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# **Satan and Demons in Popular Christian Theology**

by Georgette Short

## Abstract

*Between 2010 and 2012 fourth year students from Scott Theological College (now Scott Christian University) recorded hundreds of church services in East Africa. The aim of this project, supervised by Dr Gregg Okesson, was to identify African theology as articulated in worship services. Thousands of pages documented what was said and done in a large sample of churches in Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda and highlighted interesting expressions of popular Christian theology. This article examines the theology of these churches concerning the devil and demonic spirits, as conveyed through their teaching, prayers, songs and testimonies. It analyses the beliefs expressed in these different forms, showing what these congregations believe about the devil and how to counter his activities. The devil and his forces are seen as being active in many areas of life and responsible for the misfortunes and difficulties Christians face. He seeks to disrupt worship services and prevent people from hearing God's word. Though Christ defeated him on the cross and will conclusively defeat him when Christ returns, he still has power. Therefore Christians need to oppose him so that he cannot hold sway in their lives and worship of God. The aim is to understand popular beliefs about the devil, not to critique such beliefs or to suggest specific doctrinal improvements.*

## **Satan is Alive and Working Against Christians**

I Peter 5:8 says, 'Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.' The East African churches whose services were recorded in the ecclesiastical research gathered by students and faculty from Scott Christian University during 2010-2012 very much subscribe to this image of the devil. These East African Christians see the devil as a very real presence in the world and as actively working evil in the lives of Christians. Although they believe Jesus Christ has already defeated the devil, Satan still has considerable power and influence. He needs to be identified as being at work because he uses many dangerous ploys against individual Christians and the church as a whole. Unless he is opposed and prayed against, he will work against Christians and cause problems in their lives. References to the devil and demonic forces appear frequently in the ecclesiastical research. They can be found predominantly in the prayers and teaching of the churches but can also be seen in choir pieces and testimonies.

## **The Devil and Christian Teaching**

Teaching about the devil and his forces, his influence in the world, and how he can be defeated is a strong theme in these churches. Occasionally, whole sermons are given over to dealing with this subject but more typically teaching on the devil is woven into sermons dealing with other matters.

## **1. Teaching: Jesus Christ Has Won a Crucial Victory Over Satan**

Generally, the churches researched teach that Jesus has completely defeated the devil through his death, resurrection and ascension and will defeat him conclusively when he comes again. While believers may fear the devil and should not underestimate his influence, the churches teach that he has already been defeated by Jesus and so has only limited power.

During a leaders' seminar at the Christ Celebration Centre in Nairobi, Bishop Mureithi taught that, 'Jesus not only dealt with sin and the law on the cross but He also dealt with Satan. Speaking about his crucifixion in John 12:13, Jesus said, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out". The death of Christ on the cross looked like a great victory for Satan but it was a great defeat that he will never recover.'<sup>1</sup> Mureithi went on to say that three things happened on the cross: Jesus disarmed the powers and authorities; in his death, resurrection, and ascension he vindicated God and vanquished the devil; and he triumphed over the Roman soldiers.<sup>2</sup>

Another example of this kind of teaching can be found at Nairobi Pentecostal Church. Jesus 'is the victorious conqueror who has defeated our enemies - sin, death, Satan, and hell.'<sup>3</sup> At Nzau Bible College Pastor Mulinge also stressed the devil's defeat:

The best example I can give to illustrate God's communicable character of holiness is Satan's hurlment into the world. As the scripture says when sin was found in him, that is the 'morning star', he was hurled into the world because God is holy and he cannot accommodate ungodliness. Satan, who is the essence of all evil, has a mission of propagating his shrewd schemes but at the end he will be doomed for eternal destruction for God is holy and he will finally bring every thing to his submission.<sup>4</sup>

Such statements underpin what is by far the most dominant teaching on the devil within the churches researched - that although the devil is active in the world, Jesus has already defeated him and so he has limited power. This teaching, combined with an understanding that Jesus' Second Coming will herald the devil's ultimate destruction, encourages Christians to see the devil as relatively powerless when compared to Jesus and therefore not to be feared. In traditional African worldviews, aspects of which many African Christians share, evil spirits wield significant power, so Jesus' victory is a necessary and important teaching of the church.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Mureithi, Christ Celebration Centre, Nairobi, July 26, 2011, Albert, Sermon 17.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Mureithi, Christ Celebration Centre, Nairobi, July 26, 2011, Albert, Sermon 17.

<sup>3</sup> Nairobi Pentecostal Church, Woodley, Nairobi, Korir, Sermon 15.

<sup>4</sup> Pr. J. Mulinge, Friday Fellowship, Nzau Bible School, Nzau, Makueni County, May 26, 2011, Ndolo, Sermon 10. Minor corrections in this and other quotations are made to increase readability.

<sup>5</sup> Editor's footnote: We must carefully distinguish between practicing African Traditional Religion and holding African worldviews. African theologians often speak of the

Leading on from such teaching is the understanding that the believer can have victory over the devil in their own life because Jesus has already defeated him. While these churches suggest that some believers are being troubled by the devil, they also teach that they do not have to be because it is possible to be victorious over the devil. These churches are aware of the ways in which some of their members have been badly affected by the devil at work in their lives, but they teach that God can release them from his influence.

Some preachers suggest that the devil is attacking people even within the church. As the pastor at Jesus Celebration Centre said:

The devil has held many captive; am just coming from visiting a family which has been destroyed by the devil. Their shambas, cows and whatever they have been affected by the devil. The devil has subjected their children to drunkenness because somebody used evil spirit to destroy the family but I prayed for the family for the deliverance of God.<sup>6</sup>

Another pastor warned those attending a youth rally that, 'The devil is in the mission of winning many Christian believers from the kingdom of God to the evil kingdom of the devil. The devil oppresses, possesses, people and he also opposes us from reaching our destiny.'<sup>7</sup> Pastor Samuel Kioko suggests that:

Many people do not obey, Satan has blinded them. They are obeying the devil and doing his works. Instead of sending the gospel, people are dealing with evil things like alcoholism, worshipping idols, and lies. The Bible says that we should put off all evils things so that we may be true disciples of Jesus. It is possible that Satan is still controlling you, he has put his demons on you although you are in church. He has blinded you and you cannot meditate on the word of God.<sup>8</sup>

Family problems are also attributed to the devil's actions, 'Friends if we are united the Devil will not have a chance to disunite you. The reason why many families are in calamity...'<sup>9</sup> These examples demonstrate a strong belief that the devil is active in people's lives, and that he is the source of many of the problems they face.

The churches involved in this research believe that the devil can cause problems in the lives of believers, however, there is also a strong emphasis

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continuing influence of traditional African worldviews among Christians. (See for example, Samuel W. Kunhiyop, *African Christian Theology*, Nairobi: HippoBooks, 2012, p. xv.) But this is very different from retaining a basic loyalty to the gods and spirits of African Traditional Religion. Conversion to Christ does not require conversion to a Western view of evil spirits, whether Christian or secular. It does require a shift of loyalties from ATR to Christ, but worldviews are transformed, not abandoned.

<sup>6</sup> Lunch Hour Service, Jesus Celebration Centre, April 19, 2011, Godwin, Extra Sermons.

<sup>7</sup> A.I.C Katangini D.C.C Youth Rally, December 28, 2010, Godwin, Sermon 6.

<sup>8</sup> Pr. Samuel Kioko, Gospel Revival Centre, Mavivie, April 27, 2011, (Kanwele, Sermon 13).

<sup>9</sup> Pr. Joshua Kioko, AIC Miwani, Machakos, December 5, 2010, (Maurice, Sermon 5).

that because Jesus has defeated the devil, Christians can have victory over them too. This was summed up well at the Jesus Celebration Centre where it was said that, 'The devil will not continue arresting the people of God but the Lord is going to give them strength to overcome the challenge.'<sup>10</sup> Likewise, Paul Muthoka teaches that, 'God gives the believer victory over Satan and all other spiritual forces. The victory of a believer is won and there is no power of darkness that can prevail against the church. Jesus pronounced of building a church in which the gates of Hades will not overcome.'<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Teaching: Christians Can Defeat the Devil by Using Scripture

This kind of assertion gives the churches a theological basis for teaching that their congregations can counter the attacks of the devil, and it enables them to see that they need not fear the devil if they believe in Jesus Christ. Therefore, although Christians need to be wary of Satan, Christians can deal with him decisively and prevent him from causing harm to people.

Biblical passages are often used to give more extended teaching on the activities of the devil and how to counter them. Two passages that were used on a number of occasions are the temptation of Jesus and the image of the armour of God in Ephesians 6:10 ff. Both of these passages are used to help Christians to deal with the devil's schemes in their own lives. They are encouraged by Jesus' temptation to follow his example when faced with temptation and urged to put on the full armour of God in their fight with the devil by a study of what Paul teaches the Ephesians.

In a youth service in a sermon entitled *Trusting Jesus in Temptation* the pastor used Jesus' temptation as an example for the congregation to follow. Jesus was tempted like we are, therefore he not only understands what we are going through but can also help us in our times of temptation.<sup>12</sup> Pastor Mulei first stresses that Jesus was tempted in every way as we are and yet was without sin. He also suggests that the devil attacked Jesus at his weakest point and then goes on to look in detail at the three ways in which the devil tempted Jesus. He shows how Jesus countered the devil by the use of Scripture and uses illustrations to make each point relevant to the congregation. He ends, 'Believe in Jesus Christ ... because Jesus overcame when he was tempted in lust, because Jesus overcame when he was tempted in power, and because Jesus overcame when tempted in worship. May God bless you and help you overcome that which you are struggling with.'<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Lunch Hour Service, Jesus Celebration Centre, April 19, 2011, (Godwin, Extra Sermons).

<sup>11</sup> Paul Muthoka, Jesus Celebration Centre, Wote Town, July 23, 2011, (Albert, Sermon 20).

<sup>12</sup> Pastor Mulei, AIC Katisaa, September 11, 2011, (Albert, Sermon 12).

<sup>13</sup> Pastor Mulei, AIC Katisaa, September 11, 2011, (Albert, Sermon 12).

During a service at Muumandu Secondary School, Moreen, a student leader, uses this passage to encourage her fellow students to use the Bible as a weapon against the devil. She says, 'As secondary school students we will not be in a position to overcome if we do not know the word. The Bible says how can a young man make his way straight. Only by reading the word of God. The word of God is a weapon that makes us overcome the devil. Remember when Jesus Christ was in the wilderness ... , he was tempted by devil to change the stones into the bread. But Jesus oh yes, Jesus told the devil it is written man does not leave by bread alone, praise God, praise God again.'<sup>14</sup> Moreen uses this passage to motivate her colleagues to read the Bible because through doing so they will be able to overcome the devil and other challenges in their lives.

Ephesians 6:10-20 is also used as the text for a number of sermons. In a service in Scott Community Chapel, Machakos, the preacher uses this passage to help the congregation see what part they might play in advancing the gospel. He suggests that, 'Our position in the battle should be defensive and offensive: (Eph. 6:16) In every battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. (Eph. 6:17) And you will need the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit - which is the Word of God (TLB)', and further argues that believers need to put on the full armour of God.<sup>15</sup> Pastor Joshua Nzomo also argues from Ephesians 6:10-20 that, 'Satan discourages God's people but God's people will overcome him as they have with them the armour of God.'<sup>16</sup> These speakers use Ephesians 6:10-20 in a very specific way. They see the armour of God as a means of fighting spiritual battles against the devil and a way of both protecting yourself against his schemes and attacking him when necessary.

### **3. Teaching: Scripture Reveals How the Devil Tempts Believers**

Eve's temptation by the devil in Eden is used to teach about how the devil operates. The temptation of Eve is used to highlight some of the ploys the devil uses to tempt believers to act against God's will. Francis Mumo says: Mr. Devil is so craft[y] that he understands areas of our weaknesses and uses them to deceive us Christians, so we should be smarter to detect the devil whenever he comes to destruct us from what we know is true. In Genesis 3:4ff, the devil gave the woman assurance that they will not surely die by eating from the tree of knowledge which she believed God said so. The devil used his craft way by telling the woman that what God did is that he did not want them to be like him that's why he prohibited them from eating from that tree, which was not true. Instead of the woman seeking to ask her husband to know the truth of the matter she went ahead and saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some

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<sup>14</sup> Moreen, Muumandu Secondary School, May 13, 2011, (Mweu, Sermon 2).

<sup>15</sup> Scott Community Chapel, Machakos, November 20, 2011. (Judith, 34).

<sup>16</sup> Pr. Joshua Nzomo, AIC Mwanyani/Bomani DCC, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010, (Gideon, Sermon 5).

and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ... As the way he deceived Adam and Eve also he will look ways to deceive us too.<sup>17</sup>

The preacher uses this passage to highlight both the character and ploys of the devil as he tempted Eve and suggests that it serves as a warning of how he might tempt us too.

At a service at Ahero Bible College Genesis 3 was also used to show how the devil tempts the believer. The preacher said that, 'According to verse one of chapter 3 in Genesis the devil caused if to doubt, "did God say that you must not eat from any tree in the garden?" the devil knew that God did say then why ask, to bring the element of doubt.<sup>18</sup> The devil is also seen creating discontent in Eve as well as suggesting that God is untrustworthy and a liar.<sup>19</sup> The preacher concludes with some advice on how to avoid temptation by the devil when he says, 'Satan looks for an opportune time (Eve was near the forbidden fruit) if you don't want to eat of the forbidden fruit don't come near it. If you don't want to be accused of misusing church finances flee from them leaving them with the concerned. Why counsel opposite sex in private places?'<sup>20</sup> He uses Eve's close proximity to the fruit to suggest that believers should not linger near things that might tempt them to sin.

Some characters in the Bible are regarded as examples of what the devil is like. Pastor Nzomo, in a sermon about spiritual weapons, likens Goliath to the devil and uses this as a means of discussing the weapons and tactics the devil might use against believers. He connects Goliath and the devil and suggests that God keeps his people safe from the devil when he says, 'God is the only one who protects us against Satan, who pictured as the Philistine.'<sup>21</sup> He also demonstrates what weapon we should use against the devil. 'When we fight our enemy the Philistine (Goliath-Satan) is in our midst, we should be very keen knowing his tactics and fight him with God's word.'<sup>22</sup> This last point cannot be made directly from this passage but the speaker may have in mind what is taught elsewhere in the Bible, specifically the temptation of Jesus and Ephesians 6:10-20.

According to Rev. Samuel Mwatha, King Ahab can also be seen as a type of the devil. 'On his side King Ahab was a cunning and opportunistic person. He was a schemer who spoke what was not in his heart. He is a good picture of the devil - for the devil kisses from the front and kills you from behind.'<sup>23</sup> The

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<sup>17</sup> Pr. Francis Mumo, Funeral Service, Makuli Village, Kangundo, December 27, 2011, (Mutunga, 27).

<sup>18</sup> Ahero Bible School Chapel, (Judith 9).

<sup>19</sup> Ahero Bible School Chapel, (Judith 9).

<sup>20</sup> Ahero Bible School Chapel, (Judith 9).

<sup>21</sup> Pastor Joshua Nzomo, AIC Mwanyani, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010, (Gideon, Sermon 5).

<sup>22</sup> Pastor Joshua Nzomo, AIC Mwanyani, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010, (Gideon, Sermon 5).

<sup>23</sup> Rev. Samuel Mwatha, Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa, Gikomba-Nairobi, June 26, 2011, (Nyerere, Sermon 8).

evil character of King Ahab, as well as his actions, are equated with the devil. There is a veiled warning to believers in what Rev. Mwatha says which believers need to heed when confronted by the devil. In using the example of King Ahab, he warns that the devil does not attack directly but uses any opportunity he can to strike.

Other Bible characters are also used to show how the devil works. In a sermon by Joshua Mutinda, believers are warned through the life of Elijah that the devil often attacks when life is going smoothly. He says, 'Elijah had overcome the Baal gods and was enjoying himself, when suddenly the devil struck. The devil will always come to us at times when we think all is well. Take care!' <sup>24</sup> While the devil is not mentioned in this passage of Scripture, Mutinda equates the troubles Elijah had after his encounter with the prophets of Baal as having their source in the devil and uses it as a warning to his listeners when things are going well for them.

#### **4. Teaching: Christians Must Wage Spiritual Warfare**

Much of what is taught in the churches concerning the devil suggests that Christians are involved in spiritual warfare. Whole sermons such as the one preached by Julius Nyerere <sup>25</sup> deal with this subject while other preachers include it as a sub-topic in their sermons. Using passages such as Galatians 6:10-20 and referring to David's battle with Goliath strongly evokes this idea, but the churches included in the ecclesiastical research also use language in much of their teaching on the devil which further supports the belief that Christians are in a battle against the devil. Pastor Muthoka uses warlike language when he says, 'It means that God gives the believer victory over Satan and all other spiritual forces. The victory of a believer is won and there is no power of darkness that can prevail against the church. Jesus pronounced of building a church in which the gates of Hades will not overcome.' <sup>26</sup> Pastor Joshua Nzomo says, 'Satan has his army and always wants to fight God's people.' <sup>27</sup> The Jesus Celebration Centre teaches that, 'The spiritual warfare is real and we are fighting against the principalities, and all the evil schemes of the devil. We are all surrounded by the evil spirits...' <sup>28</sup> At a service AICT Kakola-Kahama-Tanzania it was stated that, 'The enemy the devil is at war with us, the weapon and methodologies of the war are needed to win the battle. Paul understood very well that the church of Ephesus was facing the

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<sup>24</sup> Joshua Mutinda, Redeemer Gospel Church, Katheka-kai, May 29, 2011, (Nyerere, Sermon 6).

<sup>25</sup> Julius Nyerere, Leaders' Fellowship Meeting, AIC Kwa-vonza on 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2012. (Albert, Sermon 36).

<sup>26</sup> Paul Muthoka, Jesus Celebration Centre, Wote Town, July 23, 2011. (Albert, Sermon 20).

<sup>27</sup> Joshua Nzomo, AIC Mwanyani/Bomani DCC, Dec. 5, 2010, (Gideon, Sermon 5)

<sup>28</sup> Lunch Hour Service, Jesus Celebration Centre, April 19, 2011. (Godwin, Extra Sermons)

same.<sup>29</sup> These are all examples of the kind of language and imagery used when teaching about the devil that suggests combat.

This teaching makes it clear that it is imperative for Christian believers to resist the devil. As has been seen this is implied in much of the churches' teaching but is also taught more explicitly. However, it seems that the activities of the devil are not always apparent because some of the churches teach that there is a need to be aware of what the devil is doing. Those who are under the influence of the devil or who are being attacked by him are perhaps those who are not aware of his schemes. Pastor Mulei teaches the congregation at AIC Katisaa that, 'We should be aware of the tricks of the devil to get us hooked in our problems.'<sup>30</sup> Similarly the pastor at AIC Katangini urges youth at a rally repeatedly to remain vigilant and 'aware of the scheme of the Devil'.<sup>31</sup>

### **Prayers and the Devil**

A close examination of the material gathered also identifies numerous references to the devil in the prayers of the churches. Sometimes prayers petition God for his protection against the devil, other times the devil is addressed directly. At times there are general references to the devil's activity, at other times specific situations are mentioned.

The prayers of these churches appear to reflect much of what the church teaches, putting into practice some of what is taught. Typically prayers related to the devil are offered near the beginning of a service but can be noted throughout. Analysis of these prayers brings to light a number of common features that demonstrate how the devil is viewed, what work he is believed to be engaged in and what can be done to combat him.

The names used for the devil help us to understand how he is viewed. Often he is simply referred to as the devil or Satan but other names are also given to him. One of the most regularly used names for the devil is 'the enemy'.<sup>32</sup> When this name is given to the devil, he is regarded as the one who opposes the work of God or of Christians. It is often used when the person praying wants to prevent the devil from having an influence in the worship service or when he appears to have had some influence over people already. Satan is seen as the Christian's greatest adversary and the one who wants to harm Christians and prevent them from doing what God wants. 'The Evil One' is another name used frequently.<sup>33</sup> This name highlights his nature and

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<sup>29</sup> AICT-Kakola- Kahama-Tanzania. January 9, 2011. (Madaha, Sermon 4)

<sup>30</sup> AIC Katisaa, September 11, 2011. (Albert, Sermon 12).

<sup>31</sup> AIC Katangini, December 28, 2010. (Godwin, Sermon 6).

<sup>32</sup> Elder Gitau, AIC Ngong Road, August 29, 2011, (Albert, Sermon 4); AIC Mathare, November 6, 2011, (Judith, 29); Grace Christian Church, Machakos, (Mutunga, 39).

<sup>33</sup> Chairlady, A.I.C Kikongooni, August 11, 2010, (Christine, Sermon 16); Intercessory Prayer, A.I.C Katoloni, April 10, 2011, (Godwin, Sermon 20); AIC A.I.C Katoloni, September 16, 2011, (Mainga, Sermon 17).

alludes to the kind of activities he is involved in. The use of this name means there can be no doubt that the devil is an evil force, and that the evil things that happen in the world should be attributed to him. Another name sometimes used is 'the destroyer'.<sup>34</sup> This is used when the devil is seen to destroy or damage property or people's lives and can be connected directly to the activities he is considered to be engaged in.

These names for the devil are important and rich in meaning in an African context where a person's name suggests something of his or her nature. In naming someone it is possible to have power over them. In giving the devil these names the Christians in these churches are showing that they know what the devil is like and know the activities he is engaging in. This knowledge of the devil gives them a starting point for defeating him.

Those who offer these prayers do so with considerable authority. They often confront the devil directly and use strong, confident language to prevent him from having an impact on the worship service or the lives of believers. The words used, such as denounce,<sup>35</sup> proclaim defeat,<sup>36</sup> come against,<sup>37</sup> destroy,<sup>38</sup> and rebuke<sup>39</sup> suggest a belief that although the devil is strong, he can be defeated. This is generally done in Jesus' name<sup>40</sup> and sometimes with reference to the power of Jesus,<sup>41</sup> showing that the person praying does not think that he or she can defeat the devil through human strength but is very conscious of the need to rely on Jesus for power.

The devil is commonly seen as being unhappy with the congregation gathering to worship God and may attempt to disrupt the worship service.<sup>42</sup> Therefore many of the opening prayers ask God to protect the congregation from what the devil might seek to do or oppose the work of the devil directly using words and phrases such as 'rebuke', 'arise against', 'renounce', 'bind',

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<sup>34</sup> AIC Mutongu, July 5, 2011, (Albert, Sermon 10); AIC Isaalala, January 1, 2012, (Albert, Sermon 28).

<sup>35</sup> Saints Gathering Worship Centre, (Christine, Sermon 4); AIC Mutituni, December 4, 2011, (Judith, Sermon 21).

<sup>36</sup> AIC Mathare, November 6, 2011, (Judith, Sermon 29).

<sup>37</sup> A.I.C Katangini December 19, 2010, (Godwin, Sermon 4); Gospel Revival Center (GRC), at Mavivie - Machakos, April 27, 2011, (Kanwele, Sermon 13).

<sup>38</sup> General Revival Center, Mavivie, 02 Monday, 2011, (Madaha, Sermon 21); AIC Mumbuni, April 11, 2011, (Korir, Sermon 11).

<sup>39</sup> AIC N'gelani, May 1, 2011, (Yator, Sermon 10); AIC Matuu, July 17, 2011, (Musyoka, Sermon 7).

<sup>40</sup> AIC Muthesya, July 10, 2011, (Musyoka, Sermon 6); AIC Githurai, Nairobi, July 10, 2011, (Mutunga, Sermon 19); Victory Evangelical Church, Kangundo, March 12, 2011, (Stella, Sermon 7).

<sup>41</sup> AIC Kimutwa, Kimutwa D.C.C, December 25, 2011, (Mweu, Sermon 34).

<sup>42</sup> AIC Isaalala, December 25, 2011, (Albert, Sermon 27). Evangelical Assemblies of God, Tanzania, Nyegezi L/Church, Mwanza Tz, December 26, 2010, (Kanwele, Sermon 6).

'stand against', 'refuse the plans of', 'proclaim defeat' etc. When praying in this way, the person praying turns from praying to God to addressing the devil personally. He is named, the devil, Satan, the enemy, the evil one, the destroyer etc. and he is then confronted directly.

Prayers may mention particular ways the devil might act to disrupt the service. These include making people tired and sleepy, making them backslide, and preventing people from attending church.<sup>43</sup> As we have seen, as Christians meet for worship they are aware that the devil is not pleased about this and will do everything in his power to disrupt the meeting. This is why it is seen as necessary in many churches to pray against such activity of the devil in order that the service goes smoothly so that God can be worshipped and his word heard by those attending.

Based on what it said in these prayers, the work of the devil has considerable scope. His work is always seen as negative in nature, causing harm and bringing problems. Some of the work of the devil is referred to in general terms and some is specific to the circumstances of the congregation. Those praying suggest that the devil's general work involves seeking to destroy the world,<sup>44</sup> that he destroys and brings confusion,<sup>45</sup> attacks people,<sup>46</sup> and has tactics and plans against God's people.<sup>47</sup> More specifically he makes people weak,<sup>48</sup> causes people to sleep during the service,<sup>49</sup> brings sickness,<sup>50</sup> disturbs families,<sup>51</sup> and makes people backslide.<sup>52</sup> In one instance he is seen as the force that prevented children from going to school in the past.<sup>53</sup> Drunkenness, fighting and prostitution are regarded to have their source in the devil with demons connected to each of these things requiring to be cast out.<sup>54</sup> Leading young boys into immorality through drunkenness is another thing attributed to the devil.<sup>55</sup> It appears that everything bad that happens in the world and every difficulty people face have their source in the devil.

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<sup>43</sup> AIC Mutituni, December 4, 2011, (Judith, Sermon 21). Grace Christian Church, Machakos, (Mutunga, Sermon 39); A.I.C Kyemutheke, September 4, 2011, (Nyerere, Sermon 18).

<sup>44</sup> AIC Mbukoni, March 23, 2011, (Godwin, Sermon 14).

<sup>45</sup> A.I.C Kikongooni, August 7, 2010, (Christine, Sermon 16).

<sup>46</sup> Kyondoni Village Kabati Kitui, June 4, 2011, (Muema, Sermon 10).

<sup>47</sup> AIC Bomani, June 4, 2011, (Ndolo, Sermon 4).

<sup>48</sup> AIC Nunguni, July 10, 2011, (Albert, Sermon 2).

<sup>49</sup> AIC Mutituni, December 4, 2011, (Judith, Sermon 21).

<sup>50</sup> Jesus Celebration Centre, April 19, 2011, (Godwin, Extra Sermons).

<sup>51</sup> Africa Brotherhood Church, Matetani, January 7, 2012, (Mutunga, Sermon 29).

<sup>52</sup> Grace Christian Church, Machakos (Mutunga, Sermon 39).

<sup>53</sup> AIC Katwanyaa, December 31, (Stella, Sermon 6).

<sup>54</sup> Pentecostal Church of Rwanda, Jenda, December 24, 2010, (Shadrack, Sermon 1); Jesus Celebration Centre, April 19, 2011, (Godwin, Extra Sermons).

<sup>55</sup> Africa Brotherhood Church, Kaiani, October 16, 2011, (Mutua, Sermon 3).

In these prayers God's might and power is stressed and contrasted with the powerlessness of the devil. Although the devil is seen to be active in the world and in the lives of believers, he is not as powerful as God, and so it is possible to prevent him from acting. God gives the victory over the devil,<sup>56</sup> he has not left Christians defenceless,<sup>57</sup> and he will provide whatever is needed in the moment of fierce attack.<sup>58</sup> The prayers also recognize that people need God's protection as they gather to worship him.<sup>59</sup> Prayers therefore request God's protection.<sup>60</sup> So although Jesus has defeated the devil, he still has power and is still active in the world and regards Christians as his enemies whom he seeks to attack. Believers are seen as in need of protection from the devil, and belief in God's superior power causes them to pray to him to safeguard them against what the devil might do.

As we have seen, many of the prayers also suggest ways of combating the devil. They ask for God's protection, they address the devil directly in order to counter what he intends to do and to demonstrate how relatively powerless he is. This is done in Jesus' name and often with reference to his blood. The name of Jesus is seen as being very powerful to combat the devil and is used frequently in prayers that confront the devil. His blood is also seen as powerful to protect the believer from the devil's attacks.

In both their teaching and their prayers the churches recognize that the devil does not work alone but has other forces at his disposal. Mention is therefore made of demons, evil spirits, witches etc. As God has an army of angels, the devil has his own forces.<sup>61</sup> These must be opposed or believers will be harmed. At the Jesus Celebration Centre one prayer says, 'The demons which bring sickness we destroy them in Jesus name.'<sup>62</sup> Pastor Kioko declared to his congregation that, 'It is possible that Satan is still controlling you, he has put his demons on you although you are in church.'<sup>63</sup> Believers therefore need to be aware of and to oppose demons and other spiritual forces that are working on behalf of the devil as well as the devil himself.

A belief present in both the teaching and the prayers is that people are either on God's side or the devil's - there is no middle ground. Before people are saved they are under the control of the devil but once they are saved they should be under God's control. Places where God would not want Christians

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<sup>56</sup> Jesus Celebration Centre, Wote Town, July 23, 2011, (Albert, Sermon 20).

<sup>57</sup> Scott Theological Chapel, Machakos, August 29, 2011, (Albert, Sermon 16).

<sup>58</sup> AIC Athi River, Athi River, January 22, 2011, (Mutua, Sermon 19).

<sup>59</sup> AIC Kikongooni, August 7, 2010, (Christine, Sermon 16).

<sup>60</sup> AIC Kyondoni, August 6, 2011, (Muema, Sermon 10); Anglican Church of Rwanda, Shyira, Cathedral of John the Baptist, December 26, 2011, (Shadrack, Sermon 3).

<sup>61</sup> AIC Mutuu, July 17, 2011, (Musyoka, Sermon 7).

<sup>62</sup> Jesus Celebration Centre, April 19, 2011, (Godwin, Extra Sermons).

<sup>63</sup> Pastor Samuel Kioko, Gospel Revival Centre, Mavivie, April 27, 2011, (Kanwele, Sermon 13).

to go are under the control of the devil.<sup>64</sup> However, the devil seems to still be a threat to Christians even when they are saved and so it is necessary for the Christian to be wary and to fight against what the devil is trying to do. We were once alienated from our God because we were Satan's prisoners.<sup>65</sup>

### The Devil and Christian Songs

The devil is mentioned in Christian songs. Like the prayers, they reflect what people are taught and believe about the devil. Some examples are:

'Job the man of God faced many challenges that were brought by the Satan but he beared them all (x2)

Job said I was born without anything I was given my children by God  
And all my wealth I was given by God and then he has taken, let God be  
praised x2<sup>66</sup>

'Shun from evil x2 my brother.... Shun from evil x2 my sister.... Shun from  
evil x2 my father.... Shun from evil x2 my mother.... This is the end times, the  
devil is looking for someone to devour. X2<sup>67</sup>

'I have seen, seen the downfall of Satan glory be to God, glory be to Jesus  
I have seen, seen the downfall of Satan glory be to God amen<sup>68</sup>

'Love is the weapon to defeat the devil<sup>69</sup>

'Haie....le...le...le....le Satan be cursed x2

You ruled the world surely be cursed

You separated us with God

Be cursed forever and ever x2

Thank Jesus for your salvation

Am saying thank for your salvation

The devil doesn't have authority to rule

Us any more, I command him in the name of Jesus

Be cursed forever and ever.x2<sup>70</sup>

In these songs people have the opportunity to affirm their beliefs about the devil, to proclaim his defeat, and to assert that God will protect his people. As in prayers, songs declare the devil's defeat and affirm his lack of authority. Songs also suggest ways in which the devil can be defeated. Believers affirm what they believe and are taught how to defeat the devil through the medium of songs as well as through teaching and prayer. Singing in the church worship services reinforces for believers what the Bible teaches and what the church believes about the devil.

<sup>64</sup> Nyanyaa Secondary School, December 18, 2011, (Albert, Sermon 26).

<sup>65</sup> AIC Ivengeani, May 14, 2011, (Christine, Sermon 2).

<sup>66</sup> AIC Utoo, May 8, 2011, (Muema, Sermon 1).

<sup>67</sup> AIC Upendo, Mathare, October 16, 2011, (Muema, Sermon 26).

<sup>68</sup> AIC Mumbuni, December 11, 2011, (Musyoka, Sermon 17).

<sup>69</sup> Deliverance Church Kauti, October 2, 2011, (Mutua, Sermon 3).

<sup>70</sup> AIC Kyanda, May 1, 2011, (Ndolo, Sermon 1).

### The Devil and Christian Testimonies

Testimonies are not a major feature in the services the students recorded. Often the programmer asks people to testify but no one comes forward. Based on the fact that the devil is mentioned regularly in other aspects of the worship services, one might expect that he would also be a common feature in testimonies. However, most testimonies are concerned with aspects of the Christian life such as healing<sup>71</sup>, salvation<sup>72</sup> or God's faithfulness<sup>73</sup>. Only three of the testimonies recorded mentioned the devil directly. Jacob, speaking at a crusade, said, 'Every time devil will cheat us that we have a lot of time to stay in sin.'<sup>74</sup> During a service at Kitulu, Timothy began his testimony with these words, 'Praise the Lord enemies of the Devil. Don't be surprised that I address you this way. In fact we became enemies of the devil when we gave our lives to Jesus Christ. If you are not born again you are not an enemy of the devil. But don't worry you can still be saved, since Jesus is merciful. I praise Jesus that he has kept me in him for the whole of this term.'<sup>75</sup> Peter speaking at Malindi told the congregation, 'You know where God wants to penetrate the devil comes in to destroy.'<sup>76</sup> These testimonies are in line with what is found elsewhere in the research. Those testifying see the devil as one who opposes them and seeks to harm them. He will cheat Christians and wants to destroy them. Because of this they need to fight against what he is trying to do. Jesus is again seen as the one who can help believers to fight against the devil.

In other places the devil is not referred to directly in people's testimonies but there is mention of witchcraft and being under the influence of forces contrary to God. In a TV commercial Apostle Musili highlights the 'testimony of Edwin who was involved in witchcraft and ended up in prison for many years. Edwin won the case to get him out of prison, but it was too costly. Ended up with a costly price to pay. His son died. Other people were struck by lightning and died. His wife left him. He was left with nothing of his own. The Lord chased him away.'<sup>77</sup> Another testimony is found in one of Musili's broadcasts in which Musili also refers to someone whose business has been affected by witchcraft.<sup>78</sup> For the preachers involved, these testimonies highlight the dangers of witchcraft and how it can ruin someone's life completely and even mean separation from God. Such testimonies serve as a warning to Christians to have nothing to do with witchcraft or witchdoctors.

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<sup>71</sup> Fridah Githurai, Nairobi, October 30, 2011, Mutunga, Sermon 25.

<sup>72</sup> Charles Chirchir, Open Air Meeting, Kitui, May 15, 2011.

<sup>73</sup> Pastor John Mbale, Muumandu Secondary School, July 15, 2011, Mweu, Sermon 6.

<sup>74</sup> Jacob, Wikililye Market, May 12, 2010, Christine, Sermon 1.

<sup>75</sup> Timothy Musau, Kitulu, July 3, 2011, Nyerere, Sermon 9.

<sup>76</sup> Peter, Tarasa, Malindi, December 19, 2010, Stella, Sermon 4.

<sup>77</sup> Apostle Musili, NTV, September 9, 2010, (Gregg Okesson).

<sup>78</sup> Apostle Musili, NTV, October 31, 2010, (Gregg Okesson).

## Summary

According to this research, for East African believers the devil is active in many areas of life and so needs to be included in discussions about subjects such as marriage, illness, drunkenness and disunity. While the teaching highlights particular aspects of the devil's activity and how the believer can counter his activities, the prayers of the church give a more comprehensive picture of the scope of the devil's activity. In their prayers, believers ask for God's protection against the devil. At times they confront him directly so as to prevent him from disrupting services or causing harm in people's lives. People who have been harmed by the devil are prayed for and help from God is sought for their restoration. The prayers show that the devil is seen as the source of many problems in life including illness, people losing their faith, people not being able to achieve their ambitions, drunkenness, fighting, divisions and prostitution. There is considerable overlap between what is taught and what is included in the prayers. Choir pieces and songs refer to the devil at times, reinforcing what is taught more directly elsewhere but this is relatively rare. In the testimonies recorded, the devil is not often mentioned directly but involvement in witchcraft is. These references build up a picture of how the devil is regarded by these East African churches and demonstrate how their faith in God helps them to handle demonic influence in the world.

References to the devil are not confined to any one denomination. Many of the churches are Pentecostal churches such as Nairobi Pentecostal Church, the Redeemed Gospel Church, and the Jesus Celebration Centre, but there were also many instances of references to the devil in the officially non-charismatic denomination Africa Inland Church congregations. The devil is mentioned in churches in Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda. The devil was also talked about in Bible Colleges and secondary schools and was a concern in both rural and urban areas.

So the churches in which research was conducted are very conscious of the activities of the devil. Churches of different denominations and in different countries teach about him directly, they mention him and even confront him in their prayers, and they speak of him in songs. He is seen as an adversary of both God and believers, but because Jesus has defeated him on the cross he has limited power. He is regarded as the source of the challenges in life and seems to be particularly involved in troubling believers. He does not like when Christians meet to worship God and uses many ploys to try to disrupt worship services. He, therefore, needs to be opposed by Christians who can be victorious over him in Jesus' name.

## Implications For Theological Education in Africa

This study has implications for theological education in Africa. The issues raised in this research concerning the devil need to be addressed in Biblical studies, theology, and pastoral theology classes. Graduates will be serving as

pastors in churches where belief in the devil and demons is strong, where people see them at work in different ways in their lives, and where they hinder worship in their churches. Biblical studies classes must include teaching about the devil and demons emphasising, as the churches do, that although the devil has a certain amount of power, his power is limited. Jesus needs to be shown to be the all-powerful one who has defeated the devil on the cross and will defeat him conclusively when he returns.

In theology classes the historical position taken by the church regarding the devil and his cohorts should be addressed. In both these disciplines what is believed and taught in the local churches must be addressed and compared with the Church's position historically and in other parts of the world.

In pastoral theology classes discussion of the beliefs concerning the devil found in local churches should be examined. Pastoral issues related to these beliefs, such as demon possession, consultation of witchdoctors etc. should be discussed. Student pastors should be assisted in thinking through these issues so that they are equipped to deal with them in the pastoral situations they will face.

In all these classes students need to learn how to recognise when teaching and beliefs in the churches are in line with Scripture and when they are grounded in incompatible elements found in traditional African worldviews.

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