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## Dialogue with Demons, Religion, Culture and Exorcism in Christian Churches in Zimbabwe

**Basure Hardlife Stephen**

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe

**Taru Josiah**

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe

### **Abstract:**

*This study takes a comparative analysis, pitting tradition and autochthonous cultures on one end and religious forms on the other. The comparison of traditional cosmologies and culture can be seen to be blended in almost all dominant forms of worship in the country. The study drew insights from the handling and conceptualization of some of the most contentious and divisive issues in modern day Zimbabwean religion, that is, spirit possession and exorcism. It is the conclusion of the paper that, religious forms of worship are a mirror image of societal beliefs and cultures. Hence, though there is a multiplicity of religious voices in the country, the common denominator remains the culture and cosmologies of local people. Utilizing qualitative methodologies, the study look mostly at three dimensions of worship in the country. Mainline Christian churches, Pentecostals and indigenous Apostolic movements are examined to show how their conceptualization of spirit possession and exorcism echo local cultural and religious cosmologies. The study notes that, though denominations and religious forms of worship are multiple, essentially they are dealing with the same problems which come out of people's local beliefs.*

**Key words:** exorcism, religion, cosmology, spirit possession, Christianity

### **1. Introduction**

Religion and culture have been issues which have always been seen to possess a particular reflection of the cultural forces in which they exist. This paper interrogates the link between religion and culture, focusing specifically on the subject of demons and exorcism which have now become common occurrences in Pentecostal churches and is even seeping into the conservative mainstream churches in Zimbabwe. It is the argument of this paper that people's cultural beliefs have been incorporated within the repertoire of most religious groups' attitudes and practices in relation to exorcism. Beliefs contained in the traditional religions have been taken and made a representation of all that is bad and demonic. Utilizing a wide range of qualitative techniques, the study cross-cuts various types of religious groupings in Zimbabwe. Case studies are drawn from Pentecostal churches, main orthodox Christian churches as well as indigenous apostolic churches. Interviews and observations as well as comparative analysis form the backbone of the methodology in this paper.

While studies on the interaction between foreign religions and local belief systems are numerous, (Maxwell 1995, Kileyesus 2006, Bourdillon 1997), an in-depth analysis of the relationship between exorcism and culture has often been overlooked. Most studies have also particularly made reference to these linkages in discussions which expose the need for foreign religions to adapt to local conditions (Black 2012, Maxwell 2000). Studies on Pentecostalism have shown how issues of spirit possession and deliverance are linked to the desire by the churches to gain recognition and acceptability among the local people (Maxwell, 1995, Biri 2011). The bulk of literature on spiritual healing also focuses much on the centrality of magical authority in the person of the prophet or founder of the movement (Marshall 1992), as well as the composition of victims of spirits (Ayegboyin, 2004). However, it is the argument of this paper that the practice of exorcism and deliverance from demon possession should be understood within the contexts of local cultures and values. The content of the information which is contained in conversations with demons exhibit a particular common thread which point to the fact that religious forces are mirror images of societies in which they exist. Though some religions are foreign in nature, they always carry a particular flair of the cosmologies of local people.

### **2. Exorcism, Demons and Possession in Perspective**

The subject of possession and exorcism has always been controversial in most religions. In Christianity Nischan (1987) noted a common understanding of exorcism and its position in early Christian thinking. He notes that the practice of exorcism is premised upon the belief that individuals and things may be subject to evil or diabolic powers, and that this power may be driven out through the words and actions of the exorcism rite. Nischan notes that exorcism was instrumental in assisting people understood to be possessed by the devil and was usually a prerequisite for preparing an individual for baptism in the medieval church. Possession has always been a common phenomenon across religions and it is also not alien to the local Zimbabwean cultures.

Exorcism also goes hand in hand with the concept of possession. It can be regarded as a way of redeeming an individual who is possessed from the influences of evil spirits which may be understood to be in control of that individual's body. In both Christian and local cosmologies, possession can either be from good or evil forces. Christian jargon refers evil spirits usually as demons whereas local religions regard bad spirits as *mashave* (stranger/wandering/alien spirits) (Gelfand 1969; Bourdillon 1994).

### 3. Culture, Spirits and Possession

An inventory of ethnographic study reveals that many cultures across the world accommodated spirit possession. The belief that individuals can be possessed by supernatural spirits, either benevolent or evil, outdated the introduction of Christianity into many non-western societies. As early as 1976 anthropologists such Bourguignon had studied cross cultural possessions in 488 societies across the globe. Spirit possession varies from one society to another. Early anthropologists were fascinated by the Otherness of possession as a phenomena (van der Port, 2005). Cultural beliefs inform what possession constitutes, the nature of possession and the form. Lewis (1971) notes that a possessed person is someone defined as so by people using cultural values. This practice is associated with "temporary absence of the victims' soul". Despite diverse cultural forms of possession, anthropologists have developed typologies that identify two categories of spirit possession in most societies. One of the commonly identified type of possession is that which adversely alters bodily functions causing ill-health of the possessed person. The second type of possession transforms consciousness, awareness and the will of the individual possessed. These two types of possessions are identified respectively by Bourguignon (1976) as possession and trance possession; and by Cohen (2008) as pathogenic possession and executive possession.

Spirit mediumship and diviner possession are common examples of executive possession noted in most African societies. Once possessed an individual would fall "unconscious; syncope; convulsions; tremors; speaking in tongues; sudden and abrupt, often meaningless, changes in conversation or activity; flights of thought" (Crapanzano 1973:152). Gelfand (1962), Fry (1976), and Garbett (1969) documents acts of possession among spirit mediums among Shona ethnic groups. Spirit mediums when possessed have the ability to foretell the future, heal and the ability to change the course of things, for example, making rains fall. In the Tikopia society, Firth (1969) observed that once possessed spirit mediums took a different identity, change in voice, behaviour traits and often claim and are addressed by the name of the spirit that possess them. Spirit mediums when possessed became authoritative as they are semi-deities who can prophesize. Van der Port (2005) notes that in the Bahia society, spirit possession was come among females. Dancing and singing would invited the spirit to possess its medium.

Incidents of pathogenic possessions have been documented greatly. Kenyon (1999) notes that in Sudan there a zar spirits which possess individuals. These spirits bring bad omen and ill fate upon the possessed. Zar spirits cause ill-health, misfortune and at times death upon the person. Persons inflicted by the Zar spirits were supposed to perform a Karama ceremony to appease the spirits. McIntosh (2004) narrates incidents of possession among the Gariama people of coastal Kenya who were possessed by Muslim spirits which forced them vomit if they eat during the Ramadan. It is not uncommon for individuals to be possessed by alien spirits (cf. Bourdillon, 1994). Muslim spirits infiltrated and possessed non-Muslim Gariama people. Due to possession and economic dominance of Muslims, Gariama people were forced to join the Muslim religion.

Traditional spirit possession can be voluntary or involuntary. Spirit mediums engaged in voluntary possession as deliberately used drumming, singing and chanting to invite spirits to possess them (van der Port 2005). Involuntary possession dominated pathogenic possessions. Afflicting spirits that caused illness involuntarily possessed individuals to be hysterical. In such cases, possession is viewed as an illness that requires treatment through exorcism or appeasement (Lewis 1989).

A cross cultural survey of spirit possession illustrates that possession is gendered, females form the bulk of spirit mediums observed in studied societies. Spirit mediumship is treated as a 'ritual of rebellion' in which women whose social visibility is clouded by their absence from the public sphere is overturned when they are possessed. The battle of the sex is furthered through possession which accords women's chance to exercise authority and be visible in society (Lewis 1971).

### 4. Religious Forms of Spirit Possessions

Spirit possession is a common feature in different religions, while this paper will not attempt to give encyclopedic details on all religions, Christianity and Muslim religions will be used to illustrate how dominant religions handle and treat spirit possession. Spirit possession is common in the Christians' Holy Bible. From this Christianity's perspective, the difference between believers and non-believers is based upon the reception of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 6v15

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?

Believers are possessed by the spirit of God, while non-believers lack this spirit. In Christianity, possession is not only in the form of Holy Spirit but demonization according to Carter (2000) is predominant. Demons, the binary opposite of the Holy Spirit, are capable of entering man and causing untold suffering and pushing man into sinning. Vivid illustrations can be found in the John 13v27 when Satan the arch nemesis of God entered Judas forcing him to betray Jesus, and also in the story of the Legion who was possessed by too numerous demons (see Luke 8v30). Christianity aims at casting out any other form of spirit that may enter into people. Exorcism and casting out of demons is a common practice among Christians, Jesus managed to cast out demonic spirits that had possessed, tormented and inhabited in the Legion. Demonic spirits caused Legion to stay at the graveyard and naked, Jesus granted the demons their wishes, removing them from the man onto swine. In some Christian denominations, prophets, apostles and elders can engage in dialogue with evil spirits, driving them away from the possessed victim.

Werth (2012) and Lewis (1973) shade more light on Muslim beliefs pertaining to spirit possession. Spirit possession is not accorded in a number of Muslim societies because the possession hinders man from fully worshipping Allah. The Quran in Surah 114 makes it clear that jinn (other spirits) were created by Allah but pose danger and calamities for individuals. The existence of jinn indirectly points us to the fact that Muslims can be possessed, but they have to guide against such possession that can lead

them to unabated hedonism such as excessive drinking and eating. For most Muslim societies, spirit possession is a sickness that can lead to “temporary absents of the soul” or partial death, hindering man’s ability to fully worship his creator Allah.

Globalization processes, both historical and current, have allowed the simultaneous co-existence of different religious systems in many societies. The introduction of other forms of religions into African societies had implication on the belief systems had existed prior to Christianity or Muslim. Christianity gained prominence in most societies across the globe. This co-existence is conducive enough to bring about conflicts, power play, hegemony and ideology. McIntosh (2004) has examined hegemony and hierarchical structure that exist between local quasi-religious Gariama culture and the Muslim religion which dominates and even threaten to drive local Gariama culture into extinction. Muslim spirits possess non-Muslim Gariama people, this shows the dominance of the latter over the former. Muslim became a dominant religion whose spirit could affect non-Muslim yet the opposite was considered impossible. The dominance of Muslim religion was backed by economic and financial power that most Muslims had in certain Kenyan societies, most of them were financially powerful and acted as employers to Gariama.

### 5. The Nature and Type of Spirits Exorcised in Apostolic Sects

Data presented in this section is based on field observations and key informant interviews conducted in various apostolic sects and denominations around Masvingo. Most apostolic sects held the belief that there are evil supernatural forces and spirits that affect and influence peoples’ fate. There were spirits which were considered holy and acceptable in these churches. Such spirit were associated with heavenly bodies such as angels. Most prophets were possessed by spirits that had names associated with some biblical characters such as Joshua, Daniel, Gabriel and Jacob. In these sects, during services time allocated to demon casting and evil spirit exorcism. In one of the sect observed, there was session of kutanda midzimu nemashave (casting out ancestral and evil spirits), with specific anthems devoted to such session. During this session, male members vigorously rub their palms against the crown of new converts and members who are tormented by the evil spirits. This practice forces the demon to come out and reveal itself. Maporofita, a colloquial term for prophets are instrumental in casting out the evil spirits. This is done through attrition as described above, the use of consecrated water (mvura yemuteuro) and at times, the possessed person is pressed down and pressed on the belly with the prophet’s walking stick (tsvimbo). This cosmology holds that evil spirits that possess people reside in the belly. At times the evil spirit forces the possessed person to be violent, forcing other congregants to hold the person down so that the spirit can be cast out. The prophets have the ability to communicate with the demons instructing them to leave their victim. Common demons that are exorcised from victims have been categorized as follows

- Animal spirits
- Spirits of departed relatives
- Spirits associated with specific traditional trades and professions
- Avenging and alien spirits

For detailed information concerning these spirits, refer to Bourdillon (1994). Animal spirits, erstwhile praised and honoured in some lineages later manifested in some lineage descendants. When the possessed individuals failed to honour or recognize the spirits, a streak of misfortune dogged the individuals. It is not uncommon for individuals, to consult prophets seeking the causes of mishaps. Prophets often notify the individuals of the animal spirits that possess them. These spirits are referred to in vernacular using a generic name mashave. Depending on the type of animal, a particular name is used, those possessed and tormented by the spirit of baboons are noted to be possessed by mashave emakudo, while those possessed by mermaid spirit are commonly referred to as vane shave renjuzu. The former spirit forces one to a loafer but can also make one dance well. Once possessed one can dance well as the spirit will be the inspirer of his or her moves. The latter spirit is the most feared as it is considered strong and dangerous. Once possessed by the mermaid spirit, one is given divinatory power, the ability to heal ailments through herbs and other traditions ways. These spirits are in direct opposition to what apostolic sects believe in, healing is done through praying, use of mediated water and pebbles. The use of herbs, roots, tree barks and divination dice (hakata) is believed to be ungodly thus such spirits which give people the ability to heal using herbs is considered demonic and must be cast out. Most traditional healers (n’anga) are possessed or inspired by such spirits, thus the apostolic sects do not give a nod to their practice.

The second type of spirits exorcised are those linked to departed lineage members or ancestral spirits. In Shona cosmology there is a belief that while living an older relative may choose a young family member to follow and further her/his legacy. When the older relative passes on, the young relative is possessed by the spirit of the older departed relative. These phenomena of being possessed by spirits of departed relatives is common. Prophets often call upon such spirits, forcing them to fully possess the individual. Once this is achieved, the prophet engages in dialogue with such spirit seeking the motive of possessing such an individual, the name and nature of the spirit and misfortunes it has brought to the individual. Below is an excerpt of one such dialogue with demons and evil spirits:

Prophet: who are you and what do you want on this young lady?

The spirit responded through the possessed individual in a different voice: ... I am her aunty X (name specified), I want her to take care of things which I used when I was alive.

Prophet: what are these things?

Spirit: my beads, tokoloshi, snake and other herbs that I used when I was alive. I received these things from my grandmother, these things have been in her family for long, and it is her time to continue. If she rejects she will never get married, I will push suitors away from her, and she will continue to be sick until she accepts to work with what I have left for her.

Females can be possessed by spirits from male relatives, in such situations the possessed female sits like an adult male and at times speaks in the hoarse male voice, mimicking the voice of the one whose spirit possess her. At one incident, a possessed female continuously caressed her chin as if she was bearded. Though females constituted the majority of the possessed, a handful of males were possessed by these spirits. Children also fall victim to these spirits, selected at a tender age by their older relatives.

This caused children to behaviour and show traits that were identified with the departed relatives. Namesakes were usually the ones that fell into this predicament. The majority of possessed people were inflicted with spirits that force or assist them in witchcraft and sorcery activities. Such witchcraft is identified as uroyi hwekuguurirwa.

Traditionally, there were trades and professions that were associated with particular lineages or families. Some lineages used muti to perfect and further their trade. To increase harvests, some lineage would acquire divisi (a charm/muti for securing bumper harvest), some had charms to enhance hunting skills or fighting abilities. With time, these charms became associated with particular lineages, manifesting in later generations. Shave rokuvhima (spirit that enhance one to hunt), shave rokuroya (witchcraft) and shave rekugwa/ mangoromera (spirit that helps one in fist fighting) are typical trades and professions whose spirits are common. Shave rokuvhima was cast out because in urban areas there are no animals to hunt, forcing the medium to steal. Shave rekuroya forced most females into anti-social activities such as prostitution and witchcraft. Those possessed by shave rokuroya often found themselves unemployed and engaging in violent activities. Such to the anti-social activities caused by these demons and evil spirits, apostolic sects aim at casting them out so that the victim is set free.

Ancestral spirits can manifest themselves in an individual as mudzimu with the aim of protecting and guiding the living descendants. Individuals possessed by these spirits can engage in divination. Such traditionally honoured spirits are also identified as evil and demonic in most apostolic sects. Those possessed by such spirits undergo intensive exorcism, with their clothes often black and white (jira reretso), machetes (bakatwa) and wooden plates burnt by prophets. Individuals possessed by this type of spirits, are often convinced to convert so that such spirits won't torment or possess them again. This type of spirit is considered stubborn that it can kill the medium if s/he refuses to honour it.

Avenging spirits and other alien spirits inspired by tokoloshi and gremlins can possess people. Such spirits/ forces cause ailments and misfortunes upon the possessed. In order to cure and remove the bad omen, most apostolic sects cast out these spirits and forces whenever they are identified. Maporofita have the ability to connect with these forces and spirits, their concerns and grievances can be known through the prophet who is used as a medium. This practice is called kuhakira, that is, the prophet becomes the mouthpiece of the spirits or forces. Once the grievances are known and the person behind is known, the spirit can be driven away from the victim. Jealousy among people is commonly identified as the main motive that drive individuals to burden their victims with such spirits that cause illness and barrenness. From field observation, there is need to note that females constituted the majority of victims possessed by evil spirits. Furthermore, the majority of people responsible for controlling and burdening others with bad omen were also females. Such observation confirms the general belief that females compensate their powerlessness in society through the use of supernatural means. Their ability to control and dominate those considered powerful is done latently. The majority of prophets were males, though some female prophets were instrumental in casting out demons. The structure and organization found in apostolic sects reverberate the social organization in the wider society. Religiously, females continue to be the weaker, evil and perpetually sick due to their susceptibility to demons and evil spirits.

## 6. The language of demons in Pentecostal and orthodox Christian churches

The findings of the study suggest a deep relationship between the emergent religious forces and existing local beliefs and practices. Religion can be seen to be not only a mirror image of societal processes, but also an answer to the various questions which individuals and society seek to answer. Death, wealth, health, illness, success and misfortune can all be understood and interpreted using religion. From the observations and interviews made. The study generally notes that demon possession and exorcism gives an interesting dimension to the relationship between local cosmologies and present day religion in Zimbabwe. As noted above, that independent apostolic churches deal with spirits which are generally understood to be part and parcel of the local culture, the same can be observed in Pentecostal churches in the country. However, mainline Christian churches such as Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, Roman Catholic Church, Methodist, and Seventh Day Adventist Church have distanced themselves from the practice of exorcism. However the content of their teachings is often replete with references to issues of possession, a pointer to the inescapability of local cosmologies on foreign religious ideas. The majority of respondents from these churches did not dispute the existence of demonic possession. What they dispute are the methods of exorcism which are generally used by apostolic and Pentecostal churches. One respondent narrated an incident which once occurred at a particular catholic school where a number of students fell and entered a trance-like state. The students were carried to the chapel rather than taking them to the hospital, an indication that the authorities understood the problem at hand as first and foremost, spiritual. The priest burnt incense at the altar, where the students were laid. Though such incidents have been described by others as mass hysteria, the incident showed the extent to which even believers who go to orthodox churches subscribe to the idea of spirit possession. A respondent from SDA, noted that though the incidence of demon possession occurs in their church they are not solicited. They do not actively engage in exorcism and if an individual happens to be possessed, they just pray for him/her.

The subject of spirit possession and exorcism among Pentecostal churches seem to have established a common and almost predictable pattern. These Pentecostal denominations have grown in number and the study observed both the popular and emerging Pentecostal churches which include ZAOGA, AFM, United Family International Church, HIM, Harvest House International etc., operate in more or less the same manner when it comes to the subject of spirit possession and exorcism. The practice of exorcism, though it may vary, can generally be divided into four segments among Pentecostals. These include:

- Identification of the individual under possession.
- Dialogue with the spirit inhabiting the individual.
- Casting out of the spirit.
- Confirmation of the exorcism.

Pentecostal preachers use a number of ways to identify the possessed individual. Most of them have healing and deliverance sessions which usually come after the preaching of the word. A number also hold healing and deliverance sessions on separate days to cater for the huge numbers of people who require help. Identification then can either be through the exorcist calling picking out individuals from the floor, either by name or any other means of identification, or voluntarily as in the case of healing and deliverance sessions where individuals willingly go to seek help. When an individual has been identified most Pentecostal churches allow the spirit inhabiting an individual to speak. It usually reveals its source, the mission of the host, and often threatens the exorcist or alternatively it pleads to be allowed to continue inhabiting its host. The conversations which the exorcist holds with the spirit of the possessed person are not peculiar to Pentecostal churches. It can also be seen to have roots in local cultures where possessed people often enter into a trance like state and the spirit inhabiting that body makes its objectives clear. Exorcism is confirmed usually by the falling down of the possessed individual whilst the exorciser chants commands to drive away the spirit.

One general belief which the modern religions share with the local cosmologies is an implicit assumption in the infallibility of the human being as well as the perfectness of a natural order of existence. Individuals are assumed to be incapable of doing bad things and the human being is not supposed to suffer unless there has been interference from an evil force. Hence, in the eyes of both indigenous and modern day religions, exorcism becomes a panacea to all problems which befall humans, be it sickness, death, misfortune, sin, etc. The paper identifies a number of areas which the subject of possession is applied in the Pentecostal churches;

- Health and illness
- Death and misfortunes
- Sin

Virtually all sick individuals attended to in Pentecostal churches are exorcised of a demon. The general assumption being that all diseases and suffering are caused by the devil and his minions. Hence exorcism becomes the rational way to effectively heal a sick person. In one incident a sick person entered into a trance-like state and started divulging the source of the illness. An excerpt from one conversation in a healing and deliverance session illustrates the connection between illness and possession, hence making exorcism an indispensable part of healing among Pentecostals.

Exorciser; who are you? What do you want from her?

Possessed person; I am the headman in the girl's village. I was given her as my wife when she was young. She cannot be married because I will cause her to be sick and also cause all who want to marry her to be sick or die.

She also divulged other family members who were victims of the spirit through sickness or death. Ownership of paranormal paraphernalia used in witchcraft were also claimed by the spirit communicating through the individual. One spirit cried out during exorcism;

Who will take care of my hyena and snake if you remove me from her?

Sin also has been seen to be influential in the invitation of demons into one's body. Sin was in most instances seen as both a product and outcome of the works of demons within the individual. Though the devil is regarded as the embodiment of all that is evil across most religious groups, whenever someone sinned, the act was attributed to the demons. Hence sinners also had to receive exorcism to free them from the bondage of seeing as well as to stop the recurrence of sin in the lives of the individuals. This conceptualization is not novel in traditional African religions as well as cultures. Bourdillon (1997) notes that vices such as stealing could be attributed to patronal spirits which may be using an individual. Witchcraft among the Shona was also regarded as an evil legacy passed on by the relative of the Witch, such that the individual could not be solely held accountable for bewitching others as witchcraft could be an involuntary act. Among those exorcised and delivered in Pentecostal services included those who had committed adultery. Hence adultery as a seen could be seen to be a product of some form of possession. The discourse of possession is so interwoven to the extent that in most cases issues of sin, misfortune, illness and death could be seen to be interconnected in a Gordian knot. For one to be free of disease, there was a need for exorcism. Hence demon possession became the panacea to the problems facing an individual. In the same fashion traditional health practitioners' healing is often accompanied by exorcism.

### **7. Bridging the Divide; Traditional Cosmologies and Religious Discourse**

If one closely looks at the foregoing discussion, the lines between religion and local cosmologies becomes increasingly blurred. As noted by Biri (2011), traditional religion and culture inform Pentecostal religion and it is also a source of meaning and direction to contemporary Pentecostal religions. However, we argue that traditional religion and culture informs not only the Pentecostal religion, but all other forms of worship which we currently witness in the country. The categories of thought and action in religion resonate with a resounding flare of local cosmological understandings. As shown from the foregoing observations in both indigenous African churches as well as Pentecostal churches, the issues which people deal with are a direct outgrowth of their traditional and cultural beliefs. The interviews show that evidence of the hand of local cosmologies is present in one form or the other in different religious establishments. Though methods of worship and dealing with societal problems are diverse, there is a general consensus among different denominations and believers, that everything, be it success or misfortune, is determined by some forces which are beyond what we see. This explanation has always existed in the corpus of beliefs and culture of the local people suggesting an interface between local belief systems and present day religions.

### **8. Hegemony and Discursive Power to Otherize Among Religious Denominations**

An analysis of structure, content and ideological premises among apostolic sects and traditional spirit possession reveals a close linkage. Orthodox churches believe in spirit possession as highlighted above, however their approach to exorcism radically differs from that of apostolic sects and Pentecostal churches. Most orthodox churches locate the source of evil spirits that possess people in the local cultures' cosmologies. Traditional practice such as kupira mudzimu (appeasing ancestral spirits) hun'anga (traditional

healer) are forbidden among converts because such practice are inspired by the devil as per the most orthodox churches' doctrines. As churches that do not engage much into the spiritual realm, exorcism is not a common activity. Prayers and incense are the methods used to cast out evil spirits whenever they manifest themselves. What is interesting is that cultural practices are defined as the source of some of the evil spirits that dog converts. Apostolic sects, their lifeworlds and cosmologies are similar to the traditional cosmology that informs understanding of the Shona. The use of the term cosmologies is intentional, because apostolic sect's cosmology is not unitary, different sects espouse a different worldview, with identifiable similarities. There are a number of similarities in the cosmology, and it can be claimed on solid grounds that traditional cosmologies feed into the apostolic cosmologies. Whilst many claim that new religion brings in a new cosmology, this paper argues the contrary, positing that such religions heavily depends on traditional cosmologies. Once established, new religions are elevated to the level of hegemonic ideologies that dismiss, disparage and disgrace existing traditional cosmologies. Religions of nature are mutually exclusive and rarely accommodate each other. Discursive power becomes an important factor in determining which religion gains prominence, which one is brushed aside and subordinated by the dominant one.

Apostolic sects espouse a similar cosmology with traditional cultures and religion, however, through the use of discursive power, traditional cultures and religions have been portrayed as a villain by most apostolic sects. Drawing parallels between the two religions one observes that both vividly hold that

- there are bad spirits that can enter a human body
- these bad spirits can cause misfortune and ailment
- the bad spirits can communicate
- the bad spirits can be exorcised.

As seen from the discussion above, both traditional religion and apostolic sects' cosmologies attribute particular ailments and mishaps to bad and evil spirits. The remedy to the majority of these misfortunes was found in exorcism. Whilst traditionalists exorcised through kufukira, kurasirira and kutandira apostolic cosmologies held that bad spirits could be cast off kukweshera and also kurasirira. Though the procedures differed, the aim remained the same, to retain the man to his 'natural' state. Among the apostolic sects, casting away of demons was done at the western side of their territory, near the boundary. For traditionalists, bad spirits are abandoned in the forests or away from the homestead so that they would return. These bad spirits are not supposed to be cast away in the vicinity of the worshipping area because the spirits can easily re-possess the victim. Singing and dancing emphatically is also a common feature. The songs are meant to drive the spirits away.

Apostolic religion, Pentecostalism and orthodox churches are constructed as mightier, dominant and powerful because they worship the omnipotent God who is powerful. Due to this construction of a mightier religion because it links directly to God and his angels, other religions, such as ATR, that do not directly link with God are constructed as weaker, less effective and heathen. The hegemonic attribute and discursive power claimed by apostolic religion allows it to portray and construct ATR as a binary opposite, of course a weaker one. Apostolic sects' cosmology is similar to that of ATR. Both believe in the beau idéal nature of humans. Ailments, misfortunes and any other suffering that humans experience are explained in purely naturalistic terms. Evil spirits, tokoloshies and alien spirits in both cosmologies are identified as responsible for human misery. However, apostolic sects' cosmologies further otherize ATR, constructing them as pagan mainly because their link to God is winding and long. Practice such as ancestor worshipping (vadzimu) use of natural herbs and other items such as sea shell are negatively judged in the apostolic sects' belief system. These items are used to treat or deal with the same problems that are handled with apostolic sects. It is imperative to note contestations and struggle for existence and dominance in addressing problems faced by humans has created conducive condition that for competition. Apostolic sects paganize ATR, relegating it to mere demons and evil spirits. Power is central in defining and constructing ATR as weak and demonic yet the cosmologies of both these religions are premised upon same values, beliefs and ideology. We argue that apostolic and Pentecostal religions are ATR most cosmetically apparelled in a new cloak. Apostolic sects, Pentecostal churches and orthodox churches create an edge by portraying ATR as demonic and heathenish, this enables the former to attract many followers and believers. Both religions aim at serving same population, apostolic sects derive an unfair advantage from its construction of ATR as the other. Apostolic and Pentecostal cosmologies incorporate many beliefs that are central to ATR, this endows relevance to it, luring many followers and dislodging ATR. Historical narratives on some prophets revealed that some of them were possessed by other spirits associated with the ATR cosmologies. After conversion in apostolic sects, with the aid of already practising prophets, they were assisted to ward off previous spirits that dogged them. New spirits acceptable in the sect's cosmologies possessed them, enabling them assist other.

## 9. Conclusion

Christianity, in the form of Pentecostal, apostolic and orthodox churches discussed, is a religion that parasitically relates to autochthonous religions of the people in a given society. ATR, Pentecostal, orthodox churches and apostolic sects' cosmologies share a number of similar beliefs and values. Ailments, mishaps and death is associated with bad spirits and the remedies to these malevolence can be found in exorcism. Though the practice and approach to exorcism differ among these religions, the aims and interpretations given are same. Both religions inherently hold the infallibility of man, thus if mishaps and ailments are located in personalistic explanations- evil spirits. Christianity has assumed a hegemonic position to the extent that it defines ATR as pagan and evil. This paper illustrates the exclusiveness of religion as the intolerance of Christianity, both Pentecostal and apostolic denomination, aggressively demean and paganize ATR. Discursive power and domination underlies the hegemonic tendencies utilized by Christianity in demonizing and relegating ATR to the evil. The parasitic nature of Christianity is largely due to the fact that in order for it to appeal to many people in a given society, it has to situate itself in the belief system of the people and address problems in a manner acceptable to the people in question. This gives Christianity relevance in many societies, especially African societies, as ATRs believe strongly in the supernatural- there a malevolent spirits that can affect peoples' lives and well-being.

**10. References**

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