

**WESTERN ETHNOCENTRISM: A COMPARISON
BETWEEN AFRICAN WITCHCRAFT AND THE GREEK
EVIL EYE FROM A SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION
PERSPECTIVE**

By

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that it has not previously, in its entirety or part, submitted for a degree to any other university.

Anastasia Apostolides

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Summary

This dissertation can be summarized as follows: ethnocentrism occurs because there is a lack of insight to the fact that religion is socially taught. Ethnocentrism should not be enforced on our understanding of other cultures. A comparative study was done between African witchcraft and the Greek evil eye to see if these two cultures still believe in what Westerners term superstitions, due to similar reasons. The study illustrated that these cultures still believe in these so-called superstitions because similar reasons. The study also showed that both these cultures experienced ethnocentrism from Western scholars' who believe that the practice of witchcraft and the evil are primitive superstitions instead of a different reality to the their own. Greeks and Africans are socially taught to believe in the evil eye and witchcraft respectively.

For the Greek people Satan is a real being, with supernatural powers, which can influence the ability of some people to cause malicious harm to other people by looking at them with an evil eye. Such maliciousness is despised and Greek people neither want to have the evil eye put on them or their families, nor do they want to be accused of putting the evil eye on others. The evil eye controls the social interaction of people's behaviour, making people suspicious of one another.

For African people witchcraft and the demonic are a reality that threatens their daily lives. African people live in constant fear of being bewitched. If an African person identifies the person who has bewitched them or their family they may take violent revenge on the accused witch, sometimes leading to the witches' death. Witchcraft controls the social interaction of peoples' behaviour, making people suspicious of one another.

What some Western scholars fail to realize is that Westerners are socially taught to believe that the evil eye and witchcraft are superstitions. Westerners are socially taught to believe in Satan as a symbol of evil, rather than as an actual being. In the West it is considered primitive to believe in so-called superstitions of any kind as it is believed that what causes these so-called superstitions is a lack of modern (education) medicine. Westerners prefer to solve what some would call the supernatural by looking to science for logical explanations for such occurrences.

Key words

Evil eye, witchcraft, Satan, superstition, sociology, ethnocentrism, Western, Greek, African, comparative.

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Chapter 1

Problem Statement

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to illustrate how the Western perception of evil is projected onto non-Western cultures creating a problem of ethnocentrism. A case study from the context of Ethiopia, comparing the phenomenon of African witchcraft and the Greek evil eye will be done to illustrate Western ethnocentrism. African and Greek cultures still hold on to their beliefs of witchcraft and the evil eye, respectively, and have done so for centuries although both have been influenced by Western cultures. In the West it is generally believed that witchcraft and the evil eye belong to the pre-modern era, and that in the modern era these beliefs are mere superstitions.

This study will be done from the perspective of sociology of religion. Religion is socially learned (Zuckerman 2003:47; cf Batson, Schoenrade & Ventis 1993:53; Furseth & Repstad 2006:197). Sociologist Phil Zuckerman (2003:47-48) defines the term “socialization” as follows: “The process of absorbing the infinite aspects of the culture around us. It is the process of informally learning and unconsciously internalizing the norms, beliefs, and values of our family, peer group, society, nation, and so on. So much of what we know, do, feel, think, and believe comes from how we were/are socialized.” Religion is taught to children by their parents. Later on in life an individual may learn about other religions through friends or spouses (Zuckerman 2006:49-50; cf Hadaway & Marler 1993:97-11; Musick & Wilson 1995:257-270). This means, that what most people believe about Satan and evil is socially learned. Whether a human being believes in Satan as a real being who causes havoc in peoples’ lives or believes that Satan

is a symbol of human evil, has to do with whom that person grew up or with whom they socialize. Zuckerman (2006:49-50) explains that if a person grew up in a different part of the world they would probably believe in that society's religion just as fervently as they believe in their present religion. Zuckerman (2006:51) gives the following example:

It suggests that the strong devotion of "Tom" to his religion or Jesus is quite arbitrary; if Tom's social location were different, or if he had had different parents or friends, he most probably would think some other religion was "true" and swear by it with equal passion ... The fact of the matter is had Tom been born and raised in Yemen three hundred years ago he would most certainly be a devout Muslim, convinced that Islam and the Qur'an were eternally true, not Christianity and the New Testament.

Each society believes that its set of beliefs are true. If we believe that our culture's set of beliefs are true, this would render other cultures' beliefs as false. This leads to the notion that *our* culture is supreme to other cultures as *we* have the truth and they do not (Sumner 1906:13; cf Levine & Campbell 1972:1). This is ethnocentrism. New Testament scholar Andries van Aarde (2001:39) explains: "Ethnocentrism occurs when the cultural distance between ancient and modern societies, and among particular cultures in a given period, is not reckoned with."

The New Testament, which was written for Mediterranean societies, speaks of Satan and his demons as real beings threatening the spiritual lives of God's followers. Western scholars' (see Wilkinson 1998; Craffert 1999; Twelftree 1999; Pilch 2000, 1995; Van Aarde 2000) have written much on Jesus' exorcisms. Some scholars (see Wilkinson 1998; Craffert 1999) argue that the people Jesus healed were not demonically possessed but had illnesses such as epilepsy that

can in the modern era be medically explained. New Testament scholar H Van Der Loos (1968:99) explains as follows:

The belief in the supernatural forces, both good and evil, which produce disease is common to the whole of mankind. In the past it was widespread; now many peoples no longer hold it. Particularly in cases of the sudden occurrence of a disease, in illnesses of a special kind or epidemics, thoughts tended to go – and still go – to the direct intervention of supernatural powers. The modern scholar, who works solely on a rational basis believes that this “primitive” attitude must be persistently opposed.

On the other hand the Greek Orthodox Church and the African Indigenous Churches believe in the existence of the demonic. While Western influence has infiltrated most parts of the world, there are some things that Western thinking does not change. Although communities that still have “superstitious” beliefs that predate Jesus, and are criticized by the West for such “primitive” beliefs, they still adhere to these beliefs. Why do these communities still hold on to such beliefs? Are Western beliefs on evil and Satan not also socially taught? In other words if, the “superstitions”, of the evil eye and witchcraft are socially taught, is Western thought also perhaps socially taught and not necessarily based on “scientific findings”?

1.2 Methodology

Much has been written by anthropologists (see Forster 1972; Dionisopoulos-Mass 1976; Hardie 1981) and biblical scholars on the evil eye (see Elliott 1988; 1990; 1991; 1992) and African witchcraft (see Ferdinando 1999:101; Kgatla 2000:149-150; Van Wyk 2004:1218). Likewise, much has been written about Satan and the biblical texts in which Satan is mentioned (see Twelftree 1993; 1999; Pagels 1995; Page 1995; Hill & Walton 2000), African religions (see Ejiza

1991:166; Oosthuizen 1992:54; Amba Oduyoye 2001:25-26), and the Greek Orthodox Church's belief of Satan, (see Papademetriou 1974:66-72; Schmemmann 1974:23; Ware 1996:57-58; Cunningham 2002:149-150). A comparative study will be done between African witchcraft and the Greek evil eye to see if witchcraft and the evil eye still exist today because of similar reasons and to show how the Western thought in projecting its own scientific culture onto other cultures with different beliefs often displays ethnocentrism. This study aims to make a contribution in this regard.

Chapter 2 discusses Richard Rohrbaugh's (2006) article on the Western problem of thinking that the Bible was written for "us", leading to the problem of cross-cultural ethnocentrism. Rohrbaugh discusses the six most important factors that contribute to cross-cultural miscommunication. These six points will then be applied to the explanation in chapter 6 of why witchcraft in Africa remains a persisting factor in African communities.

Chapter 3 will focus on the Western understanding of Satan and the problem of evil. This will be done to explore why there is such a difference of opinion on evil in the West compared to the Greek and African culture's.

In chapter 4 the demonic will be discussed from a Greek Orthodox perspective. One of the most prominent phenomena that still exist in this religion is the belief in the evil eye. The evil eye predates Jesus and is considered a superstition by many in the West. Yet the Greeks who themselves have become Westernized in many other aspects of life still hold firm to the belief of the evil eye. John Elliott (1988; 1990; 1991; 1992) has studied this phenomenon in the Mediterranean world extensively. His theory on the evil eye will be discussed and will then be applied to the pervasive belief of African witchcraft in chapter 6.

Chapter 5 will focus on the African belief of witchcraft and how it affects those who become victims of witchcraft. In the West the belief of witchcraft is often regarded as a superstition. Countless missionaries have tried to put an end to the belief in witchcraft and replace it with Christianity, but they have not been successful. Although many African people have converted to Christianity, they still hold fast to the belief in witchcraft.

In chapter 6 the phenomenon of the belief in the demonic in the African faith will be explained through the lense of the belief in the demonic in the Greek Orthodox faith.

Both these cultures still believe in the demonic and the damage that the demonic brings to people's lives. By applying John Elliott's theory of the evil eye that persists in the Greek culture to African witchcraft, similarities may be found as to why such beliefs still exist in these societies.

Chapter 2

Cross-cultural ethnocentrism

In order to study another culture or to compare two different cultures a careful study needs to be done of both these cultures. Anthropologists Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952:357) define “culture” as follows:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts: the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and essentially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning influences upon further action.

A culture should be understood firstly “in terms of its own values, goals, and focuses before venturing to compare it (either positively or negatively) with any other culture” (Kraft 1979:49). This is termed “cultural validity” and was devised by anthropologists as a means to combat ethnocentrism. Anthropologists Levine & Campbell (1972:1) define ethnocentrism as follows: “an attitude or outlook in which values derived from one’s own cultural background are applied to other cultural contexts where different values are operative. At a more complex level is the ethnocentric attitude or outlook that takes account of multiple points of view but regards those of other cultures as incorrect, inferior or immoral” (Levine & Campbell 1972:1). Anthropologist William Graham Sumner (1840-1910) (1906:13) who coined the word “ethnocentrism” defined the term as the:

view of things in which one’s own group is the center of everything, and all the others are scaled and rated with reference to it. ... Each group

nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities, and looks with contempt on outsiders. Each group thinks its own folkways the only right ones, and if it observes that other groups have other folkways, these excite its scorn.

Richard Rohrbaugh's¹ (2006) article entitled, "Hermeneutics as cross-cultural encounter: Obstacles to understand", addresses the Western problem of thinking that the Bible was written for "us". Rohrbaugh looks at how Americans project their own culture onto the Bible, misunderstanding what the biblical authors were writing about. Van Aarde (2000:223) puts it as follows: "The authors of the Bible wrote down *their* experiences, including *their* experiences of and witness concerning God. In this way the writers of the gospels, from within *their* world and its way of thinking, allowed their meeting with Jesus and *their* interpretations of the traditions concerning Jesus to appear in *their* manuscripts". Although Rohrbaugh's article is from an American perspective it is equally applicable to a Western Christian context such as South Africa.

Rohrbaugh (2006:560) explains that while there is a recognition of cultural differences in face-to-face encounters, Westerners seem to forget this when reading something that is not of their own culture. He says that although Westerners are aware that they do read the Bible with "culturally conditioned eyes", Western biblical scholars' still seem to ignore the fact that the Bible is not a Western book. Although the cross-cultural problem is a massive topic, Rohrbaugh (2006) discusses the six most important factors that contribute to the "intractability problem" that persists in cross-cultural communication. These will be discussed here and then these six points will be applied to the comparison between the demonic in Greek Orthodox culture and African culture in chapter 6.

¹ Prof Dr Richard Rohrbaugh is Professor Emeritus of New Testament at Lewis & Clark College, Portland (OR) USA.

2.1 Language availability

Language plays a major role in cross-cultural communication. An example of this is how some languages do not make a distinction between the second person singular and the second person plural. The example given here by Rohrbaugh (2006:565) is that of 1 Corinthians 3:16-17: “Do you not know that you are God’s temple”, refers not to the individual (you), but rather to the congregation (you). English does not make that distinction. “You” can refer to one or to many. Therefore when reading an English translation of a foreign language one would just assume that just as in their own culture “you” is meant in the individual sense. When a translation is being undertaken the historical setting is of the utmost importance. Kraft (1980:276) explains this as follows: “A translation is tied to the historical setting in which the original events occurred. A translation, even a dynamically equivalent one, dare not change the cultural settings of the participants.”

Malina (1993:13) gives us the following example of language availability:

When you do not share speech patterns, you simply do not understand a language. When you do not share behaviour patterns, you simply do not understand what another person is doing. Should you identify your language (culture) with human being (nature), you tend to think that all people should speak Human (English), just as you do. And if they do not, they are either subhuman or nonhuman. This is ethnocentrism again.

Kraft (2001:177-178) gives the following example of language availability:

This was not the ordinary type of communication problem experienced by anyone who tries to talk to someone else. But this problem was compounded by a language and culture problem of rather large proportions (just as are many of the misunderstandings that occur between missionaries and Nigerians) ... We missionaries have steadfastly maintained that the God we serve and proclaim is not merely “the white man’s God”. But many understand our message a proclamation of that kind of God, because we place emphasis on the discontinuities between African society and the “Christian” way of life (which we often equate naively with our western way of life) rather than African churches build their Christianity solidly on African foundations.

2.2 Identity maintenance

Lum (1982:386) defines “identity” as follows: “Identity is a social process in which one balances what s/he thinks of oneself to be and what others believe that one to be” (Lum 1982:386). Speech projects identity, whether it is positive or negative, one’s own identity or that of another. In Lum’s (1982:386) opinion, people prefer to relate to people similar to themselves, because they maximize their own identity in that way.

In Rohrbaugh’s (2006:565) opinion, when people are partaking in cross-cultural communications and they detect identity threat in any way, this may lead to: 1) rejection of the other person; 2) the projection of stereotypes onto the other person; or 3) the projection of a person’s

identity is assumed to be universal. This leads to a dislike of the other culture. Rohrbaugh (2000:565) then continues to say that Christians would like to imagine that the original followers of Jesus were similar to themselves. “It therefore becomes psychologically (and theologically) necessary to see early Christians as proto-Americans” (Rohrbaugh 2006:565). In other words, says Rohrbaugh, it is too disconcerting to American Christians to risk disliking the original followers of Jesus.

2.3 High and low context communication: Field-independent/ field dependant

How a culture processes information plays a critical role in cross-cultural misinterpretation. Edward Hall (1982: 18) describes low and high context communication as follows:

A high context (HC) communication is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low context (LC) communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code. Twins who grow up together can communicate more economically (HC) than two lawyers in a court case during a trial (LC)...

The New Testament is a high context document. In other words the authors assume that the readers have a very good knowledge of the context and very little explanation is therefore needed from the authors. This, says Rohrbaugh (2006:566) is in contrast to the low context documents of American authors who fully explain the context and do not assume that the reader will have prior knowledge of the context. In other

words, small-scale societies where there is little social or technological change over time, would be regarded as high-context societies. While a large-scale society in which sub-cultures co-exist and there are also expeditious social and technological changes, there is a need for contextual explanation (Rohrbaugh 2006:567).

Larry Samovor & Richard Porter (1991:20) distinguish four major differences in high and low-context communication settings:

1. Verbal messages are extremely important in low-context cultures. Low context cultures do not have the tendency to take in their environmental surroundings.
2. Low-context people who depend primarily on verbal messages for information are perceived as less attractive and less credible by people in high-context cultures.
3. People in high-context cultures are more adept at reading nonverbal behaviour and reading the environment.
4. People in high-context cultures have an expectation that others are also able to understand unarticulated communication; hence, they speak less than people from low-context cultures.

Having listed these four major differences between low and high-context societies, and knowing that the New Testament is a high-context document, while American documentation is low-context, then Rohrbaugh (2006:567) remarks: “The main problem with the Bible, then,

is that we do not know what we do not know. The spare descriptions of context in the Bible often leave us without the essential ingredient for understanding the message.”

Rohrbaugh (2006:567) relates high and low-context societies to what Devorah Lieberman (1994:179) calls field-dependent/field independent communication. Field-dependent communities are communities regard words, context, messages and emotional factors all as part of the person. These communities use context to understand what is being said to them. Field-independent communication is found within collective communities, while field-dependent communication is found in individualistic communities. In individualistic communities context is not as important as it is in collective communities. Individualistic communities take ideas from contextual messages and arrange them to cause-effect sequences (Rohrbaugh 2006:10). These two different ways of communication, points out Rohrbaugh, may cause problems in miscommunication when two people from opposite fields try to communicate.

2.4 Individualism/ collectivism

In collectivist cultures people are defined by and understand themselves as part of their family/society. “Collectivist cultures produce a dependent sense of self as if the group *is* the self” (Rohrbaugh 2006:569). The collectivist culture focuses on community, tradition, group loyalty and group honour. In individualistic cultures people understand themselves as individuals who are responsible to themselves and sometimes to their immediate families. Individualistic cultures focus on self-worth, self-expression, own opinions, privacy and individual rights. People from

these two types of societies often have miscommunication issues. Rohrbaugh (2006:569), points out that America is an extreme example of an individualistic culture, while the New Testament culture is an extreme collectivist culture and therefore it should be no surprise that there is miscommunication when Americans read the Bible. American Christians understand Jesus as their “personal” Saviour, helping them solve their “personal” problems. Rohrbaugh (2006:569) puts it as follows:

Collectivists by contrast would be more likely to assume that Jesus articulates the characteristics of a group-dependent self and offers one membership in his group on the basis of loyalty, conformity and the suppression of independent thinking. Should Americans discover that this is what Jesus was really like, it would be hard not to imagine a growing dislike for the New Testament followers of Jesus and a perceived threat to the American value of the individual.

Rohrbaugh (2006:569) also adds that, in the West, psychology is believed to explain most human behaviour, whereas in the collectivist cultures psychology is irrelevant and human behaviour is attributed to external causes. This causes further miscommunication between the cultures.

2.5 Unwarranted assumptions of human similarity

A common misunderstanding arises between different cultures when the assumption is made that all people are similar due to their basic biological similarities in needing food, shelter and to reproduce Rohrbaugh (2006:570). However this is not true. People differ culturally

in many ways. Rohrbaugh (2006:570) gives the following example, which deals with the interpretation of gestures: “A simple gesture such as a smile can be an example. Americans assume it to be a universal gesture of friendliness. It is not. In a number of Asian cultures a smile at a stranger is either rude or an indication of sexual deviance. Assumed universal similarities are also projected onto biblical writings “in the form of theological or ethical ideas” (Rohrbaugh 2006:571). Malina (1993:11,13) gives the two following examples:

- A child may be viewed as an economic asset or an economic liability. All houses are not constructed equally; there are high-class and low-class houses ... Culture is all about the distinctive shared meanings and feelings characteristic of a given group at a certain time and place.
- Were I to interpret all your actions in terms of my own experiences I’m afraid you might end up wishing to hit me in the mouth. After all, where I come from, all who “carry out” groceries from a supermarket pride themselves on their shoplifting abilities, and I would presume the same of you and everyone else. You might find this very offensive. Yet when it comes to the Bible, there is no one to give you a pause to urge you to reconsider, to hit you in the mouth in case of misinterpretation.

As Malina (1993:11) points, out this is also true for the Bible, the biblical writers and the world that they inhabited. The tendency is to apply our own cultural behaviours to the Bible and then misinterpret the passages to suit our own needs. Another example of this is the interpretation of passages containing demonic possession and exorcism. The Western

response (Strecker 2002:117) would be mixed, mostly leaning towards explaining demonic possession, exorcisms and the “evil eye” concept as superstition or something that can be solved by the medical profession. The African response would be a belief in demonic possession and the evil eye, which is still very much a part of these culture’s everyday lives.

Charles Kraft (1979:305) describes how Africans consider the Western approach to healing diseases as being medically impersonal. Africans believe that illnesses are not only caused by germs. “And when they study the Scriptures they find abundant confirmation of their point of view and abundant disconfirmation of the theological understanding of the West ... The African expects that anyone speaking for God will automatically be concerned with healing and exorcism.”

John Pilch (2000:76) has the following to say on healing² and the Bible: “It is impolite, inappropriate, and ethnocentrically anachronistic to identify the sicknesses in the Gospel as leprosy, epilepsy, mental illness, in the same sense that these conditions have in modern Western civilization.”

2.6 Cognitive style

The term cognitive style “refers to the thought pattern or habits of mind that dominate a given culture” (Rohrbaugh 2006:13). Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger & Hanfried Kellner (1974:40) use the term “carriers” to describe some ways of living. These “carriers”, they believe, create conditions whereby habits of the mind of an “institutionalized group” can be transmitted, nurtured and reinforced. There is a difference between *primary and secondary carriers*. “The primary carriers are those

² For more information on medical anthropology and the Bible see Pilch (1995; 2000).

processes and institutions that are directly concerned with technological production. The secondary carriers are processes and institutions that are not themselves concerned with such production but that serve as the transmitting agencies for the consciousness derived from this source” (Berger, Berger & Kellner 1974:40). Mind-solving is an inherent part of technological mode of production. The mind-solving cannot be “thought away”. This is a potent cognitive style that persists in the West. It is projected onto cross-cultural communication and ultimately leads to miscommunication (Rohrbaugh 2006:571). The cognitive style of mind-solving also diffuses itself into other areas of life. An example of this is “how to” manuals which address everything from technical problems to sexual compatibility (Berger, Berger & Kellner 1974:73-74)

Bennett and Stewart (1991:32) point out that the American habits of the mind are quite different to that of some non-Western countries. Americans are “fact-oriented”, always observing, collecting and measuring empirical data, making sure it is objective and reliable. Bennett and Stewart (1991:32) give Japan as an example of a non-Western country that does not do feasibility tests.

Americans value “doing” or “operational procedure”. Bennett and Stewart (1991:32) call this “procedural knowledge” focused on getting things done. This, they say, is the opposite of the Arab and German preference of “declarative knowledge” which is descriptive.

Americans are always looking to the future. This is known as “anticipated consequences” and plays a huge role in American capitalist economic activities (Rohrbaugh 2006:572). This is in total contrast to the

Mediterranean peasant way of living in the “present-time” (Elliott1988:53; 1992:52-53). Mediterranean’s live for today and do not spend time worrying about the future (Rohrbaugh 2006:573).

Americans always ask “how” questions, breaking down things to see how they work. Bennett and Stewart (1991:4) call this “preoccupation with causation”. This is in contrast with the Chinese, Japanese and Brazilian resistance to analysis. These cultures prefer holistic approaches to thinking.

Americans are inductive thinkers, while Europeans are either deductive thinkers or rational thinkers. Rohrbaugh (2006:573) explains that: “What matters there [Mediterranean cultures] are not data and derived principalities but context, status, relationships, and the ascriptive qualities of persons.”

Rohrbaugh (2006:574) emphasizes two important points: on the one hand the American problem of projecting themselves onto the Bible is not just cultural ignorance on the Americans part. Although not enough knowledge of non-Western cultures is part of the problem, knowledge of what Americans do not share with non-Western cultures is imperative in better understanding biblical writers. While on the other hand when Americans read the Bible and assume shared universalities, misunderstandings are sure to happen.

These two findings, points out Rohrbaugh (2006:574), serve as an “explanation for the near total inability of American Bible readers to distinguish between canon and culture.” Westerners are just as committed to their own culture, as are non-Westerners, and project that commitment to their own culture onto the Bible.

“Culture, not canon, has too often shaped the life of the Church” (Rohrbaugh 2006:574).

2.7 Summary

In short, to study another culture there must be full understanding of that culture’s behavioural patterns, language availability, thought patterns of the cultures’ mind, identity maintenance, how the culture processes information and how the people define themselves. How these six factors differ from one’s own culture also should be outlined and understood. Misunderstandings and ethnocentrism come from lack of information of other cultures.

Chapter 3

The development of the concept of Satan

As was illustrated in chapter 2, different cultures often misunderstand one another because they do not have full understanding of one another's cultural behaviours and thought processes. This is also true for the religious beliefs and understandings each culture has of evil. Mediterranean and African cultures believe in evil spirits and Satan as *actual beings* that can cause serious harm and health problems to people. In Western thought there are many theories for explaining the problem of evil³, and Satan is seen as a *symbol* of evil (Russell 1986:266; cf Hinson 1992:478). "Many modern theologians consider the Devil to be a symbol of the powers of evil, of the worst qualities of human nature, or of the destructive forces of the universe" (WBE 1992:145). This view leads to misunderstandings. Westerners see cultures that believe in evil spirits as primitive (Page 1995:267), while cultures like those in Africa who believe in evil spirits, distrust the Western approach to healing, calling it impersonal (Kraft 1979:305; cf Pilch 2000:25). In order to understand the concept of Satan in the West and the West's beliefs of Satan a brief study will be done of texts that refer to Satan in the Old Testament and the New Testament and some contemporary scholars. The Mediterranean views of evil will be discussed in Chapter 4 and the African views on evil will be discussed in chapter 5.

"Satan" is the Anglicization of the Hebrew noun *sātān*, which means "the adversary", "accuser" or "opponent" (Breytenbach & Page 1999:276). Devil is

³ The problem of evil is a massive topic. For some examples on the topic of evil and God see: J Hick (1966); M M Adams & R M Adams (1990; 1999); R Rush (1997) R Swinburn (1998); D Z Phillips (2005).

derived from the Greek word *diabolos*, and means “slanderer”, “enmity” or “quarrel” (Riley 1999:244).

3.1 Satan in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, Satan takes on an almost insignificant role, but even in this minor role he is present. It has been suggested that the Old Testament writers may have downplayed Satan’s role so as not to contradict their monotheism (Nel 1987:4-5; cf Boyd 1997:84; Hill & Walton [1991] 2000:201). Israel and her neighbours had concurring mythologies about opposing forces of good and evil, but Yahweh was Israel’s only god. Everything good and bad was attributed to God. Therefore it was imperative that any evil, in whatever capacity, was seen to be controlled by Yahweh. However, explains Nel (1987:5): “the mythic thought-structure was not totally banned is the Old Testament in underscored by the occurrence of cherubs and seraphs with apotropaic functions.” A variety of demons also occur in the Old Testament such as “Azazel” (Lev 16:10) among others.

The word “the satan” or “satan” is expressly stated in four texts: Numbers 22:22-38; Job 1-2; Zechariah 3:1-10, and 1 Chronicles 21:1. There are also three other texts that have been used to develop the concept of the Christian (Eastern and Western) Devil: Genesis 3:1-15; Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19. In these three texts the word Satan does not appear.

3.1.1 Numbers

In Numbers satan is used as a noun and is therefore not a name but an adversary. God is upset with Balaam’s actions. Day (1988:156) argues that Balaam set out on his journey without consulting God. This angered God, who then sent out a satan to set Balaam straight: “I have come here to oppose you

because your path is a reckless one before me” (Num 22:32). The satan, explains Pagels (1996:40), was therefore “sent by the Lord to protect a person from worse harm.”

3.1.2 Job 1-2

In Job the satan appears as a noun, and not as a name. Here the satan’s position is that of prosecutor in the service of God (Hill & Walton 2000:335). God is in control of the satan, who’s job it is to expose human weakness. The satan questions Job’s faithfulness to God and is quick to suggest that if Job’s fortune was to be reversed, Job would no longer be such a faithful servant to God (Job 1:9-11). But the satan can do nothing without God’s permission, which he is granted, twice (Job 1:12 and Job 2:6). The satan also has certain limitations placed on him by God. In the first test the satan is not allowed to touch Job, and in the second test he is not allowed to kill Job. “Though he challenges God at a very profound level, he is nonetheless subject to God’s power and, like Yahweh’s messenger in Num 22, acts on Yahweh’s instructions. He is certainly not an independent, inimical force” (Breytenbach & Page 1999:728) The satan is not mentioned in the rest of Job, as he has completed his role, and is no longer of any use to God (Pagels 1995:42). Page (1995:30) explains it as follows: “The notable absence of Satan demonstrates conclusively that the author of Job did not view Satan as a solution to the problem of why the righteous suffer.”

3.1.3 Zechariah 3:1-10

Zechariah 3:1-10 is the fourth vision of the prophet Zechariah. Here we have what appears to be a court session. Joshua is the accused, the satan the prosecutor, and God is Joshua’s defender. The satan’s role is small and obscure. The satan does not get to say a word as God rebukes him before he can. The satan, an angel, is part of God’s heavenly entourage. It is the satans job to

prosecute human beings. In some scholars' (Tate 1992: 464; Page 1995: 33) opinion there is not sufficient evidence to link this satan with the satan that would later oppose God's will. While in other scholars' opinion (Mitchel, Smith & Brewer 1962: 69; Kline 1993:24) the satan in this passage is indeed the very being whom openly opposes God from the New Testament onwards.

3.1.4 1 Chronicles 21:1

Unlike the other three texts the word "satan" in 1 Chronicles 21:1 is a name, as the noun occurs without a definite article (Page 1995:34; cf Tate 1992:465). Here Satan incites David to sin by taking a census of Israel, disregarding Joabs objections. In the parallel version in 2 Samuel 24:1, it is God who actually incites David to take the census, which leads him to sin. In Chronicles Satan is delegated the job by God to inflict evil on Israel. Nel (1987:7) points out that Satan is not a substitute for God, but for the "wrath of Yahweh". This means that Satan is still part of God's heavenly entourage, and God's instrument. The Chronist, suggest Breytenbach & Page (1999:729-730), wanted to "correct" the earlier version, "taking the responsibility of the sinful census away from Yahweh". But, they continue, it is important to understand why the Chronist changed the earlier version, as this has implications for how Satan should be understood. If the Chronist rationalized that there was an independent being who was responsible for acting maliciously towards humankind, then Satan could be seen as a proper name. This act could then be seen as the "beginning of moral dichotomy in the celestial sphere" (Breytenbach & Page 1999:730). If however the Chronist was using Satan to show a favourable relationship between God and David, with no malicious intent, "then even if *sātān* in this passage is a proper name, the term is still a long way from connoting Satan, God's evil archenemy" (Breytenbach & Page 1999:730). However, in Boyd's (1997:153)

opinion “Satan is clearly portrayed as a malicious being that is ‘against Israel’ and against God’s plans.”

3.2 The Development of the concept of Satan from non-Satan texts

3.2.1 Genesis 3

Eve’s temptation by the serpent in Genesis 3 is one of the most well known stories of the Old Testament. But, Satan’s name is not mentioned anywhere in the text. An examination of why Christians have come to believe that the snake is Satan needs to be done.

Genesis clearly states that the serpent belongs to the category of “wild creatures” (Gn 3:1), and made by God (Gn 2:19). The serpent, unlike the satans in the other biblical texts, is not part of a heavenly entourage acting under God’s command (Tate 1992:466). But, points out Hendel (1999:746): “Cross-cultural studies have shown that trickster figures characteristically are ambiguous figures who cross or blur the accepted categories of existence. The snake in Eden is true to his trickster identity in crossing or blurring the boundaries between the categories of animal, human, and divine.” This, says Hendel (1999:747), can be explained as follows: although the snake has been defined as an animal, he also possesses other qualities and abilities that are not attributed to animals. The snake has the human ability to speak, and tricks Eve through the power of suggestion to sin. “The sin never did tell a lie” (Bandstra 1995:45). The snake also has divine knowledge in knowing that the humans will not die if they eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. Although the snake tricks Adam and Eve into sin, they also gain divine like knowledge. “Like tricksters of other traditions (e.g., Prometheus and Epimetheus of Greek tradition), the boon of the trickster is both a benefit and a loss, for which humans pay the price” (Hendel 1999:747).

One of the first suggestions of the serpent as Satan, can be found in the apocryphal book of the Wisdom of Solomon 2:23-24, which is dated to the first century BCE: “God created man for incorruption, and made him the image of his of his own eternity, but through the devil’s envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his party experience it.” The early church fathers⁴ believed the serpent to be Satan. Page (1995:23) summarizes why Christians may believe the serpent to be Satan as follows:

- the serpent is more than an ordinary animal;
- the serpent is opposed to God’s purpose for humanity;
- the serpent is crafty and deceptive;
- the serpent is the cause of humanity’s fall.

Page (1995:23) points out that it is impossible to know if the narrator intended for the serpent to be Satan.

3.2.2 Isaiah 14:12-17

Isaiah 14:12-17 is a taunt song/poem describing the fall of a Babylonian king from God’s grace. The king wanted to become like God, and was severely punished for his arrogance (Page 1995:38).

How you have fallen from
heaven,
O morning star, son of the
dawn!

⁴ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Typho*, 103
Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.23.1-3

You have been cast down to
the earth,
You who once laid low the
nations! (Is 14:12)⁵

The king of Babylon, to whom the poem was believed to be directed, was responsible for the fall of Jerusalem and for the Jews being exiled from their land (Forsyth 1987:138). From as early as Tertullian⁶ (AD 160-220) the “morning star” was viewed as Satan. The Reformers (see Oswalt 1986:320) rejected this idea, and many theologians to this day do not view this text as the fall of Satan. “In fact, verses 12-15 are totally consistent with the surrounding characterization of Babylon and its fallen star ruler” (Youngblood 1998:27). The phrase “morning star” was translated to “Lucifer” in the Latin Vulgate texts, and appears this way in the King James version of the Bible.

How art thou fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art
thou out down to the ground, which didst
weaken the nation!⁷

3.2.3 Ezekiel 28:11-19

Ezekiel 28:11-19 is seen as the story of Satan’s fall (Page 1995:39). Ezekiel 28:11-19 tells the story of an exceptionally beautiful king who lived in the Garden of Eden. But as with the king in Isaiah, he too sinned, and God’s way of punishing him, was to have him expelled from Eden. The story is believed to be directed at the Tyrian monarchy and the siege, which occurred from 587 to 574

⁵ NIV Bible

⁶ Tertullian, *Contra Marcion*, 5.11. 17

⁷ King James Bible

BC (see Tate 1992:470). But because the king was said to have been “perfect in beauty” (Ez 28:12), and lived in Eden, the same church fathers⁸ who believed Isaiah to be the story of Satan’s fall, also interpreted Ezekiel in the same way. But, warns Page (1995:40-42), this is a difficult text, with many linguistic problems, and like most scholars’ (cf Tate 1992:470) believes that this cannot be the story of Satan’s fall, as it recounts a historical event.

3.2.4 Summary

In Numbers 22:22-38, Job 1-2, Zechariah 3:1-10, and 1 Chronicles 21:1, we see the satan/Satan as part of God’s heavenly entourage. Satan is a prosecutor whose job it is to monitor and find human sin. Although a little too eager to be cruel to Job, he does it with God’s permission, doing God’s will. This Satan is quite different from the demonic figure we encounter in the New Testament, who torments humankind. The figure of Satan has evolved in the New Testament due to the influence of Persian and Babylonian mythology being integrated with Jewish mythology during the inter-testamental period. Yet it must be said that anytime a satan/Satan makes an appearance in the Old Testament it is to inflict harm on human beings. Many scholars’ (see Kline 1993:20; Page 1995:115; Boyd 1997:153) believe that the origin of Satan can be traced to the above-mentioned four passages. Others (see Pagels 1995:140; Breytenbach & Page 1999:728) argue that, due to the fact that in three of the four texts Satan is not used as a proper name, it is not the same demonic being we encounter in the New Testament. Genesis 3:1-15, Isaiah 14:12-17, and Ezekiel 28:11-19, although more difficult texts for tracing Satan, are also the ones most used by Christians to show Satan’s origins in the Old Testament.

⁸ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Typho*, 103
Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.23.1-3

3.3 Satan in the New Testament

In the New Testament, Satan is referred to by a number of names. “Satan” (*Satanas*) is the Greek translation from the Hebrew, while “the devil” (*ho diabolos*) was used by the translators of the Septuagint. He is also referred to as “Beelzebul” (Mk 3:22-27); “the evil one” (Eph 6:16); “the father of lies” (Jn 8:44); “the dragon” (Rv 12:7); “ancient serpent” (Rv 12:9); “prince of the world” (Jn 12:31), among others.

In the New Testament Satan appears not as an obscure adversary/prosecutor, who is part of God’s heavenly entourage, but as someone who has a distinct dislike for God and all humanity. Satan, however, does not just suddenly explode onto the scene. The interest in Satan as the leader of the fallen angels had increased during the intertestamental period. Under Babylonian (586-539 BCE), and Persian (539-332 BCE) rule (Hill & Walton 2000:161-164), Jewish mythology had already become integrated with Babylonian and Persian mythology. Those cosmologies dealt with powers of good and evil.

The Babylonians believed in the god Marduk. The Babylonian story of creation tells how Marduk killed the goddess of chaos, Tiamat, and from her body created the earth and the sky. For conquering chaos, Marduk was made ruler of his creation. He then created Babylon, the place where the gods would dwell and assemble in Marduk’s court. Marduk created human beings to serve the gods (Hinson 1990:145).

The Persians’ religion was known as Zoroastrianism and centered on a holy book known as the Avesta. This was and still is a dualistic religion, believing in the two opposing powers of good and evil. The good god is known as Ormazd, and the

evil god as Ahriman. It is believed that there is a continuous celestial warfare and that at the end of times Ormazd will be the victor (Hinson 1990:162).

Even though the Israelites had a history of having been conquered by other nations, the period between 198-63 BCE saw them suffering vicious attacks under the rule of Antiochus IV (175-164 BCE). Antiochus imposed the Greek lifestyle on the Judeans, wanting to Hellenize Judea (Du Toit 1998:230). Radical religious reforms were pushed onto the Judeans, such as the suppression of temple sacrifices. The observance of the Sabbath was forbidden, as was circumcision. The sacred texts were suppressed, and the Judeans were forced to eat pork, among other atrocities. The temple was desecrated, civil wars broke out and eventually the faith and Judean society became divided (Gottwald 1985:443-456; cf Hinson 1990:187-189; Du Toit 1998:231). Though the Judeans never abandoned monotheism, after the destruction of the temple, God, it was said, distanced God from the earth. This led to a cosmic eschatology (Van Aarde 1987:25-26). Having suffered so severely, Page suggests (1995:88), the Judeans may have felt that super-human forces were “behind these atrocities and to the conviction that these malevolent forces could be overcome only through divine intervention” (Page 1995:88). This sort of ideology is found in Judaic apocalyptic literature, as well as in the New Testament. Satan and his entourage of demons become the cause of earthly evils, such as: death, sin, misery and violence. In the New Testament there is an awareness of a “kingdom of light”, versus a “kingdom of darkness” (Van Aarde 1987:25-26, cf Riley 1999:248).

From the Gospels all the way through to Revelations, Satan and his demons seek to destroy humanity’s spirituality. “The entire mission of Jesus can be understood as a continuous confrontation with Satan” (Schwartz 1995:68). In the

Gospels, Jesus encounters Satan after Jesus' baptism. "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil" (Lk 4:1-2)⁹. And so begins Jesus' trials and tribulations with not only the Satan but also his countless demons, whom Jesus has the power to exorcise.

The gospels list the healing¹⁰ of demonic possession as one of the diseases Jesus healed (Wilkinson 1998:65, cf Craffert 1999:65). It was believed that possessed people were victims who were under the direct influence of evil (Van der Loos 1968:371, cf Pilch 2000:104). Luke refers to Jesus performing exorcisms throughout Galilee (Lk 4:40-41), while in Mark, four of the thirteen healing stories are exorcisms. "This is appropriate because it is in exorcism that the nature of Jesus' ministry as the bringing of God's rule to a world fallen under Satan's sway comes to most explicit expression" (Page 1995:140).

3.3.1 The prominent exorcisms¹¹ of Jesus

One of the most dramatic, exorcisms is that of the story of the Gadarene demoniac¹², which appears in Matthew 8:28; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39. The

⁹ There is a dispute as to whether Jesus' temptation can be verified. From one perspective Funk, W R, Hoover, R W & the Jesus Seminar (1993:278) state: "Nobody other than the devil and Jesus were present, to be sure, which means this report cannot be verified." While from another perspective, namely that of Green (1981:196), the early church received the temptation account through Jesus himself. And they are in different order in Luke and in Matthew because "the stories circulated independently for the teaching and encouragement of Christians going through rough times."

¹⁰ In the recent years much has been written on the topics of Jesus' healings, and miracles. For some examples see Wilkinson 1998; Craffert 1999; Twelftree 1999; Pilch 2000, 1995; Van Aarde 2000.

¹¹ In Funk, WR, Hoover, RW & the Jesus Seminar's opinion the exorcism stories that are presented here are not the actual words of Jesus, but what the storytellers imagined what Jesus might have said.

¹² Wilkinson (1998:73) has suggested that in psychiatric terms the demoniac of Mark 5:2-7 could be diagnosed as having "manic-depressive" or "bipolar affective disorder".

man is possessed¹³ by many demons that call themselves Legion¹⁴. He lives in a cemetery and although he has “often been bound with shackles and chains”, such is his strength that he pulls them off. The demons beg Jesus to send them to the pigs. Jesus agrees to their request. This is the only exorcism done by Jesus where, at their request the demons are transferred from a man to pigs; in other words from one host to another. But, points out Boyd (1997:193) the pigs in destroying themselves, leave the demons without a host. Therefore the demons were not allowed by Jesus to get what they wanted for long. This is also the only exorcism story that ends in the destruction of people’s livelihood, and seems out of character with the other exorcisms Jesus performs (Twelftree 1993:75). But says Twelftree (1999:287), “we may have only a few of the exorcism stories that were once related to Jesus.” Although the demons are in full control of their victims, the demons can neither escape nor resist Jesus. Jesus, merely by his presence, accomplishes to do what the shackles and chains could not do. The story ends with the crowd being “afraid” or “amazed” at the exorcism that Jesus has performed and the crowd asks Jesus to leave. Noland (1989:404-405) is of the opinion that this exorcism itself has gone through some changes, because of its unusual features. It has been argued that perhaps the early Christian community may have exaggerated some sections (Page 1995:147).

The exorcism of the epileptic¹⁵ boy (Mt 17:14-21// Mk 9:14-29// Lk 9:37-43) takes place after the transfiguration of Jesus. Jesus is approached by the boy’s father, who asks Jesus to help his possessed son. The father had asked the disciples for help but they had been unsuccessful in healing the boy. Jesus takes over the

¹³ According to Craffert (1999:92) “demon possession is used as an explanation for ‘common’ illnesses but can itself be an identifiable illness in that culture.”

¹⁴ Legion “is derived from the Latin *legio*, the designation of the largest unit in the Roman army (between 4200 and 6000 men, and a small contingent cavalry)” (Betz 1999:507).

exorcism, issuing a “twofold command to the demon to come out and never enter the boy again” (Thomas 2002:155). The exorcism is successful.

The episode of the woman whose daughter is possessed¹⁶ (Mt 15:21-28// Mk 7:24-30) whom Matthew 15:22 identifies as Canaanite and Mark 7:26¹⁷ identifies as a Greek Syro-Phoenician goes to Jesus and asks him to help her with her daughter who has been possessed by a demon. Jesus tests the woman’s faith and in humility she not only passes the test in flying colours but is also praised by Jesus for her faith. Jesus tells the woman her daughter is healed. “This is the first time that faith is connected to deliverance from possession, and faith, it should be noted, is not exhibited by the victim of the possession” (Page 1995:158).

A not so prominent exorcism is Mark 8:31-33 where Jesus “rebukes” Peter for his disapproval of Jesus’ teaching that the Son of Man would soon be killed. Page (1995:123) explains it as follows: “Presumably, the motivation for what he said was laudable – he did not want to see his master suffer. But Peter had not yet learned that this was a divine necessity, and what he said constituted a temptation to Jesus to reject the hard path of obedience for an easier route.” In saying: “Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of things of God, but the things of men”, Jesus is performing an exorcism (Kotansky 2000:272).

¹⁵ There appears to be a dispute as to whether the boy was an epileptic or if he was actually possessed by a an unclean spirit. For a discussion on the boy being an epileptic see Wilkinson 1998:121-130. For a discussion on the boy being possessed see Boyd 1997:196-200.

¹⁶ In Wilkinson’s (1998:72) opinion there is no evidence to suggest that the girl suffered from epilepsy or idiocy.

¹⁷ The two accounts are essentially the same, but Matthew includes different details. It is assumed that Matthew used Mark and then supplemented it with another source (Page 1995:157, cf Russell 1978:263-282).

Jesus himself is accused of being possessed by Beelzebul¹⁸, who is the leader of the demons. This controversial story is recorded in Matthew 12:22-3// Mark 3:22-30// Luke 11:14-26. After exorcising a demon-possessed man, Jesus is accused by the people (Lk 11:14-26), the Pharisees (Mt 12:22-32), and the teachers of the Law (Mk 3:22-30) of doing exorcisms by the power of Beelzebul. Jesus explains to his accusers that if he was indeed possessed by Satan, it would not be to his advantage to cast out demons (Mk 3:24, Lk 11:17-18, Mt 12:25-26). Jesus then tells his accusers that the Holy Spirit authorizes his exorcisms. It is therefore blasphemous to the Holy Spirit to accuse Jesus of being possessed by Satan. Twelftree (1999:127) points out that Matthew acknowledges that Jesus was not the only successful exorcist¹⁹ (cf Sanders & Davies 1990:163; Emmerich 2000:268). In this context says Twelftree “these exorcists would be the disciples or pupils of the Pharisees, making the accusation of the Pharisees doubly difficult, if not hypocritical, to maintain.”

Those who were demonically possessed either sought Jesus or were brought to him. He did not seek them out himself (e.g. Mt 9:32-34; Mk 9:14-29). The demons usually recognized Jesus for who he was, and left in fear of him. Also, Jesus does not call on God the Father to exorcise demons. But the apostles through to the modern day clergy can only do an exorcism by evoking the name of Jesus Christ (Page 1995:178). Jesus gave his apostles the authority to cast out demons (Mk 6:7-13; Lk 9:1-6; Mt 10:1-42), so as to help those who were plagued by demons. Page (1995:179) describes the exorcism of Jesus and his followers as follows: “Through seeing the agents of Satan defeated, believers are assured that one day he and his subordinates will be vanquished completely and

¹⁸ Beelzebul was believed to be the leader of the demons, in other words Satan. Beelzebul is a “corruption of the word ‘Baal-Zebu’ and may refer to the god of Ekron (2Kgs 1:2f)” (Browning 1996:39).

¹⁹ See Craffert (1999:79-87) for examples of other Jewish and Greco-Roman exorcists.

their pernicious influence will be eradicated forever.” Twelftree (1999:98) describes the exorcisms of Jesus and his followers as follows: “From one perspective – the most obvious one – the exorcisms are the freeing and healing of sick people. From another perspective they are the destruction and plundering of Satan’s kingdom in order that the kingdom of God can be realized (Mk 3:27).”

3.3.2 Satan in the lives of Jesus and the Christians

Even during Christ’s Passion, Satan is present. Satan is alluded to in Matthew and Mark, but is more prominent in Luke and John. It starts with Peter, who inadvertently becomes Satan’s spokesperson by refusing to accept Jesus’ pending death, without knowing God’s will (Mt 19:21-23// Mk 8:31-38). During the Last Supper (Lk 22:14-38) the apostles fight amongst one another as to who will have the best place in heaven. Jesus turns to Peter says: “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Lk 22:31). Page (1995:123) argues that “Peter is represented here, not as Satan’s mouthpiece, but as the object of Satanic attack.” Luke 22:3 and John 13:27 directly attribute Judas’s²⁰ betrayal of Jesus to Satan, who possesses Judas.

In Acts, Satan makes four appearances (5:3; 10:38; 13:10; 26:18). But it is the first encounter that is the most interesting as Satan causes the first serious disruption within the Christian community. “This is consistent with the general teaching of the New Testament, in which Christians are frequently warned that they should be on guard against the devil’s schemes” (Page 1995:132). Ananias and Sapphira not only try to deceive the apostles, but above all God. Satan does not get away with his deception. But say’s Twelftree’s (1999:177-178):

²⁰ Klassens (1996:203) suggests that Judas did “his God-given duty and contributed to the realization of Jesus’ mission by being handed over.” The Gnostic text, the Gospel of Judas, states that Jesus asked Judas to hand him over to the authorities.

However, Luke did not see Jesus' exorcisms as the final defeat of Satan. A glance across Luke and Acts makes this clear. At the end of Jesus' healing ministry, Satan is active and said to enter into Judas (Lk 22:31) as well as demand to have Simon (22:31). In the portrayal of the post-Easter situation Luke says that Satan had filled Ananias' heart (Acts5:3)... And the material related to exorcism in Acts confirms the general perspective of the Luke-Acts corpus that Satan was not finally defeated in Jesus' ministry.

Satan is not mentioned in Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, Titus, Philemon, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John. Satan does however make a frequent appearance in the rest of the New Testament. He is either trying to cause havoc in believers' lives or making sure that unbelievers remain oblivious to the apostles teachings (2 Cor 4:4). Paul's writings are full of warnings to Christians on how to protect themselves from Satan's attacks (example Eph 6:12; 1 Cor 7:5).

The Book of Revelations mentions Satan more times than any other book in the Bible. This is the final battle between God and Satan. And Satan, along with his entourage, finally receive their long deserved punishment. "And the devil, who deceived them was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rv 20:7-10). In Green's (1981:218) opinion Satan, the beast and the false prophet will be annihilated and will not be left in eternal torment. While in Walvoord's (1989:304) opinion Satan, the beast and the false prophet will not be annihilated, but will instead exist in eternal torment. "The crucial thing to observe about the last reference to Satan in the Bible is that he will not triumph. His doom is assured" (Page 1995:220).

3.3.3 Summary

In the New Testament God is no longer in control of Satan. Satan now has his own entourage of demons under his command, with his own agenda to fulfil. Satan is the complete opposite of God, and is always in competition with God, hoping to sway God's people to his evil ways. Satan is a created being, who will get what is due to him at the end.

3.4 Contemporary theories of Satan

Since the Enlightenment, belief in the supernatural is considered primitive, having no place in a world where it is believed that most things can be solved and explained scientifically (Collins 1976:237; cf Sanders & Davies 1990:163-173; Page 1995:267). "Does the Devil get his due? The mainstream of Christian theologians have answered that question in the negative just as they have rejected absolute dualism. Scriptures and human experience, they have said, require us to view evil with utmost seriousness but at the same time not to accord it the status of an eternal principle equal with God" (Hinson 1992:479). Yet there remains a mixed view on the existence of Satan. Here are a few examples:

New Testament scholar, R Bultmann ([1966] 1969:247-261) shows how the "mythological" language in the New Testament is used to explain certain human conditions that are now medically explained. This, says Bultman was perfectly justifiable in biblical times, but needs to be re-interpreted and understood in a contemporary world (see Van der Loos 1968:33-34).

Founder of Protestant neo-orthodoxy Karl Barth (1886-1968) believed that certain areas were left uncreated by God. These areas are called "nothingness", lacking true being. But "nothingness" exists, as it can arise on its own. The Devil arose from "nothingness" and therefore is not a creation of God, although the

Devil exists in God's creation. The Devil has no true being, opposing true being, aiming to destroy it. God may allow the Devil some power, but also uses creation to stop the Devil (Barth 1939-1967:Vol13).

Latter day scholars have the following understanding of Satan and evil:

- Jim Garrison²¹ uses Hiroshima as a symbol of evil. He describes God as a “bipolar” God who “creates real evil” and “creates real good”. God is both good and evil (Garrison 1982:173-174).
- Petru Dumitriu (1982:58-61) argues that Satan is a much needed symbol of evil, regardless of whether he operates independently of God or not. Radical evil is as immense as God, a God who can be full of love, beauty and joy, a God who can tolerate all human suffering. Humans deny the existence of Satan explains Dumitriu “ it is a refusal of the very notion of guilty intent, of culpability, of sin” (Kirkup 1982:59). Of all God's creatures, human beings are the only ones who enjoy inflicting pain on one another.
- Glenn Hinson (1992:484-486) believes that ultimately only God knows whether an actual Satan and demons exist. Hinson explains that there is a “certain mystery about evil” (Hinson 1992:486). He goes on to say that it is difficult to just attribute all evil to a satanical scapegoat for all human evil. Hinson struggles to understand why God would allow Satan and his demons to cause so much horror in the world “We would still have to explain why God would allow them to do evil of such magnitude, however, just as we would, why God would allow human beings to defy the divine purpose” (Hinson 1992:486).

²¹ Jim Garrison holds a Ph.D. in Philosophical Theology from Cambridge University.

Jeffrey Burton Russell²² (1981:220-222) explains, that in his opinion, there are seven reasons why those in the West objects to believing in Satan. These reasons are as follows:

1. the belief that scientific knowledge is the only true knowledge. It is believed that science can prove or disprove theories conclusively
2. it is considered primitive to believe in the supernatural and therefore Satan
3. all religions, and not only Christianity have explanations for evil that are not necessarily attributed to one evil being. This, says Russell (1981:221), causes theological objections as it can be said that evil can be explained without involving Satan.
4. the inconsistent belief in Satan of main-line Christian churches
5. the inconsistent mention of Satan in the Scriptures
6. the inconsistent experience of Satan in daily life
7. The inconsistency of diabolology²³

3.4.1 Summary

The evil that has been suffered by humanity and that humanity still suffers on a daily basis needs explanation. Theologians struggle with whom to blame for such

²² Jeffrey Burton Russell is a Professor of History, Emeritus, at the University of California, Santa Barbra.

²³ Diabolology is the "doctrine concerning the Devil or devil, diabolic lore" (Barnhart & Barnhart 1983:576)

extreme evil: human beings themselves, Satan, God. It would be considered “primitive” to say that an actual satanic being with an entourage of angels exists who causes such evil, so theologians look for alternative answers. This has resulted in many scholars’ in the West to have different and abstract theories of Satan’s symbolic role. From a sociological perspective this means that Westerners are conditioned to believe in Satan as a concept rather than a being with supernatural powers. As was illustrated in chapter 2 Westerners, who live in individualistic cultures look to psychology to explain human behaviour. This means that people in the West would interpret what some cultures would perceive as being caused by the demonic as a need for psychological therapy. Thus, some Westerners blame extreme evil on the human beings themselves and by default exclude the concept of Satan as a being with supernatural powers.

Chapter 4

The demonic from a Greek Orthodox world-view

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the demonic will be discussed from a Greek Orthodox perspective. One of the most prominent phenomena that exist to date within this culture is the belief in the evil eye. John Elliott²⁴ has extensively studied this phenomenon for many years on a cross-cultural basis. This study will explore his theory on the evil eye, and then his theory will be applied to the pervasive belief of African witchcraft.

The Greek Orthodox world-view of Satan is that of a being created by God as an angel. Father Alexander Schmemmann (1921-1983)²⁵, describes Satan as follows: “He is so to speak, perfect enough, wise enough, powerful enough, one can almost say divine enough, to know God and not to surrender to Him - to know Him and yet to opt against Him, to desire freedom from Him” (Schmemmann 1974: 23). Satan and other angels chose to oppose God, then “fell from that divinely given rank and glory to become the perversion of angelic nature that was understood to constitute a demonic being” (Greenfield 1988:8). Therefore Satan and the demons were not created evil, but chose to be thus. In St Chrysostom’s (in Schaff 1975:189) words: “Let the Devil be allowed to be exceedingly wicked, not by nature, but by choice and convictions.” Satan is a liar who with the demons seeks to destroy all that is good. Saint Antony the Great (in Quasten & Plumpe 1950:38-39) explains how Satan and the demons are “envious of us

²⁴ John Elliott is Emeritus Professor of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of San Francisco.

²⁵ Father Alexander Shmemann was a prominent 20th century Orthodox Christian priest, theologian and writer. He was the dean of St Vladimir Seminar in New York till his death in 1983.

Christians, they leave nothing undone to hinder us from entering Heaven: they do not want us to mount to the place from which they have fallen”.

There are accounts, both past and present, of people who have been afflicted by demonic possession (see Cunningham 2002:149-150; Papademetriou 1974:66-72). Another phenomenon, which is recognized by the Church, is that of the evil eye and its connection to demonic influence.

The Greek Orthodox Church recognizes Satan as a real being who is experienced, “or rather, we know about it [evil] only through our own experience of evil” (Schmemmann 1974:23). It is not a matter of theorizing about Satan, it is rather a matter of acknowledging Satan and fighting Satan. In Schmemmann’s (1974:23) words: “If there is one thing we learn from spiritual experience, it is that evil is not to be ‘explained’ but faced and fought.” Bishop Kalistos Ware (1996:57-58) explains: “For us, at this present stage in our earthly existence, Satan is the enemy; but Satan has also a direct relationship with God, of which we know nothing at all and about which it is not wise to speculate. Let us mind our own business.”

The Lords prayer (Mt 6:9-13) is an example of the Greek Orthodox Church recognizing Satan as a being. In English the prayer ending is translated to: “but deliver us from evil”(Mt 6:13). But when the same line is directly translated from the Greek it reads as follows: “but deliver us from the evil one.” Therefore the “evil one” is a being that we need to be protected from, instead of just random evil that may befall us.

In the Greek Orthodox tradition the fight with Satan and the demons begins with the baptismal rite, exorcising any demonic force that may be present before the commencement of the baptism. This rite will be discussed later.

4.2 Explanation of Terms

What follows is an explanation of relevant terms from the Greek Orthodox and Mediterranean world. A brief definition of the relevant terms are given:

4.1.1 Amulet

A small object, that has a carved /painted image on it, that is worn as a protection against evil (Barnhart & Barnhart 1983:72).

4.1.2 Evil Eye (Baskania)

Baskania means to “kill with the eye” (Papademetriou 1974:49). “Drawing a stemma of the word-cluster bask-, we find that the nebula of meaning has witchcraft as its center” (Duncan & Derret 1995). The Greek Orthodox Church recognizes that there are people who through jealousy and/or envy can bring harm upon other people just by looking at them. Therefore prayers are included in the Euchologion (see 4.1.3) for exorcising the evil eye (Papademetriou 1974:49-51).

4.1.3 Euchologion (Orthodox Book of Divine Offices)

These are the texts needed by Orthodox clergy to perform the liturgy, sacraments, prayers etc. The Greek Orthodox books of order are divided into two volumes. These are known as the Large Euchologion, the full series of rites, including those that are performed by bishops, such as ordinations, and the Small

Euchologion which is used by the priest and includes only the rites he uses for his pastoral duties (Parry, Melling, Brady, Griffith & Healey 1999:191).

4.1.4 Exorcism

The act of driving out the devil and or his demons from a person, building or area, in the name of Christ. Exorcism is performed with: holy water, oil, a cross, by making the sign of the cross, by the relics of saints and icons. Every baptism is preceded by an exorcism (see Papademetriou 1975:43-51; Kazhdan 1991:771).

4.1.5 Possession

When a person is indwelt by Satan/his demons, which occupy his/her body and mind (see Parker & Parker 1990:201).

4.3 Jesus and the evil eye

According to the Gospels of Matthew (6:22-23; 20:15), Luke (11:34-36) and Mark (7:21-23), Jesus speaks of the evil eye. The evil eye was part of Jesus' culture and tradition (see Elliot 1992:52).

In Matthew (6:19-24), in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' teaching concerns the anxieties people experience when they want more material possessions. Jesus explains that it is better to attach oneself to heavenly treasures, rather than to material ones. This anxiety to gain more material possessions may make people envious of others' possessions, leading them to have an evil eye, darkening their bodies and souls. This also makes the person mean, lacking in generosity, hoarding all their earthly goods (see Allen; Sparks; Najim & Stylianopoulos 1997:20; Duncan & Derrett 1995:68). In Elliott's (1994:80) opinion: "It entails a subtle but clear call for a moral integrity and generosity and a warning against the

vice of envy and the beginning of one's substance to those in need. It is specifically Jewish coloration lies in the association of the Evil Eye with a moral disposition and behaviour which is inconsistent with the will of God." Similarly, in Luke 11:33-36 Jesus speaks of protecting your body from being filled by darkness by making sure that your eyes are full of light.

In Matthew (20:1-16) Jesus tells the parable of the labourers. An employer has hired labourers at various stages of the day. This results in some labourers having worked far fewer hours than those that started first thing in the morning. Therefore the labourers who worked a full day are very upset and question their employer when he pays them all the same wage. To this he answers: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?" Jesus' lesson here is that it does not matter to God how long a person serves Him, but that he/she does. The Kingdom of Heaven is not only reserved for those that have always served God. But those who begrudge the late comers with their evil eye may find this to be self-defeating. A person should commit himself or herself to God without judging other people's commitment to God (Duncan & Derrett 1995:65-72). In Elliott's (1992:62) opinion: "The malignant Evil Eye and the social destructive force of its envy source serves here as a negative foil for affirming the unlimited nature of divine compassion, Jesus' solidarity with the poor and undeserving, the importance of communal sharing and social cohesion, and a calculus according to which the last shall be first and the first last."

In Mark 7 (1-23) Jesus is questioned by the Pharisees about some of his disciples not holding the Jewish tradition of washing their hands and eating utensils before they eat. Jesus then explains to the Pharisees that it is more important to be spiritually clean, rather than to be physically clean. For it is from

within we defile our hearts. “The concept of the Evil Eye in this case plays only a brief illustrative role in a list of vices linked to the internal disposition of the heart” (Elliott 1988:60).

4.4 The Evil Eye and John Elliott’s Theory

John Elliott, states that the pervasive belief of the evil eye has existed from ancient to modern times because of the following circumstances:

- economic environment
- social environment
- ecological environment

Elliott (1990:263; 1991:147) explains how the phenomenon of the evil eye has been studied extensively by anthropologists (see Forster 1972:165-202; Russell 1982:539-48), historians (see Bernidaki-Aldous 1988:39-48) and folklorists (see Lykiaropoulos 1981:221-230; Hardie 1981:107-103), but has hardly been touched on by biblical exegetes and theologians. This study will explore his theory on the evil eye.

Elliott focuses on the salient features of the evil eye and the cross-cultural environment in which it flourished and regulated people’s social interactions with one another in biblical communities. The evil eye is an ancient and far-reaching phenomenon that exists in the Near East, and the Mediterranean regions. “The evidence at hand leads one to think that the evil eye is probably one of the oldest continuous religious constructs in the Mediterranean basin” (Moss & Cappannari 1976:12). Today this belief still strongly influences Judaism, Muslim and Christian communities (Elliot 1992:53). This belief has been traced to sixty-seven cultures and has the same basic belief cross-culturally.

4.4.1 The basic belief

It is believed that there are people, animals, demons or gods who have the power to cause harm to people, of whom they are envious or jealous, just by looking at them (cf Nicholson 1999:18). People may become ill, have accidents, misfortunes, or even die. Those who possess the evil eye may cause harm to others knowingly or unknowingly. Some people are not aware that they have the ability to harm another with an envious glance.

The eye is believed to be the window to the soul, physically exposing a person's inner being. It is believed that it is through this window that evil spirits/demons enter the body, empowering the jealous or envious person to cause harm upon others (Moss & Cappannari 1976:2). An evil eye was associated to envy, greed, stinginess and not wanting to share one's possessions with those in need. In other words an evil eye exposed "a heart that was hardened and a hand that was shut to a neighbour in need" (Elliott 1991:149). Socially this meant that the evil eye was very prominent amongst the "have" and the "have-nots". In the two-class social system of antiquity it was the privileged who continuously worried about the evil eye. Any person who had a sudden turn of fortunes and became the object of envy also became vulnerable to the evil eye. The privileged were most susceptible to the evil eye, as were children, animals, work places and animals (Elliott 1990:264; 1991:149; 1992:53; cf Dionisopoulos-Mass 1976:49). Those who were suspected of having the power of the evil eye were: neighbours, envious relatives, those with ocular impairments (e.g. the blind), those with strange ocular features (e.g. joined eyebrows), those with physical deformities (e.g. humpbacks), those with physical disabilities (e.g. epileptics), those who were socially displaced (e.g. widows), social deviants (e.g. those who lacked in generosity or virtue), strangers and enemies (Elliott 1992:53).

It was also of great importance that a person was not suspected by society of possessing the evil eye. This meant that a person had to go out of his or her way to be seen as generous, giving to those in need, without begrudging the gift he or she had given. It was thought best to avoid complementing people on their possessions. If a compliment was passed “words of praise or admiration are given or received with such accompanying phrases as ‘*Mashallah*’, ‘*Grazia a Di*’, ‘God be praised’, by which God is invoked as protector and ultimate source of blessing” (Elliott 1988:50).

Many methods and devices were used to ward off the evil eye. Precautions included, avoiding the direct stare of another person, the concealing of women, children, food, and prized possessions (Elliott 1988:47). It was thought best to deny any recent improvement in one’s financial status. Manual gestures such as a clenched fist and extended middle finger (*digitus infamus*) and spitting in the presence of those suspected of possessing the evil eye, especially in the presence of strangers, epileptics and the physically disabled were also used as means to ward off the evil eye. Personal protection included the wearing of protective amulets such as jewelry of blue “eyes”, phalluses and gestures; blue or red cloth; sacks filled with rue and garlic (cf Papanikolas 2002:29). Grotesque masks and huge statues of phalluses (cf Gravel 1995:65-74) protected public places and walls were inscribed with evil eye incantation. Elliott (1990:268) explains it as follows: “The underlying principle was that of homeopathic magic and *similia similibus*, the use of ‘like against like’.”

4.4.2 The ecological, cultural and social conditions

Anthropologists and historians have thoroughly researched and documented the phenomenon of the evil eye from a social, cultural and ecological perspective.

People in the Mediterranean world lived in a predictable ecological environment where resources were scarce (see Stegemann & Stegemann [1995] 1999:15-52). “The environment where evil eye belief and behaviour was pronounced was characterized by cultural complexity, peasant-urban economy, technological specialization including metal-working, grain agriculture, domesticated large animals, milking and dairying (Elliott 1992:55). Ancient societies were based on a two-class system, inhabited by landholders, bureaucrats, herders, agriculturalists and artisans (see Lenski et al [1970] 1995:217). People lived in constant social tension because an improvement in family financial status was usually at the expense of another family. This resulted in people feeling vulnerable and suspicious of their neighbours, family and friends. This kind of environment bred envy, which in turn led to the notion of the evil eye. No one wanted to be struck by the evil eye or be thought to possess it. Therefore people went out of their way to be generous with their possessions, avoided admiring other people’s possessions and concealed their own. The evil eye served “as an informal mechanism for regulating behaviour and social interaction” (Elliott 1992:147).

4.5 The Evil Eye in modern Greek society

In modern Greek society the evil eye is deeply rooted in its faith, culture and traditions. Most of what was summarized in Elliott’s theory is still prevalent in Mediterranean society today (Malina 1989:128). It is still believed that a person can be so envious of another, that he/she is able to cause them harm. People still down play such things as their wealth, possessions and intelligence. Children are still thought to be most susceptible and babies are often pinned with small iconic jewelry and amulets (cf Papanikolas 2002:29-53). A baby who is interrupted during breastfeeding is also believed to be able to cast the evil eye. Neighbours, friends and relatives are still suspected of possessing the evil eye, and people still go out of their way not to be suspected of it. If a person over

compliments another they may follow it by spitting on the person and saying “so I don’t put the evil eye on you.” The custom of spitting has now become an act of safeguarding loved ones from the evil eye (Elworthy 1958:412). The evil eye still exists among the “have” and “have nots”. It also includes the envy of beauty and happiness. If a person suddenly becomes afflicted with a headache, lethargy, nausea or dizziness they will immediately assume that someone put the “*mati*” (eye) on them.

In Greece a distinction is made between *matiazma* and *vascania*. *Matiasma* comes from the Greek word *mati*, which means eye and is unknowingly caused by most people at one time or another. *Vaskania*, which means to “kill with the eye”, is considered extremely harmful and can, in extreme cases even cause death. It is believed that a person who puts a *vaskania* on another person does so knowingly (Dionisopoulos-Mass 1976:51-52)²⁶.

The Greek Orthodox Church recognizes the evil eye, and that demonic forces may influence the ability of some people to cause other people malice, just by glancing at them. St Basil the Great wrote a homily on envy, explaining how envy is of the Devil, and how it is harmful to the person who is consumed by it, and to those whom he/she envies. In St Basil’s (in Wagner 1950:465) own words: “As rust wears away iron, so envy corrodes the soul it inhabits. More than this, it consumes the soul that gives it birth, like the vipers which are said to be born by eating their way through the womb that conceived them” (Haereses). St Basil goes on to explain how the envious person secretly enjoys seeing those that

²⁶ Greeks also distinguish between *koutsoboulia* (gossip) and *glossofeya* (devour with the tongue). *Koutsoboulia* has an important social function, and although not necessarily considered exactly true or good “reinforces norms of society” (Dionisopoulos-Mass 1976:58). *Glossofeya* is malicious and harmful gossip. It is done with the intention to ruin the reputation of another. “The victim may never have committed the act of which he is accused” (Dionisopolulos-Mass 1976:59).

he/she envies fall into misfortune. The envious person enjoys seeing the person he/she envies go from someone who is admired to someone whom is pitied. The envious person admires and praises the person he/she envied only after they have fallen into misfortune. "In a word, he [she] is an enemy of present good fortune but its friend when it is no longer possessed" (in Wagner 1950:465).

When members of the Church feel that the evil eye has been put on them the priest reads the prayers that have been included in the Euchologion to exorcise the evil eye from them. This practice is known as *xematiasma*.

The Greek Orthodox Church forbids its members to consult and make use of individuals who use magic rituals to get rid of the evil eye (Prokurate, Golitze & Peterson 1996:125; cf Papademetriou 1974:49-51; Dundes1984: 329). The Greek Orthodox Church does not recognize the wearing of amulets as a form of protection against the evil eye. But many members of the Greek Orthodox Church can be seen wearing these amulets (usually blue stones or small "eyes") in conjunction with their crosses²⁷, believing that prevention is better than cure. A person who believes that he or she may have had the evil eye put on them can recite the Lord's prayer until he or she feels better. Unbaptised children cannot wear a cross until the day of their baptism. This results in parents attaching a variety of charms on their infants to protect them from the evil eye (Dionisopoulos-Mass 1976:52). The Greek Orthodox Church recommends that small icons that have been blessed by the Church can be attached to the infant. The Greek Orthodox Church has a problem with magic rituals but people still make use of them. These rituals are passed from mother to daughter and vary

Glossofeya is usually done by a person who envies another person, and is therefore considered to be of the demonic.

²⁷ A cross that is made of wood from the tree of a monastery or convent are acceptable to the Greek Orthodox Church as protection from the evil eye (Dionisopoulos-Mass 1976:52)

from person to person depending on which village the family originated from. There are instances where the person doing these rituals are men. Anthropologist Margaret Hardie (1981:107-123) spent time in different Greek villages researching the evil eye and the rituals performed to get rid of it. The following two rituals were told to her by two old women:

From Kastoria

A person who feels that their child was cursed by the evil eye takes three nails, three live coals and three splinters from the door that the possessor of the evil eye has just left through and puts them in a shovel. The shovel is put in the fire and the child is told to lie on the floor. The shovel is then removed from the fire and a small amount of water is poured into it. The smoke resulting from this must envelop the child. If the nails in the shovel leap around it means that the child was cursed. The child is then given a sip of water from the shovel to remove the evil eye (Hardie 1981:115)

From Kastaradji:

To remove the evil eye from the victim the woman makes a cross over a dish of water. Into this she drops a live coal which sinks to the bottom taking with it the evil eye. The woman then makes the sign of the cross three times over the water. She then takes some dust from the coal, sprinkles salt on it and rubs the victim's forehead with this mixture. To completely banish the evil eye she concludes the ceremony by throwing three pinches of salt into the fire (Hardie 1981:115-116)

Anthropologist Regina Dionisopoulos-Mass (1976:45-46) did field work on the Greek island Nisi from 1970 to 1972 on the evil eye. She describes a cure for the evil eye as follows:

The curer takes nine or twelve cloves with heads. With the cloves in his right hand he makes a sign of the cross over the afflicted person three times. He then lights a candle and inserts a needle in the head of the first clove. While doing this he says: "if it is a woman who has cast the eye, then destroy her breasts. If it is a man who has cast his eye, then crush his genitals." He then inserts the clove in the flame of the candle. The clove ignites and while burning makes the sign of the cross over the afflicted person saying the following words: "Three saw you. Three bewitched you. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. From your mother you were born. By the Virgin and Christ you were baptized." This verse is said to call upon the Holy Trinity to help counteract the evil eye that may have been placed upon the afflicted person, and to also protect the person. When the clove has burned out it is put into cold water and the whole process is repeated with every clove until they are all finished. If the burning clove crackles from the heat, it is believed that the person was indeed cursed by the evil eye. If the clove does not crackle then the person was not cursed with the evil eye, and it may be recommended that he/she go see a doctor for their affliction.

Greek Orthodox priest, Father Lawdis (Papademetriou 1974:51) describes a ritual that was taught to him by his aunt:

To alleviate the victim of the evil eye she would prepare a vial of olive oil along with a glass of water. She would begin the ritual by dipping her finger in the oil and with it make the sign of the cross on the victims forehead, then let one drop of oil fall into the glass of water. This process is repeated another three times, on the chin and both cheeks. This results in four drops of oil in the water. If these four drops should join and they form an "ellipsoid shape of an eye" then the person is cursed. Prayers are then read after which the ritual is repeated. If the curse is gone the drops will not join.

In Modern Greek society the evil eye is still regarded as a serious threat that informally regulates behaviour and social interaction. People are suspicious of those who continuously complement them or point out their status in society. And they in turn do not want to be known as possessors of the evil eye. People want to be seen as generous often going out of their way to share their wealth with those who are less fortunate in the community.

4.6 Exorcism and the Greek Orthodox Church

An Orthodox Christian's first line of defense against the demonic is Baptism. Exorcism is practiced in the Sacrament²⁸ of Baptism when a chatechumen or baby is baptised, in case the chatechumen or baby have been demonically possessed or had the evil eye cast on them (Greenfield 1988:139; cf Papademetriou 1974:45). The baptismal rite begins with an exorcism, as the fight with Satan begins from the moment a person is marked with the sign of the Christ. The cross is breathed on the person by the priest three times, in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit (Papademetriou 1974:46; Schmemmann 1974:24). St. John Chrysostom placed great importance on exorcism as it strengthens the person in their conflict with Satan (Finn 1967:82).

The exorcism begins at the door of the church with the prayers of exorcism read first. The catechumen, or in the case of an infant, the godparent, is then asked to turn to the west and renounce Satan three times, and turn to the east and she/he is asked to unite her/himself with Christ. The exorcism is over and the Office of Baptism begins. The priest says a prayer over the water, making the sign of the

²⁸ Sacrament (mystery) is the "way in which God imparts Grace to His people" (Allen, Sparks, Najim & Stylianopoulos 1997:806). There are seven Sacraments namely: baptism, chrismation, the Holy Eucharist, confession, ordination, healing and unction (anointing of the sick with blessed oil),

cross over the water three times, invoking the Holy Spirit. Schmemmann (1974:39) explains how water has a three-dimensional meaning in the Greek Orthodox Church. Firstly, water symbolizes life, as without water nothing can exist. Secondly, water symbolizes destruction and death. “It is the mysterious depth which kills and annihilates, the dark habitation of the demonic powers, the very image of the irrational, uncontrollable, elemental in the world” (Schmemmann 1974:39). Thirdly, water symbolizes purification and renewal. The priest then makes the sign of the cross in the water by dropping olive oil in it. As with water, so to does oil have a three-dimensional meaning. Oil symbolizes: 1) healing; 2) light; 3) joy. The oil is known as the oil of gladness. This means that when the priest anoints the candidate with oil it symbolizes “life not as mere existence, but as fullness, joy and participation in that mysterious and ineffable essence of life which we feel from time to time in moments of happiness and exultation; life of which the Bible speaks when it calls life a gift of the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life: life as the ‘light of man’; life as not a synonym but as the content of existence; in short, life as participating in divine itself” (Schmemmann 1974:51-52). The priest anoints the candidate with the oil as follows:

Then the Person who is to be baptised is presented. The Priest taketh of the oil with the two fingers, and maketh the sign of the cross upon his [her] brow, his [her] breast, and between the shoulders, saying:

The servant of God, N., is anointed with the oil of gladness; (5) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

And he anoints his [her] breast and shoulders. On the breast, saying:

Unto the healing of soul and body.

On the ears.

Unto the hearing of faith

On the hands.

Thy hands have made and fashioned me.

On the feet.

That he may walk in the way of thy commandments.

(Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic
Church 1975:279-280)

When this is done the candidate is ready to be baptized. The priest then holds the candidate upright, looks to the east and immerses him/her in the water three times saying: "The servant of God, N., is baptized in the name of the Father, Amen. And of the Son, Amen. And of the Holy Spirit, Amen" (Hapgood 1975:280). "The three fold immersion becomes the adequate sign of participation in Christ's three day burial and resurrection" (Calivas 1984:37). The candidate is then dressed in a white garment, symbolizing the gifts of baptism. Once this is done the Office of Holy Chrismation follows. The priest says a prayer and anoints the candidate with the Holy Chrism. The Holy Chrism is a Sacrament whereby the candidate receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit which will strengthen his/her spiritual life, helping him/her in the fight against Satan (Hapgood 1974:603). "The gift of the Holy Spirit takes the neophyte beyond the restoration of the fallen nature." (Calivas 1984:38). After the Holy Chrism has been administered the candidate receives his/her first Holy Communion. After the age of seven,

confession is obligatory before Holy Communion can be given. The candidate also has his/her hair cut in the sign of the cross, symbolizing submission and servitude to God (Hapgood 1974:603). The candidate is then given a cross that was bought by the sponsor/godparent and blessed by the priest. The Baptism is thus concluded.

The Reverend George C Papademetriou(1974:72), pastor of SS Constantine and Helena, Greek Orthodox Church, Annapolis, Maryland explains that as a committed Christian a person should live a virtuous life, or in the case of a child, should be brought up in a virtuous manner. Prayer, fasting, confession and Holy Communion, should be a way of life, helping the person to live a life in communion with God, keeping them protected from the demonic. But human beings are fallible and the priests who are Christ's representatives, guide sinners to repentance and if need be exorcise evil in whatever form it comes. But before a person is exorcised medical professionals have to be consulted to rule out any psychological problems that may be rectified by medical professionals.

Christ is the supreme exorcist – “He who won victory over the power of the devil” (Papademetriou 1974:54). It is in His name that the priest is able to cast out demons and relieve the sufferer from the possession of evil. Prayers of exorcism are included in the Euchologion. There are three prayers written by Saint Basil the Great (300 – 379 AD), and four by Saint John Chrysostom (344 – 407 AD). These prayers are accompanied by the priest physically imposing a holy object on the sufferer such as a cross, icon or holy relic²⁹. The sign of the cross is physically drawn on the sufferer by the priest either using holy water or oil. The priest may also tell the sufferer to do a strict fast and pray after she/he has been cured from possession (see Greenfield 1988:144-147; Papademetriou 1974:54).

²⁹ Relic: “part of a person’s body or belonging kept as object of reverence” (Swannell 1986:460).

4.7 Summary

For the Greek people Satan and his demons are a reality. They encounter these supernatural entities in the form of the evil eye and on very rare occasions through demonic possession. The evil eye is intensely integrated into the faith, culture and traditions of the Greek people, who go out of their way to avoid having the evil eye put on them or their families. What is considered to be a silly superstition in the West is a reality that is much feared in Greece and in much of the Mediterranean. From a sociological perspective it can be said that the Greeks have been conditioned to believe that Satan is a being with supernatural powers. As was illustrated in chapter 2 collectivist societies, such as the Greek societies, explain things, such as bad luck, on external factors such as the evil eye, instead of thinking that it could just be a coincidental event. Thus, the Greeks believe that Satan is a real threat to their well being.

Chapter 5

The demonic from a black African world-view

5.1 Introduction

Witchcraft, demonic possession and exorcism have always been a reality within black African tradition and spirituality (see Kitshoff 1994:30; Pretorius, H L, Odendaal, A A, Robinson, P J, Van der Merwe, G 1996:122). “In the minds of many African people there is no doubt as to the reality of witchcraft...For many African people it is an existential reality” (Manala 2004:1503). Illnesses, misfortunes and disturbances are almost always attributed to evil spirits that have been visited upon the unfortunate person or family via a witch, wizard or sorcerer. It is believed that the illness may be cured, misfortunes reversed and disturbances can be cleared through exorcisms, rituals, medicine and ceremonies that are conducted and distributed by witchdoctors or prayer healer/prophets. In other words the equilibrium of the person, family or society has become unbalanced and needs to be restored (see Kitshoff 1994: 30; Ferdinando 1999:43). Once this restoration has occurred, then preventative measures need to be taken as protection, and if need be witchcraft may also be used as revenge against the person who is believed to have sent the evil spirits to the sufferer/sufferers. Therefore, in Africa witchcraft is practiced as a preventative and as a reversal of witchcraft (see Manala 2004:1503).

Many Western societies view witchcraft, demonic possession and exorcism as outdated superstitions that can be explained and may even be cured by the medical sciences (see Ferdinando 1999:70; Kitshoff 1994:32). When missionaries first came to Africa, they strongly disapproved of the witchcraft that was so intensely woven into African spirituality. This meant that black Africans that had

converted to Christianity did not feel free to approach their ministers about matters of demonic possession or exorcism. If they did very little or nothing would have been done about it (see Kitshoff 1994:32; Ejizu 1991:166). This left black Africans feeling split between two different worlds. Things began to change as the twentieth century dawned and African churches became independent of missionaries, leaving them free to incorporate exorcism and prayer-healing in their services (see Ejiza 1991:166; Oosthuizen 1992:54). AIC's³⁰ became a blend of Christianity and African traditional religions. Mercy Amba Oduyoye (2001:25-26), describes the phenomenon as follows:

African Religion belongs to the people – they are born into it, and to date not much has emerged that may be identified as a missionary impulse. On the other hand, some Africans have chosen to adapt other religions, mainly Christianity and Islam. Nevertheless, the cultural norms remain traditional – that is, for significant aspects of life, people follow what has been handed down by former generations, changing whatever is necessary in order to suit the changing circumstances.

5.2 Explanation of terms

A brief definition will be given of the relevant terms:

5.2.1 Exorcism

The act of driving out the devil/evil spirits from people, places or things in the name of God, by means of prayer or ceremonies (see Barnhart & Barnhart 1983:746; Browning 1996:128)

⁴ African independent churches/ African initiated churches/ African indigenous churches: these are African churches that have chosen to incorporate foreign religions (Christianity) with their own

5.2.2 Muti (medicine)

Muti is the medicine that is given to the victim by the witchdoctor for protection, healing and even revenge. “As assistance to victims, witchdoctors could also provide them with ‘muti’ that could be used in revenge (letswa) against evil people” (Van Wyk 2004:1218). It is believed that very strong medicine/magic is required to counteract the witchcraft used by a witch. It is also believed that certain parts of the human body, especially the sexual organs provide the most powerful ‘muti’ against witchcraft. “Such ‘muti’ does not only cure and protect, but can also harm and could even kill” (Van Wyk 2004:1218). Strong “muti” is made from body parts which are gotten from innocent victims, usually children, but adults can also be victims. Children are believed to have a lot of luck as they are too young to have used up their own luck. Witchdoctors do not commit these acts of violence, but hire others to do it. “Traditionally the victim must be alive when the body parts are removed as this increases the “power of the muti because the body parts then retain the person’s life essence” (Labuschagne 2004:193). Body parts that are used are normally the genitals, hands and hearts. Body parts are cooked down and incorporated with other ingredients that are either consumed or worn for luck and protection. These murders are known as ritual murders³¹ (Labuschagne 2004:192-193).

traditional religions forming a new religious system (see Phiri 2000:3-4).

³¹ This is a massive topic that has been studied by both anthropologists and criminologists. For an in depth look at this subject see Peltzer & Makgoshing (2001); Labuschagne (2004); Steyn (2005); Petrus (2006).

5.2.3 Prayer-healer/prophet

A person who is the agent of the Spirit of God, who through the Spirit can heal those that have become ill because of sin, the devil or demons (see Bate 1995:53; Oosthuizen 1992:15).

5.2.4 Possession

When a person is indwelt by the devil/evil spirits, occupying her/his body and mind (see Parker 1990:201).

5.2.5 Witchcraft

The use of magical powers, using spells, rituals and spirits to make unnatural things happen (cf Barnhart & Barnhart 1983:1252). This means that certain people called witches use these magical powers to intentionally cause harm, illness and misfortune to others (Wehmeier & Ashby 2000: 1371). It is also believed that some have these powers without being aware of them... “the supposed power of a person to harm others by occult or supernatural means, without necessarily being aware of it...” (Hayes 1995: 339-340).

5.2.6 Witch

A witch is a person who through the practice of witchcraft causes evil things like illness, misfortune and even death to occur to other people. Africans believe that there are two types of witches; night witches and day witches.

- **Night witches** are able to perform witchcraft by leaving their sleeping bodies and then cause harm to their victims

sleeping bodies by feeding off their souls (see Parrinder 1971:61; Ferdinando 1999:101). The Tsonga and the Venda are among those who believe that these witches are not aware of their powers, harming people unconsciously (Hammond-Took 1989:74). Night witches may also use animals such as dogs, cats, baboons, bird's etc (see Kgatla 2000:149-150), to either carry out their evil, or be their assistants when they go out to perform witchcraft (see Ferdinando 1999:99). In some communities it is believed that witchcraft is hereditary, being passed from mother to daughter or father to son. For example the Lovedu believe that witchcraft is passed to the child via the mothers milk, while the Shona believe that a person can become a witch if they become possessed by spirit (Ferdinando 1999:97). It is also believed that night witches can turn people into zombies³², whom they then use to work for them. "Some of these people are said to be seen in trains in industrial areas where they are said to work for the sustenance and livelihood of their witch master" (Van Wyk 2004:1211). Night witches are usually considered to be women (Krige & Krige 1991:74)

- A **day witch** is a person who learns the practice of witchcraft and then utilizes this knowledge to harm, cause misfortune and even kill their victims. Unlike night witches, day witches use medicine in their witchcraft (see Manala 2004:1494). The Sotho and the Tswana refer to a day witch as a

³² Zombie: "a dead person that has been made alive again by magic" (Wehmeier & Ashby 2000:1390).

sorcerer (see Hammond-Took 1993:169). To harm their victims a day witch apart from using “muti” may also use the victim’s footprints, urine or clippings from their hair and nails. Day witches are usually considered to be men (Kige & Krige 1991:74).

Black Africans are afraid of witches in both categories. “People who practice ‘boloji’ (witchcraft) are feared and hated by the community. Those who are accused of, or caught practicing witchcraft are either punished by gruesome death or they are forced to leave that community” (Ramashapa 1996:355).

5.2.7 Witchdoctor (traditional healer)

A witchdoctor is a person who is believed to have the ability to cure people of illnesses, expel evil spirits and expose witches to the community. They do this by using medicines, spells, spirits, and second vision that they see through their ancestral spirits. They also provide people with amulets and charms that they can use for protection from witchcraft and the reversal of curses. And if need be they put curses on their victims attackers (Manala 2004:1497; 1503). “In Africa the dividing line between good and bad, victim and aggressor, healer and murderer are clearly very narrow” (Van Wyk 2001:1218). People want amulets and herbal medicine that can provide a much stronger magic than the magic that has been sent to them by a witch (Mbiti 1985:197-198).

5.3 African witchcraft

Most black Africans live in constant fear of witches and their craft. “Witchcraft raises intense fear and revulsion because it destroys human life, human community and shatters dreams and visions of individuals and societies” (Manala 2004:1500). For many black Africans, and that includes many of those that are Christians, all evil is attributed to witches (see Douglas 1984:102). “They are not only antithetical to a successful and fully enhanced life here on earth, they pose the greatest threat to the attainment of ancestorhood, which is the burning desire of most traditional people” (Ejizu 1991:173). Repulsive acts such as cannibalism; necrophagy³³, bestiality and incest are believed to be practiced by witches. Witches perform these acts to enhance their mystical powers or when they are initiated as witches (see Ferdinando 1999:101). It is also believed that witches are jealous people by nature (Hammond-Took 1989:74), who will destroy crops, livestock and cause intense pain in those whom they consider more fortunate than themselves. “By indicating ‘jealousy’ as the most profound cause of ‘witchcraft’, Africans concentrate on one very important aspect of evil. By attributing it to jealousy, they stress the fact that most of the time witchcraft (as well as other acts of evil) is not the result of legitimate anger, but arises from the urge to harm people who have more than you, who are more successful than you are and who have better looks than you have” (Van Wyk 2004: 215-1216).

The people that are most in danger of being hurt by the witch are usually their close relatives, neighbours or friends. This creates a community whereby family, friends and neighbours will quickly accuse one another of witchcraft when there is misfortune in their lives. Jealousy and envy run rife in communities where “the good and desirable things are always in short supply. There are never enough

³³ Necrophagy is “the practice or habit of feeding on dead bodies or carrion” (Barnhart & Barnhart 1983:1388).

fine cattle, fertile plots or beautiful women to go round so that competition is endemic to the human condition” (Hammond-Took 1989:81). Therefore much time and emphasis is placed on “trying to procure relief or salvation” (Maimela 1985:68) from witches and witchcraft. Most importantly the community wants the witches who live amongst them to be identified. “When witches are identified the inexplicable could be explained” (Van Wyk 2004:1220). This means that one can then know from whom to protect themselves, on whom to take revenge and whom to chase out of the community. However the most popular method of doing away with those who are suspected of or are caught practicing witchcraft is by hunting them down and gruesomely killing them (Manala 2004:1501, cf Niehaus 2001:120,152,198). This culminates in the violent and notorious witch hunts and witch killings, that have been the result of many deaths, in particular those of elderly women. Elderly women are suspected of doing witchcraft, as it is believed that they stay young by feeding on their victims souls (van Wyk 2004:1202-1204; cf Ferdinando 1999:98). Most people support witch hunts as they feel that authorities are more concerned for the witch than they are of witchcraft victims (Peltzer & Makgoshing 2001:100).

Masango (2004:1003) understands violence in South Africa as follows: “Further violence and riots in some instances (especially in South Africa) become the sheer expression of an overwhelming sense of frustration, desperation and hopelessness.” Frustration, desperation and hopelessness can also be applied to the violence of witchcraft as people react in the same manner in which they have themselves been harmed.

5.4 Demonic possession and exorcism

Many black Africans believe that both mental and physical illnesses can be caused by personal sin, moral failure, the devil, demons/evil spirits (usually sent

by witches), witchcraft, a specific ancestor who has become upset with her/him or a witch or witchdoctor may send their ancestral spirits to the victim. (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005:177; cf Bate 1995:53; Maboea 1994:125; Oosthuizen 1992:119, 126). These alien spirits invade the victim causing them to suffer illnesses and terrible misfortune, have nightmares and behave unnaturally (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005:167; cf Oosthuizen 1992:126). It is believed that the demon/evil spirit must not only be expelled from the victim, but also from the community in which the victim lives (Platvoet, 2000:84). Therefore when western medicine brings no relief or when black Africans feel their illnesses are rooted in the supernatural they turn to their local witchdoctor or prayer healer/prophet for solutions (Parker & Parker 1990:99). Main line churches have sometimes condemned exorcism as the solution to what could be easily solved by a medical doctor or psychologist, but others (Igenzoza 1985:179) feel that exorcism has a better healing effect on patients/victims.

- **Exorcisms conducted by a witchdoctor**

The witchdoctor first identifies and diagnosis the cause of the illness by using:

- twigs or bones as divining dice (Hammond-Took 1989:114);
- extra sight (this is when they are in contact with their ancestral spirits) (see Blier 1991:77). Ancestral spirits play a great role in helping the witchdoctor to combat the victims ailments (Hammond-Took 1989:103-125).

The witchdoctor then goes about healing the victim through her/his ancestor and or makes up “muti” for the victim to take that will expel the demon/evil spirits. Sometimes the “muti” is grounded into a fine powder/snuff and given to the victim who has to inhale it so that she/he can sneeze out the demon/evil spirit. The witchdoctor can also cause a person to become possessed in revenge of her/his patient (see Oosthuizen 1992:131).

- **Exorcism conducted by a prayer healer/prophet**

The prayer healer/prophet makes her/his diagnosis through dreams or visions that she/he sees through the power of the Holy Spirit. With the help of the Holy Spirit and its advice the prayer healer/prophet will then proceed to exorcise the person by using one or more of the following main rituals:

- Hitting the victim with a staff or by hand on the shoulders and arm in order to force the demon/evil spirit out. This is seen as hitting the demon/evil spirit and not the victim (Oosthuizen 1992:125).
- Baptism, especially in the sea, as the force of the Holy Spirit is believed to drive out the demon/evil spirit (Kitshoff 1994:39-40).
- Water may be mixed with ash, salt, lime and other ingredients that are then blessed and given to the victim as an emetic that she/he then vomits and thus expels the demon/evil spirit (Oosthuizen 1992:46).
- The prayer healer/prophet also immerses herself/himself into the sea to empower him/herself or to cleans him/herself in case they have become contaminated with the victims departing demon/evil spirit (Oosthuizen 1992:115).

5.5 A case study: The evil eye in Ethiopia

The Amhara of Ethiopia believe that there are people, who are not of their community, who have the evil eye. These people are known as the *Buda*, or evil eye people. The Amhara people are wealthy people, most of them belonging to established farming communities. The *Buda*, on the other hand, are considered to be of a lower status, usually blacksmiths or artisans by trade (Finneran 2003:427; cf Reminick 1977:220). This creates a unity in the community, as accusation of all evil is thrust onto strangers who are of different ethnic origin and are believed to socially envy the Amhara (cf Ferdinando 1999:120). “So economic

criteria rather than any other factors inform this snobbery, hate and distrust, and ultimately lead on in a more extreme form to the belief that such groups or castes possess the ability to cast malevolent spells via the evil eye” (Finneran 2003:429). People, who do not belong to the Amhara community, have a fear of being seen as *Buda*’s and go out of their way not to be seen as such. The Amhara people fear that the *Buda* will “eat” them with the eye, sometimes feeling the attack immediately, while at other times the attack takes place hours or days later. Beautiful adults and children, as well as the wealthy are most at risk at being “eaten” by the evil eye. The Amhara don’t like to mention the word *Buda*, especially so at night when it is believed that the *Buda* changes into a hyena to conduct the “eating”. It is also believed that a *Buda* who takes on an unsuspecting Amhara lover will weaken the Amhara’s body. When the couple breaks up usually the Amhara person becomes severely ill, eventually dying. It is believed that the *Buda* then steals the corps of the Amhara person, raising it from the dead. The corps serves the *Buda* for seven years until it disintegrates into ashes (Reminick 1976:90).

Illness, misfortune, accidents, sick livestock are all believed to be caused by the *Buda* (Finneran 2003:428). To protect their children from the *Buda*, the Amhara people shave their children’s heads (as it is believed that the *Buda* can cause lice), and call them by the opposite sex so as to confuse the *Buda*. If an Amhara person fears that their child has been “eaten” by the evil eye, the person may spit in the child’s face for temporary protection. An Amhara person who believes that they are in danger of being eaten, are usually advised by the *Dadtaras* (deacon of local church) to crawl on their hands and knees in the church for seven days. When an Amhara person is ill or has had some misfortune befall them and they fear it is because of the evil eye, they will do one of the following things:

- the Amhara may go to their *Dabtaras* , who performs a religious rite with holy water and prayer and provides a silver amulet. The *Dabtaras* are considered to be white magicians (Finneran 2003:430).
- the Amhara may go to a wizard who is believed to be in communication with the Devil, and can cure the victim and also tell the family who the *Buda* is (Reminick 1976:93).
- the Amhara may go to an elder member of the family who performs a rite with dung and smoke, exorcising the victim of the evil eye. This method may also lead to the identification of the attacker (Reminick 1976:93).
- if the victim suddenly begins to cry, it is believed that the *Buda* is nearby. The relatives of the victim go searching for the *Buda* in the vicinity of the area. If they find a person that they suspect may be a *Buda*, he/she is then taken to the bedside of the victim. The *Buda* is then made to spit and walk on the victim. If the victim is cured the *Buda* is left to go, if however the victim dies the *Buda* may be put to death (Reminick 1976:93-94)

5.6. Summary

Witchcraft, demonic possession and exorcism are a reality that threatens the lives of black Africans on a daily basis. It is part of their culture, tradition and spirituality. Black Africans are always on their guard, constantly fearing that they may become bewitched. They often spend a lot of money at the local witchdoctors buying protective “muti” and amulets. When illness or misfortune does befall them they have no doubt that it is witchcraft that is causing this imbalance in their lives. To restore the equilibrium in their lives a witchdoctor or

prayer healer/prophet is consulted so that appropriate action can be taken. Witches are loathed and the community will do anything to get rid of their threat, including killing them in gruesome ways.

From a Western perspective witchcraft, demonic possession and exorcism are outdated and superstitious beliefs. Illnesses can be treated by medical doctors and psychologists, while misfortunes afflict innocent people everyday. But often medical doctors and psychologists seem to struggle to cure black African patients who seem to only find relief once they have been exorcised.

From a sociological perspective it can be said that Africans have been socially conditioned to believe in witchcraft. As was seen in chapter 2 collectivist societies such as those found in Africa believe that illnesses and misfortune are caused by external factors. These external factors are witchcraft .

Chapter 6

The phenomenon of the demonic belief in African faith explained through the lense of the demonic belief in the Greek Orthodox faith

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the phenomenon of the demonic belief in Africa, through the lense of the Greek Orthodox view on the demonic. Both these cultures still have a firm belief in the demonic, and a belief in the destructive effects the demonic has on people's lives. By applying John Elliott's theory of the evil eye that persists in the Mediterranean world (focusing on the evil eye in Greece) to African witchcraft, similarities may be found as to why such so-called superstitions still exist in these societies. But the word "superstition" is used here cautiously as it may be deemed ethnocentric by those who live in fear of such so-called superstitions. Superstition is defined as "an unreasoning fear of what is unknown, mysterious or imaginary, especially in connection with religion" (Barnhart & Barnhart 1983:2105). As was seen in chapters 4 and 5 neither the Greeks or the Africans consider their beliefs of evil to be "imaginary" or "unreasonable". Both, the evil eye in the Mediterranean world, and witchcraft in Africa have persisted for centuries, regardless of modern medicine and Christianity in the Western world, claiming that all "superstitions" have explanations. These superstitions do have explanations in the environments in which they exist. But scholars' in the West see these explanations as superstitions within superstitions.

In chapter 2 the six most important factors that contribute to cross-cultural ethnocentrism were discussed. It is important that these six factors are kept in mind, so that the same ethnocentric mistakes of the past are not repeated here. The explanation of evil in this chapter is not a criticism of how Africans deal with

witchcraft. But rather, it is an explanation of the phenomenon of witchcraft that is so intensely woven into the African traditions, faith and culture.

Both the African culture and the Greek culture are collectivist cultures. This means that people from both these cultures identify themselves as part of their families and communities. As was explained in chapter 2 collectivist cultures contribute human behaviour to external causes. Therefore people that are part of collectivist cultures contribute the evil that human beings do to one another to supernatural forces. And also blame the people nearest to them of manipulating supernatural forces for doing evil to them. What conditions in these societies allow for the evil eye and witchcraft to exist?

According to John Elliot, the evil eye has existed in the Mediterranean world, from ancient to modern times, because of the *ecological, cultural and social* conditions that are present in evil eye societies. Is it then possible that witchcraft may have existed, and still exists in Africa due to similar conditions?

6.2 Social, cultural and ecological conditions

6.2.1 Social conditions

The evil eye is rooted in the faith, *culture* and traditions of Greece, so much so, that immigrants took this belief with them to whatever country they settled in and have passed this belief down the generations. This means that the new generations hold fast onto the belief of the evil eye, even though they live in Western or multiracial/multicultural countries. In a modern era where many ailments can be explained by medicine and where bad luck is seen as just that in the West, the belief of the evil eye remains integrated in the Greek people's beliefs.

The evil eye is associated with envy, jealousy, greed and stinginess. It is believed that to be able to harm someone with just a glance, there has to be a demonic influence present. The evil eye is therefore seen as part of the demonic, which is both, feared and abhorred. The evil eye has *social* implications, as no one wants to be accused of possessing the evil eye or to have the evil eye put on themselves, their families or their livelihood. Therefore people downplay what they have so as not to tempt the evil eye to cause them harm. The evil eye controls *social* behaviour to a great extent, by making people go out of their way to appear generous, while making it clear that they do not intend the evil eye if they happen to compliment a person. This in turn makes people suspicious of one another as it is hard to know how sincere a person really is. The Greek Orthodox Church acknowledges that demonic forces influence people's ability to put the evil eye on another. The Greek Orthodox Church has prayers to counteract the harm caused by the evil eye. This means that Christianity in Greece acknowledges the demonic, not seeing it as a *superstition*, but as a reality that causes real harm to the victim.

Similarly, in Africa witchcraft is rooted in the faith, *culture* and traditions of the people. This is passed down from generation to generation. Western missionaries believed that the superstition of witchcraft would go away once the people converted to Christianity. What they failed to realize was that the experiences of witchcraft were very real to African people. Witchcraft is still experienced by African people on a daily basis. Witchcraft is greatly feared in African societies. Witches are believed to be envious human beings who gain great joy out of destroying people whom they are envious of. Witches are therefore hated, and if a person is caught

practicing witchcraft or even suspected of it, there are dire consequences. Witchcraft controls the *social* behaviour in Africa by making people suspicious of their relatives and neighbours, believing that either an envious relative or neighbour has caused whatever ailment or misfortune has recently occurred to them. This means that whatever terrible thing happens to a person or family, witchcraft is immediately suspected and relief from this state is sought out, from either a witch-doctor or a prophet healer. The AIC's acknowledge the reality of witchcraft and incorporate prayer-healing in their services to help victims of witchcraft. This means that Christianity in Africa as Christianity in Greece has incorporated prayers to counteract evil from the victims that approach these churches for help because the churches themselves have experienced evil on a first hand bases. In other words through many years of helping victims, these churches encounter and combat evil not as a *superstition* but a reality.

6.2.2 Cultural conditions

People wear an assortment of amulets to ward off the evil eye, not all of them are approved by the Greek Orthodox Church. Greeks experience these amulets as a reliable way to protect them from the evil eye. These amulets have been part of the Greek culture for centuries. Similarly people in Africa spend a lot of money buying "muti" and amulets for protection and good luck. These amulets are integrated into the African culture and are believed to be a reliable means of protection and revenge against witchcraft. In both the African and Greek cultures amulets are used that have been "tried and tested" by generations of people before them. These amulets have proven to be a reliable form of protection and people hesitate to use or do anything differently. The African and Greek people need something to keep near or on their person because it makes them

feel safer. The knowledge that they have something on them that has the supernatural ability to protect them from supernatural forces that they are in danger of encountering gives them peace of mind.

6.2.3 Ecological conditions

The *ecological* environment, which breeds the evil eye, is an environment resources are limited. In ancient societies where a two-class system was the norm, those who were wealthy lived in constant social tension. The wealthy feared that those who had less than themselves would harm them with their evil eye. Today resources are limited in the form of jobs, and what kind of position a person holds. Those who hold down good jobs are able to live in nice homes, drive expensive cars, wear designer clothes and socialize with the right kind of people. Again those who have a lot live in fear of those who have less than they do.

Similarly, in Africa resources are limited. This leads to an *ecological* environment that breeds contempt, which in turn leads to witchcraft. Resources are limited, both in the agricultural environment and in the working environment. Those with a good income also have many nice material things, as above: they live in nice homes, drive expensive cars, wear designer clothes and socialize with the right kind of people. This leads those people who struggle to make ends meet envy those better off than themselves, wishing them ill fortune. In an *ecological* environment where the resources are limited, as they are in Africa and Greece, it is natural for those who have little to be envious of those who have more. In other words poverty breeds contempt. But there are those who are consumed by their envy, leading them to want to do grievous harm to the person whom they envy.

The envious person's *social, cultural* and *ecological* environment will dictate how they will go about doing their evil, because these three environmental factors shape who a person is and how they will react to a situation, whether good or bad. Those who are born in a Mediterranean environment will use the evil eye to maliciously cause harm to the person whom they envy and then act helpful when they hear of that person's calamity. Those who are born in an African environment will either themselves do witchcraft or employ a witch to bewitch or poison the person whom they envy. These people then act innocent about the evil that they have unleashed on their victim.

When comparing two cultures, as was explained in Chapter 2, the differences of those two cultures should also be understood and explained in order to have a full appreciation of both cultures.

6.3 The differences between Greece and Africa

A very clear and distinct difference between the Greek evil eye and African witchcraft (including the evil eye in Ethiopia) is *violence*. What follows are examples of violent actions and reactions to witchcraft and witches in contrast to the actions and reaction of the evil eye in Greece:

- Sometimes witchcraft leads to the death of not only the intended victim, but in some cases where human organs and genitals are needed for muti, another victim dies. Such violent acts, it is believed must be revenged and also stopped. People in Africa, as was noted by Masango (2004:1003), are frustrated, desperate and hopeless when *violence* occurs to them or their loved ones. This frustration, desperation and

hopelessness leads people to take revenge. The victim or victim's family may employ a witch to hurt the person who has been identified by the witch as having harmed them or a loved one. This creates a vicious cycle, making murderers out of victims. The police do not tolerate witch hunters. However communities that experience high incidents of witchcraft feel differently about these murders. The people in these communities are frustrated with authorities as they feel that witches are more protected than those who have had to endure the evils of witchcraft. In contrast, when a person in Greece is suspected of putting the evil eye on someone, the victim avoids him/her as much as possible. This may not always be possible and that is then why amulets are used. Of course very rarely does the evil eye in Greek communities lead to the death of an individual, and even when it does there is no way of finding out who the culprit was, there can only be speculation.

- There is also a distinct difference in amulets. Although both cultures make use of amulets, in Greece all amulets are man-made. In Africa strong "muti" is made of human body parts. The victim chosen for "muti" purposes suffers a gruesome death, because body parts have to be taken while the person is still alive. The person is then left to bleed to death. Most of these victims are children; adults may also be used. Again here the difference is *violence*.
- If a person is believed to be possessed by a demon a Greek Orthodox priest will read a prayer of exorcism over the victim while physically imposing an icon, cross or holy relic on the victim. The sign of the cross is also physically drawn on the victim with holy water or oil. Once the demon has been exorcised the victim may be told by the priest to pray

and be told to do a strict fast in gratitude to God for saving him/her. If a person is possessed by a spirit in Africa a) the witch-doctor may give the victim “muti” that has to be inhaled by the victim, causing the victim to sneeze the spirit out, or b) the prayer healer/prophet will do one of three things: 1) beat the victim to force out the spirit, 2) baptize the victim to drive out the spirit, or c) mix ash, salt and lime with other ingredients and given to the victim to drink, causing the victim to vomit and therefore to expel the spirit. Therefore physical *violence* is inflicted on the victim in order to rid the victim of the evil spirits. It is believed that evil spirits are sent by witches to the victim.

The *violence* in African witchcraft is a vicious cycle that is never ending because the action of witchcraft is *violent*, which in turn leads to a *violent* reaction against the witch. Therefore, although there are similarities, which breed both witchcraft in Africa and the evil eye in Greece, there is the difference in the *social* environment of Africa, which breeds *violence*. As was earlier pointed out the evil eye may be destructive, but it is not executed in a *violent* manner. An example of *violence* and the evil eye occurs in Ethiopia as was described in chapter 5. A person who is accused of being a *Buda* may be put to death if the person they are accused of “eating with the eye” dies.

6.4 A Christian assessment

Witchcraft in Africa, like the evil eye in Greece are tightly woven in these cultures faiths and traditions. Missionaries in the West cannot just do away with witchcraft in Africa by “educating” the people that such beliefs are “superstition”. The idea that many things can be solved by “education” is in itself ethnocentric and makes African people look foolish. Western people often think that they are doing non-Western people a big favour by introducing their “scientific logic” on cultures who

do not think “scientifically”, when in fact they are causing more harm than good. Sometimes, as is the case in Africa, people just become more secretive about their ways. Western missionaries need to fully understand and confront the reality and horror of witchcraft that plagues African communities. To help the communities, who experience witchcraft, missionaries from the West could speak of Jesus’ exorcisms illustrating Jesus’ supernatural ability to cast out demons. Jesus is the supreme exorcist; the demons are petrified of Jesus. No amulet or “muti” could ever protect a person from supernatural evil the way Jesus can, as Jesus’ supernatural abilities are far more powerful.

6.5 Findings from a sociology of religion perspective

A comparative study was done between African witchcraft and the Greek evil eye to investigate if their continued existence is due to similar reasons. The study illustrated that African witchcraft and the Greek evil eye do exist because of similarities in these two societies cultural, ecological and social conditions. The study also illustrated that Greek and African societies experience ethnocentric criticism from Western scholars’ because these societies believe in what Westerners term “primitive superstitions” such as the “evil eye” and “witchcraft”. Both the practice and belief of the evil eye and witchcraft are socially taught. Just as the belief that the evil eye and witchcraft are superstitions is socially taught in the West. Therefore what the Westerners do have in common with the African and Greek cultures is that they all believe what they are socially taught. The lack of insight that religion is socially taught to all cultures is what leads to misunderstandings and miscommunication between the cultures as is illustrated in chapter 2. Westerners have a “scientific” outlook on spirituality, while Greeks and Africans have a “supernatural” outlook on spirituality. Westerners need to accept that each culture has its own unique social set-up, with their own reality and world-view. There is no correct or incorrect view, only the reality which each

human being experiences within the social framework of their culture. In other words what is real to one person in one culture, may be totally unreal to another person from another culture. But neither reality is wrong. Ethnocentrism should not be enforced on our understanding of other cultures. There also needs to be an acceptance that those cultures are not wrong or inferior to ours, but different. And by accepting the differences not as faults but as another reality, only then can cultures help one another with problems that plague their communities.

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