

# Rise, rise and fall of



Rev. King with some of his followers

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**T**HE arrest of Rev. Chukwuemeka Ezeugo Kingsley, the controversial but self-acclaimed 'miracle' worker, and founder of Christian Praying Assembly (CPA), Ajao Estate, Lagos last Sunday, brought to the fore the harrowing experience that the self-styled 'Jesus of our time' meted out to members as well as non-members.

Before starting Christian Praying Assembly sometime in May 1999, Rev. King whose parents were up to that point in time, strong devotees of the once famous *Ufuma* deity, Aguata, Anambra state, was said to have patronized the woman-priest of the feared deity.

While at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, studying Psychology, King was said to be a member of one of the secret cults in the school, and a member of the school's Karate club.

After graduation he came to Lagos to start business, and soon he found that owning a church was the best option to hit it big in Lagos.

But last Sunday, five members of Rev. King's church living with him in the CPA overseer's house at Osolo Way, Ajao Estate, Lagos were allegedly set ablaze.

Information has it that the CPA overseer threatened to set the five members ablaze, if they refused to admit to having committed sexual immorality.

But angered by his members denial, Rev. King instructed another female member of his church living with him to soak the five members with fuel, after which he personally lit a match and threw it on the alleged fornicators leaving them to battle for their lives.

According to the confessions of the victims of Rev. King's torture, Vivien, Jessica, Bunmi and Chizoba Chiejine in a statement at the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Rev. King set them ablaze with fuel provided by one sister Kelechi now in police net.

Hear Chizoba, a graduate of Industrial Mathematics, one of the victims: "Wearing only his boxers, Rev. King assembled all of us and asked us to confess all the persons we have been sleeping with. When we said none, he flogged me with a rod until I recanted, naming all people I could think of in order to escape with my life.

He would have killed us if he had a gun. In his fury that night, he not only beat us with an aluminum window blind rail, but also with pincers, and threw a set of knives at one of the

girls, but she dodged it, and the knife pierced a leather seat."

Some members of the CPA who pleaded anonymity for fear of expulsion from the church or physical assault by other members of the church also confirmed that flogging of defiant members who go contrary to the CPA's overseer's dictates was a usual occurrence

According to these members, lateness to church

programmes attracts flogging in the full glare of the public. Most time, the CPA's overseer does the flogging himself, while he instructs his bearded fierce looking aides to execute the punishment at occasions he may be engrossed with other activities of his organization.

Rev. King, who his followers adore with awe, and calls "Jesus of our Time" at the programmes that he runs, has himself admitted at several occasions that he flogs his members, explaining reasons behind his actions.

"I am a preacher. I know that the spirit of witchcraft is against the Almighty God. If somebody is a liar, he is bewitching God. I don't condone lies. Dr. King does not condone sin. I flog a lot. I have canes.

If a husband and wife mess up by having misunderstanding, I have to settle them, but the person that is at fault I must flog. If the person refuses to be flogged, I will send him out of the church," recounted the bearded but feared CPA founder in one of his encounters with newsmen.

Another punishment strategy that Rev. King imposes on members, and visitors alike is ordering those who violate his rules to roll on the ground.

According to Chukwudi Onah, 24, from Ebonyi State, who accompanied a CPA member friend to Rev. King's church service at Ajao Estate, Lagos on a Sunday in March, 2006, the CPA overseer ordered

his aides to force him to roll on the ground, for coming late to the service, even after he told them that he was visiting the church on invitation of his friend.

"That day, he began recounting, "I was humiliated, my clothes were dirtied, and I swore after that experience never to be there again, despite the plea of my friend that 'His Holiness' wanted to instill discipline in me." While speaking

with *Saturday Champion* some members of the church who refused to have their names in print admitted that such punishment like rolling on he ground is a regular occurrence, during church services, stating that the punishment was aimed at making people stop distracting the attention of their overseer while church service was in session.

They also told *Saturday Champion* that

because their general overseer is the "Jesus of our time," they are under compulsion to kneel down and bow whenever Rev. King appears on the scene for the commencement of church services.

"If you don't bow when His Holiness appears, those of us near you will compel you to follow us and kneel, otherwise one of the ushers will take you out and detain you at the end of the service; one of them enthused.

Sometimes, those who go contrary to the rules set in motion by the CPA overseer, and who are members of the church are asked to stay in the church for several days without reaching their homes or seeing members of their families, and this has led to the break up of some marriages.

At other times also, the punishment could be manual labour for defiant members of the church.

*Saturday Champion* checks indicate that such punishment and torture meted out by the now embattled CPA founder are meant to instill fear, and thereby elicit reverence from members of the church and visitors alike.

Often times, the CPA leader has been quoted as saying that he is the Messiah sent by Almighty God to redeem mankind as well as cure all incurable diseases, plaguing humanity.

According to the CPA founder "anybody who says evil things about me is evil, demon personified, and a liar, and will end up in hell."

However, it still remains to be seen whether the punishment that the CPA overseer dishes out on members of his church, as well as visitors does not suggest that the "Jesus of our time" cares little about dignity of his members, including the well being of their families.



Rev. King for this work

# a 'spiritual leader'

## ...A peep into the enclave, after king's arrest

**W**HEN *Saturday Champion* visited the Christian Praying Assembly (CPA) premises Wednesday, members of the Church were seen in groups, in front of the church compound. They wore a hostile look as well as being suspicious of any strange face among them. It was conspicuously written on their faces that they were ready to pounce on anybody who dared to make derogatory comment against their General Overseer Reverend Emeka King.

There is one thing common among the members of this church. Almost every male member wears long beard like that of the G.O. Their females put on earrings and necklaces carrying the image of Rev. King. Every member has one thing or the other that identifies him or her.

However, from observation, it seemed the members were given an instruction not to speak to anybody concerning the arrest of their leader, Rev. Emeka King. But one of the female members who attempted to speak to our reporter was shunned by her colleagues after the reporter had inquired from her on the church programme scheduled for July 27.

It could be recalled that on Tuesday, suspected arsonists had attempted to set the church ablaze but were stopped by the police who laid siege to the premises. Eye witnesses told *Saturday Champion* that it was an ugly incident to behold. According to them, the CPA members who were heavily armed with dangerous weapons, engaged in a fierce battle with the suspected arsonists, which led to the latter taking to their heels.

It was learnt that the said CPA members dashed into the streets within the vicinity with brandished weapons, attacking whoever came their way. One Mr. Uche, a cement dealer in the area, was said to have fallen victim of the devilish act as they butchered him with their cutlasses. It took the intervention of the passers-by to save Uche's life as he was immediately rushed to a nearby private hospital. Apart from him, *Saturday Champion* also learnt that some other innocent people were victims of their attack. It was also learnt that some hily-livered members rushed to the salon to shave their beards for fear of being arrested by the police or the arsonists.

Some of the residents who spoke to *Saturday Champion* expressed their gratitude to God that the can of worms was finally opened in the church. They revealed that the lives of the residents had been under serious threat since the inception of the church.

One Mr. Kingsley Uzo from Imo state expressed happiness that God finally delivered him from what he called the "church of Lucifer."

"I came to Lagos in 2000. In 2001, a friend introduced me to the church, I started worshipping with them from that time even when the church was at Ekwuano street in Ajao Estate, till 2003. I ran for my dear life when I discovered that the church has nothing to do with salvation. It is a secret cult. It is a church of Lucifer. He, Rev. King had told us that he and Jesus Christ are the same. I brought so many people to that church but thank God, I have been able to withdraw them all," he said.

Another resident who pleaded anonymity said that they normally locked the gate of the church once they started their worship, so that no member would be allowed to go outside for anything whatsoever. The man who said he had attended their worship once, revealed that once the General Overseer entered the church, no other member would be allowed in for that day. He added that members are usually subjected to serious beating for any alleged offence.

Corroborating their views, Mr. Emeka Okafor from Anambra State, who lives near

the church explained that there was a time able-bodied men of the church were ordered by Rev. King to enter into the houses within the area and arrest young men who refused to worship with them and who are believed to be obstacles to their worship.

Accordingly, the order was carried out leading to severe torture of the victims as the able-bodied men were said to be engaged in weight-lifting

and other physical exercises in the church.

He informed that CPA founder's followers worship him as God, stressing that his gullible members even genuflect before him or his cars. "Whenever he (King) is passing in his car, no other car moves in front of him," he said.

Moreover, another resident who identified himself as Femi Adewale could not understand why the church continued to thrive despite the evils being perpetuated there. He recalled a particular incident where Rev. King had to take blood sample of every member of his church in a programme he tagged, "Operation Airborne Disease." He remarked that it was a clear indication of initiation into occultism in the church.

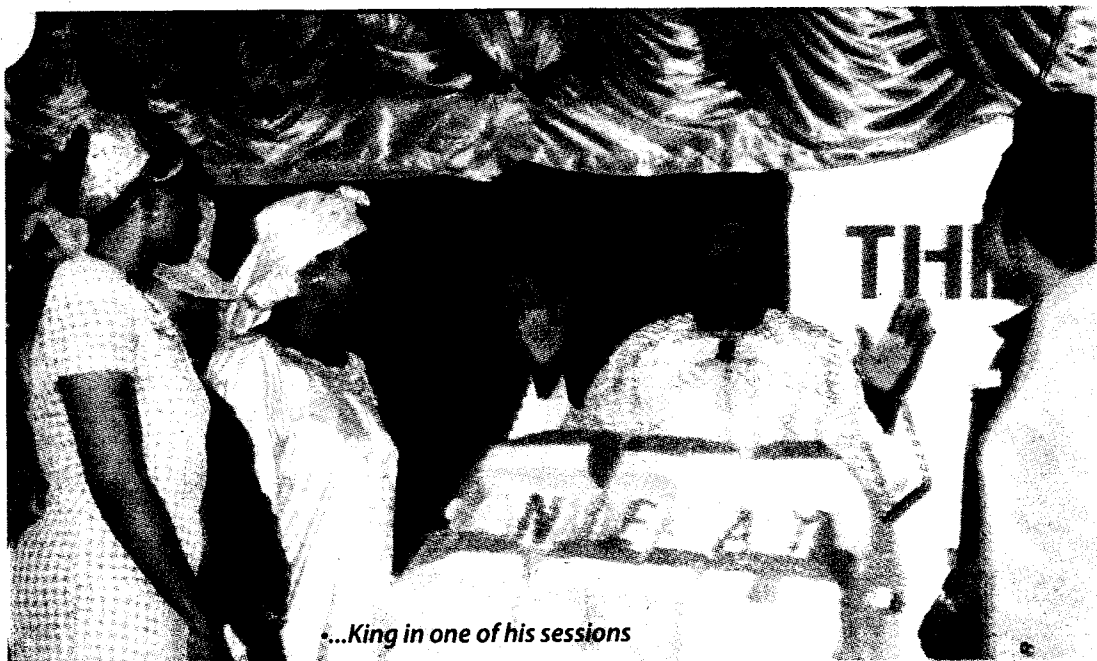
A female resident who has a shop in the area also said that the General Overseer told all his members not to buy anything from any of the shops within. According to her, almost all the members of the church come from outside the area as no right-thinking resident will worship in that church.

Meanwhile, a commercial motorcycle rider, who said he was a former member of the church hinted that people did not really get the gist even as he said that the dastardly act was carried out because Rev. King's secret was exposed.

*Saturday Champion* noticed that the atmosphere within the church premises was tensed as members seemed to be ready for any eventuality. It was a great moment for the residents as they were booing Rev. King and members of his church. But one thing was noticed. The residents were still afraid of possible attack by the church members.

Every effort made at speaking with one of the victims at the Faith City Hospital, Ajao Estate proved abortive, as the victim was under police surveillance.

According to the police, it was an order that nobody should speak with her.



...King in one of his sessions

## ...Ex-member's account

Chiejina the only male with a scare on his forehead sustained during the beating told *Saturday Champion* that Rev. King claimed that "we were committing fornication, which we did not do. He was alleging it on us falsely. So to save our heads, we admitted to that in order not to be beaten to death.

So, he later called us inside his house because I actually worked for him in his house, as an aide. I live with him in his house. So, he put the question to me again and to save myself, I said yes, so he started beating me. After beating me, he assembled all of us and beat all of us mercilessly.

He asked his attendant to pour fuel on us and he struck a matches and he set us ablaze.

The girls are in the hospital now. Their condition is critical."

Asked how many of the girls are in the hospital, he said "so many. They are all there in the hospital in a very critical condition.

Also to Mr. Chuks Iroanya, 42 a businessman and former member of Christian Praying Assembly, Ajao Estate, Lagos, there is always a sign when people come for a church service. Rev. King will ask everybody to use their fingers to hold their mouth, which means no one should say anything against the service for that day, or even for the rest of time that each church programme ran.

For Iroanya, who joined the church in 1999, members were warned never to leave their cell phones on when church services were going on, and if you do, there is a penalty which will involve seizing the cell phone for the reason that the owner acknowledged the cell phone more than God. And the seized cell phone may not be returned and the owner may be flogged.

Iroanya told *Saturday Champion* that Rev. King in the process of counseling people also flogs them and he hinted that he truly appreciates and applauds this action by the CPA overseer.

"If he did not do so, people will take God for granted. Yes, in the process of counseling, if he finds out that you have committed fornication, because it is only

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fornication that get him mad as he is a donkey in that aspect, and that persons involved, may be between one brother and a sister, he will like them to say the truth, and if eventually one accepted, and the other one refused he will now pray for the one that accepted for forgiveness and then take the other one to the elders of the church and before the congregation. When he or she later confesses he will flog that one that refused to say the truth. The reason why he flogs people is for others to take corrections," he said

Iroanya admitted that members of the church do some certain things that is not good for one to hear, and so deserve whatever punishment as may be deemed by Rev. King. "For me, I believe that Pastor King is in order for putting those rules and regulations of his church, because if for instance a native doctor ask us not to fornicate just to keep the commandment of their fetish gods, we will do it. So why will the command of a man of God not be obeyed"

Iroanya who says he spent 5 years in the church before opting out disclosed that he was never victimized by Rev. King because he was following every instruction issued by the CPA founder.

"This rumour that is going about might be true because Rev. King is so gullible about ladies and that is why he is not yet married, as he always says that women are the most enjoyable things on earth, whether married or unmarried," he said.

**V**ARIED stories and experiences has so far trailed the alleged action of Rev. King to set five members of his church ablaze.

A generator dealer at the Ilasamaja area of Lagos who gave his name simply as Ifeanyi who claims to be brother of one of the victims told *Saturday Champion* how on the fateful day he got a call that he was urgently needed by the said sister whose name he could not vouch on account of his overwhelming emotional outburst. The urgency he said was born out of fear that he may arrive late to the hospital before the unfortunate lady may give up. But according to him, it is now two days and the said sister is responding well to medications.

"It is indeed sad and I am tired of talking about it. I get worked-up talking about it," the young man said

## ...What the people say

with a note of finality.

On his part the spokesman of the Catholic archdiocese of Lagos State, Monsignor Gabriel Osu, retorted: "Is the said culprit a man of God and if he did it, did he not indeed commit the crime?" On this premise, he blamed the Nigerian public who he accused of using words indiscriminately for people claiming to be what they are not as they follow wherever they hear, the gospel of signs and wonders and not salvation preached. In his views, if answers to his questions above are positive, then the act is unfortunate. According to him, no true man of God could behave in that manner.

The reverend gentleman also blames Nigerians and the media who give undue attention to all manner of characters. Osu, however, believes that it is one of the products of the state of the nation as according to him, the prevailing state of the nation results in frustrations and all manner of fraudulent acts. He, therefore, calls on Nigerians to pray for church leaders as they also pray for themselves and the nation as a whole.

For the Trade Fair Complex, Lagos branch manager of Centage Mortgage Bank, who described the act as shocking, no shepherd can treat his flock that way. She totally condemned the action quoting firmly from the Christian holy book saying that, Jesus Christ said and demonstrated that he came for sinners and not the righteous in his gospel of salvation and not condemnation. According to her, he came that sinners might repent and not perish and every true messenger of His must follow his example. She therefore, enjoined Nigerians to pray for a discerning spirit to enable them ascertain whether or not those they follow as religious heads are the true shepherds.

Contributing, renowned human rights activist, Femi Falana, with his mouth and eyes wide open queried, "is this happening in Nigeria?" When he recovered from his shock, he analyzed the legal implications of the act saying the said pastor must be prosecuted for genocide to serve as a deterrent to other murderers in the cassock of pastors and priests of God. He urged the police to speed up investigations on the case so that, the alleged culprit may be arraigned as soon as possible.

Furthermore, Falana advised relatives of the victims to sue him to court and seek compensation as he

volunteered that he will mobilize the human rights groups to follow-up the case to ensure that justice is done.

Reactions continued to emanate from various groups, individuals and persons on the recent arrest of the controversial leader of Christian Praying Assembly, Rev. (Dr.) Emeka Ezeugo King.

Speaking to *Saturday Champion* on the incident, the Secretary General of Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), Bishop Joseph Ojo stated vehemently that "the so called King is not a reverend or pastor."

In his words, "His church is an occultic enclave and not a place that could be called a church."

According to him, the shepherd does not butcher his sheep but nurtures it, adding that setting ablaze church members by King was a devilish act.

He advised Christians and non-Christians alike not to mistake any gathering in the name of anything as that of God.

Bishop Ojo stated that there is no short cut to miracles and prosperity as people want, urging all to run after the word of God and not miracles.

On his part, Bishop John Obiokeke of God's Pentecostal Mission described the incident as the fulfillment of God's words given to him.

"I had said earlier in my prophecy that some fake prophets will be arrested and exposed this year," he said.

Bishop Obiokeke said that the world is looking for where it is happening quick, forgetting that some of these places are not led by men who hear from God.

Asked on what he feels about Rev. King's arrest, he stated that only men of God who hear from God, do God's will rather than seeking self glory and putting themselves side by side with God.

Bishop Obiokeke also urged other fake prophets and their followers to learn from the incident, adding that it is a sign of the end time.

Also baring his mind to *Saturday Champion*, the Dean, Missionary Training Centre, Lagos, Rev. Frank Freds Nwosu, described Rev. King as one who is after personal aggrandizement and self worship.

According to him, there is so much combination of Christianity with other religions like Hinduism and sorcery by people he described as charlatans.

"He is a charlatan. Rev. King has changed his name from Kingsley to Kings, all in the name of trying to get people to worship him."

The Dean, Missionary Training Centre said that charlatans like him use powers to lure people to worship them in spite of being tortured in the process.

He opined that the economic situation of the country has led many people to various places termed churches in a bid to get temporary relief which sometimes result in permanent damage or death.

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•Rev. King