmatic task and Smith's proposal on closing the circle of reflection from praxis to theory and back to praxis. It is worth noting that as the researcher is of strong pentecostal orientation, he holds Scripture in high regard. For him, the primary objective of the pragmatic task should be to discern practical Godly actions required to commend and defend the gospel, while simultaneously translating the Christian faith into action throughout the caregiving process. Scripture referencing and emphasis on evangelism are therefore inevitably dominant in this pragmatic task.

5.4 Caring principles

5.4.1 Discernment

Discernment has been identified as an integral element of the caring process as it empowers caregivers to take appropriate steps to care for the affected learners. The report has already highlighted this point in the exegesis of the situation of the slave girl in Acts 16 and that of the false prophet, Bar-Jesus in Acts 13 in the previous chapter. By discernment this report means the construction of theological and ethical norms through which to assess, guide and reform some dimensions in contemporary Christian praxis (Osmer, 2005:284). The development and implementation of theological and ethical norms are necessary in this situation for several reasons. For instance, they provide a framework that helps caregivers to ascertain when to apply Christian practices to address the situation or determine the need for referring the affected learner to another caregiver or institution.

Osmer (2005:284-285) proposes some ways in which discernment should be practised, namely judgement, discerning of spirits and guidance from the Holy Spirit, just to cite a few. In applying judgment, the caregiver uses readily available instruments such as established rules, policies, legislation etc. that guide human action under specific circumstances. For instance, the referral of a minor child to helping agencies requires the consent and participation of his/her legal guardian or parent and school policies also provide a guide on how to deal with acts of delinquency among learners. Such instruments are readily available to the caregiver to exploit. Therefore, caregivers must be resourceful in order to apply discernment in full.

Seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit entails a range of truth-seeking mechanisms which include among others, emotions, rational debate and consensus formation, consultation of Scripture and Christian tradition, and creative imagination (Osmer, 2005:285). This implies that it is not enough to be resourceful without hearing from the Holy Spirit. Caregivers should be ultrasensitive to the Holy Spirit and read Scripture regularly to be able to hear from God during the caring process. In the absence of discernment, they are likely to use intuition or own abilities to determine the appropriate caring action. In the caregiving process emotions or feelings regarding what action to take may be emanating either from their physical self or from the Spirit. Useful as they may be, they should be confirmed through Scripture. If they are consistent with what Scripture says, then they are informed by the Spirit of God.

5.4.2 Scripture-grounded

The Bible is a body of texts which is recognised as having authority for Christian thinking (McGrath, 2011:120). Although open to several interpretations, there is widespread agreement within the Christian tradition that Scripture is the most fundamental source of theological reflection (McGrath, 2018:1). As a key source of theological interpretation, caregivers should derive their wisdom and revelation from Scripture. Consequently, their caring endeavours should be derived from the revelation of God's mission as reflected in the Scripture.

The centrality of Scripture in the caring endeavour should be viewed in terms of its role in the Christian faith. As eloquently put by McGrath (2011:120), the Bible is not just an object of formal academic inquiry in theology, but it is a book used in public worship and privately by Christians. It is read and expounded within the context of public worship and is vital to individual Christians' meditation and devotion. This has been common practice since the Old Testament era as reflected in Joshua 1:8-9, where God commanded Joshua to meditate on Scripture in order to be prosperous in his ministry.

Its use in the caregiving endeavour should serve at least two purposes. Firstly, it serves as a source of inspiration to motivate caregivers and care recipients to seek God's intervention and sacred wisdom to handle the situation. Secondly, this revelation should be transferred to affected learners and their families. With the use of Scripture in achieving this, caregivers should commend salvation and adherence to its precepts which should be part of the caring conversation. As part of this process, caregivers should find ways of orientating care seekers to inculcate private Scripture reading, studying and meditating. Through this practice, care seekers will also learn to adapt their lives to alignment with biblical precepts. In addition, they should be encouraged to

participate in public worship where Scripture is properly used and applied in the lives of the congregants.

Based on his pentecostal conviction and personal encounter with the occult, the researcher suggests that caring meetings or sessions should not only include prayer and counselling but should include Scripture reading and/or reference. Through this approach, caregivers would be demonstrating the saving power of God and his interest in human history and affairs. This advantage is reflected in McGrath's (2011:130) extrapolation of narrative theology as he highlights that it "affirms that God meets us in history and speaks to us as one who has been involved in history". In this way Scripture bears testimony to what caregivers profess. It witnesses to what the Triune God has been doing to his people since time immemorial and may also encourage care seekers to gain confidence in that they will find refuge in the Christian faith.

5.4.3 Christ-centredness

In their caring endeavours, caregivers should do so with the purpose of extoling Christ. They should promote Him among care recipients as someone who is point of departure of the Christian faith and the main part of its content (McGrath, 2018:70). Care recipients should be made aware that He was there in the beginning (Jn 1:1-4); He came to the earth He created through natural birth (Is 7:14; Lk 2:7); He died and rose again (1 Cor 15:4); and was taken in a cloud to heaven (Ac 1:9). In all this He came to set the captives free (Is 61:1).

Christ-centredness obligates caregivers to witness to all of the above and not to seek personal glory. More importantly, this should be done out of love for the receivers (Van der Walt, 2017:3). It further implies that caregiving should be done in the name of Jesus Christ with the motive to participating in his mission of setting people free from all sorts of captivity. As consistently cited in this report, the caregiving mission should aim at commending the gospel. For Van der Walt (2017:3), Christians are obligated to share the gospel with everyone because Christian faith is a gift given by God in his revelation. As this gospel revolves around Jesus Christ, caregiving should be in his name.

As Jesus Christ is love, Christ-centred intervention should be done with love even in cases where there is suspicion or evidence of malice in the situation. For instance, in the case of Zondiwe's unprecedented shouting for help owing to her allegedly seeing the image of her paternal grandmother as discussed in chapter two, it is not for the caregiver to accuse the grandmother of witchcraft. As this image of the woman only appears before Zondiwe in the midst of everyone, this is a sign of clear spiritual attack that has to be repelled through weapons of warfare (2 Cor

10:04). Scripture counsels that Christians are not warring against flesh and blood but against spirits and their leaders in the heavenly places (Eph 6:12). The caregiver should confine this intervention to the limits of spiritual warfare blended with counselling to the child.

5.4.4 Contextualisation

In caring for affected learners, contextualisation means that caregivers should always read the context before providing the caring service and continue to assess it even during the caring process. In simple terms the concept of contextualisation refers to balancing faithfulness to God and meaningfulness to the other (Hesselgrave & Rommen, 2000:200). This means that in their caregiving endeavour, caregivers should remember to act in ways that are pleasing to God while bringing evident relief to the care seekers within their context. However, this does not mean succumbing to the pressure of the context at the expense of the mission of the Triune God.

In this regard, contextualisation implies that in caring for affected children caregivers need to understand the background of the learner in order to discern the appropriate intervention and its scope. For instance, learners who are socialised into the occult by family members need to know about the saving power of the gospel and make a choice whether to accept it or not, but the message must be crafted in a way that speaks gently and humbly to them. More importantly, the message should also be shared with their families for the intervention to be sustainable.

Furthermore, it means commending the gospel respectfully in action and words, fully mindful of the hearer's personal and social circumstances. Respect in this regard means proclaiming the gospel without condemning the hearer's adherence to other faiths and talking to the deliverance power of the gospel without being derogatory to other faiths. In addition to respect, contextualisation means that each situation should be given individual attention to avoid generalisation. Understanding of the care seeker's socio-cultural and personal circumstances is of great significance in this regard to determine opportunities and threats emanating from them. As new believers ordinarily enter into God's presence with their cultural identities, likewise care seekers look for help within their current circumstances (Moynagh, 2012:183). Some of those socio-cultural conditions might be conducive to the caring process.

5.4.5 Individuality

In his description of the pragmatic task, Osmer (2005: xvi) suggests that the open-ended guidelines should be developed in a non-prescriptive manner because circumstances are unique.

This implies that caregivers should not approach situations with preconceived ideas, but should open up to engage with the prevailing circumstances in order to discern the appropriate action.

Treating every situation individually means that caregivers should not generalise in their response. They have to treat every case hermeneutically as opposed to using objective ontology. Hermeneutics is the flexible art of interpreting contexts and situations whereas objective ontology is concerned with scientific facts (Meylahn, 2012:5). Treating every situation hermeneutically means that in their response, caregivers should continuously interpret the situation during the caring process and consistently avoid imposing any preconceived solutions.

In achieving the above, hermeneutical interpretation will require caregivers to refrain from applying the classical modern worldview whereby the care seeker is viewed as an object of study. Instead they should recognise the individuality of the care seeker's physical and social circumstances as an interactive reflection on what has to be done with the care seeker. In other words, caregiving responses could be different even in cases of children who come from families that promote the same practices among their children. For instance, two families might have committed to sending their children for initiation to become diviners, but the children's caring needs might be different. One learner might be eager to accept Christ and completely do away with the family's ambition, while the other one might find seeking occult powers for healing and divination appealing to him/her. Therefore, the caregiver's involvement in these two scenarios will certainly differ. The book of Acts provides two examples of how the apostles dealt with two different occult practitioners. In Samaria they preached to Simon, and upon his acceptance of the gospel, they allowed him to join them in mission (Ac 9:13); but when they came into contact with Elymus who tried to prevent them from preaching to Sergius Paulus, Paul rebuked him and demonstrated the power of the Holy Spirit over the occult by striking him with blindness (Ac 13:8-12).

Based on the above examples, it is evident that the principle of individuality also acknowledges the role of care seeker's consent. Therefore, understanding the context alone is not enough, but should be taken forward to individuality level. Context is about the prevailing circumstances around the environment in which the care seeker finds him/herself, whereas, individuality is about drilling deeply into the person's innate wishes and unique experiences beyond his/her overall social and physical milieu.

5.4.6 Right to privacy

Care seekers' right to privacy should be integral to the caring process. While privacy is a broad term which is used to refer to instances such as the condition of physical separation, the right to control one's intimacies of life, and the right for oneself to determine the extent to which his/her personal information should be disseminated (Glenn, 2003:3); in this context it exclusively refers to the latter description. For the purpose of this study the right to privacy is used interchangeably with confidentiality to refer to the extent to which the care seekers' personal information or life story should be shared and disseminated.

As caregiving in this context encompasses the utilisation of Christian practices, it is not uncommon for Christians to share testimonies in private and in public. Some of these testimonies entail sensitive and private matters which would ordinarily be treated with discretion. Testimonies are shared for the purpose of witnessing to God's deliverance or healing power, confirmation of spiritual gifts and so forth. In the absence of caregiving principles in the current caregiving dispensation, caregivers are likely to be tempted to disseminate sensitive information recklessly. This principle, like all others should be well defined, communicated and shared adequately among caregivers.

In its definition and application, caregivers should use standards set out in existing helping professions' best practice regime to determine the levels of confidentiality and how they apply it to their specific caring milieu. The common levels of confidentiality which caregivers might find useful in their caring milieu are relative and absolute confidentiality. As a caring team, caregivers might share information during referrals amongst themselves. In this instance, confidentiality is relative in the sense that confidential information is shared among caregivers for caregiving purposes. Absolute confidentiality in the caring process should entail non-disclosure of the personal identity of care seekers and their families in sharing testimonies, lessons learned, reports or conference presentations. As caregiving is about offering help, it should be viewed in terms of giving. In this regard, Christ guided that when someone gives, the left hand should not know about what the right hand has offered (Matt 6:3). Therefore, principled caregiving should refrain from making public announcements or sharing of caregiving details.

5.4.7 Evangelism

Caregiving is another way to evangelisation in a school environment and should be done in ways that elevates Christ about gifts received from the Holy Spirit. Even under this context, the ultimate objective of evangelisms should still be "to bring or announce good news" as derived from the Greek verb *euangelizomai* (Abraham, 1989:41; Bosch, 1991:409; Shorter, 1994:4). This announcement of the good news should be done to invite both learners and educators to the

Christian faith using verbal and non-verbal means. Non-verbal should be reflected in the caregivers' Christian lifestyle which bear witness to God's mysteries in the world (Conner, 2011:99). This could include a prayerful lifestyle even under the restrictive contemporary environment and an attitude to caregiving without discrimination to people of other faiths. This is likely to give confidence and hope to learners during trying times and this has been demonstrated in Sonia and Kholiwe's environments whereby learners occasionally approach them for assistance when facing challenges with the occult at school.

Verbal evangelism should be integral to caregiving. Coupled with non-verbal ways, evangelism should involve deliberate verbal invitation of people of other faith into the Christian community of faith (Bevans & Schroeder, 2004:360). Foundational to this invitation is proclamation which should be done with humility and with understanding of the social and personal circumstances of the hearer in mind (Abraham, 1989:172). Disregard for respect and humility in proclamation may constitute arrogance in the hearer's perception, thereby undermining the evangelism (Scott & Wright, 2015:98). All these recommendations are important in the caregiving process from the evangelism perspective because evangelism is built on a relationship between the evangeliser and the hearer. As Shorter (1994:4) puts it, people do not join the Christian faith by spontaneous personal reflection or introspection but by hearing the gospel from an evangeliser engaging in an interpersonal communication process. In this regard, caregiving is an interpersonal communication process which is meant to bring relief to the care seeker for the glory of God. Therefore, if it is done in respect of the other, it would be a great witness to the saving power of the Trinitarian God.

5.5 Caring process

The results of this study reveal that caregivers have been knowingly or unwittingly following a logical process flow in executing their interventions. From the researcher's observation this process comprises the following stages: Proactivity, Encounter, Response, Support and Exit (PERSE). This caring process is not meant to be a cycle of stages but a chain of milestones that start by Christian caregivers continually engaging in *proactive* Christian practices to be on alert. These Christian practices take place throughout the caring process and are meant to enable caregivers to properly respond to any *encounter*. The encounter triggers a *response* which may usually lead to offering caring *support* to affected learners. All interventions have a beginning and an end, therefore, the end of the caring process is marked by the caregiver's *exit* from the caring journey. Below is a full description of each stage.

5.5.1 Proactivity

Caregivers have established both proactive and reactive approaches in handling the occult among learners. All proactive activities constitute preventative and emergency preparedness activities. These entail all Christian practices that are used to counter potential encounters with the occult even before they occur. These include morning devotions with learners, fellowship among Christian educators, prayer and fasting, Scripture reading and sharing of testimonies. Those who participate in this proactive behaviour do so in fulfilment of 1 Peter 5:7-9. All the activity during the proactivity stage aims at actively casting out caregivers' and learner' anxiety about the situation to God, as they are aware that this situation is prowling like a roaring lion seeking learners to devour. Therefore, through these actions they work out their faith in the Triune God.

One of the distinct Christian practices which starts at the proactivity stage and remains crucial throughout the caring process is prayer and fasting. All caregivers who participated in this study are known for believing in the power of these practices because they are adherents of the Christian faith with a strong pentecostal orientation. They view prayer and fasting as inevitable in handling the occult because Christ has counselled that some of the unclean spirits can only be cast out through prayer and fasting (Mt 17:21). The power of this practice was witnessed by Sonia and the researcher in the caring process of their child, Shukurani who had been tormented by unclean spirits with evidence of occultic abilities for more than a decade. It was through consistent prayer and fasting that the two caregivers were able to realise the Triune God's deliverance power in the life of Shukurani.

Another crucial element of the proactive behaviour is the use of the full armour of God as described in Ephesians 6:13-17, which emphasises the application of salvation, faith and reading of Scripture in the process of standing firm against evil. In this regard, equipping the learners requires caregivers to proclaim the message of salvation through Jesus Christ as the point of entry, emphasise the role of faith in overcoming any situation, and back these claims with Scripture reference and simultaneously encouraging them to meditate on it even in their private time.

In addition to the above, caregivers have used fellowship with one another as another important proactive step towards handling the occult. They occasionally fellowship among themselves and spend a brief moment of devotion with learners. Their belief in this practice is informed by Jesus Christ's counsel that where two or more gather in his name, He is amongst them (Mt 18:20). It is evident in the findings under caring interventions that this practice enables caregivers to stand together against the situation. While they use fellowship as a proactive practice, its benefits are

also realised during the encounter stage whereby they tap into each other's spiritual gifts and administrative responsibilities to care for affected learners. For instance, in Chido's case, while some group members were interceding, someone confronted the unclean spirit head on while another one called the parent or legal guardian to come to the school. This coordinated effort is in fulfilment of Jesus Christ's emphasis on unity in spiritual warfare. In Mark 3:25, He uses an allegory of a divided house to emphasise that if Christians stand together in his name, they should be able to successfully cast out the devils.

With evidence from caregivers backed by Scripture, it is apparent that Christian practices such as a proactive stance against the powers of the occult among learners is crucial in the caring process. It should be noted that the primary objective and emphasis of the proactive intervention strategy should be on acclaiming the gospel and equipping learners to stand against any form of adversity in the spirit, rather than a witch-hunt of signs of the occult among learners. In other words, they should be regarded as acts of the Christian faith that are true to the nature and actions of the Triune God (Swinton & Mowat, 2016:24). This implies that they should be undertaken within the broader eschatological perspective in the Christian faith, i.e. to win souls for the purpose of their inheriting the kingdom of God.

5.5.2 Encounter

The Christian practices undertaken during the previous stage are predominantly meant to prevent the situation to occur or to curb its proliferation or eradicate it in an event that it occurred. The encounter stage comes to pass in an event that a situation or episode related to the occult comes to pass. In this context, the term, encounter, refers to the occurrence of a situation or episode involving the occult. An encounter can occur in at least one of the following ways: a caregiver witnessing a situation or episode involving occult acts, or a caregiver receiving a report or referral of such a case which he/she did not witness. The episode or situation could involve an occultist performing something in view of others with the intention to afflict or entice his/her audience. It could also involve a victim going through an unpleasant experience fuelled by practitioners or supernatural occurrences, such as hallucination or physical harm afflicted by another person in the name of the occult.

From the above scenarios, it is evident that there are several ways in which an encounter may occur. This may happen abruptly or progressively. The abrupt nature of the encounter involves a sudden occurrence of trickery by the practitioner or rapid spiritual attack on a learner. The case of Gerald levitating underwear in class and Chido's sudden loss of consciousness ahead of sitting

for the exam are two examples of an abrupt encounter involving a practitioner and/or victim. An encounter that occurs progressively may involve a practitioner confessing his/her involvement in the occult either for his/her deliverance or to recruit others. This could also involve an affected learner reporting an off-site incident. It is progressive in the sense that it is not incidental but premeditated.

All these different scenarios of the encounter with the occult illustrate that there is no one-size-fits-all in dealing with the situation. Each situation must be handled contextually. As the encounter comes to pass, caregivers should apply discernment before responding to it. In this regard, the key elements of discernment relevant to this situation are testing of the spirits, judgment and seeking guidance from Holy Spirit (Osmer, 2005:284-285). For Osmer, judgment relates to the use of existing rules or roles to determine required action. Testing of spirits entails refraining from taking hasty decisions based on insights and ideas as they could be based on human self-deception or rooted in the seductive power of the evil. Guidance from the Holy Spirit is about actively seeking his guidance in decision making using truth-seeking mechanisms such as Scripture and gut feelings.

From this discussion of the encounter stage, one is inclined to say that the complexity of the situation of the occult calls for a deep act of discernment. Evidently each situation or episode is unique, therefore each one must be discerned before responding to it regardless of its potential similarities with previous ones. Application of discernment has been evident in the findings of this study. Before praying for Zondiwe in the school library, Sonia had to determine whether to do it alone or not and Kathy also had to refer Sassa to Rachel instead of laying hands on her during school hours. Their actions were not in negation of their God-ordained authority described in Mark 16:17-18 but they were just treading carefully as Paul warns Timothy not to rush into laying hands on people (2 Tm 5:22). These complexities then raise a question on how to respond to the encounter.

5.5.3 Response

The first two stages of the caring process have laid a foundation for the formulation and execution of appropriate responses applicable to different circumstances. While the discussion on the first two stages of the caring process might suggest some detailed elaboration before responding to a situation, in fact responding to a situation might take a few minutes. The timing and nature of the response are all circumstantial and the role played by the two foundational stages is profound. Starting with the latter, Christian practices undertaken at the proactivity stage help caregivers to be sensitive in the Spirit and to discern properly. For instance, Paul in Acts 16 discerned that the

spirit in the slave girl is not of God. Therefore, he had to cast it out. The moment caregivers face an encounter they are able to act swiftly if they are consistent with their Christian practices as Paul caught up with this girl while he was busy with evangelism.

A swift and well-discerned response to an encounter is also influenced by its nature. For instance, with the consistent application of Christian practices, an emergency involving Chido's collapsing before sitting for her exam paper as discussed in chapter two, was discerned within the context of proactivity, i.e. consistent use of Christian practices. The caregiver who experienced the episode first-hand discerned the necessity of taking her to the sick bay, called on all available members of the informal network and rendered a team intervention. In the team intervention, respective roles were assigned appropriately to ensure that the learner's legal guardian is called to the school while Christian practices of prayer and intercession were in progress. In the process one of the caregivers discerned that she should exercise her authority as stipulated in Mark 16:17 and exercised by Paul in the situation of the slave girl in Acts 16.

The above case is an example of an episode that prompted the manifestation of at least three stages of the caring process within an hour. It prompted the use of Christian practices which are predominantly at the proactivity stage after an encounter came to pass. During the same period, the caregivers used judgment to call the parent, discernment of spirits to know that Chido was under spiritual attack and confronted the unclean spirit in her, and all these activities were in response to the encounter.

It would be inappropriate to conclude that the above caring process mutates from one stage to the next within an hour because it was an emergency. Even in non-emergency circumstances, the caring process may also be rolled out swiftly. For instance, when Faida approached Sonia with a prayer request to be set free from torments by an unclean spirit during the night hours a caring process had to start immediately. Faida was not at risk on the spot but Sonia discerned a feeling of trauma in the life of Faida. She immediately asked her a few questions to understand the situation, entered into a caring mode by applying prayer to set her free in the presence of another learner. In this way the intervention to move from encounter to response did not last even half an hour. The response was swift because the caregiver deemed it safe to respond through prayer as this was a felt need from the learner.

While prayer is the dominant response to caregiving, referral is another widely used response. Referral occurs if a caregiver deems him/herself not suitable to deal with the situation or it may be applied as dictated by the prevailing circumstances. Furthermore, referral may be intra-

institutional, inter-institutional or interpersonal. Intra-institutional entails internal referral from one caregiver to another in the same school. Inter-institutional referral mainly involves referral from an educator to a pastor of a local church and interpersonal referral involves a caregiver referring a learner from another school to a pastor because of a cordial relationship between him/her and the recipient minister. Another potential inter-institutional referral will entail the school opening a police case against learners who might have committed a crime at school in the name of the occult. It could also entail taking an affected child to a health institution in an event of physical harm experienced as a consequence of coming into contact with occult practitioners.

5.5.4 Support

The foundational stages of the caregiving process serve the purpose of equipping the caregivers and care seekers to handle the actual caregiving initiative. They also enable the care seeker to assess the situation before offering the required service(s). The support stage marks the actual commencement of caregiving. As the outcome of the previous only determines what is to be done, the support stage is about executing what has been decided. The typical support stage entails two sub-stages, namely recovery and post-recovery actions. Recovery actions entail all caring activities that are undertaken at the height of the learner's desire to exit the occult or need for mercy to be delivered from its torments. Post-recovery activities encompass all activities that are undertaken after the affected learner has depicted demonstrable evidence of deliverance from the situation. These activities typically involve follow up visits, phone calls or correspondences just to check on the learner's progress.

Recovery support starts by assessment of the required assistance to get the affected learner out of the situation. The assessment mainly seeks to establish the general background and religious orientation of the child's family as well as the nature of the child's association with the occult, namely is he/she a victim or a practitioner? General family background is important to establish the purpose of theoretical interpretation of the situation and to ascertain who the main contact person is, e.g. father, mother or legal guardian. Religious orientation is important from an apologetics' perspective, namely should the point of entry be commending the gospel, defending the Christian faith or mere translating the message to the language understood by the audience. Knowledge of the child's association with the occult and his/her personal desire regarding the situation are also important, viz. whether he/she wants to quit or not. Determination of the affected child's desire is important as it ensures that caregivers do not impose deliverance unto a learner who does not want to quit. This is very important as it instils the principle of informed consent. It should be noted that ministering to the learner without his/her consent should be avoided as it

might have negative ramifications, just like what happened to Paul and Silas when they delivered the slave girl in Acts 16. The two apostles were arrested by authorities after they delivered the girl from possession by the spirit of divination from which her masters earned a living from proceeds of its services.

Key to the recovery support are factors such as informed consent and equipment for self-ministering. In an event that the affected child comes from a non-Christian religious background, the point of entry would be to witness to him/her through Christian practices which will enable the caregiver to commend the gospel to the learner and his/her family. If they see value in the Christian practices and eventually accept the gospel, the caregiver would then lead them to Christ and simultaneously connect them to a local Christian church, and then disciple them over a given period of time. If they reject the Christian practices and the gospel but are amenable to receiving care, the caregiver may pay them a few visits to show Christ in whatever way applicable to their context. In so doing, she/he would be evangelising to them in action. After they had seen the Lord's intervention and his love through the caregiver, perhaps they could reconsider their stance. The caregiver should however have an exit plan, regardless of the family's decision.

In the event that the family belongs to the Christian faith, the caregiver should still come up with a support plan tailor-made for the family. This might include moments of fellowship or devotion with them until such time that they have overcome the situation. Given the limited resources, the caregiver should come up with a realistic plan. Depending on the family's circumstances and level of faith, the caregiver might require offering care via phone calls to the family before exiting.

As discussed earlier in this section, recovery support is followed by post-recovery support. Post-caring support mainly entails a few visits and calls at a lesser frequency than during recovery support. Post-recovery support should not be limited to families of Christian faith but should be applied to non-Christian families as well. All families should be treated the same in the basic post-caring support, namely calling to establish if the learner has overcome the situation or not. Such courtesy calls lead to the logical closure of the caring endeavour to be discussed in the next section.

Before getting into the next stage it is worth stating that there should be no deliberate effort to split the two sub-stages. They have been broken down for the purpose of conditioning the mind of the caregiver that at some point he/she has to reduce the number of engagement sessions with the affected family or learner to prepare them to stand on their own. In other words, proper planning will minimise incidents of dependency syndrome from care recipients.

5.5.5 Exit

This stage marks the end of the caring process. It is usually triggered by demonstrable positive progress on the deliverance journey of the affected person, non-cooperation with the caregiver's caring counsel or lack of interest in the proposed interventions. Demonstrable positive progress can only be assessed in instances where a caregiving agreement has been reached in the foundational stages of the process. For instance, in the case of a child that wants to quit membership of the secret society the agreed goal would be for him to hand over for destruction in fire all the charms and or garments that he/she might have received from the occult, followed by full commitment to Christian practices. At that stage, the caregiver should impress upon the learner and/or the family that his/her involvement in the deliverance of the learner from the situation is a short-term relationship and will cease after the learner has done surrendering all the tools of the occult and have cultivated a strong commitment to the Christian practices. There is no universally acceptable timelines or sequencing of activities in this regard as each situation is unique. Below are few examples of practices observed from the study.

When Kathy invited Sassa to a caring process to address her poor performance which she perceived to be fuelled by some supernatural beings, she took her to Rachel for a solitary prayer session. In securing permission to do this from her parents, Kathy asked Sassa's mother if she would allow her to take Sassa to this prayer meeting with Rachel. Granted this permission, Sassa entered into a recovery support phase the day she went to the prayer meeting. The support stage immediately moved to post-caring phase the moment they left the prayer meeting awaiting the next learner assessment. Upon receiving positive feedback after the conclusion of the learner assessment, the caring process reached the exit stage.

In another example, the report presents a different scenario using Frank's situation. As stated in chapter two, Frank was referred to Rachel due to a multiplicity of social problems in life and had confessed participation in the occult in his first meeting with the caregivers. After Frank's situation was referred to Rachel for intervention, Rachel and the researcher went through the caring process with him and his family. They had several prayer sessions with them which provided hope, but the caregivers had to exit the process after Frank's family was unable to nominate an internal resource to carry on with the Christian practices recommended by the caregivers, namely family fellowship, consistent attendance at public worship in the local church of their choice, prayer and fasting. In this way the caring process did not reach the post-recovery phase as the recovery process could not be sustained without full commitment to these Christian practices.

Another scenario for exit happens when a caregiver refers the affected learner to another caregiver. The referring caregiver exits the process but the care seeker proceeds into a new chain of the caring process with the new caregiver. Frank's case also serves as good example to illustrate this. When Kholiwe came into contact with Frank's aunt, she discerned that she had to refer him to a full time Christian minister. The moment she contacted Rachel to brief her on the matter she automatically exited the caring process for Frank.

As discussed earlier in this sub-section of the chapter, normal exit is typically reached after the caring goal has been achieved. Faida's case provides a good example of how such can be managed. As discussed in the prior sub-section in this chapter, Faida approached a caregiver for prayer. After a single short prayer, Faida never experienced further spiritual attacks. After acknowledging this to the caregiver, the caregiver praised the Lord and advised Faida not to stop following the Christian practices that they agreed to adhere to during the response stage.

As the caring process is meant to commend the gospel for the glory of the Triune God, an abrupt exit should be avoided at all cost. It should be avoided particularly in instances where the caregiver is not exposed to any harm. This could be a long and uncomfortable process for the caregiver but as a Christian, the caregiver should exercise patience as part of the full suite of the fruit of the spirit (Gal 5:22). The caregiver should be in the habit of approaching the caring processes without anxiety but persistently petition the Lord in prayer for a solution (Phil 4:6). However, in instances where there is evidence of physical harm and/or violent resistance, the caregiver may exit the process. After taking the appropriate action, such as referring the matter to authorities where necessary, the caregiver may then bless the person(s) and "shake the dust off his/her feet" as suggested by Christ in Matthew 10:14.

Managing all these stages of the caring processes requires institutional arrangements to foster accountability and to provide organisational structure that coordinates the efforts, fosters collaboration, enhances personal and institutional capacity.

5.6 Systems to enable caring

5.6.1 Referral

The discussion on caring interventions currently applied by caregivers illustrates that referral plays an integral role in the caring process. Referral in this caregiving environment entails a teacher sending an affected learner to another Christian educator within the same school and/or sending him/her to a pastor of a local church for caregiving purposes. As the caring practices mature,

referral might include a wider range of activities such as reporting cases of violent conduct by perpetrators to authorities or affected learners taking to places of safety; sending affected learners for professional counselling where necessary; or the entire family of affected learners sent to professional caregivers for a comprehensive therapeutic intervention.

While the current arrangement still serves the purpose, it has loopholes that have to be closed. One of these critical gaps is the issue of neglecting the use of institutions established to deal with issues like professional counselling and criminal activities, as mentioned above. For instance, the case of a practitioner learner who allegedly coerced others to join the occult by bruising their fingers was supposed to be reported to the police as that constitutes assault with gross bodily harm as the affected learners even bled due to physical harm. In addition, the affected learners deserved to be sent for professional therapy, in addition to receiving prayer from caregivers.

The above scenario illustrates that caregivers should have a formal way to capture these incidents and to report them to the school's governing structures. Based on the above observation, the school-based caregivers should develop guidelines of what circumstances require referral and to which institutions, how to manage the referral process and proper documentation, monitoring and reporting mechanisms for the outcome of the referral. However, as the caregiving is still reactive and unstructured, this might not be possible to achieve. At the time when these interventions will be structured, caregivers might need training and development to attain this standard.

5.6.2 Training and development

As alluded to elsewhere in this report all Christian educators who participated in the study are qualified professional teachers but do not have any formal training in any caring profession, including pastoral care. If the recommendations of this study were to be implemented, these educators would need training in the implementation of this proposed pragmatic strategy. The purpose of the training should aim at enabling them to successfully implement this strategy and to be able to transfer skills to others.

The scope of their training and development interventions should be contextual. However, there are basic minimum competencies that are required in their caring endeavour, i.e. elementary theological training. As their caring endeavour is influenced by their Christian faith, basic theological training is key to their work. The curriculum for their training should aim at equipping them for effective pastoral care and counselling, evangelism and apologetics. These fields will enhance their theological reflection in attending to the situation.

In addition to the above content they should also be developed in specific areas of behavioural science which are essential to caregiving, such as empathy and compassion. For Doebling (2015:39), compassion and empathy play a critical role in pastoral and spiritual caregiving. Empathy entails getting into the care seeker's emotional experience while remaining aware of and rooted in your own emotional state, and compassion involves a feeling of being moved by another person's suffering and wanting to help (Doebling, 2015:39-40). Training and development in these two behavioural qualities are crucial as they influence the caregiver's emotions and self-management.

With their envisaged collaboration with academic institutions, it is anticipated that the caregivers will have access to a bouquet of training and development initiatives. Some of them might be interested in enrolling for academic courses that will make them eligible to register with professional bodies such as the Council for Pastoral and Spiritual Counsellors (CPSC). Such possibility implies that caregivers could gain professional recognition in the caring milieu, culminating in their accessing further structured professional development.

5.6.3 Caregiver support

Caregivers might go through difficulties that are associated with caregiving or derived from other adversities in life. These adversities might render them ineffective in their caregiving. A support mechanism is required to help them cope with the stress associated with caregiving. One of them is training and development. This could contribute to caregiver support by empowering them with knowledge on dealing with stress associated with caregiving and linking them to resources that could alleviate their distress, such as access to a network of experienced Christian counsellors who would offer counselling to them.

In addition to the above, another mechanism that was found to be helpful among family members caring for elderly family members is journaling. Journal classes were offered to these caregivers to encourage them to document their experiences. These classes helped them to find meaning in their hardship and subsequently became resilient despite their caregiver burden or associated responsibilities (Collins & Hawkins, 2016:94). This method could be worth exploring even in this caring milieu under study. Just like these family caregivers, the Christian educators struggle to balance their conventional career responsibilities and their caring vocational obligations (Collins & Hawkins, 2016:89).

Lessons from the Collins and Hawkins' study show that the journaling process offered individual caregivers an opportunity to reflect on their hardships, and subsequently sharing them in venting

sessions with fellow caregivers (Collins & Hawkins, 2016:99). This could be institutionalised as an integral part of fellowship amongst fellow caregivers. As sharing is caring, the venting sessions may bring fulfilment in the lives of the caregivers as they could come to realise that their frustration is also experienced by fellow ministers in this caregiving endeavour. Journaling could also contribute to knowledge sharing and knowledge management.

5.6.4 Knowledge management

The discussion on the journaling fits well within knowledge management as it contributes to building a repository of valuable insight to the caring endeavour. This could be more fruitful if it includes deliberate and structure documenting and sharing of lessons learned. Its advantages can be realised in the present and in the future. In the present they offer immediate relief in soliciting suggestions from members on how to overcome the adversity associated with caregiving. Futuristically, it offers eschatological benefits of hope as some of the lessons learned would reveal great victories that shed some light for the future. In this way caregivers will realise their contribution to bringing about change in the midst of adversity.

Knowledge management with the use of lessons learned and testimonies will also empower caregivers by inspiring hope for the future. This has been demonstrated in the famous case of King David versus Goliath. When facing Goliath, King David remembered his previous encounters with the bear and a lion respectively that he single-handedly overcame (1 Sm 17:36). This inspired hope in him. Scripture also emphasises the role of testimony when it prophesies that “they overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony” (Rv 12:11). From the researcher’s perspective this verse means that Christians appropriate their salvation through the blood of the Lamb and use their testimony to gather strength in the midst of adversity. This implies that documenting and sharing of knowledge of caregivers could serve as a powerful mechanism to empower and encourage them.

Caregivers can use at least two platforms to optimise the above. Documented lessons learned can be shared in conferences whereas testimonies can be shared in the gathering of saints, such as in corporate worship, one-on-one meetings or small group fellowship. The purpose of both lessons learned, and testimonies should be to witness to Christ’s deliverance power and not for personal glory.

5.7 Institutional arrangements

Institutional arrangements required for the implementation of this pragmatic strategy should take into consideration the role of the local school, local church, academic institutions, professional bodies and the family. Based on Osmer's emphasis on open-endedness and flexibility in the crafting of a pragmatic strategy, this report proposes institutional arrangements that may be followed to enhance the caring process. The proposal is not definitive but resembles a scope definition of the possible institutional arrangements. It provides suggestions on how the aforementioned institutions can collaborate and coordinate their efforts to handle the occult among primary school learners, instead of providing an organogram.

The local school plays an important role in imparting foundational academic knowledge to learners. It is also one of the social environments whereby a child comes into contact with both adults and fellow children from different backgrounds, but its primary purpose is to educate learners, not to offer social services (Openshaw, 2008:5). At the core of this learning experience is the role of the teacher as he/she assumes a position of authority in the subject area. While Christian educators are appointed to offer tuition in their conventional learning areas, they should also take advantage of freedom of religion to exercise the choice of evangelising within their respective schools. Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that the school-based informal network of educators serves as a good arrangement for achieving this goal. Therefore, the researcher recommends that this model should be replicated in all primary schools where there are Christian educators. This model can be promoted through local churches by encouraging members who are educators to establish such forums in their respective schools as this is not forbidden even in the milieu of religious freedom.

The local church proved to be a valuable resource in caring for affected children as it is equipped with congregational leadership that has a passion for caring. In this regard, members of school-based forums may use the local church as the basic institution to organise themselves. While there are multiple local churches, caregivers may start by using a church that they have been working with on this caregiving initiative. This church may serve as a basic resource for hosting equipment sessions, receiving referrals and serving as a community-based caring centre accessible to all caregivers. As a resource centre, this local church would require the services of volunteers and financial resources in different areas of its operations in relation to this initiative. Therefore, Christian educators should be willing to avail themselves after school to provide services such as conducting intake interviews for referrals, making follow up calls, arranging meetings with stakeholders, etc.

Based on his exposure to be both in the academia and the caregiving initiative, the researcher believes that academic institutions that offer theological training may enhance the caregiving initiatives. From his first-hand experience with caregivers that participated in this study, the researcher found that none of them has some substantial theological training, except for attending equipment workshops in areas such as evangelism. Therefore, collaboration between academic institutions and caregivers is likely to assist with access to knowledge about relevant long term and short-term courses that will enhance their theological reflection and ministry. With their ability to organise conferences, academic institutions may also provide a platform for caregivers to access information on local and international conferences on related topics. In addition, as they pursue studies in theology, caregivers may take advantage of their collaborative link with the institutions to conduct research and present findings at such conferences. In so doing they will be contributing to the academic debate in areas such as child theology, pastoral care and counselling, *diaconia*, etc.

5.8 Summary

The analysis and interpretation of data collected in this study culminated in the development of the theory to address the situation of the occult among young children as reflected in this chapter. Although the study applied Osmer's definition of the pragmatic task in determining the approach to craft this theory, it was practically impossible to apply Osmer's pragmatic task counsel in its entirety. The researcher was able to mainly use it to define the parameters of the pragmatic strategy, i.e. its definition as a guide not a precept, but applying its key rules of art in a form of principles, systems, institutional arrangements and process flow. In addition to these rules of art, the scope of the strategy includes the description of the purpose statement.

The purpose of this strategy is to alleviate the situation of the occult among primary school learners. This will be done through the rules of art that are presented in the five-stage caring process. Based on the empirical data, the researcher argues that the caring process should start by what he terms proactivity, which encompasses all proactive activities undertaken by Christian educators in collaboration with their congregations to pray against the spread of the occult among children, evangelise among people of non-Christian faith and equip learners to take informed decisions on issues of faith. This equipment track will empower the community and the children to act appropriately when encountering the occult.

Encountering the occult refers to coming into contact with a situation or episode of the occult which has to be assessed carefully before responding to it. The response stage entails

implementing the actions that are informed by the process of discernment that occurred when encountering the situation. The response should not be a once off thing but must include the process of supporting the affected learners and their families where necessary. During the caring process, the care recipients should be equipped to use Christian practices to defend their salvation without reliance on external support. The realisation of this objective culminates in a smooth exit from the caring process by the caregiver.

Based on empirical evidence presented, it is clear that the caregiving process is complex and requires systems to manage referrals, training and development of caregivers, caregiver support and knowledge management. In addition, all caregiving should be governed by principles of discernment, contextualisation, Christ-centredness, Scripture-grounded, and right to privacy.

As an open-ended guide, the strategy highlights a need for rules of art regarding institutional arrangements for caregiving. It proposes that the local church that has been used as a point of referral can serve as a foundational institution to coordinate the community-based caregiving caring initiatives. This implies that for a start it may be used as a hub to host equipment and training interventions. Furthermore, caregivers should collaborate their efforts with academic institutions, and should consider taking up the opportunity of acquiring training that would enable them to access registration with professional bodies that are specifically established for spiritual care. This will enable them to grow and use the registration process to enhance their credibility as caring practitioners.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes this research report by presenting an evaluation of whether this study has been able to achieve what it had establish to accomplish. The evaluation includes, drawing conclusions on the central theoretical argument, synthesising the research results per research objective, assessing the application of key methodological approaches or models, highlighting the limitations of the study, and making recommendations for future studies.

6.2 Conclusions on the central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of this study is that Christian practices used by Christian educators to care for primary school learners affected by occult practices in Mkhuhlu are likely to contribute to the development of theological guidelines that could be used to address this situation across many schools in the area.

The study proves be true as the empirical argument of data on the Christian educators' caring practices provided the field experience which, when tested against Scripture, formed an integral part to illustrate translation of theory into praxis in the development of the theological guidelines. These provided a practical experience that guided the development of the caring process and most of the caregivers' approaches to caregiving are consistent with the normative principles from Scripture and have simultaneously enhanced the development of the caring principles and suggested systems required because they are grounded in tested praxis.

6.3 Conclusions on research objectives

- 6.3.1 To discuss the empirical description of how the occult manifests itself among primary school children in the Mkhuhlu community based on an autoethnographic experience.

Through this objective, the study answered the question of "how does the occult manifest itself among primary school children in the Mkhuhlu community based on auto-ethnographic experiences?" This question was answered by presenting the overview of the occult situation in Mkhuhlu focusing on the researcher's childhood experience in his own life, incidents of the occult in his community, his child's experience and other children from various primary schools in the area.

On analysing these data, the study developed themes on how affected learners are discovered and how children are drawn into the occult. As this study is about proposing guidelines for possible use by educators in caring for affected learners, it also looked at current caring interventions used by Christian educators and their concomitant challenges in their response to the situation. In addressing this objective, the study performed the descriptive empirical task which seeks to answer “what is going on” in terms of Osmer’s theory of theological interpretation. In addition, the chapter used theoretical concepts from sociology, psychology and anthropology to make sense out of the teacher’s interventions and the challenges that they experience in their caring endeavour.

6.3.2 To interpret the current situation of primary school learners affected by the occult in the Mkhuhlu community within the broader scope of how the occult manifest itself globally, on the African continent and in South Africa

In order to achieve this objective, the study used a literature study to define and interpret the phenomenon as it manifests across the globe, in Africa and South Africa. This was done in order to answer the question of “how can the current situation of primary school children affected by the occult in the Mkhuhlu community be interpreted in the broader scope of how the occult manifest itself globally, on the African continent and in South Africa?” In addition to an academic literature study, the chapter also used testimonies of African Christians who have been set free from the occult to explain the situation from the African perspective.

The foundation discussions in this chapter covered the critical examination of the definition and description of the phenomenon globally. From the multiple definitions, it became evident that the phenomenon is complex, has multiple variants and changes with the context. Consequently, a brief exposition of key global players within the respective variants was necessary. This was a precursor to the discussion of its manifestation in the African continent and in South Africa. In the discussion of its manifestation in Africa the report included the influence of the African traditional worldview and testimonies of adherents of the Christian faith who were once practitioners of the occult in the Africa. The discussion on the South African context covered the historical political context, inconsistent views, religious context and socio-economic contexts.

As the study was conducted among the black population within the African continent, the interpretive task focussed on using theoretical concepts to determine factors that contribute to its occurrence and pervasion in Africa among the black population. It discovered that socialisation,

social learning, experiential learning, bullying and delinquency are some of the key factors that contribute to its resilience and proliferation in Africa.

From the above discussion, it is evident that the study was able to achieve this research objective. However, it could have been better enriched if it had further identified and described some of the well-documented currents like magic, witchcraft and Satanism. A synopsis of these movements could bring further clarity to what primary school learners are mainly lured to and the reasons thereof. Although this pitfall has been mitigated by including it under the discussion of “some of the key global players in the occult”, this is a vacuum which might require further exploration in future studies. From the perspective of Osmer’s model, the second objective was able to answer why the situation of the occult is happening in Mkhuhlu. The findings on the situation in Africa and specifically in South Africa as interpreted through these concepts explains why the situation is happening in Mkhuhlu.

6.3.3 To formulate normative principles from Scripture about Christians’ attitude and behaviour regarding the occult.

This objective was meant to answer the question of “what normative principles can be formulated from Scripture about Christians’ attitude and behaviour regarding the occult?” It used Scripture to determine “what is to be going on?” in order to care for affected learners (Osmer, 2011:2). Its focus was on constructing “normative principles rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ and its theological tradition” (Pieterse, 2010:3). To achieve this, the study conducted exegesis of relevant pericopes from both Old Testament and New Testament.

The findings from the exegesis produced biblical principles relevant to responding to the situation of the occult. Findings revealed that all forms of occult practice are sinful before the eyes of God; they also breed other evil; they are provocative to God; thereby alienating from God those who practice the occult; and consequently, attract severe punishment from God.

The report argues that the above biblical truth is important to the contemporary body of Christ during this period of religious pluralism and diverse Christianity. From the various pericopes studied in chapter 4, it is evident that occult practices are not part of Christianity and should be repelled by every Christian. Christians should distance themselves from any occult practices and condemn it in their sharing of the gospel. In the process of sharing the gospel, they should present the gospel of salvation with love to practitioners and exert the authority of Christ against the spirit in the practitioners and not in the physical person. With evidence from the book of Acts, Christians

should have confidence that the Holy Spirit is more powerful than the spirits who operate in the lives of the practitioners.

6.3.4 To construct theological guidelines that could be used to equip Christian educators in caring for primary school learners affected by the occult.

The fourth objective addressed the question of “what theological guidelines can be developed that could be used to equip Christian educators in caring for primary school learners affected by the occult?” In Osmer’s (2005: xvi) terms it focused on providing an “open-ended guide” to be used in caring for affected learners. As suggested in Osmer’s model, the open-ended guide that was developed with the use of certain rules of art (Osmer, 2005: xvi; Osmer, 2008:176).

The rules of art that were used in the development of this guide relate to the caring process flow, the caring principles, and systems required for effective caring. The guide proposes a five-stage caring process, namely proactivity, encounter, response, support and exit. Proactivity entails all Christian practices undertaken as preventative measures and equipment track to handle the occult in the event that it is encountered. The encounter involves coming into contact with the situation that requires a response. A response is an immediate decision and action taken by caregivers in addressing the situation, e.g. prayer or referral. Support is a post-response group of activities that happens during caring and toward the end of the caring process. It involves continuation of the caring practices started at proactivity as well as follow-up activities to assess progress. These activities lead to the last stage of the caring process, which the researcher terms as exit. Exit is when the caregiver amicably terminates his/her caring activities.

The caring activities are implemented within the principles of discernment, contextualisation, individuality, Christ-centredness, Scripture-groundedness and the right to privacy. Discernment is necessary to determine what to do with the prevailing situation or episode. It involves judgment, discernment of spirits and guidance from the Holy Spirit. Contextualisation speaks to customisation of the caring endeavour to the prevailing conditions of the care seeker to avoid generalisation. Related to contextualisation is individuality which emphasis that each individual is unique even if they come from the same context, therefore the caring process should be customised to address the care seeker’s individual circumstances. Christ-centredness acknowledges that all caring endeavours are carried out in the name of Christ, therefore their primary objective should be to commend Christianity among care seekers, and this should be done within his precepts as described in Scripture. Throughout the caring process, Scripture

should be the final authority and key source of theological interpretation which should be used in caregiving sessions, and care seekers should be encouraged to read, study and meditate on it regularly. The principle of right to privacy acknowledges that certain information should be kept confidential or shared discretionarily to protect the affected child against all forms of harm.

In addition to the proposed process and principles, the guide also recognises the complexity of the caring initiative. During the study it became evident that the caring environment requires systems to manage referrals, to train and develop caregivers, to offer caregivers support and for knowledge management. The systems are also proposed on an open-ended approach. The referral system should be able to cater for intra-institutional and inter-institutional referrals that will enable proper tracking and monitoring of their outcomes. It further proposes a structured way to offer training and development to caregivers and suggests caregiver support mechanisms. The last system entails a structured approach to document and share lessons learnt at conferences and meetings of saints for the purpose of creating awareness and education of the ecumenical movement for the purpose of knowledge management.

For the caring process to bear fruit, it has to be managed through flexible institutional arrangements. Although not adequately defined, the strategy proposes that caring interventions should be managed within each school and inter-institutional referral should be centralised at a local church that has already been involved in the caregiving endeavour as a start. This local church will be used as the administration and case management hub where training interventions are planned and executed. In recognition of its limited resources, caregivers should avail themselves to offer voluntary services such as counselling, administration and follow-ups with affected learners after school.

From the researcher's perspective this objective was fully achieved as it culminated in the development of an open-ended strategy. While the researcher is confident that the process is in line with the grounded theory, its description of the institutional arrangements is not adequate. The proposed institutional arrangements lack solid suggestions on organisational structures or a constitution. Perhaps this could be better proposed after further studies have been conducted on the situation in this area.

6.4 Conclusions on the methodology

6.4.1 Application of Osmer's four tasks

The primary objective of Osmer's model of theological reflection is mainly to capacitate congregational leaders to systematically engage in practical theological interpretation of challenges confronting them in ministry (Smith, 2010:1). Osmer proposes the use of what he calls categories to distinguish the focal points of theological interpretation, namely situations, episodes and contexts (Osmer, 2008:11). These are interpreted within a broad research process which Mutemwa *et al.* (2017:1) conceive as a four-stage process, namely descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative and pragmatic tasks. Osmer (2008:11) counsels that the interpretation should be applied in a spiral form rather than in a circular nature as it constantly circles back to the tasks that have been explored.

In its application to this study, the researcher was able to implement the entire four tasks but with some modifications. In chapter two, the study applied the descriptive empirical task which was simultaneously used with the interpretive task. In the same chapter, the study used autoethnographic data to answer the question 'what is going on?' regarding the manifestation of the occult among learners and how Christian educators respond to it. It then applied the interpretive task only to the teachers' response to the situation and received the interpretation of why learners are involved in the occult.

In chapter three, the study conducted an interpretive task to explain why the learners are involved in the occult using secondary data from published testimonies of Christians who were involved in the occult. Theoretical concepts were then used to provide an overall interpretation of why the occult manifests itself among African children in the continent and in Mkhuhlu. There is a thin line between the descriptive empirical task and the interpretive task in the use of academic literature and testimonies in the description of the occult globally, in Africa and in South Africa. Although these data have been incorporated into the interpretive chapter, they could also be used as secondary data to describe what is going on globally, in the continent and South Africa. Nevertheless, regardless of where the researcher locates these data within the two tasks, they have provided context that has enhanced the findings.

The normative task covered in chapter 4 falls well within the parameters of Osmer's framework as it exclusively used Scripture to formulate principles that informed the development of the theological guidelines. The last task was addressed with most of its elements covered in the study. However, the guidelines deliberately excluded the aspects of congregational leadership as the guidelines are to be used beyond the confines of a local church.

6.4.2 Use of autoethnography

Based on Chang, Ngunjiri and Hernandez's (2016:12) description of autoethnography, the researcher understands autoethnography to relate to a study of self which involves observing, interpreting and writing about life experiences within the context of family, work, schooling, and society. Consequently, the narratives of episodes of the occult discussed in Chapter 3 revolve around presentation and interpretation of experiences within the researchers' family, local schools and the society of the Mkhuhlu community.

As this study focuses on the occult among primary school children, the researcher had limited his personal experience and that of his family to their primary school going age, except for their caregiving experiences. To illustrate the study's emphasis on ethnography, the report presented the researcher's childhood experience as a practitioner and one of his siblings' experience as a victim of black witchcraft. He also included his daughter's decade of the encounter with the occult to sustain the justification for autoethnography.

The report revealed that the researcher's childhood's personal experience with the occult involved adherents to the African Traditional Religion whereby he was assigned responsibilities to perform certain rituals during ceremonies of venerating ancestral spirits. He had also served as an assistant herbalist to his paternal grandmother and was party to performing sacrifices related to the healing of the patients. The report also narrates the story of how one of his siblings ceased eating red meat before the age of ten after he was evidently bewitched by an elderly female family member in full view of other children at a family feast. Lastly, autoethnography was also revealed in the narration of how the researcher's daughter was able to see in the spirit since birth until about the age of twelve when God used the researcher and his nuclear family to cast out that ability from her. All these empirical data contributed to the empirical description of the situation which served as an input to the development of the guidelines.

Regardless of its emphasis on qualitative research methods, autoethnography is structured in terms of demarcation of the study area. Crockford and Aspren (2018:5) suggest that the location where the study focuses should be a field site that is delimited and arbitrarily defined by the researcher to suit his/her purpose. In this study, the narrative and interpretation of the researcher's experiences is limited to his family and relatives who live in Mkhuhlu and have first-hand experience of the phenomenon in this research site. In this way the core of this study presents "specific knowledge about specific experiences rather than the general information on the subject" (Jones & Ellis, 2015:21). This specific knowledge about the occult among primary

school learners entails the learners' involvement in the occult and victimisation by the occult and the educators and ministers' caregiving experiences.

While in the past autoethnography did not recognise the use of documents and interviews as legitimate data collection methods for its purpose, according to Flick (2018:57) these sources are currently recognised. This development enabled the researcher to use secondary data recorded in his self-published books to enrich the study. Although these data were originally collected for different purposes, they still provide valuable data as they have pockets of rich narratives about witchcraft in the community and the researcher's family. The downside of these data are that they could not adequately cover several aspects of the study which could have been better addressed through in-depth interviews which would have afforded the researcher an opportunity to have multiple sessions with each respondent. For this reason, he had to incorporate two situations which are outside the published books due to their importance to the study.

6.4.3 Utilisation of Grounded Theory Method

The method of grounded theory employs a research process whereby the researcher creates theory directly from the data. Theory construction happens simultaneously with data collection and theoretical analysis (Lee, 2016:39). In this way it is an open approach to research that stresses that "existing theories are not a starting point of the research but an end point" (Flick, 2018:57).

In accordance with this approach, the researcher undertook to collect data with an open mind not trying to prove a certain theory from the onset. He simultaneously started with theoretical analysis and theory building while still busy with data collection. For instance, in chapter 2 while answering the question of how the occult manifests itself among primary school learners, he captured the findings in themes that simultaneously developed theories on how affected learners are identified, how children are drawn into the occult, how Christian educators care for affected learners and challenges affecting caregiving at these schools.

Another point to note in the application of GTM is that in grounded theory the researcher "begins a research project by analysing the current practice" before applying theoretical concepts (Pieterse, 2010:108). Chapter two as explained above sets a good example in this regard as well. In chapter three, this principle is also applied as its formative sections presented the status quo of the situation of the occult globally, in Africa and in South Africa based on secondary data. These findings were then subjected to theoretical interpretation.

The development of normative principles in chapter four also followed a similar approach. While the researcher was transcribing the pericope, he was simultaneously identifying, extracting and documenting biblical principles in the dedicated section within the chapter. During the same process he was also identifying key themes for the pragmatic strategy in chapter five. The whole approach enabled the researcher to develop a coherent proposal or theological guidelines that progressed from chapter two. It enabled the guidelines to emerge from field data, modelled from Scripture and enhanced through established theological concepts from the field of apologetics.

6.5 Limitations

While the study has achieved all its objectives, it would be illogical to conclude that it had no limitations. The following limitations have been identified:

6.5.1 Limitation of secondary data usage

A key limitation was on the use of secondary data sources in describing learners' involvement in the occult. The use of secondary data limited the potential of probing for more information which could have been provided by affected learners themselves. Secondary data did not afford the researcher an opportunity to probe and follow up with the primary sources on issues of interest that could have enhanced the findings.

6.5.2 Limitation of the theological guidelines

The theological guidelines developed in this study are fairly comprehensive but do not provide adequate guidance on recommended institutional arrangements to manage the caring interventions. Clear institutional arrangements are required to ensure that educators are not taken away from their conventional professional obligations and resources are properly managed and channelled to the caring endeavour. This aspect has not been adequately covered in this study and may require an in-depth focus in related future investigations.

6.5.3 Limitations of sample size

The findings of this study are useful to provide an idea of what is happening regarding this situation in this community. However, the findings may not be generalised due to sample size. As the occult is said to be contextual, the study could have been enriched by extending data collection to other geographical areas to access children from different cultural backgrounds.

6.6 Recommendations

The researcher recommends that the following should be considered in future studies on this situation:

- The use of in-depth interviews to collect data directly from affected children and their families in the same geographic area, and to replicate similar studies in other geographic areas to test if the key findings are common even in these other areas;
- Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the impact or sustainability of the interventions provided among the affected learners; and/or
- In-depth understanding of the currents prevalent or appealing to primary school learners.

6.7 Summary

This chapter evaluated if the study has achieved its objectives regarding the central theoretical argument, research objectives and the utilisation of the proposed methodology. The results acknowledge that all research objectives were met, the central theoretical argument has been affirmed, and acknowledged that all methodological approaches proposed at inception were substantially applied. It also notes some gaps in the use of secondary data, inadequacy of the pragmatic strategy and the limitations of the sample size. It is then concluded by making suggestions for future research in the area.

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ANNEXTURE 1: SUMMARY OF SITUATIONS PER LEARNER

Following is a list of primary school learners with a summary of their exposure to the occult.

	Pseudonym	Summary situation/episode
1.	Capstone	This boy confessed to Kholiwe that he belonged to a local secret society that operates in the local earth dam. According to him there is a huge community under the water of the dam. While still a member of the society, he used to leave his body in class and go to participate in occult activities even during school hours. He had since decided to abandon the group, but they are after him. Unlike in the past when they used to fetch him from class, this time they were unable to do so because he was in Kholiwe's class. He claimed that each time they approached Kholiwe's class, they see a hedge of fire around it because she is prayerful. Consequently, they call him from afar because they cannot cross the hedge.
2.	Chido	This girl was introduced by family to the occult and this was discovered by Sonia at school one morning as Chido was about to sit for one of her exam papers. She collapsed and lost consciousness while drinking water at a tap in the school. Christian teachers took her to the sick bay where they prayed for her until she regained her consciousness. Sonia then interviewed her to find out about the situation. Chido then confessed that she is possessed by ancestral spirits who want her to become a sangoma and she has already committed to taking her for initiation.
3.	Faida	Faida used to suffer from torments from a mysterious being that used to visit her at night. Although the details are scanty, According to Sonia, she tried to chase it away through prayer and calling on the name of Jesus Christ, but the spirit mocked at his name, saying it will not help her. As she knew that Sonia is one of the Christian educators at school, she approached her for prayer. The caregiver did not hesitate to do that after gathering information on the situation from her.
4.	Frank	Self-confessed boy occultist who was referred to Rachel and Vusi by Kholiwe. In full consciousness he confessed several things to them, such

	Pseudonym	Summary situation/episode
		as being part of a local group that meets in an underwater community in a local river, participation in satanic activities globally, drinking human blood, possession of mysterious stuff and powers of darkness, and accessing several places via astral travel.
5.	Gerald	As part of the teachers' sharing of testimonies at Sonia's school, one her colleagues narrated how this boy caused some underwear to appear and levitate in class to the amusement of his classmates. His teacher invited his father to the school to discuss this episode. In the discussion, his father confessed that he is indeed involved in some mysterious acts. Among others, he cited that Gerald once made their parents' bed to levitate while they were in bed at night. In another incident, he duplicated himself appearing in the bedroom and at the same time playing outside one night.
6.	Happy	One night during a school excursion, Happy surprised Kholiwe, other teachers and fellow learners when she started fidgeting just after midnight. The Christian educators discerned that she was about to embark on astral projection. They then called on the name of Jesus and commanded her soul to be still in her. Her sleep was immediately restored.
7.	Rachel	She experienced numerous encounters while she was a primary school girl during the period in which her family adhered to ATR. Some of the encounters include divination payers whereby she was able to see things before they happened, e.g. perceiving visitors' details before they arrived.
8.	Londi	This boy approached Kholiwe to tell her that he is involved in the occult and has one day caused another learner, Megan to fall and bleed in order to drink her blood supernaturally.
9.	Kholiwe	Kholiwe is one of the teachers who care for affected learners. She had been lured to the occult during childhood. At childhood her family was deep in ancestral worship. During this period, she was lured to join the occult in several ways. On one occasion while doing laundry at the local river a bucket popped up from the sand full of money and a voice told her to join "them" and she would be rewarded with those riches. But she refused the

	Pseudonym	Summary situation/episode
		offer as she had just given her life to Christ. In another incident, she was invited to be initiated to become a <i>sangoma</i> by a witchdoctor neighbour “in order to be set free from her afflictions”. This suggestion was rejected by her and her family.
10.	Lourens	Lourens, together with his cousin were each given a piece of braai meat which tasted bitter in full view of other children, including Vusi who were all given pieces without a strange taste. The two boys lost their appetite for red meat since that day.
11.	Megan	Kholiwe received a report during school break that Megan fell on her forehead and started bleeding profusely. A few days later, Kholiwe was approached by Londi who confessed that he was responsible for Megan’s bleeding. He caused her to fall and bleed in order to mysteriously drink her blood.
12.	Mfitshane	This boy joined the occult on invitation from other local boys. He confessed this in a discussion with Rachel in the presence of his mother. He affirmed that he enjoys the life of secret society because there is wealth at night, and they eat human flesh. According to his mother, he was one day seen by his younger brother inserting a snake into the ear of his new-born sister. The baby girl later died.
13.	Mubabatsi	Mubabatsi was a student in Sonia’s class. He reportedly refused to lead a prayer meeting in class because he does not believe in Jesus Christ. His classmates told Sonia that he told them that the deity that he venerates requires of him to conclude the prayer by shouting 666 not Amen. His classmates also told Sonia that he usually steals dogs in his township which they suspect he uses them for animal sacrifice.
14.	Nathan	This boy was another noticeable learner in Sonia’s class. He was famous for playing truancy at school. One day when Sonia collected his exercise book she was met with mysterious artwork on the cover. He had used a red pen to draw a sword, and a pentagram and engraved the words “enter at your own risk” next to two drawings.

	Pseudonym	Summary situation/episode
15.	Nuyoma	His mother brought him to Rachel after she discovered poor performance at school and unbecoming behaviour. Before prayer Rachel interviewed him wanting to gather more information. He confessed that he has two lives, one in the physical and another in the spirit. In the spirit he is a married man with children. He further confessed that he belongs to some local secret society which operates at night.
16.	Pretty	She was once attacked by a strong whirlwind in front of other learners in the bathroom in Kholiwe's school. The force of the wind brought her down to a point of losing her consciousness. Other learners called on Kholiwe to pray for her as this whirlwind used to torment children in this school.
17.	Ryne	He was caught red-handed by fellow learners using violent actions to conscript learners to the occult in Kholiwe's school. He used weird tactics to bruise the ring finger of unsuspecting classmates to enter into a blood covenant which links them to his secret society.
18.	Sassa	Sassa was referred to Rachel for prayer by her teacher, Kathy due to poor performance at school. While there was nothing discovered that could link her to personal involvement in the occult, her case presents another good example of God's deliverance power and the effectiveness of the informal referral system and caring process. After praying with the minister, she was set free from the poor performance and she ceased seeing snakes in dreams.
19.	Shukurani	Shukurani is the researcher's child who suffered at the hand of the occult and has confessed occasional involvement in astral travel. In prayer session prompted by manifestation of demons, unclean spirits confessed through her mouth that they entered her while she was in her mother's womb because of the sin of her great grandmother. Besides reports of astral travel, Shukurani was also able to see in the spirit an ability that left her after she was set free.
20.	Siku	Siku confessed his participation in the occult in an interview with Rachel when his mother wanted the minister to pray with her to set him free from

	Pseudonym	Summary situation/episode
		from torments in dreams. He narrated that that he belongs to a local secret society which he joined on invitation from three boys. He explained that members of this society meet at night to have fun such as driving expensive cars, splashing money and eating human flesh. He also shared that he gets habitually molested sexually by some men while in the spirit.
21.	Sipho	This boy approached Kholiwe with a confession that he is involved in the occult without any precedence. He sustained this claim by pulling out a book from his school bag. This book had pictures of snakes wherein he pointed at one of the pictures and told Kholiwe that uses it as a means of transport to occult activities. He said that when he wants to travel, he invokes it from the book to either mount it or enters into its belly to swiftly travel to places.
22.	Vusi (real name)	Vusi was invited by his paternal grandmother to serve as her assistant herbalist and his family assigned him a role to lead rituals during ATR ceremonies at home according to their tradition. His situation changed after his family was converted to Christianity. He later accepted the gospel personally as well.
23.	Zondiwe	She was one of the learners that Sonia taught in one of the schools where she plied her trade. Zondiwe used to be tormented by the sight of a supernatural being that occasionally appeared before her in the image of her paternal grandmother at home and in class. This situation started after her parents separated.