

# Traditional Versus Modernism: The Persistence of Tharaka Traditional World-view among the Evangelical Converts in Tharaka, Kenya

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## Abstract

The evangelical Churches have evangelized the Tharaka for decades since 1940s. Although the evangelicals in most instances urge their converts to abandon their traditional world-view and adopt a new way of life (which they term as Christian cosmology), the evangelical converts in Tharaka continue to hold firmly to their traditional world-view while at the same time following Christianity. Some aspects of traditionalism which the evangelical converts still regard include: belief in the influence of the spirits, the mystical power in its manifestation in witchcraft, magic divination and others. This study investigated this scenario and found that the reasons for the persistence of the traditional world-view include: the failure by the Evangelical Churches to adequately meet the converts' needs, poor evangelism, failure to make use of the Tharaka world view in evangelism, lack of serious grounding in the word of God and psychological factors. There is no way the evangelicals can ignore the traditional Tharaka traditional world-view as they have done for years if they hope to be relevant to the Tharaka people.

**Keywords:** Tharaka; Tharaka Traditional World-view; Evangelical Denominations.

## 1. Introduction

The Tharaka community is one of the nine sub-groups of the Ameru of Kenya who live along the slopes of Mount Kenya. The others are Mĩĩtĩne, Igoji, Imenti, Tigania, ĩgembe, Chuka, Mwĩmbĩ and Mũthambĩ (Fadiman, 2012). The Tharaka are traditionally religious people in nature with religion touching every aspect of their life including rites of passage, hunting, planting and harvesting of crops (Icheria, 2015). This religious system accounts for how the community understands and interprets the things that happen to them or other people. Nothing is secular to them as everything they say, hear, see or do is interpreted from a religious perspective (Ferdinando, 2012). It is this traditional religiosity that has led them to conflict with the new religions such as Christianity. For example, while the evangelicals have evangelized in Tharaka since 1940s, and many of them have emphasized on the importance of letting the traditionalism go so that the Christian converts adopt a new way of life, many evangelical converts have stuck to their traditional world-view. This study was undertaken to underscore reasons that the evangelical converts in Tharaka still hold to their traditionalism.

## 2. Some Common Aspects of Tharaka Traditional World-view

There are a number of worldview aspects in Tharaka community which the Tharaka people have hesitated to let go even after receiving the Christian message. Such include the belief in the Spirit Beings, commonly known as *Nkoma cia Bachũchũ* (Living dead and ancestors). When one dies, he or she is said to have joined the spirit world. The spirit beings occupying the spirit world may inhabit specific places on earth for example, rivers, hills and forests. These places are regarded sacred (Nyaga, 2017). There are also human spirits: they may be the living dead or the ancestors and communicate with the living through dreams or visions (Kabuitu, 2017). Generally, the Tharaka people fear these spirit beings and take caution not to offend them. They visit the living to ask for food or drinks, warn of the impending danger, to enquire about family affairs, and rebuke those who have failed to follow their special instructions. They are the guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethics and activities and people are very careful not to offend them (Murithi, 2017).

There is also belief in mystical power which is manifested in witchcraft, sorcery, divination, curses and *Kũmerua i Kĩrimo* (Being swallowed by a mythical creature called Kĩrimo) (Icheria, 2015). The first three involve the use of magic. Among the Tharaka, magic is of different types. There is magic by contagion or contact, homeopathic magic, white magic, black magic and natural magic (Kabuitu, 2017). Medicine men and diviners make use of white magic. This magic is used as a protective charm (*Gĩtĩgo*) against witches and sorcerers or *nkinga* to guard one's homestead against witches and sorcerers (Kabuitu, 2017). On the other hand, black magic is used by witches. The Tharaka fear witches (*arogĩ*) to the point that some are afraid of leaving their items anyhow rest a witch picks and uses them to bewitch them. They too are keen not to step on things lying along the road or step on marks made along the path they are using. Children too are advised not to greet strangers along the way otherwise they may unknowingly greet a Murogi (witch) (Mutembei, 2017).

Regarding the use of words among the Tharaka, Giarelli (1997) remarks that words are considered efficacious in that they have real power to the extent that the spoken word is said to act or do something and thus

has effect on people and things. Moreso, he adds that there are words which are considered very effective; these are the ones which are used outside the context of ordinary conversation, uttered secretly following an elaborate formula or ritual. The strong belief in the power of curses is associated with this belief in the mystical power of words.

Tharaka worldview also finds expression in the view of causation and anthropocentric worldview. Suffering is not an accident or does not simply occur: it has a cause. The phrase *tibwamana* (it is not for nothing) expresses this belief well. Suffering can be caused by spirit beings, wrong done to someone and even malicious witches (Nyaga, 2017; Rwanda, 2017). Diviners are thus consulted to establish the cause of the suffering. As regards anthropocentric world-view in the Tharaka community, God is sought after for the benefit of the family, clan or community. The Tharaka seek God because they have a specific need they want met, for example, blessing of rain and when this is met, God is no longer bothered (Murithi, 2017). Even religious specialists are there to serve the needs of man. Religion is thus man-centred.

Then there is *Kūmerua i Kīrimo*, a practice that continues to be highly regarded in Tharaka to date. This is a self-awareness rite which young boys go through prior to circumcision (Icheria, 2015). It is done by a mythical creature called *Kīrimo* (Icheria, 2015). The practice involves beating the boys anyhow, encouraging the initiates to tell lies about *Kīrimo* to scare those not 'swallowed', singing songs with obscene lyrics in praise of *Kīrimo* and mystical power (Finifrock & Kathenya, 2009). It is this worldview that still, to a large extent, informs the Tharaka community despite the coming of the Christian missionaries and modernization.

### 3. Christian Contact with the Tharaka People

The missionaries took longer to arrive and proclaim the gospel among the Tharaka people. Issues of insecurity and accessibility due to poor means of transport among others may have contributed to this delay. The Consolata Fathers of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) were the first missionary group to arrive in Tharaka in 1948 (Muthomi, 2017). They built a centre in Matiri Boys where a hospital was also constructed (Muthomi, 2017). The RCC has constructed schools and hospitals in Tharaka and have been involved in community development, something which has also aided their evangelization in Tharaka (The Tharaka of Kenya, 1994).

The first evangelical group to proclaim the gospel in Tharaka was the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA). The PCEA started its mission work in Kajjampau in Chuka-igamba Ng'ombe area in 1949 (Kamwara, 2017). The first missionaries to Tharaka were Africans from Chuka-Mwimbi area. Among the early missionaries were Amos Magati from Chuka, N'maguta from Kīrūmi and Ezekiel Kanampiū (Kamwara, 2017). Other key missionaries were Joses Kathendu from Kīrīndīni, Julius N'ngombe who was an evangelist, Julius Ngaara from Chuka who too was an evangelist, Raphael N'nthaka, a catechist from Chogoria and Jediel Micheu, a Reverend and hailed from Chogoria. These missionaries came at different times; some staying a little longer than others (Kamwara, 2017). They travelled long distances as they conducted door to door evangelism (Kamwara, 2017). Also, PCEA established Kajjampaū primary school where an elementary school was established. There, the converts were taught elementary reading. Though PCEA was the earliest evangelical group to arrive in Tharaka, its numerical growth has not been impressive due to lack of ministers (up to now there is only ordained minister stationed at Kajjampau to oversee the whole of Tharaka which is still considered a missionary zone (Kamwara, 2017).

The Methodist Church in Kenya was the second evangelical group having been introduced in Tharaka in 1958. It was introduced in Tharaka by a missionary from England called Frederick Wilmot Valender at Marimanti (Njagi, 2017). Different ways were used by the Methodist missionaries to reach out to the Tharaka people. One way was by giving them incentives such as clothes and other gifts. They would bring sugar and tea leaves to the people while the people would provide milk for preparing tea (Njagi, 2017). They also introduced elementary schools which made those who joined them know how to read and write and therefore they were also able to read the Bible (Njagi, 2017). They also preached the gospel from place to place in Tharaka (Njagi, 2017). It is the lay people who had been converted to the faith who mainly were used to spread the gospel to other parts of Tharaka. These evangelists were later trained and became ministers availing many workers to serve in MCK in Tharaka and hence contributing to its growth (Njagi, 2017). Currently, MCK has seven circuits in Tharaka alone (Njagi, 2017).

The work of evangelization in Tharaka expanded a lot with the coming of Pentecostal Churches. The Full Gospel Church of Kenya (FGCK) was the first Pentecostal Church in Tharaka. In 1963, FGCK came to Tharaka under the leadership of Stephen Munyua who had been sent by Matirecah, a missionary from Finland, then serving in Laikipia (Njagi, 2017), Maturū, Philip Kithetu and Taratisio Murugaara were among the first converts in Tharaka (Njagi, 2017). These three greatly assisted Stephen Munyua in the evangelization of Tharaka. The first branch that was opened was Tunyai by Maturū in 1963. People's conversion was very slow as Christianity was perceived as something foreign and winning a single person to the Christian faith was considered a great achievement (Njagi, 2017). With time, other branches were opened including Tunyai, Rūūngū, Kibūng'ā, Gatūnga, Makutano and Kithiori (Njagi, 2017). The mode of evangelism used was mainly door to door and was

done with much fear (Njagi, 2017). Provision of medical care as well as giving clothes, money and other incentives were used (Njagi, 2017).

The coming of East African Pentecostal Church contributed the most in the evangelization of Tharaka (The Tharaka of Kenya, 1994). EAPC was introduced in Tharaka in 1964 by Evangelist Kaunga Gabriel at Giampondo (Rwanda, 2017). Evangelist Kaunga hailed from Tharaka and had become a Christian while in Mombasa. He was assisted by Njeru, who hailed from Embu (Rwanda, 2017). Kaunga's work was to preach the gospel from door to door and open Churches while Njeru would baptize and do pastoral work (Rwanda, 2017). The EAPC came with a lot of charisma. God accompanied the proclamation of the gospel with signs and wonders: many who were sick were healed; those who had been bewitched were delivered and some witches even brought their artifacts including horns (*ngochi*) to be burnt upon conversion (Rwanda, 2017). Such manifestations of the move of God as well as the fact that the missionaries were a good example furthered the gospel (Rwanda, 2017). Even some of those that had joined FGCK left and joined EAPC (Njagi, 2017). Though FGCK and EAPC are Pentecostals, the EAPC attracted more people in Tharaka. The EAPC recruited many mission workers in the mission field and paid them hence ensuring that many got the message of Christ (Njagi, 2017; Rwanda, 2017). FGCK on the other hand, had very few workers who served as ministers and they often had no salaries. This hindered inefficiency in the delivery of the message (Njagi, 2017). Further, FGCK was firstly selective in their evangelism. They targeted local leaders who were perceived as people of influence in society. These included people like clan leaders and elders (Njagi, 2017). Persuading such, took longer and thus slowed down evangelism (Njagi, 2017). EAPC however, was not selective in its outreach. It targeted all and sundry and as such, was able to reach out to masses and spread faster (Njagi, 2017). In fact, EAPC has the largest number of pastors in Tharaka and is the largest with 105 pastors and 9,500 members (Rwanda, 2017).

Other churches continued to be established in Tharaka soon after independence. The African Inland Church (AIC) was started in Tharaka in 1965 at Tunyai by Pastor Ndauti Muriungi Nguũ from Thagichu (Karuri, 2017). He was soon followed by Pastor Philip Matoro from Kangundo. The second centre to be opened was Nkondi and soon, others followed (Karuri, 2017). Door to door evangelism was also the main means of evangelism (Karuri, 2017). In 1975, Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) opened a branch at Kithinge together with a primary school and around 59 members were enrolled (Nkonge, 2016). In 1975, a primary school and congregation were also started in Twamikua in Chuka-Igamba Ng'ombe (Nkonge, 2016). Though other congregations were gradually founded in places like Nkondi, Marimanti and even Tunyai, the growth too has been slow due to leadership problems as well as reluctance of members to reach out to others (Njoroge, 2017). The Redeemed Gospel Church (RGC) was started in 1992 at Rũngũ but closed shortly after (Kabuitu, 2017). The work was revived when Pastor Kabuitu opened RGC in Nkondi in 1999 and from then on, RGC has grown steadily in Tharaka (Kabuitu, 2017). Charismatic and independent Churches have also mushroomed in Tharaka contributing to rapid spread of Christianity. Currently, over 90% of Tharaka people are confessing Christians (Kabuitu, 2017).

All these evangelical churches have been teaching and preaching that for one to be a disciple of Christ, he or she has to abandon his/her attachment to the traditional world-view as an outward expression that he/she has become a Christian (Muthomi, 2017). Conversely, many evangelicals have remained attached to their traditional world-view even after conversion. This necessitated this study.

#### **4. Persistence of Tharaka Traditional Worldview among the Evangelical Converts**

The evangelicals have consistently proclaimed the gospel in Tharaka for over sixty years yet some evangelicals have continued to hold on to some Tharaka traditional worldview aspects which evangelicals condemn. Some evangelicals still hold the view that their ancestors communicate with them through dreams and when this happens, the message they receive is treated seriously and acted upon (Nyaga, 2017). This is in spite of the fact that evangelicals in Tharaka condemn necromancy and also teach that the dead are not allowed to appear to the living (Deut.18:11, Lk. 16: 24-31) hence disagreeing with the Tharaka view that the dead can appear to the living (Kabuitu, 2017). It is also a common belief that ancestors can still control one's destiny. In some Pentecostal circles in Tharaka, poverty is associated with an ancestral spirit especially if one bears the name of a person who was poor; such a spirit is rebuked in Jesus' name as a means of delivering one from this bondage (Kabuitu, 2017). Onunwa (2011) also notes that this belief is found in many charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Africa where ancestral spirits are cast and bound to allow one to prosper in one area or another.

The fear of witchcraft is pervasive among evangelical believers in Tharaka. Their fear of being bewitched makes them dread leaving items anyhow rest witches pick and use them to bewitch them. They too may not respond to the need of a witch who may request them to assist them with some money for fear that the witch will use the money given to cause harm to the giver (Nyaga, 2017). Some Christians in Tharaka too secretly practice witchcraft. Commenting about Africa in general, Nyabwari & Nkonge (2014) note that though claiming to be Christians, some keep snakes, birds and human dry bones in the roof tops of their houses in order to retain power in witchcraft.

On the other hand, some Christians are so afraid of being bewitched that they seek ways of protecting

themselves from harm. Some may protect their homestead against harm by witches through protective medicine (*Nkinga*). Others may protect their businesses and property through *gitigo* that is protective medicine (Kabuitu, 2017). In some cases, some believers place the Holy Bible on the bedside as they sleep to guard themselves against effect of mystical powers (Kathanya, 2017). Some believers too wear charms and amulets in different parts of the body for protective purposes. All this attest to the reality of fear of witchcraft among some evangelicals in Tharaka. In addition, many evangelicals in Tharaka consult medicine men and diviners especially in times of crisis. When someone or a member of the family goes through periodic suffering and modern medicine fails to help the individual, many result to visiting a diviner to diagnose the cause of the problem and offer a remedy (Kathanya, 2017). Some converts too are given charms to attract and retain customers in their businesses, to lure a lady or man to oneself (*Munyanjo*) or to exert control over one's spouse (*Kagwiria*). All this is done secretly to avoid being known (Kathanya, 2017).

The clergy are not left out in this practice of magic. To draw crowds in their meetings and churches, some preachers use magic charms acquired through the help of the medicine men (*agao*). This they do behind the back of the unsuspecting congregation (Mutembei, 2017). This observation too is supported by Kiremu (2009) who notes that magical powers are used by some Christian preachers in the healing ministry: these ministers do it by chanting magical powers through the help of magicians. The use of these magical powers as a source of a minister's power is not supported by evangelical teaching. A minister's power should emanate from the authority of scriptures and the power of the Holy Spirit (Grudem, 1994).

Moreover, some evangelicals in Tharaka believe and teach on generational curses as well as belief in the mystical power of words. It is said that believers can suffer the curses of their forefathers and consequently prayers of deliverance are made in order to break such curses. The fear of curses may also make others to hold to family traditions which are considered by evangelicals incompatible with the Christian faith: they fear breaking the practice and hence suffering effects of a curse. Similarly, the teaching that the words have a mystical power and so believers can create their own reality through speaking into situations and bringing desired results is daily gaining ground among evangelical churches in Tharaka. This is because they find it appealing as Africans (Nyaga, 2017).

Further, Tharaka view of causation is still prevalent among evangelicals in Tharaka. These therefore hold that prolonged suffering is not an accident but is caused by an agent. Prolonged suffering may either be a result of witchcraft or a curse. Thus, a jealous neighbor or one's enemy may decide to bewitch a Christian and the Christian suffers the effect of witchcraft. Pertaining to this, Kunhiyop (2008) likewise asserts that many African Christians believe that the ultimate cause of suffering, sickness and death that affects God's children is among other things, witchcraft. Theoretically, they may believe in a Supreme God who is sovereign but practically, their faith is dualistic: like Manicheans or Gnostics, their perception of ultimate reality is that there are two equal competing realities, one good and one evil (Kunhiyop, 2008).

Generational curses are also viewed as a cause of a believer's suffering by some evangelicals in Tharaka. Generally, among Pentecostals today, the struggling and suffering of Christians find explanation in the teaching of generational curses with allusions made to the Pentateuch for biblical support. On this subject, Godsay (2016) notes that the choices our ancestors made affects us today and are the cause of generational iniquity and blood-line curses. Repeated accidents in the life of an individual for example, are interpreted as an indication of the presence of generational curses in the lives of individuals. When one goes through a long period of suffering, a convert may begin digging the family background to try and discover whether the present situation he or she is in is caused by a generation curse.

Finally, some evangelicals still hold on to the anthropocentric worldview. Many turn to God because of the personal benefits they hope to gain from their relationship with God. They come to Christ because they want their businesses to be blessed, a job promotion in their workplace, a husband or wife et cetera. If this is not met, they are more often than not quick to leave the church for they become disillusioned. They too may move to another church seeking out for the goodies (Nyaga, 2017). The immediate need, not eternity thus becomes a motivation for seeking God. The prosperity gospel, which holds that the death of Jesus Christ on the cross promises material, physical and visible blessings for anyone who would believe in the gospel for that is God's will for all believers is highly emphasized (Adeleye, 2011; Mbugua, 2016; McConnell, 1995; Musyimi, 2016).

## **5. Reasons Responsible for the Persistence of Tharaka Traditional Worldview among Evangelicals in Tharaka**

There are several factors that account for the persistence of Tharaka traditional beliefs and practices among evangelicals as discussed below.

### **5.1 Failure by the Evangelicals to adequately meet converts' needs**

Tharaka traditional religion, like other African religions is an experiential religion and so addresses day to day concerns of the people. Kathanya (2017), notes that Jesus Christ met the immediate needs of the people who

came to him. He healed the sick and so his ministry was relevant to the people. However, there is spiritual bankruptcy among evangelicals in Tharaka and so when people come to the church to be prayed for when they are sick, and the church is not able to help, these people turn to the traditional diviners and medicine men for their spiritual cure.

Further, Christianity at most does not offer instant answers to people's problems. This is unlike what the Tharaka people have been used to in the Tharaka traditional setting. When one goes through a troubling time, the Tharaka people go to diviners to understand what is amiss and if they have been bewitched, they go to a medicine man (*mūgao*) for treatment. There is thus an immediate answer to their problem (Mwangi, 2017). When one becomes a Christian, upon one going through a difficult situation, one may pray for himself or herself or request the pastor or the congregation to pray for him or her. If the healing is not forthcoming, some may choose to visit diviners and medicine men for a solution. They may lack the patience and perseverance or consider Christianity having failed to help them (Kathanya, 2017).

In times of crisis, individuals going through such a situation may require attention. When some pastors or church leaders fail to visit these members at such times, these church members may think that the pastors or church leaders are indifferent to their needs. They view that the church does not care about what they are going through. This is either because the pastors are few or so cannot attend to the needs of all people. Some pastors also serve in more than one congregation which makes home visitations difficult. Others are not well equipped and so may not be able to address every issue brought to them (Nyaga, 2017). As Turaki (2006) observes, a new religion should be able to meet the needs of individuals that the older religion met so that the members can embrace it and not go back to the former religion. Christianity in Tharaka has failed to seriously address social, psychological and spiritual concerns of individuals so that some have from time to time reverted to their pre-Christian beliefs and practices condemned by evangelicals. These visit traditional specialists such as diviners and medicine men for solutions to their problems. This situation then may be understood not as a problem with the gospel but how the gospel is proclaimed by evangelicals among the people of Tharaka.

## 5.2 Poor Evangelism

Poor evangelism was displayed when Christianity was initially introduced in Tharaka. Kamwara (2017), Njagi (2017) and Rwanda (2017) note that when Christianity was introduced in Tharaka, both the Western missionaries and the African evangelists just condemned the Tharaka traditional worldview and culture; and urged converts to outrightly reject all of it as it was regarded evil. There was no attempt to seriously engage the Tharaka culture in evangelism (Rwanda, 2017). This condemnatory attitude made many converts secretly practice the old religion alongside the Christian faith as they still found it relevant (Kathanya, 2017). The method of evangelism has not yet changed much to date. There is still outright condemnation of the Tharaka traditional cosmology without at most letting people see what the Bible says about these beliefs and practices.

Further, many joined the Christian faith without a proper understanding of the essence of Christian faith. Njagi (2017) notes that some people who joined the Christian faith during the western missionary era joined Christianity not because they had been persuaded by the gospel of Jesus Christ but rather they had joined Christianity because they had received gifts from missionaries. For lack of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, these individuals secretly continued to practice the Tharaka traditional faith while still professing to be Christians. The downplaying of personal conversion in evangelism therefore leads to people joining the Christian faith without commitment hence practice both religions (Njagi, 2017).

Closely related to the above is the fact that the anthropocentric worldview expressed in the current teaching on wealth and health gospel prominent among some evangelicals in Tharaka has promoted poor evangelism. This is because Christ is not presented to the people as primarily coming to deal with human sin but as having come to make the life of people better through giving them a better life here and now (Mutembei, 2017). In such preaching then, calling people to personal repentance or discipleship is deemphasized producing a breed of Christians who will easily leave the Christian faith under any pressure and go back to their former religion. When what these believers were promised is not forthcoming, they too go back to the traditional religion (Mutembei, 2017).

Evangelism is not only limited to sharing the gospel through words but also through deeds. This more often than not lacks, giving Christianity a poor image among the unregenerate. Kaburu (2017) notes that when believers abandon the Tharaka beliefs and practices upon becoming Christians yet do not live by the ideals of the Christian faith, their behavior is viewed as resulting from abandoning the Tharaka way of life. Consequently, this may make some Christians and non-Christians have a poor opinion about the Christian faith preferring the old way of things. Some weak Christians may therefore go back to the old ways, leading to the persistence of Tharaka traditional worldview.

## 5.3 Failure to acknowledge the Tharaka worldview in the making of disciples

There is not much which is done to help converts get rid of aspects from the Tharaka traditional worldview

which evangelicals consider incompatible with biblical teachings. Kaburu (2017) asserts that evangelicals in Tharaka overlook the fact that people get converted at different ages and thus by the time they are converted, they have already embraced Tharaka worldview aspects which may not go easily after conversion. Furthermore, does conversion to Christianity imply abandoning one's culture? Kaburu (2017) further argues that much time is spent interacting with people with Tharaka assumptions about life and so these are likely to influence individuals more than the two to three hours spent with their pastors on Sunday. In short, he notes that there lacks a deliberate effort by evangelicals in Tharaka to help their members deal with Tharaka worldview aspects which they consider unbiblical.

Commenting on this, Chemorion (2014) notes that one feature of worldview is that they are tenacious and resilient; therefore, deliberate measures need to be taken to address pre-Christian worldview when one becomes a believer. This too is further supported by Gousmett (1996) who also notes that when people join the Christian faith, there is need for a worldview transformation on the part of the convert which needs to be deliberately facilitated by the church. Failure to do this allows believers to continue with pre-Christian assumptions hence persistence of Tharaka traditional worldview which evangelicals condemn.

#### **5.4 Lack of grounding in the word of God**

Some evangelicals are ignorant about what the Bible says about some aspects in Tharaka cosmology which evangelicals condemn hence continue holding on to them. Mutugi (2017) notes that some converts visit diviners and medicine men because they lack biblical understanding of the fact that suffering is sometimes willed by God to make believers mature. He adds that when such people pray and God seems not to respond, they become impatient and revert to traditional religious specialist for help. Failure to understand the biblical teaching on suffering and the place of prayer and waiting on God in such times may lead some converts to seek help from diviners and medicine men, something which evangelicals condemn.

Kunhiyop (2008) similarly points out that,

Ignorance of scriptural truths and theology has also contributed to the resurgence of witchcraft-related beliefs and practices among Christians. A quick survey would show that many professing Christians have no knowledge of the Scriptures and are unaware of what the Bible really teaches on many issues, including witchcraft. Pastors and evangelists are more prone to issue superficial condemnations than to give systematic teaching on philosophical, religious and theological beliefs and values in the African context.

This lack of grounding in the word too leads some converts to keep protective medicine (*Gitigo*) to protect their businesses, bewitch their relatives to get a contested family piece of land or even use charms to have a say in a family where the man is so domineering (Njagi, 2017). These are all indicators of spiritual immaturity owing to lack of grounding in the word.

#### **5.5 Psychological factors**

Fear also accounts for persistence of Tharaka traditional worldview. Some believers still fear witches and so feel vulnerable to their sadistic tendencies. They think that they can be attacked by them, lose their lives through their attack or not have any success in their business (Karuri, 2017). They do not believe that God is able to protect them from witches and if they do, it is merely theoretical and so use protective medicine such as *Gitigo*, *Nkinga* or even charms. This way, they feel that their property as well as their life is secure. Some of these believers fear witches more than they even fear God (Njoroge, 2017). Medicine men and diviners are thus consulted to escape real or imagined threat.

These converts may listen to preaching's condemning these actions or even read in the Bible about God's power to protect and deliver but they may not fully understand or believe this and so, stick to their pre-Christian way of doing things (Njoroge, 2017). This fear thus keeps these believers in bondage and encourages the practice of turning to these religious specialists for as Mwansa (2017) notes, people's way of doing things or solving problems is copied from those before them to a large extent; for the Tharaka people them, people dealt with the fear of witchcraft through seeking protection from a medicine man (*mũgao*).

### **6. Conclusion**

Although the evangelicals have evangelized in Tharaka for decades, where they have emphasized on adopting modernism or rather Christianity, the Tharaka converts have firmly held to their traditional world-view. This is a clear lesson to all those spreading Christianity and other new religions not to expect the receivers of their message or the new converts to abandon their cultures for the new religion. This is the mistake that the first missionaries in Tharaka made. Just as their counterparts in other parts of Africa, they expected the people they evangelized to leave their cultures and religion and adopt the western culture which they had baptized 'Christianity' as the way of life. Because of this, the Tharaka people refused to change from their traditional ways to adopt modernism. This has continued for years and it may not change. In this regard, the evangelicals

and other denominations evangelizing among the Tharaka have to change their mode of evangelization if they want their gospel to be relevant to the people. Considering people's culture is very important as we spread the gospel of Christ.

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