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# A Biblical Study of Witchcraft: With Applications for Second and Third Generation Christians in Kenya

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*Witchcraft remains an issue for the Church in Africa yet many second and third generation Christians are confused about what to think of witchcraft and how to handle those who are caught up in its power. When people seek to use the power of witchcraft there is always a high price to be paid in terms of spiritual decline and physical damage. The biblical position on witchcraft is outlined showing that God condemns the practice not only for violating the first commandment but also for damaging the person. The author concludes that instead of condemning those caught up in witchcraft the modern pastor should show concern, "affirm the biblical teaching of the reality of witchcraft and give God's reasons for prohibiting it."*

**D**uring my years of ministry with the Africa Inland Church in Nairobi, I have come across many second and third generation Christians who are coming into contact with witchcraft and yet they are ignorant of the biblical teaching on it or they have a distorted view of it. This renewed boom in interest and return to witchcraft and its practice seems to be happening due to several reasons.

There are those who are coming into contact with witchcraft out of mere innocent curiosity. After interviewing many such individuals, one Christian writer realized that many simply committed themselves to a series of simple experiments to "see if it would work." To their amazement results were produced, at least sufficiently so as to satisfy their initial curiosity. With the mysteries before them, they continued to pursue further possibilities. "[Then] their involvement became deeper and their commitment moved on relentlessly." (Davis, 1973, 38).

A second reason seems to be the current call in our Kenya Secondary schools and secular university colleges for a return to traditional practices as a way of

showing patriotism. This includes either returning to or integrating African Traditional Religions with Christianity. Obviously, one major characteristic of African Traditional Religions is its assertion of the African personality with its advocates "straining every nerve to 'purify' Christianity from its western association" (Kato, 1975, 51). Hence, the consequent return to witchcraft because "in African traditional religions, the worshipper believes that through divination the prescribed sacrifices, he can be delivered from his enemies, real and potential, secure the help of his ancestors and the gods and be prosperous in life." (Adeyemo, 1983, 4).

Another reason is that many are returning to witchcraft as they seek to find answers as to why certain things are befalling them or as they seek to obtain release from social strains. As Moreau notes, one of the reasons why witchcraft and supernatural beliefs have not "died off" with the advent of education, urbanization, and westernisation is that "witchcraft continues to be utilized in explaining events (failure on exams, why my brother got malaria, why someone died, and so on)" (Moreau, 1990, 124-5). Why today's nominal Christianity fails to offer the solution to these mysteries, most people tend to seek solutions in witchcraft which offers to provide mysterious and adventurous experiences through communion with the supernatural (Boa, 1977, 118).

The key reason, however, is the ignorance on the biblical teaching of witchcraft. This is due to the tragic fact that the subject is neither well taught in our Bible schools and colleges nor well expounded in our churches. Instead, both the early white missionaries and the present indigenous church leaders seem to have chosen to remain silent on it, probably hoping that this would dissuade people from witchcraft. Witchcraft may be defined as "the human exercise of alleged supernatural powers for antisocial evil purposes" (Kluckholm, 604). Other synonymous terms are "magic" and "sorcery" which may also be defined generally as "attempts to influence people and events by supernatural or occult means."

Some anthropologists like Evans-Pritchard have attempted to distinguish between sorcery and witchcraft. According to him, sorcery is the evil practice which harms people by performing magic rites and using bad medicines. Witchcraft is an innate mystical power which performs no rites, utters no spells and possesses no medicines and yet is real and can be used to harm people (Middleton, 1963, 3). Interestingly, however, further study reveals that most African societies do not distinguish between witchcraft, sorcery, evil magic, evil eye, and other ways of employing mystical powers to harm. Instead, the same

word (witchcraft) is used in a broad sense for all these terms and the same person may be accused or suspected of employing one or more of these to hurt community members (Mbiti, 1969, 202). Thus, regardless of the means, the end is the same in that people and property are injured by use of the supernatural.

### **Current Beliefs and Practices of Witchcraft in Kenya**

*Beliefs Regarding the Existence of Witchcraft.* Beliefs and practices always have an important influence on a person. They determine the action one takes in a crisis situation. We therefore need to examine briefly some contemporary beliefs and practices of witchcraft in Kenya. In the first place, there are those who deny its reality. Those who hold this view believe that the only way someone can kill is through the use of poison. Elizabeth, an old Christian Mkamba, expressed this attitude when she said:

There is no such thing as Uoi [witchcraft] but I believe there is poison or dangerous chemicals which can kill once eaten in food. This is the only way one can bewitch me. I don't believe that someone can use powder, as Nzevu [potent magic powder], to utter words that can kill or harm me (Gehman, 1985, 198).

Boa is therefore right in observing that "some writers claim that witchcraft is nothing more than legend and ritual" (Boa, 1977, 111). A yet more vivid case illustrates this attitude very well. Recently a young Maasai forced his way into the Narok County Council Chairman's office and dumped a heap of assorted charms wrapped in a polythene bag. Later, while addressing the press who had witnessed the event, the Chairman (Yiaile) said he did not believe in witchcraft since he was a Christian ("Man Takes Charms," 4). This attitude is therefore found among many rationalistic Christians, especially those educated under the pioneer white missionaries. As noted earlier these missionaries considered witchcraft as superstition and they dismissed it as unreal. Consequently, those Africans who learned from them followed suit.

A second attitude is one whereby every case of misfortune is explained as being the result of witchcraft. In a 1988 newspaper article on witchcraft, Mutahi noted a common belief that "very few Kenyans die of natural causes or accidents. Most of them die because somebody somewhere has 'fixed' them with some mysterious 'dawa' [medicine]" (Mutahi, 1988, 13).

This view is particularly prominent among the traditional Akamba. These have a common saying that “Mukamba ndakusaa ate muoe” (A Mkamba cannot die of natural cause, unless he is bewitched). Gehman confirms this view, adding that “the belief in witchcraft permeates the worldview of the Akamba” (Gehman, 1985, 80).

Many nominal Christians who have not firmly grasped the reality and power of Christ in their lives turn to witchcraft for solutions whenever in crisis situations. An example is where Njoroge’s Christian mother could not understand why Njoroge was not gaining weight after he had started working: “She was advised by a relative that somebody must have organized some witchcraft against [Njoroge] and that is why [Njoroge] was not gaining weight. It was suggested that [Njoroge] should see a witchcraft to counter what was working against [him]” (Mutahi, 1988, 13).

A third attitude also found among contemporary Kenyan Christians is a mediating one. This view holds that while there are genuine cases of witchcraft, there are at the same time cases of misfortune that are not the result of witchcraft. This, “we [must] readily admit and fully affirm that a large portion of what is claimed to be mystical power is none other than deception by the specialists themselves” (Gehman, 1989, 12). This is a reasonably objective attitude towards witchcraft.

A fourth attitude towards witchcraft is that of indifferent disposition. Most of those who hold to this view seem to say that the subject is too complicated for them to understand. This attitude is especially common among many second and third generation Christians who are totally ignorant concerning either the traditional or biblical view of witchcraft.

However, some renowned anthropologists like Parrinder attributed witchcraft to lack of medical and scientific knowledge (Parrinder, 1958, 163). Yet modern education and scientific knowledge have not cured witchcraft beliefs and fears. Published reports abound that attest to the reality of witchcraft. The case of Mrs. Ekow is instructive. Mrs. Ekow (not her real name), though a Christian, was a victim of a witch’s target. The witch was a lady who was a family enemy and who had sworn that no child would ever be born to the Ekows. The result was that for no apparent medical problems, all of Mrs. Ekow’s pregnancies ended up in miscarriage before they were four months old. But the most interesting factor was that each miscarriage would be preceded by a terrifying nightmare in which Mrs. Ekow would wake up screaming and sweating and with severe abdominal

pains. This made the couple to think that these were not simply normal events. Much prayer and study of God's Word confirmed to the couple that the devil and his agents were involved. Finally, after claiming Jesus' authority over Satan through fasting and prayer, these terrible experiences disappeared and God blessed them with several children (Kisuke, 1987, 7-8).

Therefore, regardless of the many different views and opinions people have today regarding the reality and existence of witchcraft, it "is alive and well in Kenya and there is no denying that whatever efforts are being made to eradicate it, its effect(s) are being felt" (Arunda, 1987, 9).

### **Beliefs Regarding the Source of Power, Practice, and Control of Witchcraft**

There is a general agreement that in witchcraft man "seeks to control that which is greater than he is" (Arunda, 1987, 9) but debate continues regarding the source of power in witchcraft. People like Mbiti suggest that the real source of power in witchcraft is God. This is because all "power is ultimately from God, but in practice [of witchcraft] it is inherent in or comes from or through physical objects and spiritual beings" (Mbiti, 1969, 203). He further explains that human beings can tap this power (which is neutral) from the "spirit beings" and then use it to either benefit or harm society (Mbiti, 1969, 203). After having examined various beliefs on the use of mystical powers in Africa, Gehman also agrees that most Africans believe that these powers are impersonal. Hence, these may be tapped, either for good or ill (Gehman, 1989, 78).

However, in spite of such a belief, there is "evidence among traditionalists which indicates a connection between aimu (evil spirits) and Uoi [witchcraft]" (Gehman, 1985, 199). Several authors including Boa, Koch, and Somba, believe that witches obtain their power through demonic agency (Boa, 1977, 112); Koch, 1974, 60-61; Somba, 21). Thus although some witches may not be certain about the source of the power they are tapping, evidence shows that Satan and his agents are the real source.

Emmanuel Eni is a former wizard from Nigeria who was later saved. His relations with the spirit world came innocently via association with his wife, Alice, who was a witch. After Emmanuel's discovery that she was a witch and his subsequent interest in witchcraft, Alice offered to take him to a witches' meeting where he was initiated. He explains that he had to enter into a covenant

with Satan and his agents. As a result, he was not only given a demonic angel to guard him, but he also had certain gadgets inserted into his body to enable him to have prior knowledge of his enemies' thoughts as well as ability to change into various forms (Obonyo, 1989, 7). Thus, there is evidence from a Christian perspective for the belief that the real source of power in witchcraft is Satan and his agents.

Regarding the practice of witchcraft, several methods seem to be evident. One is "sympathetic magic." This is the type which depends on an apparent association between things. Here, "the Muoi [witch] utilizes all manner of items which had once been in contact with the victim" (Gehman, 1985, 78). Such items would include things like finger nails, toe nails, hair, pieces of cloth, footprints, faeces, or even the private parts of a close dead relative. Thus, among those who strongly believe in witchcraft, great care is taken to ensure that such things are hidden lest they be secured by a witch and used to harm either the owner or his close relatives. The other is the type that uses poison made from certain herbs or parts of animals (such as the liver of a crocodile). Such poison, if concealed in the fingernails of the witch and then surreptitiously placed in the food of the victim, would be sufficient to do the deadly work (Gehman, 1985, 79). Regardless of the type, however, many people in Kenya today, Christians included, still believe in the power of witchcraft.

### **Some Effects of Witchcraft Among Second and Third Generation Christians**

Often, those people who engage in witchcraft attain the desired result that originally motivated them to resort to witchcraft for help. However, there is always a catch because Satan and the demons behind the power in witchcraft will never give anything for free. Hence, "most of those who are serious about witchcraft know that some kind of contractual arrangement is involved. Just as they are served by the dark powers (demons), so they must also serve these beings" (Boa, 1977, 112). Most of those who venture into witchcraft are prone to becoming demonized. Basham says that

occult enquiry results in demonic affliction for the enquirer. [This is] because the whole psychic realm is dominated by evil spirits anxious to

attach themselves to a human personality [and] those who dabble in occultism invite spiritual oppression (Basham, 1975, 81).

Merrill Unger also supports this when he observes that "healing through occult involvement leads to psychic disturbances" (Unger, 1971, 94). It simply shifts the trouble from the organic to the psychic. Thus, Satan drives a hard bargain and he grossly cheats his victims (Unger, 1971, 95).

Two living examples that I came across during my ministry show that involvement in witchcraft often results in demonization. The first case involved Mwendya (not his real name) who happened to be the first-born son in what was originally a well-to-do family of four children. But Mwendya's parents died and left the four orphans at a very early age. Those deaths affected them greatly. One of Mwendya's brother's died and the other brother and sister became mentally disturbed. But somehow Mwendya managed to scrape through his education. Eventually, he was able to obtain a scholarship to India for university education. But he later became convinced that his parents' death and the subsequent suffering were the result of witchcraft by a jealous paternal uncle. Mwendya then sought help through witchcraft in Tanzania. As a result he got a well-paying job as a bank executive with a house and a car as fringe benefits. But he has also had to pay a price. He became demonized and was ordered by the demons never to keep a wife beyond her sixth month of pregnancy or else he could die. Consequently, he married and sent away six different girls in the five years that followed.

The second example involved a church elder whose wife had suffered incurable migraine headaches for more than five years. After trying all possible medical help in vain, he decided to try witchcraft secretly. His wife was healed of her headaches, but not for free. She immediately became demonized, mentally ill, and often violent. Early this year, the elder confessed the truth to a team of Christian brothers. His wife was then healed after much prayer and removal of the demons. But this happened after ten years of oppression. The key thing to remember here is that this oppression was invited when help was sought through witchcraft.

Another notable effect of witchcraft is death. This often happens, not only for the bewitched victim, but also for the enquirer who becomes demonized. Unger observes that many occultists and magic workers especially those who have cultivated the black arts and signed themselves over to the devil in their own blood, die horrible deaths. This is especially true when a ready successor is not provided to carry on the nefarious practice (Unger, 1971, 95).

Other generally negative effects of witchcraft are divorce and lack of development. One Kenyan government official in Siaya made the comment that “accusations of witchcraft in homes have caused many divorce cases” (Arunda, 1987, 9). This happens when a woman is accused or suspected of being a witch by her husband. It has also been noticed that general lack of development happens in areas where people strongly believe in witchcraft. This takes place when students in such areas choose not to excel in examinations lest they arouse jealousy and witchcraft from their competitors. Many people also believe that witchcraft has eliminated many intellectuals with great potential for national development (Arunda, 1987, 9). Thus, although there are those who would admire witchcraft and see it as a way of curbing unnecessary ills such as theft and tensions, it must be noted that witchcraft produces extremely devastating effects.

### **Biblical Study of Witchcraft**

In this section, we shall examine some key selected passages of scripture which deal with witchcraft and associated practices. The passages will be drawn from both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The purpose will be to determine what the Bible teaches on witchcraft and related practices. Later, we will be able to draw some conclusions based on the biblical teaching. All scriptures, unless otherwise noted, are quoted from the New American Standard Bible.

*Leviticus 19:26.* The general purpose of the book of Leviticus is to reveal how sinful man must approach a holy God in worship through sacrifice and obedience to God’s commandments. Chapter nineteen contains a series of precepts and prohibitions which are to be observed by God’s people (Israel). It is worth noting from the outset that the aim of these precepts and prohibitions is not to present a complete enumeration of all the moral and ceremonial duties. Rather, these are aimed at illustrating the application of the injunction found in the second verse of this chapter, which calls upon the people to be holy in their daily living because God is holy. This is the object of the whole ceremonial and moral law, as well as the supreme object of the Gospel (Kellogg, 1978, 408).

The Hebrew word translated “divination” in this passage is *tenachash*. Its lexical form is *nachash* from the root “serpent.” In the form in which it is used here, *nichesh* means “divination by serpent,” “to use enchantment,” “divination”, “to perceive,” “to observe” (Davidson, 1950, 545). According to Gesenius’ Hebrew Lexicon, the root of this word originally means “to hiss” or

“to whisper.” Specially used, it refers to “the whispering of soothsayers.” In the form in which it is used here, it may mean “to practice enchantment” or “to use sorcery” or “divination by serpent” (if derived from *nachash*). This is how it is used in Leviticus 19:26 and Deuteronomy 18:10. It is also used in a similar manner in II Kings 17:17 and 21:6. The word may also mean “to auger”; “to forebode” or “to divine” as used in Genesis 30:27 and 44:15 (Gesenius, 1979, 544). Thus as study of this term, which is derived from the root *nachash* shows that it could mean several things. It could refer to superstitious observance of omens. It could also refer to prophecy from observing snakes. It may also refer to the use of charms, incantations, and such objects as goblets. But precisely how these were accomplished is unknown (Bush, 209; Harrison, 201; Keil, 423).

The other practice which is forbidden in this passage is what is translated “soothsaying” and which the New International Version translates as “sorcery.” It is the Hebrew word *twenew*. Its lexical form is *anan* which is the root word meaning “a cloud.” In the form in which it is used here, it may mean “to divine by the clouds or the sky” (Davidson, 1950, 769). According to Gesenius’ Lexicon *anan* means “to cover,” hence “a cloud.” It may mean “to act covertly”; “to use hidden arts such as magic” or “to practice sorcery.” This is the manner in which it is used in our present text (Lev. 19:26), and also in Deut. 18:10; 18:14; II Kings 21:6; Isaiah 2:6; 57:3; and Micah 5:11. Many ancients understood the word to mean a particular kind of divination (Gesenius, 1979, 644).

It therefore seems that “witchcraft” or “soothsaying” are terms which are used interchangeably and therefore seemingly synonymous. The terms may refer to the instance of the prognostication of favorable times for specific forms of action. They may also refer to the practice of using herbs or material objects to bring about supernatural effects (Harrison, 1980, 201). However, beyond the technicality, there is a clear biblical command. Those who have a covenant relationship with God are forbidden from using drugs, herbs, or any other means to bring about supernatural effects either for the harm of others or the protection of their clients (Gehman, 1989, 116).

*Deuteronomy 18:10.* The events in Deuteronomy occur right at the end of the Mosaic period, just before entry into the promised land. Moses is about to die and Joshua is going to take over and lead the people to the promised land. Following the Exodus, they have renewed and amplified the covenant made previously with the patriarchs. God is the liberator King and since the Israelites owe everything to him, they are to submit to him out of love (Craigie, 1976, 18-19). Moses, who has been the mediator of the covenant and the human leader,

will no longer be with the Israelites. This is what makes a repeated call for obedience necessary. The covenant at Sinai has been sealed following God's victory over Egypt. This victory has emphasized to the Israelites that:

God participated in the events of human history to bring about the fulfillment of his promises to his people. Hence, the outcome of the future battles lay not in their military powers but in the power of God and their whole hearted commitment to him (Craigie, 1976, 31).

This commitment to the covenant is to be shown through obedience. In our passage, the Israelites are to demonstrate their love for God and commitment as God's covenant people by not participating in any type of "divination," "magic," or "consultation with the spirit world." Such practices were typical of the Canaanite religion.

In the list of prohibitions found in our passage, Moses groups together all the words which the language contained for the different modes of exploring the future and discovering the will of God. The purpose is to forbid every description of soothsaying or witchcraft (Keil, 1980, 393).

There are three terms used here which refer to the various types of divination. Two of these are used in Leviticus 19:26. These are *tenachash*, which is translated as "interpreting omens" and *twenew*, which is translated as "witchcraft" or as "sorcery" in the New International Version. Since these words were studied in Leviticus 19:26, we now need to examine the other new term.

The Hebrew word *tenasheph* is translated in this passage as "sorcery" while the NIV translates it as "witchcraft." Its lexical form is *nashaph*. In the form in which it is used here, *nashaph* means "to practice magic" or "to use witchcraft." It is used in this sense in Joshua 12:20, and 19:15 (Davidson, 1950, 396). According to Gesenius, the root word *nashap* means "to pray" or "to offer prayers" or "to worship." In the form in which it is found here, it means "to use enchantment" or "to use magical songs" or "to mutter." This is the way it is used in II Chron. 33:6; Ex. 7:11; Deut. 18:10; Dan. 2:2; Mal. 3:5 and Ex. 22:17. The LXX translates it as *pharmakos* (Gesenius, 1979, 418-419).

Thus, the different terms used in this passage all refer to various types of divination. According to Mayes, all these terms were originally distinct but by the time Deuteronomy was written, they may have had synonymous meaning. They are simply brought together in this passage to emphasize the absolute exclusion of all forms of divination (Mayes, 1979, 280).

It may therefore be difficult to draw a sharp distinction between each of these practices because the techniques and purposes that lay behind each individual practice enumerated are not clear. What is clear is that anyone who knowingly meddles with any of these practices will be breaking faith with Yahweh, the God of Israel. Here, Yahweh is not demanding a moral and religious perfection, but an undivided commitment which is to be shown by not consulting any strange gods or spirits (Von Rad, 1966, 123). Furthermore, we need to note that all these abominable practices were forbidden because "Yahweh would make His will known to Israel through His prophets, whose words would be clearly understandable unlike the ambiguous and mysterious revelations of the magicians and diviners" (Thompson, 1974, 210).

*Galatians 5:20*. The purpose of the passage in question goes back to Paul's exhortation in verse 13b. Here, he is calling upon the Galatian not to use their liberty to gratify the flesh, but to rule their lives by love through living by the Holy Spirit (Burton, 1920, 303-304). Further down in verse 16, Paul personally appeals to the Galatian Christians to keep on walking by the Spirit of God. In this endeavor, they are to bear in mind that those who walk by the Spirit of God do not fulfil the desires of the flesh. This means that they do not long for forbidden things or passions. In verse 19, he says that such "desires" or "works" or "deeds" of the flesh are well known to everyone (Guthrie, 1973, 283). To authenticate this, Paul goes on to give a list whose purpose is to emphasize some of the common sins within Christian brotherhood during the time, rather than to distinguish those who are highly moral in an immoral world. The list shows the church how much of the world is still living in its midst (Guthrie, 1973, 247). Among this list is *pharmakeia* which is translated as "sorcery."

According to Bauer's Greek-English Lexicon, the term *pharmakeia* simply means "the use or administering of drugs." However, it may also mean "poisoning" as used in Rev. 9:21 or "sorcery, magical arts" when used in connection with idolatry as in Gal. 5:20. Several commentators agree with this meaning. Hendriksen says that the Greek term *pharmakeia*, though a neutral term, is here used in the sense of sorcery whereby mysterious powers were ascribed to certain article formulas or incantations as in Acts 8:9; and 19:13, 19. The sorcerer had access to some superhuman power by means of which he plied his trade. It is an idolatrous sin because it seeks to replace faith in God with trusting in magic. The term is again used in this same sense in Rev. 21:8 and 22:15 (Hendriksen, 1939, 247-248). Bruce agrees with Hendriksen but adds that at the time Paul wrote to the Galatians, the term had acquired two senses: that of

using drugs to poison people or its use in witchcraft. This is the same sense in which it is used in Ex. 7:10 where it refers to the sorcerers in Pharaoh's courts. It is again similarly used in Rev. 9:21; 18:23; 21:8 and 22:15 (Bruce, 1982, 247-248). According to Guthrie, "idolatry" and "sorcery" were closely related sins in that the former provided an inadequate substitute for God, while the latter counterfeited the works of the Holy Spirit (Guthrie, 1973, 137).

A careful examination of this term in its context therefore reveals that denotes incantation or superstitious dealings with the spirit world which were commonly practiced in Asia minor (Acts 19:18). One is therefore right in translating the term to mean "witchcraft" as the NIV does. It is also clear that by implication, the practice is forbidden. This is because it is depicted as one of the desires of the flesh which should not be found among those who are saved and walk by the Spirit of God.

*Revelation 22:15.* According to Hendriksen, the book of Revelation aims at showing that the devil is not as powerful and victorious as he may seem to be. Christ is the ultimate victor (Hendriksen, 1939, 12-13). This is a very good summary of the book that needs to be borne in mind as one studies it.

Our passage is found in the climax of the epilogue of the book of Revelation. After a vision of the blessedness of life in the city of God has been given, then comes a grim picture of life for those who are excluded from this city. The aim of this grim picture is to make an implied appeal to the readers not to allow themselves to be numbered with the reprobate who will not enter the city (Beasley-Murray, 1974, 340).

After having shown in v. 14 that Christ is coming to judge men according to their works, John goes on to contrast the destiny of the saints (who have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb) with the fate of the wicked. This he does in a very picturesque manner. Like dogs, the wicked will be cowering outside the gates of God's city, while the redeemed inhabit the city (Ladd, 1972, 293). However, Mounce says that this passage is not to be taken to mean that all the wicked men will eternally live outside the gates of the heavenly city. It is simply contrasting the blessedness of the faithful with the fate of the wicked (Mounce, 1977, 394). Included together with "dogs" in the description of the types of evil doers who are excluded from the heavenly city are "sorcerers."

The Greek word for "sorcerers" is *pharmakoi*. It is the plural form for *pharmakos* which means a person who practices *pharmakeia*. As noted earlier, this same word is used in Galatians 5:20. It denotes the superstitious use of drugs in magic. Hence it is used here to refer to "sorcerers" or "witches," those who

practice “sorcery” or “witchcraft” because (as seen earlier) these terms are used synonymously (cf. Deut. 18:10). Thus, by implication, witchcraft is again forbidden by God in this passage. This is because those who practice it cannot have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. Therefore, they have no place in God’s consummated eschatological kingdom.

## **Biblical Conclusions**

**1. *The Bible Affirms the Existence of Witchcraft.*** Our study reveals that there is ample biblical and existential evidence for the Christian to believe in the reality and existence of witchcraft.

In Leviticus 19:26 and Deuteronomy 18:10, God clearly forbids engagement in witchcraft and other related practices such as divination, sorcery and magic. The New Testament also speaks strongly against witchcraft, divination, and sorcery. In Galatians 5:20, Paul lists sorcery or witchcraft among the works of the flesh while in Revelation 22:15, sorcerers or witches are included among those who will be judged and who will not enter the heavenly Jerusalem. Thus, the Bible, by implication acknowledges the existence of witchcraft. It is therefore wrong to dismiss as mere superstition the reality and existence of witchcraft while still continuing to hold on to the authority of the Bible in matters of faith and doctrine.

**2. *The Bible Prohibits Involvement by God’s People.*** In all the biblical passages examined above, it is evident that the Bible forbids, either directly or by implication, any engagement in witchcraft and other related occultic practices such as divination, sorcery and magic. Moreover, an examination of the terms used reveals that they are used interchangeably and therefore most of them are synonymous. John McDowell summarizes this very well when he says:

both the Old and New Testament make repeated references to the practice of witchcraft and sorcery, and whenever these practices are referred to they are always condemned by God. The Bible condemns all forms of witchcraft, including sorcery, astrology, and reading human animal entrails (McDowell, 1986, 80-81).

**3. *The Major biblical reason for Prohibiting Witchcraft is that it is a denial of the supremacy and all sufficiency of God.*** According to both Harrison and Wenham, God’s main reason for forbidding witchcraft and related practices in

Israel was not because it was unreal and superstitious. Rather, it was due to the fact that God had “made His will known directly to His people through revelation to Moses and others, and indirectly by means of Urim and Thumim (Exodus 28:30; Lev. 8:8). No other means by which God’s will might be ascertained was provided, but in any event the righteous man lived by his faith (Hab. 2:4)” (Harrison, p. 20; Wenham, 272, ).

By implication therefore, it seems evident that seeking power through witchcraft is a violation of the first commandment. “The practice of consulting unseen powers by those devices was tantamount to acknowledging a power other than Yahweh, and this was rebellion” (Thompson, 1974, 210). Engaging in such practices shows lack of trust in God. That is why the punishment for a sorcerer, a medium, or witch was death (Ex. 22:18; Lev. 20:27). Such practices are an abomination to God. Abominable means hateful, repulsive, morally, or physically detestable, offensive. These practices were part of God’s reason for judgment of the Canaanites which would be seen in their ejection from the land (Craigie, 1976, 261). Moreover, there is a more practical reason for God’s prohibition of witchcraft and associated practices. The key thing to note here is that God does not forbid these practices out of harshness but out of fatherly love for his children. In His omniscience, God knows that His children may be ignorant of the destructive consequences that may result. As seen earlier in this paper, many are not aware that engaging in occultic practices involves participation in Satan’s realm. Satan’s purposes, in relation to man, are to “steal, kill, and destroy” (John 10:10). As seen earlier, Satan may begin by giving good things because he has a great deal of power. But eventually, he harms those who turn to him instead of turning to God for help. We saw that, most of those who get involved in these practices end up being demonized. Many end up either in death or becoming deeply involved in immorality and pornography. This is because it has already been observed that at the heart of the satanistic movement [and occultic practices] is the concept of free love and unrestrained sexual behavior. [So that] this in itself, should be a red signal flag to the believer to remain completely apart from any who practice these things (Davis, 1973, 39).

## **Suggestions on How Second and Third Generation Kenyan Christians Can Deal with Witchcraft**

In a recent article entitled "When Members Get Caught in the Occult," Gordon Dalbey enumerates several practical guidelines to be followed by spiritual Christians seeking to help those who become involved in witchcraft and other occultic practices. The writer considers these suggestions to be biblically based, valid, and practical. These will therefore form the basis of the discussion in this final section. They are stipulated below.

**1. *The Spiritual Helper Should Communicate Concern Rather than Condemnation.*** In Galatians 6:1, spiritual Christians are called upon to help those who fall in sin. However, Dalbey feels that to "Simply tell someone [that] 'the Bible says occult practices are sin' may cause the person [who is involved] to feel judged and [he may] turn away" (Dalbey, 1989, 62).

Right from the start of this paper, we observed that many people get involved in the occult either because they do not recognize the full authority of scripture or because of ignorance on the biblical teaching regarding these practices. This is what makes it even more necessary to approach the person who is involved in witchcraft with concern.

The spiritual Christian who is helping must explain to the one involved in witchcraft that he has a primary concern for his safety. The victim must know that "what he [is] doing bears danger to his spiritual welfare" (Dalbey, 1989, 63). He must be told that dabbling in the occult is like experimenting with eating wild varieties of poisonous vegetables which are deadly. Hence, the need for a caring friend to warn such a person.

**2. *The Helper Should Look for the Spiritual Need Leading to Occult Involvement.*** There is need to find out why a person turned to witchcraft in the first place. In other words, what need did he hope witchcraft would meet. The reason for this is that quite often "the sin of occult involvement can be traced to a genuine desire for something good [that God can offer]" (Dalbey, 1989). But due to ignorance or disillusionment with the lack of a quick solution in nominal Christianity, the person turns to witchcraft. Only after ascertaining his need will the helper be able to find out whether the victim has tried Jesus who has all power. He will be able to determine why the person thinks that Jesus is unable to provide a solution to his problem. The helper needs to accept and affirm the person's spiritual hunger that is buried beneath his occultic involvement. The

desire may be good since it simply reveals that all men have a spiritual need. Such an affirmation is bound to make the person more open.

**3. *The Helper Should Not Deny the Reality of Witchcraft.*** As implied earlier in this paper, one of the biggest hindrances to helping people who are involved in the occult is that “Many churches have pooh-poohed occult activities as mere superstitions, power of suggestion, fantasy, or plain baloney” (Dalbey, 1989, 63). Yet the Bible makes it very clear that there is real power in witchcraft although it is not for free. Evidence adduced shows that many who have tried witchcraft have obtained results. Therefore, if the person who is seeking to help a victim who is involved in witchcraft scoffs negatively at its power, the most likely response would be for the victim to defend his experiences or to withdraw.

Our Christian witness should therefore not be asking whether witchcraft really works because it often does. Instead, we should be asking what its source of power is. The sin of adultery would illustrate this. While it is true that the experience may be adventurous and exciting, it is a sin against God and against one’s wife. Hence, just as a faithful Christian husband would not try adultery because of love for God and his wife, similarly, a Christian who loves Jesus should not attempt witchcraft. Jesus gave his life to wed the Christian to God. And God has far more saving power than any witch could ever provide.

**4. *Christians Should Understand God’s Rationale in Prohibiting Involvement.*** Second and third generation Christians should be made to understand not only God’s prohibition of engagement in witchcraft, but also His reason for it. Although these were given in detail earlier in our study, we need to summarize them again. It is because:

(1) God is the only true God who is the only source of all spiritual power and therefore trying to seek power through witchcraft or any other means or source is to reject and rebel against Him. It is therefore a violation of the first commandment (Ex. 20:3).

(2) God has a fatherly love and concern for His children. He knows that they are naive and that out of ignorance they may not be aware of the dangers such as demon possession, spiritual deterioration into deeper sin and death that often results from occult involvement. These must be made clear to all Christians.

## **Conclusion**

Today, many second and third generation Christians are not sure whether witchcraft exists or not, and if it does, whether it has real power. But both existential and biblical evidence shows that witchcraft is real and that the power behind it is demonic. Modern witchcraft may not take the form of traditional 'sorcery' and 'magic' practiced in the 'bush.' It continues to be practiced in our cities in forms and fashions that are not easily recognizable. These include charms, astrology, and palmistry (Wachira, 1989, 12). It is also clear that wherever the Bible refers to witchcraft, it either directly, or indirectly prohibits the people of God from engaging in it. God does not prohibit witchcraft because it does not produce results. Rather, it is because it is a violation of the first commandment and a failure to recognize God as the ultimate source of all power. The other reason for prohibition is that God loves His children and he would not wish them to suffer the destructive consequences that come with the power that Satan offers. As seen earlier, these include demonization, spiritual deterioration into sin, and death. Although the whole area of demonization and its relation to the Christian would be very interesting for further study, we will not deal with it here because it is beyond the scope of our study. However, we strongly recommend such a study for victims of witchcraft or those seeking to help such victims. The following books would be helpful for further study: Moreau, The World of The Spirits; Unger, What Demons Can do; Bufford, Counseling and the Demonic; Koch, Occult ABC; and Carson, Demon Possession.

Every effort must be made to help those Christians who have become involved in witchcraft. In so doing, we must show concern rather than condemnation; seek to understand the deeper spiritual hunger that has driven the victim to witchcraft; affirm the biblical teaching of the reality of witchcraft; and give God's reasons for prohibiting it.

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