

BIBLICAL COUNSELLING OF SOTHO  
CHRISTIANS IN SYNOD MIDLANDS BELIEVING  
IN WITCHCRAFT

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BA (Hons)

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POTCHEFSTROOM

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By

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BA (Hons)

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**Biblical Counselling of Sotho Christians in Synod Midlands believing in  
witchcraft**

**SECTION A**

**Chapter 1**

**Introduction**

**1.1 Definition of witchcraft**

The word for witch in the OT is כַּשֵּׁפ (kashaf). It is difficult to know the exact meaning of this but it is usually associated with sorcery and divination, although divination can be studied on its own. Witchcraft links with secret communication with another world. Passages that make mention of witchcraft are the following: Ex 22:18, Deut 18:10, 2 Kings 9:22, 2 Chronicles 33:6, Micah 5:12 and Nahum 3:4. The Septuagint uses *φαρμακεια*. This Greek term implies the taking of drugs, probably to produce clouds of vapour, as part of the process. The NT in Rev 9:21, 21:8, 22:15 and Acts 9:19 strongly denounce this as one of the sinful works of the flesh. Hayes (1995:339) describes witchcraft as the supposed power of a person to harm others by occult or by supernatural means. In the modern context Kgatla (1995:21, 22) says there are two types of witches: night witches and day witches, and he describes some of the techniques they use to harm or kill others as follows.

***1.1.1 Night witches***

Night witches are born with an inherent quality of evil as the snake is born with its venom. They have a compulsion to do evil, which needs to be activated by jealousy or hatred as in the case of day witches. Their nature compels them to harm others purely for the sake of the pleasure they derive from it. A child of a night witch inherits this quality from his/her parents and he/she can never change from that practice. Night witches work chiefly by night but they can also work by day if circumstances permit it.

The night witch is able directly and without the aid of any medicine to affect his/her evil purpose. Night witches are usually women who are believed to be walking naked in the night, even in the coldest winter nights. Night witches paint themselves with ashes to disguise themselves as witches; they run faster than they can under normal circumstances. People fear them and normally those who do not have the right protective medicine do not walk in the night, especially around two o'clock in the morning. It is believed that night witches are at their best around that time because they would have held their regular meetings and plans would be ready to carry out.

#### 1.1.1.1 *Their techniques to harm others*

Night witches employ familiar animals such as hyenas, big dogs, mongooses, owls, snakes, or lightning birds. Through their skill they tame these animals and during the day they hide them in their back huts. If a person accuses another person of possessing a bird it means he/she suspects him/her of practising lightning. Night witches are cruel masters who do not feed their pets, because of hunger these familiar animals are not well fed, for that reason they look for food in other people's dustbins during the night.

#### 1.1.2 *Day witches*

A day witch is an ordinary individual who, by means of medicine obtained from some expert or spell, tries to kill his/her enemies or even innocent people. A day witch is notorious and dangerous for he/she goes directly for their prey during daylight. This type of witch can be deterred from their practice by putting them to death upon finding them. They never miss an opportunity to bewitch their victims. They are actually active at festivals where liquor and food are served.

#### 1.1.2.1 *Their techniques to harm others*

Day witches can also employ familiars to carry out their tasks. They may send a snake to bite his/her victim or send lightning to strike it down.

Nyirongo (1997:185) says a day witch can also tamper with the victim's hair, nail snippets or any articles worn by the victim, and then apply magic to them in order to harm or kill the victims.

## **1.2 Background**

In this study the word Sotho refers to the Southern Sotho, also called Basotho, and to the Western Sotho, also called the Batswana, as well as to the Northern Sotho, also called the Bapedi. Many Christians who include Reformed Church members believe in witchcraft. Harriet (1996:328) says witchcraft does have positive effects on society. Most of the people believe that witchcraft is the greatest cause of all misfortunes, accidents, sickness, death and even barrenness. According to this view nothing harmful happens by chance: someone causes everything directly or by mystical power (Van Rooy, 1978:24). Therefore Harriet (1996:325) argues that for Africans to receive good news into their reality witchcraft must be addressed. There are circumstances that motivate people to believe in the existence of witchcraft. These include the limited cosmic good, fear, and doubt of someone's life-force.

### **1.2.1 Limited cosmic good**

Muthwadini (1990:6) says another example of how this belief in the principle of the limited cosmic good works is the way witchcraft is believed to work. For example when two wives of one man live together and the children of one are prosperous and healthy, while that of the other wife is sickly and unfortunate in everything they do, the mother of the less fortunate children is likely to suspect her co-wife of witchcraft. She will reason that since the children are from one father, why are all her children weak while the children of the other wife are strong?

### **1.2.2 Fear**

Like all human beings Africans fear certain things. Two things that most Africans fear more than anything else are death and witchcraft. A person often takes all his money and his last resources to a diviner or a witchdoctor because he believes that he

is being bewitched and he wants that witchdoctor to tell him who is bewitching him. In Africa the witch is feared like the Devil himself. Sometimes the fear is so great that even people who call themselves Christians run to the ancestor spirits to ask help from them (Muthwadini, 1990:8).

### **1.2.3 Doubt about someone's life-force**

Nyirongo (1997:187) describes circumstances that can make someone doubt his/her life-force, for example failure or success, poor relationships at home, sickness, insanity or lack of education. Muthwadini (1990:11) adds that since people often fear death and witchcraft they look for means by which to strengthen or increase the life-force. There are different kinds of amulets which people trust in to this end, believing that by these they will counteract the work of witchcraft. Some of these amulets are pieces of cloth, wood or metal. Many members of the ZCC regard their star badge as this kind of thing.

Van Rooy (1978:25) says that the evil nature of witchcraft also implies the belief that witches take away the life-force of other people or the fertility of their crops in order to strengthen their own vital force or to increase the fertility of their own crops. For this reason those who get rich by unknown means, or whose crops prosper while the fields of other people are not so forward are liable to be accused of witchcraft. Since some go for amulets and others for divine healing Hayes (1995:345) says some look for Biblical counselling to increase or strengthen their life-force. Therefore Marthinus (1989:63) argues that pastoral care is important in this regard and should be studied and developed.

## **1.3 Problem statement**

1.3.1 What Biblical counselling can be given to the Sotho Christian members who believe in Witchcraft?

1.3.1.1 What is the Scriptural message concerning witchcraft?

1.3.1.2 What effect do the problems of limited cosmic good, fear and doubt about one's life-force have on Christians of the Reformed Churches in the resort of Synod Midlands?

1.3.1.3 What guidelines can be developed to contribute in pastoral counselling for members who strongly believe in witchcraft?

#### **1.4 Aims and objectives**

1.4.1 The aim of this research is to offer Biblical counselling to Reformed members who believe in witchcraft. The following objectives thus come into focus:

1.4.1.1 To determine Scriptural perspectives concerning witchcraft.

1.4.1.2 To analyse the effect of witchcraft on Sotho Christians in the Reformed Churches in the resort of synod Midlands with special focus on limited cosmic good, fear and doubt about one's life-force.

1.4.1.3 To formulate some guidelines on how to counsel a Reformed believer who strongly believes in witchcraft.

#### **1.5 Central theoretical argument**

This study holds that many Reformed Christians who also believe in witchcraft can be helped to overcome this problem through intensive Biblical counselling.

#### **1.6 Method of research**

The method or approach to be followed here is a model set out by Zerfass (1974:166) for practical theology. The method comprises of a basis-theory, a meta-theory and a praxis-theory.

##### **1.6.1 Basis-theory**

To understand a Scriptural message, a grammatical-historical method of exegesis will be used as described by Venter (1995:199).

### 1.6.2 Meta-theory

To analyse the effect of witchcraft on members a literature study will be conducted with a view to Socio-Anthropology, which deals in depth with humankind and its culture. In addition a questionnaire will be formulated to interview 60 members in different Reformed congregations in the resort of Synod Midlands. The members will include 5 ministers, men, women, and youth members in order to get a broader perspective. This evidently involves quantitative research.

### 1.6.3 Praxis-theory

Intercommunication will take place between the basis- and meta-theories. The information gathered here will be analysed and thus utilised to formulate guidelines that will be operative among Reformed members.

### 1.7 Schematic representation of the correlation between 3, 4 and 6

PROBLEM STATEMENT	Aims And Objectives	Methodology
What is the Scriptural message concerning witchcraft?	To determine the Scriptural message concerning witchcraft.	To understand a Scriptural message, a grammatical-a historical method of exegesis will be used as described by Venter (1995:199).
What effect does the problem of limited cosmic good; fear and doubt about one's life-force have on members of the Reformed Churches in the resort of Synod Midlands?	To analyse the effect of witchcraft on Reformed members with special attention to limited cosmic good, fear and doubt about one's life-force.	To analyse the effect of witchcraft on members a literature study will be conducted with a view to Anthropology which deals in depth with humankind and its culture. In addition a questionnaire will be formulated to interview 60

		members in different Reformed congregations in the resort of Synod Midlands. The members will include 5 ministers, men, women, and youth members in order to get a broader perspective. This evidently involves quantitative research.
What guidelines can be developed to contribute to pastoral counselling for members who strongly believe in witchcraft?	To formulate some guidelines on how to counsel a Reformed Christian who strongly believes in witchcraft.	Intercommunication will take place between the basis- and meta-theories. The information gathered here will be analysed and utilised to formulate guidelines that will be operative among Reformed members.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Basic-principles of a Scriptural perspective concerning witchcraft**

#### **2.1 OT and NT teaching on witchcraft**

##### **2.1.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to make an intensive study of the OT teaching regarding witchcraft. One cannot easily come up with Biblical counselling to someone who is affected by issues of witchcraft unless one has a clear understanding of what the Bible teaches regarding witchcraft. Hence this chapter will seek to come up with Biblical principles that may be utilised to come to grips with witchcraft issues in a better manner.

##### **2.1.2 Work-plan and method**

This study adopts a grammatical-historical exegetical approach. Each Scriptural portion studied will be followed by some basic theoretical principles that will the study ultimately integrate with meta-theoretical guidelines to form new practical guidelines.

##### **2.1.3 Exegetical study of Exodus 22:18**

"Do not suffer a witch to live."

Walvoord & Zuck (1983-c1985) state that the ancient Rabbis counted 613 specific laws in the Pentateuch. Here, within a section called the book of the covenant (Exodus 20:22-23:13), a number of these 613 are listed. They illustrate and thus help to explain the implication of the basic Ten Commandments for members of the covenant community. The laws in these can be grouped by general content: there are laws governing treatment of Hebrew servants (21:1-11), compensation for personal injury (vv. 12-13), restitution for violation of property rights (22:1-5) and there are laws that deal with various responsibilities individuals have as members of the covenant

community (vv. 16-31). The important truth this collection of laws illustrates is, first, that God is deeply concerned with every aspect of the believer's lifestyle. Secondly the basic Ten Commandments have the broadest possible application. We are to be sensitive to their implication for every choice we make, and for every law that our society enacts.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown (1989:369) agree with Walvoord and Zuck that these laws are not a collection of picky laws but are collectively a case study of God's principles in action. God was taking potential situations and showing that his laws would work in the Israelites' everyday lives. These case studies had several objectives:

1. To focus the nation's attention on God.
2. To protect the nation.
3. To organize the nation. The laws listed here do not cover every possible situation but give practical examples make it easier to decide what God wants. (Walvoord and Zuck 1983 –1985).

Richards (1991) states, moreover, that the laws that follow from v.18 onwards differ both in form and in subject matter. However they make demands upon Israel on the grounds of its election to be the holy nation of Jehovah. The transition from the former series to the present one is made by the command in v.18 that stipulates: "Do not allow a witch to live." Witchcraft is the vilest way of injuring a neighbour in his property.

A word used here for a witch is **כַּשְׁפָּא** in the Hebrew language which means a practitioner in magic and incarnations or a juggler who pretends by skill in occult science to reveal future events. The word here is in the feminine gender: the reason is that many women devoted themselves to mystic arts during that time. However this does not condone the fact that male witches were available during that time but rather it indicates that female witches proved more seductive than male performers.

“Thou shall not allow/suffer a witch to live” is a strong expression adopted apparently to prevent the interposition of any false sympathy or misplaced tenderness towards a

person of such character. Indeed such persons were to be exterminated among Israelites.

An Interpreter Bible (1995:1006) says that witchcraft was referred to as one of the capital offences and it generally consists of supernatural rites connected with earlier forms of religion now discarded. Nevertheless the religion of Yahweh demanded absolute loyalty and to participate in other cults was regarded as religious high treason punishable by death. Therefore the Life Application Bible (1989:141) says that witchcraft is an act of rebellion against God and his authority; in essence, it was to team up with Satan instead of God.

Clements (1972:145) adds that there was strong opposition to witchcraft on religious grounds in Israel because it implied a use of the supernatural outside of and hostile to the power of God. In this regard Exodus, 22:18 says that Israel was not allowed to exercise any form of witchcraft.

#### *2.1.3.1 Principles from Exodus 22:18*

- The Lord demands absolute loyalty and does not tolerate any consultation with other gods or spirits.
- Witchcraft teams up with Satan instead of God.
- Witchcraft implies a use of supernatural forces outside of and hostile to the power of God.
- Those who practice witchcraft were to be exterminated.

#### **2.1.4 Deuteronomy 18: 10-12**

"Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, or casts spells, or who is a medium or who consults the dead."

In Deuteronomy 18:10b-12 God gives a comprehensive list of witchcraft practices which Israel had to avoid maintaining pure worship. Nyirongo says that God was

concerned because pagan religious and witchcraft was the same thing. In fact each time God's messengers came into conflict with pagan rulers it was always the magician, sorcerers and the diviners who came forward to challenge them (Nyirongo 1997:188-189).

Walvoord & Zuck (1983 -c1985) say that Israel had other leaders besides the local elders, priests and legal experts who compromised the Supreme Court and the king. These included ordinary priests and Levites who served brief shifts at the central sanctuary (Deut. 18:1-8). Most notable among these were prophets who served as God's contemporary spokesmen to his people. Israel was not to seek supernatural guidance from an occult source (vv.9-13) for God would give any direction needed beyond that provided in scripture through His prophets (vv. 14-22). The true prophet of God could be recognised by three tests: he was a Jew (v. 15), he would speak in the name of the Lord (c. 20) and what he predicted would surely come to pass (v. 22).

God's prophets were not to be confused with a whole range of other religious operators. Listed in verse 10ff. Israel is told sharply to have nothing to do with soothsayers, diviners (v.14) witchcraft practitioners and so on. This entire group claims to be in the prophetic category and that is why this chapter sweeps them to one side, before it goes on to discuss the true Israelite prophet. It emphasises that they belong to foreign, pagan nations; there was no place for them in Israelite religion. Like prophets all these practitioners claimed to be able to ascertain the divine will, or to read the future. They used a wide variety of means which explains why the list is so long. Some read the stars, some read the entrails of slaughtered animals and they were all specialists in their own way (Keil and Delitzsch: 2002).

Furthermore Keil and Delitzsch (2002) say that the reason why the OT is so hostile towards these practitioners is that they associate themselves with other deities. God makes it abundantly clear that he will not reveal his mind nor give any guidance for the future to anyone who resorts to such false methods; and as for non-existent deities, they have no guidance to offer. So any resort to divination, astrology, witchcraft, and the like is doomed to failure; the answers received will be false and would in all likelihood lead to wrong actions and harm to others.

Vincent (2002) confirms this when he says that all the forbidden practices in this verse are called **detestable ways** (cf. v. 12) of the nations in the land – ways dealing either with foretelling the future or with magic. By the use of magic one attempted to manipulate or force the gods into a certain course of action. Child sacrifice was mentioned here because it was used either as a means of foretelling or as magic to manipulate certain events. All these practices were forbidden because they divorced life from morality (Vincent: 2002). Moreover Craigie (1976:261) says that these foreign offices and practices which were abomination to the Lord were to be forbidden in Israel precisely because they were a part of the reason for God's judgement of the Canaanites. To maintain their possession of the Promised Land the Israelites were to be perfect to the Lord (v.13).

Verse 10a says: "Let no one be found among you who sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire." The Life Application (1991:141) says in this respect that God strictly forbade occult practices and child sacrifices; these practices were common among pagan religions. Israel's neighbours actually sacrificed their own children to the god Molech (Lev 20: 2-5) and Israelites were to replace their evil practices with the worship of the true one God.

There are several passages in the OT that mention child sacrifice (cf. Lev 18:21; 2Kgs 16:3; 17:17; 23:10; Ezek 16:21 20:26, 31; 23:37). At least three times the rite is associated with Molech, an Ammonite god (Lev 18:21; 2 Kings 23: 10; Jeremiah 32: 35) and twice it is linked with divination or sorcery (2 Kgs 17: 17; 21:6). The fact that it is listed in our passage with the terms that are exclusively divinatory in nature argues strongly for its usage in that kind of practice. The Molech connection would suggest that the rite was originally indigenous to an Ammonite cult with which Israel came in contact very early on (cf. Judge 10:6). In any case the concern of the passage is that God's people must avoid any heathen means of achieving revelation and must rather avail themselves of those prophetic instruments that he himself would raise up and through which exclusively he would reveal himself (Payne: 2001).

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown (1989:369) say that the word that is used here in Hebrew is **מכשפה** which means a practitioner in magic and sorcery. In this verse all

manners of witchcraft, sorcery, divination, or pretence to any of them were considered to be open professions and practices of idolatry for witches pretend to a knowledge and power of doing things that are above human, by virtue of supernatural powers received from the deities with whom they were supposed to have immediate and intimate connection. The powers from idols were considered to be overt acts of idolatry - that is of high treason to the Hebrew government. Whether such declarations were in reality true or false in themselves or not, the treason was the same, for it denied Jehovah openly to be the one true God. Instead it asserts the power of idols. The intention is to depose Jehovah as the king of Israel, by asserting the authority of "other gods before him." This justifies the wisdom of this law against a practice of idolatry which was so very apt to corrupt weak minds eagerly fond of knowing things to come since the greater part of every nation is composed of such ones.

In addition to that Phillips (1973:125) says that every form of divination, whether from cultic or natural objects, as well as the communion with the dead, and all forms of magic, are to be utterly ruled out. In fact the third commandment prohibits resorting to magic as a means of divination.

#### *2.1.4.1 Principles from Deuteronomy 18:10-14*

- The Lord forbids Child sacrifice as another form of witchcraft and occult practice.
- Witchcraft practices are to be ruled out.
- The third commandment also prohibits this strongly.
- God's people must avoid any contact with witchcraft practices.
- Witchcraft is part of idolatry: the first commandment forbids that.
- The power of witchcraft comes from other deities rather than from God.
- Witchcraft practices deny God as the only true God.
- Witchcraft practices are punishable by God.
- God's people should be free from those practices.

### 2.1.5 2 Kings 9: 1-29

When we read from the word of God we find accounts of how the kings of Israel participated in or allowed witchcraft practices in their lands: one of these is Joram.

2 Kings 9:22 literally reads: "So long as the whoredoms of your mother Jezebel and those many witchcrafts of her continues there will be no peace" In this verse we also see Jehu confronting Joram who allowed idolatries and witchcraft practices in his land and declaring to him that there can be no peace between them under such circumstances (Spence & Exell, 1950:192).

Keil & Delitzsch (2002) say that, Hazael and Jehu were the men who were designated as the instruments of God's justice in punishing and destroying the house of Ahab. Elijah was told to appoint them to this service but upon Ahab's humiliation, a reprieve was granted and so it was left to Elisha to appoint them. Hazael's elevation to the throne of Syria we read of in the preceding chapter. We must now attend Jehu to the throne of Israel; for him that escaped the sword of Hazael, as Joram and Ahaziah did, Jehu must slay, of which this chapter gives us an account. A commission is sent to Jehu by the hand of one of the prophets to take upon him the government.

We have here the anointing of Jehu to be king. As this time he was a commander (probably commander-in-chief) of the forces employed at Ramoth-Gilead (v. 14). There he was fighting for the king his master but he received orders from a higher king to fight against him. It does not appear that Jehu aimed at the government or that he ever thought of it. The commission given him was a perfect surprise to him. Some think that he had been anointed before by Elijah, whom God ordered to do so, but privately. There was an intimation that he should not act until further orders came, just as Samuel anointed David long before he was to come to the throne. But that was not at all probable for then we must suppose Elijah had anointed Hazael too.

Henry (1999) says that, Jezebel's whoredoms and witchcrafts were as not provoking as her persecution of the prophets like killing all the family of Ahab (v1-10) here is his speedy execution of this commission.

1. He communicates it to his captains (v. 11–15).
2. He marches directly to Jezreel (v. 16–20) and there dispatches Joram king of Israel (v. 21–26), Ahaziah king of Judah (v. 27–29) and Jezebel (v. 30–37). The punishment that some of these people got were so harsh because some were driven into corners and caves -- see 1 Kings. 18:4. (2.) Some were sentenced to utter destruction not to be corrected but to be cut off and rooted out. This Jehu had to come to know that his eye might not spare anyone for pity, favour or affection. All that belonged to Ahab had to be slain (v. 8). A pattern is given him of the destruction intended in the cases of the destruction of the families of Jeroboam and Baasha (v. 9) and he is particularly directed to throw Jezebel to the dogs (v. 10). The whole stock of royal blood was little enough, and too little, to atone for the blood of the prophets, the saints and martyrs, who in God's account are of great price. The prophet, having done this errand, made the best of his way home again and left Jehu alone to consider what he had to do and beg direction from God.

Henry (1991) records the conversation between Joram and Jehu as follows. Joram inquires: "Is it peace, Jehu?" He replies: "What peace, as long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts continue?" The notion of continuance is implied in the Hebrew word זְנוּנִים עַד which refers to spiritual whoredom, i.e., idolatry.

#### *2.1.5.1 Principles from 2 Kings 9:1-29*

- Where there is witchcraft there is no peace.
- God punishes those who practice witchcraft.

#### **2.1.6 2 Kings 21:1-10**

Further passages from Scripture which denounce witchcraft are 2 Kings 21:1-10a and 2 Chronicles 33:6. The latter is based closely on 2 Kings 21:1-10 (vv1, 6, 9). The story is dominated by Manasseh's evil action (Selman 1994:519). Manasseh followed the example of his grandfather Ahaz more than that of his father. In addition he adopted the wicked practices of Babylon and the Canaanites including sacrificing his

own son. He angered God most by practicing occultism - including sorcery and divination and consulting mediums and spiritists. These acts were strictly forbidden by God and for these evil practices he was severely punished by the Lord.

Walvoord & Zuck (1983 -1985) state that after the death of Hezekiah his son, Manasseh, became king. His 55-year rule was the longest in Judah's history. But it was also the most corrupt for Manasseh reversed his father's policies and actively promoted the old Canaanite religions (21:1-9). The 50-year counter-revival so corrupted Judah that its own future destruction was assured (vv. 10-18). Manasseh was followed by his son, Amon, who ruled for only 2 years before he died to be replaced by the second king, Josiah, who was destined to become one of Judah's most godly rulers (vv.19-26). Auld (2001, c1986) states that there were at least seven religious offences that Manasseh committed. Firstly he reverted to the worship of idols in the same manner as the nations that Israel expelled from the land. By doing so he proved the people of the covenant to be as unworthy of the Promised Land as their predecessors. Secondly Manasseh allowed high places to flourish again. His standards thus turned out to be no higher than those of Jeroboam 1. Thirdly he sank to Ahab's religious level when he reintroduced the worship of Baal and his consort Asherah (cf. 1 Kings 30-33; Deut 16:21). Polytheism re-entered Judahite society with royal approval.

Fourthly Manasseh also bowed down "to all the starry hosts." Astral deities were popular throughout the ancient world before, during, and after this time. Fifthly Manasseh altered to these gods in the temple of the Lord as Ahaz his grandfather did in 2 Kings 16:10-16. If there were Assyrian deities he probably hoped to please the gods which he thought could make him as powerful as his masters or at least he hoped to please his masters. Sixthly he also imitated Ahab's practice of child sacrifice (2 Kings 16:3). Willington (1999: 15) adds that Manasseh offered one of his sons as a sacrifice to the Ammonite god Molech in the valley of Hinnom. Seventhly he consulted mediums and spiritists both in direct violation of Moses' Law (cf. Lev 18:21; Deut 18:9-13).

It is clear that Manasseh followed all the wrong role models. He imitated the detestable Canaanites, Jeroboam 1 the builder of high places, Ahab the advocate of Baal worship, Ahaz the proponent of child sacrifice and Saul the visitor of mediums.

The king believed that all forms of worship were better for the people than the exclusive worship of Yahweh prescribed in the Law. His policies provoked the **Lord to anger** (cf. 21:15; 22:13, 17; 23:19; 26; 24:20) and were evil in **his eyes** (cf. 21:2).

#### *2.1.6.1 Principles from 2 Kings 21:1-10*

- God forbids child sacrifice.
- God forbids idol worship since people who practice witchcraft get power from them.

#### **2.1.7 1 Samuel 28:1–25**

Walvoord and Zuck (1883-c1985) say that the closing chapters of 1 Samuel deal with a single major event, a great battle between Israel and the Philistines, and with the actions and fortunes of the three parties involved: Saul and the Israelite army, the Philistine army and David and his smaller army. The Philistines initiated these events mustering their forces in strength (1, 4). Most of the battles between Israel and the Philistines took place in the Southern part of the country but now the Philistines changed their strategy and mustered the forces in the North at Shunem. They were probably trying to cut Israel in two, separating Saul from his tribes. At any rate Saul could not ignore this threat and it seems that he was forced to fight on level ground where Philistine chariots gave them a great advantage. (Usually the Israelites were able to fight in the hills where chariots were of little use.)

Israel was, therefore, in a dangerous situation and Saul was desperately in need of military advice. Although the story is told in personal terms it is important to realize that Saul was seeking guidance as king of Israel and not as a private individual. But as king of Israel he could get no prophetic help. The story mentions in v. 6 the three usual means for learning Yahweh's will: for example the Urim refers to the priestly ephod (see 14:37). Saul could no longer consult Samuel who had recently died unless he could do so through a medium. But Saul himself had driven all the mediums out of the central part of his realm. The OT laws attack the practice of consulting the dead

(necromancy) (see Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:9–14) and Saul had upheld such laws. It was a sign of his desperation that he now consulted a medium. To do so he had to go as far north as *Endor*, a journey to the far side of the Philistine camp.

The Biblical author here is not concerned either to attack or to ridicule the practice of necromancy; he is simply intending to portray Saul's desperation and Yahweh's firm decisions. Whether God allowed Samuel himself to reappear or whether some spirit took the form of Samuel, the fact was that as far as Saul was concerned he saw Samuel and he heard the voice of Samuel. This voice repeated and confirmed Yahweh's rejection of Saul and choice of David. The story adds a new prediction in v. 19 about the outcome of the battle that was due on the next day.

The intention of this story is to emphasize Saul's hopelessness—and to show how low he had sunk when even a criminal helped to comfort him. For the woman was a criminal by Saul's own laws. The chapter is certainly not endorsing the activities of mediums: God's guidance is never to be obtained from them.

Carson (1994:80) says that this section presents what another writer considered to be perhaps the darkest moment in Saul's life: his deliberate violation of one of the most serious prohibitions in the Torah (cf. 1 Chronicle 10:13–14). By turning to a medium to receive guidance for his life Saul committed a capital offence (cf. Lev 20:6). Less than twenty-four hours after he did so he was dead—a sobering reminder of the swiftness and surety of the Lord's punishment for anyone who violates the divine Word.

There are some authors who made some comments regarding this passage in 1 Samuel 28:1 about a Witch of Endor. According to Parrinder (1963:119) the so-called 'Witch of Endor' has frequently been quoted as a clear example of a Biblical witch. Yet the remarkable thing about this notorious lady is not only that she is plainly a witch but also that she is not even called one in the Biblical text. Those who hurriedly turn up their Bibles to disprove this assertion (1 Sam 28) will find the Authorized and the Revised Version both translated in the phrase “a woman that hath a familiar spirit. In fact the word witch only occurs in page- and chapter headings in the Authorized Version which says 'Saul consulted a Witch ' and ' Saul seeks to a Witch'. Those

headings are not part of the original text; they are mere interpretations of the King James translation. They are commentaries on the text which at times seek to spiritualise the original text.

However Scott (1968:56-57) argues that 'The Witch of Endor ' was a mere fortune-teller to whom unfortunate king of Israel had recourse in despair of all aid and in the absence of any answer from the Almighty. In some way or another he obtained the awful certainty of his own defeat and death. She was liable, indeed deservedly so, to the punishment of death for intruding herself upon the task of the real prophets -- by whom the will of God was at that time regularly made known. But her existence and her crimes can go no length to prove the possibility that another class of witches either existed at a more recent period or were liable to the same capital punishment.

To add to this: the Life Application Bible (1989:485) comments that occult practices which include divination, sorcery, witchcraft, mediums, spiritists or anyone who consults the dead (such as a Witch of Endor) -- have Satan and demons as the source of information, and this was strictly forbidden by God. That is why before he committed evil before the eyes of the Lord Saul banned and removed all the sins of spirits, mediums and witchcraft. But in desperation he ultimately turned to one for counsel. Although he removed the sin of witchcraft from the land he did not remove it from his heart.

The subsequent verses 3-5 review known facts and present additional background materials necessary for understanding one of the strangest and most sordid events in Saul's life. First the author reminds the reader that at this time "Samuel was dead" (v. 3; cf. 25:43). Furthermore he had been dead long enough to be buried and to have an appropriately long mourning period.

Secondly the writer indicates that Saul had previously made a commendable effort to abide by the Torah in the matter of expelling "mediums and spiritists from the land." Mediums and spiritists were individuals who claimed the ability to contact the dead, either in serving as intermediaries through whom the dead would speak (cf. Isaiah 8:19) or by rousing the dead to speak for themselves. This note establishes Saul's clear understanding that it was forbidden for Israelites to consult these individuals, a fact

necessary for understanding the severity and speed of the punishment meted out to him.

Letšosa (2005:230) therefore rightly states that the dead are not truly communicating with the living in these instances: rather it is simply a case of some evil spirits that act in disguise of the real deceased. God does not use the departed to proclaim His message. Instead He makes use of the living. To think that God is helped by the dead who are referred to as god is actually to despise God and to make him incapable of acting without such people.

#### *2.1.7.1 Principles from 1 Samuel 28: 1-25*

- One must not seek counselling from the dead.
- One must have faith in God even in the most adverse conditions of life.
- God does not fail his promises whether of blessings.

#### **2.1.8 Micah 5:11**

In Micah 5:11 the Lord says: “I will destroy your witchcraft and you will no longer cast spells.” During this time of the prophet Micah many people believed in their self-might and the power of their witchcraft practices, but for those evil practices the Lord would destroy their witchcraft (Wiseman 1988:189).

Vincent (2002) adds that the great seventh prophesy of hope in chapters. 4–5 also refer to *that day* (see 4:1, 6): the day the remnant under the Messiah conquers the nations. The additional phrase, *declares the Lord* (see 4:6), guarantees its fulfilment. It refers to the protection of Israel in two ways: the purification of Israel within (10–14) and the punishment of the disobedient nations without (15).

One may say verses 10 to 14 embody a prophecy because it begins with “*I will destroy*” (10–13): this is God's answer to the prayer of v. 9. The Hebrew verb behind 'destroy' frequently refers to the removal of persons that violated Israel's holiness (*e.g.*

'cut-off' in Lev. 17:10; 20:3–6). This involved a measure to preserve Israel in the face of God's wrath against the unholy. The objects, the works of their own hands, consigned for annihilation *from among* them (10, 13, 14) threatened Israel's faith in God: military might (10–11; *cf.* Deut. 17:16–17), sorcery (12; *cf.* Deut. 18:9–13) and idolatry (13–14; *cf.* Deut. 7:5). Isaiah (2:6–8) accuses Israel of placing their confidence in these very things. Military hardware included the offensive *horse-drawn chariots* (10) and the defensive *cities* and *all the strongholds* (11). In verse 12 the NIV Bible omits after *witchcraft* the phrase 'from your hand', a phrase that stresses that they are human fabrications. In verse 13 the same point is made with reference to *carved images and sacred stones*, the stylized representations of the male deity, Baal.

#### 2.1.8.1 Principles from Micah 5

- God will destroy witchcraft practices in his land.

#### 2.1.9 Nahum 3:4

This principle also applies to the land of Nineveh. In Nahum 3:4 we see how Nineveh was regarded as the mistress of all witchcraft practices because of her seduction and her deceitful manner. Nineveh had used its beauty, prestige and power to seduce other nations. Like a harlot she enticed them into false friendships and for that reason God would judge them.

The prophet showed the spiritually depraved condition of the once-haughty and prosperous city. **Woe** in v. 1 is an interjection pronouncing either grief or, as here, impending death (*cf.* comments on Isaiah. 3:9). Nineveh was truly a **city of blood**—blood spilled by her uncontrolled lust and murder. She earned this title by her atrocious practice of cutting off hands and feet, ears and noses, gouging out eyes, lopping off heads, and then binding them to vines or heaping them up before city gates [and] the utter fiendishness by which captives could be impaled or flayed alive through a process in which their skin was gradually and completely removed. It was also a city of deception (**lies**). The tactics Assyria followed when surrounding Jerusalem clearly display this characteristic (2 Kings 18:31).

Nahum's accusation of Nineveh's guilt (v. 1) is followed by several terse descriptions of the final assault on the city. These statements are a progression from **whips**, to **wheels** and **horses** of **chariots**, to **cavalry** with **swords** and **spears**, to widespread slaughter and carnage (**bodies without number**). These describe the attack on Nineveh (cf. 2:3-4), which was surprisingly like Nineveh's own war tactics. She had piled up many dead bodies but now the *Ninevites'* **corpses** would be piled up.

The reason for this terror is that she had lusted for power like the lusting **of a harlot**. Nineveh sold her military aid and power in order to lure **nations** under her control. By this statement Nahum may have subtly alluded also to Ishtar, the Assyrian-Babylonian goddess of sex and war, who was called a harlot and some of whose exploits were acts of savagery. Nineveh's control over others was exercised by **sorceries** and **witchcraft**. The Assyrians used hundreds of incantations to seek the foretelling of the future and influence over others' lives; they also read omens in the movements of birds, animals, clouds and in dreams.

This policy is called whoring or lovemaking inasmuch as it amounted to that selfishness which wraps itself up in the dress of love while under the appearance of love it seeks simply the gratification of its own lust. The text describes זונה still more minutely as ט וְבַת חָן which means beautiful with grace. This refers to the splendour and brilliance of Nineveh by which this city dazzled and ensnared the nations like a graceful coquette. The word קְשָׁפִים (witchcrafts) is connected with זוננמ as in 2 Kings 9:22 and these refer to secret wiles which, like magical arts, do not come to the light in them but only in their effects. The word כָּרַמַּי, means to sell nations: that is to rob them of liberty and bring them into slavery, to make them tributary as found in Deut. 32:30, Judge. 2:14; 3:8.

### *2.1.9.1 Principles from Nahum 3: 4*

- Witchcraft practices should not be used in any way to cheat other people.

Parrinder (1963: 122&1223) says that there are a few OT indications which resemble witchcraft practices implicitly and he describes them as follows. Ezekiel 13: 18-21 cries out: ' Woe to the women that sew pillows, and makes kerchiefs for the head of the person of every stature to hunt souls.' This sound like authentic witchcraft belief as found in other parts of the world and it is significant that it occurs in a late period of Israel's history; spoken by a prophet who was living in exile in Babylon in the sixth century B.C. It is not very clear what these evil people do. However one should know that they are women. They hunt souls 'to slay the souls that should not die' and this they do for "handfuls of barleys and for peaces of bread.' They hunt souls to make them fly 'and save other souls alive that should not live' but God 'will let the souls go.'

There are further scattered references in the OT to either evil forces which may mean the magic arts in general or evil spirits which operate at night. Thus in Psalms in particular we find the statement: "You will not fear the terror of night" (91:5). It is at night that evil is thought to be unleashed and then the wicked do their plotting as stated in the following phrase: ' He plots evil on his bed (36, 4). That this is not mere enmity but could refer to a form of witchcraft is clear from Psalm (11: 1&2) which states: 'How then can you say to me, flee as a bird to your mountain? (v.2). for "look, the wicked bend their elbows; they make ready their arrow upon the string, which they may shoot in darkness at the upright in heart." Here the soul is thought to fly like a bird while the wicked shoots at it by night.

Evil men practice what Hebrew call און a word that includes evil deeds, magic and sorcery. These are the ones who set "the snare of the fowler' for the unwary (91:3).

There are other Bible passages in which persons are accused of supporting witchcraft practices or divination (Wheaton 1986:723-727).

Some scholars have argued that God permitted Israelites to practice certain types of magic or divination. To support their claims they refer to various Bible texts to be discussed briefly and immediately. However a careful interpretation of these passages proves the contrary.

(a) *The use of mandrake by Leah* (Gen 30:14-18). It is true that at the time Jacob married Leah and Rachel Eastern women had used mandrake for many centuries as medicine to aid conception. In fact modern medical investigations have shown that mandrake "contains some elements that are really effective" (Wheaton, 1986:723-727). It is however foolish to conclude from this that God permitted Leah to use mandrake as a magical aid to influence her conception. The God who promised Abraham numerous offspring was the same God then (in spite of the women's anxiety and polygamous situation) at work in fulfilling his plan.

(b) *Jacob and his peeled rods* (Gen. 30:7-41) have been cited as another example of witchcraft in the Bible. Here Jacob was most likely influenced by "primitive ideas of the peeled rods upon the unborn young" (Wheaton, 1986:727) since in verse 40 we read that the fine cattle came about through selective breeding. Modern husbandry also shows that by combining certain breeds with other breeds one can yield better results. What is important here is not however Jacob's ingenuity in breeding the animals but God's hand at work.

(c) *Samuel and the pouring out of water* (Sam. 7:6) is another example of this. The solemn pouring of water by Samuel before the storm started is thought to denote sympathetic magic. Nevertheless a careful reading of the context reveals a contrary interpretation. According to Samuel 14:14 water poured on the ground was a "symbol of human frailty and impermanence and Samuel's action may best be interpreted as a sign of abasement and humiliation before God" (Wheaton, 1986: 723-727).

(d) A further example is *Samson's hair*. Some scholars produce stories from many parts of the world alleging that the soul or strength of a person is located in the hair. However in Samson's case the unusual strength was a work of the Holy Spirit and its substances depended on the man's faithfulness to the Nazarene's vow commanded by God (Judges 16: 14-19).

(e) Consider also *raising up leviathan*. Some regard Job's speech in Job 3:8 as a reference to magicians who were thought to rouse up a dragon to swallow the sun at an eclipse. Nevertheless the context suggests the contrary. Job's speech is simply a metaphorical way of challenging "anyone bogus or real who might claim to bring ill-luck on his birthday" (Wheaton 1986: 723-727).

(f) *The power of blessing and cursing* has also been mentioned in this context. In our first chapter we note that witches rely mostly on magical curses or spells to harm their victims. However the same thing cannot be said of the curses pronounced by the holy patriarchs in the OT. Their curses or their blessings worked because they were in agreement with God's will. God was able to turn malicious cursing into blessings and to prevent anyone to undo what He had declared.

(g) *Miracles* come to mind in this respect. In both the Old and NT the pagan world regarded certain miracles as magic (e.g. Exod.7 and Acts 8:9-11) but the Bible does not regard divine miracles as superior magic. The devil can imitate but he cannot produce divine miracles. Even his ability to imitate is limited by God's power.

(h) *Casting of lots* also comes to mind. That God's people relied on the casting of lots to make decisions cannot be denied but to say that they regarded the practice as a kind of magical intuition is to violate good principles of interpretation. The logical view of lots with regard to the holy men of God is that God was behind the casting itself - so that the results agreed with his will. It is worth noting here that the casting of lots was no longer used by God's people after the Pentecost. God the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures were now the only reliable sources of guidance.

(i) Consider *Joseph and divination*. Some perceive Genesis 44:4-5 and 15 as clear cases of God's people resorting to divination to tackle problems. Serious Bible scholars understand the passage differently: Joseph was simply "play-acting in order to bring his brothers to a point of genuine repentance."

(j) *Prophets and divination* may be mentioned. The accounts in 1 Samuel 9:6-10, Numbers 22: 7, 24:1, Mica 3:6-7, 11, Ezekiel 13:6-7 and Zachariah 10: 2 suggest that the word divination could occasionally be used by the prophets in a positive sense to

describe the seership aspects of prophecy. In other words a prophet was a seer who could use his clairvoyant gifts to assist enquirers to know God's will. However this gift was sometimes misused by prophets for selfish gain. In such cases it became as bad as pagan divination (Nyirongo 1997: 91).

(k) *Use of the Teraphim; Urim and Thummim* also deserves attention here. The Bible does not explain what these objects looked like and how they were used to assist enquirers in making decisions. The Bible does however give sufficient hints as to the motives behind their use. The Teraphim were used in pagan divination but the Jews were directly or indirectly warned against using them (see 1 Sam. 15, 2 Kings 23:24, Judges 17:6, Zach 28:1-29; see Nyirongo 1997: 192).

The Urim and the Thummim were provided by God to assist the Israelite priests in making decisions. They were worn as part of the priestly garb which God Himself had designed (Exodus 28: 1-29).

(l) *Dreams* must also be mentioned briefly. Although God used dreams to reveal His will we do not anywhere in the OT and NT find the people of God deliberately asking for guidance or supernatural knowledge through dreams and visions or to receive new revelations as additions to the Bible. The Bible gives all that we need for guidance. It is the only the reliable yardstick for all our claims (Nyirongo 1997: 192).

It is clear that no devout Jew resorted to magic or divination as pagans did or do. Any traces of witchcraft among the Israelites simply demonstrated a departure from true worship. In addition we see within these OT passages that witchcraft originates from or is inspired by demons. Wheaton (1986:727) argues further that even the so-called white magic (the casting of spells to undo evil magic) or fortune telling are not as innocent as they appear. They are also influenced by demons. The magician tries to compel a god; demon or spirit to work for him, or he follows the pattern of occult practices to bent psychic forces to his will.

### **2.1.10 A summary of Biblical principles from the OT**

- God condemns engagement in the practice of witchcraft.
- Witchcraft power comes from Satan.
- Witchcraft is a sin and God will punish those who practise it.
- God's people must seek counselling from God and not from the dead.

## **2.2. The NT teaching on witchcraft**

### **2.2.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study is to make an intensive study of NT teaching on witchcraft.

#### **2.2.1.1 Work-plan**

This study adopts a grammatical-historical exegetical approach: each Scriptural portion studied will be followed by some basic theoretical principles. The principles that are determined from each studied pericope will be gathered together to form general principles of NT teaching on witchcraft. This involves exegesis of all periscopes that deal with, mention or imply witchcraft. At the end of this study the OT and NT principles will be gathered to form Biblical principles on the whole Bible regarding witchcraft. Ultimately this information will be integrated with meta-theoretical guidelines to form new practical guidelines.

#### **2.2.1.2 Acts 8:9-25**

The NT reveals that some magicians, sorcerers and diviners regarded themselves as gods. Thus it is not surprising that in Acts 8: 9-25 the Samaritan sorcerer projected himself as a god and he was treated by his followers as such. We read in v9 and 10 that Elymas boasted that he was someone great and all the people both high and low gave him their attention and exclamation, and they called him the great power from God. Due to his spiritual blindness the sorcerer thought that he could buy God's power from Peter and Philip with money. Peter's response clearly demonstrates that

there must be no room for witchcraft in a Christian's heart. He says: "May your money perish with you because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money you have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God" (see Nyirongo 1997:189).

Wiersbe (1996) adds that many traditions centre on Simon the sorcerer. About him one finds various allegations: that he was the founder of Gnostic heresies, that he went to Rome and perverted Christian doctrine there and that he became involved in a miracle contest with Peter and lost. At any rate this Simon of Samaria did practice sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. Because of his "sorcery," the ability to exercise control over nature and/or people by means of demonic power, people called him the Great Power. Simon boasted that he was someone great and the people of Samaria believed him. Furthermore he accepted their adulation.

Keener (1993) says that Simon was a worker of magic: a charlatan who made money from his bag of tricks. The early church fathers however tell of a heretical Gnostic sect of Simonians in the second and third centuries that traced their beliefs back to the Simon of Acts. The earliest account is Justin Martyr's from the middle of the second century. Justin was himself a Samaritan and wrote that Simon, a Samaritan from the village of Getto, was worshipped by almost all of the Samaritans of his day as the first god. Dating his rise to acclaim in the reign of Claudius he spoke of Simon's journey to Rome where he was worshipped as a god and had a statue erected with the inscription "to the holy god Simon." Justin also notes that he was accompanied by a female named Helen who had been a former prostitute. Writing towards the end of the second century, Irenaeus attributed a much more elaborate system to the Simonians. It is quite possible that Simon of Acts had virtually no connection with Justin's Simonians but was co-opted by the later Gnostic group to give a NT root age to their movement.

Moreover Vincent (2002) says that it is a basic principle in Scripture that wherever God sows His true believers Satan will eventually sow his counterfeits (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). This was true of the ministry of John the Baptist (Matt 3:7ff) and Jesus (Matt. 23:15, 33; John 8:44), and it would be true of Paul's ministry (Acts 13:6ff; 2 Corinthians 11:1-4, 13-15). The enemy comes as a lion to devour and when that

approach fails he comes as a serpent to deceive. Satan's tool in this case was a sorcerer named Simon. The word translated as bewitched in Acts 8:9 and 11 simply means astounded, confounded. It is translated as wondered in Acts 8:13. The people were amazed at the things that Simon did and therefore they believed the things that he said. They considered him to be "the great power of God." Simon's sorcery was energized by Satan (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12) and was used to magnify him while Philip's miracles were empowered by God and were used to glorify Christ.

Wiersbe (1996) says that both men and women who believed in God's message were baptized. The most amazing thing is that both Philip and Simon performed miracles: Simon by demonic power and Philip by divine power. Simon boasted and welcomed acclaim to him but Philip proclaimed Christ. People were amazed at Simon's magic but people were converted to Christ by Philip's ministry.

Wiersbe (1996) argues that Luke did not mention clearly whether Simon was saved or not and it is difficult to be dogmatic. But seven facts suggest that Simon probably was not born again: the verb believe (πιστευω) does not always refer to converted faith. Simon's faith could have been like that of the demons as found in James 2:19: merely a form of intellectual assent. Furthermore faith based on signs is not a trustworthy faith (cf. John 2:23-25; 4:48). In addition Luke never stated that Simon received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8: 17-18). Simon continued to have a self-centred interest in the display of miraculous power (vv. 18-19). The verb repent (μετανοεω) used in verse 22 is normally addressed to lost people. Also the word "perish" (εις απολειαν) employed in verse 20 is strong. It is related to the word perish in John 3:16. Furthermore the description of Simon in Acts 8:23 is a better description of a lost man than of one who is saved (cf. Deut. 29:18). Still one cannot be dogmatic on this point. The Lord knows those who are His.

Keener (1993) adds that there is no object given for Simon's believing. The only response connected with his baptism was his following of Philip everywhere, totally entranced by his miraculous signs. This could have been Luke's way of indicating that Simon's commitment was lacking and that it was based more on Philip's miracles than his preaching while it was predominantly oriented toward the tricks of his own trade.

### 2.2.1.2.1 Principles from Acts 8:9-25

- Witchcraft is used to cheat others and therefore it is evil.
- Witchcraft leads to self-exaltation and claims the place of God in one's life
- Witchcraft promotes demonic power and therefore fights against the will of the Holy Spirit.
- Those who practice witchcraft have to be rebuked through God's Word so that they may see Christ and his love.

### 2.2.1.3 Acts 13:8-25

Walvoord and Zuck (1983-1985) say that it was to Cyrrus that Paul and Barnabas first went. Barnabas was a native of Cyrrus (Acts 4:36) and it would be typical of his gracious heart that he should desire to share the treasures of Jesus first with his own people. Cyrrus was a Roman province, famous for its copper mines and its shipbuilding industry. The governor of Cyrrus was Sergius Paulus. These were intensely superstitious times and most great men -- even an intelligent man like Sergius Paulus -- kept private wizards, fortune-tellers who dealt in magic and spells.

During his first missionary journey in Cyrrus Paul met a Jewish magician by the name of Elymas who opposed the faith and tried to turn the proconsul against it. The word used here in Greek is *Ελυμας ο μαγος* or Elymas the magician. According to Louw and Nida (1989:545) *μαγος* is someone who practices magic and witchcraft.

Wiersbe (1996) states that the name Elymas is something of a problem. Probably it is a Semitic word-meaning sorcerer, which was given or taken by him as a nickname. But Keener (1993) argues that the name Elymas comes from the Arabic root *alim*, which means to sage -- or that it comes from Aramaic *haloma* which means interpreter of dreams.

No matter what the name Elymas means Scott (1968: 58) states that Elymas's problem was to try to put his own mystical and ridiculous pretensions to supernatural power in competition with those who had been conferred on purpose to diffuse the

Gospel. When we read further from v 10-12 it shows how the sorcerer was punished because witchcraft practices were forbidden in the Early Church. Paul's response to Elymas the sorcerer is another clear illustration of how a Christian should perceive witchcraft. To Elymas Paul said: "you are a child of a devil, an enemy of everything is right, you are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you not stop preventing the right ways of the Lord"?

Keener (1993) adds that Paul rebuked Elymas by saying "you are the enemy of everything that is right" and this could refer to Elymas general moral opposition to all that was good and just. The phrase "enemy of all righteousness" could have implied that Elymas had set himself up as an enemy of God. He was filled with deceit (*δολος*) and trickery (*ραδιουργια*). The word *Δολος* originally meant bait by which something or someone was lured into a trap. This was what Elymas was doing all along with Sergius Paulus: deceiving him with all his false claims. Now he was adding to his evil ways--not only tricking the proconsul but also perverting the straight path of the Lord himself in attempting to divert the official from the gospel. Moreover Russels (1980:35-36) says that Christians' attitude towards sorcerers was clear from the book of Acts onwards. This became clear when Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, cursed the sorcerer.

#### *2.2.1.3.1 Principles from Acts 13:8-25*

- Christians should not perceive witchcraft practices as something positive.
- Witchcraft is the enemy of everything that is right.
- Witchcraft practices lure people from what is true to what is wrong.

#### **2.2.1.4 Acts 19: 19**

Acts 19:19 states that those "who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. "This verse shows how people who practiced witchcraft lately believed in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Life Application Bible (1989:2002) says that Ephesus was a centre for black magic and other occult practices. The people cooked their magical formulas to give them wealth, happiness and success in

marriage. Superstitions and sorcery were commonplace. God clearly forbids such practices. You cannot be a believer and hold on to the occult, black magic or sorcery. So many people in Ephesus who heard God's message got rid of their witchcraft practices and followed God's message.

Polhill (2001) says that since the Ephesus was regarded as the centre for magic practices the famous statue of Artemis was erected there and this magical gibberish was considered to have greater power. It was not by surprise that Paul's encounter with magic took place in Ephesus, nor is it a surprise that his converts there had been involved in such practices. Magic was part of Ephesians' culture.

Keener (1993) says that, despite the popularity of Jewish magicians, people recognised that Paul's Jesus could not be manipulated like lower spirits and people started to believe and confess their sins and many of them brought forward their magical papyri to be burned. These magical papyri were rolled up in small cylinders or locketts used as amulets around the neck. These magical incantations were so common in Ephesus that rolls of these formulas are called *Ephesia grammata* or Ephesians' writings.

To add to that Polhill (2001) says that these magical papyri consisted of various spells that often invoked the names of foreign gods and employed several kinds of gibberish. These ancient magicians were syncretists and would borrow terms from any religion that sounded sufficiently strange to be deemed effective. But the attempt to lure people to their magical tricks backfired and people believed God's message and burned all that was associated with magical practices.

#### 2.2.1.4.1 *Principles from Acts 19:19*

- Christians should radically turn away from magical practices and believe in God.
- No matter how strong the concoction magical formulas cannot replace the work and the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.
- Christians should not use magic formulas to get blessings, blessings are only from God.

### 2.2.1.5 Galatians 5:20

Walvoord and Zuck (1983-c1985) say that Paul has shown that Christ has set us free from the law and from slavery. We are now sons of God (Gal4: 1-7) in the "free" line of Isaac and not the "slave" line of Ishmael (4:21-31). And God has set us free to experience freedom (5:1)! Only living by the Spirit can release us from the domination of a sinful nature and this has nothing to do with the law (vv.16-18). The works of the sinful nature are so obvious (vv19-21): this means either as some suggest that they are public and cannot be hidden. The listed sins are commonly seen to fall into four categories. First three sexual sins are mentioned: sexual impurity, impurity and debauchery. Secondly Paul cites two religious sins (Galatians 5:19 &20): " The acts of the sinful nature are obvious [they are] idolatry and witchcraft" (v. 20). In Greek these sins are named εἰδωλολατρία and φαρμακεία.

According to Guthrie (1969: 146) the immorality and idolatry are never far removed in Paul's mind. The two were closely knit in contemporary paganism especially in much pagan worship. Sorcery or witchcraft that was also prevalent contemporary practices is here represented by a word φαρμακεία which means the use of medicine or drugs. Drugs might occasionally have been used for poisoning (Spence and Exell 1950:274). Furthermore Guthrie (1969:146) states that both idolatry and sorcery were thus examples of the sins of pagan worship, the first providing an adequate substitute for God and the second counterfeiting the works of the Spirit.

Lastly eight societal evils are listed: hatred, discord, and jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition dissensions, envy, drunkenness and orgies. The apostle then solemnly warns the Galatians as he had done when he was in their midst that those who live like this, who habitually indulge in these fleshly sins, will not inherit the future kingdom of God. This does not say that a Christian loses his salvation if he lapses into a sin of the flesh but that a person who lives continually on such a level of moral corruption gives evidence of not being a child of God.

#### 2.2.1.5.1 *Principles from Galatians 5:20*

- Since Christ has set us free from the law and slavery we must get rid of our sinful nature which includes idolatry and witchcraft.

#### 2.2.1.6 **Revelation 9: 20&21**

Henry (1991: 2475) says that in chapter 9 we have an account of the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets and the appearance that attended them as well as the events that were to follow. The sins of witchcraft, which include sorcery, fall under the sixth trumpet. Under the rubric of this dreadful judgement belonged the rest of mankind consisting of those who were:

- Idolatrous -- those who would not cast away the images, which could do them no good because these images could not see nor hear, nor walk.
- Murderers (v. 21) -- they committed murder upon the saints and servants of Christ.
- Sorcerers -- they had their charms, magic arts and rites in exorcism and other things.
- Fornicators -- they allowed both spiritual and carnal impurity and promoted these in themselves and others.
- Thieves -- they had by unjust means heaped together vast deals of wealth to the injury and impoverishment of families, cities and nations.

Henry (1991:2475) adds that these sins are the fragrant crimes of the anti-Christ and his agent and though God has revealed his wrath from heaven against them they are obstinate, hardened, impenitent -- and judicially so -- for they must be destroyed. From the sixth trumpet we learn that when God's judgement is on earth He expects the inhabitants thereof to repent of sin and enter righteousness.

According to the Interpreters Bible (1952:437) the sins, which are quoted here in v. 21 including the sin of witchcraft practice, have no place in the worship of our Lord. Every sort of evil grows in the soil of godlessness. And when great acts of judgement

falls upon the world, the people enmeshed in their own evil ways, do not repent. They are likely to try some new magic, some new idolatry instead of turning to the living God. All this is the consummation of the dark process, which may be disturbed in this fashion. At first humans commit evil deeds and the deeds are theirs: there is something in them, which can sit in judgement upon the deeds of wickedness. Ultimately they become one: the humans and their evil deeds are synonymous and they can no longer repent.

#### *2.2.1.6.1 Principles from Rev 9:20&21*

- The sins of witchcraft will be destroyed.
- Witchcraft practices have no place in the worship of our Lord.

#### **2.2.1.7 Revelation 21:8**

Henry (1991:2483-2484) says that the prophecy of this book has presented to us a very remarkable mixture of light and shade, prosperity and adversity, mercy and judgement in the conduct of divine providence towards the church in the world. Now at the close of all the daybreaks and the shadow flee away, a new world now appears, the former having passed away. Some are willing to understand all that is said in these chapters of the state of the church even here on earth in the glory of the latter days; but others expect a more perfect and triumphant state of the church in heaven.

Beasley-Murray (1974:314) adds to this that those who persist in active opposition to God will meet the judgement of God. The list of those who will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone are the fearful, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters and all liars. All of these evildoers have no place in the great consummation.

Therefore Henry (1991:2484) rightly says that their punishment is that they have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. They must die another death after their natural death; the agonies and terrors of the first death will consign them over to the far greater terrors and agonies of eternal death to

die and to remain always dying. This misery will be their proper part and portion, what they have justly deserved: what they have in effect chosen and what they have prepared themselves for with their sins.

#### *2.2.1.7.1 Principles from Rev 21:8*

- Those who practice witchcraft and other sins will have eternal death as their judgement.
- All evildoers listed in these chapters have no place in the great consummation.

#### **2.2.1.8 Revelation 22:15**

Henry (1991:2485) says that in this chapter we have a further description of the heavenly state of the church (v. 1-5), a confirmation of this and all the other visions of this book (v. 6-19) as well as a conclusion (v. 20&21). The Interpreters Bible (1952:547) adds that it has frequently been assumed on the basis of this verse that those who are described as dogs and fornicators and sorcerers and murderers and idolaters and those who love and practice falsehood are just outside the city gate vainly seeking admission. With regard to v. 15 Beasley-Murray (1974:341) says dogs were regarded in the ancient East as scavengers of the streets rather than pets and they were viewed by the Jews as the most despicable of all the creatures. To call man a dog was to express the utmost contempt for him. The term was applied by the Jews to the godless in general and especially to the heathen. It is evident that for John the term relates not to the heathen over against the Jews but to the godless of any nation in contrast to men of all nations who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. Now here the sorcerers and the fornicators and the murderers and the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood are stated to be outside the city.

2.2.1.8.1 *Principles from Rev 22:15*

- Those who practice witchcraft and other sins mentioned in this chapter are to be placed away from the believers.

2.3 A summary of the Biblical principles from the NT

2.2.1 Christians should radically turn away from witchcraft practices.

2.2.2 Christians should not use magical formulas to get blessings, blessings come only from God.

2.2.3 Christian love towards those who practice witchcraft is needed so that they may see Christ and his love.

2.2.3 The sin of witchcraft will be destroyed.

2.4 Biblical principles from both the OT and the NT

2.3.1 God condemns engagement in the practice of witchcraft.

2.3.2 Witchcraft power comes from Satan.

2.3.3 Witchcraft is a sin and those who practise it will be punished by God.

2.3.4 Faith in God is needed even in the most adverse conditions of life.

2.3.5 Christians' love towards those who practice witchcraft is needed.

2.3.6 Christians should not use magic formulas to get blessings -- blessings come from God only.

2.3.6 Counselling is needed not from the dead but from the Word of God.

## **Section B**

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### **Meta-theoretical principles concerning witchcraft**

## **Chapter 3**

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### **3.1 Aim**

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the effect of witchcraft on Reformed members with special attention to limited cosmic good, fear and doubt about one's life-force.

### **3.2 Method**

A literature study will be done with a view to the discipline of anthropology, which deals with humankind and its culture on an in-depth basis. Certain aspects that are closely linked with issues of witchcraft will be discussed in this chapter among which the following are persistent: limited cosmic good, fear, ancestral spirits, and witchdoctors and so on.

After a discussion of each of these persistent issues some evaluation will be conducted. Ultimately some negative as well as positive inferences are made. At the close of this chapter all the inferences will be brought together in order to depict the African view of witchcraft and the Biblical evaluation of this view.

#### **3.2.1 Limited cosmic good vs. blessings**

Van Rooy (1978:7-8) says that it seems as if the background of black cosmology as in the case of many other "primitive" cultures shows the idea of a limited amount of cosmic good. This idea is typical in subsistence level societies where there are seemingly limited natural resources. In expanding societies such as modern industrial societies the fact as observed by the people would deny such an idea.

Since the cosmic good is limited it is believed that the amount of good possessed or controlled by a particular person can only be increased at the expense of someone or something else. On the other hand: when it seems to be decreasing the logical conclusion is that it is being drawn away somewhere else. This idea is one of the sources of the widespread belief among the blacks that the whites in Africa can only prosper at the expense of the Africans themselves – as reflected in the practise of colonialism which is one of the most important grievances of Africans against the white population. That also explains why independent governments in Africa are more or less forced by the views of their people to nationalize the sources of wealth, so as to prevent this kind of exploitation (Van Rooy 1978:7-8).

Muthwadini (1990:2) says that in some African languages a proverb says: "to give is to hang up in order to take it down later on." Another proverb says: "the benefactor gives benefits to a benefactor like him" which means one good turn deserves another. These sayings confirm the existence of a view of the limited cosmic good to some extent.

Muthwadini (1990:3) adds that since people in Africa believe that there is a limited cosmic good they feel very strongly about stinginess. If there is a person who does not share his/ her possessions with other people he/she is regarded as a bad person. Given this there is a very strong principle in Africa that every good thing that one gets from another man has to be returned in some way. If I accept a gift from someone and I do nothing in return it means I am taking more than my due share of the cosmic good.

Against this background one begins to see why in the African perspective less prosperous people are likely to accuse the more prosperous of witchcraft. Muthwadini (1990:6) gives an example of how this belief of limited good works amongst Africans. As has been mentioned: when two wives of one man live together and the children of one are prosperous and healthy and those of the other wife are sick and unfortunate in everything they do, the mother of the less fortunate children is likely to suspect her co-wife of witchcraft. She will reason in this way: "These children are the children of one father. Why are all my children weak while all the children of the other are strong? The only explanation can be that this wife is practicing witchcraft." The second wife may even go as far as saying: "she is eating my children," so that the

sense of one taking away from the other within a context of limited good becomes very graphic indeed.

Lagerwerf (1985: 34) says that belief in sorcery blocks every initiative because success is considered a threat to the community. He suggests that the pastoral engagement of Christians might overcome this jealousy by creating a "community of friends" characterized by mutual assistance. Pastoral engagement should form ways to re-invent networks of exchange which are more structured and less amorphous than simple comradeship.

### *3.2.1.1 What does the Bible say about limited cosmic good versus blessings?*

The Bible teaches us that cosmic good comes from God. This means that it cannot be obtained by taking it from someone else - consider that in this we are not talking about common theft but about cosmic good. Thus one finds for oneself by working. God tells us in Genesis 3:19: you "will have to work hard and sweat to make the soil produce anything." He or she who fulfils this command of God will find wealth and will obtain good things of the world.

Ecclesiastics 3:13 says: all "of us should eat and drink and enjoy what we have worked for. It is God's gift." This means that we do not find life by taking it away from anyone else: we find life from God. Because God is the source of all good it also means that the cosmic good is not limited because God is not limited. God is the source of unlimited wealth and life and power. His resources are inexhaustible; they can never be used up. There is always more than enough for everyone.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 3:22 and 23: "Paul, Apollos and Peter; this world, life and death, the present and the future - all these are yours, and you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God." So we need not to take anything from anyone else: it has been given to us already by God Himself who is the source, the unlimited source of everything that is good. Since this is the case, we do not need to be greedy or stingy any longer. No: we do well to each other just as God has done well to us by giving us Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus Himself says in Luke 6:27 to 35: but "I tell you who

hear me; Love your enemies, do well to those who ill-treat you. If anyone hits you on one cheek, let him hit the other one too. If someone takes your coat, let him have your shirt as well. Give to everyone who asks you for something and when someone takes what is yours, do not ask for it back. Do for others just what you would do for yourself."

Paul says more or less the same thing in Acts 20:35: "I have shown you in all things that by working hard in this way we must help the weak, remembering the words that the Lord Jesus Himself said, 'there is more happiness in giving than in receiving'." According to the Bible, the more I give the more I am blessed.

#### *3.2.1.2 Positive inferrals*

- All good come from God. He is the one who blesses his children.
- God's blessings are not limited.
- God's blessings are not determined by the doing of man. We read in Ps 127 that He blesses one even in his sleep and so on.

#### *3.2.1.3 Negative inferrals*

- The African refers to limited cosmic good which means that the good is only for specific people and not for all.
- If certain people are favoured by fortune then it means that they are bewitching others not to receive fortunes. This means that not all people can receive blessings simultaneously: some have to suffer so that others may benefit.

### **3.2.2 Fear**

Adams (1973:416) says that fear seems to stem from the fear of what either God or other humans may do to me. The summary of the law should be of great interest since it consists of a message of love towards God and humans. Love towards God means focusing upon how one may trust, worship and serve Him. Love towards one's

neighbour likewise focuses upon being in a relationship with him/ her in the light of this. Christian counsellors must determine the source of fear and meet it by the proper call to repentance and love. If the counselee fears God his relationship to God must be explored. If the counselee's fear is fundamentally a fear of man then the answer lies in encouraging him to engage in loving ministry which he may give of himself to others. Adams (1973:414) says that the fear of God is the one that removes all other fears. The enemy of fear is love: the way to put off fear is to put on love. Love moves towards others, fear shrinks away from them. Love is strong because it casts out fear. The more fear, the less love and the more love the less fear: they tend to seesaw.

To add to that Lagerwerf (1985:18) says that the power to love (cf. Corinthians 13) is able to counter-attack the power of evil for it strikes at the root of evil. The most essential point is to develop a living faith in God the Father. He who cares for the birds, will He not care even more for people also? Duvieusart (1984:48) points out that one day in his sermon on magic he referred to action of vaccination against chicken pox which has caused the disappearance of the illness. At the end of the mass, a Christian a well educated and engaged in the parochial apostolate said to him "Father, what you said in your sermon is right. Yet, what has liberated me from the fear of Kindoki was telling me that God is much stronger than Kindoki. This means that the trust in God the Father who is mightier than evil spirits liberated the person from the fear of Kindoki. For that reason, trust in God for a person who fears witchcraft will liberate him/her from the fear of witchcraft.

The other way to liberate people from the fear of witchcraft is to stimulate them to pray for the sorcerer so that he may convert himself. Christians ought to understand that witchcraft does exist and that it is an objective and subjective reality emanating from the devil. But having recognizing this, as Paul did when he combated the Colossian's error, they must also proclaim the pre-eminence and uniqueness of Christ whose all-embracing love is able to draw all humans to him.

Fear leads to hatred. According to an interview conducted by Deborah Parta, a presenter at E.TV's programme Third Degree (2006), people hate witches. They regard witches as number one enemies within the community. In most cases people who were accused of practicing witchcraft were burnt, stoned, wounded and killed by

the communities. Sometimes they were chased out of the community. There is a village in Limpopo province in Moletjie district called Helena in which most of the inhabitants had been accused of being witches and were deported there. During 1990 and 1991 three hundred cases of witchcraft practices were reported and 600 people who were accused of witchcraft practice lost their lives. It is by no mistake that the South African government in 1957 passed a Suppression Act which does not recognise the existence of witchcraft. In this regard it was or it is still a crime to point out someone as a witch in South Africa.

This shows how hatred is put forward to the witches instead of love. The hatred is not new to the world. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century persecution of witches was common. In the 200 years between 1450 and 1650 thousands of witches were put to death. Salem Mass was in the centre of a witch-hunt in 1692. The last execution for witchcraft was in Scotland in 1772. Because of this up to 20 years ago and for centuries before no one would admit that he or she was a witch (Tan 1996).

As has been mentioned Muthwadini (1990:8) says that Africans fear things like all human beings, and two things that they fear more than anything else are death and witchcraft.

### *3.2.2.1 What are ancestral spirits?*

Setiloane 1976:64 calls ancestral spirits the living dead. He says that at death all initiated Sotho-Tswana become badimo or ancestral spirits. Babies are gifts from badimo. Through childhood they grow until they are initiated as adults. At death they again change their state. Indeed the metaphor of a change of state, drawn from physics, is more apt than the biological metaphor of caterpillar-pupa-butterfly (Setiloane, 1976:64-65). Although in the case of badimo the reaction cannot be reserved there is something about the intangible all-pervasiveness of vapour which reflects the intimate presence of badimo at every point of life. They serve as the immediate agents of God. They are viewed as closer to God and live in a realm of spiritual realities. People have an ambivalent attitude towards ancestors. At the same time they love and fear them depending on the circumstances. They are generally

expected to be protective and beneficent even if they were not like that in their earthly lives (Thorpe 1991:113).

Their function is to ensure the good ordering of social relationships among the biological living as well as the fertility and well-being of men, their crops and stocks. In return they expect tirelo or service. This tirelo is also called mpho ya badimo or a gift to the ancestors. What usually happens in the African context is that many people resort to slaughtering for the departed. They make offerings in order to appease the departed perhaps in such a way to gain their favour (Letsosa 2005:231).

The belief is that the ancestral spirit has to be cared for by being given offerings. Sometimes when those offerings are made they are accompanied by prayers. Often the spirits are addressed by name one after the other. Some beer might be spilt on the ground or some blood of a fowl or an ox or a calf or a goat and they will be told to eat their share of it so that the living can enjoy what is left. When they bring these offerings and pray to the ancestor spirits there is often among many tribes no sign of trust or love. They do not bring it because they really care for the spirits but they bring it because they are afraid that if they do not do it those spirits will take revenge on them and kill the children and cause the crops to wither and prevent them from getting good harvests (Muthwadini 1990:21).

Gehman (1989:17) agrees with Muthwadini (1990:21) that when the ancestors are not cared for their spirits return to haunt the living. Their spirits become a menace to the living and they thus cause sickness and death among the living. Their attitude to the living is parental and protective, corrective and aimed at the welfare of the whole group. Therefore Letsosa (2005:225) confirms that by saying that ancestors are viewed as spirits they gain control over the living.

Muthwadini (1990:20) says in addition that it seems as if all over the world all people believe that although the body of a person dies his/ her spirit does not die in the same way as the body. There is still the knowledge that there is life after death. We get a belief in Africa that the spirit is the same as the shadow: therefore many people believe that a dead body does not cast a shadow.

Furthermore Dillon-Malone (1987:36) argues that the witchcraft paradigm for evil cannot be separated in practice from the African paradigm for good focused on the ancestral spirits as the guardians and protectors of life, health, peace harmony and order in society. The focus in witchcraft merely emphasizes the awareness of the extent to which these desired qualities are lacking in society. Indeed failure to respect the ancestral spirits and to observe the social code of behaviours which they endorse not only results in losing their protection but also renders them highly vulnerable to witchcraft attack.

Welbourn (1972:233) adds further that if ancestors are not respected this may cause diseases directly or they may withhold their protection and allow other causes to operate. Just as illness, misfortune, disorder and death are directly associated with witchcraft so health, good fortune, orders and life are perceived as inseparable from good relations with the ancestral spirit world. In practice the concept of holistic healing is central to African world view(s). It is a concept that simultaneously covers the human dimensions of the spiritual, the social, the psychological and the somatic. Witchcraft can impair health on any or all of these.

### *3.2.2.2 What does the Bible say about ancestral spirits?*

The Bible teaches us that only the Lord God created heaven and earth in the beginning. When He created it He did not go away and leave heaven and earth and the creatures to themselves. He is still looking after creation even today. He is still holding it in his hands. He cares for us to such an extent that in the Gospel of Mathew we read these words of our Lord Jesus (Mathew 10:29-31): even "the hairs of your head have been counted." We also read in Isaiah 45:7: "I create both light and darkness; I bring both blessing and disaster. I the Lord, do all these things." All these things do not come from the ancestor spirits -- they come from our Lord.

That is why He also says in the first commandments of Exodus 20:3: "I do not want you to have any other gods." He does not want us to have other gods because there are no gods, He is the only God. Isaiah 46:9 compels us to remember "what happened long ago, acknowledge that I am alone am God and there is no one else like Me." Isaiah 45:21, 22 say further: "come and present your case in court, let the defendants

consult one another. Who predicted long ago what would happen? Was it not I, the Lord who saves His people? There is no other God. Turn to me now and be saved, people all over the world. I am the only God there is". Isaiah 44:6 continues to state: the "Lord who rules and protects Israel, the Lord Almighty has this to say: 'I am the first and the last, the only God. There is no other God but me.'" Now if God is the only God there cannot be any other God.

The ancestor spirits do not know anything about us. In Isaiah 63:16 we read these words: "You are our father. Our ancestors Abraham and Jacob do not acknowledge us, but you Lord are our Father, the one who always rescues us." The Bible itself says that people who have died do not know us any longer. Ecclesiastics 9:10 reads: work "hard at whatever you do because there will be no action, no thought, no knowledge, no wisdom in the world of the dead and that is where you are going." So the dead people will not have anything to do with us. They are not allowed to come and tell us anything. In Luke 16:19 we read about the rich man who asked Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers. Abraham answered that it was impossible. His argument was that they have the Bible: they should listen to the Bible. If they do not want to listen to the Bible they will not listen even if someone from the dead comes to them (see Muthwadini 1990:22-23).

### *3.2.2.3 What are witchdoctors?*

Setiloane (1976:46-47) says that there are four types of witchdoctors (ngaka in Tswana and Sotho) and he describes them as follows:

#### *The Diviner (Selaodi)*

This type of witchdoctor uses a set of stones, shells and engraved stones which he carries in a small -skin bag. These he throws on the ground and through the pattern they form when they fall both his ancestors and those of his client reveal the answer to his client's enquiries. Enquiries may relate to the nature and causes of sickness, the reason for a death, and the whereabouts of missing stock, the meaning the objects found in the commune and any baffling situation or desire to know about the future.

Senoge refers to one who smells out or one who divines without a set of stones

This type of a witchdoctor touches the enquirer, or in the latter's absence, a piece of his/ her clothing and ancestors with whom he/ she is in close and constant contact communicate to him/ her required information. Enquirers are of the same nature as those for which a selaodi diviner is consulted except that they consult a senoge on more serious occasions encompassing a wider social circle than just the family or single persons. The acquisition of this skill does not require apprenticeship. It is a direct gift from badimo or ancestors' spirits frequently recognised in early childhood. The illness becomes the focal point at which badimo burst in the bloom in the person: and after such recognition the skill is endorsed, enlarged and liberated through pha badimo or thanksgiving to the ancestors.

Lethugela

This type of a witchdoctor is mainly of Nguni origin. They are often women. They specialize in the treatment of spirit possession of which the most common symptoms are violent headaches. They work in teams beating drums and dancing. They claim inspiration and support from ultra-human forces but rely on badimo less than selaodi or senoge.

Dingaka tse dinaka (horned doctors)

They are called horn doctors because they keep their medicine or dithlare in hollow horns. The same word is used for the black mixture of vegetables, animal and mineral material held together with fat which they place together in a horn and supply for the protection of a homestead against unseen evil influences. Their special function is to ward off sorcery. This type of a witchdoctor may simultaneously also practice as a selaodi or senoge. Indeed almost invariably they use ditaola or sets of stones in their practice. While they cannot be said to be more closely in touch with badimo than the other dingaka their services are more generally sought in the performance of rites addressed to badimo.

It is therefore clear that all these types of witchdoctors are directly connected to the ancestors or badimo. Parrinder (1963:182-183) says in addition that a witchdoctor is a practicing witch meaning that he/ she may well have certain affinities with witches. He has something of the same spirit. He has to be like witches so that he may overcome his powerful spirit. In this regard one may say that witchcraft for them is a gift from the ancestors. The witchdoctors have a power like that of witches. By this power they recognise those who are using witchcraft and heal those who are bewitched. But the power is very delicate and is fraught with danger to the possessor. If the witchdoctor is not strong enough against the power of the witches his attempt to heal or to ward off the witches may backfire and place him in danger.

#### *3.2.2.4 Methods of cure/ witch cleansing*

Douglas (1970:129) says that in most African societies witchcraft is a putative cause of what is seen by the sufferer as unmerited misfortune. Usually magical means of defences are available to individuals who feel threatened by witchcraft. Such prophylactics are dispensed to their clients by local specialists: the witchdoctors of traditional Africa.

Munday (1951:17-18) says that there are medicines that witchdoctors use to ward off disease and not only disease but also robbery, witchcraft lightning and all sorts of misfortunes and disasters. Parrinder (1963:187-189) says that these cleansing methods of cure fall into two classes. In the first class belong those who are supposed to be witches and in the second those who have been bewitched or are afraid of becoming so.

Setiloane (1976:54) describes witchdoctor's methods of cures as follows. Witchcraft cleansing includes two things: prevention and cure for those who have been bewitched. Prevention involves the application of lenaka horn to such strategic points as the doorposts of the house, the corners of the lapa, fields and the cattle-kraal. The head of the household preserves the lenaka (the horn with its contents) and is annually recharged to be used in the right of 'go theya motse' (to make a house strong against witches). The witchdoctor may or may not take part in this.

Another setlhare, leswalo, is a fatty substance rubbed on the face and body to render one likeable. One cannot be physically ill first when this is done. Another effect of leswalo is to make witches unobservant of the successes of the one to whom it is applied and, therefore, forgetful of their jealousy and destructive impulses. Another method to cut parts of the body, usually on top of the head, the forehead, the back and the joints on the hands and legs (Kgatlal1995:23).

Mokhubetso is burned, preferably on red-hot cow-dung. Its smell drives away witches. It also cleanses the atmosphere of difatlhi (those who make people not to recognize their blessings) and promotes the uninterrupted growth of infants.

Moupelo which is often part of the ingredients of lenaka prevents the birds from eating the millet and reduces the multiplication and destructiveness of the maize stalk-borer in the fields. It is invariably included in the medicine used in the ritual of seed-cleansing

Seipone is a mirror: A cup full of mixture of traditional medicine is given to the enquirer. After some minutes the enquirer is led to a dark room where he/ she will start seeing those who are bewitching him/ her. This kind of therapy helps the enquirer to be careful about those who he/ she saw in the seipone.

Curative medicine or ditlhare may be given orally, by external application or by incision. Sejeso (poison eaten by the victim) may be treated by pitsa (boiled medicine), an emetic or a laxative; this is the most common method.

### *3.2.2.5 What does the Bible say about witchdoctors?*

The Bible teaches us that death as well as life comes from God. It teaches us that not a hair will fall from our heads if God does not want it to happen (Matthew 10:29 and 30)

We know that it often happens that people who go to witchdoctors are also healed. Sometimes they may be healed through the medicines which were given to them.

Sometimes they are healed just because they trust in those doctors. It is well known that the spirit has a strong power over the body. If my spirit tells me that I have been healed, my body will often believe it and react healed. Consider Proverbs 17:22 which states: being "cheerful keeps you healthy; it is slow death to be gloomy all the time" and also Proverbs 14:30 which states that peace "of mind makes the body healthy but jealousy is like cancer." Proverbs 18:18 says that you're your "will to live can sustain you when you are sick but if you lose it your last hope is gone."

### *3.2.2.6 Christian doctors/ prophets of today*

Parrinder (1963:189) says that it is only to be expected that when nearly everybody including Christians, Muslims and pagans believe in witchcraft the new religion will have their doctors also. There are those Elijah's who rival the priests of Baal. Christian diviners are to be found particularly among the native sects that flourish in many places, with their apostles, prophets and their mixture of Christian and indigenous beliefs. In South Africa alone more than 2 000 such sects are known to have existed though many of them are small and some die out as others arise.

Lagerwerf (1985:29) says that Africans believe that one has to be protected in one way or the other. Most of the 'historic' Churches are well aware of this need but have to face the problem that the message of God's caring love, prayers and the sacraments are experienced by many Christians as not fully adequate. As a consequence they look for additional means of protection and resort to traditional rites and sacred objects among other things.

Parrinder (1963:189-190) says that for the bewitched Christian separatist sects use cleansing medicines just like herbal remedies of the witchdoctors. They merely issue them in modern glass bottles. Or since it happens that the sect opposes the use of all medicine, European and African, and relies on 'faith-healing,' recourse may be taken to anointing with oil, sprinkling with holy water, rubbing with ashes or censuring with incense.

In that way people also find additional means of protection within the Church. In the Roman Catholic Church one finds for instance devotional objects like holy water, the rosary, medals and prayer books. The cross, holy candles, church bells and consecrated herbs are used as means to ward off witches. To add to that Sebald (1978:217) states that Catholics continue to take advantage of the rich repertoire of rituals and sacraments that they could employ to rid themselves of the Devil and the curse of witches. They assure their members that the Church could dispense many efficacious remedies for protection against witches.

Having rejected these devotional objects from the very beginning of their existence in Africa Protestant Churches lost many members to the independent Churches. Others stayed in their Church but lead a dual life (Lagerwerf, 1985:29).

Furthermore Sebald (1978:216-217) argues that although Catholics supported the idea of the use of devotional objects and other remedies to ward off witches, Luther and Calvin as the Reformers shifted their theological guidance from ecclesiastical tradition to a greater reliance on the Scripture and on faith. Ecclesiastical practices, as well as old folk magic, used to ward off the Devil and his witches were condemned as superstition, even blasphemy, and to a large extent became alien to the Protestant. Faith in God was regarded as the infallible shield against Satan and his witches.

### *3.2.2.7 What does the Bible say about Christian doctors/ prophets of today?*

In Isaiah 44:14-18 we read the following words of the Lord: "He might cut down cedars to use or choose oak or cypress wood from the forest, or he might plant a laurel tree and wait for the rain to make it grow. Man uses parts of a tree for fuel, some of it he takes and warms himself. With the other part he makes a god and worships it. With some of the wood, he makes a fire and roasts meat, eats it and is satisfied. He warms himself and says, 'How nice and warm, what a beautiful fire.' The rest of the wood he makes into an idol and then he bows down and worships it. He praises it and says, 'You are my god, save me'. Such people are too stupid to know what they are doing. They close their eyes and their minds to the truth."

We read again in Isaiah 12:2 that God “is my Saviour; I will trust Him and not be afraid. The Lord gives me power and strength. He is my Saviour.” Once more the Lord says in Jeremiah 17:5: “Cursed is the one who trust in man and whose hearts turns away from the Lord.”

Debrunner (1955:48) adds that God provides a much better protection from witches and Christ offers to us His Holy Spirit, the strong Spirit of discipline and truth. If that Spirit really dwells in us, then not only can the witches no longer harm us, but they even lose their reality--just as a candle loses its light when the sun rises.

#### *3.2.2.8 Positive inferrals*

- Love removes all the fear.
- The fear of God removes all the fear.
- Faith in God the Father who is mightier than witches liberates people from fear.
- Only God can protect us from witchcraft, not ancestral spirits, witchdoctors or prophets of today.
- Counselling from the Word of God is necessary.
- God provides real answers to any problem through his Word.

#### *3.2.2.9 Negative inferrals*

- Hatred and to protect oneself are always put forward.
- Much faith is put on amulets and other objects to ward off witches instead of looking to God the protector
- Counselling is always necessary with a view to ancestral spirits, Christian doctors and witchdoctors.
- Witchcraft is regarded as a gift from ancestors.
- Africans view witchcraft as a threat to their community.

### 3.2.3 Life-force/ vital force

The idea of life-force goes hand in hand with the idea of limited cosmic good: for example when a person is not prosperous or when his/ her goods are limited he/ she will argue that someone has taken his life-force.

Van Rooy (1978:8) says that to understand what life-force means one must first understand the African concept of life and death. To Africans life and death are not absolute concepts as they are to Europeans. They are rather relative concepts with no clear dividing line between the two. Life to Africans is a dynamic process of constant increase or decrease in vital force.

An African would say "I am dying of hunger " when he has had a meal that same day, "the children are dying of flu" when they are running about and playing happily, "he has killed me" when one has to pay an excessive price or has received an excessive punishment or has been paid too little for strenuous labour. All these mean that the vital force of the speaker or his children is being diminished. This being so it is logical that there are degrees of life and death. When being asked about one's health one can answer "we are still living a little bit" meaning that one still has a little life-force left (Van Rooy 1978:8). Against this background one sees why, when Africans sense fear of witchcraft approaching, they look for means by which to strengthen or increase their life-force.

It is believed that witches on the other hand also increase their life-force so that they may be strong. The most fearful thing is that they increase their life-force by feeding themselves with human flesh. It is said that witches kill those who are young, whose life is still full to increase their life-force. The reason is that old people's meat is tough and not good and also that their life-force is too weak because they are almost near death. If they kill an older person it is not to consume him/ her but out of vindictiveness (Musopule: 1993).

### *3.2.3.1 Traditional ways of increasing someone's life-force*

When one wants to increase one's life-force he/ she must go to a traditional doctor. Then there will be a cutting of some of the body with a razor blade and a mixture of traditional medicine or a fatty black substance will be put in where the body has been cut. As has been mentioned the cuts occur especially on the top of the head, the forehead, the back and on the various joints of the body. This is done at least every year so as to strengthen one's life-force. Students and those who are working are often encouraged to strengthen themselves so that they may not be weaker than their counterparts.

Muthwadini (1990:14) says that there are many diviners who deceive people. The problem is that many persons do not only want medicine, they also want to be told who causes the sickness. In this regard the diviner has no choice but to tell lies because their ditaola or stones cannot tell exactly the name of the person who is bewitching the inquirer.

### *3.2.3.2 Sectarian ways of increasing someone's life-force*

Amulets are put on believing that these will counteract the work of witchcraft. Some of these amulets are pieces of cloth, wood or metal. Many of the ZCC regard their star badge as this kind of thing, as we have seen. I once took away one of those badges from one of the workers at our hospital and the next day he came to me and asked for it. He said: "Please give it back to me. I did not sleep at all last night. I'm very ill because you've taken away this protector of my body." Another man told me that when he has that star, that badge, even ghosts and evil spirits are afraid to come near him (see Muthwadini 1990:11). There are many things that are used by these sectarians to increase someone's life-force., below follow some of these:

- (a) Sewasho: this kind of setlhare is a mixture of medicine and ashes and it can be applied on the face to render one likeable to the witches. Sometimes it is poured in the water when one takes a bath so as to ward off witches or to be strong against them.

- (b) Meetse a thapelo: this is normally water from the ocean. Before it is given to anyone a person or a priest who is a prophet blesses the water by means of a prayer and after that it can be given to anyone in need. One may drink this meetse a thapelo, or one may pour some in the bath before bathing. Some carry little glass bottles containing this kind of water wherever they go so that they may look like a real person. Those who are unemployed usually go to these prophets to get those little glass bottles so that they may get jobs easily.
- (c) Letsoai: this is normally a coarse salt. This letsoai is blessed with prayer by a priest before it can be distributed. Letsoai can be thrown around the house or inside the yard. The main purpose is to make the house strong against witches. It is mostly used when there is a thunderstorm rain so as to prevent the house from being attacked by lightning.

### *3.2.3.3 Methods of cure*

Most ZCC people use tea (especially Joko tea, Trekker tea, cacao coffee) mixed with milk. The ill person may drink that or he/ she may use a syringe bulb to remove any sejeso (poison), this syringe bulb is normally called spyt.

O kapa or o phalaza is another way of healing. Here lukewarm water sometimes mixed with medicine or coarse salt is given to the ill person. O phalaza or o kapa is to drink more water and after that a person points a finger deep into his mouth so as to bring back the water which he/ she drank.

Sefotho or dipoana or a mixture of medicine is poured in a big dish containing boiling water and the person puts a blanket over the body and around the big dish so that he/ she may sweat excessively. This is like a modern steam room.

There are many illnesses that these people treat, for instance hypertension. It is treated by using needles to pin a person in the nose and on the foot and it is believed that when the pinned blood from the nose and the foot gets out the hypertension will be moderated.

#### *3.2.3.4 What does the Bible say about life-force or increase in someone life-force?*

If we are afraid of death let us take refuge in God. Amulets and badges cannot give us life or increase our life-force. Their power is imaginary. The real-, eternal- and indestructible life we can only find in God our Lord. Jesus Christ is the source of life. He who has Jesus Christ has indestructible life. In proverbs 8:35 and 36 we read the following words: “the man who finds me finds life and the Lord will be pleased with him. The man who does not find me hurts himself. Anyone who hates me loves death.”

John 1:4 says that “the Word was the source of life and this life brought light to the mankind.” Also in the Gospel of John, chapter 17:3, in the high priestly prayer of our Lord, we read these words: and “eternal life means knowing you, the only true God and knowing Jesus Christ whom you sent.” John 5:26 goes on to say: just “as the Father is himself the source of life, in the same way he has made his son to be the source of life”. We inherit life because Jesus Christ died for us and gave us his life. That is why the Bible says that “He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son has no life. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ as his Lord and saviour has received eternal life, glorious life, the life in the new world.” We read in John 11:25 that Christ says of himself: “I am the resurrection and the life.”

Jesus Christ has given us eternal life: we now have a new law of life. Luke 9:24 and 17:33 say whoever wants to save his life will lose it but whoever wants to lose his life for me will save it.

These Scriptural quotations make it clear that there is no need for us to run around looking for medicine to increase our life-force. Those who are trying to increase their life-force either by trying to take it from other people or by acquiring mixtures from witchdoctors or prophets of today are wasting their time. Because we only have real life when we believe in our Lord Jesus Christ who is the source of life. Instead they will lose their life.

### 3.2.3.5 Positive inferrals

- Jesus Christ is the source of life.
- The real, eternal life can only be attained by believing in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Mixtures from traditional healers and from false prophets will never give us life.
- He who has Christ has life and he who does not have Christ does not have life.
- Jesus Christ is the resurrection and life.

### 3.2.3.6 Negative inferrals

- Many traditional medicines and mixtures from sectarian Churches are believed to increase someone's life-force.
- The life-force of another person can be taken away.

### 3.2.4 A schematic representation of positive and negative inferrals as found in chapter 3

POSITIVE INFERRALS	NEGATIVE INFERRALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God's blessings are not limited.</li> <li>• All good comes from God. He is the one who blesses his children.</li> <li>• God's blessings are not determined by the doing of humans. We read in Ps. 127 that He blesses one even in his sleep and so on.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The African views cosmic good as a limited entity which means that the good is only for specific people and not for all.</li> <li>• All good comes from, humans, nature or the ancestors.</li> <li>• If certain people are favoured by fortune then it means that they are bewitching others not to receive fortunes.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Love removes all the fear.</li>   <li>• The fear of God is the fear that removes all the fear.</li>   <li>• Faith in God the father who is mightier than witches liberates people from fear.</li>   <li>• Counselling with regard to matters related to witchcraft must be made on the basis of the Word of God and must not be based on what ancestral spirits, witchdoctors or prophets of today say.</li>   <li>• Jesus Christ is the source of life: he who has Jesus Christ has life.</li>   <li>• Amulets, badges and traditional medicines cannot increase our life-force.</li>   <li>• Our life-force cannot be taken away by another person because we believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and he gives us indestructible, eternal life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Love for witches is not always put forward but hatred and to protect one' self are always put forward.</li>   <li>• Witchcraft is feared more than God and it is regarded as a threat to the community.</li>   <li>• Much faith is put on amulets and other objects to ward off witches instead of looking to God the protector.</li>   <li>• Counselling is always needed from the ancestral spirits, Christian doctors and witchdoctors and not from the Word of God.</li>   <li>• Africans go to the witchdoctors and to the prophets of today to increase their life-force.</li>   <li>• Many traditional medicines and mixtures from the sectarian Churches are believed to increase someone's life-force.</li> </ul> <p>Africans believe that someone's life-force can be taken away by another.</p>
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### **Summary of positive inferalls as found in chapter 3**

- All good comes from God and cannot be taken away by anybody (3.2.1.3).
- Love removes all the fear (3.2.2.8).
- Faith in God the Father who is mightier than witches liberates people from fear (3.2.2.8).
- Counselling from the Word of God is necessary and not counselling from witchdoctors, ancestor's spirits or prophets of today (3.2.2.8).
- Jesus Christ is the source of life: he who has Jesus Christ has eternal life (3.2.3.5).

### **Summary of negative inferrals as found in chapter 3**

- Africans use witchcraft to protect themselves against other witches. They use witchcraft practice either for good or for evil motives (3.2.2.9).
- Witchcraft is regarded as a gift from the ancestors (3.2.2.9).
- Hatred and to protect one's self is always put forward (3.2.2.9).
- Africans view witchcraft as a threat to their community. Those who are suspected of practising witchcraft are tortured or put to death. Witches are regarded as the number one enemies by the Africans: they are the most hated and feared creatures on earth (3.2.2.9).
- Africans view cosmic good as a limited energy which means that the good is only available for specific people and not for all. They argue that if any African succeeds it must be because they are bewitching other people and taking the blessings that had to be received by them. Someone who succeeds steals the blessings of other people (3.2.1.2).
- Africans put much faith on amulets and traditional and prophetic medicines to ward off the evil of witchcraft (3.2.2.9).

- Africans always go to witchdoctors, prophets and to the ancestral spirits for counselling (3.2.3.5).
- Africans believe that traditional medicines and mixtures from the sectarian Churches increase someone's life-force. And they also hold the view that the life-force can be taken away by others such as witches (3.2.3.6).

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the empirical aspect of the study. By means of questionnaires it determines the situation of Sotho Reformed Church members when it comes to witchcraft.

#### 4.1.1 Method used

The empirical study was conducted by means of findings inferred from interviews conducted with some members of the Reformed Churches in the black community (only Sotho speaking people were used). The pattern that was followed for the interviews was quantitative as has been mentioned in chapter 1. Semi-structured interviews were used in which questions were clarified to ensure that the respondents knew exactly what the interviewer wanted to know (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:78).

The aim of the empirical research was to generate knowledge that would enable one to change a current situation into a more desirable situation (Heitink, 1999: 233-225).

Heitink (1999:221) shows that empiricism derives from the Greek word *emperia* which means experience and it thus acts to join the basis theory to the practice theory. This is part of action research in which the attitude of the members of the Reformed Church with regard to the witchcraft is indicated.

It is important to consider that the questions were based on findings from both the OT and the NT and also on positive inferences made as found in chapter 3 – consider further that these, too, were based on the Word of God.

For this study 60 individuals were given questionnaires to complete. Four Classes in Synod Midlands were consulted, viz. Classis Ditsobotla, Classis Tshwane, Classis Mangaung and Classis Moroka. From each Classis three Sotho speaking congregations

were chosen. And from each congregation a minister, a church council member, a male, a female and a youth of either gender were interviewed.

#### **4.1.2 Work-plan**

The questionnaire was drafted based on the information represented within the preceding chapters. To follow in this chapter is a representation of the empirical research including the questionnaire that was used, responses from the members and an integration of the information gathered. The results of the questionnaires were compiled by statistical consultation at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University in South Africa.

#### **SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES FROM BOTH OT AND NT AS FOUND IN CHAPTER 2.**

- God condemns engagement in the practise of witchcraft (Exodus 22:18; 2.1.3.1; 2.2.1.4.1).
- Witchcraft is a sin and God will punish those who practice it (Exodus 22:18; Micah 5; Rev 9:20&21; Rev: 21:8; 2.1.3.1; 2.1.4.1; 2.2.1.7.1).
- Witchcraft power comes from Satan (Deuteronomy 18:10-14, 2Kings 21:1-1; Acts 13: 8-25; 2.1.5.1; 2.2.1.2.3).
- One must have faith in God even in the most adverse condition of life (Eph 6:16; 2.1.6.1; 3.2.2.8).
- We have to love and lead those who practice witchcraft to Christ (Matthew 22:34-40, 1 Corinthians 13, Romans 12:9-21; 2.3.4; 2.2.1.2.3).
- Only counselling from the Word of God is necessary (Luke 16:19, 1 Sam 28:1-25; 2.1.6.1)

### SUMMARY OF POSITIVE INFERRALS AS FOUND IN CHAPTER 3.

- All good comes from God and cannot be taken away by anybody (3.2.1.3).
- Love removes all the fear (3.2.2.8).
- Faith in God the Father who is mightier than witches liberates people from fear (3.2.2.8).
- Only counselling from the Word of God is necessary (3.2.2.8).
- God forbids his children to consult witchdoctors, ancestral spirits or prophets of today (prophets of today means those from ART Churches who claim to foresee what will happen in the near future; 3.2.3.5).
- Jesus Christ is the source of life and He gives all those who believe only in him eternal life (3.2.3.5).

### SUMMARY OF NEGATIVE INFERRALS AS FOUND IN CHAPTER 3.

- Africans use witchcraft to protect themselves against other witches. They use witchcraft practice for either good or evil motives (3.2.2.9).
- Witchcraft is regarded as a gift from the ancestors (3.2.2.9).
- Hatred and to protect one's self are always put forward (3.2.2.9).
- Africans view witchcraft as a threat to their community. Those who are suspected of practising witchcraft are tortured or put to death. Witches are regarded as the number one enemies by the Africans: they are the most hated and feared creatures on earth (3.2.2.9).
- Africans view cosmic good as a limited energy which means that the good is only available for specific people and not for all. They argue that if any African succeeds it is because they are bewitching other people and taking the blessings that had to be received by them. Someone who succeeds steals the blessings of other people (3.2.1.2).
- Africans put much faith on the amulets and traditional and prophetic medicines to ward off the evil of witchcraft (3.2.2.9).

- Africans always go to witchdoctors, prophets and to the ancestral spirits for counselling (3.2.3.5).
- Africans believe that traditional medicines and mixtures from the sectarian Churches increase someone's life-force. And they also hold the view that the life-force can be taken away by others such as witches (3.2.3.6).

**The content of the questionnaire was the following:**

In my study at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University, I am attempting to render pastoral counselling for Sotho Christians who adhere to witchcraft. Scripture (both the OT and the NT) serves as the point of departure for the elaboration of this research.

Please keep the following in mind when you complete this questionnaire:

- This is an anonymous questionnaire and there is no way you could be identified.
- Therefore you may complete this questionnaire freely.
- Your commitment in completing this questionnaire sincerely may ensure that you contribute to the establishment of possible guidelines that will benefit the body of Christ.
- Just tick at each question the answer(s) that you think is (are) right.

Questions and answers of all interviews conducted are available from the author of this document and can be supplied if needed. The author is mostly available at these numbers: (012) 373 8125 and 073 228 8179. Or you may contact him via his email address [revkwena@lantic.net](mailto:revkwena@lantic.net) or postal address which is P.O. Box 34, Atteridgeville, 0008.

## **4.2 Results of the respondent's answers**

There were 60 respondents.

- 4.2.1 To question one only 3 answered that they think Christians should engage them in the practice of witchcraft while 57 answered no.
- 4.2.2. To question two only 4 people answered that witchcraft comes from God while 56 answered that it comes from Satan.
- 4.2.3. To question three 2 people answered that we should hate those who practice witchcraft, only 1 answered that we should love them, 41 answered that we should lead them to Christ and 16 of them answered that we must both love and lead them to Christ.
- 4.2.4. To question 4 the responses were as follows: 40 of those interviewed said God is going to punish those who practise witchcraft and 20 of them said He is going to forgive them.
- 4.2.5. To question 5 a number of 56 respondents answered that cosmic good/ blessings come from God and each answered that is from man and ancestors respectively while none said is from nature and only 2 said it comes from all of the above.
- 4.2.6. To question 6 concerning whether cosmic good or blessings can be taken away 22 answered yes while 34 answered by saying no and 4 of them were not sure.
- 4.2.7. To question 7 which dealt with the protection against witches 57 answered that they protect themselves against witches by having faith in God, none of them put on amulets, 1 said that they protect themselves by traditional medicines and the other 1 said they used prophetic medicines while only 1 said they made use of all of the above.
- 4.2.8. To question 8 which dealt with the increment of the life-force (power) 55 believed that the only way of increasing your life-force is by believing in Jesus Christ, 1 answered that is by putting on traditional medicines and the other 1

said it is by putting on amulets from witchdoctors while 1 answered that is by putting on prophetic amulets and medicines. A further 2 answered that it is both by putting on traditional medicines, amulets from witchdoctors and also by putting on prophetic amulets and medicines that one protects oneself. And 1 answered that is by doing all of the above that one protects oneself.

4.2.9. To question 9 which asked whether the life-force can be taken away or not 27 answered yes and 29 of them answered no while 4 of them were not sure.

### 4.3 Summary of findings based on questionnaires

In answering the questionnaires all categorised people did not give the same answers. A respondent answered the questionnaire according to what he /she experienced in everyday life. This is clear from the results of the answers to the questionnaire.

In this study there are number of differences that can be seen in all the questions. It is clear that members had different interpretations of what they deem to be the meanings of yes or no. However this should be seen as a major reason why this study is so relevant. An analysis and the schematic presentation of these differences follow.

## 4.4 Findings gathered by empirical research

### 4.4.1 Strong points and weak points

STRONG POINTS	WEAK POINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christians should not engage in the practice of witchcraft.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christians should engage themselves in the service of witchcraft.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Witchcraft power comes from Satan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Witchcraft power comes from God.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We should love and lead those who practice witchcraft to Christ.</li> <li>• God is going to punish those who practice witchcraft.</li> <li>• Cosmic good or blessings come from God.</li> <li>• God's blessings to us cannot be taken away by anybody.</li> <li>• Faith in God who is mightier than the witches liberates people from fear.</li> <li>• We should get Biblical counselling from the priest.</li> <li>• We should increase our life-force by believing in Christ.</li> <li>• Our life-force cannot be taken away by anybody including witches.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We should hate those who practice witchcraft.</li> <li>• God is going to forgive those who practice witchcraft.</li> <li>• Cosmic good or blessings do not come from God; they come from man, nature and from ancestors.</li> <li>• God's blessing to us can be taken away by anyone.</li> <li>• Much faith is put on amulets and other objects to ward off witches other than God the protector.</li> <li>• We should get counselling from ancestors, witchdoctors and prophets of today.</li> <li>• We should increase our life-force by putting on traditional medicine, amulets and prophetic medicine.</li> <li>• Our life-force can be taken away by others such as witches.</li> </ul>
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**4.5 Summary: positive guidelines inferred from the literature study as well as the empirical research.**

- It is wrong to engage in the practice witchcraft.
- Witchcraft power comes from Satan because such power is evil and demonic.
- It is wrong to hate each other: love towards the enemy should be put forward first.
- It is wrong to practice witchcraft because it is a sin and is punishable by God.

- Cosmic good or blessings come from God and not from other things or others including ancestors, nature or man.
- God's blessings to his children cannot be taken away by anyone including the witches.
- Concerning protection: Christians should protect themselves against any form of evil by having faith in God who is our protector, our fortress and our rock.
- Biblical counselling on matters related to witchcraft is necessary amongst God's children.
- Concerning our life-force: it is wrong for the Christians to increase their life-force by putting on amulets and medicines from witchdoctors and prophets of today.
- No other things or creatures can take our life-force which we got from Christ because the life we get from Christ is indestructible.

## Section C

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### Chapter 5

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<b>Practice-theoretical guidelines on how to counsel Sotho Christian members who believe in witchcraft.</b>
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#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides guidelines which may be used in assisting Sotho Christian members who are affected and strongly believe in witchcraft.

##### 5.1.2 Problem statement

When we take a good look at the Church of Christ nowadays, what views does it have with regard to the whole issue of witchcraft? Although most of the Sotho Christian members are affected by this issue, how can OT and NT views be applied in their daily life?

Is it necessary for the Church to use Biblical and pastoral guidelines to help people who are affected and believe in this whole issue of witchcraft? The objective of this chapter is to formulate and give pastoral guidelines that can provide help to Sotho Christian members who believe in witchcraft.

##### 5.1.3 Method

Hermeneutical interaction between the basis-theoretical guidelines and meta-theoretical findings will be used to establish the said guidelines.

##### 5.1.4 Work-plan

The first thing that this chapter will attempt is to analyse the data gathered from chapters 2, 3 and 4. Basic and meta-theories as found in the materials of these chapters

will be linked so that a critical hermeneutical interaction may be made in order to formulate practical guidelines.

### **5.1.5 Data analysis and interpretation of basis principles**

A summary of the basic principles is as follows:

- God condemns engagement in the practice of witchcraft (Exodus 22:18; 2.1.3.1, 2.2.1.4.1).
- Witchcraft is a sin and God will punish those who practice it (Exodus 22:18, Micah 5, Rev 9:20&21, Rev: 21:8; 2.1.3.1, 2.2.1.4.1, 2.2.1.7.1).
- Witchcraft power comes from Satan (Deuteronomy 18:10-14, 2Kings 21:1-1, Acts 13: 8-25; 2.1.5.1, 2.2.1.2.3).
- We have to love and lead those practice witchcraft to Christ (Matthew 22:34-40, 1Corinthians 13, Romans 12:9-21; 2.2.1.2.3).
- All good comes from God and cannot be taken away by anybody (Genesis 3:19, Ecclesiastic 3:13, 1Corinthians 22&23, Acts 20:35; 2.2.1.4.1).
- Faith in God the Father who is mightier than witches liberates us from the fear (Psalm 18:3, Ephesians 6:16, John 10:1-18). (3.2.2.8)
- Only counselling from the Word of God is needed (Luke 16:19, 1sam 28:1-25). (2.1.6.1)
- Jesus Christ is the source of life and He gives all those who believe only in him eternal life (John 11:25, 1:4, 5:26, 17:3; 3.2.3.5)

A summary of meta-theoretical perspectives:

- Africans use witchcraft to protect themselves against other witches. They use witchcraft practice either for good or evil motives (3.2.2.9).
- Witchcraft is regarded as a gift from the ancestors (3.2.2.9).
- Hatred and to protect one's self are always put forward first (3.2.2.9).
- Africans view witchcraft as a threat to their community. Those who are suspected of practising witchcraft are tortured or put to death. Africans regard

witches as the number one enemies: they are the most hated and feared creatures on earth (3.2.2.9).

- Africans view cosmic good as a limited energy which means that good is available only for specific people and not for all. They argue that if any African succeeds it is because they are bewitching other people and taking the blessings that had to be received by them. Someone who succeeds steals the blessings of other people (3.2.1.2).
- Africans put much faith on the amulets and traditional and prophetic medicines to ward off the evil of witchcraft (3.2.2.9).
- Africans always go to witchdoctors, prophets and to the ancestral spirits for counselling (3.2.3.5).
- Africans believe that traditional medicines and mixtures from the sectarian Churches increase someone's life-force. And they also hold the view that the life-force can be taken away by others such as witches (3.2.3.6).

## **5.2 Critical hermeneutical interaction.**

### **5.2.1 God condemns engagement in the practice of witchcraft (Exodus 22:18).**

#### *5.2.1.1 Basis-theoretical principles that gave rise to this:*

The Lord demands absolute loyalty and does not allow His children to practice witchcraft. Witchcraft practice leads to self-exaltation and claims the place of God in one's life. The children of God must radically turn away from witchcraft practice because God is not pleased with it (see 2.1.3, 2.1.2.2).

#### *5.2.1.2 Corresponding meta-theoretical perspective:*

Africans use witchcraft to protect themselves against other witches. They use witchcraft practice either for good or evil motives (see 3.2.2.9).

### 5.2.1.3 *Empirical findings:*

The positive finding from the interviews indicates that no one should engage in the practice of witchcraft and the negative finding from the interviews indicates that one should engage in the practice of witchcraft (see 4.4.1).

### 5.2.1.4 *Interaction:*

Witchcraft power is *real*. One of the false views about witchcraft is that it does not exist. We have seen in both the OT and the NT how that is wrong. The devil is real but not greater than God and the Holy Spirit who is in us. In both the OT and the NT God is not pleased with people who practice witchcraft. The reason is that people hurt others in such practices and people exalt themselves in such practices like Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8:9-25.

The most problematic thing is that when fear of witchcraft approaches Africans witchcraft they tend to use the same witchcraft practices to protect themselves against other witches. In this regard one may say they use witchcraft for either good or evil purposes. They apply a method which says that one has to be a witch to be protected against witches. For that reason they directly or indirectly engage themselves in the practice of witchcraft. However the purpose cannot justify the means.

The fact that the evil of witchcraft is real as we see both in the OT and the NT should not confuse people but instead they must know that God the Holy Spirit who is in us is greater than the devil himself. God's warning against practising witchcraft is intended to protect us from Satan's influence and attacks. For that purpose people should not engage themselves in the practice of witchcraft even if it promises success, wealth or protection.

#### *5.2.1.5 Practical theoretical guidelines:*

- Members must learn from the Bible all matters concerning the sin of witchcraft (see for example Exodus 22:18).
- Members must not attend any meetings or ceremonies of the witches or even go to such places.
- Members must not use magical potions since they are used by witches.
- Members must be wary of being involved in witchcraft practices because the light has nothing to do with darkness as 1 Corinthians 15: 33 makes clear.
- Members must be taught to live a holy life by putting off all their sinful behaviour for God says in 1 Peter 1: 15: “Be holy as I am holy.”

#### **5.2.2 Witchcraft power comes from Satan (Deuteronomy 18:10-14, 2Kings 21:1-1, Acts 13: 8-25).**

##### *5.2.2.1 Basis-theoretical principles that gave rise to this:*

Witchcraft teams up with Satan instead of God. It implies the use of supernatural forces outside of and hostile to the power of God. God forbids idol worship since people who are practicing witchcraft get power from them. Witchcraft denotes demonic power and therefore fights against the will of the Holy Spirit (see 2.1.2.2, 2.1.5.1, 2.1.3).

##### *5.2.2.2 Meta-theoretical perspectives:*

Witchcraft is regarded as a gift from the ancestors (chapter 3).

##### *5.2.2.3 Empirical findings:*

The positive finding indicates that witchcraft power is from Satan and the negative finding indicates that witchcraft power is from God or its origin is uncertain or is from ancestors (see 4.4.1).

#### *5.2.2.4 Interaction:*

Witchcraft is a rebellion against God and his authority and in essence it is like teaming up with Satan because there is nothing good about witchcraft and its intention is wicked. The power which comes from witchcraft is evil and hostile to the power of God. We read in Acts 13:8-25 how Elymas the sorcerer was possessed with such power. His power was Demonic and it deceived others: that is why Paul filled with the power of the Holy Spirit said to Elymas you are a child of the Devil -- because that power was from Satan and not from God.

Most of the Africans believe that witchcraft is an ancestral gift and that its power is from God and some do not know exactly where it comes from. This shows that most of the Africans lack knowledge about the origin of witchcraft. The most important thing which people must know is that God's power is unique and different from Satan's power because God's power protects and strengthens us in everything we want to achieve. In this regard there is no way in which witchcraft power may come from God. Witchcraft is part of idolatry because witches get power from other deities and that is a violation of the first and the second Commandments. Such practices deny God as the only true God.

#### *5.2.2.5 Practical theoretical guidelines:*

- Members should avoid being possessed by witchcraft power: they must pray to God to give them the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Members have to be encouraged to study the Word of God so as to be able to discern the true power of God from the false evil power of Satan. The word of God in 1John 4:1 says test the spirits to see whether they are from God. In this regard one will only be able to test the spirit if the Word of God is studied.
- Members have to be encouraged to join Bible study groups or cell groups so that they may be well equipped spiritually; in cases where Bible study groups or cell groups are not available the Church must introduce them to equip their members spiritually on a daily basis.

- Members must avoid becoming deceived by sangomas or any person who is involved in ancestral veneration.
- In instances where people dream about their ancestors or are said to have the gifts to become traditional healers, as Christians they have to be very sceptical about this -- especially if the situation involves any witchcraft practices.

### **5.2.3 We must love and lead those who practice witchcraft to Christ (Matthew 22:34-40, 1 Corinthians 13, Romans 12:9-21)**

#### *5.2.3.1 Basis-theoretical principles that gave rise to this:*

Love removes all fear (see 3.2.3.5).

#### *5.2.3.2 Meta-theoretical perspectives:*

Hatred and to protect one's self are always put forward first by those who practice witchcraft.

#### *5.2.3.3 Empirical perspective:*

A positive finding reveals that love towards the witches should be put forward and at the negative end hatred is always put forward towards those who practice witchcraft (4.4.1).

#### *5.2.3.4 Interaction:*

African people easily tend to hate their enemies as would many other nations. It is only Christianity that teaches us to love our enemies and give them water to drink when they are thirsty. Loving our enemies does not imply that we make peace with their evil. Instead we have to pray to God to deliver them from evil as He delivered us who also were once lost. It must therefore be my duty and responsibility to fight against evil through love by all means. Romans 12:9-21 says that "we must not repay

evil with evil and we should live with peace with one another if our enemy is hungry we should feed him if he is thirsty we should give him something to drink.”

This means we must not be overcome by evil but instead we must overcome evil with good. God commands people to love one another. This means that we should not hate each other as children of God. Love casts all fear out: the power to love is able to counterattack evil power because it strikes at the root of the evil. The enemy of fear is love: the way to put off fear is to put on love. Judgement should be left for God because it is only He who can avenge us. Romans 12:20 says you will be heaping burning coals on the head of the enemy (see chapter 3.2.2).

#### *5.2.3.5 Practical theoretical guidelines:*

- Members should be taught to forgive by exercising true Christian love towards their enemies (See 1 Corinthians 13).
- Members must pray for their enemies to be converted from their sins (see Luke 6:28b).

#### **5.2.4 Witchcraft is sin and it is punishable by God (Exodus 22:18, Micah 5, Rev 9:20&21, Rev: 21:8)**

##### *5.2.4.1 Basis-theoretical principles that gave rise to this:*

Witchcraft practice is a violation of the First Commandments of God since the power behind witchcraft practice is from other deities. Such practice denies God as the only true God. Witchcraft has no place in the worship of our Lord. Those who practice witchcraft and other sins will be destroyed and will receive eternal death as their judgement (see 2.1.3.1, 2.1.11, 2.1.13).

##### *5.2.4.2 Meta-theoretical perspectives:*

Africans view witchcraft as a threat to their community. Those who are suspected of practising witchcraft are tortured or put to death. Africans regard witches as the number one enemies: they are the most hated and feared creatures on earth (3.2.2).

#### *5.2.4.3 Empirical findings:*

The positive finding indicates that God is going to punish those practicing witchcraft and the negative finding indicates that God is going to forgive those who practice witchcraft (see 4.4.1).

#### *5.4.4.4 Interaction:*

Moloi ha a na mmala: this is an African saying which means a witch does not have colour. The implication is that a witch cannot simply be recognised by a mere look in the eye or face. It has also been indicated in the introduction of this dissertation that witchcraft is an act of darkness. Despite the fact that witches cannot be seen their activities therefore become easily exposed in the light because nothing can remain hidden in the eyes of the Lord. God is omniscient and omnipotent. Thus witchcraft is a sin and it is punishable by God. God cannot let sin pass by: this is impossible for God since it is at variance with his holy being. He is indeed “a faithful God who does no wrong upright and just is He. If God is not enraged by sin and does not punish it in a just manner He no longer is a God of holiness and justice. That is why He curses all who do not obey him in everything. “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of Law” as the Bible says in Gal 3:10 and Deut27:26 (see De Bruyn 1997:18).

Since most Africans hate witchcraft people who are suspected of practicing witchcraft are tortured or put to death. For Africans witches are regarded as the number one enemies. Sangomas are normally used to sniff out witches and the suspects are handed over to the community to be punished. Nevertheless the fact that witchcraft is a sin which is punishable by God does not give people permission to torture and kill those suspected by practicing witchcraft because the Word God prohibits killing. Even though God is going to punish those who are not repenting from their sin of witchcraft this does not mean that God is not merciful. God is merciful but He is also just. Therefore He requires that sin committed against Him be punished with extreme, that is, everlasting punishment of body and soul (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 4, Question and Answer 11).

#### *5.2.4.5 Practical theoretical guidelines:*

- Members must be taught and be prepared through Catechism to acknowledge witchcraft as a sin.
- Church activities such as conferences and seminars must be used as an opportunity to teach members about the sin of witchcraft.
- If the church realises that there are members who are involved in matters centring on witchcraft they should be placed under church discipline so that other members will realise that this is sin before the face of God and that He does not tolerate it at all. Church discipline is not to intend to excommunicate people but rather to repair them. Hence the church should not only preach against it but should also act against it.

#### **5.2.5 Cosmic good/ blessings come from God and nobody can take them away (Genesis 3:19, Ecclesiastes 3:13, 1 Corinthians 22&23, Acts 20:35)**

##### *5.2.5.1 Basis-theoretical principles that gave rise to this:*

God is the one who blesses His children. His blessings are not limited and they are not determined by the acts of humans. We read in Ps. 127 that He blesses one even in his sleep (see 3.2.1.2).

##### *5.2.5.2 Corresponding meta-theoretical perspectives:*

Africans view cosmic good as a limited energy which means that good is only available for specific people and not for all. They argue that if any African succeeds it is because they are bewitching other people and taking the blessings that had to be received by them. Someone who succeeds steals the blessings of other people (see 3.2.13).

#### *5.2.5.3 Empirical perspectives:*

Positively viewed all blessings come from God and negatively viewed all good comes from ancestors, man and nature (see 4.4.1).

#### *5.2.5.4 Interaction:*

God did not create things and leave them on their own. He still cares for us. He is still blessing us. He is the Author of our blessings. He is Jehovah Jireh.

There is no way on earth that we may get blessings from other creatures including ancestors or nature or from a human: after all they were created by God. The word of God says that He blesses us even in our sleep as we have seen in the case of Ps. 127. There is always more than enough for everyone.

God's blessings bring wealth. In Proverbs 10:22 we read that blessings do not always come as material possessions. We have the blessing of eternal life in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (see Rev 21:7-8).

God's blessings may also denote the spiritual good brought by the gospel (see Romans 15:29 and Ephesians 1:3). God usually blesses those who follow his command (Deut 11:26-27). Sotho Christian member should not be stingy or greedy any longer because we read in 1 Corinthians 3:22 & 23 that this world, life and death, the present and the future are all ours and we belong to Jesus Christ and Christ belongs to God. These blessings are given to us by God. Contrary to this however most Africans view cosmic good or blessings as something given to them by the ancestors or as something given to them by nature which can be taken away by others including ancestors or witches.

But blessings cannot be obtained by taking it from someone because we get them only by following God's command and only by hard working. Genesis 3:19 says: "you will have to work hard and sweat to make the soil produce anything, he who fulfils this command of God, will find wealth and obtain the good things of the world" (see also chapter 3.2.1).

*5.2.5.5 Practical theoretical guidelines:*

- Members must be encouraged to use talents or God-given gifts to earn some income rather than blaming witchcraft as their stumbling blocks towards success (see Matthew 25: 14-30).
- The Church must establish projects which will help to identify and develop the talents of the members so that they may see the blessings of God through those talents.
- Members must be encouraged to follow God's commandments for God blesses those who follow His command (see Deuteronomy 1:26 and 27).
- Members must be taught not to ask badimo (ancestors) for blessings since they are no more than dead people.

**5.2.6 Faith in God who is mightier than witches liberates us from fear (Psalm 18:3, Ephesians 6:16 and John 10:1-18)**

*5.2.6.1 Basis-theoretical principles that gave rise to this:*

Only the fear of God can remove all fear of evil powers because God is mightier than all evil powers. God is the only one who can protect us against the evil of witchcraft. Ancestors, witchdoctors or false prophets cannot protect one against the evil of witchcraft (see 3.2.2.8).

*5.2.6.2 Corresponding meta-theoretical perspectives:*

Africans put much faith on amulets and traditional and prophetic medicines to ward off the evil of witchcraft (see 3.2.2.9).

#### *5.2.6.3 Empirical perspective:*

The positive finding indicates that faith in God protects one from the witches and the negative finding indicates that one has to be protected by putting on amulets and by applying traditional and prophetic medicine (4.4.1).

#### *5.2.6.4 Interaction:*

Africans protect themselves against witchcraft by getting prophetic and traditional medicines from witchdoctors and from false prophets of today to ward off witches. It is also evident that some of the people live a dual life in which they try all means of protection including protection from God. In the OT God is called our rock and our fortress and where we take our refuge in Him. There is no mistake about this. David says in Ps. 18:3 says: "I call to the Lord, who is worthy, of praise and I am saved from my enemies." David's situation was terrible at the time in which he wrote this Psalm. He was faced from all sides by enemies and death was surrounding him. It was as if he was caught in a trap and had no escape. Despite everything he found his refuge in God and he was saved.

One must have faith in God only -- because faith is our shield against the devil's scheme according to Ephesians 6: 16. It is called a shield because it protects us from Satan's flaming arrows. Faith is the attitude in accordance with which a human abandons all reliance in his/ her own efforts to obtain salvation. It is the attitude of complete trust in God through Christ. When one trusts God with all his/ her heart he/ she is saved from everything evil and has eternal life in Christ. For when we read in John 5: 24 that "he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life." This word faith denotes a believer who clings to his/ her Saviour with all his/ her heart. The man who believes in this abides in Christ and Christ in him (John 15: 4). True faith puts trust in a Person and that Person is Christ only. When man trusts in Christ he commits himself decisively to Christ. He must always look to Christ for everything he needs including protection from the evil of witchcraft. For He is a good Shepherd who always protects his flock (John 10:1-18).

*5.2.6.5 Practical theoretical guidelines:*

- Members must be taught to have full trust in God through Christ and not to fear anything for when they have the Holy Spirit they have all the protection of God.
- Members must always pray God for His protection (see Matthew 7: 7-9).
- Members must be taught not to put on or carry amulets and traditional and prophetic medicines since these cannot protect them.
- Members must be taught not to ask badimo (ancestors) for protection since they are dead.

**5.2.7 Only counselling from the Word of God is necessary (Luke 16:19 and 1 Sam 28:1-25)**

*5.2.7.1 Basis-principle that gave rise to this:*

Counselling from the Word of God is necessary because God provides real answers to any problems through his Word (see 3.2.2.8).

*5.2.7.2 Meta-theoretical perspectives:*

Africans always go to witchdoctors and prophets and to the ancestral spirits for counselling (see 3.2.3.5).

*5.2.7.3 Empirical perspective:*

The positive finding indicates that counselling from the Word of God is needed. The negative finding indicates that counselling from ancestral spirits, witchdoctors and from false prophets is also necessary (see 4.4.1).

#### *5.2.7.4 Interaction:*

When troubles or hardship comes it is likely that most of the people including Christians do not know where to go for help. In these kinds of situations one will get many different forms of advice, some good and some bad, as found for instance in Job 2:9 in which Job's wife tells him to curse God and die. Thus is not new when members who come across troubles or fear inflicted by witchcraft or evil powers. Some will spend their last penny to go and look for answers from false prophets, ancestors or witchdoctors. Some believe that God has to be helped especially by getting answers from these people.

In these cases members must not get confused: they must always look for answers from God. We read in 1 Sam 28:1-25 that when Saul was in trouble he looked for counselling from the mediums which was not good before the eyes of the Lord because it was the very same Saul who banned all mediums and spiritists in his country. What a contradiction! One should trust God even in the most adverse conditions of life.

The Word of God is the only guide for members in times of suffering. We read from Luke 16:19 about a rich man who asked Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers and it is for this reason that Abraham replied by saying that it was impossible! They have the Bible: let them listen to the Bible – that was the answer. If they did not listen to the Bible they would not listen even if someone from the dead came to them (see chapter 3.2.2.2). There is no need for Sotho Christian members to put much faith or to believe in other things besides the Word of God. Sotho Christian members must always be guided by the word of God. Biblical counselling on matters relating to witchcraft is what is necessary for Sotho Christian members.

#### *5.2.7.5 Practical theoretical guideline:*

- Members must be encouraged to consult their Pastors for counselling in matters relating to witchcraft. During announcements or through Church news letters members may be reminded of this.

- Members must be taught through the Word of God not to get counselling from ancestors, witchdoctors and the prophets of today since such counselling is of no help (see 1 Sam 28: 1-25).

**5.2.8 Jesus Christ is the source of life: he/ she who has Him has eternal life and our life-force cannot be taken away (John 11:25, 1:4, 5:26, 17:3)**

*5.2.8.1 Basis-theoretical principles that gave rise to this:*

The real life, eternal life, is only attained by believing in God through our Lord Jesus Christ because He who has Christ has life and he who does not have Him has no life. Jesus Christ is the resurrection and life (see 3.2.3.5).

*5.2.8.2 Meta-theoretical perspectives:*

Africans believe that traditional medicines and mixtures from sectarian Churches increase someone's life-force. And they also hold the view that the life-force can be taken away by the others for example through witchcraft (see 4.4.1).

*5.2.8.3 Empirical perspective:*

The positive finding indicates that the only way of increasing life-force is by believing in our Lord Jesus Christ and the negative finding indicates that the life-force of the other person may be taken away. According to this view the only way of increasing and protecting someone's life-force is by putting on traditional medicines, amulets and prophetic medicines (See 4.4.1).

#### *5.2.8.4 Interaction:*

It is true that when fears of witchcraft approach Sotho Christian members they look for means in which they may increase their power or life-force. Africans believe that traditional medicines and mixtures from sectarian Churches increase someone's life-force. And they also hold the view that the life-force can be taken away by the others such as witches. Muthwadini (1990: 11) says that he once took away the ZCC star badge from one of his workers and the next day the worker came to him and asked for it as we have seen. He said: "please give it back to me. I did not sleep at all last night. I'm very ill because you have taken away this protector of my body. Because when I have this star badge, ghosts and evil spirits are afraid to come near me."

This is really not true because amulets and traditional medicines from witchdoctors cannot give us life or increase our life-force. We only get our life when we believe in our Lord Jesus Christ. We read in John 11:25 that He says: "I am the resurrection and life." John 1:4 says that "the word was the source of life and this life brought light to mankind." Also in the Gospel of John chapter 17:3 we see the high priestly prayer of our Lord and read these words: and "eternal life means knowing you, the only true God and knowing Jesus Christ whom you sent." John 5:26 goes on to say: just "as the Father is himself the source of life, in the same way He has made his Son to be the source of life. We inherit life because Jesus Christ died for us and gave us his life." That is why the Bible goes on to say that he "who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son has no life" (see chapter 3.2.3.4).

Sotho Christian members must know that Jesus Christ is the source of life. He/ she has Christ has indestructible life. There is no need for Sotho Christian members to be loaded with amulets or to put traditional or prophetic medicines on their faces to look strong.

This idea of the life-force is the same as the notion of cosmic good: when one is not performing well in his/ her life or when one is not prospering he/she will say that someone is bewitching him/ her or is taking his/ her life-force. This is also the case

when one is more prosperous than the other: the less prosperous are likely to accuse the more prosperous person that he/ she have taken the life-force of others or himself/ herself.

Sotho Christian members should know that we do not get our life-force from other people: we are not alive because of the life-force were taken from other people. God gave us life through his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ gives us eternal life. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour has eternal life, glorious life, the life in the new world. Members should know that no one can take life which was given to him by our Lord Jesus Christ. After all people may destroy the body but they can never touch the soul. For this reason Jesus says in Matthew: do not be afraid of those who can destroy the body. Rather be afraid of the one who destroys both body and soul. This teaches us that there is only one to fear: God.

#### *5.2.8.5 Practical theoretical guidelines:*

- Members have to live in faith. They have to trust Jesus. For He says in John 14:11 “Believe me when I say I am in the father and the father is in me”.
- This is a serious challenge to every Christian. Without this faith in Him there is no hope for deliverance from witchcraft.
- Members have to put trust in the power of the Word. God’s Word can comfort and bring healing.
- Members have to believe in prayer. They have to communicate with God to help them have trust only in Him and to deliver them from evil and temptation.

### **5.3 Summary of practical theoretical guidelines**

In Sesotho we say moloi ha a na mmala which means a witch does not have colour, as has been mentioned. This means that no person can say whether someone is a witch merely by looking at the person. Regarding the final practical guidelines it is therefore necessary to speak of witchcraft activities instead of directly referring to witches.

It is also assumed by many people that sangomas are merely traditional doctors and not witches. However in this study they are categorised as witches because they inquire from ancestors and they help in everything whether good or bad. They help people kill their enemies and they create hatred with the implications that other people bewitched their customers. Christians, like all other people, are still persecuted by the devil. Because of this they also easily run for help just like the non-Christians. The following advice is thus given to them as well as to those counselling them.

Members must be taught through sermons about matters relating to the sin of witchcraft. But it also remains the responsibility of the members to study the Word of God on their own and become part of Bible study groups or cell groups so that they may be taught well Biblically. In addition to this Church activities such as conferences and seminars must be used as an opportunity to teach members concerning the sin of witchcraft. The Church must establish projects which will help to identify and develop the talents of the members so that they may see the blessings of God through those talents. Should there be members who feel threatened by witchcraft powers and are affected in one way or another by these counselling from the Word of God should be conducted and the members must be encouraged to consult their Ministers and the Word of God. Many members are still sceptical and afraid to communicate with their ministers about such things. It should be the responsibility of the whole congregation to encourage one another and pray for one another in this respect.

If there are members who are believed to have been bewitched by some of the people they know they have to forgive them because Jesus also forgave them of their sins. Moreover they have to love their enemies and trust God for deliverance. This will shame their enemies and in such a manner will lead them to Christ through their behaviour. In most instances people are surprised at the success of someone they thought the least of. The moment they realise that the strength of such a person comes from God they easily repent and also believe in God (1 Corinthians 13, Luke 6: 28b). It happens at times that Christians dream of their ancestors communicating with them and asking them to slaughter for them or to become sangomas or to become involved in evil practices. If this happens to confessing Christians they must take a radical stance not to believe in these things and must therefore not respond to them.

Christians must avoid running to sangomas to inquire about ancestors. They fully have to rely upon what God reveals in his Word for their life situations. They must even inquire blessings from them. Only God blesses. The ancestors are dead and there is no way they can help someone. Members must live a holy life and avoid being in association with people related to witchcraft practice (1 Corinthians 15:33, 1 Peter 1:15).

Christians have to remember that witchcraft is sin and is punishable by God. With regard to blessings from God members must be encouraged to use talents or God-given gifts to earn some income rather than to blame witchcraft as a stumbling block towards their success (Matthew 25: 14-30). Moreover members must avoid attending meetings/ ceremonies of people who deal with witchcraft like sangomas since it would be difficult to distinguish who among the sangomas are not working with witchcraft. Some of them may even use magical potions just as they are used by witches. Evil is evil and it remains evil. Members must be encouraged to follow God's commandments for God blesses those who follow His command (Deuteronomy 1:26 and 27).

Despite the fact that Christians are persecuted by the devil they have the protection of the Holy Spirit. Where the Spirit is present there is no fear because we have received the Spirit of power and boldness and not of fear. There is therefore no need for members to put on or carry amulets and traditional and prophetic medicines since these cannot protect them. Neither can these add life-force: members must be assured and be comforted that by believing in Jesus Christ they inherit eternal life (John 11:25-26).

#### **5.4 Concluding remarks**

It is evident from this study that Pastoral guidelines to Sotho Christian members who believe in witchcraft are necessary. This study provides Pastoral guidelines which Sotho Christian members may apply in their daily lives. These guidelines will help them to counteract the sin of witchcraft.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **SUMMARY AND FINAL CONCLUSIONS**

#### **6.1 Problem statement**

The main problem which this study aimed to address was: what Biblical counselling can be given to the Sotho Christian members who believe in witchcraft?

In addressing this problem the study attempted to answer the following questions:

- What is the Scriptural message concerning witchcraft?
- What effect does the problem of limited cosmic good; fear and doubt about one's life-force have on Christians of the Reformed Churches in the resort of Synod Midlands?
- What guidelines can be developed to contribute to pastoral counselling for members who strongly believe in witchcraft?

And therefore the **aim** of this study was to investigate and propose guidelines for counselling Sotho Christian members who believe in witchcraft.

#### **6.2 The method:**

The method of approach that was followed here is the model set out by Zerfass (1974:166) for practical theology. The method comprises of a basis-theory, a meta-theory and a praxis-theory (see chapter 1).

#### **6.3 Work-plan:**

The work-plan was to infer basic theoretical principles from Scripture through historical grammatical exegesis and to state the basis-theoretical principles. Meta-theoretical perspectives were found from a literature study and from empirical research. By means of hermeneutical interaction between the basis-theoretical guidelines and meta-theoretical findings practical theoretical guidelines were given (see chapter 1).

#### **6.4 The following basis-theoretical principles were achieved**

- 6.4.1 God condemns engagement in the practice of witchcraft (Exodus 22:18; 2.1.3.1, 2.2.1.4.1)
- 6.4.2 Witchcraft is a sin and God will punish those who practice it (Exodus 22:18, Micah 5, Rev 9:20&21, Rev: 21:8; 2.1.3.1, 2.1.4.1).
- 6.4.3 Witchcraft power comes from Satan (Deuteronomy 18:10-14, 2 Kings 21:1-1, Acts 13: 8-25; 2.1.5.1, 2.2.1.2.3).
- 6.4.4 Love and lead those who practice witchcraft to Christ (Matthew 22:34-40, 1 Corinthians 13, Romans 12:9-21; 2.2.1.2.3).
- 6.4.5 All good comes from God and cannot be taken away by anybody (Genesis 3:19, Ecclesiastes 3:13, 1 Corinthians 22&23, Acts 20:35; 2.2.1.4.1).
- 6.4.6 Faith in God the father who is mightier than witches liberates us from fear (Psalm 18:3, Ephesians 6:16, John 10:1-18; 3.2.2.8)
- 6.4.7 Only counselling from the Word of God is necessary (Luke 16:19, 1 Sam 28:1-25; 2.1.6.1)
- 6.4.8 Jesus Christ is the source of life and He gives eternal life to all those who believe only in Him (John 11:25, 1:4, 5:26; 17:3; 3.2.3.5).

#### **6.5 The meta-theoretical study gave rise to the following perspectives:**

- 6.5.1 Africans use witchcraft to protect themselves against other witches. They use witchcraft practice either for good or evil motives (3.2.2.9).
- 6.5.2 Witchcraft is regarded as a gift from the ancestors (3.2.2.9).
- 6.5.3 Hatred and to protect one's self are always put forward first (3.2.2.9).
- 6.5.4 Africans view witchcraft as a threat to their community. Those who are suspected of practising witchcraft are tortured or put to death. Africans regard witches as their number one enemies: they are the most hated and feared creatures on earth (3.2.2).
- 6.5.5 Africans view cosmic good as a limited energy which means that good is only available for specific people and not for all. They argue that if any African succeeds it is because they are bewitching other people and taking the

blessings that had to be received by them. Someone who succeeds steals the blessings of other people (3.2.1.2).

6.5.6 Africans put much faith on amulets and traditional and prophetic medicines to ward off the evil of witchcraft (3.2.2.9).

6.5.7 Africans always go to witchdoctors and prophets and to the ancestral spirits for counselling (3.2.3.5).

6.5.8 Africans believe that traditional medicines and mixtures from the sectarian Churches increase someone's life-force. And they also hold the view that the life-force can be taken away by others such as witches (3.2.3.6).

## **6.6 The following practical- theoretical guidelines can be provided:**

6.6.1 Members must learn from the Bible about all matters concerning the sin of witchcraft (Exodus 22:18). They have to know what witchcraft entails. People cannot fight their enemies unless they know them and unless they know the strategies that they use.

6.6.2 Members must avoid attending meetings/ ceremonies of people who deal with witchcraft like sangomas since it would be difficult to distinguish who among the sangomas are working with witchcraft or are even using magical portions as they are used by witches. Evil is evil and it remains evil.

6.6.3 Christians must not believe in dreams about ancestors and they must not respond to them. Christians must avoid running to sangomas to inquire about ancestors. They have to rely completely upon what God reveals in his Word for their life situations. Members must live a holy life and avoid being in association with people related to witchcraft practices (1 Corinthians 15:33, 1 Peter 1:15)

6.6.4 Members must avoid being possessed by witchcraft power by not getting initiated as witchdoctors and prophets. They must pray to God to give them the power of the Holy Spirit. Members must avoid becoming deceived by sangomas or any person who is involved in ancestral veneration.

- 6.6.5 Members must study the Word of God and be part of Bible study groups or cell groups so that they may be taught well Biblically.
- 6.6.6 Members must forgive their enemies and also pray for them to be converted from their sins (1 Corinthians 13, Luke 6: 28b).
- 6.6.7 Members must be taught and be prepared through Catechism to acknowledge witchcraft as a sin.
- 6.6.8 Church activities such as conferences and seminars must be used as an opportunity to teach members about the sin of witchcraft.
- 6.6.9 If the Church realises that there are members who are involved in matters centring on witchcraft they should be placed under church discipline so that other members should realise that this is sin before the face of God and that He does not tolerate it at all. Church discipline is not to excommunicate people but rather to win them to Christ. Hence the church should not only preach against it but should also act against it
- 6.6.10 Members must be encouraged to use the talents or the God given gifts to earn some income rather than blaming witchcraft as their stumbling blocks towards their success (Matthew 25: 14-30).
- 6.6.11 The Church must establish projects which will help to identify and develop the talents of the members so that they may see the blessings of God through those talents.
- 6.6.12 Members must be encouraged to follow God's commandments for God blesses those who follow His command (Deuteronomy 1:26 and 27).
- 6.6.13 Members must be taught not to ask badimo (ancestors) for blessings since they are dead people.

- 6.6.14 Members must have full trust in God through Christ: they must not fear anything for when they have the Holy Spirit they have all the protection of God.
- 6.6.15 Members must always pray God for His protection and not ask badimo (ancestors) for protection since they are dead (Matthew 7: 7-9). Members have to believe in prayer. They have to communicate with God to help them have trust only in Him and to deliver them from evil and temptation.
- 6.6.16 Members must be taught not to put on or carry amulets or traditional and prophetic medicines since these cannot protect them.
- 6.6.17 Members must be encouraged to consult Ministers or the Word of God for counselling in matters relating to witchcraft: they must not consult ancestors, witchdoctors and the prophets of today (1 Samuel 28: 1-25).
- 6.6.18 Members must be assured and be comforted that by believing in Jesus Christ they inherit eternal life. Amulets, traditional medicines and prophetic medicines will never increase or give them life (John 11:25-26).

## **6.7 Final conclusions**

Both the OT and NT condemn witchcraft practice as a sin which is contrary to the will of God. Pastoral guidance for members who are affected by this entire matter of witchcraft has long been overdue. Therefore it is the duty of the Church of God to provide Biblical guidelines to members with regard to matters related to witchcraft.

For this reason the main purpose of this study was to give Pastoral guidelines to Sotho Christian members who believe in witchcraft. In this study I tried to compare Scriptural perspectives about witchcraft practice with the practical situation that Sotho Christian members meet in their daily lives. The focus was on the following key words: limited cosmic good, fear and doubt about someone's life-force.

These guidelines may only be effective when Sotho Christian members and Christian counsellors follow them. It is the duty of the Church of God to promote those Biblical guidelines and it is also the duty of Sotho Christian members to apply them fully in their daily lives.

## **SECTION D**

### **Addendum: questionnaires about witchcraft**

All questions are based on the general basis-theoretical principles that have been determined with regard to the OT and the NT. The questionnaires focus on the present situation with some reflection on basis-theoretical principles that have been determined.

1. Do you think Christians should engage themselves in the practice of witchcraft?
2. Where does witchcraft power come from?
3. How do you think we should live with those who practice witchcraft?
4. What do you think God will do with those who practice witchcraft?
5. Where do you think cosmic good (blessings) comes from?
6. Can cosmic good (blessings) be taken away from someone?
7. How do you protect yourself against witches?
8. Where do you go if you suspect that you have been bewitched?
9. How do you increase your life-force?
10. Do you think the life-force of a person can be taken away?

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## **FIELDS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

The following can be recommended for further study:

- The effect of prophetic healing in Africa.
- Dealing with people who are said to be possessed by ancestral spirits: a pastoral study.

## **KEYWORDS:**

*Biblical counselling, Christian, Sotho, witchcraft.*

## **SLEUTELWOORDE:**

*Bybelse berading, Christen, Sotho, toordery*

## ABSTRACT

The main problem, which this study aims to address is: what Biblical counselling can be given to Sotho Christian members who believe in Witchcraft?

In addressing this problem the study will attempt to answer the following questions:

- What is the Scriptural message concerning witchcraft?
- What effect does the problem of limited cosmic good; fear and doubt about one's life-force have on Christians of the Reformed Churches in the resort of Synod Midlands?
- What guidelines can be developed to contribute in pastoral counselling for members who strongly believe in witchcraft?

Therefore the **aim** of this study is to investigate and propose guidelines for counselling Sotho Christian members who believe in witchcraft.

The study utilises Zerfass's model for research to form a basis theory, meta-theory and practical theoretical guidelines and methodology (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:35-36).

The study compares a Scriptural perspective about witchcraft practice with the practical situation that Sotho Christian members find in their daily lives. The following key words and phrases direct the focus of the study: limited cosmic good, fear, and doubt about someone's life-force. Scriptural perspectives and the key words are researched in detail, compared and evaluated Biblically. The conclusion provides guidelines from a Christian perspective to help Sotho Christian members who believe in witchcraft.

These guidelines may only be effective when Sotho Christian members and Christian counsellors follow them. It is the duty of the Church of God to promote those Biblical guidelines and it is also the duty of the Sotho Christian members to apply them fully in their daily lives.

## OPSOMMING

Die primêre probleem, wat hierdie studie ten doel het om aan te spreek, is: Watter Bybelse berading kan aan Sotho Christen-lidmate, wat aan toordery glo, verskaf word?

Ten einde hierdie probleem aan te spreek, sal hierdie studie poog om die volgende vrae te beantwoord:

- Wat is die Skriftuurlike boodskap rakende toordery?
- Watter uitwerking het die probleem van beperkte kosmiese goedheid; vrees en twyfel omtrent 'n mens se lewenskragtigheid op Christene van die Gereformeerde Kerke in die toevlugsoord van die Sinode Middelland?
- Watter riglyne kan ontwikkel word om tot die pastorale berading van lidmate, wat vas aan toordery glo, by te dra?

Derhalwe is die doel van hierdie studie om riglyne te ondersoek en voor te stel vir die berading van Sotho Christen-lidmate, wat aan toordery glo.

Die studie maak van Zeffass se navorsingsmodel gebruik om 'n basis-teorie, 'n meta-teorie, en praktyk teoretiese riglyne te formuleer (Heyns en Pieterse, 1990: 35-36).

Die studie vergelyk 'n Skriftuurlike perspektief oor toordery praktyk met die praktiese situasie wat Sotho Christen-lidmate in hul daaglikse lewe teëkom. Die volgende sleutelwoorde en sinsnedes dui die fokus van die studie aan: beperkte kosmiese goedheid, vrees, en twyfel omtrent iemand se lewenskragtigheid. Skriftuurlike perspektiewe en die sleutelwoorde word in besonderhede nagevors en op Bybelse gronde vergelyk en geëvalueer. Die gevolgtrekkings bied riglyne vanuit 'n Christelike perspektief om Sotho Christen-lidmate, wat aan toordery glo, te help.

Hierdie riglyne sal slegs effektief wees wanneer Sotho Christen-lidmate en Christen-beraders dit navolg. Dit is die kerk van God se plig om sodanige Bybelse riglyne te bevorder en dit is ook die Sotho Christen-lidmate se plig om dit ten volle in hul daaglikse lewens toe te pas.