

# WITCHCRAFT: A PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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## INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

The thorny issue of witchcraft among many Christian communities in Africa today is not unconnected with the serious problem of evil. The problem of evil is perhaps the greatest philosophical issue that faces all human beings irrespective of their religious persuasion. This is man's greatest problem because every human being born on the face of the earth is always confronted with some form of evil. As Michael Peterson states,

The perennial problem of evil haunts those areas of inquiry which deal primarily with the nature and destiny of man: philosophy, theology, literature, art and history. Neither is it surprising that every major worldview, whether religious, ethical or political proposes insight into this vexing problem.<sup>1</sup>

Evil is here understood in terms of human crises of pain, sickness, death and anything that causes discomfort to the human

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Peterson, *Evil and the Christian God*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982, p. 11.

being. When confronted with pain or sorrow, one is forced to square his experience with his religious belief and understanding. Harold Kushner, a Jewish writer, dealing with this problem said,

None of us can avoid the problem of why bad things happen to good people. Sooner or later each of us finds himself playing one of the roles in the story of Job, whether as a victim of tragedy, as a member of the family, or as a friend/comforter. The questions never change, the search for a satisfying answer continues.<sup>2</sup>

The real question that faces the religious devotee is whether or not his ultimate focus of devotion gives a satisfactory explanation to the evil he is experiencing. John Hick, who has written extensively on the topic, expands on the problem as it affects the three major religions observes that,

Christianity, like Judaism and Islam, is committed to a monotheistic doctrine of God as absolute in goodness and power and as the creator of the universe *ex nihilo*. If God is all-powerful, then he must be able to prevent evil. If he is all good, he must want to prevent evil. But evil exists. Therefore, God is either not all-powerful, or not all-good.<sup>3</sup>

Another version of this problem is well stated by David Hume.

Is he [God] willing to prevent evil but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?<sup>4</sup>

He goes on to elaborate on the problem by asking,

Why is there any misery at all in the world? Not by chance, surely from another cause. Is it from the intention of the deity? But he is perfectly

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<sup>2</sup> Harold S. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. New York: Avon Publishers, 1981, p. 143.

<sup>3</sup> John Hick, "The Problem of Evil" in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Vol. 3 & 4. New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1967, p. 136.

<sup>4</sup> David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, pt. X, p. 88.

benevolent. Is it contrary to his intention? But he is almighty. Nothing can shake the solidity of this reasoning, so short, so clear, so decisive.<sup>5</sup>

The understanding of what kind of God one believes in will affect how he understands evil. For example, a loving God but not a powerful God, though he wants to help cannot help his children. Evil, therefore, comes upon his children because God cannot protect them from it. Kushner states this position very succinctly.

I believe in God. But I do not believe the same things about Him that I did years ago when I was a theological student. I can worship a God who hates suffering *but cannot* (emphasis mine) eliminate it, more easily than I can worship a God who chooses to make children suffer and die for whatever exalted reason.<sup>6</sup>

Many Africans have embraced Christianity as their religion. They hold to the belief that God is almighty and that Jesus is the Son of God who provides salvation through His shed blood. At the same time they also hold to the strong belief that evil forces such as witchcraft, secret societies and evil spirits are ultimately responsible for all the suffering, sickness and death that afflict God's children. At the conceptual level, Africans believe in a supreme God. At the practical level, they are very dualistic, almost to the extent of a Manichean or Gnostic view of ultimate reality, in which there are two equal competing realities in the form of good and evil. I agree with Peterson that,

What a religious system says about evil reveals a great deal about what it takes ultimate reality, and man's relation to it, to be. Hence the credibility of a religion is closely linked to its ability to explain evil.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 91.

<sup>6</sup> Kushner, p. 134. He gives the title of chapter 7 of his book as, "God can't do everything but can do some important things" (p. 113). This demonstrates his profound belief that though God is loving and caring, He is limited as to what He can do, especially in the prevention of evil and suffering for his children.

<sup>7</sup> Peterson, p. 16.

The aim of this paper is to offer a philosophical and theological perspective on witchcraft as it affects Christians in the African context.

### MEANING OF WITCHCRAFT

Witchcraft is believed in almost all African societies. The belief in witchcraft is the traditional way of explaining the ultimate cause of evil, misfortune or death. Carol McKinney, who studied this phenomenon among the Bajju of Kaduna State of Nigeria, notes that witchcraft is:

an inherent capacity to exert supernatural influence over another person. This influence frequently causes harm, and it explains phenomena such as breaches in social relations, anti-social behavior, unexpected occurrences, sickness and death.<sup>8</sup>

Belief in witchcraft is a serious philosophical attempt to deal with the thorny question of evil. This belief in witchcraft explains that there is a primary or ultimate cause of evil. Evans-Pritchard captures the logic of witchcraft when he writes,

It is a system with its own natural logic. This explanatory system provides answers to questions of why particular occurrences happen to specific individuals at the time they do. It does not invalidate their understanding of empirical cause and effect of an occurrence. Rather it deals with its ultimate cause.<sup>9</sup>

Thus one sees that natural causes and witchcraft are not mutually exclusive but supplementary. The one supplements the other, accounts for what the other does not account. Pritchard explains further by example.

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<sup>8</sup> Carol V. McKinney, "The Bajju of Central Nigeria: A Case Study of Religious and Social Change." PhD Dissertation, Southern Methodist University, 1985, p. 59.

<sup>9</sup> Evans Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, Oxford, 1976, p. 71.

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Fire is hot, but it is not hot owing to witchcraft for that is its nature. It is a universal quality. It is the particular variable conditions of an event and not the general universal conditions that witchcraft explains.<sup>10</sup>

One sees that the belief in witchcraft serves a very practical purpose in explaining events and occasions and the causes behind them. Death is thus not a natural phenomenon. The death of young men and women is very unnatural. The witches would always be the cause of such a death. Even old people are sometimes said to be killed by witchcraft. Young people die not from natural causes but always from the powers of witchcraft. In some societies death from dysentery, falling off a tree and any violent death were considered such a serious misfortune that the deceased had to be buried in the backyard. This is not to say that people do not recognise natural causes, for example that the death of a young man in a motor accident was directly caused by a vehicle is not denied. The critical observation of Pritchard just cited indicates that there is a recognition of natural causes, but at the same time there is the acknowledgment of the fact that things do not “just happen”.

In concluding this section on the meaning of witchcraft, one must state that in essence Africans see witchcraft as “the enemy of life.”<sup>11</sup>

### PROOFS OF WITCHCRAFT

The African believes that witchcraft is proven by the scores of stories of the activities and confessions of the perpetrators and victims alike.

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion. The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*. New York: Orbis Books, p. 187. He goes on to explain that “Harmony, order, good neighbourliness or good company, co-operation and sharing, propriety and equitableness, honesty and transparency – all of which constitute signs of how human and created order should be – are denied in the most fundamental way by witchcraft....A witch is a person who does control the impulses that good members of society must keep in check. Insatiable desires and hatreds account, separately or together, for the deaths witches cause. Witches are morose, unsociable people” p. 87.

What do we make of the countless stories of the activities of witchcraft, confessions of witches and wizards? What do we say of the mass hysteria of witchcraft and secret societies? Doesn't this add up to the indisputable idea that there is witchcraft as we hear it from these stories and confessions? There are thousands and thousands of stories about witchcraft activities, confessions of old men and women, young boys and girls, children, rich, and poor, educated and uneducated, even infants and toddlers. Let me mention a few. Basil Davidson states,

Countless women, mostly of advanced years, confessed to being witches and to having committed fearful crimes. . . . A mid-wife confessed that she had killed as many as 170 children, twenty-two of whom were related to her. An old man confessed to having said that if he had not been arrested three days before he would have destroyed everything for twenty-five leagues round with hail and gravel-stones... The seventy-five year old woman, Anna Ottlin of Zeilitzheim, confessed that, as she was old and feeble, she might be allowed three days' respite, when she would tax her memory and tell of each separate crime in detail... Another witch, who had been several times tortured but had always recanted everything after being set free, was finally, after severer torture, brought to confess that she had dug up the bodies of sixteen children, boiled them and made witch salve out of them.<sup>12</sup>

A Nigerian writer writing about the Ibibio also enumerates the activities of witchcraft.

Barren women, people whose children die at birth, women with irregular menstrual flow, accident victims, traders who suffer losses, office workers who fail to get promotions, a political candidate who fails to get elected, a student who fails examinations, a person who notices scratches on his or her body, a hunter or fisherman who fails to bring home meat, a farmer with bad crop yields, a football team that consistently loses matches—all suspect witches as the cause of their misfortune. Even those who are most successful in their business or

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<sup>12</sup> Davidson, p. 124-125.

profession constantly fear being bewitched by envious relatives or friends.<sup>13</sup>

If you were asked about this, you would have your own stories. I have mine too. My grandfather who contracted small-pox was denied medication until he confessed about those he had killed with his witchcraft. The young Kunhiyop confessed that he had killed those that had recently died in the community and even some that died before his mother got married. My uncle's wife confessed last year that she was responsible for her husband's poverty. She also confessed that she would also kill him using witchcraft.

My 17 year old son, Babangida, was also accused of being an elder in a secret society. He, it was alleged by the accuser [also a member], was in charge of administering human blood. The point is that these stories *boku* (abound). What are we to make of them?

Let me begin by saying that it would be idle and foolhardy to deny the existence and reality of the belief in witchcraft. This belief must be taken seriously. "It is very real in the minds of those who believe in witchcraft."<sup>14</sup> People who believe in witchcraft attribute to it almost every social and personal evil. "There is no kind of illness or hardship at all that may not be attributed to witchcraft. . . . When natural or religious explanations fail to satisfy, the social explanation—witchcraft—is invariably invoked"<sup>15</sup>

African Christians who are trying to be relevant to their culture must begin by accepting that there is something such as witchcraft, by which I mean generally the power of Satan and his evil cohorts that bring suffering and misery to humanity.

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<sup>13</sup> Daniel A. Offiong, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Magic and Social Order among the Ibibio of Nigeria*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing, 1991, 78, quoted in Hiebert etc., p. 155. Pritchard notes that there is "no aspect of culture, however small or insignificant, where the power and influence of witchcraft is absent." P. 63.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, Tite Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999, p. 173.

<sup>15</sup> Magesa, p. 182.

However, my belief in witchcraft does not exonerate me from asking serious philosophical questions on this issue. The two critical philosophical questions that face us with regards to witchcraft are metaphysics and epistemology.

At the metaphysical level, I must ask myself for example, if one confesses to the eating of the flesh and drinking of human blood, is it to be taken metaphorically or physically. Indeed both Christians and non-Christians have been asked this question, and they indicate serious doubt about the real eating of the flesh of the human being. The Nupe people of Nigeria believe that the eating is spiritual not physical. That still does not settle the metaphysical problems associated with the "eating and drinking of human flesh and blood."

At the epistemological level, we have to ask ourselves how do we know that the stories are true or false? Again, I am aware that as Africans we believe that if someone has confessed to being a witch, why should we not believe him or her? However, if one were to put these stories together and ask himself of the truthfulness or lack of, would he not conclude that "while they by no means prove that the actions confessed were actually committed, they certainly point to vivid and profound belief in witchcraft."<sup>16</sup> In my mind, these stories demonstrate clearly that "what is known about witchcraft is what is believed about them. But what is believed about them is that they embody the workings of evil."<sup>17</sup>

As we all know.

A principal way in which traditional religions accredit, justify and propagate ideas about the supernatural is through the telling and retelling of stories of the supernatural. These stories are told to accredit an incredible range of beliefs about spirits, beliefs, which vary according to the culture and religion of the teller. . . We are expected to

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<sup>16</sup> Basil Davidson, *The African Genius*. Little Brown and Company, 1969, p. 121.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127



assent to the validity of the stories and of the inferences drawn from them.<sup>18</sup>

The authors go on to conclude rightly that “if we proceed on the mistaken assumption that we can infer truth about spirits from people’s beliefs about spirits, we will invariably end up syncretistically incorporating animistic and magical notion of spirit power into our doctrinal understanding of the demonic world.”<sup>19</sup> Stories and confessions about witchcraft do not prove the reality and certainty of witchcraft but simply affirm the belief in the existence of witchcraft. Though the belief in witchcraft attempts to provide a solution to the existence of evil in the world, it does not provide an adequate and an acceptable solution to the problem of evil.

### BIBLICAL PERCEPTIONS ON WITCHCRAFT

Another crucial question about the issue of witchcraft concerns the Biblical teaching on witchcraft. We must ask ourselves the question, “What does the Bible have to say about witchcraft?” People of God in both the Old and New Testaments have been warned to have nothing to do with demonic activity and anything related with it. Leviticus 19:31 states, “Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them” (cf. 20:26; Ex. 22:18; Deut. 18:14). Deuteronomy 18:14 makes it very explicit: “Let no one be found among you..... who engages in witchcraft or cast spells. These are detestable practices.” It is very clear that *witchcraft or any demonic activity* in all its ramifications *is detestable* to God. In the New Testament, man is said to be bewitched when he replaces God for another (Gal. 3:1). There is a clear prohibition of involvement in witchcraft, whether in actual

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<sup>18</sup> Priest, Robert J., Thomas Campbell, and Bradford Mullen, “Missiological Syncretism: The New Animistic Paradigm.” In *Spiritual Power and Missions: Raising the Issues*. Edited by Edward Rommen. Evangelical Missiological Society Series, Number 3. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995, pp. 9-87.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

involvement in demonic activity or giving verbal support of the activity.

Believers who have dabbled in demonic activities have been hurt and injured. Disobedience to the clear teaching of Scripture concerning witchcraft leads to catastrophic consequences e.g. defeat, injury, and death. The story of Saul in Samuel 28 and the sons of Sceva in Acts 19 demonstrate some problems encountered when people dabble in demonic activities of any kind. In fact, witchcraft has nothing good to offer. Witchcraft encourages disrespect against parents, children, disunity and hatred among families, and murder. Recently, a young man hacked his father to death because he suspected his father of killing his son in witchcraft. It is almost incredible the atrocities that have been committed because of witch-hunting even among Christian communities.

The testimony of Scripture is that the child of God has complete power over demonic power. Look at the New Testament. There it is the devil that flees, not the child of God. If there is the power of witchcraft, then the power of the child of God overshadows it. "Jesus' power is super power and Satan's power is powerless power" according to a current children's chorus in Nigeria. The theological basis of this assertion is that the cross disarmed demonic control of the believer in Christ when Christ had stripped evil forces of their power. "He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them" (Col. 2:14). According to Fred Dickason,

Satan and demons are no match for Christ, the God-man. In face of satanic opposition, the cross accomplished God's self-glorification, released the devil's prisoners, publicly routed evil spirits, and sealed their judgment so that men would never have to fear or follow them again.<sup>20</sup>

This has been a brief survey of the biblical material on witchcraft. Does the biblical material prove that the African belief

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<sup>20</sup> C. Fred Dickason. *Angels, Elect and Evil*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1975, p. 215.

in witchcraft is basically the same doctrine that the Scriptures present? I believe not. Confessions, stories and experiences of witchcraft are a clear demonstration of what a person believes according to his cultural belief. Many times the Bible is used as a proof text for our already established opinions and beliefs. Certainly, our culturally postulated reality of witchcraft needs to be adjusted to and addressed pastorally with seriousness, sensitivity and respect. The Bible properly interpreted would not support the kind of doctrines of demons, evil spirits and witchcraft which are supported, nursed and propagated by our traditional beliefs and transmitted through stories, confessions and experiences. Though experiences and stories are relevant and should be interacted with, the epistemological formulation and certainty of doctrines on this matter should be based on Scripture alone.

### **RESURGENCE OF THE BELIEF AND PRACTICE OF WITCHCRAFT**

In spite of the fact that Christians have been warned not to have anything to do with witchcraft, the evidence is that,

there is widespread belief in the power of witchcraft and the fear of being bewitched. Christian rituals are often seen as new and more powerful protection against the attacks of one's enemies and those who may be jealous.<sup>21</sup>

It is not uncommon to hear mothers covering the beds of their children with the blood of Jesus to ward off witches and evil spirits before putting them to bed. The blood of Jesus is also poured on the road to provide security against witches who cause accidents on the road.

We are plagued with the resurgence of witchcraft in such proportions that we are forced to ask ourselves what has precipitated this mass hysteria? Why is there such a resurgence of belief in the powers of witches and wizards among Christians

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<sup>21</sup> Hiebert, p. 173.

today? Why have the demons and witches resurfaced in such numbers? I think several factors are responsible for this almost epidemic situation in the African context.

First, I think that church leaders, especially expatriate missionaries, have presented evil inadequately. The main problem is this: "What is the ultimate cause of misfortune, sickness and death?" As far as the African is concerned God is our Father and we are His children, He does not cause evil, sickness or death. It is a known fact that missionaries, the early church leaders and some contemporary leaders dismissed witchcraft as mere superstition. At this point, though we acknowledge with deep appreciation the role missionaries played in transforming the African society through the gospel, we must also add that missionaries and early African Church leaders failed in understanding the world view of the African. In this regard, Professor Yusufu Turaki notes.

The major pitfall of the pioneering and early missionaries was the way they berated African culture. Their attitude was in the main the basic negation of African culture, custom, religious and social life.<sup>22</sup>

It is not an exaggeration that church leaders are now painfully aware that the mere dismissal of witchcraft as superstition no longer carries weight with many of their members. In fact many Christians in our churches confess to the existence and practice of witchcraft. I doubt seriously that the church has responded to the nagging problem of witchcraft from a Scriptural and a theological perspective. As Merrill Unger observes,

every spirit-anointed minister should echo the words of the Great Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ whose wonderful ministry of liberation was so gloriously foretold "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to proclaim freedom for the captive and release from darkness for the prisoners" (Is. 61:1,2, and Lk. 4:18-19).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Yusufu Turaki, "The Minority Ethnic Group and Christian Missions." Boston: Typewritten, 1982, p. 27.

<sup>23</sup> Merrill Unger. *Demons in the World Today*. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971, p. 188.

But the minister must know what he is fighting against so as to be able to proclaim a message of victory.

*Secondly*, as a consequence of ecclesiastical leadership failure, Christians generally are prone to provide worldly standards and demonic explanations to the question of evil rather than biblical and theological explanations. Consequently, though we claim to be Christians, we are quick to suspect witchcraft when someone's children are getting sick or have died. We are prone to give suggestions which favour witchcraft rather than to recognise Christ's power over our lives. We therefore cling to witchcraft which satisfies our desire to find answers to our questions. Many young Christians can hardly give one story of deliverance from demonic power, but can give countless stories of the confessions and power of witches and wizards. As long as Christians have more stories (true or false) of witchcraft, they will always feel that witchcraft has power over the child of God.

*Thirdly*, nominal Christianity has also contributed to the resurgence of witchcraft. External change without an internal transformation does not affect the whole person. Many Christians that I have talked to have accepted the fact that they became Christians because it was the normal thing to do. In the southern area of Kaduna State of Nigeria and most former mission stations, it is normal to be church-goers. This is exactly where the danger lies. Though at the external level they claimed to be Christians, they are unbelieving and unchanged and of course cling tenaciously to those deep-seated traditional beliefs and values.

Stephen Neil makes the significant observation that,

On a deeper level than conduct, and in the end more menacing, is the persistent underground of non-Christian structures and patterns of thought. Those patterns are far more instinctive than rational. They persist in all of us, racially as well as individually... such deep conviction can remain unspoken and can apparently, in Europe no less than in Africa, be transmitted from generation to generation. This explains the distressing emergence in the third and fourth generation

Christians of old and evil practices such as one would imagine to have long disappeared from the Christian consciousness.<sup>24</sup>

John Mbiti, a noted African theologian equally remarks that,

a careful scrutiny of the religious situation shows clearly that in their encounter with traditional religions, Christianity and Islam have made only an astonishingly shallow penetration in converting the whole man of Africa, with all his historical-cultural roots, social dimension, self-consciousness and expectations.<sup>25</sup>

Alyward Shorter similarly notes that,

at baptism, the African Christian repudiates remarkably little of his former non-Christian outlook. What remains above the surface is, in fact, the tip of an iceberg. The African Christian is not asked to recant a religious philosophy. Consequently, he returns to the forbidden practices as occasion arises with remarkable ease.<sup>26</sup>

Witchcraft, sorcery and witch hunting among Christian communities are a classical case of Shorter's significant observation.

*Fourthly*, ignorance of Scriptural truths and theology has also contributed to the resurgence of witchcraft beliefs and practices among Nigerian Christians. A quick survey of an average Christian would indicate that generally many professing Christians have no knowledge of Scriptures, and specifically they are unaware of what the Bible really teaches on many of the issues about witchcraft. Pastors and evangelists are more prone to superficial condemnations, rather than giving a systematic teaching on philosophical, religious and theological beliefs and values in the

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<sup>24</sup> Stephen Neil, *The Unfinished Task*. London: Edinburgh House Press, London, 1957, pp. 117-118.

<sup>25</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann, 1969, p. 263.

<sup>26</sup> Alyward Shorter, *African Theology. Adaptation or Incarnation*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1977, p. 10.

context of Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. Again, Stephen Neil puts his finger on the problem.

Almost everywhere there has been grave failure in the giving of systematic instruction to the members of Christian faith. There has been plenty of preaching—almost all simple sermons—but the intellectual content has been small, and the aim is all too often moralistic edification rather than serious instruction. The Bible is a more difficult book than is often realised by those who have been brought up on it.<sup>27</sup>

Another scholar in Africa also states,

One is forced to ask the question: why does the African, in times of human crises, revert back to non-Christian practices? This appears to be the rule rather than the exception when because the African's past has been ignored and no attempt has been made to penetrate it with the regeneration power of the gospel message, the converted African lives in two levels.<sup>28</sup>

This explains, in part, that although they are Christians, their worldview has not been transformed.

*Fifth*, the lack of "social restraints and other in-built mechanisms" have contributed to the retention of these beliefs which are negative to the Christian faith. In modern African Christian societies there has been a steady disintegration of traditional structures and values. For instance, the practice of witchcraft in traditional African societies had controls and restraints. Not everyone could claim to be a witch or wizard. The elders provided controls and were the interpreters and judges of those who practised witchcraft. The situation is completely different today where you have children and young people claiming to be experts in witchcraft. Young people and children have become authorities on witchcraft. The collapse of the authority of the elders has contributed immensely to the breakdown of law and order.

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<sup>27</sup> Neil, 1957: 130.

<sup>28</sup> G.C. Oosthuizen, *Post Christianity. A Theological and Anthropological Study*. 1964, p. 4.

There are no checks and controls in the modern mass hysteria of belief and practice of witchcraft. This has provided a fertile ground for the resurgence of the notorious belief and practice of witchcraft.

### **DEALING WITH WITCHCRAFT: THEOLOGICAL PERCEPTIONS**

In order to deal with the problem of evil properly, one must approach it from concepts that properly root in Scripture. I will discuss them briefly.

*First*, the attributes of God will enable the Christian to an adequate understanding of evil.

**Sovereignty.** James Montgomery Boise states it very well,

So the doctrine of the sovereignty of God is no mere philosophical dogma devoid of practical value. The sovereignty of God is the foundation of Christian faith... the centre of gravity in the system of Christian truth. It is also the Christians' strength and comfort amid the storms of this life.

There is clear teaching in the Scripture that Satan and evil spirits act only when they have been given permission by God. The story of Job in chapters 1,2 clearly demonstrate this truth. Romans 8:31, 35, 37-39 provide the assurance that the knowledge of the sovereignty of God will afford a deep sense of security in a world which is full of misery and trouble.

**The Goodness and Love of God.** In a real and practical way, God is involved in the world through the goodness He demonstrates to all his creatures. Goodness here means the outgoing of God's grace and love and mercy towards his creatures. John Wenham also notes that God's goodness is in a manner quite outside our experience.

God's goodness is a blazing, consuming, awe-inspiring thing, unlike the best that we know among men. It is when we see the creator standing



over against creation, loving his children with infinite love; yet hating evil with infinite hatred that we see theism in all its glory.<sup>29</sup>

One writer exclaims: "Oh the goodness of God, the goodness of God." In any human crisis the Christian must resort to this Biblical truth in order to succeed for indeed God is good (Lam. 3:21-25). The love of God is still evident in allowing his children to suffer for His glory and the goodness of the suffering Christian (Rom. 8:38-39). Evil is temporal but God's love for his children is everlasting.

**The Presence of God** is another attribute of God that will transform the Christian worldview. God is always present with him. To Moses, God said "My presence will go with you." To Elisha's servant, "those who are with us are greater than those you see around us." It is clear that though one affirms the existence of demons and evil spirits, the presence of God and his angels is enough to provide adequate security against demons and any human fear. The fact is that our God who is always with us is greater, mightier and stronger than the devil. In this regard John said, "He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world." (1 Jn 4:4). For the Christian in particular, Christ promised us that He will be with us to the end of the age (Mt. 28:20). The point is not denying the existence and power of Satan and his agents through demons/witches but that we affirm the power of God over those who oppose us.

**Second** are the causes of evil. The believer needs to understand the source of evil. There is the need to understand that the origin of evil is sin. The consequences of the fall on the human race is death (Gen. 3:19), pain, domination of the wife by the husband, cursed ground, and hard labour. In other words, evil in whatever form is a result of our sin for which we are personally responsible (Rom. 5:12).

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<sup>29</sup> John Wenham, *The Goodness of God*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1974, p. 45.

Evil springs from the moral choices of men. Man is free to act. He makes his own decisions. If you decide to jump from a tree, the law of gravitation will cause you to fall, not upwards but down to your injury or death. Moral choices set in motion laws of cause and effect which God has established. The man or woman who lives a promiscuous life and gets the deadly AIDS virus cannot blame any witch or evil forces but has opened himself or herself to getting this deadly disease.

Evil forces may cause evil. Evil spirits or demons not only exist but also afflict human beings. The story of Job indicate that the demonic world can be involved in causing disease and even death. But note again that, evil is permitted by God's will and for special purposes (Gen. 50:20, Ac. 2:23). These causes are not unrelated but interrelated.

Physical causes may also be there. That man is in the flesh makes physical death a necessity (Ps. 90:10). Also moral causes exist, for example sin is also a cause. The wages of sin is death. In addition, divine causes (Job 1). Lastly, **the goodness of God must be seen from God's perspective not from man's point of view.** When God allows evil, it is not because he desires to see his children suffer, but because he intends to achieve his goal. When he allowed Satan, it was not because he could not stop him, but he only allowed him.

**Third,** we must realise that God controls evil and He will eventually do away with it. He sets limits on the extent of evil upon his children. The case of Job is a good example. The Bible makes it clear that God has a boundary or limit over everyone's life (Job 14:4, Heb. 9:27). The child of God must realise that he is touched by the devil only as God almighty allows the devil or evil forces to do so, and even in this case God has placed a limit over demonic power. The devil does not compete with God's power; he seeks God's permission to inflict injury or harm God's people.

Job demonstrates this confidence in the death of his children and the personal destruction of his property. Even when we cannot

fully understand God's permission of evil which causes so much pain (as the story Job clearly states), the child of God must say along with Job, "though he slay me, yet will I hope in him." This is an avowed confidence of the believer in God. The believer in such crises does not yield to Satan and evil spirits. He also does not deny the existence and potency of these demonic spirits, but he affirms his commitment to the Sovereign Lord. In addition to this radical commitment, the problem of evil in all its form should also motivate the Christian to live a life as if he were to die any moment. It is in this regard that the Psalmist says "teach me to number my days" (Ps. 90:10-12). God has not promised any person a non-violent death. That man is to die is certain; that he will die while sleeping is no where guaranteed. A Christian may become mentally deranged, drown or be killed in a car accident. Job 21:22-25 states, "Will any teach God knowledge, seeing that he judges those that are on high. One dies in full prosperity, being wholly at ease and secure, his body of fat and the marrow of his bones moist. Another dies in bitterness of soul never having tasted of good."

The Christian does not live as if there are no evil spirits and witches, but he lives with the full conviction that God is in control. He believes wholeheartedly that the Devil and his forces have been conquered and that as a believer he has no need to fear demonic forces. The fact is, without this affirmation from the Scripture in our ears, it would not be worth being a Christian. The joy of being a Christian is that our God in Jesus Christ is sovereign over all evil forces, and the child of God can proclaim that without fear. This is the clear teaching of the Scriptures which should provide great comfort and strength in these times of the resurgence of demonic activities which cause so much fear and terror. The Christian has victory in Christ over witchcraft and all its divergent forces.

I believe that the term "Theological witchcraft" refers to genuine religious practices. However, practices and beliefs that have been termed "witchcraft" do not constitute a single identifiable religion, since they are found in a wide variety of cultures, both present and historical; however these beliefs do generally involve religious elements dealing with spirits or deities, the afterlife, magic and ritual. Sometimes witchcraft is used to refer, broadly, to the practice of indigenous magic, and has a connotation similar to shamanism, or it can refer to modern-day Wicca.Â Theologians use various forms of analysis and argument (philosophical, ethnographic, historical) to help understand, explain, test, critique, defend or promote any of a myriad of religious topics. Witchcraft: a philosophical and theological analysis. Samuel Waje Kunhiyop. INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF EVIL., The thorny issue of witchcraft among many Christian communities in Africa today is not unconnected with the serious problem of evil. The problem of evil is perhaps the greatest philosophical issue that faces all human beings irrespective of their religious persuasion. This is man's greatest problem because every human being born on the face of the earth is always confronted with some form of evil. As Michael Peterson states Philosophical analysis is the techniques typically used by philosophers in the analytic tradition that involve "breaking down" (i.e. analyzing) philosophical issues. Arguably the most prominent of these techniques is the analysis of concepts (known as conceptual analysis). While analysis is characteristic of the analytic tradition in philosophy, what is to be analyzed (the analysandum) often varies. Some philosophers focus on analyzing linguistic phenomena, such as sentences, while others focus on