

Cases of “Satanism” touched by the ‘Fingers of Thomas’

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During one year (2008), the Fingers of Thomas followed up around 30 cases of people who either said to be former Satanists, or who felt attacked, manipulated or victimised by Satanists. These people felt directly involved or confronted with Satanism, and the cases went along with traumatic experiences.¹ It were cases of pastoral concern, where individuals or families looked for help from the church in connection with Satanism.²

Satanism can mean different things in Zambia. The aim of the following presentation is not to evaluate the stories, but to see what the stories were about and how they affected the different people involved. We classified them into different types, though we are well aware that it is not a perfect classification.

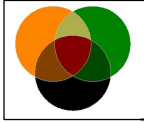
¹ A number of other cases of rumours and suspicions were brought before the group. As long as no person came forward who was directly involved in the story - either as a victim of (perceived or real) Satanism or as a Satanist - the group did not take it up. Nor did it take up cases that were referred to as Satanism but did not leave a serious impact. A number of people for example claimed (without hard evidence) to have escaped from abduction or kidnapping by perceived Satanists.

² Most of the members of the ‘Fingers of Thomas’ are Catholic, but the group dealt also with a number of cases that non-Catholics brought before the group.

A. People identifying with their role as Satanists (8 cases)

The group dealt with eight cases of people who called themselves “ex-Satanists”, “delivered Satanists”, or “reformed Satanists”. All of them were either “delivered”, or they were in the process of being delivered (meaning being prayed over by Pentecostal pastors, by Catholic priests and/or other charismatic groups. In a way, all of them either were from a charismatic/Pentecostal background, or they were introduced into such a background by their families when they were looking for help to deal with the events that were going on. When members of the Fingers of Thomas interviewed them, they were no longer in Satanism, or they were in the process of coming out. Their testimonies mostly followed the charismatic/ Pentecostal language of deliverance.

In seven cases, the Satanists said they were initiated involuntarily, for example by family members (a grandmother, a mother), or that they had been Satanists since birth, meaning they were born as Satanists. According to their testimonies they had never consciously chosen to become Satanists; Satanism had been something that just happened to them. Once initiated they felt they were belonging no longer to their families but somewhere else. Most became aware of this belonging first through dreams, and then through events in “real life”. They say that eventually they had to



make a covenant with the Satanic world, though all of them said that they did not know what it really meant. Some of them said that they attained powers that ordinary people do not have, and they identified with the role of being Satanists. "It gave me powers and I felt great".

Most of these 'ex-Satanists' spoke of experiences like flying, walking through walls, going under the ocean or under the "Red Sea", visiting Nigeria, the Kilimanjaro, or the Indian Ocean, or the USA. They said people outside their own circle of Satanists would just see copies of their physical bodies behind. Some spoke of dividing their souls, entering different bodies, or of being at different places at the same time.

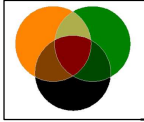
The Satanic world of this type refers to a different world, a spiritual world, and it would be futile to dig a borehole so as to investigate this Satanic "underground world" under some ocean. Nor are the "Nigerias", "USA", and the "Kilimanjaros" of this world necessarily the same as the places of such names that we know in the physical world. The Satanists had difficulties to describe and separate the two different worlds. Sometimes they referred to the physical world as the "real world", but often they described also the Satanic world as the "real world" from where the physical world as we know it becomes manipulated. In fact it was not possible for them always neatly to separate one from the other.

The testimonies of the delivered Satanist 'queens' and 'princes' were similar in vocabulary and symbolism, and they provide us with the stereotyped images of the Satanic world. They are similar also to a number of published testimonies that are circulating all through Zambia in charismatic/Pentecostal circles.³

³ An example is the published testimony of Evangelist Kabila as described in http://www.fenza.org/files/fingers/satanism_in_zambia_a_pastoral_challenge.pdf.

Here a part of a testimony of a young woman, who was delivered from Satanism around ten years ago:

As a child I experienced a lot of rejection. When I was sent to my aunt I was abused in many ways. I started to dream of people visiting me. They were wearing black robes. In my dreams they took me to the ocean and to the underground world. They told me I was a queen. Once I dreamed that they tied on my arm a black cloth. I thought it was a dream, but when I woke up in the morning, I had a black cloth tied on my arm. Another time I dreamed I was given a ring to wear in the underground world. I woke up in the morning with that ring on my finger. These were dreams, but when I was ten years old, the dreams became reality, and the very people I had seen in my dreams started to visit me in real life. They took me out. They taught me how to walk and how to fly. We were going to many different places and to the underground world. A copy of my body remained behind in the house or in the school, but my real self went with those people. I was meeting with many other Satanists. I was given 100 bodyguards to look after me, whom I could send wherever I wanted. Other Satanists had to climb up the hierarchy by following orders and going out on missions. But myself I was a queen from the very beginning. Because in the spiritual world I was married to Lucifer himself. I was his wife, from my birth. I killed people. I caused accidents. I was sent on many missions. It was my task to destabilise churches. I could split my soul in five and enter five churches at the same time. I made people fall asleep during the prayers, and I really enjoyed causing confusion. I was a choir mistress in church, and even during the mass I was possessed by the devil, but people never noticed. Other queens were sent



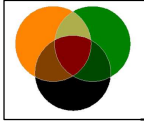
on missions to sleep with pastors. When they slept with a pastor, he would lose his brains and die. But myself I was never sent to sleep with a man, because I was the wife of Satan. The devil was jealous of any man who wanted me. That is why I could never get married in the physical world. The devil took my heart of flesh. You know, Satanists have no love and no feelings. The devil wants no joy. And the devil wants no prayer. Sometimes we failed a mission when the people we attacked were praying. Prayer is stronger than Satan. When true prayers were around, we were feeling very hot, it was too hot to bear, that is why we could not be close to people who pray. It was prayer that finally delivered me from Satanism. But it was a long way, it took three full years to deliver me [prayers in Ndola and in Lusaka], and many people prayed for me. Those who prayed were strong, they did not give up. I was despising them, I was stubborn and just difficult, because the devil did not want to give me up. Finally they removed my spiritual rings and I was delivered. But even then, it took still a long time for me to get my feelings back.

In another dramatic case, the family of a girl in grade 11 discovered prayers and dedications to the Devil in the pupil's copy-books. They had been concerned already for some time about her behaviour (rudeness, disobedience, and once attacking her sister with a knife but dropping it). They challenged her, and shortly afterwards she collapsed while in school. Eventually she was brought to a Pentecostal pastor and later to a catholic priest to be prayed over. She spoke about being initiated into Satanism by members of a new church in their area who visited her on one of their evangelising missions and who wrote her name into their book. "Thus they started to work on me through my name." At first she started meeting the very members in dreams, where she was shown the powers of the other world,

and slowly she was made part of that world. At first – so she said – she had to pass through different chambers; in one of them her heart was removed to be locked up; in another chamber she lost her willpower. She passed through several schools under the ocean in which she did very well (at a time when her results in the normal physical school dropped drastically and when the school authorities complained to her family). Then she was given a spiritual husband (a black man of the USA) and the task "to kill 365 people in every country of this world by causing road accidents", a mission which she succeeded except for Zambia, where she failed to sacrifice her older sister, "because she was too prayerful". The failure of the mission brought her into a crisis which eventually led to her deliverance.

Another young woman who was delivered by two Pentecostal pastors is presently studying in a Bible College to become a pastor herself and deliver other Satanists. Some 'Fingers' filmed her testimony, which she did very willingly. Another case is of a 13 year old boy (a former street-child and very traumatised), initiated by his grandmother, who confessed to have sacrificed his mother, "but without knowing". Other cases are from Secondary School boarding schools, where some queens of the Satanic world caused panics that gravely disrupted the school life.

A rather humorous story came from a young man and self-confessed Satanist who wanted his testimony to be recorded and broadcasted on radio. He stated that he was initiated by his grandmother. After some years of training in the underground world where he was taken from school to school and from chamber to chamber (each one he can describe in great detail) he was made to work in the laboratories and factories that produce cosmetics, which he was supposed to distribute in the 'real world' so as to find new members. He spoke of secret meetings "on planet Jupiter" where they were not allowed to laugh. On various occasions, when he had succeeded in a number of



missions, he was allowed to meet Satan himself. But when “men of God” were really praying hard, the whole underground world was shaking. Having become an important man in the underground world, he was sent on difficult missions. His task became to look for recruitments in the churches that have the Holy Spirit. “In the other churches which do not have the Holy Spirit [in which he included the Catholic church] we did not bother; they belonged already to us.” One Pentecostal church eventually taped his testimony and produced a well selling record.

The only ‘voluntary Satanist’ we dealt with was a refugee who had passed through many countries over a ten-year long journey, who said he had entered Satanism while being in Eastern Congo. A friend had told him about the riches that one would gain when becoming a Satanist. He said he approached a Satanist woman for powers and riches, but that he did not become rich. Instead he started to have experiences of being drawn under the ocean into a different world. Later while in Zambia he said he was initiated into a secret occult society. Now he felt haunted by some unknown people, feeling they wanted to kill him, and he experienced also terrible dreams. He was seeking help from the church to be delivered from the powers of that cult and from his own sins. But the testimony was very difficult to follow and the story kept changing. The man was highly traumatised and also lived in very insecure conditions in Kanyama.

That we have only one (confused) case of voluntary Satanism does not mean that voluntary Satanism does not exist in Zambia. It simply means that nobody else came to seek help.⁴ Our cases were those of pastoral

⁴ Some other cases were brought before the group where neighbours or relatives (in two cases own fathers) were suspected to be voluntary Satanists. Many rich people are labelled ‘Satanists’ in Zambia due to suspicions, dreams (family members or neighbours felt visited and haunted by them in dreams), rumours, some “revelations” obtained

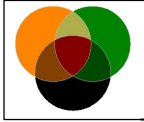
concern, where troubled people themselves looked for help from the church. The Satanism encountered by *us* was the Satanism of an involuntary type.

The Fingers of Thomas consider the Satanic “underworld” to belong to the subjective worlds of the ‘Satanists’ (the *inner* world). As such they demand tools of interpretation that take into account a person’s life-history, worldviews and religious background, but also the psychological and social forces that play themselves out in the person and that shape or reshape their subjective experiences. The ‘Fingers of Thomas’ tried to look into the family histories of the cases. 5 out of the 7 cases had been marked by a very dramatic if not traumatic childhood; they had experienced a lot of rejection from their own families and sometimes abuse. Since the testimonies were given during or after deliverance and conversion into a born-again or charismatic background, we consider the testimonies to be largely re-interpretations of life-stories, stories reshaped by the paradigm of Satanism.

But the stories and symbolism remain intriguing. When there is a testimony of a Satanist in church, people travel far to listen, and to listen again. The symbolism is capturing and the testimonies provide us with an intimacy of the Satanic spiritual world for which many long. And even people who do not believe in the presence of the ‘underworld’ can still be captured by the artistic quality, the inner conviction of the narrator, and the dramatically unfolding storyline.

B. People feeling invited into the Satanic world by powerful spiritual forces, but resisting and not accepting (14 cases)

during some prayer meetings, or behaviour that is considered bizarre. Since the Fingers of Thomas aim at diminishing suspicions rather than spreading further suspicions, we did not follow up such cases.



A number of people made an experience with the Satanic world or 'underworld', but they resisted the appeal to become Satanists. They felt overcome by some very strong Satanic forces that tried to coerce them into Satanism, but they refused to cooperate and they sought help from their pastors at the onset of these experiences.

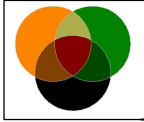
An interesting aspect is that 9 out of the 14 cases had their experiences of being taken into the underground world during the time they were being prayed over by charismatic or Pentecostal pastors or shortly afterwards. They were seeking prayers, and actually they became aware of their connection with Satanism during or after intensive prayers. (The "Satanists" of type A were avoiding prayer.)

Here an example of a young woman, who was a dedicated youth leader in a catholic Parish. The following experience (her first encounter with the underground world), happened when she came back home from a charismatic prayer meeting, when she had an argument with her brother which upset her greatly. Later at home she collapsed, after taking some tablets of an unknown type which she found on the table. The next day she collapsed again, and the family called in a Pentecostal pastor and some members of the charismatic prayer group. While they prayed, the girl experienced herself to be somewhere else under an ocean with totally different people and creatures around.

"That afternoon the pastor and his wife prayed for me. I fell down, and I could see myself leaving my body and look at my own body from a distance. I heard my body speaking with different voices; it was not me speaking, but voices speaking in me. The pastor told the demons to go, but they said: "Give us still some days before we go". The pastor said: "Whatever you ate on the graveyard has to come out", and I started vomiting very slippery things, and something I vomited looked like a

snake. Next, I saw myself under the ocean besides a snake and a lion and a girl. I was seated on a big chair. I wanted to go back home, but the girl told me: "you are not going anywhere, you will stay here." Meanwhile I could still hear the pastor praying from very far. The girl told me: "you are a princess, and you cannot leave your husband behind." My husband was both the snake and the lion. "You have been married here already for seven years, and you are a princess. At that point the pastor prayed very hard, and through his prayers the snake fell down, as if hit by a bullet. The girl and the voices under the ocean rebuked me: "Do you see what you have done to your husband? Anyway, you may go now, but know that we will come back." At that point, I saw myself walking along the shore of the ocean, until I came back home, re-entering my body. The pastor asked me what I remembered, and I narrated what I had seen. The pastor also narrated what he had heard. At some point, we all went to sleep."

The girl never wanted to be part of the underground world. But she remembered now some childhood dreams of the ocean and of snakes, and she wondered whether she had not all that time be a Satanist without knowing it. During the coming weeks, she had regular visions of creatures (people and animals) from the 'underworld'. Not only at night; she would meet them also in a mini-bus, in school, and at her home. She sometimes woke up at 01:00 hours (a symbolic time in testimonies of Satanists) when the creatures encouraged her to follow them back to the underground world. "You are one of us!" She never did, but she was very terrified by her experiences. She felt very comforted when members of the charismatic group visited her to pray for her. After some months the visions came to be less frequent. Eventually they stopped.



Another young woman dreamed repeatedly about three people dressed in black suits who invited her to follow them. From then onwards she would feel very uncomfortable to go to prayers (headaches, body aching). Since she stopped going to church, the family called in a charismatic prayer-leader. It was during the prayers that her whole body started itching. She started *kusemuka* (talking like a possessed person), during which she mentioned dead family members. Then she said that she had been sold and paid for, so the church should not get her back. This experience happened often, also when visited by members of the 'Fingers'. But she always insisted that she did not want to be part of that world. She was helped by a prayer service that she attended with all her family, and said that after the prayers both the dreams and the uncomfortable feelings during prayers left her.

Also in a number of other cases, the first experiences with the 'underworld' or with an evil force happened either during intensive prayer, or (in two cases) shortly after intensive prayer. When asked about this, one interpreted it by saying: "God wanted to make me strong for the experiences that followed".

Other cases, however, were not directly linked to prayer experiences. Some people (including one 10 year old boy) were haunted by inner voices enticing them to kill. In six cases people felt haunted by close family members (some dead, some alive), feeling their presence and their urge to initiate them into a dark force; they felt that this force was intervening with their affairs (exams, marriages) and that they were being manipulated by it, so that they would join. They did not want, but wondered whether they were strong enough to resist, since they felt the force to be very powerful. One married and one unmarried woman had repeated dreams of men "in black" having sex with them, and they had been told by some pastors that they had spiritual spouses who were sacrificing their spiritual babies in the underground world. (The

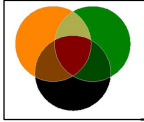
theme of spiritual spouses was common in type A).

People of type B were often very embarrassed by their experiences. They felt they were different from other people and they were seeking help from their pastors because they simply did not know what was going on with them. They had heard a lot about Satanism, and they feared they were in the process of being initiated into it.

Type C: People feeling sacrificed by Satanists (10 cases)

One girl (10 years old) picked up a 50,000 Kwacha note near her house, where her mother was selling beer. She showed it to her mother, who was agitated and demanded the money. But the girl ran away with it, and went into a shop where she bought some goods for herself and some gifts for her grandmother whom she adored. A few days later during a church service she started to shout that her mother sold her for 50,000 Kwacha. Later on she ran away from her mother. Repeatedly she met the mother, she shouted on top of her voice that she had been sold to be sacrificed for 50,000 Kwacha. A story started to circulate that the mother wanted to sacrifice a person with Satanic money which she dropped near her place where people were drinking beer, and that it was a tragic coincidence that her own daughter picked up the money. The Fingers visited the daughter a number of times at her grandmother's place to encourage her and to quieten her down. When they organised a prayer service for the sick, she attended and shouted and cried a lot during the prayer meeting, but towards the end of it she calmed down. A week later her mother died unexpectedly. The family refused throughout the events to get involved in rumours or to comment beyond the observable facts. But outside rumour linked the death of the mother to her 'failure' to sacrifice the daughter.

In two separate cases, young men (both of them heavy drinkers) disappeared for more



than a week, and reappeared with strange stories. The first young man had been reported missing by his family for 10 days, when a Pentecostal pastor found him lying in a pool of mud, far from home, in clothing that were not his own. Having been brought home, he remained in a confused state, unable to narrate a coherent story. What he remembered was that on the day he got lost after drinking he had entered a black car, and that people in the car took off his clothes and gave him new ones. Then his memory stopped. He just remembered that he found himself for a long time somewhere "under water" with dead bodies floating all around. After a week a white horse entered the water to take him out; then he was found by the pastor. The man was very confused, and it took him two or three months to recover. The Fingers followed up the case and spoke with the people he was drinking with the day he had disappeared. They were told that the boy had a *mulandu* (a case) with one of them for stealing a little amount of money, and some suspected that he was sold to Satanists because of this outstanding case. Slowly the man recovered a bit, but when he felt better, his father got a stroke and nearly died. People now started to talk that the father had been sacrificed, because the son had been saved.

The other young man (also a heavy drinker) got missing a day after he had come home from somewhere half naked and in a confused state with some money, telling his mother that they would be rich within a matter of days. At night he was confused, and the next morning he ran away. After more than a week the family consulted a *ng'anga* who told them that he had been abducted by Satanists to be sacrificed, but that he would bring him back. Indeed, the next day the man re-appeared, but could not say anything. Two years have passed and he is still confused.

Another case is of a girl whose father entered her bedroom at night with a lot of money, persuading her to meet people in the neighbouring house (which was not inhabited),

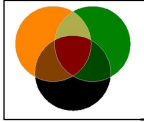
but she refused and ran away to an aunt. Some men followed her up a few days later, and left a letter to her grandmother (written in a hurry and in poor English): "Don't bother about the girl. If you bother she will be killed. Ask the father to her, he is the one sending us to catch her. We know ourselves where we will take her. She will be back either dead or alive. This is our business. She is the last one in your family to be sacrificed." The girl hid herself. The family referred the case to the police. The girl herself considers her father a Satanist.

In six other cases (four individuals and two whole families) people felt haunted by suspected Satanists of whom they dreamed, and they felt that their life was in danger. Two young men fell a few times into a trance, looking at something with open eyes, and speaking confusedly; neither the family members nor the visiting 'Fingers of Thomas' could wake them up, until they came to themselves to tell what they had seen. This repeated itself a number of times, but eventually for most of them the experiences stopped after some time, which the concerned families attribute today to prayer.

Conclusions

This brief synopsis does not do justice to the cases, some of which were very complex and interwoven into long family histories with many underlying dramas. Nevertheless, the synopsis brings out a few points:

1. Most cases were of an involuntary type. Satanists themselves felt they were victims. They felt initiated or sacrificed against their will or without their consent.
2. The experiences of types A and B have some similarity with people's experiences with spirits (*ngulu*, *mashawe...*) of which Zambia has a rich history. Both are involuntary. In fact, in one case a woman had struggled with *ngulu* for many years and her experiences with these *ngulu* was not solely negatively; it was only when she



read a pamphlet about Satanism that her inner voices changed – they became Satanic.

3. Most of the Satanists investigated by the group with only few exceptions spoke of a spiritual world of Satanism. This type of Satanism present in Zambia is different from Western Satanism (say the Church of Satan) where one finds empirical meeting places (grottoes...) to which in principle anyone can have access. The Fingers so far have not discovered any Western Satanist church in Zambia. This does not mean such groups do not exist. (Secret societies for example do exist in Zambia, but this does not make them Satanic.) As Fingers of Thomas we have not found a way to enter such groups and they are unlikely to reveal themselves to us if they are there. The types we dealt with pointed towards spiritual or mental or subjective realities. While some call them demonic, others may look into the realm of psychology for explanation. Again others may do both.
4. Satanists in Zambia are commonly thought to be people who sacrifice beloved ones so as to gain riches or powers of this world. They do so voluntarily, meaning they know more or less what they are up to. They gain money and powers through their sinister activities. Yet of all the cases we dealt with, only one person said he entered Satanism voluntarily, knowing what he was doing. All others said they were either victims of Satanists, or they entered Satanism without knowing what was happening. Incidentally, none of our Satanists ever became rich "in the real world" through their Satanist activities or their 'sacrifices' of relatives. Even two 'queens' who confessed to have killed and sacrificed hundreds of people remained as poor as their non-Satanic neighbours. It seems at this stage reasonable to see the "Satanic riches" as a metaphor. We may,

however, also link these worldly riches to the realm of money laundering, corruption, drug-trafficking, and misappropriation of funds, of which Zambia has a rich history, and which also require secrecy and "inside-knowledge"; they easily become part and parcel of popular rumours and imagination.

Saying this, child defilement, abductions, and ritual murders are taking place in Zambia in the belief that the body parts confer special powers on a business or a person. Sometimes the culprits have been brought to book, but at other times they remained unknown. In the past this was called witchcraft; today people in urban areas often refer to this as Satanism. Police reports confirm that ritual crimes are a reality in Zambia which sadly seems to be on the increase. Such investigations belong properly into the realm of the police and of criminal justice. So far the evidence seems to relate ritual crimes either to individuals or to small groups that are mostly short-lived, not to an organised and widespread network.

In Zambia there is also much confusion over groups that are often suspected of Satanism (sometimes due to Pentecostal preaching, but also due to the testimonies of delivered Satanists), for example the Freemasons, the Mormons, the small groups of Eckankar, and a number of other churches. Some Satanists of type A (with a dualistic born-again mindset) claimed that they were meeting as Satanists in such churches, and one woman claimed she was initiated into Satanism by one of such churches or groups. It shows how much 'Satanism' has bred a spirit of suspicion, of accusation and of mistrust between the many churches and also new religious movements.