

# The evangelical role of witchcraft in some pentecostal movements

An african pastoral concern.

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## Abstract

There is enough evidence that while listening to the preaching and messages of most Pentecostal preachers or watching them on some free television channels today, the emphasis is on freeing people from the oppression of demons and witchcraft. Many people, the poor included, risk asking for cash loans to use for travelling to meet with the so-called prophets in distant areas. There is an example of those South Africans who died in Nigeria when the double storey building fell upon them. Besides promising them prosperity, these prophets also promise to protect them from those who bewitch them. This kind of message is fast becoming the driving force behind the fast-growing megachurches around Gauteng and in other parts of South Africa. The intention of this article is to check if it can be theologically justifiable to use witchcraft to make people come to church. It will be important to also investigate if this kind of advent brings the intended message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Keywords:** Supernatural power, witchcraft, Pentecostal churches, prophesy, spiritual battle and gospel

## 1. Introduction

Anderson (2000) confirms that African initiated churches (AICs) and Pentecostal churches are growing rapidly by saying: "There are indications that the new churches increase at the expense of all types of older churches, including the prophet-healing AICs." The new Research Center (2006) also confirms the fast growth of the Pentecostal churches with the following statement:

Pentecostalism has become an increasingly prominent feature of Africa's religious and political landscape. The movement's growth has been particularly dramatic since the era of decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s. According to recent figures from the World Christian Database, Pentecostals [sic] now represent 12%, or about 107 million, of Africa's population of nearly 890 million people.

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According to Olamedi (1980:2), witchcraft is a reality in Africa because there are indeed witches – people with distorted but very strong personalities. People generally believe that African religion is expected to deal with the effects of evil caused by demonic spirits and witchcraft (Gyadu 2006). This puts pressure on the Pentecostals who intend to compete with the AIC in the same space. According to Phaswana (2008:150), many family and tribal fights have been orchestrated by witchcraft and the fear it instills into African people. Okeja (2010:8) goes on to argue that even the most educated African people believe in witchcraft. Tangelder (2012) argues as follows: “For the Western mind it is almost impossible to realize the power witchcraft has over the black South Africans.” This is not an exaggeration; the above statements are typical of how black South Africans fear witchcraft. They will do anything, including spending their last cent, if it means that they can avert witchcraft. It is on this fear that most Pentecostals capitalise to capture the attention of the people.

In his article, the author indicates the various forms in which witchcraft manifests itself, but this is not the focus of the study (Baloyi 2014). People’s fear of witchcraft makes them vulnerable to such an extent that they want to do away with it at all costs. In Yorubaland and other places, people deserted their homes out of fear for witches and some religious leaders and Pentecostal pastors who claim to have the ability to expel and prevent people from practicing witchcraft are becoming increasingly popular, therefore people flock to them to ask for their protection. Besides the great number of people who are flocking to these pastors, they also advertise that people should come to them for protection. The main issue in Africa is that people want God to attend to their situations and if God can use the Pentecostal pastors to protect them from the enemy, it is a true God. This justifies Stabell’s (2012:1) view that in many places around the world, mission is carried out in contexts where talk of witchcraft is a significant element.

The invitations of many evangelical Pentecostal churches are accompanied by promises of miracles. One of the most common activities that form part of their services is witnessing people being freed from demons and witchcraft, which is said to cause all kinds of misfortune. Not many adverts indicate that the focus is on preaching and listening to the word of God. The traditional denial and demonization of witchcraft by most western theologies did not make witchcraft disappear, but opened the door for Pentecostal evangelicals to use it as an invitation to people to come to their churches (Merz 2008:202).

Besides healing, prosperity, the gospel and so forth, the demonstration of spiritual powers over witchcraft has seen the fast growth in Pentecostalism. This is also evidenced in the mainline churches which are facing a decline in membership while the Pentecostal churches are growing rapidly. According to Newell (2007:1), there is no doubt that the Pentecostal churches derive their popularity from the

claim that they can put an end to witchcraft in the community. Regardless of its association with the power of the evil, the terms and expressions of witchcraft can be used positively according to Asamoah-Gandu (2015:1). This research concerns itself with the threats of witchcraft, which among other things, have become a positive evangelical tool for some Pentecostal movements and churches. This is because some pastors and prophets (particularly from Pentecostal backgrounds) are believed to have the power to expel witches and protect people from their influence. The Tsonga people used to believe that diviners can properly strengthen or protect a village to render witches helpless by attempting to trap them so that they are unable to leave in the morning (Ntsan'wisi 1985:17).

## **2. Problem statement and relevance of theology**

One observed, while visiting some of the Pentecostal churches, that many people are passive participants in those services while the preaching is done, but only become active while other issues like demon execution, praying for problems, wealth and progress take place. For some, getting to those churches is aimed at getting rich, progress and breakthrough in life. They go there in order to get rid of anything that is effecting their misfortune, witches being the chief enemy. The question is whether these people end up getting what they should, which is a relationship with the living God as well as the correct opportunity to serve Him as He expects in His word.

The allegation that the church is silent about some public matters is a very serious one (Tshaka 2009:159) not only to certain individuals, but to the entire theological fraternity. The plague of violence, increasing poverty, corruption, continued inequality, landlessness, HIV/AIDS and other challenges calls for theological engagement. It has been a long time since theology ceased to be confined to the church and the ministry. Being a public theology, it means practical theology must engage with people in their own situations and context.

## **3. Why missiology**

Priest (2010) realised that there are a number of difficult challenges faced by Christian missionaries and pastors working in the societies with witch ontologies. Bosch (1992:427) indicated in his argument that mission as a contextualisation should involve a variety of local theologies. It can be argued from this perspective that missiology, as one of the theological disciplines, cannot avoid the challenges that are brought by <<Author: Please check my interpretation. Thank you.>> the Africanisation of theology. That is why the author is in agreement with Niemandt (210) who argues that the sensitivity towards the marginalised people as well as the ongoing narratives that are involved are important in shaping the discourses that

will make theology meaningful for ordinary local people. It is an undeniable fact that Pentecostalism is one of the fast-growing movements in the SADC region, making its influence more relevant to missiology as well as the entire theological cluster. The contest that exists between the western mainline theologies and the Pentecostal theologies are not only interesting to entertain, but it also demands scholarly intervention of academics who intend to make their theology relevant to their immediate audience within their context. Hauser (2016:6) exposes this necessity when he argues that one cannot ignore the relationship that exists, for instance, between the prosperity gospel and the economic realities of the local people. Although it can be a point of contest in future research as to whether the traditional African religions provided a fertile ground for prosperity gospel, instead (Niemandt 2016:208), for the sake of this particular article, it is important for the author to mention that witchcraft is being used as a central point to evangelise among certain Pentecostals, and that is a focus of this missiological research.

#### 4. Brief background

It is a fact that many African people see witchcraft as one of the biggest threats to their lives. I was about to lead a funeral sermon in a village outside Giyani (Limpopo) when a family member (an old man dressed in a big black jacket) stood up and said: "I am a witch and anyone who denies that can stand up so that I can point my finger at him or her and see if you cannot die." After this statement, the people in the funeral tent were quiet for a few minutes; nobody said a word or stood up. The deceased was the son of the old man's brother and by making this announcement, he was trying to see if there was anyone who would contest what the family thought was a witchcraft-related death, since the boy died while taking a bath before going to school. I then realised that the majority of African people are afraid not only of witchcraft, but also to be associated with any form of witchcraft. Okeja (2010:7), Ashford (2005:1) and Baloyi (2014:4) agree that witchcraft is one of the most fearful things among Africans at least. Many people deserted their homes in fear of witchcraft and others asked for the assistance of diviners to protect their families and belongings (Olamediji 1980:1). The Ralushai commission that was appointed in 1995 indicated how the fear of witchcraft resulted in many people being torched alive; others were dispossessed of their homes and so forth (Baloyi 2014:2).

In the past, before the people were modernised or Christianised, they had used various ways to fortify themselves from witchcraft. Niehaus Isak (2013), in his book, *Witchcraft and a life in the New South Africa*, discusses how African people used to fortify themselves from witchcraft. The traditional methods of *ukuziqinisa* (Zulu), *ku tisirhelela* (Tsonga) or *lenaka* (Sotho) referred to various forms of protecting oneself against witchcraft. According to Niehaus (2013:130-142), the

Zion Christian Church (ZCC) people used water mixed with coffee, chillies and salt to sprinkle around the home to fortify the family from witches. There are also prophets who used to tie ropes around the waist and other body parts like the neck and hands of people to fortify them from witchcraft. But many of those who call themselves Pentecostal Christians today have replaced the stuff mentioned above with anointing water, anointing oil, bracelets and other things. The ritualistic kind of fortification is done in a more civilised way, because if someone is seen wearing a necklace, they are understood better than those who have ropes around their necks and waists. Perhaps the idea behind anointing water differs from the traditional ZCC water, because it is cleaner than the water fetched from dams and rivers.

Igwe (2006) said:

Africans are suckers for magic, miracles, and paranormal claims. Generally, among Africans, there is a deep-seated belief in supernatural forces that intervene and alter human destinies for good or ill. These spiritual forces are believed to work in magical and miraculous ways, through signs and wonders that confound the human mind. And the evangelical churches are capitalizing on this superstitious element in African thought and culture to peddle and propagate their paranormal services. They promise divine healing and instant solutions for problems and diseases.

For many Pentecostal preachers, the need for deliverance and exorcism is attached to a demon possession which is understood mainly as a sign of attacks by witches (Brooks 2015:5). Although it is problematic for Stabell (2012:462), the driving force behind the Pentecostal preachers making use of witchcraft to lure crowds into their churches is that Christians in Africa demonise witchcraft. This eases the job of charismatic preachers who have to convince their audience by using biblically justified witchcraft. Poverty and bankruptcy do not matter when people feel the urge to consult the so-called prophets who they believe will deal with the witches that hamper their progress. Mashaba (2015:1) reported that one of the Pretoria-based churches charges its congregants R5 000 to access their Malawi-based prophet for a one-on-one session.

## **5. Spiritual war against the forces of darkness as an advert**

The identification of territorial spirits and strongholds are usually the concepts used according to DeBernard (1999:1). These strongholds are often described as having divisions in a form of departments, for instance, those specialising in finances, killing or attitude. Bernard (1999:2) makes the following statement in this regard: "Drawing together certain Bible passages with these contemporary revelations and experiences, those who support this new theology argue that unconverted

regions of the world are under the control of territorial spirits (which one author identifies as “cultural ethnic demons”) who are rooted in specific “geographical areas and population centres.” Every evil that a person does will be categorised into a particular form of a demon that belongs to a particular group of strongholds.

Fire is used as a metaphor for God when fighting, scaring and burning all forms of evil, including witches. Among the scriptural passages that contain this metaphor is Exodus 20:18 which says: “When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance.” Another example which is commonly used is the one where God spoke to Moses in a bush of fire in Exodus 3. Noise and fire serve as vehicles of God’s awesome revelation (Ogunbile & Akinade 2010:96). Noise and fire are always associated with deliverance, since fire is used to scare off and consume demons and whatever witches brought to one’s life. There are many references to fire in the Bible to emphasise God’s judgement of the wicked and those who do not believe in Him. The issue here is that if this metaphor is generalised, it is a contradiction of the Scriptures which state that God was not in the fire when coming to talk to Elijah in Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:11-13). It is in this context that the author argues that God’s power cannot be limited to one particular mode of manifestation.

## **6. The downside of overemphasising witchcraft as a cause**

LeClaire (2013:1), who wrote much about witchcraft, is correct when he argues that because of people’s fear of witchcraft, they cannot brace up their minds and be sober as demanded in 1 Pet.1:13. The fact that people are always preoccupied with witchcraft takes away their freedom to serve God peacefully. This is why the people who run to churches nowadays are not doing it because they want to be Christians, but because they want to be protected against the powers of witchcraft. The other problem is that every bad thing that happens in our lives is alluded to witchcraft. Ally (2015) confirms this statement by saying:

On the basis of these descriptions, witchcraft seems to represent a theory of misfortune. This theory of misfortune guides the interactions between people and provides them with explanations, steeped in the supernatural, for almost every misfortune. Regardless though, of the role witchcraft may play in deflecting responsibility for misfortunes, the capacity witchcraft is believed to possess, manifests in a sense of fear.

Evans-Pritchard (1937) goes on to emphasise this by arguing that witchcraft may be drawn on as an explanatory frame in light of what may be considered by the person as undeserved misfortunes. The author is not using these statements to argue that there is no witchcraft, but to indicate the extent to which witchcraft is being feared

and overemphasised. Among the Yoruba people in Nigeria (just like in many other African tribes), witchcraft is believed to be one of the major causes of death.

This compromises the truth of the Gospel in which Jesus Christ assured us to partake in his sufferings. This Gospel teaches that whenever you become a Christian and get anointed, you become immune from any sicknesses or challenges of this world. This perception is refuted by 1 Cor.12 where Paul was sick and after saying three prayers, there was still no difference to his sickness.

## **7. The power and the intention of the Gospel undermined**

There is enough evidence that most people who rush to churches where the issue of witchcraft is overemphasised do not always intend to listen to the preaching of the Gospel. This becomes clearer when even the pastors concerned dedicate more time to dealing with issues concerning witchcraft than paying attention to preaching the Gospel. People will be psychologically absent for the rest of the service, until the demons start talking and then they will become active participants.

For the sake of this study, it is my articulation that the correct meaning of the concept “Gospel” be touched upon. The original Greek noun *euangelion*, occurring 76 times in the New Testament, is translated as “Good News.” The verb “*eu-angelizo*” means “to bring or announce the good news.” Both words come from the noun that means “messenger” (Hampton 2004). In 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, Paul summarises the basic ingredients of the Gospel, which are: the death, burial, resurrection and appearances of the resurrected Christ. If we can put it in summary, the fact of the matter is that the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ is an extra ordinary message which brings hope to people and that is the basis of salvation. It was prophetic against these kind of teachings that Paul went on to say:

“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-with great patience and careful instruction. <sup>3</sup>For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup>They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry (2 Timothy 4:2-5).”

My argument here is that such preaching, like the one that uses witchcraft as an agent, were foreseen even before.

It is the author’s point that if this kind of opinion is ignored from the preaching of the Gospel, then everything that is done or said in the name of Gospel lost the whole direction.

The emphasis of preaching good news is shifted and many hours spent in these churches are not about preaching. For this reason, people go there for healing and protection from witches although they do not even understand the basics of God's word. This could serve as a wake-up call for pastors to start teaching the truth about the power of the Gospel compared to the power of the evil and witchcraft.

In Hebrews 12:4, we are told that "The word of God is more powerful than the double-edged sword." This is the conviction which every Christian is expected to have. In practical terms, ornaments, necklaces, bracelets, anointing water and anointing oil that people buy seem to have replaced this conviction. One of the pastors known for healing and using holy water was Christinah Mokotundi who came from a Ndebele clan in South Africa and founded the St John Apostolic Faith Mission in 1933 (Mwaura 2013:428). Unfortunately, even people who do not believe in Jesus are buying these items to get protected. It is questionable as to whether the power of God, which manifested itself in the life and works of Jesus Christ, can be reduced to buying these things.

## **8. Evaluation**

When compared to other theologies like Reformed theology, for instance, it is very true that the Pentecostals have an edge on trying to deal with the local concerns of the people (Robbins 2003:222). No one can deny that one of the biggest challenges of the African people is their fear of witchcraft, which theologies from the west happen to relegate to a simple superstition and allegation (Gijwijt-Hofstra 1999:110). This undermines the actual problem that black people are dealing with in their lives, hence, they rather try the church that will accommodate their concerns and deal with it.

The fear of witchcraft entrenches, among other things, the abuse of the Gospel whereby people are made to pay a lot of money to be healed and to obtain other forms of protection against witches. Poor people are forced to make loans in order to buy anointing water and anointing oil, which is believed to protect them against witchcraft. Necklaces and bracelets bearing the names of the prophets are selling fast among the people who believe that by wearing these ornaments, witches will not be able to harm them. Pictures and stickers of prophets who are believed to have the ability to repel witches are bought, hanged and pasted on their vehicles for protection. Although these evangelicals used to be critical of the same practice when members of the Zion Christian Church used to buy pictures of their leader, Barnabas Lekganyane, it is now time for them to eat humble pie, since they are now guilty of the same practices.

Unfortunately, buying all these items go against the ministry of Jesus during which He cured and healed many people without asking a cent from them. Accord-

ing to Lestrangle (2015:1), one of the Pentecostal prophets was disturbed by the fact that the entire ministry was hijacked by witchcraft.

However, prostituting a gift by putting monetary demands upon people in order to allow them to benefit from a gift is a breach of character at best, manipulation and witchcraft at worst! I don't care how many books you have written, hours you've been on television or who has endorsed you. This practice is abusive and creates a tremendous stain upon the prophetic ministry. The body of Christ and leaders, in particular, need to stop tolerating this and put a stop to it.

The author fully agrees with Reverend Mbewe (2015:1) who argues that: "The religion of the Bible does not teach a God who is so far away from us that unless some powerful humans come in and give us a breakthrough, he cannot bless us. No! The Bible teaches about a God who is near us. The only barrier between God and us is our sin, and Jesus has dealt with that by his death on the cross." It is false to teach that God is far from His people until someone with supernatural powers, with their excessive demands, comes to relieve them. Jesus never asked for payment to release people from various kinds of depravity and challenges. For instance, He healed the lepers at no cost.

It is not only unbiblical to attribute every failure and misfortune to witches, but it also reverses the teaching which indicates that the devil and his angels were conquered in Christ's death. This gives the impression that the devil is more powerful than God, hence, God keeps fighting him off through the prophets and those who are able to deliver people from the bondage of Satan. The Pentecostal church is more about the prophets than God. The other danger that people fall into when attributing everything bad to witchcraft is reductionism. Reductionist theories have always reduced something into what it is not. Human error and punishment of God for mistakes will be relegated only to future life, meanwhile there are many indications of the judgement of God in the Bible which pushed Israel, for instance, to Babylonian captivity. This kind of thinking promotes what the author would call "all is fine Christianity." The Bible never promised that Christians are immune from the challenges of the world like sickness, unemployment, persecution and so forth. It is problematic and controversial to determine that some of those claiming to be able to expel or deal with witchcraft used to be witches themselves. The problem with this is that it is not easy to be sure if the former witch has separated with their past self. One example of this, according to Ukah (2007:15), is Helen Ukpabio, a Nigerian who confessed to be a former witch who now specialises in delivering people who are under the possession of witchcraft spirits.

The author agrees with Gyadu (2006) who argues:

Whether the human crisis has resulted from possession or oppression, African Pentecostal churches and movements including the classical Pentecostal churches provide the ritual contexts for prayer and exorcism to deliver the afflicted. Thus the African worldview of mystical causation looms large in the practice of healing and deliverance.

This kind of reductionist theory becomes unfair to the complexity of life, which even the Bible did not promise will be without challenges. It is in this context that Pentecostalism would fail to deal with the problems and oppressions that came with colonialism like poverty and injustice, since it infers everything to a curse or witchcraft. This means issues that, for instance, need psychological attention, will be relegated to spirituality. Another confusing matter is when those who are calling themselves “prophets” start revealing other controversial issues when they discredit one another and it causes uncertainty about everything. It was very disturbing to read the blog of Prophet Kautsire who had once been deported from USA for an alleged sexual offence.

I was in South Africa and I met the who-is-who of the gospel, what they told me is heart-breaking. I am speaking this from experience, some Prophets have had to sacrifice their church members to gain fame. You have heard of people dying in places of worship, it is because they are using the people as sacrifices (Nyasa Time Reporter 2015).

According to the report, Kautsire went on to say that he was told by the witchdoctor to carry out a ritual that involved sacrifices, such as killing family members or church members. It will not be a problem if these things were said by an ordinary person, but when it is said by one of those prophets who are in the ministry, it complicates the truth. For the author, even though these prophetic practices of Pentecostals cannot simply be equated to traditional divination (Anderson 1996:174), the thought behind it is to try to provide an innovative alternative to traditional diviners. This is because of their ritualistic character of using anointing water and oil. In the context of Ezekiel, God denounced and disliked various forms of reducing His power to a material instrument. This is why John 4:24 reads as follows: “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.” Human-made rules, regulations and ornaments, water and oil included, do not have a biblical justification to protect or wipe off the evil from people. The concept “anointed” is often used as a brand to sell whatever the Pentecostal prophets can think of. According to News Daily, one prophet cashed a lot of money from women to whom he

claimed to be selling “anointed underwear” that will prevent them from the possession of the so-called spiritual husbands. Another story was that of a minister who made money by selling so-called “anointed straw brooms” to followers to sweep the problems out of their homes in Lusaka. One woman was quoted saying: “We can use the broom to sweep in the mealie meal bin, the fridge, on the bed or anywhere you want blessings to come” (News Day 2015 October 10). No one can observe whether or not it is true that the product or water is anointed.

## **9. The role of theology, particularly missiology**

For the author, it is not helpful to use western philosophies which relegate witchcraft to superstitions because that is where the western theologies lose touch with African epistemologies that provides fertile ground for Pentecostal theology. It is for that reason that I am in agreement with McKee (18) who argues that, that is where the Western rationalists failed to understand the African realities.

According to Gifford (in McGinnis 2002:669), the truth is that a charge of witchcraft, whether or not it leads to a conviction, tarnishes both an individual and her family for generations to come. Their self-confidence, trust as well as psychological thinking is affected. Though there was not much to be done, because it looks like people justify their bad actions by blaming it on witchcraft, in Gifford’s context, many pastors began to be interested in attending to a great number of practical, spiritual questions concerning witches and their powers. This can be one of the points of departure, to first understand what witches are and how they practice their rituals, before making pastoral interventions. It is because the author has learnt that even pastoral caregivers are not at ease when trying to listen to what witches have to say, because everyone has already judged them before listening to them (McGinnis 2002:671).

Missiologists, in cooperation with pastoral caregivers and pastoral counsellors, must be able to uproot the fear of witchcraft, which is the root cause of all these troubles. But the other important thing is for the pastors to seek knowledge and information about witchcraft, since some people are misled to hate and charge other people for witchcraft without knowing the truth about the matter. There have been many false accusations that resulted in the death and suffering of innocent people due to witchcraft.

Waruta and Kinothi (2000:94) fully agree with Olukoya (2004:42) in using a prayer to avert evil spirits and protect Christians from witchcraft. It is partly the duty of theologians and theology to teach people how to pray and ask for God’s divine protection. These are the kind of prayers that Omartian and Hayford (2003:130) call “a force that is irresistible.” Instead of looking for prophets to pray for them, Christians themselves need to be prepared to pray at all times. Some call this kind

of prayer a spiritual warfare in which a person must engage themselves (Baxter & Lowery 2006).

Semenya and Letsosa (2013) give Christians who fear witchcraft the following assurance:

Despite the fact that believers are persecuted by the devil, they are assured of the protection of the Holy Spirit who is always with them. Where the Spirit is present, there is no fear because believers have received the Spirit of power and boldness and not of fear. Therefore there is no need for members to put on or carry amulets and traditional and prophetic medicines since these cannot protect them.

Christians should, in other words, understand that the Holy Spirit given to them by God is always protecting them. By this I mean the day one becomes a child of God by salvation, the Holy Spirit that we receive permanently dwells in us; therefore, the issue of buying either anointed water or oil to seek the services that are rendered by the Holy Spirit becomes confusing. It has been God's aim with humanity that His love and care must be experienced even when unfavourable things happen to them. It is Biblical to indicate that since "God is Love," nothing should stand in the way of this experience, including witchcraft. Paul said this very well in Romans 8:38 when he said: "And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love." It is this love of God which missiology is battling to drive into the hearts of people. In other words, people must be drawn to God by this love, instead of fear of witchcraft.

Since it has been unveiled that the fear of witchcraft is the root cause of the problem, it will be advisable for missiologists within the particular context to start looking for ways in which the fears of witchcraft can be addressed and dealt with. This is because since African people live in commune and depend on one another, it might be difficult, if not impossible, to uproot a challenge like this if one follows the western individualistic kind of approach. This means the church must find ways to design a kind of a communal approach. In supporting this idea, Van der Walt (1997) articulates the beauty of African communalism by indicating that every decision is made in consultation with the whole village or community. Phaswana's (2008) research in the context of VaVhenda people in which he argues the richness of the African counselling models in which the village elders need to be involved in a form of *dzulo or kboro* (meaning meetings), becomes a very important tool to deal with this. In order to use this approach, the pastoral caregiver needs to work hand in hand with the local leaders or people who are on the leadership roles. This approach is in line with the recommendations of the Ralushai Commission which

also indicated that the government should closely work with traditional leaders in dealing with issues of witchcraft (Ralushai et al 1996:60). The missiologists will also need to work out of the box by employing some pastoral skills or consult and refer to pastoral caregivers to assist in this regard. Baloyi (2014:8) indicated that people who are instilled with fear of witchcraft for whatever reason, including the one of preachers who scare them to come to their churches, are among other things, affected mentally, psychologically and physically.

The teaching or preaching of the Gospel must also be used as a tool to curb the misuse of the Gospel for personal gain. The author is of the opinion that the correct teaching of the Bible may help to reduce or eliminate the fears that are instilled in people by those charismatics who want to always deliver them from the said bondage. Paul's exhortation, as I mentioned in one of the previous sections as quoted from 2 Timothy 4:2-5, is relevant here. It is only through the true teaching that false teachings can be untaught and refuted in churches, which also demands theologians, particularly missiologists in this context, to train good preachers of the Gospel. Theology, missiology in this context, should not shy away from ensuring that the preachers of the Gospel are well equipped and well trained to bring the Good News to the already broken communities. The message of hope is fundamental in the preaching of the true Gospel. The Bible also allows Bible readers not to be quiet when the true message is distorted for whatever reason, hence checking and critically analysing the preaching is what we are taught in 2 Thessalonians 5:19-22 which says: "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt, but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil." It is the duty of theologians and preachers to ensure that the church is assisted to refute false teachings, among other things. The church, through missiologists and preachers, should try to have bible study programmes that will assist people to know the truth as well as offering support to those people who are put into a dilemma by the false teaching that scare them instead of giving them hope. In short, pastors and preachers should start seeing intensive Bible study groups as an important tool to remedy this situation. In their book entitled "12 Dynamic Bible Study Methods," Warren, Richard and Shell (1987) have a variety of methods they discussed to assist Bible study groups. One of the methods, called "topical method," may be helpful so that instead of just reading the Bible, the group may engage and always have particular topics for discussion. This will involve much of pastoral support for the people in need of truth.

## **10. Conclusion**

Witchcraft is regarded as one of the most dangerous enemies of human beings, particularly black people. It is also evident that some Pentecostals who have seen this fear use it as a driving force to lure people into their churches. This fear causes

many people to fall into this trap, because everyone wants a better way to deal with the enemy or witches. This results in people flocking to churches where the promise of whatever means of security against the witches is made, not for the sake of listening to the word of God or getting salvation. The truth of the Gospel which invites people to Jesus Christ in love is compromised since people are forced to run to the church – even if they are not convinced about the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ – because all they want is security from evil forces. Pastors and preachers can correct this perception by teaching the true Gospel of God and counselling those who feel threatened by witchcraft practices.

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