

Abstract

This article examines the concept “curses” and the practice of “cursing” among the Agĩkũyũ of Kenya and draws out the emerging insights and interpretations indicating their socio-cultural and religious benefits. The enigmatic phenomenon is that there is a real phobia for “curses” and “cursing” and yet these practices are still conserved as invaluable elements in the African people’s concrete historical life. Whatever discipline one may belong to and the faith affiliation one adheres to, one finds oneself posing questions- and in some cases questioning the questions- as follows: What is a curse and what is cursing? Is fear of curses grounded on any rational belief? Who is entitled to proclaim curses? What is the main objective in cursing? Who are the recipients and why? Can any good emerge from curses and cursing? Why does a curse scare some and spare others, terrify some and horrify others? What good or evil does it render to the recipient? Are curses monolithic or are they multifaceted? What are their implications in the socio-cultural and religious realms? These and others of similar nature are the concerns of this Article with a specific focus on the Agĩkũyũ community.