

UNSEEN WORLDS

Dealing with Spirits,
Witchcraft, and
Satanism

Full 3rd Edition

Bernhard Udelhoven

Unseen Worlds

FENZA Publications

The Faith and Encounter Centre Zambia (FENZA) was founded in 2007 as an initiative of the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) with the aim of empowering Christians to face in openness the challenges of traditional and contemporary cultures, and to encounter people of different Christian denominations, contemporary religious movements and religions. FENZA publications aim at provoking discussions on cultural and religious topics that affect the Christian faith.

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Witchcraft,
and Satanism

by

Bernhard Udelhoven

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Dedication

To all who face evil or ambivalent spiritual powers. In a special way, I dedicate this book to the people who have shared with me their experiences with such powers. They have proven that such encounters do not need to lead to suspicions, accusations, fear and despair. This book is a witness that they can lead to growth, reconciliation, and to a wider sense of belonging.

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Spirits in the “traditional paradigm”: Traditional healers or doctors (*ng’anga*) discern sicknesses and spiritual afflictions with the help of their own ambivalent spirits. Above: Doctor Nyanga Zalila (Misisi Compound, Lusaka). Below: Doctor Chimphepo (Misisi Compound), attending to a patient after a whole night of dancing with her *vimbuza* spirits. (Photos: author)



Spirits in the “Pentecostal/charismatic paradigm”: Demons who bring sickness or misfortune are exorcised and defeated with the help of a stronger power, the Holy Spirit. Photos taken in the “Word of God Soul Winning Ministries”, one of the 95 different Christian churches of Bauleni Compound, Lusaka. (Photos: Günther Menn)



Falling down in the “Pentecostal/charismatic paradigm” can be provoked by demons who manifest themselves in the context of prayer, but also by the Holy Spirit as a sign of his powerful outpouring and anointing. (Photo above, taken in the “Word of God Soul Winning Ministries”, Bauleni Compound, Lusaka, and below, during a deliverance ministry of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Regiment Parish, Lusaka. (Photos: Günther Menn.)



Spirits in the “Zion Christian paradigm”: Many Zion, Mizimu and Mutumwa Churches in Zambia regard spirits as their helpers, sent by God, to heal sicknesses, to detect witches and charms, and to discern spiritual conditions. While some spirits need to be exorcised, others are regarded and appeased as angels. Photos taken in the Bauleni Zion Church, by Günther Menn).

Glossary of Zambian vernacular terms

<i>bangulu</i> (Bemba)	people befallen by <i>ngulu</i> spirits
<i>basangu</i> (Tonga)	spirits associated with local shrines of communal interest
<i>cishimba</i> (Bemba), <i>chizimba</i> (Chewa)	activating medicine
<i>cibanda</i> (Bemba), <i>chiwanda</i> (Chewa)	shade/spirit of a dead person (of a different lineage, or of an estranged person of the own lineage)
<i>mankowesha</i> (Bemba)	defiling/polluting practices of adults that make especially children sick (<i>kukowela</i>)
<i>mashawe</i> (Chewa), <i>masabe</i> (Tonga), <i>ngulu</i> (Bemba)	nature spirits, associated with local landmarks or foreign peoples
<i>mcape</i> (Chewa); <i>mucapi</i> (Bemba; plural: <i>bamucapi</i>)	witchfinder (witchhunter) and witch-cleanser
<i>mdulo</i> (Chewa)	A separation between cold and hot spheres of life (sexually inactive and active periods) maintained by wide-reaching taboo systems. Overstepping will “cut” (<i>kudula</i>) the breath especially of children, bringing sickness and death.
<i>mupashi</i> (Bemba) (plural: <i>mipashi</i>); <i>mizimu</i> (Nyanja) (plural: <i>mizimu</i>)	soul, ancestral soul, spirit
<i>myela</i> (Bemba)	undefined nature spirits
<i>ng'anga</i> (Bemba & Nyanja)	traditional healer and/or diviner
<i>vimbuza</i> (Tumbuka)	nature spirits, with their own system of diseases, dances and cures (similar to the Bemba <i>ngulu</i> or Chewa <i>mashawe</i>)

Preface

The approach of this book is the fruit of many discussions and experiences in the deliverance ministry in Zambia, to which many people contributed: pastors of various churches, traditional healers, but also historians, anthropologists and psychologists. Once we were able to formulate our approach into a coherent method, we managed to explain it to diverse audiences: rural and urban, literate and illiterate, in English, and in various local languages.

I hope that it will contribute towards a constructive discussion on a divisive topic. I have seen successful ministries dealing with witchcraft and spirits that build on different premises from what I am presenting in this book. For example, pastors who show no doubt about the presence of witchcraft and of demons in people's lives and who give very clear and authoritative directions about how to handle them, have often attracted crowds of afflicted people, who felt understood. The concepts of the pastors matched their own. Their concerns were acknowledged and maybe also addressed. But such an approach that gives quasi divine authority to the pastor and that downplays non-spiritual control mechanisms comes also with its costs: ethical, theological, social, psychological, and also spiritual, some of which I will draw out in this book. On the other side of the pendulum are pastors and priests who deny from the outset any reality of witchcraft or of spirits. They force afflicted people's experiences into their own secular categories of thought, shaped by the Western Enlightenment. This too can give rise to a form of violence that denies and silences afflicted people's own experiences.

The approach of this book takes people's experiences seriously together with their own concepts. We walk with them for as long as we can, while we want also to do justice to the psychological, social and theological insights that help us to lead a meaningful and connected Christian life in the modern world where different people hold different spiritual beliefs. In the process of this dialogue, the categories of thought are allowed to change and be transformed: those of the afflicted patient but also those of the helper. Both sides must be ready to embark on a journey that may lead to change in perception and attitude. The helper must be able to welcome the beliefs of the client, and even to appropriate them (to a certain degree), while at the same time maintaining congruence with his/her own beliefs and faith. The client must be ready to relate in a humanising way with all significant persons who contribute or stand in some form of rela-

tion to the negative spiritual affliction. The sheer size of this book shows that such a journey can be complex and involve very different directions.

LOCALITIES AND EVENTS THAT SHAPED THIS BOOK

In 1997, Mansa Diocese opened a new parish among farming and fishing communities in the Luapula Province (Zambia), and I—only just ordained to the priesthood—was part of the new team. People chose the name of the new Parish (“Kasamba”) in reference to a close by river of the same name, and they explained their choice with a wordplay: *kusamba inembo shesu*, “to wash away our incisions/ sins/ witchcraft”. While we were welcomed by church leaders, another parallel event took place, of which we were unaware. Just a few kilometres away, a diviner (*mucapi*—a witchcleanser) who called himself Kilimanjaro had been called to identify the witches of quite a few villages. Supported by a large crowd, he was moving from house to house, naked, to sniff out people’s charms. That the two different events—the opening of a new Catholic parish and the cleansing of villages from charms and witchcraft—coincided, epitomised for me the plurality of methods that people employ in order to deal with one of their most fundamental threats in life: witchcraft.

During my pastoral engagements, especially when visiting and praying with the sick, I got immersed into a much wider world of beliefs that encompasses many types spirits and different ways of looking at human personhood. During the first Mass in one of our prayer centres, a woman disrupted the church service by collapsing into a trance. Lying on the floor, she talked in a high-pitched voice about things I could not understand. People in the congregation were not disturbed by the event. Some women gently carried her outside and took care of her until we finished our prayers. Then they asked me to pray for her. By now, she was back to her senses, and people explained that she was troubled by *ngulu*, by “nature spirits” (as many translate the Bemba term). “These spirits are very common here, especially among women,” the chairperson told me. We had a short prayer together, and the woman went home.

During the following church council meeting, I asked how many of the attendants were also struggling with such spirits. More than half of the women present, and also a few men, said that such spirits had befallen them, either in the past or at present. They stayed behind after the meeting to talk about their experiences and struggles. Many felt they had a double vocation. They were active in the Catholic Church where they held leadership positions, yet they also had to cope with spirits, dreams

and extraordinary human faculties that they discerned through cultural patterns.

Dealing with people who were “befallen” by spirits became part of our regular pastoral life. Following Bemba terminology, I use in this book the term *befallen* rather than *possessed*.¹ The term *possessed* can carry the association of an utterly irrational behaviour; the *possessed* person may be dangerous to society and needs to be isolated and silenced. The “*befallen*” people, in contrast, lead normal lives. When the spirits come, they temporarily act out the personality of their spirits—for a limited time, and in culturally accepted modes. I learned that people *befallen* by spirits could develop an extraordinary commitment to a spiritual path. The popular Christian notion of demons was not doing full justice to these spirits, even if many Christians in Zambia call them evil spirits.² But also labelling *befallen* people with different forms of mental illness or “psychological problems”, that many priests attach to such conditions, was unhelpful, since such terms tend towards silencing the individual, and not encouraging self-expression. Like artists, people with spirits often have an ability to feel and absorb tensions in their surroundings, suffer from them, and at times transform them. Zambian traditions that tame the spiritual world are plentiful but ambivalent and open to different interpretations. We did not see, at that stage, any need to demonise the spirits or their traditions, but we lacked a pastoral approach through which we could help afflicted people. Many educated people, including many priests, brushed away such cases as hysterical episodes in a person’s life that did not need further discussions. The dividing effects of the “Milingo affair” (see chapter 4) had furthermore shown that a direct engagement with such spirits could easily lead into uncharted territories.

Dealing with the world of spirits can also lead to an entanglement in the world of witchcraft, to which the spirits seem very sensitive. I found it harder to engage with witchcraft beliefs on a positive level, because of the violence that flows from them. Our community of priests did not stay neutral in such disputes; we took sides—usually with the accused against the accuser. Here I witnessed the ugly side of witchcraft accusations and mob justice. A number of people, whom I knew well and in whose homes I was welcome to stay and sleep, were killed as alleged witches. Some died through poison, administered by professional witchfinders under the eyes

¹ The Bemba term *abawilwa ngulu* translates with “*befallen* by *ngulu* spirits”.

² In classical Greek, the word δαίμων (*daimōn*) denotes a spirit or a divine power. In this Greek sense, the word “demon” is close to the Zambian cultural heritage. However, in Christian terminologies the word is associated with evil and with the devil.

of onlookers and family. One teacher was burned to death in his house; an old headman, well known to me, was beaten to death and thrown into the Luapula River. Some were chased away, humiliated, beaten, and their property (houses, granaries, bicycles or boats) taken or burnt. The elderly father of one family with whom I worked and his two sons died on the same day (we believe they were poisoned), after the family of a dying neighbour, diagnosed with cancer in the remote hospital, accused them of having caused the sickness by witchcraft; a diviner had confirmed the accusation. A close friend of mine who had previously hidden a “witch” in her house from a mob, now herself accused of witchcraft, was stripped naked and dragged along the tarmac road, beaten and “washed” in a pool of mud in the midst of many onlookers, until she was saved by church members who finally intervened. Another elderly woman (I used to call her my mother) narrowly escaped mob justice when she was accused of “crash-landing” with a magical plane said to fly by means of human blood, after she got lost in the bush. In another occasion, a mentally ill person in our parish, who regularly came to hang out around the church, was stoned and beaten to death as a “crash-landed witch”, when he appeared at dusk half naked in a village where people did not know him.

While the parish team tried to cope with such events, our immediate concern was for the safety of the accused. Our next step was to encourage the accused to take recourse to the Zambian law, that criminalises the naming of alleged witches. However, while the police sometimes helped, the Witchcraft Act was rarely applied in a rigorous way. Witnesses often backed out. When witchfinders, or those who called them, were arrested, it was usually only a question of days before they were again released. The Witchcraft Act is unpopular among families who have to cope with deaths and sicknesses in the conviction that they were caused by witches who live in their neighbourhood. The involvement of us priests in witchcraft cases was not always well received by the accusing families and their friends, which included village headmen, headwomen and chiefs. We were accused of protecting the witches: “It is not your children they kill, but ours!” Such public confrontations showed us the need to engage with the topic of witchcraft on the layer of meaning and of a meaningful spirituality. Stopping witchfinding by recourse to the law and enforcing the law with the help of the police is not enough. The violence, suspicions and fears surrounding witchcraft are signs that the Church has not sufficiently addressed the wider world through which the forces of witchcraft are experienced.

Our team of priests and pastoral workers also received much support. Across denominational boundaries, people took great personal risks when intervening during accusations or mob justice. Some suffered beatings and insults when they intervened, or they were harassed by chiefs, when they unmasked financial profits, manipulations and trickery during the procedures of witchfinding. Public opinion about ways of dealing with witchcraft is polyphone. This has been important for our approach. It is necessary in each actual case to find common ground between people holding different ideas and beliefs with regard to what has happened; we call this common ground in our approach the “outer world”. Establishing the “outer world” in witchcraft-related issues is always a mediating effort across fracture zones.

After working in the Luapula Province and in the Luangwa Valley for ten years, I was given the chance, while working with the Faith and Encounter Centre (FENZA) in Lusaka, to get to know an urban dimension of the spirit world, and to gain experiences with charismatic groups and Pentecostal Churches. I was privileged to receive hospitality in innumerable churches, across Lusaka, but especially in Bauleni Compound. By then, Satanism had become the talk of the day, provoking panic in many schools and parishes. FENZA started a research on witchcraft and Satanism in Zambia, which I was heading. This brought me into contact with many people who testified to be former Satanists or who felt spiritually affected (“sacrificed”) by Satanists. Their life-stories, not unlike people who have to cope with nature spirits, revealed remarkable inner lives. Priests and pastoral agents expected from the research a tangible and meaningful approach to deal with this issue, without causing yet more panic. I hope this book fulfils the expectations.

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MISSIO Aachen offered a generous grant for the research and publication of this book. From 2007 to 2009, a number of priests and sisters worked together in a Think-Tank to evaluate different types of experiences that were associated with Satanism. Fathers Stephen Mwewa, Laston Lupupa, Isaac Balungu, François Richard, Marc Nsanzurwimo and Monga Tax, as well as Sr. Dolores Bulanda and myself constituted the core group. A number of lay-people, priests and sisters joined the group on various occasions to share with us their experiences or questions. The group members evaluated some of the case studies that I present in this book and of-

ferred precious insights. We shared different outlooks and understandings of what we saw and heard. This forced us to sharpen our tools of analysis.

Also in 2007, another research group—based on a youth group—formed itself in order to work with FENZA. The group called itself the “Fingers of Thomas” (named after the doubting Thomas of the Bible), and took up the quest of “putting a finger” on rumours of Satanism and following them up. Together, we developed the methods presented in this book. By “putting the finger of Thomas” on a story or testimony, we distinguish the aspects in a story that need an empirical approach for public action from those that reflect inner experiences. The members have also been visiting churches rumoured to be satanic, people suspected of Satanism, and families and schools affected by Satanism, always trying to find and understand other viewpoints and to see a larger picture. Together, we have held workshops, throughout Zambia, in parishes, schools and colleges. Such workshops linked us up with affected families across Zambia. All the individuals engaged in this research gave their time and resources—over a period of eight years—freely, with no financial benefits given. Instead, many times, while covering long distances across Zambia to give a workshop in parishes that were financially restrained, the “Fingers of Thomas” contributed towards their own transport costs. The group has been carried by a spirit of cooperation and humour and an eagerness to gain new experiences. Therefore, when I speak in this book of “our approach”, I refer to the approach developed in collaboration with the “Fingers of Thomas”.

A third group that was important for the development of this book is the KATEMBE research group, our little local association of traditional healers from across Zambia. During our regular meetings, hosted by St. Lawrence Parish (Lusaka), I learnt about fundamental cultural notions about the human body and the mediating characteristics of traditional medicines. The openness and longing for sharing knowledge among the healers has been very encouraging.

The approach developed in this book has ripened through our discussions in the pastoral teams of Kasamba and St. Lawrence Parishes (Mansa and Lusaka Dioceses) and in the FENZA team. We discussed nearly all of the case studies, and sometimes worked on them together. Marja Hinfelaar, director of Research and Programs of the Southern Africa Institute for Policy and Research, linked me up with the academic community in Zambia in the fields of religious studies and anthropology. I especially thank Toon van Kessel, Marc Nsanzurwimo and Thera Rasing for going through the draft of this book in detail, making comments, reflections

and clarifications that have flown into the book, and Katarina Zeravica, my editor. The photographs were shot by Günther Menn, who accompanied me to charismatic churches, with eyes to capture the energy during the unforgettable moments of ecstatic worship.

Although many people have contributed to this book, instead of giving a litany of names, I prefer to introduce one person who has given the approach its life-blood: Chuma Mfuni, one of the members of the “Fingers of Thomas”. Having studied medicine, microbiology and philosophy, he has extensive knowledge and mental resources that he applied to the topic of witchcraft and spirit possession. His ability for deep empathy with affected families and individuals, ever turning negative symbols into a life-giving direction, have shaped our pastoral approach. Dark symbols can be transformed into healing icons, if one dares to engage with them in meaningful ways, which is the topic of this book.

1

Introduction

Confusion in the spirit world

Africa is today the continent with the highest number of Christians worldwide. However, looking at the ever growing number of deliverance ministries, one may also conclude that Africa is the continent with the highest number of witches and demons! And also of occult practices, by which I understand ways of tapping into the spiritual world that are not acceptable to the wider society and that are feared to have dangerous consequences for others. An awareness of a complex spiritual world brings a maze of pastoral problems:

How can the Church help people who are or who feel threatened and affected by witchcraft, demons or forms of occultism?

Are exorcisms and spiritual warfare the best ways of helping the possessed?

How can the Church intervene when communities are ripped apart by witchcraft accusations?

How can one avoid “occult panic” at school and yet be able to help pupils who claim contact with occult forces?

In this book, I seek practical answers to these questions that have proven themselves in pastoral situations, that are informed by historical, anthropological and psychological approaches, and that are theologically sound from a Catholic and ecumenical perspective. Priests and pastors are approached by people who fall victim to such forces but also by people who fall victim to wrongful accusations. Ignoring these concerns means that the Christian Church excludes itself from important discernment processes that affect Christian families; people who struggle with such problems go somewhere else. However, tackling witchcraft and demons at

face-value easily entangles the pastor in a minefield of suspicions and accusations. In Zambia, the church is clearly divided when evaluating such troubling powers:

Do they belong to the demonic world masterminded by the devil?

Or are they part of the fear-provoking world of false and superstitious beliefs?

How are beliefs in spirits and witchcraft woven into the wider repertoire of African cultural and religious wisdom and understandings of human personhood, and of the nature of the cosmos?

Depending on the answer, some Christians combat demonic forces with exorcisms and prayers for deliverance to challenge the devil head-on and take the bull by the horns. Others hope that modern education will replace African beliefs with better-adapted models of causality; in the meantime, they don't engage with people's demons for fear of validating wrong beliefs. Others—though a minority—propose to study the subtle cultural dynamics of communal discernment in relation to an African understanding of what human life is about. In the confusions that arose from such diverse answers, the devil became a chameleon, changing colours with different approaches. Different Christian viewpoints in turn affected the local understandings of the spiritual world. New categories of spiritual evil developed in Africa; Satanism is one of such new concepts, and is not the only one. The consequences affect everybody. Consider the following two dramas:

DRAMA 1: JOHN LOSES HIS SOUL AND DIES

John tragically died, just before completing high school. His parents and family found it very difficult to cope with his unexpected death, especially since it was accompanied by strange events. Here the words of his mother, when she came to seek help:

A few weeks before our son died, he had fainted. He was sweating all over the body. Then, some days before his death, our son cried for help: "Mum, they have come and taken away my soul!"

We were terrified: "Who has stolen your soul, dear child?"

"They are people from the church. They even wear church uniforms when they come," he answered.

I said: "Where are they? We did not see anybody!"

He answered: "You can't see them mum, but I see them. I see them very often. They have been coming. Even at night I hear their voices."

We brought him to hospital, where he died. Also the doctors were surprised. They found nothing wrong. Now, after we buried, all of us in the house, we had strange dreams. I dreamt that he was walking towards me, saying: "Mum, I did not just die. So and so [a prominent member of the church] gave me a bottle with a red liquid that I had to drink. It has burnt my lungs and my heart. The doctors could not see those things. That is why I died."

Because of these events, a climate of distrust developed in the church. A prominent leader, who came to church every day, stood accused in church-gossip to be responsible for bewitching and sacrificing innocent people. Daily Mass never touched this issue. Complications in the medical history of the boy, who had been diagnosed with diabetes at an early age, were eclipsed when witchcraft came to the foreground ("In the hospital they found nothing wrong.") The church, instead of being a haven for peace and liberation, developed into a place where Christian life was marked by internal suspicions and witchcraft accusations. Examples of Christian churches that have become the locus of occult discourses are plentiful.¹

DRAMA 2: MARY LOSES HER WILLPOWER

Mary, a fifteen-year-old orphan, was brought to our group by her aunt and guardian for prayers. They feared that she had been initiated into Satanism. The aunt described what had happened:

Mary has become withdrawn. She has stopped answering our questions and is often very rude. She had never been like that before. In school, her marks deteriorated. Two days ago, I sent Mary to fetch a broom just in front of our house, but Mary was not coming back. Later, our neighbours found her on the road, talking senselessly. Mary, explain to the priest what has happened to you.

[*Mary, in a monotonous voice:*] Two girls passed by from our school. At school, they had given me a necklace. Now, they passed

¹ Also Catholic priests are not free from being implicated in rumours about the occult. One Catholic parish in Kasama Diocese recently had its priests withdrawn, because the parish priest himself was associated with witchcraft in popular rumours. Maia Green described the processes that led to Catholic priests (as members of the rural elite) being associated with witchcraft in a rural Diocese of Tanzania (Green 2003).

by without saying a word, and one of them made a wink before my face. My willpower was taken away. I could not resist but had to follow them. I just had to follow. We were somewhere else and there were mountains all around. Then they had a bottle with a red liquid, which they wanted me to drink. I did not know what it was, and I refused to drink. They said, "You are the queen of the coast."

Then I became paralysed and could not move. I wanted to cry, "Jesus!" but I could not. Finally, I could say "Jesus!" and they left me. I found myself with our neighbours who brought me back home.

[Aunt:] The next day I went to the school authorities to inquire about those two girls. While I was explaining what had happened, a girl entered the classroom in which we were sitting, picked up some papers, and looked at me in a very provocative way, full of hatred. Then she went out, without saying a word. The headteacher told me: "This is one of the girls you asked about."

I was abashed and said: "But how can you tolerate Satanism in your school?"

She answered: "These things happen everywhere, in all the schools. Some things you can only solve through prayers. We are in the last days [near the end of the world]."

What does it mean to take away a person's willpower? Or to be a queen in another world? Are we dealing with psychotic experiences? With a disturbed teenager's attempt to explain her changing world or to cover up something else? With Christian fundamentalist interpretations? Or with encounters with the spiritual world that determine life or death? This drama centred on symbols that are in Zambia commonly associated with Satanism: a mysterious necklace (which the aunt never saw), a strange red liquid, an experience of another parallel world, and the liberating effects of shouting out the name of Jesus. While some teachers remained sceptical ("These are just stories!"), the drama had consequences for them too. They became implicated in the narratives about Satanism by their students, and suspicions poisoned the learning environment and the trust of parents. Pressure on the school authorities by some parents led to the expulsion of students who were allegedly involved in Satanism, without any form of proof beyond what somebody dreamed or said or felt about the way they looked. The school authorities needed to show that they were doing something. Once Satanism came to the foreground as a non-ne-

gotiable reality, they had to “play along”, but nobody saw a concrete way forward of how to handle it.

I want to offer in this book a way of responding to such situations. We acknowledge in the descriptions and images, admittedly weird and out of the ordinary, a form of *religious language* that tries to communicate something that is true for the narrator: true in a certain sense and in a certain life-situation. Religious language can give present realities an epic or cosmic dimension by means of linking them to the sacred or the mythic, or to the fantastic, the irrational, or the grotesque, that cannot be grasped by the neat categories of everyday life. The very element of non-believability (by means of ordinary categories) raises it to a level that demands faith and belief in something out of the ordinary. It raises the awareness to another level of reality, that can of course be doubted and denied, yet that will nevertheless pose existential questions about the present-day situations. We acknowledge that such forms of religious language want to be unsettling. Apart from psychological, biological or social quests, they also beg for a religious answer. In the one we give, we trust in the power of the Christian faith also in extraordinary circumstances—that is our specific role and also the reason why people approach the church for help. As Christian leaders, we want our own religious language to be challenging, but also to be humanizing, and we realize that religious language can attain dehumanising tendencies, some of which I will explore in this book. Not every form of religious language helps affected families to become more loving or more accepting of difference.

Both narratives stroke a resonance with many listeners to whom the protagonists talked. They did not treat the stories as hysteric episodes that need to be silenced. Or as talk without sense. Though most people were perplexed and failed to comprehend what was happening, they listened and believed that the mother of the deceased boy had something important to say. And so had the girl, and her aunt. They understood the vocabulary that was used as belonging to the realm of witchcraft, where evil people prey on innocent victims. They understood it in an emic way: what happened to the boy and to the girl could happen to their own children too.

Where the church's language to the problem of witchcraft is that of outsiders who are unaffected, it will not touch the nerve that an emic language (from an insider's perspective) does. “If a lion could speak, we could not understand him,” said Ludwig Wittgenstein,² because we re-

² Wittgenstein (1958), §327.

main outsiders to his world and he to ours, even if he were to use English words. Our own answer to witchcraft may be scientifically, philosophically and theologically sound, but if it remains that of a lion, of an outsider to the shared life-context, it is irrelevant. Our language must deal with the same issues, concerns and relationships that make the witchcraft language so compelling in a given situation.

In the first drama, no priest could make the boy again alive. The witchcraft language was giving a clear answer to the family about the boy's strange death and the dreams. It bundled emotions of anger and fear onto the image of the church elder-witch. We did not know the precise medical or spiritual nature of the boy's death. But this did not prevent us to pray, and try to help the family to pray, and get in touch with their Christian vocation. We mourned with the family. We begged them to avoid fast conclusions, and not be led by anger or hatred, since this would place them on the same level as any witch who is driven by such dark forces. The Christian vocation demanded to acknowledge a common humanity even with the person they disliked. We acknowledged that the church elder was a witch *for the mother of the dead boy*, at the time she narrated the story. This did not make him a witch for us. We did not receive any form of evidence besides dreams that would justify to associate the elder with witchcraft, and we tried to protect his name from the witch-image in the community. We hoped that the church elder would not remain for ever subsumed under the label of the witch in the world of the mother. Religious and moral labels can change with time, or transform themselves, and also evaporate when they are no longer needed—this book will give plenty of examples. Direct interactions and face-to-face encounters are often the best way to start a re-humanising process. An avoidance of the witch, in contrast, cements the negative emotions.

Also in the second case, we were not able to provide a proper spiritual or psychological assessment of the girl. Instead of arguing about the truth-claims in her descriptions, we recognized in them a form of religious language. We too gave a religious answer by drawing attention to the strength of the Christian faith and by using her own images in our language of prayer. We recognized in the drama a cry for help, and drew attention to her state of alienation in school and at home. Our roadmap consisted in working towards a positive sense of belonging at home (where orphans are often tossed around), in school and in church. For this we needed the aunt to be part of the healing process, and also some members of the school and of the church.

INTIMACY OF WITCHCRAFT AND SPIRITS

Witchcraft was never far away from life-experiences in Zambia. Nor were other spiritual forces, whether good, evil, or ambivalent, related to kin and family, or to the land, or simply just there, bringing illness and confusion, but also healing and protection. Spiritual powers have been intervening in human affairs and they have been manipulated by humans. They are often woven into concrete relationships.

Christianity has not fundamentally changed these beliefs. Sickness and death, bad dreams, strange events, infertility, or the suffering of children continue to reveal the work of witches and of spiritual powers. In recent times, Christians have made the devil responsible for spreading very contagious forms of Satanism. They see in God the ultimate benevolent life-giving power. Yet, when calamities impose themselves with all their force, who does not think of evil rather than good?

Mainstream Christianity in Zambia has not made redundant the *ng'anga*, the traditional healer and diviner, who professes insights into the deeper dimensions of events through direct contact with the spirit world. The Catholic Church has always condemned the usage of divination or the evocation of spirits for gaining extraordinary knowledge into the causalities of deaths and sicknesses, but this has not prevented Catholics from seeking such knowledge elsewhere. Many feel that there is no viable alternative to the traditional diviner. When the priests of a rural parish in Mansa diocese confronted their chief who had invited diviners to identify the witches in his chieftdom, the chief answered: "Your own Catholics force me to call in the witchfinders. They are the ones who put pressure on me!"³

Christian prophets of various churches provide today an alternative to the traditional healer in Christian Zambia. They claim direct contact with the Holy Spirit whose mouth-piece they have become. Their techniques (Bible, prayer, fasting, anointing etc.) are very different from those of the traditional diviner (white clay, throwing bones, rubbing an axe on the ground, etc.), but the outcome can look pretty similar when they implicate third parties in witchcraft and Satanism, making them responsible for the afflictions of their clients.

When Emmanuel Milingo was Archbishop of Lusaka, he connected with the needs of thousands of people who felt oppressed by evil spirits, when he exorcised them during his famous healing Masses. In some of his writings, he talked about the cultural violence that he witnessed when

³ Kasamba Parish, in 2001.

church officials explained away the beliefs of simple people as superstitious. He felt that the Church made herself guilty of belittling the mysteries of life and its supernatural dimension in connection with “the world in between”, as he called the world of the spirits. In all cultures, he wrote, “man lives on beliefs which he accepts as facts without necessarily understanding the reasons.”⁴ In the Catholic Church, he gave as examples the use of holy water, of the rosary and of blessings. They work not because people know the theological reason, but because they simply accept them as gifts of the Church and trust in them as means to ward off evil. Much of human life, Milingo asserted, depends on this dimension of a simple faith that does not always understand everything and yet works miracles.

Our people have noticed that the Christian religion, while it condemned the traditional beliefs as superstitious, it did not at all replace them with something equally impressive and demanding. In many ways the Christianity we have adhered to leaves a lot to be desired.⁵

Milingo believed that the church possesses meaningful ways of dealing with people’s spiritual needs in regards to the world in-between, but that priests and church officials tend to feed people with a theology that was cooked in the Western secular world. It explains away the African mysteries of life as superstitions. If there are no spirits, then there is no need to deal with them! But spirits are facts of life for people in Zambia (and for Milingo).

This book takes up the challenge that Milingo left to the church. But how can we respond to people’s fears and spiritual needs without losing balance with the demands of the Christian faith and also with those of modern life, including science and biology? This question is not easily answered since traditional beliefs and scientific approaches rest on different presuppositions and follow different trajectories. The facts of life of one person may be superstitions for another.⁶ We hold different assumptions

⁴ Milingo (1975), p. 3.

⁵ Milingo (1975), p. 10.

⁶ In this book, I am not delving into the debate about delimiting superstitious beliefs from rational or from religious beliefs. The concepts (superstitious, rational, religious) come with their historical baggage, but this does not mean that they cannot be useful if we manage define or redefine them in an appropriate way that allows us to be clearer in our way of looking at beliefs. About a possible way forward, I am referring to Kroesbergen (2015), who, by engaging with D Z Phillips, has offered a helpful way to demarcate superstition through the concept of confusion and the depth of integration into other areas of life. Such boundaries will of course be porous and messy in real-life situations, but they can nevertheless give guidance when investigating different aspects of specific beliefs in relation to the person’s life-context.

about the spiritual and material worlds. We also differ about our trust in the capacities of the human mind to be able to comprehend all types of reality.

False beliefs exist in all traditions; they should be challenged when better models are available. Beliefs may become redundant with new developments in science. Traditional beliefs have never been static and also Christian theologies change over time. If a belief claims to be operating on an empirical level, it should allow itself to be tested on that level. The teaching of the Catholic Church warns about opposing faith and reason.⁷

But unmasking false beliefs does not always address the questions that people have attached to their belief. The following example is an illustration of that point. I give back the story in the way it was told to me by the priest of a Catholic Parish in Western Province:

DRAMA 3: INVISIBLE SATANISTS DRUM IN CHURCH

When we moved into the new Parish, we started to renovate the community church. Once we finished, strange things started to happen: Whenever a person died, drumming was heard in the church, starting at around midnight. Our church building is located between the mortuary and the graveyard. “The Satanists celebrate,” people commented. “Whenever somebody dies, the drums will talk!”

I made sure that the church was locked every evening, yet the drumming continued. “Satanists can walk through closed doors,” people explained.

The charismatics asked for permission to hold overnight prayers, accompanied by fasting, to re-dedicate the church to God. For me, this did not make sense, since the bishop had already blessed the church. Had his blessing already expired? The issue continued and became the talk of gossip far beyond our neighbourhood. I had to do something.

One night I got up and walked towards the church, which is located a few hundred meters from our house. When I approached the church, I started to hear the drumming myself. It was midnight. The church building was still locked—nobody had tampered with the keys. There were no lights inside, yet I clearly heard the sound of drumming. “So people are right!” I thought.

⁷ Pope Jean-Paul II (1998), (*Fides et Ratio*).

I had a strange feeling, and opened the door with my keys. I stood there in the dark for a moment, listening to the frantic drumming. Then I flashed the torch inside the church to look out for the Satanists, but I saw nobody. I now realised that the drumming was coming from the roof, above the new ceiling boards. I took courage, climbed up the ladder and peeped with my head through an opening. When I turned on my flashlight, the mystery was solved, and I burst into laughter: The drumming Satanists turned out to be bats who had fallen onto the ceiling boards. Bats had always lived in the church, but they were not used to the new ceiling boards. In their attempts to get back up and fly, their wings beat on the ceiling boards to produce the sound of drums!

Most of us would be able to share many stories of similar experiences, when ghosts vanished to give way to better explanations. Using concepts of witchcraft or spirits as explanations for unknown phenomena produces intellectual and spiritual laziness, and pre-empties a quest for truth. The unmasking of false beliefs is a noble task that has been pursued elegantly in a number of publications.⁸ However, beyond the bats, we must focus also on other elements in the story that made it so compelling. Christians of other denominations saw the Catholic missionaries as a threat. The story of Satanism in the new church was a welcome occasion to show the questionable spiritual status of the newcomers. Also Catholic charismatic Christians were excited about the presence of Satanists. They had heard about such new forms of the occult in town. "Satanism is real!" they tirelessly stressed. They meant to say that it can only be conquered by spirit-filled Christians (like themselves!) The threat of Satanism created a need for their prayers that were often ridiculed in their own church. On a wider level, beyond interdenominational squabbles, the presence of invisible Satanists provided occasions for social commentaries about the encroaching modern evils in Zambia. Satanism, once located in distant towns, had finally reached home! It confirmed the spiritual dimension of human life—so often neglected in development discourses—and gave a tangible face to fears about the future and to an awareness of estrangement.

Various theories have been proposed to explain the apparent increase of witchcraft beliefs in Africa in sociological terms, for example by relating

⁸ See for example the *Confessions of a Wizard* by M. Hove (Hove 1995).

them to poverty,⁹ or to increasing social strains,¹⁰ i.e. through processes of restructuring family life when traditional societies catch up with modernity. But, is it wrong to look also for *spiritual* forms of evil when in this process whole sections of society fail to catch the train and have lost hope in what life has to offer to them? I agree, we have walked a long way from the bats in the church. The thing is, even with the false belief exposed, many people did not feel that they were proven wrong by the priest. The mystery had been solved for the priest but not for them. Bats are closely linked to witchcraft in local beliefs. For them, the priest had not proven anything. “Do you not know that Satanists can transform themselves into bats?” a person asked. The priest realized that he still needed to get rid of the bats, because people equated them with witchcraft. He also realized that he needed to engage with the wider questions that made people look for a satanic explanation—why they *wanted* to believe in it.

A WIDENING GAP

The explosion of Pentecostal Christianity in Africa has drawn God fully into the battle with evil. Pastors hold evil powers at bay through ecstatic forms of prayer, spiritual warfare, fasting, overnights, calculated forms of tithing, anointing with holy oils and Christian declarations. God’s arm is twisted through expressions of faith to bring miracles, healing and success. With God, the believer is supposed to be on the winning side of the battle, even if the battle is often very long. Prophecies guide the charismatic Christian through this battle, pointing out the entry-points of the invisible forces of witchcraft and demons, and assuring of the ultimate victory. The name of Jesus is used as a wonderful weapon that makes demons shrink.

Has Christianity then finally found the answer to the spiritual problems that Milingo was looking for? While the number of deliverance ministries in Africa keeps multiplying, the presence of demons and witchcraft has not diminished. The opposite seems to be true: demonic entities appear with new names and even new worlds. The question needs to be asked: why do demons hang around given that they are beaten, cast out and insulted by so many churches? Critics argue that witchcraft has become a concept on which people project all their problems, and that churches exacerbate this tendency, because they deal with witchcraft and promise easy solutions for complex problems. In answer, some Christians refer to

⁹ Miguel (2005).

¹⁰ Marwick (1964).

the end times: “The devil has started his final assault! That is why we have so many demons now!” Others refer to their own spiritual superiority: “You need to be a spiritual person in order to recognize the presence of demons or witchcraft!” The gap between the positions that affirm or deny tangible spiritual forms of evil is not closing.

This gap has seen many shifts in the long, global history of the Catholic Church. At times, demonic activities were closely associated with natural disasters, sickness and disease, especially those of domestic animals and crops. The blessings of fields included rites of exorcisms (as they still do in Orthodox Churches today). The faithful were equipped with many formal prayers and blessed objects (crucifixes, rosaries, holy water, palms, sacred pictures and medals) to ward off demonic attacks. The Catholic baptism rite contains an exorcism. But, it belongs to the nature of the unseen world that one can also doubt its presence. Post-Enlightenment Christianity of Europe and North America looked increasingly towards the natural world for explanations of symptoms that were once associated with states of demonic possession, such as seizures, hallucinations or personality changes. An aversion to sacred objects, blasphemous words uttered during prayer, extraordinary strength displayed when in a state of trance, or occasional telepathic abilities and knowledge of phrases in foreign languages were seen by earlier generations as clear proofs of demonic possession. Then they received natural explanations from new insights in memory studies. Apart from schizophrenic psychosis that people may mistake for demon-possession, psychologists postulated that the power of the human mind is very capable of calling upon itself delusions of magnificent proportions (autosuggestion). Some psychiatrists recorded disorders where patients projected their own reviling self-hatred or feelings of guilt onto imagined demons, wishing upon themselves the expiating punishment of demonic possession as a witness to the world of their utter evilness of heart.¹¹ Sigmund Freud presented a modern theory about the demonic phenomenon:

What in days gone by were thought to be evil spirits to us are base and evil wishes, the derivatives of impulses which have been rejected and repressed.¹²

Or with the words of Oesterreich, a prominent psychologist of the par-anormal in Freud’s time,

¹¹ Trethowan (1976), p. 129.

¹² Freud in *Teufelsneurose*, quoted in translation by Trethowan (1976), p. 130.

Possession begins to disappear amongst civilised races as soon as belief in spirits loses its power. From the moment they cease to entertain seriously the possibility of being possessed, the necessity of autosuggestion is lacking.¹³

Psychologists don't speak of demon possession but of dissociative trance disorders and possession-syndromes. Spirits no longer function as a universal explanatory currency. In the Western world, they were banned from the public domain and pushed into the curious realm of private beliefs held by the esoterically inclined population. Demons also evaporated from the official theologies of Western Catholicism. Where people do not believe in demons, there is no need to cast them out. The fact that the Catholic Church, even after the Second Vatican Council, reaffirmed its belief in the devil and in demons brought embarrassment to many Catholics in the Western world.¹⁴ In the Anglican Church, some psychiatrists advocated for the abolishment of the rite of exorcism with the argument that the presence of an exorcist increases the number of people forgoing psychiatric treatment because of their outdated beliefs in demons.¹⁵ Africa as locus of popular beliefs in demons, in turn, was constructed in the West as the continent entrenched in superstition.¹⁶

At the same time, the paranormal continued to fuel people's imagination also in the West. It gave rise to a profitable media and self-help industry and even to "paranormal tourism". Also some prominent psychiatrists doubt whether current models used in psychiatry do justice to *all* documented cases of spirit possession and of extrasensory perception. Some call for openness in their profession towards the possibility of demon possession or the interference of external, non-corporal, conscious spiritual beings in people's lives. They suggest that genuine demon possession could proceed hand in hand with psychological disorders.¹⁷ Some

¹³ Quoted by Trethowan (1976), p. 133. The quote comes from Oesterreich's work *Possession: Demoniacal and other among primitive races, in antiquity, the Middle Ages, and modern times* of 1921.

¹⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1975).

¹⁵ "The fact that some [Anglican] dioceses do not prohibit exorcism, and a few may actually encourage it, is an unfortunate and retrogressive step which, as in the present tragic instance, must rebound to the discredit of those who lend support to the continuance of medieval mumbo-jumbo by still adhering to the nefarious nonsense of the *Malleus Maleficarum*." (Trethowan 1975 p. 19, in a feature article of *The Times* (United Kingdom), commenting on a murder that was committed by a person claiming to be demon possessed.).

¹⁶ Ironically, Western media reports about instances of ritual crimes and child witches have helped to conflate African forms of the occult with witchcraft in Western imagination. See Ranger (2007) about the implications of turning African witchcraft into a discipline of study.

¹⁷ For example, Peck (1983) and Stafford (2005).

also indicate that exorcisms and deliverance sessions were often more successful than conventional psychiatric interventions that involved people who believed themselves to be possessed.

In any case: many people continue to believe in demons and in witchcraft, also in the West. According to a study in the USA, this belief shows significant variations across gender, race, age groups and church-attendance; people of lower economic income tend to hold stronger beliefs in religious evil than the richer economic classes, and more women believe in demons than men do.¹⁸ When Church theology ignored their quest for help against evil spiritual powers, it may have aligned itself, as so often, with the upper economic classes and with male society.

Here I want to pick up a conviction of the Italian writer and filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–1975). He saw in the religious language of miracles and of the sacred as used by people rooted in folk-beliefs a valid challenge to the cultural hegemony of rationalist modernity. As the Jesuit scholar Aldemo Dunghe explained,

To Pasolini, one of the things which separates intellectuals ... from the working-class, the subproletariat and the peasantry is a strong faith in the supernatural, in miracles, and in other sacred mysteries. Ignored by, or perhaps even lost to, the reasoning of intellectuals, these ‘irrational’ features of reality ... are valuable means of dealing with the existential questions of human life.¹⁹

In the meantime, the centre of gravity of Christianity has long shifted away from the North to the Southern half of the globe, and is shaped less strongly by Enlightenment presuppositions. Christians here—including members of the elite—do not question the world of demons or of witchcraft. They live in it and with it. In Africa, Nollywood (the Nigerian film industry) proved even more interested in the occult than Hollywood: African movies capture the aspirations of an upwards moving middleclass, deeply entangled in the occult; their worlds remain inhabited by witches and demons. Pentecostal and African Initiated Churches have taken up a

¹⁸ “African Americans tend to have a stronger belief in religious evil than do whites. Women have a stronger degree of belief than men. Net of religious controls, younger Americans hold stronger belief in conceptions of religious evil than older Americans. Finally, social class plays an important role in how certain an individual is about the existence of religious evil, with those of higher social class having weaker confidence about the existence of religious evil. However, these effects are conditioned by church attendance.” Baker (2008), p. 218.

¹⁹ Dunghe (2012), p. 584.

felt need and have provided a terminology of deliverance that has blurred denominational differences.²⁰

Here another debate becomes crucial for our topic. Marjolein van Duijl, an expert in transcultural psychiatry, aptly said that

In many cultural settings, dissociative phenomena are experienced as part of the *normal* cultural construction of self, local cosmology and society. However, in Western psychology and psychiatry, dissociation is mostly treated as *pathological* and associated with traumatic experiences.²¹

Some cultures value trance experiences as a normal part of human life; others marginalise them into the realm of the neurotic or psychotic. The traumatised and pathological psychopath of one culture is the successful healer and diviner in another culture. Who has the right, across cultures, to classify who is mentally healthy and who is sick? In addition, how successful is Western psychology in the treatment of psychological illnesses in African contexts? Coming to the practical level: Where in rural Africa would we possibly find qualified psychologists and psychiatrists?

Theologians cannot deny that African faith experiences in the deliverance ministries resonates with the New Testament message that recognises the powers of the Church over demons. As scholar of religion Philip Jenkins said,

The vitality of prophecy in the contemporary South means that the rising churches can read biblical accounts with far more understanding and sensitivity than Northern Christians can.²²

The heritage of the Northern or Western Church risks falling into oblivion and losing its significance for the South, if it ignores the invisible world with which people struggle. The Pentecostal/charismatic framework, in turn, risks being overrun by fundamentalism and sectarian outlooks, if it severs the spiritual world from psychological and social realities. It risks throwing away a rich theological heritage that developed in the Western and Eastern worlds over two millennia and that should be a source of help for avoiding pitfalls.

²⁰ Asamoah-Gyadu (2007) and the short historical overview of Ranger (2007).

²¹ Duijl et al. (2010), p. 382. Emphasis added by me. Whether dissociative trance disorders can be clearly correlated to traumatic events in a person's life history is debated.

²² Jenkins (2007), p. 148.

PLURALISTIC BELIEFS

The problem addressed in this book is not so much about a conflict between Western and non-Western forms of Christianity. It is about finding a pastoral approach that can hold water in contexts of pluralistic beliefs. Religious beliefs in Africa are far from being homogeneous. Since the arrival of the first missionaries from different Christian denominations, the Christian message has been appropriated in different ways inside and outside the missionary churches. Demons do not mean the same thing. Official Catholic Church teaching, for example, acknowledges the existence of demons but regards demonic possession as something exceptional and very rare; it regulates exorcism by precise norms.²³ In contrast, demons are very common in neo-Pentecostal Churches and may constitute the spiritual dimension of HIV/AIDS, diabetes, bad luck, misfortune or the lack of a spouse. Some see in demons clear signs of the approaching end of the world. Christians advocating the Prosperity Gospel see in demons agents that try to steal their blessings of health and wealth in this world, and not just in a life to come. Other religious movements, many of them African-born, have developed their own ways of dealing with spiritual attacks.²⁴ Traditional healers employ specialised concepts of witchcraft and of the human body. While healthcare institutions and the educational system try to imprint on people a view on causalities that is born out of the Western Enlightenment, concepts of the unseen world remain pluralistic in Africa and accommodate various cosmologies.

Many people also change their outlook on the spirits depending on the framework from which they expect to receive help. They learn how to speak several languages of health. To this day, traditional healers use fine nuances when dealing with spirits. In contrast, many Christian prophets homogenise the African spirit world and press them into one universal category of evil spirits that work with the devil to bring about misfortune. Many churchgoers embrace Christianity in a situational way. Hugo Hinfelaar, a missionary priest and historian, noticed that

²³ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 29 September 1985, signed by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger.

²⁴ In Zambia, we could notably mention the diverse Zion, Mutumwa and Mizimu Churches (Dillon-Malone 1983, 1987; Kirsch 2002), but also Churches like the Umutima Uwalowa Wa Makumbi of Emilio Mulolani (Burlington n.d., Garvey 1994, pp. 159-171, Hinfelaar 1994, pp. 101-125) that have developed specific theologies of dealing with the spiritual world.

So many women were confused and lived in two worlds, one filled with vestiges of traditional thinking and the other crammed with undigested chunks of Christian dogma.²⁵

Archbishop Mpundu (Lusaka Archdiocese) expressed the same:

The Zambian Christian is a funny creature, living both on the land and in the water, walking along the shore. When a crocodile comes, we flee to the land. When the lion comes, we go into the water. We continue to live in both worlds. On some occasions we are fully committed Christians. On other occasions, we go back into the sea of traditional beliefs.²⁶

In this process, the shore and the water come to mirror each other. In Zambian cultural traditions, people can dance a whole night to appease their spirits and to find relief for their afflictions. Charismatic Christians too have overnights, sing and dance extensively, and often fall into trance—be it from possession by demons (expressing the need for deliverance), or from being “slain by the Holy Spirit” (expressing the heavenly giftedness that is bestowed on them). The difference between the two manifestations is not always obvious, and they find different expressions in different Churches. When some pastors accuse each other of working with demons instead of the Holy Spirit, they show that the distinctions within the wide spectrum of ecstatic manifestations are blurred.

COMMUNAL MEDIATION

Spiritual forces may impinge themselves on the individual by virtue of him/her being a member of a specific family, environment and society. In Africa, many people suffer from spirit afflictions that are mediated through cultural lines and cannot be pressed into a simplistic dualistic framework that divides spirits into good ones (angels) and bad ones (demons). African religions know a more complex spirit world, where spirits are ambivalent, sometimes beneficial, while at other times they are harmful. For example, all Zambian cultures know of a category of spirits that impose dietary taboos or that have a liking for white clay, white dishes and beads.²⁷ These spirits bring illnesses to their hosts in the initial

²⁵ Hinfelaar (1994), p. 184.

²⁶ Paraphrased from a speech given to the National Catholic Forum, November 2006.

²⁷ John Mbiti (1969, pp. 75-83) called them “nature spirits”, while other scholars use terms such as gods, demi-gods or divinities. In Zambia, the Bemba call such spirits *ngulu*, the Tumbuka *vimbuza*, the Tonga *basangu* and *masabe* (in distinct historical traditions) and the Chewa *mashawe* and in some contexts *mizimu*.

stage, or temporary madness, or they interfere with the person's love life. Hence many people call them "evil spirits". But when appeased, they are acknowledged to bestow on the afflicted person extraordinary abilities, to be used (ideally) for the benefit of the community. Across Zambian cultures, people understand each other's experiences with such spirits. Yet, in spite of such similarities, they are not completely the same. In one cultural region, such spirits are said to be fond of drinking blood (the *vimbuza* spirits among the Tumbuka), but in others they are not. Spirits in different regions respond to different tunes and beats of the drum, and within some regions there exist several traditions side by side. Either the spirits are tribalist, or—more likely—the manifestations of being possessed are mediated by a specific cultural background. In the process of either appeasing or resisting the spirits, the possessed person learns to discipline body and mind in relation to a set of observed characteristics, under the guidance of a healer and in an established cultural tradition. The possessed develops internal dispositions, which become the starting points for further actions.²⁸

The same could be said about experiences with the Holy Spirit. Some charismatic gatherings are regularly marked by the gift of tongues (glossolalia). Some authors affirm that new members entering such communities easily receive the same gift, sometimes within a week or two of attending such prayers. In other charismatic groups, the gift of tongues is hardly present, but experiences with the Holy Spirit manifest themselves in other ways, like falling down into silent trance, or prophesying, and again, new members develop their gifts among similar lines as already practised by the group. While the Holy Spirit is known to give gifts in the way he wishes, a person's disposition or openness for such gifts is surely also marked by the practice of the group.

When we witness exorcisms and deliverance sessions, we should be aware that the onlookers and audiences become themselves part of the drama of possession or of witchcraft. During the spectacles, onlookers evaluate the possessed body and scrutinise it to discern the name of the spirit, which expresses itself (often very erotically) through convulsions and trance. We should not fail to see that the onlookers project their own issues into the situation. When a church exorcises demons today, it deals not only with the demons of the possessed but, through his/her body, also with its own devils and obsessions. In our approach, we have to deal as much with the community as we do with the possessed individual.

²⁸ See Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* (Bordieu 1977).

DIAGNOSIS?

Many pastors who are active in the deliverance ministry, and also a number of Catholic exorcists, assert that we need to know whether or not we are dealing with real demons when a person comes for help. They say that fighting a demon needs different weapons than dealing with psychosomatic issues. They want a diagnosis to be assured that the infliction is indeed due to demonic influences. The Vatican guidelines for exorcism (1999) recommend this too.²⁹ An exorcism should be preceded by a medical and psychological evaluation by experts to distinguish genuine possession from psychic illnesses and from processes of the imagination. To come to such a diagnosis, the Scholastic distinction between the natural, the preternatural and the supernatural plays a central role: We should deal with demons (the preternatural) only after excluding the natural (psychological, medical) and supernatural causes (God's miracles). Such a method of gradual exclusion seems to imply that trained people are able to distinguish natural trance and hypnosis experiences from real demonic possession. Some exorcists see in the reactions of a patient to the exorcism such a diagnostic tool: it provokes the demons to manifest themselves.³⁰ As a pastoral tool in our own approach, the Thomistic distinction may be helpful if it is part of a person-centred approach. For example, it can give rise to exploratory questions to the patient and his/her family that can help to disentangle experiences of affliction:

Were you created with the forces that you experience and that affect you so negatively? Are they part of your own inner life?

Or do you experience them as coming from outside (preternatural)? How do they affect you?

And where do you experience God's direct intervention (supernatural) in your struggle with these forces?

The answers to such questions can provide the vocabulary for prayer. But we have to accept that they don't lead us to objective certainty, nor do they dissolve the need to look at the interpersonal relationships in which the spiritual realities play themselves out. Even the best psychologists dis-

²⁹ The text is available on the Vatican website (during my time of writing this book) only in Italian and Spanish, and I rely on commentaries.

³⁰ The famous Roman exorcist Father Gabriele Amorth (1925–2016) advocated this method (Amorth 1999).

agree among themselves how to evaluate possession dramas.³¹ In practice, different priests and psychologists may come to different conclusions when observing a specific exorcism. In Africa, the spiritual and material worlds are intertwined, and I will argue in this book that local notions of the soul are often bound up with specific relationships. In our approach, we simply interpret manifestations of the demonic as a call for help. We respond to it as generously as possible, but we don't claim the final word on the nature of the attack.

Most cultures know about spirits and/or demons in one way or another, but we lack a singular observable characteristic that defines every single case of possession. Possessed people may be in a state of trance and dissociation, exhibit strong shifts in moods and emotions, speak in strange tongues, show extraordinary strength, belch and vomit during prayer, avoid certain foods, or avoid religious symbols. Yet, not one single trait applies to all cases of possession, and any single trait can also be explained by secular models. We may regard such manifestations as signs of possession, but they are never *sure* signs or definite proofs. Jesus spoke about heaven and hell in parables, not in the genre of scientific treatments. The spiritual world evades neat concepts and categories and is deceptive, as already the name of Lucifer ("the light bearer") shows. A wise pastor will cultivate an attitude of humility about the spiritual world. The diagnoses made by pastors and diviners, who convey absolute certainty about the nature of attacking spirits or the forces of witchcraft—which they seem to see with their own eyes—calls for a prudent distrust.

The term "diagnosis" is borrowed from the medical profession, and attributes a name to an illness in view of opening up a way for treatment. Malaria and meningitis, for example, have similar symptoms but need to be treated in different ways. A parasite-centred diagnosis identifies a specific organism as the root-cause of a sickness. Hence many pastors in Africa offer a demon-centred diagnosis, sometimes according to a list of symptoms. They identify family-spirits, demons from the water, territorial principalities or other spiritual entities as root-cause for a condition, which they then defeat through "strategic spiritual warfare". Once the demon leaves, the person is supposed to be cured. Some readers may have similar expectations for this book: What are the signs that show that someone has been initiated into Satanism, for example? Or of a family curse? Or of a specific witchcraft attack? While I hope that this book

³¹ Compare for example the view of Trethowan (1975) with that of Stafford (2005).

will not disappoint them, we aim at helping people without claiming sure knowledge about the cause of a specific condition.

Our own approach resembles more that of a *differential diagnosis*: it could be this, but it could also be that! Very often, doctors treat a medical condition successfully by trying out various interventions, without knowing for sure in the end which one tipped the balance towards success. That is the path we trod in this book.

A person's spiritual issues may be intertwined with medical, psychological, cognitive and social issues. Fears, desires, blind spots, coping mechanisms, childhood memories, perspectives for the future, and the social background through which certain dispositions are acquired and expressed, can all play into spiritual experiences. This calls for an holistic approach. But again, people come to our ministries not because we are psychologists or doctors (most of us are not!), but because of prayer. In what follows I want to lay out our specific contribution as pastors in the deliverance ministry. What is our roadmap or strategic plan in our interventions?

OUR ROADMAP

Witchcraft and demons, whether they are real in the mind or real outside there, want to be disturbing. Also the pastor should allow himself/herself to be disturbed and attend to a cry for help.

One way of allowing ourselves to be disturbed by the narrative or testimony of the afflicted, and yet maintain a healthy sense of distance that allows us to place it into a wider context of faith is very simple: We (the pastors) listen to it in the same way as we watch a film. For the patient, witchcraft is obviously not like a film; it comes to them in a direct and unmediated way. But for us it is, since we are dealing with the experience of somebody else.

When we appropriate a film, we temporarily inhabit a world that is assembled from the observed reality of the film-director. From that world, we then emerge again with our own reality that has become both challenged and increased.³² In a similar way, listening to a testimony or narrative of witchcraft allows us to temporarily enter the world of the affected persons or that of their families. Then we emerge back into our own world. Here we do not need to find again the witches and the demons of the patient. Nevertheless, our own world changes and enlarges in the

³² Dunghe (2013).

process. We hope through our response also to enlarge the world of the patient, by bringing it into the perspective of the Christian faith and by rearranging with the patient (who remains the film director) the religious images to allow them to point into a life-giving direction. The aim is to help the person to make a response from his/her own life-vocation.

Like film, also religious testimonies about experiences with Satanism, witchcraft or demons are made up of powerful images that speak to an audience in order to transmit an experience. Allow me to bring up another conviction of the already mentioned filmmaker Pasolini: He believed that we process reality in more or less the same way as we process a film. The world expresses itself to us in images and sounds (and other sense experiences). Dreams and memories do the same. Pasolini recognized in dream and in memory the primordial outline of a film-language. He proposed that we constantly dialogue with reality through this primordial language and that we understand reality through that language.

We... already have in our heads a sort of 'Code of Reality' ... It is through this unexpressed and unconscious code that we are made to understand reality, [and] that we also understand the various films.³³

Pasolini regarded every human experience as a "conversation between us and an environment which expresses itself through the images that compose it." We can therefore recognize also in witchcraft narratives a dialogue of the affected person with reality that is processed through images. Whatever the reality behind the demon or witchcraft attack—we understand it through that same code.

Depending on the way things are put together, images or film-shots say different things. Any film director has to make constant decisions about which elements to include in a shot and which ones to leave out, and from which angle to shoot, so as to help the audience to follow the film. In any testimony of an experience, the narrator needs to make the same choice. But the meaning of any part changes through the way it is assembled or interacts with other parts. As Pasolini says,

Reality is a language.... Nothing is ever rigidly monosemic; on the contrary almost everything is enigmatic because it is potentially polysemic.³⁴

³³ Quoted by Dunghe (2013) from Pasolini's article (1967), "Is Being Natural?", p. 238.

³⁴ Pasolini, quoted in Bruno (1991), p. 36.

Any pastor who deals with dramas of witchcraft or demon possession will need to deal with polysemic realities (realities with many meanings) that cannot be pinned down to only one single interpretation. In such narratives, reality becomes elastic (at one moment something is real, but in the next it isn't) and the boundary to fiction blurred—memories and dreams may merge into each other. In our approach, we do not suppress multivocality. Different members of our group understand possession dramas in different ways. We don't need to fear that this leads into a relativism that lacks a method for finding common ground. (I will present such a method in chapter 7). Nor do we need to dismantle or debunk the patient's images of witchcraft and demons, as has often been done by pastors and priests marked by the rationalist mind of modernity. We rather try to make the shot wider, allow it to include helpful elements, and help the patient to rearrange the images in a way that allows for a life-giving direction. This demands an attitude of playfulness with the images. Like an assistant film director, we look at the different elements in a given scene and ask ourselves if they could not be arranged in a different way so that they allow space for the challenge of the Gospel. There are no limits to the creativity of the helper in this process. For example, sometimes we asked clients to visualize a spiritual attack through drawings, or through a played drama with helpers as actors, and then introducing slight changes, or introducing into it the person of Christ. Such concrete ways of visualization worked particularly well with children.

We can't control the world of spirits, but we can pray, and ask for God's help, and trust that our prayers will be answered. We want to help the victim of the attack to be in touch with his/her own faith. That is our specific role as pastors. We try to increase the positive faith of the affected person. In prayer, we focus on God, not on demons. To use an analogy, by bringing light into a room, the darkness vanishes by itself. To borrow another metaphor from medicine, we hope that by strengthening the immune system, we will also fight the troublesome microbes (in our case the spiritual attacks), without always knowing their precise nature. The Church has always regarded a rootedness in Christian life and practice as the best protection against the demonic.

Our approach is not one of blame but of facing up to challenges. Blame focuses on negative emotions. A challenge focuses on the strength of a person, enabling him or her to engage creatively in the process of rebuilding relationships. We encourage the transformation of pertinent questions that are rooted in negative thoughts concerned with loss, anger, a

sense of betrayal or revenge. We look for new questions that arise from a different logic. Compare for example the following sets of questions:

Who caused my misfortune?	How can I find God, life or love in this painful situation?
Who has stolen my belongings?	Is there something to gain from the experience of loss?
Why can I not find a marriage partner? (or have a child)	How can I live my life meaningfully and lovingly, for the time being, also without a marriage partner? (or a child)
How can I get revenge?	What is the next step to take, through which I show my faith in God?

From the questions on the left side of the table, grounded in negative emotions, arises the need for divination. Questions on the right side stimulate discernment how to live out one's specific relationship with God. Note, however, that urgent questions need to be acknowledged before they can be transformed. In our approach, we do not spare victims of attacks the need to struggle with negative emotions. It is through wrestling with them that a faith-driven answer to a catastrophe in life can release its blessings.

When people seek help against spiritual attacks, they refer to outer, external realities that impinge on the victim, be it in the form of personal forces (demons, ghosts, or ancestral spirits), or more abstract forces, like those employed by witchcraft. Note, however, that these stand in a certain relationship to the soul and to the faith perspectives of the person that we can also call spiritual: they shape a human person on an existential level, making the person who he/she is. In African experiences, this soul is not an island. It is linked up with significant others. In the next step of our approach, and this is the most important one, we look at relationships that affect the soul of the patient. We reach the world of spirits and of witchcraft by addressing, in a faith-driven way, the significant relationships to which the attack points. In the Bible, Saint John said that we cannot love God, whom we do not see, while we hate a brother, whom we see (1 John 4:20). We apply this maxim to the world of demons: It makes little sense to cast out a demon, whom we do not see, while we neglect the broken relationships (to which the attacks point) with significant others, whom we see. Apart from prayer, whose effects cannot be quantified, the case studies of this book show that working on broken relationships and/or

a sense of belonging proved the single most effective component in the fight against spiritual attacks, demonic forces and witchcraft.

THE DEMONIC AS A BOUNDARY CONDITION

I close this introduction with a remark on our theological perspective on the unseen world. We look at the spiritual world always in the context of the person's basic orientation and relationship with God that affects daily choices and relationships. In this book, we call spiritual attacks evil not when they are unpleasant or painful, but when they have the capacity to derail a person from his/her source of life. In contrast to this, painful spiritual experiences may look evil, but they present themselves as calls for growth and positive change. Take the Biblical example of Jacob, who wrestled a whole night with what seemed to be an evil force. (Genesis 32:25–30):³⁵ That night, after bringing his family across the river,

Jacob was left there alone. Then a man wrestled with him till the break of dawn. When the man saw that he could not prevail over him, he struck Jacob's hip at its socket, so that Jacob's socket was dislocated as he wrestled with him. The man then said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go until you bless me." "What is your name?" the man asked. He answered, "Jacob." Then the man said, "You shall no longer be named Jacob, but Israel [meaning, "struggles with God"], because you have contended with divine and human beings and have prevailed." Jacob then asked him, "Please tell me your name." He answered, "Why do you ask for my name?" With that, he blessed him. Jacob named the place Peniel [meaning, "face of God"], "because I have seen God face to face," he said, "yet my life has been spared."

What appeared to Jacob as an evil man or a demon turned out to be God himself who became a source of blessing because Jacob endured the fight. Jacob was on his way to meet his estranged twin-brother Esau. He feared him. The last person to ask him, "What is your name?" had been his father Isaac. We remember that Jacob answered his question with a lie, in order to steal the parental blessing in the name of Esau. Now the strange man asked again the same question, "What is your name?" This time Jacob is blessed in his own name, and he is even given a new name. What follows is Jacob's reconciliation with Esau, preceded by a strategy of appeasement. In our approach, we follow the example of Jacob: We wrestle

³⁵ All Bible quotations are taken from *The New African Bible* (2011).

with spiritual attacks until they release a blessing for growth. This growth translates in working on estranging relationships.

As Jacob was given a new name through the spiritual attack while the attacker concealed his own name, deliverance is not only about finding the name of the demon, but about finding a new name for the patient, at least in the sense of developing a new sense of belonging and of a life-vocation and mission. Before deliverance, the demon has agency; after deliverance, the healed person goes away with a new sense of Christian agency.

Many Christian authors who write on deliverance advocate a confession of sin and an acceptance of Jesus Christ as a prerequisite for an exorcism or for effective deliverance. They stress personal sin, personal repentance and personal faith. Then they discern the name of the demon and drive it out.³⁶ Deliverance in such approaches is a rather private, individual, and even individualistic affair. In African contexts, however, demon possession and witchcraft attacks are a public affair. They elevate a private affliction to a public concern.³⁷ Therefore our approach needs to be wider and involve the immediate community.

The story of Jacob may suggest that the realm of the demonic is all about personal or private struggles. We may recall ancient desert monks like Saint Anthony who fought spiritual fights against their demons by mastering their temptations of lust, pride and greed. In the Bible, the devil tempts (think of Adam and Eve, Cain, or David).³⁸ Failure to master temptation leads to personal sin, for which the sinner has to claim responsibility.

But this is not the whole story. The Biblical heritage paints a much wider view of the demonic that goes beyond the realm of inner personal struggles. When Freud reduced the demons to projections of psychological forces that only *seem* to come from the outside, he missed an important dimension. The demonic has affinities also with the forces of imposing social entities; hence they do come also from the outside. In Biblical apocalyptic literature (especially in the books of Daniel and Revelation), angels and demons stand in a relation to corporate identities, nations and groups that shape history in a sense that goes beyond the mere sums of individuals. Impinging powers from outside are felt by everybody—we may think for example of the controlling powers of institutions, ideol-

³⁶ See for example the approach of Karl Payne (2012).

³⁷ This point was made by Owen Sichone (2006) for the issue of witchcraft.

³⁸ Note, however, that the stories of Adam and Eve, or Cain and Able, or the temptations of David in the books of Genesis and Samuel do not know of the devil. The devil appears in the post-exile reinterpretations of these books (Chronicles, Wisdom).

ogies, and group-pressure on their subjects. They can hardly be evaded by an individual. These forms of influence remain as invisible as the demons. They do not eliminate a person's willpower—they shape it. Using New Testament metaphors of Saint Paul and Saint John, dangers to the Christian vocation come from inside through “the flesh” (temptations), but also from outside through “the world” (social influence). Both can derail a person from his/her relationship with God. The devil in Christian thought is neither identical with the “flesh” nor with the “world”, but may work through both.

A possessed person is flooded with dreams and images beyond his or her own control. If these bear a relationship with the anxieties, obsessions, and neuroses of the surrounding community, then the personal nightmare of the demoniac can express and reshape the common nightmare of the community. In a similar way, Monica Wilson described witchcraft symbols as “the standardized nightmare of the group.”³⁹ Walter Wink has drawn out this point in his analysis of the demonic Gerasene in Mark 5:1–20.⁴⁰ The demons with the name of “Legion” mirror the paranoia of the community of the Decapolis about the Roman Legions, from whom they sought to guard their independence, and whose fetters they wanted to break, as the demoniac did every day. The focus of the Biblical narrative shifts repeatedly between the demoniac and the community. Possessed people, with their heightened sensitivities, can become the involuntary artists of their surroundings. Incidentally, many African cultural approaches have made room for spirits to dramatize and make visible encroaching political and social forces. These forces are sustained, like structural evil, by common actions that are condoned by the community. The pastoral approach outlined in this book seeks to cast out demons, but also allow them to point out the nerves of structural injustice.

In the New Testament, the possessed are often portrayed as having a heightened sensitivity to the presence of God. They are the first ones to recognize God in Jesus (Mark 1:21–27). The Bible scholar Vitor Westhelle has drawn out an interesting inverse relationship between the idol and the demon:⁴¹ The idol (for example the golden calf) proclaims the presence of God where God is absent. Demons, in contrast, reveal the presence of God (by shrinking away) where people do not recognize it. The possessed pose, as it were, an embodied question-mark to the community. A loud

³⁹ Wilson (1951), p. 313.

⁴⁰ Wink (1984).

⁴¹ Westhelle (2002).

voice pierces through; a possessed body breaks to the ground and constitutes a visible breach of order. Structures shake because the possessed are fundamentally disturbing. While Jesus exorcised the demon with authority, he also taught the audience with the same authority, trying to free them too from bondages perpetuated in the order of the day.

The Church is called to confront both idols and demons. The Biblical prophets tried to shake the chosen people out of wrong notions of security by proclaiming God who is different from people's expectations. Prophets unmask the idol for what it is. The demon-possessed, in contrast, deserve compassion. They do not speak themselves—demons speak through them. They embody the annihilating powers that are at work in all, but they also show the new power of God's hidden presence and intervention. In our approach to deliverance, we allow the demons and the witchcraft symbols to wake us up from false securities, as if all was OK. In a specific way, we allow them to lead us to the relationships that are in need to be addressed. Where such concerns are bypassed, let the demons continue to haunt and do their job!

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

I wrote this book in the hope that it will be read as a whole, from cover to cover. This brings out the approach in the clearest way. But each chapter can also be read on its own. The first part forms a historical introduction. I look at three different approaches of dealing with witchcraft and demons in Zambia: (1) of the historical mission churches ("Real demon possession and real witchcraft attacks are very rare!"), (2) of the movements for inculturation ("We need to understand better what witchcraft means for people in their own life-context!"), and (3) of the charismatic/Pentecostal movements ("The devil, demons and witchcraft are real and they invade all aspects of life; addressing them is a battle that we can only win with the weapons of faith!") I am not playing out one approach against the other, but highlight the achievements and also the dangers and pitfalls that each approach brought.

Part two introduces the principles of our own, person-centred approach that forms the heart of this book. It requires empathy, cultural intelligence and faith. Somebody who looks for a quick entry into our approach should start here. Of specific importance is the distinction that we make on the level of truth-claims in what we call inner and outer worlds that I present in chapter 7.

Part three deals specifically with the pastoral challenges brought by spirits in the Zambian contexts, especially with so-called nature spirits. (I will deal with ancestral spirits at a later point—in part four, chapter 14—after introducing cultural notions of personhood.) In part three, I highlight different roles that spirits play for different people and in different life-situations. It will become clear that spirits are never static entities out there. Examples show that they may change their names and “nature” in response to different circumstances and life-commitments: we will follow a woman whose nature spirits became angels but later turned into satanic demons. In spite of these changes, the woman experienced them with a sense of continuity of identity. Our approach of deliverance starts with the affected person’s own experiences and mapping out the relevant life-contexts. From here we look for ways of responding to the challenges brought by the spirits from the viewpoint of the person’s Christian vocation. Spiritual experiences with spirits may be (or may not be) connected to pathological conditions, one of which I will introduce in chapter 10. Affirming medical conditions that bear on specific experiences does not exclude that such experiences are also of a spiritual nature. In our approach both sides need to be addressed, not necessarily separately from each other (as if there were clear boundaries), but nevertheless in distinctive ways. In chapter 11, I look at the role and possibilities of ritual interventions. Some people ask for exorcisms; we have experimented also with other types of dramatic ritual interventions that proved very adaptable.

Part four deals with witchcraft and with other negative spiritual attacks and alienations. The table at the end of chapter 12 provides a quick guide how a helper can meaningfully assist an afflicted person also when not fully trained in psychology or theology. Then I draw out Zambian understandings of witchcraft in relation to the human soul. Because of this connection, cultural notions of personhood become very important. Chapter 14 presents a scheme of layers that can guide the pastor to identify the significant relationships that a specific spiritual attack (beyond witchcraft) points to. I illustrate this with many case studies. Part four also contains a chapter that deals specifically with the role of children in witchcraft accusations and experiences. Here I also give back an own, personal experience with a paralysing force that was understood by all people involved as witchcraft. I show how it was embedded in specific relationships.

Part five focuses on giving help to alleged witches: to the accused. With the help of an extended case study, I show that our interventions can have unforeseen consequences since witchcraft accusations play themselves out on different social levels. Very often, the accused are as much afraid of

witchcraft as the accusers. Cultural traditions receive different interpretations in different fractions, and the composition of fractions changes over time, also within the protagonists' own families. The accused need to manoeuvre through messy and blurred circumstances and rely on those local authorities who may guarantee some sense of security also for the future. Often compromises are struck that may blur clear boundaries of guilt and innocence. I look at interventions at different levels that can help to bridge across the different fractions.

Part six introduces the world of Zambian Satanism, the voluntary types, but also the more prevalent involuntary types (in regards to what we encounter in pastoral counselling). I look at the requests for help that people expect from their church. I propose ways of dealing with the different needs at different levels. I also show some of the complexities and contradictions of new forms of school Satanism and propose ways of dealing with the testimonies of former Satanists.

The last part of this book (part seven) is concerned with theological questions that are relevant to our discussion. They can help the pastor to put our own approach into a wider theological perspective, with which he/she may agree or disagree. I also make a proposal in regards to the theology of charismatic healing and of the prosperity gospel.

Most chapters contain case studies or dramas. The reader can find a very quick entry into our approach by following these dramas, for example through the table of dramas at the beginning of the book. Some of them have been written by the concerned people themselves. All of them are rendered to represent the original events as faithfully as possible, but I have changed names, localities and some identifying circumstances in order to protect the identity of the protagonists.

Part One

*Three dominant approaches
in Christian Zambia*

Three dominant approaches in Christian Zambia

The Christian faith becomes very meaningful where it engages with people's spiritual notions, including their concepts of selfhood and of evil. The opposite is also true. The Church remains aloof to people's lives and thinking when failing to link up with *their* experiences with the spiritual world. In that case, the Church may be on the map on Sundays, but has little to offer for their day-to-day living, struggles, thoughts and hopes.

In this part, I look at three historical trends in which the Catholic Church in Zambia has tried to make the Christian faith and the African spirit world meet. In chapter two, I look at the successes and failures of the Church implanted by the missionaries in a church-centred model. I then look at two important alternative ways of dealing with witchcraft and the demonic: the paradigm of inculturation and dialogue (chapter three) and of charismatic approaches shaped by Pentecostalism (chapter four). All three trends have left their marks on today's Church. For our approach we want to learn lessons from all three paradigms.

2

The devil of the missionary Church

From strongholds to illusions

The first Christian missionaries of various Christian denominations arrived on the Zambian scene towards the end of the 19th century.¹ The fact that a hundred years later Zambia was declared by its president and constitution a Christian nation, and that the vast majority of the population considers itself today as Christian, speaks for the enormous success of the Christian missionary endeavour.

The missionaries, of course, did not arrive into a historical vacuum. Historians have written about the spiritual changes, innovations and insecurities that had accompanied religion and social life in the centuries preceding Christianisation and colonisation.² Social and religious change also continued to mark people's lives after the advent of the missionaries. Peoples were drawn more directly into the emerging national and global schemes, bringing forth new concerns, ambitions and outlooks that went beyond the local scopes and the competence of the local spirits. Ideas of direct access to a God to whom all peoples are subject became more relevant.³

But what place would the African spiritual world attain in a global religion? And how did African Christians appropriate the missionary notions of the devil? By looking at the history of Catholic evangelisation

¹ When I extrapolate in this book the notion of Zambia into colonial and precolonial times, I simply refer to the geographical area within the boundaries of today's state.

² See for example Binsbergen 1981, Werner 1971 and Hinfelaar 1994, pp. 19-33.

³ Historians and sociologists have laboured to deduce the reasons that favoured the mass conversion to Christianity and Islam in Africa in the twentieth century. Robin Horton suggested that African religions contained already the seeds for their own transformation. The enlarging social and political factors in the 20th century favoured the processes of conversion to world religions with universalistic explanations and global frameworks (Horton 1967). Others evaluated it through the lens of Western imperialism that destroyed or distorted the African religious landscape (Arowolo 2000). Others stressed African agency in the process of change (Strayer 1976). Few, however, analysed how conversion could become meaningful also on the spiritual level for the adherents!

in Zambia on the example of the Missionaries of Africa (the “White Fathers”), I will draw out lessons that will be very relevant for our contemporary problems.⁴

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND GREY ZONES

David Livingstone, the great explorer who foreshadowed the missionary enterprise, regarded many African spirits, for example the Bemba *ngulu*, as deities and compared their oracles with Old Testament prophecies. The Arabs disagreed with Livingstone, advising him they were neither angels nor gods, but devils.⁵ Missionaries of all denominations that came to the region after Livingstone forbade their Christians to seek direct contact with the traditional spirit world. For the missionaries, such spirits were either demonic, or (much more often) phantasms based on superstitious illusions. In neither case should Christians invoke them.

However, grey zones became evident especially in the quest for healing, on which this book focuses. Christians, after all, were not excluded from becoming ill. The available options for healing passed mostly through local idioms. Few missionaries saw problems with strict forms of herbalism, but traditional healing was never limited to the application of a few roots or leaves. As a Bemba proverb says: “To dig for medicines, you mix it with God.”⁶ Medicines in local healing discourses often mediate with the spiritual world.

The historian Hokkanen analysed the engagements of the Free Church of Scotland (tied to Livingstonia Mission) with local healing discourses. The Church outlawed for Christians any dancing and drumming for spirits, even for the sake of curing a sickness. Missionaries saw such dances as promoting both deception and idleness.⁷ However, when it came to classifying what constituted “un-Christian practices” in the range of traditional medicines, amulets, charms and healing procedures, missionaries were not able to give clear answers, not even with the help of various commissions of inquiry attended by people considered as experts in this field. While everybody condemned medicines used with the intent to do harm, things were not so clear for medicines used for healing. African terminologies for what makes up a medicine or a charm were not identical with

⁴ I, the author, am a member of the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers), and am not writing this chapter from an unbiased perspective.

⁵ Hinfelaar 1994, p. 34.

⁶ *Ukwimba akati, kusansha na Lesa*. (Bemba)

⁷ Hokkanen 2007, p. 738.

Western ones. While the missionaries regarded many African medicines as superstitious, they could not exclude the possibility that some medicines and practices were helpful to the people. Many times they worked. Alternatives were not available, and concepts of healing remained pluralistic also in Christian contexts.

Official guidelines left the usages of terms like “charms” or “medicines” very vague, maybe intentionally vague, Hokkanen proposes, to make room for the local adaptation of Church policies. The African Christian elite negotiated the acceptance of some forms of medical pluralism that was realistic in their work on the ground. Not every healing method was condemned, though many cultural remedies interacted in one way or another with the spirit world that was far from being Christianised. Transformation of beliefs took place through specific engagements, when spiritual help was rendered (or not rendered) to troubled individuals. With this insight, I now look at the Catholic missions in Zambia, using the example of the White Fathers.⁸

INVOLVEMENT IN DISCERNMENT PROCESSES

The early White Fathers took the existence of the devil and of demons for granted. Though they made much room for the notion of superstition, they nevertheless believed that the devil was real, and so were demons. Such beliefs presented them with opportunities to take part in the discernment processes that surrounded people struggling with spiritual forces. An overlap developed between theirs and local beliefs. The Church had weapons against attacks by evil spirits, the most direct one being the prayers of exorcism. Where missionaries applied it, it aroused much interest among people. Bishop Joseph Dupont used it at the beginning of the twentieth century against a plague of locusts on the gardens of the mission (successfully). We do find some examples of exorcism in the diaries, when people called the missionaries to help in the struggles with evil

⁸ Hokkanen showed that the missionary enterprise itself was plural (foreign missionaries, medical personnel and doctors, African church leaders and elders, evangelists, preachers, ministers and their families, but also differences in individual congregations), and so was—of course—the local scene. This point applies also to the White Fathers, on whom I focus in this chapter. While their decision-making process was highly centralised, they had to apply rules with the help of African catechists, and teachers. Compromises on the ground became transformative to local beliefs. The missionaries may have looked similar to each other with their beards and cassocks, but letters reveal different attitudes and heated controversies about appropriate pastoral approaches. See for example Oger 1993, p.26, pp. 54ff, and p. 77 and letters of Joseph Dupont in the Archives of the Missionaries of Africa, FENZA, Lusaka.

forces. An event that occurred in 1911, as recorded by the White Fathers of Kayambi Mission, is the following:

Going through Musanya, the Fathers saw for themselves that the chief's houses were really haunted. In the course of his religious instruction, Fr. Marsan was not afraid of telling them that they were not tormented in their homes by the spirits of the dead on the prowl, but by the Devil himself. He added that they had nothing to fear, that the Devil's power came from God, and that the Devil had no power to take their lives away. While the Fathers were at supper, Musanya came to call them. The Devil had come. The priests made for the house where the Devil was busy, and found the children were being pinched, scratched, slapped. They felt the children with their hands, but did not find anything. They could hear the slaps, but did not see any striking hand. The children were shouting "*Nafwa*—I am dead!" The following day, in the same village, the chief called them again. This time the two priests shut themselves into the house and closed the door. Fr. Ducourant put on a stole, recited the prayer for the blessing of a new house, and sprinkled holy water around, then challenged Satan to manifest his presence. There has never been any strange happening since then in this house nor in the village.⁹

The people of Musanya and the missionaries had different understandings about the nature of the force that was haunting the house. The priests taught them that the manifestations did not reveal the spirit of a dead person, but the devil. The missionaries' prayers and approach seemingly fulfilled their purpose. The house remained quiet (at least the diary entry suggests this), and the priests gained the reputation that they had powers to deal with such forces. Many missionaries were certainly keen to show that there was superior power in the Christian faith—they were able to defeat witchcraft and evil spirits. On the other side of the coin, they themselves became also more easily associated with the occult world.¹⁰

The process of Christianisation, of giving meaning to religious concepts, was a two-way traffic. Missionaries and church officials sorted out the "pagan" notions of spirits and spiritual forces in view of their own theological categories; aspiring Christians in turn understood and appropri-

⁹ Kayambi Mission Diary, 9 March 1911.

¹⁰ Early mission diaries speak of the fear that people had of baptism ("baptism makes people die"), which made the missionaries more careful to administer baptism in danger of death. On the other hand, baptism with its aspect of cleansing became one of the main attractions of early Catholicism in many areas.

ated Christian notions according to their understanding and experiences of the spiritual world. Differences in categories proved to be problematic in some circumstances. The White Fathers in Chilubula Mission recorded the following incident in 1904 (six years after the foundation of the mission):

Another case: a woman aged roughly twenty-five, from the Kifunge area, suddenly declares herself possessed by the spirit of a chief's spirit ("*mfumu ya mipashi*"). In other words, one of the great spirits of the ancestors—one of the spirits the Natives consider as secondary divinities by the powers they attribute to them—has taken possession of her body and mind. She now gives orders to all around to bring her food and cloth. It is a real racket. We have her arrested for questioning, but all we can get out of her is: "*Ni Shetani*—it is Satan." She pretended to be possessed by the Devil. After being condemned to pay five hens as a fine, she is booed by the crowd, for the people are in awe of those people turned instruments of the spirits, and they are very pleased to be rid of them. What is at the bottom of those so-called possessions by spirits? Most of the time, it is purely and simply a fraud, trickery, made possible by the credulity and superstition of the ordinary folks. It may be sometimes a case of hysteria. We must not exclude either the possibility of genuine cases of diabolical possession. The case of that woman mentioned above seemed to have been an attempt at a clever hoax, for the woman remained remarkably calm and composed under questioning.¹¹

Here we have a case where a woman declared herself to be possessed by Satan ("*Shetani*"), whom she understood as "*mfumu ya mipashi*", meaning "the chief of the spirits". It seems that the event took place in the village on the mission ground in Chilubula itself, since the missionaries had the authority to judge the case and impose a fine. The missionaries had been teaching about the devil ("*Shetani*") in the catechism classes. The woman seemingly associated "*Shetani*", the new chief of the spirits, with the many ambivalent spiritual agents that possessed people frequently. "*Shetani*" for her fell into the class of spirits related to the royal ancestors or of the *ngulu* spirits (spirits connected with awe-inspiring monuments of nature, or spirits vaguely connected with past or present peoples). Such spirits could make a person sick, but could also become a valuable resource for the community by bestowing extraordinary abilities of healing, prophecy

¹¹ Chilubula Mission Diary, February 1904.

or divination. For this, they needed to be respected, and the possessed woman demanded this respect. Missionaries on their part investigated this type of possession in terms of their own categories. Since the experience of the woman did not fit the pattern of what they expected from genuine demon possession (as defined by the Roman ritual traditions), they either saw it as a hoax or as a form of hysteria shaped by superstitious concepts and understandings. In the quotation, the missionaries distinguished three types of possession:

1. Real demonic possession (which could be answered by means of prayer and exorcisms);
2. Faked possession to gain attention or privileges (here the best answer was to slap a fine on the person to bring her back to her senses, as the above example shows); and
3. Imagined possession, due to superstitious beliefs.

It seems that the people who had settled on mission territory (mostly young people—and sometimes former slaves freed by the missionaries) sided with the missionaries in this case. Many of them were looking for a break from the past, and were unwilling to give the woman privileges because of her status of being possessed by a spirit. The incident is an early example of the suppression (fining, punishing) and of the silencing of experiences with interfering African spiritual realities that was to accompany the missionary endeavour. But the quotation also shows that the devil was becoming a flexible category of thought, appropriated in different ways.

This incident happened at a time when there was much discussion among the missionaries themselves about the use of exorcisms and blessings. While some early missionaries made ample use of prayers of blessings, other missionaries feared that such an approach fostered superstitious beliefs in magical objects, leaving people trapped in their fears. Worse still, those with extraordinary powers of healing and blessings could also bring curses, when angry. The healer of one person or group may be the witch of another person or group. The careful approach that downplayed spiritual powers was to gain the upper hand, while rituals and blessings outside the church came to be much discouraged.¹² Fearing misunderstandings, missionaries stepped on the brake and avoided

¹² Oger 1995; Hinfelaar 2004, p. 75.

exorcisms and personal initiatives of blessings. Instead, priests encouraged people to strive for a firm integration into the sacramental life of the Church, which was enough to safeguard the Christian from the enemy's attack.

ABODES OF THE DEVIL

When the missionaries arrived, Catholic theology of the time did not leave much room for salvation outside of the Church.¹³ The realm outside the Church was tainted by the devil. The missionaries brought with them a worldview where the Kingdom of Satan stood in opposition to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. If someone did not belong to the latter (was not firmly rooted in the Church), chances were rather high that this person somehow belonged to the former. Every evening the White Father missionaries prayed for the peoples of Africa to be freed from the grasp of the devil:

Do not suffer, O Mother of Mercy, that these unfortunate children should continue to fall into Hell, in spite of the merits of Jesus Christ and the cruel death He suffered for their salvation... Send into these abandoned districts legions of holy missionaries to wrest them from death and from Satan and to bring them into the fold of your Holy Church.¹⁴

Missionaries did not necessarily uphold the link between the devil and paganism in particular reference to African cultures. Some of the early missionaries were vocally sceptic and sarcastic about their own contemporary "enlightened" European culture, against which they compared the Zambian cultures favourably. They warned about the destructive influences on African cultures of "so-called civilisation."¹⁵ They judged the connection of the devil to pagan cultures in reference to the Church: inside was God, and outside was the devil—whether in Europe or in Africa. Institutions like polygamy were more closely linked to Satan since they

¹³ The word "Church" in the Latin Christian maxim, "*extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*—outside the Church there is no salvation," was understood commonly as referring strictly to the Catholic Church in its denominational dimension. Some official documents had also affirmed that those who had not yet received the Gospel could be related to the Church in various ways and thus be able to obtain salvation, if they were not culpable for their exclusion (for example Pope Pius IX, in *Quanto conficiamur moerore*). Such documents, however, made it look rather difficult not to be culpable for the error of exclusion.

¹⁴ Quoted in Hugo Hinfelaar (n.d.)

¹⁵ See for example the writings of Father Foulon 2001 (1899-1906).

made a person unfit for the sacramental life of the Church on a permanent basis.¹⁶

The occasional references to the devil in the mission diaries (often as poetic allusions at the occasion of liturgical feasts about the defeat of the devil) bring across the image that the missionaries have penetrated the devil's strongholds. The devil kept people hostage by means of pagan culture, religions and rites.¹⁷ The insertion of the Catholic Church into the country was breaking up the empire of the devil, who was resisting and putting up a fight.¹⁸ Some diary entries acknowledge that the devil has preponderance in the country and owns many dwellings; he will be made to flee, defeated by the Church.¹⁹ Baptism especially is a defeat of the devil and liberation from his slavery;²⁰ in the baptism promises, the catechumens renounced Satan and all his deeds publicly and with a loud voice. During Easter of 1907, for example, when catechumens were baptised after many years of preparation, the missionaries of Kayambi recorded that

The Devil must be grinding his teeth as well as plugging his ears not to hear the joyful Alleluia of the faithful. He must be terribly vexed that he no longer holds absolute sway over this country. He must be shocked to witness the enthusiasm of the people for the Christian faith, their fear to fail the exam, and their joy, expressed in boisterous singing and dancing, when they are admitted, either to baptism, or simply to the next step in their formation.²¹

¹⁶ Concerning attitudes of early missionaries towards African cultures see Garvey 1994, p. 45 and p. 111, and Oger 1995, p. 69. Bishop Dupont, as we know from his letters, was fighting against the opinion among missionaries that saw the African world contaminated by the devil and by sin. On the other hand, a number of missionaries marvelled at the closeness of African culture to the Biblical message (see for example the entry of Kayambi Mission Diary, 11 September 1895).

¹⁷ E.g. Kabunda Mission Diary, 22 April 1941. When drums were beaten during the whole night just next to the Mission station on the occasion of a dying man in the last stretch of his illness, the diarist noted: "The Baushi stick to their old beliefs and customs, unable to see that the Devil is pushing them around and leading them straight to hell."

¹⁸ When no porters signed up on the feast of the birthday of Mary (1899), when the missionaries needed them urgently, the Kayambi Mission Diary commented: "The Devil was trying hard to save his Empire". (Kayambi Mission Diary, 8 September 1899). Note that many statements about the devil in the mission diaries were made on liturgical feast days that celebrated the devil's defeat.

¹⁹ Chilubula Mission Diary, 30 March 1902 (Easter) "... for we are convinced that the universal veneration of Christ's mother will mark the end of the Devil's preponderance in this country..." See also 31 October 1902 of the same diary.

²⁰ Lubwe Mission Diary, 23 March 1913.

²¹ Kayambi Mission Diary, 31 March 1907. See also Lubwe Mission Diary, 25 December 1911. Baptism frees the pagan from the slavery of the devil.

The young people turn away from Satan with eagerness. ... Satan is still strongly entrenched in positions that will be impregnable for a long time to come, but even those positions are breached through in several places. ... The Devil won't easily give in, there are still very hard times ahead, but there is no doubt of what the final issue will be: the victory of the Cross.²²

The passage suggests that the history of evangelisation is determined by a battle between God's grace and the devil's obstinate resistance. Some diary entries admire the faith of the early African Christians who overcame many obstacles and much opposition.²³ Many were convinced that the victory of the Christian faith was inevitable. On the other hand, the missionaries saw the devil as pulling strings in the background when scandals arose among the Christians, when some slid back into polygamy or marital unfaithfulness,²⁴ when expansions of the rival Protestant Churches challenged the missionaries' advances,²⁵ and when cultural traditions and customs proved more persistent than anticipated.²⁶ Bishop Larue (bishop in Chilubula 1913-1935), for example, asked his priests to counter the lack of people's "fear of God" (as he perceived it) through the stressing

²² *Chroniques Trimestrielles* (Quarterly Reports), 1907-1909, commenting on the above entry (Kayambi Mission Diary, 31 March 1907).

²³ See the report of Kayambi mission, dated 1904 in the *Chroniques Trimestrielles* (Quarterly Reports) 1890-1905, Nyasa Vicariate, CT 59, No 108, of July 1904. The missionaries pondered on the strong faith of their Christians, the popularity of the sacraments of confession and of the Eucharist, and on the trust of pagan people in the missionaries in times of sickness and for settling disputes.

²⁴ Chilonga Mission Diary, 30 March 1902 ("The Devil does not waste time to play havoc in our small Christian community by creating scandals. ... One of our first six Christians has been convicted of adultery. May the Lord have mercy on him!") See also the entry of 15 February 1913 of the same diary, and Chilubula Mission Diary, 31 October 1902.

²⁵ Minga Mission Diary, 11 August 1923, and Lubwe Mission Diary, 6 August 1933. The former entry reads: "Seeing the large number of people who are turning their backs to Protestantism and flocking to us, we cannot abide by the decision of the Magistrate of Fort Jameson without betraying their trust. It was to be expected that the Devil would do all in his power to block our advance, for he definitely feels that his kingdom is seriously threatened in this part of the world."

²⁶ Chilubi Mission Diary, 7 November 1921, and Chilonga Mission Diary, March 1935. The latter reads: "The people living in the Nsenga are the BaKunda, and their language is Cibisa. They give the consonant 's' a buzzing sound. They are all animists. The spirits are in the centre of their worship. They are addicted to customs we are tempted to attribute to the devil, like abusive beer drinking ... lascivious dances, adultery, and polygamy. They are miles away from our polished Christian civilisation. But as human beings, they are kind and pleasant, and they showed themselves very hospitable towards our catechists." The former quotation refers to a battle of catechists with their own communities, who teased them with provocative and sexualised dances: "People recently danced immoral dances before the eyes of the catechists while nagging them to do anything about it and at the same time making all sorts of nasty remarks about their virility. The Devil is still fighting rearguard battles very efficiently."

of judgement and eternal punishment.²⁷ Missionaries were supposed to counteract a lack of thought about life after death.²⁸

Some missionaries who were to leave a lasting impression on people (for example the famous Father “Kolibo”)²⁹ made much use of the image of the devil to make people reflect about the consequences of immoral actions. People remembered details of his fiery instructions and sermons for decades to come, and sometimes applied his images of the devil to concrete misfortunes that happened to lapsed Christians. Bishop Larue (maybe more than other bishops) promoted an approach marked by judicial and legal consideration, drawing out the convergences and incompatibilities of Christian and cultural norms. Hugo Hinfelaar wrote that

Many marital customs and the initiation rites of the women were scrutinised and declared to be pagan. A list of sins was drawn up that allegedly offended the commandments of God and of the Church and were regarded as something to be confessed during the sacrament of confession. The stress tended to be on hell and the power of the devil. This negative approach became oppressive.³⁰

Hinfelaar, however, also notes that this negative approach to culture was not universal. Another approach and active interest in African culture developed among White Fathers that became a hallmark for them. The classic “White Father’s Bemba Dictionary” is an example of this interest that was applied with attention to detail. The process of studying the language and local culture brought to many missionaries an appreciation and a love for the traditional wisdom. This also brought them closer to local cultural authority figures. Hinfelaar writes that

In the 1930s there emerged a more open approach to traditional wisdom, the proverbs and the sayings of the peoples in Zambia, as this came to be regarded as a preparation for the coming of Christ’s message. Later on, this traditional culture was to underpin Catho-

²⁷ Garvey 1994, p. 91.

²⁸ See the writings of Father Nicolas Garrec (written in the 1920s). “As for doing good,’ the elderly people are want to say, ‘we did not even think of it, we had no time for it, nor did we speak of resurrection and of a world to come. We were just living our lives where we were, living through the events of every day. We were only concerned about war, food, witchcraft, and women... We thought only of ourselves.”

²⁹ Jean-Marie Colibaut, 1880-1954, who lived in Zambia from 1907 until his death in 1954.

³⁰ Hinfelaar 2004, p. 121.

lic catechesis that adapted it as much as possible to the teaching of the Church.³¹

Missionaries used African culture for the service of evangelisation, as a “tool box” to root catechism into people’s life. This also brought an interest into the conflicting areas. Studies and inquiries were repeatedly commissioned to scrutinise pagan rites (including the secret puberty rites) and to draw out where they were incompatible with Christian thought. Missionaries were often very uncomfortable with practices exhibiting sex. The problem was that “good traditions” and “bad ones” were subtly woven into each other. Taking out the “bad” elements (as evaluated by the priests) could destroy the rites altogether or turn them into dull and unexciting enterprises.³²

Missionaries’ positive interest in local culture made it no longer possible to identify the realm of the devil plainly with non-Christian practices. If culture contained both good and bad elements, which were not easily separable, then the devil’s connection with non-Christian practices also became less specific, vaguer and indirect. While the devil remained associated with the realm outside the Church still for years to come, the missionaries rarely saw the devil as directly possessing people in a way that necessitated a formal exorcism. Furthermore, according to Catholic doctrine, the devil cannot take away the freedom of people to choose what is good. In the traditional Catholic paradigm, the devil is the hidden spiritual agent in the background; he does not appear in the foreground, and if he does, it is very rare and exceptional. The devil for the missionaries was a feared spiritual agent with a theological significance. He was also an explanatory and/or poetic category for people’s resistance and cultural entrenchments. He was rarely an agent whom one would encounter face to face as in forms of direct possession. The concept of widespread de-

³¹ Hinfelaar 2004, p. 430. “This negative approach to culture and custom was not universal. For some missionaries the key word had become adaptation, i.e., some of the traditions could be adapted to the teaching of the Church. However, the local culture was seen as being at the service of Christian evangelization and there was as yet no equal dialogue between the tenets of African traditional religion with those of Christian religion.” (Hinfelaar 2004, p. 122).

³² Even when inculturation theology enabled later generations of missionaries to acknowledge the presence of divine wisdom in cultural traits, the elimination of “bad elements”, orchestrated from the outside, crippled many Christianised rites. For example, in initiation rites, the removal of all the elements that were classified as bad (beer, punishments, nakedness, sexual commentaries, obscenities, the use of medicines to increase sexual attraction and potencies, etc.) also took from the rites many life-energies and could turn them into uninteresting, catechetical endeavours. After receiving the church rites, people still wanted “the real thing”—performed secretly away from the eyes of the Church. (See Udelhoven 2015, pp. 138–140.)

monic possession that needed to be addressed through exorcisms would come only much later, in the charismatic and Pentecostal approaches.

"YOU CANNOT SERVE TWO MASTERS"

The early missionaries stressed a very long catechumenate. People who sought baptism had to make a choice in life: one cannot serve two masters. Spirits other than God had to be renounced.

As we know today, people lived with a complex and changing world of spirits, with many regional differences, when the missionaries arrived on the scene at the end of the 19th century. Different types of spirits were associated with local or regional shrines, chiefly cults, ancestors of one's own lineage, the dead belonging to a hostile environment, spirits belonging to fearsome places or foreign peoples, and spirits able to teach extraordinary crafts; spiritual forces were subtly woven into specific relationships. Spirit possession referred to distinct issues and phenomena, depending on the types of spirits that afflicted a person. Also the ancestors embodied a part of themselves in a new-born child, connecting intrinsically to his/her soul. Some spirits were dangerous for outsiders but beneficial for insiders. Others could transform the person they befell into a "wounded healer", a prophet or a diviner. Some spirits could be manipulated through the forces of witchcraft.

The missionaries did not experience these spirits themselves; they studied and classified them according to their nature ("good spirits", "bad spirits") that they perceived from people's descriptions, which placed the spirits on a more abstract level.³³ Catholic theology of the early missionaries used concepts of scholastic theology going back to Thomas Aquinas to understand and classify the spirit world. Their concepts defined angels as spiritual, non-corporal beings with superior intelligence, whose knowledge is not tied to the senses. They can see in a flash of time many of the divine truths. If they turn against the will of God, then their decision is permanent; angels cannot change their mind. Either they are with God or against. There is no middle ground for spirits in this theology. For the spirits that interfered with the lives of people, if they were real and

³³ Although the White Fathers became known for their efforts and pride in learning the local languages and customs, the earliest missionary writings show little awareness about the distinctions among the local spirits—which they lumped together into one group of evil spirits (see for example the writings of Emile Foulon (1871-1907)). Nicolas Garrec, writing between 1910 and 1920, drew out already detailed distinctions of the spirit world and followed Bemba categories in his descriptions. Edouard Labrecque and others later presented (with the 1930s) elaborate materials concerning Bemba religious concepts.

if they were a hindrance to the acceptance of the Gospel, they belonged to the devil. The Aristotelian philosophical principles that provided the foundations for Scholastic demonology and angelology were foreign to the people to whose concepts they were applied. Their own concepts were embedded in relational understandings of reality and human life.

While the missionaries associated some spirits with the devil, calling them demons, they placed most spirits into the world of superstitious beliefs where they existed only in people's imaginations. Such beliefs were associated with the devil only in an indirect way: the devil held people captive in fears produced by this world of false beliefs. In any case, people troubled by such imaginary spirits were not qualified to be subjected to the formal rites of exorcism. They were left alone with their spirits in the hope that better education would eventually liberate them from their entrenched superstitious beliefs. Where people could be entertaining real spirits (the missionaries left that possibility open), they were engaging demons and needed to be excluded from the sacramental life of the Church. This extended also to a spiritual relationship with the ancestors, who—outside the realm of the Church—continued to secure blessings for their descendants, but not without making concrete demands by enforcing taboos and demanding offerings for recognition.

Conflicts developed through people's integration into earthly authority structures of kings, chiefs, headmen, family heads or ritual specialists, whose sources of power were never understood in purely secular terms. Authority in Zambia always had spiritual dimensions.³⁴ Royal shrines and traditions continued to stand out as visible focal points for the spiritual authority of chiefs, which was connected to the protection of the land and its fertility, thus also underlining their position in a changing world. Along riverbanks, lagoons and forests, forces of nature were appeased by the invocation of the ancestors of specific clans by their descendants who held ritual authority over these territorial stretches. Where young people asked the White Fathers for religious instruction in their villages, this could imply a potential political assault on the village authority structures upheld by the ancestral spirit shrines (*mfuba*; singular: *lufuba*), which were ridiculed or even destroyed by the catechists, teachers and their followers. Hence, the policy of the White Fathers to seek permission first from the headmen, who were in turn often office bearers of a chief.³⁵ Missionaries arrived on the Zambian scene when memories of war and

³⁴ The same applies for wealth. See for example Ellis & ter Haar 2004, pp. 114–139.

³⁵ See for example incidents recorded by Garvey 1994, p. 79 and p. 100. Audrey Richards acknowledged the loss of spiritual authority of Native Authorities at the expense of mission-

an extracting slave trade were very much alive. The survival of individuals and of groups within the upheavals of the 18th and 19th centuries depended on having the right set of loyalties.³⁶

In Bemba-land the conflict between the different sets of authorities became marked when, in 1931, Bishop Larue (Vicar Apostolic of the Bangweolo Vicariate) wrote a strong letter to all Christians (he meant Catholics) and catechumens, forbidding them to attend any form of prayer that “worship the spirits of the dead”. He referred in this letter to prayers organised by the Bemba paramount chief for the fertility of the land through the intercession of the ancestors (*ukupepa imipashi*—understood by the Bishop as ancestor worship), and placed participation in such prayers under the sanction of excommunication. According to Louis Oger (a historian of the White Fathers), this letter alienated Bemba chiefs from the White Fathers for decades to come.³⁷

UNDERGROUND RELIGION

When the missionaries tried to appropriate for the Church ritual authority over all spiritual aspects of life, they pushed underground other ritual authorities, who thereby however did not cease to exist. An example was the establishment of an underground chiefly cult right at Ilondola Mission in the aftermath of the letter of Larue. Chiefly authority, to be effective, needed to reach into every single village through the headmen and multiple sets of ritual authorities. Louis Oger described how chief Nkula secretly appointed a traditional priest to the newly established Ilondola Mission, who was to become one of the main catechists:

ary interests (Richards 1939, p. 362; Garvey 1994, p. 82). Acts of respect towards the spiritual world of clan ancestors were termed idolatrous (Garvey 1994, p. 110).

³⁶ People who had hands, feet, ears or noses cut off served as living reminders of the terror that awaited people who undermined the authority of chief or king, or the values on which society depended.

³⁷ See *Les Petites Nouvelles et Renseignements*, issue Nr 26 (dated 03/02/1931). This letter, combined with the behaviour of the German priest in charge of neighbouring Malole Parish towards colonial administration and chiefly authority, caused Chief Nkula to withdraw his permission to open a mission station in his country, according to Oger (1993, p.6-7; 1993, p. 58-61; 1995, p. 22). Oger's analysis takes account of the religious conflicts concerning chiefly ambitions at the onset of indirect rule. It is for me more convincing than Gordon's recent claim that Chief Nkula withdrew the permission because he feared the witchcraft of the White Fathers (Gordon 2012, pp. 50ff.) The ailing Chief Nkula arguably feared the paramount chief Chitimukulu and the interference of the White Fathers into the royal duties more than the (alleged) witchcraft of the missionaries. The District Commissioner of Chinsali in his Memorandum of 07.02.1934 cited White Fathers' policy on divorce as the reason for Chitimukulu to prevent Nkula from allowing the White Fathers in (Oger 1993, p. 248).

Chief Nkula knew he could not indefinitely refuse Fr. van Sambeck permission to open a station at Ilondola. He then made plans to establish his own *shimapepo* [priest; literally: “father of the prayers”] at the mission station itself and he carefully prepared his man for this delicate function, as one of the elders explained to us many years later. This man chosen by the Chief to perpetuate traditional religion side by side with Christian Religion followed the normal catechumenate for admission into the Catholic Church—he was a Protestant—and was baptised. Then he was appointed headman of the village in the immediate neighbourhood of the mission station. In the meantime, the Chief’s *shimapepo* endeared himself to the missionaries, for he turned out to be a fervent Catholic, and very active at the service of the Church and the Christian community. The long and short of it is that Father Superior summoned him to the Mission, where he became his right hand man in the life of the parish. When the time came to choose a new headman for Ilondola Village, Father Superior proposed his candidature to Chief Nkula, who was only too happy to oblige. Thus it was that, from 1934 up to 1991 when we finally discovered what was going on, a member of the family of this *headman-cum-shimapepo* had been exercising the function of priest of the traditional cult of the spirits of the ancestors and of the spirits of the lords-and-masters of the land in the shadow of the Catholic Church, whether he was headman or not. Thus it was that for fifty-seven uninterrupted years two cults—should I say two systems?—had been maintained in function side by side without any trouble at all.³⁸

We could draw out similar points also for other peoples in Zambia. The secret Nyau society of the Chewa—incorporated into chiefly authority structures—reached into nearly every village, constituting an alternative religion that came “over-ground” when local authority needed to be asserted. The incoming Angoni, who had conquered big parts of Chewa territory in the 19th century, feared the secret Nyau structures as much as the Christians did. The Nyau continued to affirm, against the invaders, the religious role and importance of the Chewa ancestors in regards to the upholding of morality, fertility and territorial landmarks. The Angoni felt

³⁸ Oger 1995, p. 22. He refers to a similar case in Lufubu along the Luapula, documented by Ian Cunnison, where the chief secretly entrusted to one of the catechists the task of being the guardian of the tomb of an important Lunda prince, who was invoked to prevent disasters of hurricanes and thunderstorms. Note that quotations from Oger’s work and from the Mission Diaries do not contain italics in the original. I have added italics in all quotations for vernacular terms in order to conform to the standards elsewhere in this book.

in charge, yet had no religious roots. The Chewa way of safeguarding their religious authority over the land was to take it to a hidden level, to which neither the Angoni nor the missionaries in subsequent times had access. The Christianised Angoni became natural allies to the Catholic Church in the fight against the Nyau, but not out of Christian motives.³⁹

Where there was no open clash of authority, different religious systems coexisted rather peacefully next to each other. Many people participated in both, non-exclusively, depending on the situational needs. Village life had multiple sets of contesting authorities. For example, it continued to be marked by festivities that accentuated prolonged rites of initiation (puberty rites), where notions of womanhood and manhood, a people's values, authority structures, spiritual concepts and beliefs, and ideas of possible punishments from the spirits were passed on to the next generation. According to Church teaching in the time of Bishop Larue, the clapping for ancestors during these initiation rites bordered on idol worship. By nature, initiation rites are secret and hidden from the eyes of the uninitiated—they easily went underground. The instructors of the initiation rites came to church on Sundays, while playing a very different religious role during the rites, which they carefully kept away from the eyes of the Church.⁴⁰

Open ancestor shrines disappeared from Christian villages. However, the ancestors did not disappear with the shrines. In dreams and in times of life-crisis they continued to be strong markers of identity. The personal shrines of individual specialists, blacksmiths, hunters and diviners that individuals used to enhance their personal crafts and gain esoteric knowledge also went underground. Such cults of tapping into occult forces were by nature hidden ones. The Church could not be part of this realm. Even ordinary people were often suspicious about esoteric knowledge gained for private purposes, which was easily associated with the practice of witchcraft. Going underground often increased their attraction, especially in times of crisis when one needed extraordinary help—at any cost. Different forms of securing hidden spiritual interventions for protection, for business, for finding marriage partners or for securing their faithful-

³⁹ In earlier centuries, the Achewa had themselves been an invading agricultural people. Unlike the Angoni, however, they had managed to form with the indigenous peoples a ritual symbiosis to gain access to the religious fertility structures over the land. (Personal communication with Toon van Kessel, St. Lawrence Parish). See the introduction in Boucher 2012.

⁴⁰ Missionaries, when forbidding for their Christians the participation in highly sexualised dances, with which they felt uncomfortable, did not always recognise the religious nature of many dances. They would have forbidden the dances also on religious grounds, had they realised!

ness, continued to develop. This quest could have dangerous consequences for others. Such powers, with a close connection to sorcery, needed to be controlled. Since they did not fall under the authority of the Church, nor of the state, traditional authorities (chiefs) and healers claimed this space for themselves. People settled disputes that arose in the trails of occult practices with the help of the chiefs' courts, or headmen, diviners and healers who knew about this world, outside the realm of the Church.

Also, people with *ngulu* or *myela* (in this book I refer to them as "nature spirits") opted for less visible signs of their spiritual status; many people with such spirits were active church members. The old landmarks and shrines (at waterfalls, old trees or caves) lost much of their ritual appeal. Nevertheless, dietary and sexual taboos and cooking practices in reference to the spirits unfolded in the domestic realm. Spirits continued to punish their hosts for trespassing on their rules and taboos. Sometimes, this was an occasion for divorce from an oppressive marriage, at other times an occasion for renegotiating existing authority structures within the family. They could bestow on their hosts faculties of healing, of divination, of detecting witchcraft and prophetic gifts. Christians were not allowed to entertain *ngulu*. Edouard Labrecque, a White Father who was commissioned to write up treatises on Bemba customs for his fellow missionaries, wrote that

The cases of 'kuwilwa' or spirit possessions (falling in a trance, writhing on the ground, foaming at the mouth) may be genuine enough, but they are usually pathological cases (epilepsy and unsettled state of the nervous system). It is not totally impossible, however, that Satan, the Father of all lies, may be involved in some cases (diabolical possessions).⁴¹

Since missionaries rarely exorcised *ngulu* spirits (most of the time they thought they were just imagined) and did not otherwise engage with them, the Church excluded itself from the discernment process that accompanied possession by such spirits (causes of sicknesses, prophecies, dreams). It was left to other ritual specialists, away from the eyes of the Church.

In many ways, the *ng'anga* (the traditional healer, shaman or diviner) became the alternative to the priest or missionary—which did not prevent Christians from seeking help from both. Most missionaries considered them as charlatans. If they had real divining powers or intimate

⁴¹ Labrecque 2001 (composed between 1931 and 1934), p. 101. Edouard Labrecque (1895-1984) worked in Zambia from 1922 to 1952.

knowledge of people beyond natural faculties, then such powers pointed directly to the devil.⁴² Christians who consulted a diviner were barred from the sacraments for a number of reasons. From a spiritual point of view, access to knowledge through means of divination ran against the teaching of the Bible and of the Church. From a social point of view, the consultation of a diviner often culminated in concrete witchcraft accusations with the consequence of broken families. From a medical point of view, the practice of healers was often incompatible with the models of modern health care. People, however, connected with the *ng'anga* on a different level than with the Church. Extended rites of healing manipulated a spiritual world that connected with the human soul through dancing and singing, dreams, medicines from animals and plants cut and rubbed into the body, and rituals performed at significant places. This symbolic universe often remained more meaningful to people, as it was intimately linked to the human body and their understanding of health and sickness.

UPROOTED CHRISTIANS

From the viewpoint of scholastic theology, it was a reasonable and necessary demand of the Gospel that one cannot serve two masters. The early Christians would publicly, loudly and proudly deny, in the baptism promises, the abstract devil and all his demons, and would be sincere in those promises. Few, however, linked these promises to their own experiences with the spirit world. The spirits with whom people struggled were different from the demons they denounced. Spirits were interwoven into concrete life-situations from which it was difficult to escape. Christians with *ngulu* (or *mashawe* in other cultures) felt themselves to be victims of such spirits. They obeyed the spirits since the spirits punished them for not adhering to their commands and taboos. People who did not pass through the puberty rites were not considered as true women or true men, and sometimes did not consider themselves such either; they were regarded

⁴² While diviners were largely seen as charlatans by the missionaries, the diaries mention instances where the missionaries regarded their intimate knowledge of people as coming directly from the devil. "How does one become a witch or a witchdoctor? It is simply a matter of cunning and daring. What looks like magic and sorcery to a credulous Native is in fact a clever trick, which an incredulous European would quickly discover if he were allowed to attend the consultation. But there are certainly real diabolical interventions: in other words I am convinced that some witchdoctors have, in some circumstances, direct contacts with the Devil" (Foulon 2001 (written between 1899 and 1906), p. 53.) See also diary entries that refer to the devil's presence in the procedures of the *bamucapi* witchfinders (for example, Lubwe Mission Diary, 28th September 1934).

as a bad omen for the whole clan and despised as slaves.⁴³ People not going to the diviner could be looked at as cowards who kept their eyes shut, fearing to confront the witches. Alternatively, they were themselves regarded as witches. Not to give due respect to the ancestors could provoke disastrous consequences not only for oneself but also for the family. Many understood it as an act of ungratefulness for the gift of life. Ancestral traditions were very important during funerals, since the dead could come back to haunt the living where traditions were neglected. Within families, people scrutinized each other along the lines of cultural beliefs in order to avoid misfortune.

Some people managed to follow a Christian way of life and to renounce their ties to the ambivalent spirit world, often with costly personal consequences. Mission diaries contain entries about uncompromising individuals and saints, who lived out of their new faith and passed it on to their families, even against accusations of disloyalty and witchcraft. Many Christians, however, were not attuned to viable alternatives when it came to subtle questions that posed themselves to those who remained “in the world”. They had to live life with their families, obey their local authorities and live out their cultural and domestic values and obligations. Could a Christian take part in pagan dances, sometimes highly sexualised, when drumming was often associated with the spirit world? Could a Christian protect his/her child and family from contact with (sexual) pollution that was understood to bring death? And could a Christian participate in funeral rites, which had clear references to the spirit world that slowly transformed a departed family member into an ancestor, followed by inheritance-rites, and rites that brought back the soul of the dead to the family? Common hunting, pot-making and beer-brewing traditions, agricultural duties, or the cooking of food with the many taboos surrounding salt and fire, were all connected to the world of the ancestors and spirits. How could one abstain from them all? Missionaries themselves realised that their Christians led a double religious life. The French missionary (White Fathers) Nicolas Garrec, writing before 1920, expressed the missionary experience of an uphill struggle forcefully:

Our Christians may no longer go openly to venerate the spirits (*mipashi*) ... All the customs of the BaBemba are rooted in pagan beliefs, and they are still faithfully observed by all the Christians, because deep down they still share those beliefs with their pagan

⁴³ See Garrec 1999 (1910-1920), p. 47. Thera Rasing investigated the concerns around the implications for Christians participating in initiation rites, and of Christianising such rites (Rasing 2001).

counterparts, even in the villages of the Mission Compound, and there is nothing anybody can do about it. I have found out that paganism was most lively in those villages, and among those families, which had the reputation of being one hundred percent Christian. Those Catholics who are the loudest in claiming that the past is for them dead and buried are probably those who are the staunchest conservatives and the most active in preserving the beliefs and customs of their ancestors.⁴⁴

For the converted Christians, the world of spirits did not come as a theoretical world—as the one renounced at baptism—but was enshrined within the concepts of the human body and often validated by individual experiences. Scholastic theology did not start with human experiences but with the abstract nature of the spirits. This theology proved to be too blunt to deal with such a complex spiritual world in which people lived, and which was subtly woven into relationships between individuals and families. Sure, some spirits were good, while others were malicious and bad (or at least ambivalent). Often, however, the goodness or badness of a spiritual force depended on the side from which one was looking. In Bemba culture, for example, the soul of a departed adult usually became a benevolent spiritual agent for his/her family, a *mupashi*; a new-born child in this family would inherit its name and character. But it was not a *mupashi* for the remaining spouse, but a polluting shade, a *cibanda*, clinging to the spouse's soul as a meddling spiritual force related to death. He/she needed to be cleansed from the *cibanda* by the late spouse's family, to whom the dead fundamentally belongs. Whether the influence of the dead was experienced positively (e.g. a *mupashi*) or negatively (e.g. a *cibanda*) depended also on the kinship link through which one was related to the departed person.

Catholic theology proposed that a Mass said for the dead would take care of all the spiritual concerns about the dead person. Nevertheless, very few Catholics asked for a Mass or trusted that this would cleanse the remaining spouse from the *cibanda*. It is too closely tied to the authority of the family of the dead person; they alone can cleanse the remaining spouse from this spiritual reality, because washing away the *cibanda* through extended rituals goes hand in hand with negotiations between the two affected families. This includes speaking about remaining grudges, failures, property rights and the welfare of the children. A Mass or

⁴⁴ Garrec 1999 (1910-1920), p. 65.

other prayers in church could not do this. The *cibanda* was (and is) not an abstract ghost, but linked to the demands within concrete relationships.

The *ng'anga*, the diviner, remained a master of seeing through relationships, and no Church in Zambia managed to make him/her redundant—except those who integrated *ng'anga* figures into their structures (examples are various Zion, Mutumwa, and Mizimu Churches, and to an extent also the Mutima Church).⁴⁵ Early anthropologists like Audrey Richards—working in the 1930s—hinted at the irony in Zambia's religious history that the spread of Christianity, against all its good intentions, did not help to diminish fear but instead increased spiritual insecurity in Zambia. In her functionalist analysis, she proposed that such spiritual insecurity was triggered by a breakdown in traditional sets of relationships and mutual obligations that were in turmoil in the new political conditions brought on by the colonial regime. The traditional *ng'anga*, the healer and diviner, was needed more now than before.

Also the authority of parents over their children was vested with spiritual properties; parents could bless their children but could also curse them. The paternal aunt, who was often a ritual authority figure in families of matrilineal societies, made her authority felt in family matters when marriages were negotiated or children raised. When people left their homes to seek employment elsewhere, the ancestors lost much of their impact—not because Christians renounced them in solemn declarations in church, but because new life-situations had made them redundant. On the other hand, an urban family may have been grounded in the Christian faith for many years, but the occasion of a visiting relative could bring back the whole weight of tradition and obligation. Out of nowhere and to the puzzlement of the priests, such Christians embraced again beliefs that they had rejected long ago. The spirit world was far from being static. Some spirits lost out to new social conditions, while new spirits and concepts, never heard of before, came to make their impact felt in new social situations. Where the Churches and modern state institutions were absent from puberty rites, cleansing rites, healing rites or rites for protection against the consequences of trespassing important taboos, cultural ritual specialists could act with little supervision or peer review.

⁴⁵ The renewed Bemba Catholic rites and prayers at funerals (*Amapepo ya kulosha*) of the Interdiocesan Pastoral Co-ordinating Team take account of this issue at various stages of the rites, and offers prayers and Christian reflections for each stage, including the *isambo lya mfwa* (the family meeting with the remaining spouse), the *bupyani bwe shina* (inheritance of the name—given to a relative of the deceased who will take over some public functions of the deceased), and the *kupasa icililo* (official end of the funeral).

DEALING WITH WITCHCRAFT

A human person was supposed to be healthy, prosperous, living in harmony with the community and a good influence on society. Christians and non-Christians alike shared this outlook. When things were not working out, when disaster struck (death), or when sickness triumphed over attempts of healing, things were obviously not as they were supposed to be. Concepts of evil were tied to interpersonal relationships—a witch was responsible for the afflictions in the community. Witchcraft could be acquired or inherited. Missionary studies attest that in pre-colonial times some forms of witchcraft could not be redeemed. The character of the witch was inherently bad, and the community had to make sure that a person was totally destroyed for fear that the spiritual substances enshrined in the body could be passed on or be reincarnated. We have accounts of various forms of poison ordeals how convicted witches were killed and burnt to ashes, sometimes with extensive rituals, and their families sold into slavery (hence the association of slaves with witchcraft).⁴⁶ This view contrasted with the Christian faith that never excluded the possibility of repentance even for the worst sinner (or witch); Catholic theology—at least since the European witch-craze—was very careful not to make direct, definite and eternal connections between an individual person and the devil. Early White Fathers bought slaves and resettled them on Mission grounds—their descendants sometimes remained associated with witchcraft for generations to come.⁴⁷

Witchcraft was a pastoral problem from the first days of missionary endeavours, and people were rarely happy with the way missionaries dealt with it. The following entry was recorded in the diary of Santa Maria of Chibote in 1903, just a few months after the opening of the mission station:

The children in our boarding (barza) came to tell us about a man in the village who is ready to submit to the trial by poison. In the following morning, at the time of the public prayer, we warned the people that, if the villagers were to go through with the trial, we would send a report to Kampanda and ask that policemen be sent to arrest the man responsible for it. Later we were told of the motive behind the whole affair. ... The man under accusation demanded that he be taken through the trial by poison to prove his

⁴⁶ See for example Foulon 2001 (1899-1906), pp. 26-27; Garrec 1999 (1910-1920), Labrecque 1982 (1931, 1934), pp. 28-29.

⁴⁷ Oger 1993.

innocence. Our decision ran contrary to the feelings of the people. Nobody was pleased. Our people are convinced that the poison made with the bark of a certain tree (probably of the *stephanotis* family) mixed with droppings from hens and dogs is an infallible way of proving or disproving the innocence of a person under a serious accusation. This person is declared guilty if he fails to vomit the mixture. In that case, he will fall down and writhe, and the spectators will fall on him with their spears and axes and hack him to death, and his corpse will be cremated.⁴⁸

The man above wanted to prove his innocence through the poison ordeal, which the missionaries prevented by force, threatening to involve the colonial powers which had outlawed witchfinding. The accusers and the accused saw themselves in need of a forum in which one could prove or disprove witchcraft. The accusers wanted this forum to stop witchcraft attacks on their families and punish the guilty. The accused also wanted it in order to clear their names of the crimes of witchcraft that would continue to stick to them, turning them into outcasts in their own families. Church and colonial powers outlawed the poison ordeal, while also being unable and unwilling to deal with the witchcraft or to acknowledge it. A forum for dealing with witches was established with the *ng'anga*, the traditional healer and diviner, who fitted into the authority structures opened by chiefs, headmen and family heads. Operations of the *ng'anga* changed to fit the new circumstances. To avoid arrest, witchfinding had to stay vague, or it had to be done away from the realm of the state under supervision of parallel authorities in a space constituted by chiefs and headmen.

Dialogue about witchcraft was not taking place between ritual authorities and the missionaries. Hugo Hinfelaar writes in the *History of the Catholic Church in Zambia* that

The missionaries regarded themselves as sons of the Enlightenment. After many centuries of witchcraft accusations in Europe,

⁴⁸ Chibote Mission Diary, 17th July 1903. The text goes on to explain beliefs, like witches to change into lions and other animals. It finishes with the assertion that people do not know of natural causes of misfortune; any sickness or evil that befalls a person is seen as a result of witchcraft of people who hate and who harm. The original translation reads "witchdoctor" instead of "witch". Usually the pejorative term "witchdoctor" referred to the healer/diviner. The quoted text, however, seems to refer to beliefs concerning the workings of the witch. Usually, the missionaries regarded such beliefs as superstitions. But there are exceptions. See, for example, Chilubi Mission Diary, 18th February 1916: "Fr. Tanguy came back from the Nsumbu today. He came into close contact with witchcraft in the course of this pastoral journey. He came to realise with a shock that witchcraft was the Devil's way of keeping the people under his thumb in a state of real slavery. He understood how true it is to say that Christ came to free Man. Christianity is liberation." See also Foulon 2001 (1899-1906), p. 53.

most people there had finally rid themselves of this scourge by a more rational approach. "Witchcraft does not exist," they preached. "It is caused by a fear of the unknown that will be taken away by modern science. Witchcraft is mere superstition." Whether this was of any use to the people in the villages, in particular to the women, remains very doubtful. They were of the opinion that by not being able to take cases of witchcraft to a court of law, be it civil or ecclesiastical, evil beings could have their own way without any social control. As there was no room for discussion of honest dialogue, this problem went underground and festered for a long time to come.⁴⁹

New movements of diviners and healers took up the need of addressing the problem of witchcraft. In the 1930s the *mcape* movement (in the North called *mucapi*) swept through the country. It was silently tolerated by the colonial powers and enthusiastically accepted nearly everywhere by the local population, including the Christian population. The new type of diviner, the *mucapi*, was identifying the witches in the gathered village assemblies organised by headman or chief, with the aim not of destroying or chasing the witches (as in the pre-colonial paradigm), but of cleansing and reintegrating them back into the community after they had confessed and surrendered their charms. This was a new concept in witchcraft beliefs. The witchfinders and witchcleansers first invited people to bring all their charms, including protective ones, in the presence of the diviners (which many people did). Then they proceeded to find out or "sniff out" the witches in the community with the help of their mirrors or other utensils. They made them confess and forced them to drink medicines or concoctions that would prevent them from practising witchcraft again under the threat of a sure death. After payments of compensation were made to the harmed families, and of course to the diviners (and sometimes to the chiefs and headmen), they were now supposed to become reintegrated into the community (at least in theory—in practice this was not always working), since they had been cleansed from their evil powers.

The success of the *mcape* movement and of other witchcleansing movements puzzled the missionaries. The following diary entry (Kabunda Mission Diary, 25th September 1934) shows that the association of the traditional diviner with the devil was coming to a logical dilemma:

Some more Christian victims of the village cleansing carried out by the *mucapi* at Kalaba: they were forced to drink the 'anti-witchcraft

⁴⁹ Hinfelaar 2004, p. 122.

lotion', but at least they did not buy any of the stuff for further use. At the village of Chief Kale, the witchhunters have collected an impressive quantity of horns and other magical gadgets, mainly from some old pagans and from the Chief Kale himself. We are also told that the village cleansing led also to the removal of a famous snake that had the reputation of being possessed by the Devil.—According to the testimony of many serious, reliable witnesses, the way *bamucapi* proceed to 'cleansé' a village from all witchcraft can only be diabolical. All Christians are, therefore, obliged in conscience to abstain from direct participation in the proceedings. On the other hand, we can only be pleased to see full baskets of horns supposedly packed with magical bits and pieces (bones, hairs, nails, etc.) thrown away in the bush. That is a very strange sight to see *bamucapi* (witchhunters) neutralising the evil enterprises of *baloshi* (witches and witchdoctors and sorcerers) *by magical means*, as if the Devil were fighting against himself.

The following premises show the ambivalence with which missionaries linked the *mucapi* or *mcapi* to the devil: (1) Witchcraft is evil; (2) the *mucapi* pretends to rescue people from witchcraft; (3) the *mucapi* works him/herself with the forces of the devil.⁵⁰ Beelzebub was once again fighting against himself.

Converted Christians reached similar ambivalent conclusions. They easily bought into the vocabulary of the devil as an explanation for evil and for forces hostile or incompatible with the Christian faith. Yet in times of crisis, people felt obliged to go to the diviner. Coming back to the sacraments, they confessed to have been overcome by "Shetani" or that they had gone to consult the "liar". They had often seen no other way of dealing with evil. Maybe the devil could help in important struggles against evil where God seemed powerless; maybe he knew evil better than God, and could give a hand to sort it out! Notions of good and evil had moved beyond the clear colours of black and white into ambivalent grey zones, depending on situational needs.

A few missionaries attended such cleansing ceremonies, documented what they saw and reflected about their meaning. One of them, Fr. Stürzer while in Kabunda Mission, though strongly condemning the methods of

⁵⁰ For the context of Eastern Congo, Emma Wild (1998) has made a similar point about Christian discourses in the wake of the rising of the "Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération" of Laurent Kabila against Mobutu, locally known as "Mai-Mai". Their magical powers were associated with the dark forces of witchcraft or Satan, yet they brought down the evil regime of Mobutu, equally identified with the devil. This forced Christians to come up with explanations that went beyond a mere dualism of good against evil.

the *bamucapi* (which he considered diabolical), pointed out the failure of the Church to do something about witchcraft:

We missionaries must not have any illusion about our Christians: witchcraft has still a great, almost unshakeable hold on them. We must not be surprised that the Chiefs and all men and women of good will are giving the *bamucapi* or witchhunters such an enthusiastic welcome: they see them as well-intentioned people keen on freeing the country from the underhand hateful activities of evil-intentioned people. Our Christian teaching does *not* do anything to rid the villagers of the threat of witchcraft. The stress is on to do something to free them of witchcraft. The *bamucapi* fulfils a practical function appreciated by the people.⁵¹

After the *mcape*, other witchcraft eradicating movements swept through the country, on both wide and small scales. Some indigenous Churches took up the quest of cleansing witches to reintegrate them back into the community after confession. In the 1950s up to the beginning of the 1960s, people brought heaps of charms to Alice Lenshina in the Lumpa Church in both Protestant and Catholic territories, be it on their own accord or through group pressure.⁵² They confessed, were baptised and reintegrated into the community. Seeing the enormous success of Lenshina, some priests tried out similar initiatives, inviting people to bring their charms and be prayed over. Very few people came, if any. The Catholic Church by now had firmly established itself in the realm outside the local discourses on witchcraft, spirits and other spiritual forces that intruded into people's lives. This image could not be changed by means of one or two isolated initiatives, nor would it proceed without the help of charismatic and gifted persons who could connect to people on a deep symbolic and spiritual level.

Church workers were well aware that charms also remained important for Christians, who continued to use them for securing love and good luck, good businesses, protection or just for hunting. Nevertheless, there had developed in the Church a bias to look at those accused of witchcraft as sheer victims of wrong accusations. Witchfinders, according to the church discourses, would conveniently seek out the rich and successful and share the spoils. They would also mix into the equation some of the elderly and poor, or the beggars who were becoming a nuisance to their own families, to give further credibility to their divination practices.

⁵¹ Kabunda Mission Diary, 14th October 1934.

⁵² See Gordon 2013, 2011, Binsbergen 1981, Hinfelaar 1994 and Calmettes 1982.

The Church looked at the accused as totally innocent of all witchcraft, sometimes overlooking that some of the accused were power-hungry, aggressive, and surrounding themselves with an aura that inspired fear. Declaring them as innocent came across as condoning their behaviour. Some of the accused people were leaders in the church councils, and the priests seemed to be protecting them.

Nevertheless, the *mcupe* movements showed that concepts of witchcraft were changing and were even adapting to a Christian framework and to judicial conditions that had outlawed the killing of witches. Pre-colonial Zambian approaches to witchcraft had left little chance for the witch to be “converted” to a life where witchcraft is abandoned. If the inherited soul of a person was itself rotten, then there was little chance for redemption for a real witch. Such ideas were changing. The *mcupe* movements illustrated to people that witches could be redeemed; through cleansing rituals, their evil forces could be removed from their bodies. Such popular movements were adaptations of beliefs to new colonial situations and to new spiritual understandings. Priests and church leaders have seen in the triumph of the *mcupe* movements a relapse of Christians into paganism. In hindsight, one can also describe their triumph as a sign that Christian concepts of redemption had partly re-moulded Zambian concepts of the human person. Concepts of witchcraft were not static.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE DEVIL IN THE MODERN PARADIGM

Starting from the 1950s, the devil disappears from the mission diaries. Missionaries saw less and less of the devil in the spiritual forces that affected people and more of a world of superstitious beliefs that needed to be eradicated—not through engagement with such forces but through the provision of modern education and healthcare. While in earlier paradigms the devil had been omnipresent in non-Christian cultures, he now disappeared. Many thought that African epistemologies would slowly disappear with the arrival of the Western world in Africa (modern education, healthcare, scientific outlook, systems of law and institutions of the nation state), with the consequence that the *ng'anga* or *mucapi* would also lose the very ground he/she stood on. Many pastors feared to step on this ground and toss around with its forces; they feared that such an engagement would validate the very worldview that one was fighting. Many local Zambian priests and pastoral workers were afraid to step on this terrain, which was governed by its own sets of ritual authorities from which the Church had for a long time excluded itself.

In many pre-Christian African cultures, God was approached either directly or through intermediaries. John Mbiti described how people lived in an awareness of God's presence, though God was not approached lightly outside of calamitous situations. Intermediate spirits (of nature and of the dead/ the ancestors) interfered into the details of daily life.⁵³ The modern "enlightened" outlook on the world and on human life made God more remote to people's spiritual problems. Sickness and disease in this outlook are biological in nature, not spiritual; a sick person is referred to hospitals and clinics, not to priests. Frightening dreams and inner voices became a matter to be investigated in the realm of psychology, not spirituality. Moral decay in society became analysed in reference to economic poverty and social change, not their spiritual causes and consequences. The rain that traditional religion had connected directly to God as his entry-point into human history was no longer a concern for communitarian prayers but for radio announcements by the meteorologists. Issues of human fertility also were transferred from the spiritual world into the competence of the modern medical establishment. The answers that the Church was giving to people's spiritual problems often became secular answers. People suffering attacks from witchcraft or demons needed counselling, not prayers. Church membership continued to grow, but for spiritual problems, people went to diverse prophets and the ever-growing armies of traditional healers with different sets of healing paradigms, outside the Catholic gates.

While the devil disappeared from Catholic theology, he did not disappear from people's minds but continued to develop into a powerful category of thought. Apocalyptic descriptions of the devil or of biblical beasts with many heads and horns in a cosmic battle threatening the annihilation of a chosen community have appealed to Christians in stressful situations, who went on to apply them to the political realities that they experienced. Jehovah Witnesses waited for the Biblical Armageddon, the global fight of God against wickedness and evil to restore heaven on earth for the selected ones. Such images gave them strength in their resistance, active or passive, against the colonial regime and the authority of chiefs and village structures. Lumpa adherents, the followers of Alice Lenshina, whom they believed had risen from the dead to bring a message from heaven, applied apocalyptic images to the hostilities they encountered in their environment. Such images inspired them to enter the final destructive war against their enemies (1964). The Mutima Church of Emilio

⁵³ Mbiti 1969, pp. 29-91; 1991, pp. 45-81.

Mulolani (founded in the 1950s) regarded sin as the blood of Satan; such images helped members to defy social and gender roles. Seventh Day Adventists applied the beasts of the books of Daniel and Revelation directly to the Catholic Church. Catholic responses have remained on a defensive side. Priests and catechists explained them away as historically referring to a remote Roman or other empire, or by ignoring the debate altogether as irrational or fundamentalist. Catholic responses to evil did not meet the symbolic layer on which people engaged with it, and they sidelined or downplayed Biblical images of the devil (beast, dragon, serpent, battles, Anti-Christ etc.) that were important in the theology of other Christian denominations or sects.

CONCLUSION

Christian missionaries (and long before them Moslem traders) brought the concept of the devil to Zambia, but they did not invent notions of evil. People were well acquainted with ideas of utter evil—the concept of the witch is one of them. The images of the devil that the missionaries spread needed to come alive through associations with people's own experiences and frameworks. If they did not, the devil remained an abstract spirit—hardly relevant for daily life. Where they met, however, demons became meaningful for people in ways that went beyond the catechism lessons taught by the missionaries. African Christians applied the concept of the devil to different situations than did the missionaries. They recognised his presence in witchcraft and the witches, while missionaries saw him in the opposite camp, in the witchfinders, diviners and healers, as well as in cultural practices that were not easily reconciled with the demands of the Gospel. Later, when the official Catholic Church became rather silent about the devil, he remained a persuasive category of thought in local discourses and theologies that people applied to various political constellations.

Many missionaries, though themselves believing in the existence of the devil and of demons, placed African spiritual beliefs much more often into the world of false superstitions. Local African church leaders, catechists and teachers, in contrast, who gave up or reinterpreted their beliefs within a Christian framework, did not just substitute old African beliefs with modern *secular* notions of causalities, but continued to look for *spiritual* interpretations of their local events. Notions of the devil and of demons were very persuasive in times when Christians found themselves under fierce opposition, struggles and personal attacks. Local lead-

ers and catechists in Zambia were on the battle line in their home villages; the notion of devils could become more persuasive for them than for the missionaries themselves.

When missionaries stopped to believe in the existence of the devil, or when the devil was seen as an abstract theological concept, missionary endeavours lacked the direct engagement with many spiritual perils that afflicted people. Missionaries shared the view that Africans lived in fear of witchcraft and spirits. With some exceptions, their response was largely indirect; they saw the solution to the problem not in individual battles with concrete spiritual powers, but in modern education and people's inclusion into the sacramental life of the Church. Local diviners and healers, in contrast, were directly involved in people's spiritual battles with witchcraft or spirits. The official Church had only a partial presence in the discernment processes that guided people through these battles; often the Church was in fact totally excluded, or had excluded itself. Notions about spiritual evil were shaped in these concrete interactions outside the gate of the Church.

African Christians often held situational and pragmatic opinions about the spirit world. The landscape of spiritual notions remained complex. The Church's framework is accepted when people expect help within a Christian narrative. These same people, when visiting a traditional healer, may appreciate an analysis of the spirit world in very different terms and frameworks. Hence the urgency of the task to make Christian and traditional frames of reference meet.

This chapter was about a clash of concepts, which remains relevant for today's ministry. Missionaries, who were trained in scholastic theology, often proceeded from an essentialist or substantive view of religious realities.⁵⁴ Demons, spirits or sins were categorised according to a set of inert defining characteristics. In the Zambian traditional contexts, however, notions of evil were often relational and tied to conceptions of belonging to a group, a family, a clan, a spouse, the land or a people. The missionaries' abstract version of the devil could not encompass the relational dimensions. The historical overview of this chapter thereby grounds the quest for better theological and pastoral tools.

⁵⁴ Essentialism is "the belief and practice centered on a philosophical claim that for any specific kind of entity it is at least theoretically possible to specify a finite list of characteristics, all of which any entity must have to belong to the group defined" (Wikipedia's glossary of philosophical terms). Scholastic theology defined demons and angels as well as notions of sin ("mortal sin", "venial sin", etc.) through such inherent sets of characteristics.

POSITIVE ENGAGEMENTS

So far, I have presented the failures of the mission Church to engage with evil and ambiguous spiritual forces on a meaningful symbolic level. It would be wrong to say that the Church left people completely alone with their spirits or witchcraft attacks. Where people needed visible signs in their struggles against evil forces, they found them in the sacramental life and in Catholic symbols, like the rosary, medals, crosses and holy water. It was a church-based approach: inclusion into the sacramental life of the church, being inside, protected the Christian from witchcraft and demons—so the priests hoped. A number of Catholic lay-movements managed to build up a symbolic world that linked their own struggles to Biblical and Christ-centred images. One example are the uniforms of Catholic movements that are proudly worn as markers of a public and respected identity. The colours of the “Ba Nazareti”, for example—black, red and white—refer to the Christian struggle from darkness (black shoes) through the salvific sufferings of Jesus (red skirt) to the light (white blouse and headgear).⁵⁵ Colours of other lay-movements have similar meanings. The Church made room for various frameworks that allowed Christians to symbolise their struggle with evil—not in a dualistic but a Christ-centred framework. Furthermore, the Church-based approach made room, even if maybe rarely used, for a community-based answer to evil.

Building on this heritage, two distinct approaches have been explored in the Church to connect to people’s symbolic world: of inculturation and charismatic approaches. The former approach was often initiated by the hierarchy and the Christian elite, while the latter developed from the grassroots, sometimes in opposition to the official Church. In the following two chapters, I will explore these approaches further.

⁵⁵ The three colours used for the uniform of the Nazareti are also the three traditional Bemba colours used in the initiation rites that the Nazareti tried to Christianise (Rasing 2001).

3

Spirits in the inculturation paradigm

Dialogue and discernment

In the last chapter, I explored the reasons for the exclusion of the Church from many discernment processes about spiritual forces in people's lives. In this chapter, I focus on attempts to gain access to these processes. Cultural centres, museums and language centres developed in a number of dioceses; they were spearheaded by individual missionaries and local Zambian priests with a lifetime commitment to studying the local culture and religion. Having themselves developed a love for local languages and understandings, they tried in their own ways to make church policies more sensitive to cultural matters. Cultural commissions were established, and different language courses put great emphasis on imparting cultural knowledge. In Zambia, many attempts at inculturation, predating the Second Vatican Council, had been made. However, the documents of the Council, giving respect to non-Christian religions, brought official theological tools that could now be employed.

Different priests tried out different ways of dealing with spirits and with witchcraft. Father Bonaventure Kapompole (Kasama Diocese, 1914-1999), for example, treated many patients both with prayers and with herbal medicines. Many priests in rural areas were much involved in the healthcare of the sick, which naturally brought them in touch with cultural discernment processes; they tried to work with such processes instead of working against them.

In this chapter, I explore one example: Louis Oger, a French missionary priest of the White Fathers who worked among the Bemba and neighbouring peoples from the 1950s until the 1990s, and who left behind many notes about his experiences. Apart from his pastoral work, he also ran the Bemba language course at Ilondola and gathered diaries, letters and notes from missionaries for the White Fathers' archives. He lived a reflective life as a missionary, and was much concerned with pastoral problems about

witchcraft and spirits. He himself was at one point diagnosed with having spirits (*ngulu*) after a spell of mental illness, which afforded him personal experiences with the ways of cultural discernment.

Central to Oger's self-understanding as a missionary was the question about what it means to be a Christian and to be Church in a particular cultural and historical setting, with its unique questions and concerns. In Zambia, many people make personal experiences out of struggling with evil or ambivalent spiritual forces that intervene in their affairs. For Oger, this had to be the grounds for the Christian challenge. Witchcraft in particular was a challenge with which every Christian had to struggle.

We live at a time when the various religious beliefs and doctrines endeavour to meet for a better understanding of one another. Ought we not, first and foremost, to acknowledge the existence of this mentality—not to say philosophy—revealed by witchcraft, which is deeply anchored in the people who believe in witchcraft? ... Ought we not to make an effort to meet these people on their own ground? ... Ought we not to admit that we cannot continue to think and act as we are doing in relation to witchcraft?¹

Where priests had different understandings of the spiritual world from the people who sought help, for Oger, the starting point consisted of learning what the spiritual forces meant for those who experienced them, and what role they played in their lives. Easy answers like, "People live in fear!" or "People have superstitious beliefs!" do not do justice to the quest of listening and learning.

Towards the end of his missionary life, Oger published a small book with twenty-two short articles or historical flashes.² His conclusion was sombre: While missionaries thought people understood the Christian message in the way they themselves understood it, many people had absorbed it in terms of their understanding of the spirit world. People feared the Church as a foreign power which was dangerous to offend, but which had little to offer to counter the deep-seated evil forces of which witchcraft was the fruit. Christianity in Oger's reflections was far from being a liberation, because Christian life stopped at the threshold of the church and had little impact on the reality of daily life or on people's thoughts. It had little to do with their symbolic world and with relationships that formed the bedrock for the understanding of spiritual evil. For Oger, it was clear that without respectful dialogue with African religion, Christi-

¹ Oger 2002, p. 3.

² Oger 1993.

anity could not meet the spiritual needs of the people, which would thus continue to be met elsewhere.

DEMANDS AND DIFFICULTIES OF DIALOGUE

In its official documents, dialogue and proclamation intrinsically belong together in the mission of the Church.³ While the Catholic Church is convinced that the Holy Spirit works in a full and particular way within the Church—which gives it the duty to proclaim its faith—it recognises that the Spirit is also present and active outside the Church, which gives it the duty to listen to non-Christian religious traditions.

The Catholic Church in Zambia had always aimed at using suitable local cultural and religious elements as tools for evangelisation, to make catechism classes and preaching more relevant to people's lives. The approach of using dialogue added another dimension. African religion was not something just to be *used* as a steppingstone to reach the faith of the Church (especially when that steppingstone itself was crushed in the process of stepping on it). The Christian faith has been proclaimed in Zambia for 100 years, but the religious and ritual authorities of African grown religions have only sparsely been shown respect as guardians of divine mysteries.

Oger ventured into this dialogue. He had become convinced that the Church harms itself, robbing itself of opportunities for inner purification, where it does violence to African non-Christian or pre-Christian forms of dealing with the mysteries of life. According to him, they belonged to God's ways of relating to humanity. Where traditional religion had seen decades of opposition and condemnation from the Catholic Church and had thus gone underground, this new approach of dialogue came with the danger of bringing confusion to people. Louis Oger described his experiences (of the 1950s) when he and other missionaries tried to study the rites of royal ancestors and of the nature spirits:

In the fifties, those cults were still frowned upon by the Catholic Church as being the expression of the traditional pagan religion and they were of course prohibited to the Catholics. But many Catholics continued to venerate the *mipashi* and the *ngulu* in secret, privately or in ceremonies carried out on the sly. It was a minor

³ See for example the relevant sections in *Lumen Gentium* (1964, 2; 13; 14; 16), *Dignitates Humanae* (1965, 1-3), *Nostra Aetate* (1965, 1-4), *Gaudium et Spes* (1965, 28), *Redemptoris Mission* (1990, for example section 56), *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991) and *Dominus Iesus* (2000). See also the text of the first and second African synods.

earthquake in Kayambi Mission when we began to mention those cults in our instructions and in our homilies without condemning them, because we had at last gone into what was behind them and there was nothing reprehensible in most of it. The people were at first dismayed that the Fathers had found them out but were happily surprised to realise that they were not being blasted to hell. “The Fathers have changed,” they said. “All we do is no longer sinful in their eyes.” That is a remark that was overheard in February 1955 in the village of one of the guardians of the sanctuary dedicated to the memory of the spirit of the chief who had founded the village.⁴

In 1972, Louis Oger, together with two other priests, attended (like Fr. Stürzer had forty years earlier) a healing and witchcraft-cleansing ceremony that had been called by the local headmen with the knowledge and implicit permission of the local church council, without informing the priests, right beside the priests’ house in Ilondola Parish. They watched and attended the ceremony with the permission of the leading diviner (a famous travelling prophet of the *Nchini* Church) and interviewed him without condemning him there and then. This caused a stir within their own community of priests. According to Oger’s description, the diviner had—without the priests realising it, but which was noticed by the rest of the audience—convicted fifteen people of witchcraft during the séance. The parish priest, who had been absent when the diviner came, wanted to take a hard stance and communicate a clear message to the people about the ills of witchfinding and the corresponding injustice and harassment of looking for scapegoats especially among the marginalised and weak. He wanted to chase away the diviner, close the mission for at least a week, and bar those who had responsibilities at the séance from the Eucharist. This, however, was difficult since his own curates had been present! The priests’ community got itself together, worked out a compromise, and said Mass together (all four priests) the following Sunday, delivering a homily they had prepared together. The event proved an occasion where lay-leaders became involved in evaluating what had happened: the witchhunt had done little to improve relationships. “[People] were happy to have found scapegoats, washing their hands and ready to continue to live as before without conversion,” wrote Oger. The priests, however, gained many new insights about the actual tensions among different groups of people in the parish.⁵ Such tensions, combined with many individual tragedies and suf-

⁴ Oger 1995, p. 20.

⁵ Oger 1991, pp. 162-165.

fering, had been smouldering under the calm surface of Christian worship for years, having hardly been addressed in church.

Some priests in the surrounding parishes accused the Ilondola priests of “ruining fifty years of missionary work by the imprudence of attending one pagan ceremony.” Subsequently, when some of them barred Catholics from the sacraments because they had consulted diviners, they received the answer that “the priests in Ilondola also visited a diviner! Why can’t we do the same?” Also in Ilondola itself, opinion among the Christians was divided about the presence of the priests in the divination process, even if only for the purpose of observation. The local sisters were scandalised. Oger’s forms of dialogue seemed to water down the firm categories of right and wrong that the Church had tried to establish for so many years. People had to know the boundaries between the Christian faith and African beliefs, many priests asserted. Divining practices are outlawed in Biblical and Church teachings,⁶ and can give rise to grave injustices. Church regulations promoted fixed rules, which were easily taught; a person consulting a diviner had to be barred from the sacraments and had to pass through a punishment or “refresher course” in which Catholic doctrine was hammered back into his/her head and learnt by heart.

Oger’s approach came with a cost, but since he had “crossed over”, he was able to ask questions that, before him, were rarely asked, allowing people the freedom to give an honest answer:

Why did *you* need, in that situation, a word from a diviner?

Who in your family needed it and for what?

Who do *you* think spoke to the diviner during the séance?

Did the message that the diviner spoke to you come from God?

Did the desire to go to the diviner come from God?

Does it correspond with the direction that you wanted to take in your life when you put yourself on the journey of baptism?

What will you do now with the message you received?

How can you become a peacemaker in this situation?

Sometimes the need for a word from a diviner was based on a desire for truth. At other times, it arose from pressure from the family, or from the

⁶ The Bible knows however also of a number of legitimate forms of divination (see chapter 21).

emotions of grief, hatred, suspicion and revenge. Beyond condemnation, Oger considered such motives the ideal ground on which the Christian message had to prove itself.

Dialogue with ritual experts allowed for a glimpse into the spiritual world as navigated by people in touch with this world. In the above example, Oger did not condone that what he saw was wrong and violent in the divining practices of healers who pointed out witches. Nevertheless, he did not lose respect for them, nor for the people who needed them; the process of reflection and discernment was to be kept open, and he wanted to remain part of this process.

Many pastoral workers recognised that this bridge came with the dangers of contaminating the Christian message (syncretism) and bringing ambiguity. Oger's work among the Bemba proceeded at a time when similar approaches were being forged in other countries, such as the work of Éric de Rosny and Meinrad Pierre Hebga in Cameroon, or Claude Boucher in Malawi.⁷ Many "bridge-builders" have been accused of muddying up clear waters, making it dirty. People who never wanted to make a serious Christian commitment could easily exploit the newly arising questions that had not yet been answered. But it also came with new opportunities of evangelisation. People approached bridge builders with problems of spirits and witchcraft, family disputes and ancestors. In contrast, priests who remained unfamiliar with the other side of the rift were called, "the priests who do not know." Not only had they never experienced witchcraft or spirits themselves, they also remained unacquainted with the ritual specialists and their categories of thought through which people processed their experiences. Their inability to feel themselves into the experiences of others disqualified them from being relevant in matters beyond their position of being the final judge about admittance to the sacraments.

OBSERVATION AND EVALUATION

Oger also brought in another dimension: the need for honest evaluation. Concepts such as witchcraft or spirit possession cannot be viewed as ahistorical categories independent of their life-context. With changing times, they give rise to different implications. A need for empirical studies arises

⁷ De Rosny 1985; Boucher 2012. The case of Meinrad Hebga has an added layer of complexity due to his own involvement in the healing and deliverance ministry with the help of his Ephaphata movement, and his way of discerning the various categories of spirits. Like Milingo, he was not just sympathising with African discernment processes, but actively shaping them through his ministry.

from concrete situations. One cannot know the outcome of a given pastoral policy; it needs ongoing reflective observation.

Oger described one experiment that took place in Malole Parish, one of the oldest Catholic parishes of Zambia. A number of parishioners had called a witchfinder and cleanser (a *mucapi*) into one of the prayer centres to deal with the issue of frequent deaths that had plagued the community for some time, to find the culprits (the witches) and to punish or cleanse them. The parish priest was supposed to visit this prayer centre the same weekend. He wrote a note to cancel his trip, "because the *mucapi* and the priest cannot cohabit in the same village, even for a few days." He thought this would communicate a clear message to the Christians about the consequences of calling in a witchfinder. Subsequent common evaluation of this event by the parish team showed, however, that people understood the priests' refusal to come in their own terms. Firstly, most people perceived the priest's action as a punishment, not as a lesson. Secondly, it was perceived as an unjust punishment, because it punished the innocent together with the guilty; while many Christians had indeed contributed money to facilitate the coming of the *mucapi*, others had refused to pay and not everyone had attended the ceremony. Thirdly, people experienced the Church as absent when they needed it most: in the midst of human suffering, deaths, confusion, family rifts, accusation and suspicions. This discouraged the church leaders who felt deserted by their own priests. In the absence of the priests, the only ritual specialist left to deal with these issues was the diviner and his team. The diviner's discourse was left without any viable alternative.

The common evaluation, in which the priests and Christians participated, opened up the possibility of a process of reconciliation—lasting nine months. In this time, members of the parish team talked with every single affected family, and then with the opponents of each family. The Christian community chose the symbols of reconciliation, once they were ready. During the reconciliation Mass, the divided families publicly washed each other's hands in the church. Many people were touched by this witness of public reconciliation, which was followed by a common meal and beer.

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Zambian traditional spirituality or religion is not a bounded set of beliefs separate from Christianity, but it has provided a repertoire of frames and symbolic worlds through which Christianity has been appropriated.

It also continues to be applied to various situations outside the Christian framework. Inculturation theologians, like Louis Oger, regarded the process of accepting the Gospel in its fullness as a long journey, and indeed a life-journey, and not as a punctual event (baptism, or to be “born-again”). Biblical images such as taking roots, growth and transformation became key-metaphors in the process of inculturation, requiring patience and endurance through different forms of challenges. Even cultural traits that look evil at first may reveal themselves as containing elements or motives that are inherently good, as Jesus pointed out in the parable of the wheat and the weeds (Matthew 13:24-30). Culture will be transformed from within if the yeast is mixed with the wheat flour (Matthew 13:33); the yeast in this paradigm is the message and the demands of the Gospel, while the wheat flour stands for the world and its cultures and traditions. When somebody receives the Christian message, he/she does so as a member of a society that is glued together through its religious concepts and values. These concepts include the forces of witchcraft and spirits as integral parts of their religious system. Inculturation theology makes room for grey areas. This calls for prudence and for ongoing evaluation, of which the people need to be a part.

The starting point with which Louis Oger experimented is fundamental: listening empathically to the story of the person who experiences the attacks of evil forces, and daring to consult ritual experts: how do they explain what is going on in the person’s life? How does the patient respond to their suggestions? How does the patient describe what is going on within these premises? The patient is asked to use the best possible words and categories to describe his/her experiences. The cultural experts’ (elders, healers, ritual specialists) advice helps the pastor to see the relationships, including the broken ones, that are part of the model for the spiritual attacks. In this way, the territory of the experience is being mapped out. The patient feels understood in his/her own categories of thought. This often makes the patient ready to move forward.

From here, the priest can broaden the terminology used by the ritual experts with a Christian perspective. Categories of ritual specialists are not always fitting easily into a Christian framework; the tensions with the Christian challenge should not be glossed over but should be mapped out, explored and reflected upon. In addition, different categories of healing can be introduced to complement the model used by the cultural experts, including, of course, models of modern medicine and psychology. Spiritual healing has different dimensions. Making sense of tragedy or

illness is not a one-time event (one answer clearing everything once and for all) but a journey that passes through different models of explanation.

DIALOGUE WITH TRADITIONAL HEALERS

Traditional healers have remained the antithesis to discourses of modernity and Christianity. Many healers have a very limited education in terms of formal school attendance, and they speak about causes and medical conditions that are hardly reconcilable with those of the modern health sector. Their techniques for accessing the spiritual world to find hidden reasons for misfortunes or for tapping into secret powers are detested in Christian thought. And yet, they have maintained their place in the discernment processes surrounding witchcraft and spirits.

The approach towards diviners in the Catholic Church has often centred on exposing the fraud in their profession. A person's trust in divination is easily exploited. People who have worked hard in Zambia to expose trickery in common divination techniques during the last decades include Father Robert Lavertu and his teams of former witchfinders. A calabash can be manipulated to fall or not to fall on command. With a hollow castor-oil bean hidden in the nose a diviner can produce the sound of a talking spirit. Tea prepared with hallucinative plants can make a person see visions on a mirror or a TV screen. The last two people carrying the corpse in a funeral procession can give the "flying coffin" the needed momentum and direction to bang into the suspected witch. Trickery in divination practices has a long history all over the world. In Zambia, seminars on witchcraft during which trickery was exposed have empowered a number of accused "witches" to challenge the discourse of a diviner.

However, when the Church focused exclusively on such exploitative and cheating performances, we may have ignored the fact that African divination sometimes works, and in very surprising circumstances. All over Zambia, diviners have retrieved missing objects, missing people, and diagnosed very intimate details of family histories or medical histories. Some people have extraordinary gifts; not every human being may believe in these gifts, but many do, and there is no reason in our approach to downplay such gifts. There is no need either to link them directly to demons or to the Holy Spirit. A starting point can be simply to acknowledge that certain gifts are allowed to be there, and maybe are unexplainable. We find them not only in Africa, but all over the globe, including of

course the Western world. Diviners in Zambia understand such special gifts in view of the spirit world.

What is one to do with the knowledge that is retrieved through a diviner or through other gifted people? In chapter seven, I will describe how we place truth-claims of a gifted person into the “inner world”. It is not necessary to deny that, at times, the inner world of an individual has in mysterious ways connections to our common world, but we refuse to make this level the focus of public action. The inner world of a diviner is tied to a personal life history, and its truth-claims may resemble isolated splinters rather than full pictures. It is easily distorted and manipulated.

In Zambia, many diviners and traditional healers claim to have such gifts. Today, the Traditional Health Practitioners’ Association of Zambia (THPAZ), the biggest body of licensed healers in Zambia, has between 18.000 and 40.000 members, according to its chairperson, Rodwell Vongo.⁸ This number does not seem to be diminishing. Registration follows four overlapping categories: (1) herbalists, (2) traditional birth attendants, (3) faith-spiritualists and (4) diviners.

Dialogue in the context of inculturation theology needs to strive for clarity about terms and the meaning of practices, and does not shrink away from clarifying incompatibilities of certain practices with the Christian faith. The practice of healers who stay within the first category (herbalists), one could think, is quite compatible with the Christian faith. However, since medicines in Zambian understandings can also mediate between the physical and the spiritual worlds, it is misleading to look at herbs from a purely secular angle. Mediating medicines accompany the important stages of human life, from the time of birth, when the umbilical cord needs to fall off in the right way and with the right medicines (to prevent barrenness and future witchcraft attacks), up to the time of death, to protect the family from unfavourable spiritual influences and to enhance the beneficial contacts. Many practices are compatible with the Christian faith and, apart from the healing properties, can also help a person to lead a connected life and be in touch with other life forms. However, the widespread usage of herbal love potions (meant to manipulate the love of others), medicines used to secure the faithfulness of a spouse, a promotion, or the winning of a football match, show that not all usage of herbal medicine is compatible with the Christian faith; discernment is always needed.

⁸ Personal communication with Rodwell Vongo. THPAZ was founded in 1978, under the government of Kenneth Kaunda.

Practices of the second category (traditional birth attendants), again, are often compatible with the Christian faith. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that the task fulfilled by female healers in this category goes beyond physical and psychological assistance at birth. Many birth attendants are called to discern spiritual scopes. Sometimes religious or cultural taboos are enforced for the pregnant women. Difficult pregnancies can point the adultery of the spouse, to a curse or to witchcraft. The birth of the firstborn child especially needs to be carefully guarded by the mother's family and the traditional birth attendants. The new-born child also needs to pass properly between the ritually cold and hot states of life. In other words, it would be futile to consider the work of traditional birth attendants, who often work in conjunction with the modern health institutions, as purely secular in nature. Conflicts with the Christian faith are bound to arise also in this category, showing the need for dialogue and discernment.

The last two categories (faith-spiritualists and diviners) were always regarded as incompatible with the mainstream Christian faith. Healers registered under these categories explicitly call on the help of spiritual forces and spirits, which exist outside the mainstream Christian framework (*mizimu*, *ngulu*, *mipashi*, *mashawe*, *vimbuza*, etc.) The Catholic Church condemns efforts of any kind to "tame the occult", which also includes access to what is sometimes known in the Western world as "white magic", to achieve good.

Looking at the various forms of incompatibilities should not, however, lead the Church to equate the methods used by diviners and faith-spiritualists with satanic powers, as many charismatic Churches do. Healers who employ spirits into their healing repertoire usually do not see their work in opposition with the Christian faith. They do not see themselves as belonging to the camp of the devil. Take as an example Rodwell Vongo, who introduces himself as an herbalist, a faith-spiritualist and a diviner; he also prays with the Presbyterian Church. He explained his position in a conference on healing (August 2013) which many expatriate missionaries from various churches attended:

Western medicine can do many things which traditional healers are unable to do. But we traditional healers can also do many things which Western medicine is incapable of doing. We can deal with demons and spirits, with bad luck and with curses. These things cannot be seen under the microscope, but they can be seen in the mirrors of the healers. We can treat people and they are getting bet-

ter. We should never be called witchdoctors, because witches have no place among our members; we have a disciplinary committee, which expels them. Our members are those who heal sick people, not those who kill or “crash-land” [referring to flying witches].

Such descriptions are resonating with Western ideas of “white magic” employed to do good. A Christian missionary participant at the conference condemned this line of argument:

When healers have spirits then these spirits are demons. Even when demons heal, they will bring harm, because they belong into the other camp. Superficially, they may do something good to gain support from people. That is how the devil works. But in the final analysis, they are obstacles in the plan of God, which wants to derail.¹

The missionary translated—as many Christians do—the healers’ spiritual endeavours into a dualistic worldview where a good camp fights against an evil camp and vice versa. Doctor Vongo replied that he was aware that some of the healers’ techniques were not easily reconcilable with Biblical teachings. However, these difficulties should not lead the Christian to condemn healers into the other camp. “I am a committed Christian,” he said. Healers see the evil camp made up of witches who do harm, kill, are selfish, jealous and hateful. “Those in the other camp work against society. We work for society.” Many healers see themselves engaged in the same struggle against witchcraft as the Christian Churches, only they are assisted in this fight by supernatural powers, by spirits.

The dispute between Doctor Vongo and the born-again Christian is epitomised in the Gospel itself: Doctor Vongo’s theology may be summed up with Jesus’ words, “For whoever is not against us is for us.” (Mark 9:40) Doctor Vongo sees himself united with Jesus in the same cause. His opponent may also quote Jesus, “Whoever is not with me is against me.” (Matthew 12:30) In both scenarios, the fact that some of the healers’ methods are not compatible with the Christian faith, should not exclude them from a place on the table of dialogue; the Catholic Church today includes leaders of world religions at this table. One can acknowledge incompatibilities without demonising the other, when one develops a pluralistic, not dualistic worldview.

¹ Comment of a Pentecostal participant in a seminar about spirits in FENZA, September 2013.

“What about charlatans among the healers? Many cheat with simple tricks and exploit the fears of people!” A number of people, including priests, aired out this objection against dialogue with healers in our workshops: “One cannot dialogue with charlatans!” The answer to this objection is simple. Sincere dialogue always takes place in a search for truth. On both sides of the table, this desire must be there. Before a person is declared a charlatan, he/she deserves to be listened to. Judgement comes *after* meeting a healer in good faith and understanding his/her rationale, not before.

A theology and spirituality that was based on the concept of two kingdoms, good and evil, has marked generations of priests and church leaders in Zambia. A dualistic outlook has advantages of clarity that can be imparted in catechesis, but it has not been able to do justice to Zambian spiritual realities that have evaded the neat categories of two separate camps, the one of God and the one of the devil. Pastoral theology that deals with ambivalent spiritual forces is still in want of coherent concepts, beyond dualism. I will engage with some important questions in the last part of this book. In the next chapter, however, I look at a very different way of dealing with African spiritual realities that has come to overshadow the inculturation paradigm: the charismatic approach.

4

The devil of the charismatic Church

Spiritual warfare for prosperity

Attempts at inculturation in the Catholic Church in Zambia proceeded from the Christian elite, involving the people “in charge” of the liturgy, the architecture of church buildings or theological reflection. The charismatic and Pentecostal increment, in contrast, has been driven by the Christian grassroots. Divine interventions do not always follow the hierarchical authority structures of the Church. The charismatic experience recognises that the Holy Spirit speaks directly to ordinary people, with little regard to hierarchy and age. But apart from the Holy Spirit, also witchcraft and demons populate the Pentecostal worldview; they are defeated through extraordinary charisma (spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit) given to individual Christians. While inculturation theology is driven by the awareness that the Holy Spirit has sown seeds of divine truths in non-Christian cultures and religions that *precede* the Christian faith, charismatic and Pentecostal theology focuses on the Holy Spirit *after* the requisite of conversion (being “born-again”). The time before conversion is often associated with the devil. African spiritual worlds become again easily demonised—similar to the paradigm of the early missionaries, but with different nuances. I will focus on them in this chapter, and revisit some aspects related to the prosperity gospel at the end of the book (chapter 24). The charismatic experience is very diverse, and needs to be diverse, since it is a lived and transforming experience. My focus here is limited to the issues of spirits and witchcraft, in the way that I witnessed them (mainly in Lusaka) during my engagements between 2006 and 2014.

THE CHARISMATIC EXPERIENCE AND DUALISM

I use the term *charismatic* in this book not in a theological sense, where the term belongs to the gifts (in Greek *charis*) of the Holy Spirit. In Christian theology, a non-charismatic Church is inconceivable. I use the term

in a sociological sense as referring to those branches of the Church that place great emphasis—inspired by the Pentecostal churches—on ecstatic worship, on extraordinary manifestations of the Holy Spirit and on direct experiences with Him.

Charismatic worship stresses God's direct speech and intervention that does not exclude anyone by nature of status in society, as long as one has set out on the path of repentance and new birth, "extending the Lordship of Jesus over all areas of life." Through prolonged singing (worship and praise) and through the involvement of the whole body in prayer (standing, kneeling, crying) in informal ways, awareness in prayer sets out to be an embodied experience that involves a variety of emotions and an experience of community. Believers shift to a mode of worship in which they are in touch with themselves and with others in a different way compared to the ordinary day-to-day mode of being. They know this in terms of opening up to the presence of the Holy Spirit. Charismatic prayers go beyond cerebral prayers, where for example the priest prays well-formulated and approved prayers on behalf of all, giving the intellectual understanding of the Christian message the dominant role. Charismatic prayer stresses the power of the Gospel, and seeks to experience and channel this power. It also validates human experiences that are downplayed in the mainstream theology of the European mission Churches, like dreams or visions. A stress on long and regular periods of fasting flows out of an awareness—not foreign to African traditional religions—that a path to the spiritual world opens up when one follows certain rules and taboos. Charismatic overnight prayers are popular in Africa; for many people the spiritual world impacts itself in a more forceful way during the night than during the day. Faith comes with its own space and premises.

Since charismatic worship contrasts experiences of the Holy Spirit with the ordinary mode of being, it facilitates the construction of binary oppositions:

world	Holy Spirit
ordinary	extraordinary
human endeavours	faith
natural	supernatural

Faith-healing reveals God's direct intervention and is sometimes contrasted with treatment in hospitals; truth attained through dreams and visions is easily elevated above truth obtained through human reasoning.

The seeking of direct contact with the Holy Spirit are given a strong momentum through the hopes of healing in the face of incurable sick-

nesses (HIV/AIDS) and the prospects of prosperity (health and wealth) for an emerging middle class amidst surrounding poverty. The promise of Jesus to give “life to the full” to the believer (John 10:10) becomes easily equated with life in health and prosperity. Misfortune, sickness and poverty, in contrast, become associated with demons. Charismatic Christians recognise witchcraft and spirits as the spiritual authors of adversities that can be defeated through spiritual warfare; they belong to the devil, who has been overcome by Jesus Christ.

FLASHBACK: THE “MILINGO AFFAIR”

Before the charismatic experience became popularised in the Catholic Church in Zambia through the Charismatic Renewal Movement, it was preceded, but also problematized, by the healing ministry of Archbishop Milingo. The mass-exorcisms of Milingo—Archbishop of Lusaka from 1969 to 1983—and his difficulties with the Catholic Church establishment and his subsequent removal from Zambia, known as the “Milingo-affair”, became internationally interpreted as a symbol of the cleavage between Western and African forms of appropriating Christian thinking.² On the local scene, however, divisions were more complex and also concerned administrative issues apart from the “expatriate versus local” divide on the map of the Church’s complicated constellations of authority. Voices that were critical towards Milingo’s ideas and ways of dealing with afflictions were no less African or Zambian than those who remained fully on Milingo’s side.

One focal point of the clash concerned the world of spirits that Milingo had termed “the world in-between”; disagreements arose about the nature of this world and the proper way of dealing with it. During confirmation and healing Masses conducted by Milingo, many people fell into trance, and Milingo relieved them from evil spirits that threatened their lives. His ministry revealed that people in their thousands, from all walks of life, were troubled by this world that plagued them with all kinds of misfortunes. Hospitals and clinics could not deal with such issues—nor would conventional Christianity. Many saw in Milingo a saintly and understanding healer with a God-given gift, sent to deal directly with this troubling world of spirits.³ Milingo’s healing ministry gained popular support from the laity and the grassroots in the Catholic Church far beyond the Lusaka Archdiocese and indeed the Catholic circles. The aware-

² See Hinfelaar 1994, p. 184.

³ Hinfelaar 2004, pp. 327-330; Ter Haar 1992.

ness that God spoke and acted directly through a Zambian made him a magnet on the national scene. Milingo's pastoral approaches sought close contact with people and their worlds and showed often an angle that was different from the established ways. However, it also brought division. Where some saw manifestations of the Holy Spirit, others saw outbursts of mass-hysteria. Milingo's success and popularity suggested to many observers that people's experiences with the "world in-between" had been ignored or silenced in the official Church for too long; that the Church's answers remained irrelevant. "The growth of spirit possession and related phenomenon in Zambia in recent years can be said to indicate a failure of both Church and state," concluded Gerrie ter Haar and Stephen Ellis in their sober analysis of the "Milingo affair".⁴

Today, Milingo's approach of dealing with the spirit world through a personal vocation or charisma (defined as a "gift of the Holy Spirit" in charismatic language) finds expression in Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity. Milingo's removal from Zambia by the Vatican in 1983 and the subsequent developments made the deliverance ministry in the Catholic Church a difficult issue, a "hot potato" that many Church officials wished to avoid. Milingo had left a Church that was divided on the issue of healing. Large sections of the laity could not understand the stance of the hierarchy. During the time of his exile, Milingo became a well-known figure in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Europe. By remaining a controversial figure, however, he did not help the charismatic cause within Zambia.⁵ For more than a decade after his removal, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal had a rather marginal existence and was regarded with suspicion. In the wake of the Pentecostal explosion, however, this attitude slowly changed: it developed into one of the most important lay-movements in the church, and a number of "charismatic priests" took up the course of the movement.

INCREASED SENSITIVITY FOR THE DEMONIC

Pentecostal worship addresses the world of witchcraft and spirits directly. Mass healings and public testimonies of deliverance from demonic powers and Satanism have become an issue of Christian mass-consumption in Zambia since the 1990s. They are sustained by crusades with preachers of international fame and taken up by the Christian and the secular media

⁴ Ter Haar & Ellis 1988, p. 205.

⁵ Milingo did not start the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Zambia, but he popularised it, and his own healing groups had links to it.

(television and radio). The establishment of Pentecostal Bible colleges for the training of pastors and links to big international Pentecostal movements created opportunities for many gifted men (and fewer women) to break away from their Church bodies and start their own ministries, fellowships or prayer-points. New churches mushroomed. The language of miracles continued to make steady inroads into Zambian Christian society beyond denominational boundaries. In schools and colleges (scripture union) and through Pentecostal outreach ministries, people were exposed to new styles of free prayers, non-hierarchical modes of participation in worship and a centrality of healing and deliverance in prayer-life. Many people discovered their own spiritual giftedness.⁶

Demons received much attention in these new styles of prayers. They had nearly disappeared from mainstream Christian worship, but were now manifesting during Pentecostal worship, as they had done during the ministry of Archbishop Milingo. “Manifesting” means for charismatics that the invisible demons reveal themselves, usually prompted by charismatic styles of prayer, through the bodies of the possessed (falling down, entering trance, speaking with another voice, etc.), which is a first step towards deliverance.

Why do demons manifest themselves so regularly in charismatic and Pentecostal churches, but only rarely in traditional mainstream Christian worship? Answers to this question vary. Mainstream Christian priests and pastors often brush away charismatic worship experiences as forms of mass-hysteria:

People are prayed over again and again, and each time the demons manifest. They think they are healed, but after the prayers reality catches up. Do they not fight shadows and wrong ideas in their charismatic prayers, instead of dealing with real issues?⁷

Charismatics and Pentecostals, in contrast, claim to have gained a heightened sensitivity for the demonic world:

There are different reasons why demons manifest themselves during our prayers. These are spiritual prayers. In some other churches, prayers are not spiritual, so they cannot go to the bottom of reality. Demons remain undetected because they are under the surface. Here, our prayers chase them up. When Jesus entered the synagogue in Capernaum [referring to Mark 1:21-28], the demons

⁶ For a history of the Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Zambia, see Cheyeka 2009.

⁷ Question of a Catholic priest during a workshop on deliverance (Lusaka, 2009).

started to manifest. They did not manifest when the Jews were praying, but the demons had always been there.

You know, there are different spiritual levels, like in school, where you proceed from one class to another. When you receive the Holy Spirit, you have a higher sensitivity for spiritual things. Even Christians, who have accepted Jesus as their personal saviour, continue to struggle with personal issues. Some have strange moods. Others have addictions, problematic family issues or incurable sicknesses. You know, many of these problems cannot be solved by usual prayers, because these conditions are hardened by demonic influences. These people will not get better until the demons leave. We have now become more sensitive to the spiritual dimension of such problems.

Then there is also another reason why we are under constant attacks by the demons. The devil fears us. You see, immediately after Jesus had received the Holy Spirit, he was attacked by the devil [referring to the temptation narratives in the gospels of Matthew (4:1-11) after Jesus' baptism]. The same is happening to us. Once you receive the Holy Spirit, you have to expect demonic attacks. You know, when President Chiluba declared this country a Christian Nation [in 1991], the devil got very angry. Satanism now started. This may sound frightening, but we have nothing to fear. Yes, demons are there, but you have seen today yourself how they have been defeated. We are believers and God gave us power and authority over the demons and also over the devil.⁸

I have heard answers in similar lines also in other Pentecostal churches and from leaders of the Catholic charismatic renewal. Answers are not always as systematically spelled out. Very often during worship, "things just happen"; "spiritual matters manifest themselves!" Many Christians do not always need a theological explanation for this, but they do expect something to happen when they go into charismatic prayers. For them, dramatic manifestations are part of experiencing the spiritual realm. Without it, the Holy Spirit may be absent.

Of course, there are also other ways, less spiritual, of looking at the sudden increase of demonic manifestations in charismatic and Pentecostal churches. The anthropologist Michael Cuneo, for example, who studied

⁸ This quotation is an abbreviation of interviews with several leaders of the *Word of Faith Soul Winning Ministries*, whom I interviewed after attending deliverance sessions in Bauleni Compound, Lusaka (2009).

exorcisms and deliverance ministries in the United States across Christian denominations, reported answers similar to the above.⁹ He added, however, also his own observations:

Consider also the distinctive style of so many charismatic prayer groups: the ecstatic worship, the gushing emotionalism, the breathless solidarity. All of this gave rise, as often as not, to an atmosphere of heightened suggestibility, of hothouse conformity. Individual charismatics, even relative newcomers, easily surmised what was expected of them in the way of belief and conduct, and there was no shortage of cues to help them along. Imagine a fairly new recruit to the renewal movement, impressionable, eager to please, seeing two or three, or fifteen or sixteen spiritual brethren writhing and moaning in demon-induced torment. And then seeing the performance repeated time and again. It would take an iron act of will, arguably, for such a person not to go along for the ride.¹⁰

Christian counselling often precedes deliverance sessions, in which the vulnerable patient receives subtle cues from the prayer group that make him/her focus on the demonic as root cause for their condition. People come to be prayed over, because they want to get better, and under these circumstances some buy rather easily into the model of possession.

In his study, Cuneo does not intend to dismiss the reality of demons. Demons may well be there, he concedes, or they may not be there. However, he also finds satisfying alternative ways of explaining why many people tend to fall down during charismatic prayers, why they come to manifest a demonic presence. One of them is the charismatic “gift of discernment”. Some established prophets who claim this gift for themselves and who maintain to have worked with it already for a long time, suggest to the patient in an absolutely self-assured way, without any hint of doubt, that they have discerned spiritual problems (meaning demons). Where the other group members buy into this discernment, and where different prophecies reinforce each other, it can be very difficult for anybody to withstand the pressure by not buying into this viewpoint, so Cuneo.

Comparing my own observations and participation in Zambian deliverance ministries with Cuneo’s American findings of heightened expectations during charismatic prayers, I can certainly find many similarities.

⁹ Cuneo 2001, pp. 112-114. He added also another dimension, namely that many Pentecostals see themselves as having entered a new era; they are pilgrims marking out new territories, and therefore expecting new obstacles, which came in new forms of demonic attacks.

¹⁰ Cuneo 2001, p. 114.

At the same time, this has not prevented me to try and open myself to the charismatic experience. I do not speak in tongues. But I certainly witnessed, again and again, to be part of a shared experience that was—for me and others—transformative, in the sense that I came out differently and also saw myself and my surroundings differently. Whatever our own beliefs, it is important to acknowledge that “demons”, or “witchcraft”, or the “Holy Spirit” are not just concepts or ideas that charismatic Christians digest on the cerebral level. While they remain evasive, they are also experienced in their moving power or paralysing power, and it is not easy to preserve such lived experiences in this book.

PENTECOSTALISM AND THE CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL IN ZAMBIA

During the 1990s and especially the 2000s, the Charismatic Renewal became a popular and fast-growing movement also within the Catholic Church. Some time had passed now since the Milingo affair (though Milingo continued to make headlines). Many priests themselves followed the charismatic “Life in the Spirit Seminars”, which initiated them into the movement, and which gave them a more positive outlook on the charismatic cause. The Vatican had long accepted the movement as an integral part of the Church, hoping it will play its role in the Church’s renewal and spiritual awakening, and to make it ready for a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit.¹¹ The hierarchy placed constitutions and guidelines into the movement, also to have some control. Nevertheless, the dynamics of growth often evolved outside the eyes of supervision by the relevant authorities. Charismatic groups did not easily accept “non-charismatic priests”;¹² for their part, many priests shunned the charismatic overnights, noisy prayers, long periods of fasting and the fundamentalist lay-preaching of young adults. Catholic charismatics identified with their Church, but felt persecuted by the hierarchy, whom they accused of trying to control the Holy Spirit. Many gifted members avoided supervision; they saw themselves on a higher spiritual level than the mainstream Catholics, including their priests. In official meetings, they were sometimes fighting the cause for very “Catholic” issues (for example the veneration of the Holy Eucharist, the status of the Virgin Mary, or the role

¹¹ International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Office 2002, p. 4 and the draft constitution of the Charismatic Renewal Movement of Lusaka Archdiocese (2013).

¹² By “non-charismatic priests”, members of the Movement meant priests who had not followed the foundational “Life in the Spirit Seminars”, who showed little appreciation for extraordinary manifestations of the Holy Spirit, or who were just dull preachers.

of the sacraments), maybe as part of a strategy to become more accepted. But left to themselves, many charismatic cell groups developed their own deliverance and healing ministries. Catholic guidelines sought to counteract non-Catholic influence, elitism, and the casting out of demons on private initiatives, but few priests ventured into closely supervising the charismatic cells. Some feared a mass exodus from the Church, if such groups were not tolerated; also “non-charismatic priests” acknowledged that the charismatics somehow addressed a felt need.

In Pentecostal theology, an experience with the Holy Spirit has priority over denominational affiliations. Many charismatic groups, while remaining Catholic, kept their doors open to different preachers across denominational borders, who—they felt—understood their cause and language better than the Catholic hierarchy. Pentecostal literature remained popular within the movement and different Pentecostal ministries have succeeded to imprint their messages on the Zambian public. One of the larger influencing factors can be traced to the “Word of Faith Movement”, “Third Wave evangelism”, the “miracle gospel” or the “prosperity gospel”—expressions that I use synonymously in this book. Sometimes this movement bypassed the ideals of the “holiness movement” that was brought by the earlier Pentecostal Churches to Zambia; hence, it is often called neo-Pentecostal in distinction from the older Pentecostal Churches.¹³ The language of the prosperity gospel, while never embraced at an official level of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement, has found easy inroads into the heterogeneous repertoire of Pentecostal ideas from which also Catholic charismatic preachers draw their thoughts.¹⁴

PREACHING OF PROSPERITY

The way demons are imagined and experienced in Christian Zambia has much to do with the way the prosperity gospel is preached. The following example, recorded in a Catholic charismatic group at a Sunday afternoon gathering in a Lusaka parish (in 2010) and attended by more than 100 adults, illustrates the connection. After singing and praising God, the guest preacher—a young man, dressed smartly in a suit—was intro-

¹³ In some literature, the word neo-Pentecostal denotes the charismatic wings of mainstream Churches who are influenced by the Pentecostal movement. In this book, I am using the word neo-Pentecostal not as a precise category, but when I want to emphasize a distinction from the older Pentecostal churches, especially in distinction to the Holiness movement.

¹⁴ Note that the prosperity gospel is not synonymous with Pentecostal thought—the older Pentecostal Churches and parts of the Evangelical Movement have strongly opposed many of its aspects (Banja 2009). Neither does it reflect the official teaching of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement.

duced to the group as “Brother Paul” and greeted with much applause. His teaching connected well with the audience, who affirmed nearly every sentence with an enthusiastic “yes!” He entitled his lesson with the word “restoration”:

Before I start, I have to lay the foundation. We are made in the image of God. God created us to see us prosper, to see us reign, to see us in authority. God is Spirit, and we are Spirit. But Adam chose to follow the devil. He submitted to the authority of the devil. Now, the reward of the devil is death. Our lives have been blocked. We have not been the people whom God wanted us to be.

[*The pitch of the voice goes up.*] Now, if something is wrong, someone has to put it right, ok? This is what I call restoration. And Jesus said: “I have come that they have life.” (John 10:10). Not a life of sickness and misery. But life to the full. And he has paid the price in full. “By his stripes you are healed” (Is 53:5). Me, I believe what the Bible says. I am healed! As a believer, I accept that the reality of healing has already been settled in heaven: it is mine, and the person who is born-again has a right to healing and a right to prosperity and a right to a marriage, a right that comes from God to those who live by faith. [*Much applause*]

Now, so many Christians don’t know how to access God’s power. They go to church to complain silently to their God, but nobody gives them knowledge. It is like a person who has no light in the house—you need an electrician, someone who knows. It took me a long time to study the Bible. As there are laws of nature, there are also laws of the spirit, ok? The thing is that God’s actions are limited only by lack of faith. Tell your neighbour, “Nothing is impossible for God!”

Sickness is an attempt by the devil to rob you of your divine right to total health. It is a sign that Satan still has dominion. Blockage in business is a sign that the devil still has entry-points in your life. Where God’s authority is accepted, God gives only perfect gifts. Complete healing of the spirit, complete healing of the soul, and complete healing of the body. The Bible says you have to confess. You have to declare it loudly. You have to believe what you say. Then you issue a decree that will come to pass. You are called to be rulers! Tell your neighbour, “The word spoken in faith must be fulfilled! [*People in the congregation turn to each other, repeating the message.*] Believe without looking back! This year is the year of

breakthrough. Those of you, who are looking for a husband, listen to what I say. You have to decree, "I will get married this year!" and you will be married this year. Decree, "I will be healed" and you will be healed. What you say in faith is decreed. God cannot be cheated! If at the end of this year you are still not married, or you are still sick, you know yourself, you have a problem. You have to check your faith! [*much applause*]

Me, I cannot be sick. You can put me to the test. I was born-again twelve years ago. And I have never been sick ever since. And I will never be sick! [*Much applause*] You can put God's word to the test. Abraham believed and God blessed him.

Tell your neighbour: God meets you at the point of your needs. "The God who gave me teeth..." – [*people answer: "will also give me something to chew!"*] [*More applause*] The only barrier for God's actions in your life is lack of faith. God told me that great things are about to come today. Today you can choose: Choose life or choose death. The choice is yours! [*The enthusiastic applause lasts long, and the leaders of the group congratulate the preacher.*]

The preaching followed the outline of a book of David Oyedepo (the Nigerian founder of Winners Chapel), which the preacher had carried along to the service. Such a teaching of the "health, wealth and prosperity gospel" would usually not be acceptable in the Catholic Church. Nor is it representative of preaching in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement. Yet the preaching, which was carried across without a hint of self-doubt, connected visibly and audibly with group's expectations, ambitions and emotions.

God intends people to prosper, be healthy and provide a better life for their children and offspring (blessings). One does not need to be ashamed to ask God for these concrete blessings. Each person can evaluate spiritual progress with reference to material manifestations. One of the concrete steps to test one's faith is the rule of tithing (understood as "sowing a seed"), proposed as a step to take initiative for one's life, and bringing a sense of self-worth and worth in the eyes of God: "I am somebody, I am counted by God, who dares to accept my gift."¹⁵ Blessings can be harvested on a personal basis. The ideas of the prosperity gospel confirm the presence of demons as a wedge to divine blessings in sickness, poverty and misfortune. This also means that the suffering person can find

¹⁵ Garner 2000, Banja 2009.

him/herself in the hands of persistent demons, when the condition fails to change:

DRAMA 4: BEHIND THE SCENES—JOYCE ACQUIRES A SPIRITUAL HUSBAND ¹⁶

After the prayer meeting, Joyce approached me for help. She was a middle-aged businesswoman, a widow, who rented a small grocery shop near a popular market in Lusaka. She was a leading figure in the team of intercessors of this group. She had the reputation of being a calm and balanced person, eager to bring her talents into the Catholic Church. She dedicated one day every week for fasting and prayed many hours with her team of intercessors. From her small income, she paid tithes to the church.

A perfect example of a happy Christian life? No. After many years, Joyce was convinced that something was seriously wrong with her. Her life did not progress. There were many quarrels within her family. She would have liked to remarry, but Mr Right never showed up. While she listened enthusiastically to many testimonies of people to whom God had granted a breakthrough in health, family life and finances, her own prayers remained unanswered, in spite of tithing, fasting and praying.

After the initial enthusiasm, Joyce experienced different forms of alienation. At first, she blamed her own lack of faith. All hints of doubt needed to be dispelled. “They come from the devil.” All was well—she just needed to believe harder. She upgraded her fasting-days to “total fasting”, meaning she would not even drink water. “Prayer of intercession is a spiritual warfare. Sometimes I nearly collapsed during the prayers, since we are standing for hours without sitting down.”

She came to realise that there must be a spiritual cause for her unsatisfying life-situation. When she dreamt of a sexual encounter with a man, she interpreted her dream as a sure sign of having a demon, a “spiritual husband”. A prophet of another charismatic group confirmed the diagnosis. A demon was blocking her blessings, and prevented men from remaining attracted to her in a relationship. This demon evidently also brought confusion into her family and business life. She had been fed on the words that “God meets you at the point of your needs.” Instead, the world of demons had imprinted itself on her life. A woman who once knew herself as a child of God now found herself in the arms of demons who prevented even her prayers from reaching her God.

¹⁶ This narrative is based on personal communication with Joyce, who shared her experience with me when she became convinced to be possessed.

I would not have helped Joyce by heaping yet more prayers on her head. The only demon that needed to be cast out, I believed, was a spirituality that made her focus on her own needs, by whose fulfilment she judged God's absence or presence. I encouraged her to start by thanking God that she was not married (yet) but free for others. And that she was not hooked to riches. And that she received spiritual gifts to help others and be concerned about others. I was convinced that God was answering her prayers, but that Joyce did not understand God's answer since she kept looking for something else.

Charismatic Christians understand themselves as being in direct continuity with the early Christian Church that was sustained and guided by the Holy Spirit with miracles and revelations. However, the former Christians' expectations of martyrdom, of persecution, and of sacrificing the comforts of earthly life for a life to come, sits rather uncomfortably with present-day charismatic concerns for their own prosperous future.¹⁷

DEMONIC OPPRESSION

Some Pentecostal discourses distinguish between demonic obsession, possession, infestation, and oppression. By demonic obsession they mean extraordinary strong temptations and compulsions that diminish the willpower of a person, without however totally eclipsing it. They speak of demonic possession, when a demon takes, temporarily, full control during manifestations. The idea of demonic infestation expresses that specific objects are vested with unseen demonic powers that bring misfortunes and dependencies on the unsuspecting victims who uses these objects. This idea plays a crucial role in Zambian concepts of Satanism where people become initiated against their own will into the satanic world through satanic objects that come to control their willpower. In neo-Pentecostal literature, the notion of demonic oppression has been extended to include general misfortune and bad luck.¹⁸ Joyce's oppression by a "spiritual husband" is an example: she felt neither tempted nor possessed by the spiritual husband, and yet the demon was coming intimately close, more than even God. Also, familial or generational curses ("family curses") fall under the realm of demonic oppression, giving the devil an entry-point into family affairs. Take the following example of three sisters who approached me for help:

¹⁷ See Banja 2009 or Piper 2001.

¹⁸ See the examples given by Asamoah-Gyadu 2004.

Our sister has demons. You know—these *ngulu* spirits. Our mother also had them. All of us we have renounced them, because they are demons. But our sister keeps them. She has even become a traditional healer, a witchdoctor, can you imagine? We begged her to stop, but she does not want to listen. These demons prevent us to progress in life. Whenever we start a business, it fails. Whenever anyone of us gets some money, we see nothing coming out of it. We can give you so many examples. Even our marriages suffer. We know it is because of our sister. We consulted different Christian prophets who said the same thing. Our sister needs deliverance; else, nobody in our family will progress. We are under demonic influence—they have an entry-point in our family through our sister.

Upon my intervention, the said women did not change her way of life; her sisters had to find a way of accepting her, the way she was. The notion of demonic oppression (when understood in the above sense) can obtain many affinities with ideas about witchcraft. It shifts the blame for misfortune easily onto others. During intensive prayers, such oppressing demons are supposed to manifest themselves (through signs of full possession), while the person falls into a trance. Once they manifest, a powerful pastor can cast them out (deliverance).

Abraham Akrong warned that this outlook (which he called a “neo-witchcraft mentality”) can entrap its followers into a human existence caught up in a constant fight between good and evil spiritual forces.¹⁹ The causes of misfortune are projected onto evil others. Spiritual techniques (spiritual warfare), not political, economic or social engagements, become the mode of addressing and controlling misfortune. Akrong has warned of the passivity, fear, dependency-syndromes, and evasion of personal responsibility that can flow from the “neo-witchcraft mentality”. He concludes:

Finally, the most troubling aspect of this witchcraft mentality is that it promotes very dangerous and naïve assumptions about human life and existence, which lead to an almost infantile view of life. If every misfortune must be the work of evil agents then the assumption is that life is created perfect and must come to fruition without any disturbance. This must also entail the idea that human existence and the world are perfect; that there are no natural deformities inherent in nature that we can experience as inimical

¹⁹ Akrong 2000.

to our well-being. Everything that happens to us must happen according to our wishes as if our wishes ruled the world.²⁰

But the belief in demonic oppression does not necessarily lead into notions of spiritual warfare that neglect social and political action. It is also possible to envisage that the teaching may actually produce successful believers who engage actively with social and political issues precisely because they are motivated by their faith in Christ's victory over the demonic world, which they see re-enacted and demonstrated in the weekly sessions of deliverance. Which direction the belief in demons takes a person in regards to social and political engagements (neglecting such engagements in favour of prayer against the demons, or seeking such engagements because demons will be defeated) may depend a lot on the pastor who gives guidance and orientation. This point should be kept in mind when we look now more closely at "pentecostal demons".

"PENTECOSTAL DEMONS"

Pentecostal understandings of the demonic can feed on a dualistic worldview. It would be wrong, though, to blame Pentecostalism either for this dualism or for the homogenisation of African spirits as one class of evil spirits responsible for all sorts of misfortunes. "The African traditional spirit world has been demonised throughout the history of Christian education in Zambia," wrote Gerrie ter Haar.²¹ Already in the time of Milingo—predating the Pentecostal explosion in Zambia—the Christian heritage had firmly established a dualistic field for the spirits.

It seems from the letters to Milingo that in modern Zambia these historical differences [of concepts of the spirits] have been largely eroded to the extent that people writing to Milingo will refer to *vibanda*, *ngulu*, *mashave* (and for that matter Lucifer and the Devil) as though all were synonymous. ... It seems that modern Zambians increasingly consider that there is only one type of spirit

²⁰ Akrong 2000, p. 5.

²¹ Ter Haar 1992, p. 127. Similarly, David Gordon commented about the Bemba *ngulu*: An ambivalent spiritual force with the potential of doing good became an entirely negative spirit through the missionaries' framework (Gordon 2013, pp. 56ff.) "The trend of demonising the African spirit world ... was started by 19th century foreign missionaries", says Ezra Chitando (2005, p. 193.) Birgit Meyer wrote for the Ghanaian context: "By providing believers with an image not only of almighty God but also of this dark counterpart, Christianity affords the opportunity to demonise traditional gods as well as 'worldly' temptations such as uninhibited consumption." (Meyer 1995, p. 237) In the part on Satanism, I will come back to Meyer's argument that Pentecostal images of Satanism formulise a critique both of African traditional religion and of the modern market and consumption.

possession, although it may be called by different names depending upon which language one is speaking or from which part of the country one originates. This is, of course, the belief of Christians, and notably of Archbishop Milingo himself, for whom all evil proceeds from the Devil and in whose view all evil may be healed by one all-powerful spirit, the Holy Spirit.²²

African spirits, once part of a complex, ambivalent and heterogenic world, became reduced to demons and evil spirits (in league with the devil) in Christian discourses. I have argued in the introduction that the acceptance of a homogenised world of demons can be situational, meaning that it pertains to those circumstances in which people expect help from within a Christian framework; these conceptions may adapt to other frameworks that are more heterogeneous, for example when the same people seek help from a Zion, Mzimu or Mutumwa church or from a traditional healer. Ter Haar and Ellis have shown us, however, how broad the Christian dualistic framework span was, already in Milingo's time, across class and gender. The Pentecostal message built on this but also gave new dimensions to the imagination of the devil and of demons, through (1) its emphasis on power, (2) the primacy of spirit and (3) a radical break with the past (born-again).

(1) Some scholars have contrasted the mainstream Christian focus on the *meaning* of a Christian message with a charismatic/Pentecostal focus on the *power* behind a meaning.²³ The spoken word is more than just a sound produced by the vocal cords that transfers a message. In charismatic thought, it contains a spiritual power that can manifest itself in blessings and in curses, very akin to African religious ideas, where the human word carries something of the soul; its inherent power goes beyond the intellectual message that it conveys.²⁴ Charismatic worship and preaching has much to do with tapping into divine powers and combat the evil ones. Teaching is supposed to give the required knowledge for understanding the nature of spiritual powers: to dispel ignorance that prevents access to

²² Ter Haar & Ellis 1988:199-200. "In passing, we may note that the apparent erosion of beliefs in distinctive local spirits, and their incorporation into a nationwide or worldwide phenomenon of possession, constitutes an enlargement of scale paralleled by national government and universal religion."

²³ Harris 2007, p. 290. We are dealing here more with a question of emphasis on a continuum. Where the question of meaning is totally eclipsed, the preaching of the newer Churches has come under scrutiny of the older Pentecostal Churches, which speak of an abuse when the Bible is a source of authority rather than a source of teaching, a source of power without being a source of meaning (Banda 2009).

²⁴ Maxwell 1983.

God's powers or that enables evil powers to gain strongholds. The power behind Jesus' teaching that cast out demons and illness is invoked. The prayer style in some groups (loud, sweating, full of energy) can invoke this power that is to be channelled into deliverance and into providing a spiritual experience that results in "giving one's life to Jesus", a crucial outcome of preaching. Many people join the Charismatic Renewal in search of God's powers that they wish to channel into a specific life-situation. Praying and singing in a loud voice and involving the whole body, falling into trance and losing control over oneself, can express an expectation of being touched by God's power.

In Catholic Church history, the activities of Satan in the Church have especially been associated with the realm of heresy. The devil was the master of deception, of secrecy (avoiding exposure to the truth) and of false teachings that distorted the truths and doctrines of the Church. While the devil also had spiritual powers with which the Christian had to combat, he was largely active—especially in the Church-centred models of salvation—on the level of meaning. One rebuked the devil by refuting heresy through argumentative reasoning.²⁵ In contrast, in charismatic Christianity, prayer-warriors and intercessors fight the demons with the weapons of spiritual warfare. Exorcising demons with a loud voice is to prove to the demons that they are under a higher power to which the believer has access. The devil's activities are imagined less in the realm of meaning and more in the realm of powers.

(2) Many charismatic worshippers link material aspects of life very directly to spiritual dimensions, where "spiritual" refers to concrete, nameable, external spirits and powers. These determine the outcome of material, economic, political and biological constellations. Preachers of the prosperity gospel have accused mainstream Churches of dealing with problems only on the material level, the level of mere symptoms, neglecting the direct causative influence of God and demons. A microscope may reveal a bacteria or a virus, but behind every material reality is a spiritual reality that controls it. Also, any political or social power needs to be preceded by spiritual power. In dreams, visions and prophecy the spirit

²⁵ Also European church history knows of individual battles with the devil. However, in the Church-centred models of salvation, the main dangers of the devil were recognised on the level of meaning; hence the devil was associated with Christian heresy. The followers of heresy brought disunion to the Church or, when splitting off, prevented their followers to live in full communion with the Church. Pope John XXII, in 1320, assimilated the practices of black magic and witchcraft into the crime of heresy (Iribarren 2007).

world breaks into the believer's awareness to show the true nature of the events that take place in his/her life.

By giving primacy to the spiritual over the physical reality, the Pentecostal explosion has challenged the framework of the European Enlightenment that left little room for spirits in the public sphere. Not only is the devil very much back on the agenda—but is now coming with his own kingdom, agents and spirits. Charismatic thought challenges the division between secular and religious life, whose dividing line was drawn and redrawn in a complicated European history. All life is inherently religious. Life that is carved out away from the sovereignty of God is implicitly subject to the sovereignty of the devil. There is nothing like a neutral, secular world in between. The existence of an active Satanic kingdom (Satanism) that manifests itself in the secular and private institutions (schools and hospitals), and even in many Churches (especially the “non-spiritual Churches”), is a logical conclusion (see part six). However, the confusability of the opposing spiritual forces—both God and the devil can give material wealth as rewards—gives rise to much ambivalence.²⁶

(3) The “born-again” experience creates a break between the past and the future life.²⁷ This has repercussions on the way demons are experienced. Many born-again Christians have developed the tendency of viewing their past lives in exclusively negative terms—lived for demons, idols and witchcraft. Combined with non-negotiable aspirations for prosperity, which for the urban middle class is often associated with an urban life style, it is easy to transpose the dualism between God and the devil onto other forms of binary oppositions:

Holy Spirit	Devil
Future life	Past life
Spirit-filled Christianity	Traditional African religion
Urban, global, “international”	Village life in traditional culture

We will see in the chapters on Satanism how the new notion captures especially urban aspirations, while witchcraft remains persuasive in situations that seek the occult in localized traditions.

²⁶ For the bipolar view of occult economies that promise riches through spiritual means while moralising about riches in demonising discourses, see J. Comaroff and J. L. Comaroff 2001, pp. 1-51.

²⁷ See Igo 2007.

CHARISMATIC EXPERIENCE AND INCULTURATION THEOLOGY

It is an irony that the hierarchies of mainstream Churches were warming up to the theological concepts of “inculturation” and “contextualisation”, while charismatic Christians from the grassroots demonised the African spirit world. As the vice-chairperson of one Charismatic Renewal Group in Lusaka explained,

You can see that demons come through the Nyau [an extensive religion and secret brotherhood of the Chewa, which initiates boys into adulthood]. Whenever there are serious prayers, I mean really serious prayers, the demons manifest in these people. And not only the Nyau. Demons are passed on through all the different puberty rites in the village, Bemba, Tonga, all of them. You can make an experiment. Bring any person who has been initiated in the village, or who stayed a long time in the village, and bring them here for prayers, I mean serious prayers, and you will see what happens. The demons manifest, I have seen it so many times, because our ancestors dedicated their lives to demons.

Inculturation theology demands a certain ability to step back from concepts and look at them from several angles. People who feel afflicted by spirits, however, look for a direct, non-mediated and immediate answer. The inculturation movement tried to overcome the split between the Christian faith and persistent cultural practices by recognising divine inspiration in the relevant rites. In contrast, the born-again movements focus on a radical break with the past through repentance, total faith and commitment to the Biblical message, without any alterations.

The stress of the charismatic/ Pentecostal discourse on power over meaning, the spiritual over the physical, and the prosperous future over the sinful past can run against the efforts of inculturation and liberation theology. Inculturation theology builds on a positive evaluation of African tradition and works on the level of symbols and meaning; Pentecostal worship is oriented towards the global and international dimension of Christianity and portrays little interest in being Africanised.²⁸ Liberation theology plunges itself in correcting social and material conditions against the perpetuation of injustice in which it sees the prime cause for distorting spiritual conditions; Pentecostal stress on the primacy of spirit does it the other way round.

²⁸ See Meyer 1998a p. 760.

Obvious, there are many Pentecostal churches and charismatic ministries with a very positive attitude towards Africans traditions. Not all fall into the above sketch! I wish to close this chapter by pointing out fundamental similarities. The charismatic experience, as a grassroots movement, has taken up the concerns of inculturation theology by engaging through a Christian framework directly with people's spiritual concerns about evil powers, instead of translating them into other categories (psychology, sociology) that mean very little to ordinary people and that are foreign to them. Charismatic prayers touch the human person on a layer that conventional prayers have rarely managed to penetrate; thus they fulfil one of the basic concerns of inculturation theology. With liberation theology charismatic theology shares the understanding of human nature in terms of interconnectedness. We are affected by each other on a fundamental level in ways that are not visible to the human eye. As I said earlier, many Pentecostals feel empowered to deal with political issues because they see the demons defeated in their worship:

Demons are not an intellectual construct; they are experienced in action, during worship, during trance, while being in communion with other believers. The charismatic believer sees that demons are defeated through commanding shouts, stamping and clapping, through confessing one's faith and through believing in the presence of the Holy Spirit during prayer. Charismatic prayers are meant to end with a victory of God over the demonic. In this sense, the demonic manifestations always point towards the authority of Jesus—as they also did in the gospels. They are always experienced in the action leading to their defeat. Demons only manifest when they are being exorcised. Charismatics understand the manifestation of demons as the first sign of their defeat. If we understand the charismatic experience of deliverance as a re-enactment of Christ's victory in the believer's life, I believe that we do justice to its theological component. Even mainstream Catholic liturgy re-enacts Christ's death and resurrection (and victory) week after week during the sacred liturgy (Mass) in order to renew the life of the Church. What is wrong with doing this in a way that touches the lives of the believers in an emotional way that makes use of the whole body, even if for some it involves (sometimes) shouting, trance, crying or even vomiting? (Incidentally, a number of African rituals of cleansing involved elements of trance and vomiting—which brings us back to the similarities with inculturation theology.)²⁹

²⁹ In a number of Zambian cultural traditions, vomiting had to be induced upon dreaming "bad dreams" that involved eating suspicious foods (Rosner & Udelhoven 2013). Vomiting during the precolonial poison ordeals was a proof of being innocent of the crimes of witch-

CONCLUSION

I have introduced in this part three strong historical traditions of the Church in regards to demonic attacks: that of the historical mission churches, of inculturation theology, and of the charismatic experience. We learn from all three traditions. The historical mission churches have shown that being rooted in the life of the church and in the church's tradition is the best protection against demonic attacks and witchcraft attacks. Inculturation theology shows that a meaningful reaction to spiritual attacks demands a lot of listening to the patient and also to cultural experts. We need to know what demons or witchcraft mean for the patient and his/her family and how these forces manifest themselves in the patient's life. We look especially at concrete relationships towards which they point and at the demands of Christian reconciliation. The charismatic experience has taught us that Christian ritual intervention must go beyond the intellectual appropriation of the Christian faith. Deliverance is very effective when it allows for a variety of emotions to express themselves in the drama that reenacts Christ's victory over the devil. To be freed from demons and from witchcraft attacks needs to be an embodied and a communitarian experience. I can now outline the principles of our approach.

craft. According to Pascal Tembo, the chairman of the KATEMBE research group, vomiting can represent the aspects of cleansing and renewal in healing rites, "removing evil substances in the body", when it comes as a sign of recovery from a spiritual cause of a sickness. Members of various deliverance ministries gave me similar interpretations.

Part Two

First steps for helping the afflicted

First steps

What are the concrete steps of help that a pastor can offer to people afflicted with spirits or demons? In this part, I present three short chapters on the practical principles of our approach, which will accompany the whole of this book. It starts with recognising a cry for help and the helping community, with empathetic listening, and with distinguishing different layers of truth. These steps can open up a variety of simple but meaningful interventions that can bear far-reaching results.

5

Recognising a cry for help

Making oneself a neighbour to a troubled person

When being confronted with experiences of witchcraft, Satanism or demon possession, many Christians think it is the task of specialists to deal with such things. Maybe one needs a special state of divine grace, extraordinary faith, knowledge, or at least some sort of permission from the church authorities. However, it is not helpful to be paralysed by thoughts about what one may be lacking when confronted with such perturbing situations. In any case, shifting the responsibilities to the specialists (exorcists, “men of God” and prophets), rarely helps in the long run. A specialist or exorcist can play an important part at a given moment of the healing process. Friends and family play a much greater role: they are part of the whole, long journey.

What can I do when a person collapses in my presence with signs of demon possession (“manifesting”) or with attacks that seem to come from the other world?

1. I should take serious the person’s condition as a cry for help.
2. I can listen to the person’s experience with an empathetic, understanding and non-judgemental heart. I can show interest in the details of the experience, in the family background, context, life history and other circumstances that may be related to the experience. I should make myself a neighbour to the troubled soul.
3. I can pray with the person, using the very frightening symbols that the person mentions or sees—without giving an interpretation from my side—bringing the entities before God in the process of prayer. Through prayer, I can help the person to see the experience as happening within the realm of God’s presence, not outside of it.
4. I can check the conditions of the person’s living environment and safety and inquire about possibilities of effecting change if this seems necessary.

5. I can encourage the person to seek medical help with regard to bodily symptoms that accompany the experiences.
6. I can draw attention to the strengths and faith of the person. I can make the person aware of the helping forces around and inside that have enabled him/her so far to cope with such powerful manifestations.
7. I can encourage the person not to see him/herself as a mere victim of outside forces, but to see the experience as a stage leading towards spiritual growth.
8. I can encourage the person to make active efforts towards rebuilding relationships that are broken, especially those that can be connected with the figures of the spiritual attack.

I have often been amazed how much such simple steps can accomplish, even in very difficult and dramatic forms of attacks that people went through. I do not need to know what exactly triggered such experiences, what is behind it (spiritually or psychologically), or what is the reason for it. We do not have to pretend to have extraordinary knowledge to deal with such things. The above steps are often enough to start a healing process.

A CRY FOR HELP

People who feel spiritually attacked know that something is going on in their life that escapes common explanations. How can they communicate an experience with the unseen world to somebody who does not see, hear and experience these things? Their attempts to put experiences into words can sound ridiculous to other people; stories of witchcraft and Satanism are bizarre—out of this world.

Verbal communication, in any case, does not capture the impact of such experiences. People, who seek help when they have to cope with witchcraft, demons or Satanism are affected at different levels of their being. Their experiences can touch boundary conditions of life, such as death and sickness, mysterious events, nightmares, hallucinations or concrete threats and suspicions. They are related to a personal life story that may reach far back into childhood and that is woven into a long family history. When narrating their story, people often do not even know where to start. Sometimes they are victims of paralysing fears. Life-energy is sapped away; the person becomes more and more passive. To express this

in the language and images of present day Zambian Satanism, we could well say that somebody is “drinking the person’s blood”.

Sometimes family members bring the suffering people to church; the suffering person may just stay mute. One can be patient, kind and respectful in the face of such situations, but one cannot force the person to speak. Nobody should.

Others bring themselves—on their own initiative—to a charismatic church, as if drawn by a magnet, and fall down into a trance when touched by the pastor, or simply of their own accord. Different people will have different explanations for what is behind such phenomena. Whatever it is, one should recognise a call for help. The location of an attack can at times give some indication of the environment from where the person seeks help, which I want to demonstrate in three very different examples:

DRAMA 5: GRACE MANIFESTS SIGNS OF SATANISM

Grace was in grade ten at school when she collapsed during assembly prayers, falling into trance. She fell onto the floor and started to stutter incoherent words at a very fast speed. Several people had difficulties to hold her when she became violent, hurting herself and hitting her head to the floor, talking about Satanists who were controlling her. The teachers took her out of the assembly into a private room, where two female teachers stayed with her. Away from the crowd, she quickly came back to herself. They encouraged her to attend prayers so that the demons could go. During prayers with a small charismatic group she avoided Christian symbols (Bible and rosary), and looked visibly uncomfortable in the presence of such items. She crawled into a corner of the room as if she wanted to disappear. Shortly afterwards she fell again into a trance. She made strange bodily movements, while lying on her back, pressing up her belly into the air and just standing on her head and feet with extraordinary agility. Though her body was of a rather tiny nature, she displayed great strength that made it difficult for the others in the room to pin her down. When she tried to crawl out of the room, the people who were present blocked the exit with their bodies. She crawled back to the corner, where she stayed quietly until she came out of the trance. At that point, the school authorities contacted me for help. This experience repeated itself several times, also in my presence, but always during prayers. While in trance, she spoke to us of a mysterious ring that she was wearing, invisible to us, which could not be removed from her finger. “They have given it to me.”

As long as she was wearing this ring, she explained, she belonged to them and not to us.

People saw in this drama a manifestation of Satanism. The girl displayed some of the standard signs through which people recognise Satanism as it is known in Zambia: avoidance of Christian symbols, seeing people who remain invisible to others, who are said to control the person, or the insistence on specific symbols, like the mysterious ring. The drama communicated to the audience that a form of Satanism was manifesting itself in the girl, though some teachers also showed sceptical attitudes. "Maybe there are psychological issues that need to be addressed. In any case, we should not speak of Satanism, else the whole school will panic," a teacher said. This cautious advice did not stop pupils and even teachers to be fascinated by the drama. The label of Satanism could no longer be removed from it; those who had only heard of Satanism had seen now with their own eyes what it was like.

At this stage in our approach, we do not speak of "real" or "not real", "spiritual" or "psychological". Instead we acknowledge that the girl was not playacting; something was happening to her, something beyond words. We acknowledge that she communicated through the drama (unconsciously, perhaps) a form of Satanism to the audience that controlled her. And that the audience understood it largely in such terms. However, we resist the temptation to objectify the experience by saying: "She was overcome by Satanism in the school." We rather say: "She experienced forces that she knows as Satanism", or that people know as Satanism, or that we know as Satanism, and that she most likely wanted these forces to be recognised by us. We do not need yet to define or comprehend what this form of Satanism is all about. We take note of an experience of the girl and of the onlookers at school who have their own stories to tell. We acknowledge that many in the school attributed the label of Satanism to the experience of the girl and to the drama that they witnessed.

At this stage, the cause of the experience and drama (whether Satanism, demons or psychological issues) is not essential for us. We avoid dishing out blame: "Something is wrong with the girl."—"Something is wrong with the school."—"Maybe something is wrong in her family." Such judgements are bad starting points for helping a person. It is more helpful at this point to recognise in the drama a call for help. Compassion for the girl is the appropriate response, not judgement, and surely not dishing out blame, neither to the girl nor to others. The girl was overpowered by something and did not manage to control these powers by herself. She displayed extraordinary bodily convulsions; nobody among the students

who witnessed the events could reproduce the action of standing just on the head and feet with such an agility and strength. I was utterly amazed by the girl's extraordinary movements. I suspect that outside of the trance the girl would have been unable to replicate the movements. The girl was overcome by immense powers. It is enough for us to know that she could not deal with these powers by herself, be they of a spiritual or of a psychological nature. She needed help.

People who do not share the belief in spiritual forms of Satanism often tend to dismiss such dramas. Consequently, the cry for help becomes ridiculed and repressed. In some schools, pupils who manifest signs of Satanism or spirit possession are treated with a bucket of cold water in their face and a few slaps. "This prevents them from attention-seeking behaviour and from causing a panic in the school," a teacher expressed. "We send them home and say: 'Come back to school when you are cured.'" Yes, panic may be avoided with such a treatment. However, the cry for help has not been answered; instead, the behaviour of the pupil is ridiculed and shamed.

For a moment, let us look at the drama as a form of communicating a non-verbal message to a specific audience. The place where she collapsed (the school assembly) may play more than an accidental role. Maybe the girl implicitly expected help from the school. It was a sign of trust: "I know there is someone here who can help me!" This empowers the staff of the school to say: "Look, this happened here before our eyes. Let us get together and try to help this girl!"

The drama communicated Satanism to the audience. But this label can be interpreted in different ways. Some saw the girl as an agent of Satanism: "This girl must have been initiated into Satanism a long time ago. Now we see how deeply she was involved. Maybe she sacrificed already many people because that is what Satanists do. But Satan has a problem in this school—there are prayerful people around. That is why the Satanist failed and why she collapsed during our powerful prayers." This interpretation looks positively towards the school, making the school a place of godly powers. But a negative focus then remains attached to the girl; some blamed her for recent accident that had happened to members of the school. Furthermore, the question arises about who may have initiated her. This interpretation can perpetuate a climate of suspicions that may also be transferred to her family, friends or other pupils at school. It also prevents pupils from having compassion for the girl.

An interpretation in the opposite direction is also possible. The girl herself is a casualty and victim of Satanism: The drama projected the girl

as a passive, manipulated and controlled person, no longer in charge of her own willpower. Implicitly, the girl may have been longing for this way of interpretation, communicating: "Other powers are controlling me! It is not me! These powers have been hidden before, but now they manifested through prayer. They have been controlling me for a long time. They made me do many things where you thought it was me doing those things." She may have hoped for a confirmation that Satanism was at work in her, through which she could explain events of the recent past that preceded the drama.

In our approach, we acknowledge that other powers may have controlled the girl, but we resist the temptation to blame others, not even the devil, for her problems or poor school performances. The outcome for the school would be disastrous: Suspicions start to spread—and it will not be long before concrete accusations will be aired against teachers and fellow students. School life deteriorates into a confused entanglement of suspicions, rumours and hidden accusations.

We avoid any position that puts blame on others. We even avoid to interpret the drama. It can just be there. We simply ask ourselves what it wants to show to us. We acknowledge that the girl, while in trance, is controlled by something that we do not know but that the audience called this Satanism. Later in our approach, we ask about the relationships, especially broken relationships that the drama may be pointing to. We don't do this through a complicated exegesis of symbols. We look at what is plainly open in sight for all to see. She is controlled by invisible agents. She crawls into a corner. She avoids everybody. She speaks of a ring. These images can just be there for the moment. Some of them will lead us by themselves to specific constellations in which they will attain meaning.

On subsequent visits to the family, the girl's background became clearer to us. She was an orphan, kept by a cousin of her late mother. There were many other children in the same household, and the family struggled to keep Grace at school. In subsequent meetings, she told us that she felt like a burden to the family. Since the death of her parents, she had been shifted around, staying some years here and some months there, with uncles, aunties, a cousin, but never truly belonging anywhere. The state of *not belonging anywhere* became our key-metaphor for looking at her form of "Satanism". When asked whether she belonged to God or to the devil she answered that it may be the devil. "I don't feel that I really belong to my family or to God." She felt out of place and out of touch with normal life. Curing her form of Satanism then was not just a matter for

more prayers, as some had suggested. It was a matter for fostering a positive sense of belonging.

Had Grace collapsed at home, she may have been shifted again away to other family members—and branded again as a difficult girl. The school was the stable point at this moment in her life, from where she may have hoped to find help, and maybe an acknowledgement of belonging as well. The girl had collapsed in the right place: During subsequent family visits and prayers, some teachers of the school played a crucial role in the healing process. Two teachers in particular had a beautiful and intuitive way of dealing with the girl. By listening in a non-judgemental and comforting way, they became like a bridge between the girl and her family. Being her teachers, the family gave them the necessary respect that made their mediating role possible. They encouraged the family to show their love and acceptance to the girl. The drama, with the help of the teachers, helped the family to bond more strongly together.

When she collapsed into a trance, she talked about a spiritual ring which none of us could see. Whatever the nature of the spiritual ring that could not be removed, this particular “ring of belonging” corresponded strikingly with her own state of not belonging anywhere. At our prayer meeting with the family, we playfully used the symbol. We stood around her, saying: “We are your ring, you belong to us, and this ring is stronger than any powers of the devil.” The manifestations of Satanism did stop, and this corresponded with a stronger mutual commitment. The family members became more accepting and inclusive towards her; “We will never again speak about her leaving our home.” She too committed herself to the family in stronger terms.

DRAMA 6: PRISCILLA FALLS DURING PRAYER AT CHURCH

Priscilla, the choir mistress and youth leader of a prayer centre in our parish (in a rural Bemba speaking area in Zambia) had asked me several times for prayers—she was having bad dreams. I did not take her condition seriously. I vaguely promised to pray when coming back for a children’s baptism ceremony the following week.

After the baptism service, some people stayed behind, including Priscilla, her family and her husband, reminding me of the promise. We formed a circle around her and prayed. Again, I did not take her request very seriously. I wanted to go and thought: “At least let me pray a bit for her.” But to my surprise and alarm, when I stretched out my hands over her, she fell backwards, like a log of wood, remaining fully stretched out,

until her body reached the cement floor with a loud bang. I thought she had fallen on the back of her head, but people told me later that, mysteriously, her head had not touched the floor. She remained unhurt. Then she started to crawl like a snake, slipping out of the hands of the people who tried to hold her. By now, I realised that I had to make time, there and then.

Her face remained calm, and yet she displayed extraordinary strength while crawling. She continued to crawl like a snake through the church—silently—while relatives and choir members tried unsuccessfully to pin her down. Seeing that she was in a trance I encouraged the family just to let her continue to crawl. We calmly prayed a part of the rosary and sang some songs. At times, while crawling, she seemed like she was dancing to a beat that she alone was hearing. The drummers of the choir started to try out different beats, to which she responded, but I stopped them. After about a quarter of an hour she lay still, but did not respond to any questions or attempts to wake her up. Then she started to crawl again. This alteration of crawling and stillness lasted for more than an hour.

While Priscilla was crawling on the floor like a snake, the family and church choir tried to discern the names of the spirits (*ngulu*) that had possessed Priscilla. They tried to provoke reactions and recognised that the possessed body had established a mode of communication with the unseen world. Several times some women tried to question the spirit, “What is your name?” At first, Priscilla did not answer. Then at one moment, she cried out, “We are nine!” In a rapid pitch, she mentioned the names of a great number of spirits that are known in the area as *ngulu*. Then Priscilla turned to the choir and asked with a despising voice: “Who is that one in a white cassock? Tell him to go!” She meant me.

Since I was now clearly part of the equation, I went to Priscilla, tried to establish eye contact, which she avoided, and asked “the spirits” if they knew where we were.

“In church,” she said.

“Do you know to whom this place belongs?” I asked.

“To Jesus,” she said.

“Do you know him?”

“We do.”

“Do you not know that Priscilla belongs to him and not to you?” I tried to speak with a calm voice. The spirits remained silent. I asked them: “Do you know that Priscilla does not want you? She even asked me to pray so that you go! Is it good of you to stay where you are not wanted? Is it not better you stay where you belong?”

They answered that they had come a long time ago. "She cannot have children because she is married to us!"

Some women present told them to go, in a loud voice. I asked them not to shout. Priscilla continued crawling, while we remained in the church, talking about other things. At one point, she silently waved her hands, as if the spirits were saying good-bye, and seemed to be falling into a sleep. Shortly afterwards she came back to herself. When questioned, she said she had no memory of what had happened, but felt very tired. We had a short prayer for her and with her, and then left her with her family.

People who witnessed these manifestations were sure that Priscilla had *ngulu* with whom people are familiar in this area. In Bemba speaking cultures, *ngulu* are spirits that one can pick up accidentally and involuntarily. They can also run in families. Usually the spirits choose their host, not the other way round. They make a person sick, but they can also bestow spiritual abilities on the person if appeased. They often interfere with the person's marriage, regarding themselves as the real spouse. During the manifestations, I entered the drama, speaking with the spirits as if I was speaking to a visible person. I did not believe in the spiritual world in the same way the other onlookers did. Priscilla was the owner of her experience; whatever my personal beliefs, she expressed her spiritual state in terms of *ngulu* spirits which we respect in our approach.

I continued to meet with Priscilla. She seemed fine after the prayers, though not yet completely healed. "Eight demons left but one is still there," her sister said. Several other family members had had *ngulu* in the past; the family was well acquainted with such experiences. Before marrying her present husband, Priscilla had been married to two other men, without ever falling pregnant. Not long after the above experience, Priscilla did become pregnant and later gave birth to a child. Her barrenness was over, which was a proof to the family that the *ngulu* had gone. Our joy, however, was diminished by another subsequent discovery: Priscilla was HIV positive. While Priscilla was overjoyed by the pregnancy, she had hoped that her HIV status would also miraculously disappear with the *ngulu*. It did not.

Was this a clear case of spirit possession? Or did the prayers and her own faith have psycho-somatic healing effects to loosen a bodily condition that she could only explain through the cultural idiom of *ngulu* who had made her barren? I do not know, nor do I need to know. Her family, the choir, the church members and—reluctantly—myself, had heard her cry for help and responded to it, providing an environment in which her condition could be expressed. We all tried to strengthen her own faith.

The *ngulu* left (at least most of them). Their precise nature is not important in our approach.

DRAMA 7: FAIDESS IS POSSESSED BY HER GRANDMOTHER

When Faideess was twenty years old, she experienced spiritual attacks for the first time in her life. She was overcome by someone whom she could physically see in the room, though others in the room could not see that person. She fell into a trance, but kept her eyes wide open, lying as if paralysed and absent. The family decided that the girl needed prayers, and they called in a charismatic prayer-group. While they prayed (a few days after the first experience), sudden convulsions overcame the girl. Her mother and sisters subsequently narrated that they saw a snake inside her body: "The snake was just under the skin, moving up the stomach until reaching the throat, but it did not come out of the mouth." The family panicked. The girl remained in a state of trance for a long time, and the prayer-group continued to pray much of the afternoon. This experience repeated itself several times. At times, Faideess held her throat with both hands as if she wanted to strangle herself. Family members had to overpower her to prevent her from doing harm to herself. While in trance, Faideess spoke with a different voice and mentioned names of family members who had died long ago, whom she had never met. Only her mother knew them, they were family members of Faideess' late father. Significantly, her mother was always present when she had such attacks. Under the prayers of the charismatics, the voice seemed to reveal that her late paternal grandmother was speaking through her. This woman had committed suicide (she hang herself) before Faideess was born. Her family now feared that Faideess could be made to commit suicide like her late grandmother. When in trance, the "grandmother" said she had left the powers of witchcraft in her family tree, meaning Faideess' late father's family. The prayer group prayed often, but the experiences did not stop.

Her elder sister then called me for help. When I arrived at the house, Faideess reacted to me in a normal way; she was open, cooperative with my questions, clear, frank and easy to talk with. While we were talking, she said at one point that she was now seeing the grandmother. The grandmother was in the room on the wall (invisible to us), dressed in a black coat, and she had been there for some time. In fact, she said, she saw her every day, even if she would not tell the others. She could not see her face, but she knew intuitively it was her paternal grandmother, though she had never known her personally. While we were still talking, she started to

glare, became somehow absent, and a short while later fell suddenly on the floor into a trance. Her muscles started contracting over her body in a very peculiar, slow and coordinated way—it gave indeed the impression of a “snake” pushing itself upwards from her belly into the throat. I had never seen such an extraordinary, bodily reaction before.

Faidess mentioned several different names in a fast-pitched voice. Some of the people were known only to the mother—they were relatives, some already dead, some still alive, of Faidess’ father’s family. When the “snake” reached her throat, she grasped her throat with both hands as if to strangle herself. We overpowered her, and after some time she came back to her senses. She was exhausted, but we could talk normally with her, though her leg was hurting.

The family explained to me that they were not in a good relationship with her late father’s family. It was a family immersed in witchcraft. The grandmother hanged herself because her family had accused her of witchcraft. Since her father had died (about five years prior to these events), there was hardly any contact between the two families. Faidess’ personal life seemed otherwise quite normal. She was looking forward to going to college; she had completed grade 12 two years earlier and was working in a saloon. Prior to the attacks, however, she had split up with her boyfriend of two years, for no real reason, she explained. She explained that the spiritual attacks had destroyed their relationship and that she failed to make any progress in life.

The family understood the spirit in terms of the Bemba concept of a *ciwa*, an evil spirit. The grandmother had committed suicide—she was known as a witch. Her spirit could not become an ancestor, but would continue to trouble the family even after death. Her special interest in her granddaughter was a sign that she was seeking to initiate Faidess into the world of witchcraft from beyond the grave. Or force her into the same fate of suicide. For myself, I connected Faidess’ trance reactions to an internalised family conflict and history. Faidess never collapsed at work, or at church. She experienced the attacks always at home, and always when her mother, who had knowledge of her father’s family, was present. I guessed that Faidess’ mum was as much part of the drama as Faidess and needed to be part of the solution; she was the main link between the two families.

If the interpretation of the family was right, we had two options: either to help the spirit of the grandmother to be laid to rest and stop being a disruptive presence in the family tree. Or to cut all links with the evil force, to ban her even further away from Faidess. The family opted for the second option, while I tended towards the first option: it seemed to

be reflecting the Gospel, and it also seemed to be more demanding, and I like to pose a challenge during treatment. While discussing, the family asked me for Mass for her late grandmother. "Maybe she needs to be put to rest." This seemed to be a compromise. In our approach, we address the realm of the dead by working on relationships with the living. I wanted to accompany our prayers with active steps of moving towards the estranged family members of Faide's father. I said that some family members of her father's side should be present. They were reluctant. It was obvious to me that they did not want to meet them. Finally, however, they agreed—if we could use the occasion of a memorial for her father rather than the grandmother.

Things worked out well. We decorated the altar in church with a large picture of Faide's late dad and many flowers. Some female cousins who came were of the same age as Faide, and they seemed to be at ease with each other. I had encouraged Faide's family not to speak about witchcraft and not to see witches in the faces of her father's relatives. During the prayers, we used a list of all departed family members, including Faide's dad and grandmother, praying for each one in turn. With each name that was pronounced, somebody brought a small light to the altar. In our prayers, we trusted that God forgives. We asked God for a good family spirit of cooperation. After the prayers, we proceeded to the home of Faide; all the girls helped in the final stage of cooking and we had a meal together.

At first, Faide felt much better. (In the first edition of this book, I concluded that our prayers succeeded!) While her violent trance experiences were indeed over, she still saw at times the presence of people in her house, who remained invisible to others. She also continued to feel somewhat depressed. I told her that the vision of people in the house would not lead her away from God, nor would they prevent her from progressing in life. I could not promise that they would stop. Against my hopes, however, the two families remained estranged. Faide also continued to see in her grandmother an absolutely evil person from whom she wanted to be cut off, physically and spiritually. "I disown her in my heart as my grandmother," she told me. I wanted her to try and make peace and develop a re-humanising perspective. But I could not force my solution on her, nor did I want to. She had to cope herself with her life. To my surprise, disowning the grandmother seemed actually to work. It was her way of saying that she wants to determine her life by herself, and that she does not want to be determined by her grandmother, larger family, or anybody else. Her own approach helped her to find a much greater sense of self-as-

sertiveness, and I had to readapt my own thinking. Making peace with the ancestors is a good option for some. But, maybe, cutting oneself loose can also be an option for others. I still hope that Faïdess may be able to develop a re-humanizing perspective later in life, but I am not in the driving seat of her life. As of now, she managed to build up a quite successful business in which she seems to flourish. And she has an extraordinary commitment to the healing ministry in church.

I have given this example to illustrate that in our approach we don't need to know the precise nature of the cause of a problem, nor do we need to know the correct path for a solution, as if there existed only one such path. Through playfulness, flexibility, posing challenges, identifying helpful forces, and a focus on agency and on one's own vocation in life, different doors and windows often open up for the patient who finds an own way of response.

ALLOWING ONESELF TO BE DISTURBED

In the three dramas, people discerned very different spiritual realities: Satanism, *ngulu* spirits, and the spirit of a grandmother. I believe that we do not need to know what was "really" behind these dramatic manifestations. They can be understood in different ways by different people. We know that it is quite ineffective to argue on an intellectual level with the beliefs of a person. Such experiences touch very personal and intimate layers that have unfolded in the person's own frames of reference, and not those of the helper. To transplant a fully-grown tree into another soil will kill the whole tree. We ask the helper to attune himself/herself with the spiritual world of the patient. One needs to acknowledge the aspect of mystery in the experience—denying it or explaining it away will do violence to it. We also acknowledge that every deep inner experience is also spiritual in nature, since it touches the inner autobiography and hence the soul. As such, it escapes the realm of neat explanations. Of course, to classify something as being spiritual does not exclude the role of psychological and social factors. Our approach tries to find a creative way that can meet the demands of the various discourses that we are able to employ.

The people whom we encountered in this chapter were helped because somebody attended to their cry for help: in school (Grace), in church (Priscilla) and at home (Faïdess). In spite of the extraordinary manifestations, help did not demand extraordinary efforts: Attentiveness and a compassionate heart, a readiness to be thrown out of one's own routine and own ideas, and a confidence in prayer worked miracles. People's

experiences and manifestations were given room to express themselves without being judged or forced into external interpretations. Help was given in a way that avoided putting blame on others, but allowed the victim to play his/her part in finding a solution. Spiritual attacks can prove to be a challenge for personal growth but can also provide an avenue for rebuilding relationships.

The helping community allowed itself to be disturbed by these events. All three cases demonstrate that there were extraordinary forces at work: the astonishing agility of a Satanist that no other girl could imitate, the extraordinary collapse and prolonged snake-like movements of a woman with *ngulu* spirits and the simulated suicide of a girl possessed by her grandmother. The communities recognised these forces to be from another world. While we never try to fix such dramas to only one single interpretation, we look also at wider tensions that play themselves out. Also in the onlookers. In the third case (of Faidess), the drama enacted alienations that were felt by everybody in the family: two branches of the family lived estranged from each other for more than a decade and had silenced the suicide of an alleged witch, a tragic event in a previous generation that was still demanding recognition. Was Faidess's grandmother spirit attached to unspoken tensions and memories that were felt and lived by a whole family? Curing her then meant also curing the family. Faidess did not want to walk that line of thought; but she found her own way of developing agency. Disowning her grandmother, after all, can also be a way of stopping to think negatively about her.

In the drama of Grace, the manifestations of Satanism vibrated also with contradictions that other pupils felt in their own lives. Satanists are said to have access to fast riches and extraordinary powers. Also life at school is supposed to open up the doors to the modern world and give the students a future that their parents never dreamt of. Many students in Zambia experience tensions between their own desires for the future and the expectations of their parents who are aware that modern life puts many strains on traditional family values. Students experience the lure of the riches of the modern world, but they also know that these riches can be destructive if they are pursued in an immoral way. In the case of Grace, her possessed body, controlled by the strange forces of Satanism, became an idiom through which pupils and teachers could develop a moral discourse about their own desires and imagined possibilities. The drama generated moral energies in the school.

Also the drama of Priscilla went beyond her own problems of not having children and of being possessed by strange spirits (*ngulu*). If a drama

of possession appeals to a community and captivates an audience, then it may embody concerns that are also felt by other people. The community had been ravaged by the scourges of HIV and AIDS, of which Priscilla herself was a victim. This scourge was silently moving through the whole community like a snake, biting potentially anybody and affecting everybody. Or maybe the drama corresponded with a wider feeling of disappointment with the modern medical health-discourse: the modern clinic was neither able to cure Priscilla from HIV nor to enable her to conceive a child. People were fascinated by Priscilla's *ngulu*; the drama captivated the audience as a traditional answer in the face of failure of the modern sector. Such ways of thinking are secondary elaborations—they were not in the mind of Priscilla! Still, I am suggesting that such a drama can be used to provide very powerful symbols for engaging with the wider tensions that are experienced by the community. The choir saw in the possessed body a medium through which one could communicate with the unseen world, beyond the personal struggles of Priscilla. We can allow also ourselves to use the symbols and manifestation of such a drama to pose wider questions to the community.

I believe, it is a good starting point to be shaken up by a reality that is still indefinite; that is not yet fixed onto a single interpretation. The most creative helper is not the one who quickly finds the right interpretation for the drama, but the one who dares to leave the experience open and who continuous to feel the tensions that the drama leaves behind. Ultimately, the work of listening, and absorbing, and feeling the tensions becomes more important than the work of interpreting. In due time it will reap its own harvest of which the drama is but the seed.

6

Listening with faith and cultural intelligence

How experiences with evil can attain a life-giving direction

Some people have an extraordinary gift for listening and empathy. Since I am aware of being less blessed with this ability, I like to be accompanied at some stage of my engagement with troubled people by people who have more of this gift. A number of times I witnessed that the patient bonded with such members of our group, even when they met for the first time. The listeners were truly present to the experiences of the patient's mind, body and soul. Some clients told me that their presence brought relief to them. The healing ministry is a collaborative ministry.

The exercise of listening is a creative venture where new grounds are discovered by both sides. The patient is helped to revisit frightening events. The retelling of events is not comparable with using "copy and paste" on the computer. One retells a story differently, depending on the listener. Events unfold on a new level, shedding new light. The Christian listener bonds with the patient through empathy, trying his/her best to visualise and feel the events with the own senses. The victim feels that someone else is also witness to the events: a person of faith. The listener thus accepts to have his/her viewpoints challenged by another person. The art of listening is the first step towards shedding new light on a story. Events are now no longer the same.

The methods of person-centred psychotherapies, as spearheaded by Carl Rogers, provide a powerful framework for the encounter between helper and client. The healing process is not based on the superior knowledge of the helper (the specialist)—as one would expect in the medical profession—but on the quality of listening in the relationship between client and helper. This demands a genuine striving for (1) unconditional positive regard for the other person, (2) empathy, and (3) congruence.

Unconditional positive regard for the other person meant, for Carl Rogers, "to value the person, irrespective of the differential values which one

may place on his specific behaviors.”¹ The helper accepts and positively values the person, without making implicit conditions for his/her love concerning the client’s behaviour, actions, motives or beliefs. This includes a willingness to listen without judging or interrupting and giving advice.

Empathy for Rogers meant to perceive “the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy, and with the emotional components and meanings which pertain thereto, as if one were the other person, but without ever losing the ‘as if’ condition.”² While listening, the helper tries to bracket out his/her own frame of reference (own explanations, values, beliefs) and slips into the person’s footsteps, trying to see the world and the experience in the way the client sees it, and trying to feel it that way too. He/she appreciates the feelings of the other person.

Congruence means to be in a state where one’s own self-concepts are in harmony with one’s personal experiences, including thoughts, feelings and behaviour. In other words, the helper is not acting out some script; he/she is genuine in the relationship, being him/herself. In the process of listening, the helper is not hiding behind a façade of knowledge or the mask of being a specialist. He/she relates to the client from the perspective of his/her experiences and is ready for self-disclosure to facilitate the relationship.

Troubled people may expect such a mask or façade from their priests or pastors. Some expect extraordinary and superhuman spiritual powers that can deliver them. Nevertheless, I believe that, in the long run, such expectations build up a dependency on outside spiritual powers. Congruence and honesty in the sense proposed by Rogers seem more apt in assisting the client to develop his/her own spiritual powers.

While in exorcisms the helper rebukes demons, the creative act of listening according to the rules of person-centred therapies has a different focus. The listener or helper is not interested in the forces or demons in themselves (as would a demon-centred approach), but in the patient’s experiences of them. Ideally, the patient gains the courage to relive his/her own experiences, listening to his/her own body, and acknowledging the pain, rather than just casting it out in total rejection. The approach enhances self-awareness and a basic trust in oneself.

The helper resists from fixing the explanations of the patient into ascertained categories, but tries to remain curious and ready to be surprised

¹ Rogers 1959, p. 208.

² Rogers 1959, p. 210.

by the experiences of the patient. It is not the listener but the patient who determines the *personal* meaning of these experiences in the healing process. (Note, however, that our approach does not allow the owner of the experience to determine the spiritual truth of the experience in as far as it concerns other persons and third parties.) The helper therefore needs a degree of humility. He/she facilitates a healing and coping process of which the client is the main actor. It is not humanly possible to see the totality of the client's potentials and inner resources. The outsider cannot know for certain how the clients are hindered, blocked or developed in their own experiences. The person-centred approach aims at helping the client to build on his/her own resources that lead to health and wholeness. Rogers believed in the *actualising tendency* of every living organism, which he defined as "the inherent tendency of the organism to develop all its capacities in ways which serve to maintain or enhance the organism."³ A person's organism will strive for health, wholeness and actualisation of its potential whenever the way seems open to do so. The approach is optimistic about the person's own resources and capacities to bring out its potential as a unit in all its dimensions of functioning.

People overpowered by the forces of witchcraft or demons feel manipulated by outside forces; they see themselves as powerless victims. Needless to say that most of them have already received a lot of outside advice before they come to a given priest or pastor. In the jungle of all the different advice, the patient's own resources are often neglected. Outside advice on what to do and what not to do can lead to further self-alienation. Helping the person to come to an awareness of his/her own strength and powers is vital at this moment in time. Rogers' approach downplays the importance of explicit advice. We depart a bit from him in our own approach. We do give advice, but try not to compromise the person-centred focus that leaves the patient in the driving seat. We try to guide our process of counselling in a certain direction—usually towards an active rebuilding of broken relationships, which can be a great challenge for many patients.

To reach self-actualisation in Roger's sense demands also that some fundamental requirements are met.⁴ Is the family environment safe, or is

³ Rogers 1959, p. 196.

⁴ A classical example of such a hierarchy is Abraham Maslow's "ladder of needs" ("Maslow's ladder"). It can help the helper to focus on the immediate personal environment of the patient. Maslow suggested that physiological needs of inherent drives (food, water, shelter, sleep) need to be met before one can address the needs of safety (security, material resources, means to secure livelihood, health). This, in turn, is done before one can address the needs of belonging (family, friendship, sexual intimacy), and the needs of esteem (self-esteem, confidence, sense of achievement, respect of others and by others). Maslow placed the level of self-actualisation that describes one's personal sense of vocation on top of the pyramid.

it abusive? Are the expectations from the family on the patient realistic, or conflicting, unrealistic and overpowering? What about the client's performance at school or at work? What are the patient's aspirations for the future? Asking such questions, the listener can help the client to map out better his/her own territory on which he/she has been losing ground due to the spiritual attacks. Sometimes the environment needs to be adapted or even changed.

FAITH

The Christian healer brings in a new element: faith. In a way, this is part of Rogers' notion of congruence on the side of the helper, who is always more than a silent listener. People who feel overcome by spiritual forces struggle not only with outside forces but also with their own identity: spirits or demons have put their foreign identities, and often even their names and voices, on the victims. Outside witches manipulate their bodies and souls. The healing process is not just about discovering the name of the demon, but also about discovering the "name" of the patient: his/her own vocation.

The goal of the healing process goes beyond attending to a specific demon or witchcraft attack. Helping has much to do with providing a climate for growth. While the person often expects to find a powerful pastor to deal with these forces on his/her behalf, Jesus built on the faith of the person ("your faith has healed you!" Mark 5:34), or on the faith of the helping community (Mark 9:24). Faith is a relational term, through which a person understands and reshapes him/herself in view of God and significant others.

LISTENING TO THE BODY

In Zambia, witchcraft or demons are not felt in an abstract way. They are felt through the body. People come with descriptions of "snakes moving through the body," of "bees travelling in the blood," or of "an insect eating something in the head." Some of these descriptions can refer to pathological medical conditions. Very often, however, they arise out of a process of symbolising a life-situation with their own body. In our approach, we listen very carefully to such descriptions and use them as a starting point for moving forward.

Psychologists like Eugene Gendlin have made us aware that the *bodily awareness* of a situation or a problem is important for the process of sym-

bolisation. Zambian ways of attending to witchcraft or to spirits have an affinity with the psychological school developed by Gendlin that came to be known as “focusing”. In our approach, we encourage people to continue using this natural talent, often forgotten in the Western world, of sensing aspects of life and of relationships not just through ideas but also through the body. Gendlin speaks of a “bodily felt sense” as a “direct referent”. Such a bodily sense of a relationship is allowed to come afresh when the person focuses on being aware of bodily sensations that develop “around” a strong feeling, or “under” the feeling, or “along with it”. It is an awareness that something is coming up, be it an old hurt or a new insight.

This felt sense is rarely uniform; a single sense bears a whole complexity, which can make it confusing, vague, overpowering or paralysing. Yet by staying with it, focusing on it, and acknowledging it to be there, awareness is allowed to shift to another level. The moment one is able to describe this awareness with accurate words, the felt sense is duly formed. In the words of Gendlin,

With the emergence of such a single bodily sense comes relief, as if the body is grateful for being allowed to form its way of being as a whole. The bodily sense becomes something in and of itself, a fact, a datum, something that is there. The person *has* that “something that is there.” It is something you *have*, but not something you are. Before you *were* that way of being. ... How you were is now something you *have* in front of you. It has become the object to which you attend.⁵

The way of focusing enables the person to symbolise a life-situation by means of his/her own body. The awareness of the problem becomes externalised and the person can stand back from it. Awareness shifts from self-identification with a problem towards allowing oneself to look at it as if from the outside. A new sense of agency develops.

Many people in Zambia are at ease with describing their awareness of witchcraft or spirits by focusing on their body. This provides a natural pool of resources that the helper can use in an atmosphere of prayer with the patient. By staying with the bodily pain that is associated with the spiritual attack and bringing it before God, the self-awareness may shift towards an aspect of life that can be addressed in small steps. Very often, it concerns relationships, the memory of which triggers a bodily awareness.

The methods of Gendlin and Rogers are examples of psychological schools that can accompany our approach by providing meaningful and

⁵ Gendlin 2012, p. 20. Italics in the original.

creative listening frameworks. They do not *explain* what has happened, and they do not even interpret. But they create an environment in which the patient can find positive regard that makes him/her grow, find inner strength and a new perspective from which to view the events.

LISTENING TO CULTURE IN THE SEARCH FOR MEANING

Beliefs in witchcraft and Satanism often lead to a dehumanising downward spiral that is dominated by mistrust and fear and that builds up hatred. But very often it is possible to guide the search of meaning also into an up-building and life-giving direction. The trusted listener can bring in this dimension. This is nothing new for an African spirituality. The task of the elders has always been to strife for unity and solidarity within a given community. In Zambia, dreams were traditionally interpreted by the elders, not by the youngsters. They often managed to link spiritual attacks to fractured relationships. I will make use of three dream experiences in which people recognised encounters with the unseen world and were helped by a helper to find a life-giving response to the experience. The first one is from a middle aged woman in Bauleni Compound (Lusaka):⁶

DRAMA 8: DREAMS OF MY MOTHER IN A COFFIN

At one point in my life, I started to dream about my late mother. She was in a coffin, and we were body-viewing. My whole family was around the coffin, all of us very sad. I dreamt the same dream many times. The dream left me puzzled and disturbed. My mother had died long ago. Why was she coming back now in my dreams? She surely wanted to tell me something. I went to ask an elder for the meaning. He asked me, "When you looked at your mother in the coffin: who else was there at the coffin?"

I said, "The whole family was there, very close to the coffin."

He asked, "Was there nobody else?"

I recalled that there was also my niece, the orphan-daughter of my late brother. She was standing there at a distance and she also looked very sad. The elder then asked me about this niece. I explained that she is kept by her mother's relatives, but that she is not well cared for. She does not even go to school. The elder told me: "The dream is clear. Your mother is telling you that you should care for your niece!"

⁶ The three narratives have been published also in Rosner and Udelhoven (2013).

This prompted me to take my niece into our house, and to bring her to school. Since then the dream never came back. I know that my mother is happy with what I did.

The positive outcome shows that the elder approached the dream in a satisfactory manner. The frequent dream occurrence stopped. The elder addressed the concern of the late mother by focussing on the living family members.

In the matrilineal cultures of Zambia, which other dream-symbol could have expressed more powerfully the demands for solidarity in the family and care for the neglected niece than the mother figure? A psychologist would be happy about the interpretation. In our approach, however, we do not translate the dream into psychoanalytical categories: for the dreamer, it constituted a real encounter with her late mother. That is how she understood it. A theologian may have argued about the nature of the mother-figure: Can a dead person really come back to give messages to the living? But if one leaves the question about the precise nature of the mother-figure in the background, I believe, the solution offered by the traditional approach to this captivating dream remains compelling and ingenious. Pleasing the late mother by caring for the neglected niece finds resonance in the Bible: How can you love God whom you do not see and hate your brother whom you see? (1 John 4:20)

African approaches do not operate with a concept of an unconsciousness that breaks into the consciousness in dreams or visions. Such forces are seen to come from the world of the spirits. Western psychology has made us sceptical about attributing such forces quickly to the supernatural. But when we acknowledge that every deep experience is surely also spiritual in nature, especially when it becomes part of a person's inner autobiography and experience of selfhood or self-identification, we confirm that such an experience always belongs in the realm of prayer, whether it originates in the mysterious unconscious, in the actions of witches, demons, or angels, or in God's own ways of reaching the soul. Very often, spiritual experiences are interpreted in Africa not in terms of introspection but in terms of an evaluation of actual relationships. Where *being* means *being with*, as in the Ubuntu philosophy, one cannot speak of oneself without also speaking of the people one belongs to, and of the people one is called to belong to, also in a spiritual sense.

We would gain very little by playing out psychology against African ways of making sense of a spiritual experience. They come with different premises. This is true also for experiences that were recognised by the

Catholic Church as true encounters with heaven or hell. For example, neither Saint John of the Cross nor Saint Teresa of Avila knew the unconscious in the way it is known by modern psychology: they attributed inner voices (which they called locutions) either to God or to the devil. There was no middle ground that today's psychologists can find in the unconscious. But this does not take away the validity of their insights, which over centuries have guided people to learn the steps of mystical prayer—and people have been guided well! Can the same point not be said about African ways that have developed over hundreds of years? Take the following example, also from Lusaka:

DRAMA 9: HAUNTED BY DREAMS OF HAVING SEX WITH MY LATE HUSBAND

My husband died ten years ago. I went through the rite of cleansing, even though I never wanted to remarry and have remained single ever since.⁷ I live with some of my children in our family house. Five years ago my husband came back at night in my dream to have sex with me. This dream came back repeatedly, month after month and year after year. It was very disturbing. I loved my husband, but the dead should not come back to you! I asked priests to offer Mass for my husband. I approached the Charismatics for prayers: it helped for some time, but then the dream came back again. One day I shared my experiences with a friend. She asked me: “Do you go out with men?”

“No”, I said, “I have never been touched by a man since my husband died.”

Then she asked, “How do you go along with your in-laws and the family of your late husband?”

I said, “At the beginning we went along well. They performed all the rites for the cleansing ceremony and told me that I was free to remarry. Tensions came only five years ago, after I changed the ownership of the house to my name and the name of our children [in accordance to the Zambian law].”

My friend asked me, “When did your late husband start coming back to you?”

⁷ In Zambian cultures, a widow or widower needs to be cleansed from the shade (in the Bemba language called *cibanda*) of the deceased spouse. The cleansing rites are performed by the late spouse's kin.

Only then did I realise that it was at the same time. My friend advised: "You are with a *cibanda* [the shade of your spouse]. You have to sit down with his family, otherwise it will not stop. You will become mad! Ask them what they want from you."

This was a very difficult step for me. They said that they should have been consulted about the change of ownership of the house. I explained that we had bought the house together. At least we had started to talk again with each other! Though the issue of the house was not resolved completely, the dreams stopped. Today I am free.

Both women saw at the root of these dreams the Zambian concept of a *cibanda*: a shade or presence of the deceased husband that comes as a negative force related to death, a burden that can bring madness and death. A widow not yet cleansed (hence with a *cibanda*) is not allowed to remarry or to engage sexually, else the *cibanda* runs amok. Hence the first question of the friend, inquiring about her sexual behaviour. When this led into a cul-de-sac, the inquiry shifted successfully towards linking the dreams to the woman's present relationships with the in-laws.

A theologian and a psychologist might argue about the precise nature of a *cibanda*. But one is not forced to put an answer to this question into the foreground. In Zambian cultural traditions, the *cibanda* is not some isolated ghost that attacks a person and that can be neutralised through prayers or a Mass. The concept of the *cibanda* is embedded in concrete relationships: very fragile relationships between the remaining spouse and the in-laws (the dead husband's wider family), who were bonded together into a communal life of defined relationships through the link of the husband, who is no more. Embedded within the relationships are expectations about sexual behaviour, possibilities of remarriage, questions of property, and especially the future of the children.

Cleansing rites are part of the extended funeral rites. Most Churches in Zambia have difficulties with such rites. Still, they constitute an important ritual that clarifies the relationship between the two families. The threat of remaining with a *cibanda* becomes a mirror of their precarious relationship: not because the late husband has turned into an evil spirit, but because the relationship with his family is slowly but surely estranging: they were linked together through the husband who is no more. The freedom from the *cibanda* comes only after the cleansing rites, when the remaining issues that are still in need to be addressed have been clarified. In the above case, the issue of the house had not yet been settled, and the woman could not escape the *cibanda* that marked a broken relationship with her

affine family. Since it is the privilege of the kin of the dead to take control over the *cibanda*, the friend investigated about the existing relationships with the in-laws. Indeed, once a relationship was re-established by sitting down together, the *cibanda* disappeared. What could not be solved by prayers for the dead (looking at the *cibanda* purely as a spiritual force in itself) or by prayers of deliverance (praying for the troubled woman just by herself), was successfully addressed by the process of re-entering relationships with the family of her late husband.

The recurring dreams chose, as key-symbol, the late husband, coming as a *cibanda*, a precarious spiritual force that belongs to another family. In a culture where the family of the husband is always from another clan, with its own spiritual forces to which one is not related—which other symbol but a *cibanda* could express better the hidden, unexpressed conflict with his family to whom one is no longer related? Hence our emphasis on working *with* cultural concepts as far as possible, instead of working *against* them.

In our approach we do not pretend that cultural notions are always perfect. A pastoral approach needs to be intelligent and vigilant; one needs to know where one wants to go to when working with such notions. But where we develop a sense of playfulness with cultural notions, we should always find a way of working *with* them, because their interpretation can usually be pulled in different directions. Uncomfortable dreams or spiritual encounters have often been used in Africa to accuse others of witchcraft. But the same dreams can also be given a positive direction, if one applies cultural discernment patterns in an intelligent way. Consider the following example from Kasamba Parish (Luapula Province):

DRAMA 10: MY DEAD CHILD SHOWS ME THE WITCH

My baby died. I started to dream about the baby, nearly every night. I was dressing up the child or wrapping the child, because I wanted to go to church. On my way to church with the baby on my back I would meet our neighbour, standing and watching from afar. She was not saying anything, just standing and looking at us from a distance, uncomfortably. Then I woke up. This dream came back so many times. Then I asked a friend about the meaning. She said: "The baby wants to show you the witch who killed it. This woman has killed your child!" And it is true: after our child died and we buried the child, somebody stole the dish that we had put on the grave. We know that the child died through witchcraft. Why else

should somebody take the dish? I avoided my neighbour. We were good friends before. But now I knew she was a witch.

The stealing of the dish on the grave confirmed to the couple that the death was due to witchcraft: The dish was needed for the witch to wash herself from the shade of the child that was haunting the murderer; with the help of the dish the witch wanted to put to rest the haunting shade. In consequence, the mother of the baby started to avoid her neighbour. They had been close friends in the past, so close that the neighbour had been allowed to name the child; she had given her own name to the child. Further dreams intensified the suspicions. However, subsequent events shed a different light on the story. The dish on the grave had been stolen by some youths on behalf of a visiting diviner, who needed something from a grave for preparing his medicines. The husband was very angry with the diviner, who apologised and returned the dish, which was then returned to the grave. Subsequently the husband became more sceptical about the interpretation given to the wife. He came up with another way of looking at the dream:

Why should our neighbour be a witch? There was no motive for her to kill our child. The child was not showing us the murderer. But there is a reason why our neighbour was always in the dream: the child bears her name. Our neighbour had given her own name to the child when she was born; there is a connection between the child and our neighbour. In the dream, my wife was always on the way to church with the baby when she found our neighbour on the way, standing there, watching and not moving anywhere. Our neighbour had stopped going to church. Now the child was showing us whom to bring back to church. She had stopped singing in the choir since our child died. This was our task that was given to us in the dreams by our child.

The husband's way of making sense of his wife's dream gave it a positive direction. The wife needed some time to warm up to this interpretation, but eventually she did. And that is the approach of this book: ever turning negative symbols into a life-giving direction.

7

Inner worlds and outer worlds

Dealing with different layers of truth

When dealing with witchcraft or demons, one is quickly drawn into scenarios where categories such as true versus false, and real versus not real do not easily apply. Most cases and testimonies that we dealt with contained some clear factual elements. But at a certain point, we either had to rely on the testimony in good faith, or dismiss it, since the powers of witchcraft, Satanism or demons belong to a different, parallel world, often of a spiritual kind, which evades empirical verification.¹ Moreover, many affected people also saw visions, heard voices, and at times experienced strong forms of dissociation in waking life. This made the boundaries between objective and subjective realities very porous. Many affected people were themselves not always sure, whether other people could see and hear what they saw and heard. How is one to deal with such experiences?

In our approach, we speak of *inner world* and the *outer world*. Another name for the same distinction could be the exclusive world and the common world. We acknowledge that truth claims about the world of witchcraft and demons, like heaven or hell, depend on faith and belief. People refer to God, spirits, demons and witchcraft not in the same way as they would refer to other invisible forces like magnetism, electricity, or radiation. When they refer to spiritual forces, they speak about something that affects the soul, including a person's internal autobiography and sense of identity. There is a personal and intimate dimension in the perception and in speaking about spiritual forces, which makes them different to outside forces that are more easily objectified.

Our distinction is not dualistic. We are not speaking about two worlds on an ontological level. It simply divides truth statements or propositions:

¹ Common expressions in Zambia, like: "You need to be a witch in order to follow a witch," or: "Only the fully initiated can enter into the satanic world," communicate the impossibility of ascertaining the forces of witchcraft or Satanism with mere human, empirical means that are available to all.

some propositions refer to our common world, while others refer to a unique, personal experience. It is a functional distinction, like in mathematics where there are odd numbers and even numbers. Inner and outer worlds are both filled with propositions and truth-claims.

Each narrative about witchcraft or demons contains propositions. Some of the propositions or truth-claims are understood by everybody as being accessible to all: they prove themselves in the communication between people of different beliefs about spiritual worlds. They are part of the common world. They can be subjected to processes of verification or falsification by different people. We place such truth-claims into the outer world (or common world). Other truth-claims are recognized by everybody to be exclusive: they give back a personal experience that the listener has no own access to. We would place for example a dream narrative or the testimony about a vision into the inner world, since one cannot enter and participate in the dream world of the client. Into the outer world, however, we place the accompanying circumstances of the vision that one can ask other people about, for example the presence or absence of certain people at certain moments.

Why making this distinction? It allows us to work with another distinction in pastoral council between interior and exterior forum. The former is confidential, while the latter concerns public facts and responses. We deal with inner worlds in the interior forum and with outer worlds in the exterior forum.

THE OUTER WORLD

Inner and outer worlds in our approach are worlds of statements and truth-claims. We define the outer world as the collection of truth-claims about state of affairs or events or happenings that (1) are in general accessible to our human senses, or that are made accessible to our senses by means of technologies. And, crucially, (2) that also prove themselves in communication between people who hold different faiths and beliefs about the world and about what has truly happened. Obviously, what we see or hear can be interpreted in different ways, depending on the views and theories through which we process our data, and the data itself will mean different things to different people or even be disputed altogether. But, crucially, also people who are in disagreement with each other about what has actually happened will still manage to come to an agreement on some of the truth-claims, or transform them in their engagements in a way that makes them acceptable across different views. These form the

outer world. In our approach, the outer world is not synonymous with a static, objective world of facts that we could easily perceive if we simply open our eyes or rely on unfailing technologies. Every person sees the world with different eyes. Already in ordinary life, the objective world is largely beyond our reach. The situation of a disputed event is more complicated still. Incidents that surround witchcraft attacks are usually contested; they happen where people live in tension with each other. With every new witness, the outer world enlarges or shrinks, because new elements come into public awareness. Yet, even people who hold different beliefs about the spiritual and material worlds understand each other, and come to a consensus with each other, on many issues. They still live and interact with each other in the same world, and usually do so without too many misunderstandings. The failure to reach a consensus should initiate a discussion as to why this is so, thus clarifying the issue of contention. Statements about the contested issue then wander into the inner world and will be understood by the public as subjective truths or as contested truth-claims, but the statements on which everybody agrees remain in the outer world.

As part of a relationship of trust, we consider, for a start, all statements that a person shares with us about witchcraft, spirits or about God's own interventions to be true. They are true for the patient. We say they are true in the "inner world". Some aspects of the story are in principle also open to other people and can be verified or falsified by common standards for evaluating truth claims. Of course, such standards of evaluation change over time, including also the standards of science. Different people with different backgrounds may believe in different procedures for validating truth-claims. Nevertheless, even in the absence of a cross-cultural meta-narrative for such standards, we can always find aspects of a narrative that prove themselves in communication between people who hold different beliefs about witchcraft. People who hold different presuppositions disagree with each other on some points, but they will never disagree on all points. They have no problem interacting on many issues.

Concerning witchcraft, for example, the police in Zambia have hard evidence for occurrences of so-called ritual crime in a shocking proportion. Albinos for example and their families fear for their lives in the parish in which I work. People overtly or covertly threaten others with witchcraft in public meetings. Others keep charms in their homes or gardens that can be seen and touched. The sceptic therefore acknowledges as much as the believer that some people try to use charms. Also some forms of Satan worship have been filmed. Christians, Moslems and atheists, be-

lievers in witchcraft as well as sceptics, easily agree among themselves on such issues. This is what we call the outer world. We deal with it in the exterior, public forum. For example, where aggressive actions can be identified that are easily associated with witchcraft, like open references to witchcraft in threats and intimidations, we may need to address this behaviour as part of our ministry. But we do not address it as witchcraft. We address it as unsettling, bullying, or coercive actions that should not be tolerated by the family or the community. Our ministry protects even the open aggressor from the dehumanising label of the witch. We condemn his/her actions, but never his/her soul. The ingredients of a given charm can become part of an objective investigation (outer world), but the forces of witchcraft that may be tied to the charm cannot—as little as demons, angels, God, the devil, or the human soul. Thereby we do not render these powers unreal or reduce them to psychology. By inner world we simply mean that they fail to prove themselves in communication across different spiritual beliefs. Acceptance of its truth claims is dependent on the person's faith.

In conflicts based on witchcraft and on demons, the outer world evolves with each new narrative about the mysterious event. We should not be discouraged when different people's stories conflict with each other. The guiding question for a first step in mediation concerns an identification of those points on which everybody agrees. This outer world becomes the realm for public action. It is a contested and evolving world; using the philosophical concepts of Karl Popper, one could say that it is a world whose propositions and facts can in principle be falsified.²

Ritual crimes are but examples of witchcraft related events that call for public action, beyond prayer. Ideally, we address and challenge suspicious or threatening behaviour of specific individuals before it provokes fears and rumours.

THE INNER WORLD

The inner world contains statements about unique experiences. It is the world of testimonies. It would be wrong to say that the inner world is less real or less concerned with the truth than the outer world. In certain

² Popper 2002, pp. 57-73. Popper's view is attractive in our context, because he does not transpose the principle of falsifiability, which he demands for science, to the realm of meaning. Popper also acknowledges the existence of meaningful theories that cannot be falsified. Popper's distinctions are useful to us for coming to a working definition of truth-propositions that we place into the outer world, without denying that those of the inner world need a different approach.

ways, it is more real. The awareness of spiritual truths arises in the inner world. A Biblical example would be Stephen's vision of the heavenly Jesus prior to his death (Acts 7:55-56). His adversaries saw neither Jesus nor God, but only clouds. This does not make Stephen's vision untruthful to the believer of the Biblical message. The fact that Stephen saw something, which other people could not see, places this passage within a certain realm of truth. The communication of spiritual truths presupposes certain beliefs on both sides of the communication line.

Encounters with spiritual truths pass through the inner life of a person, but are also filtered through this inner life, linking up with its symbolic frameworks. In the Bible, the risen Christ appeared to different people in very different ways: as a bright light to Paul, but as a gardener to Mary Magdalene. As another example we could refer to the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary to believers. While Catholic teaching affirms the truthfulness of many of these visions, the Church does not propose that Mary who appeared in Lourdes had exactly the same features as Mary known by the apostles. Mary who appeared to Bernadette spoke not Aramaic, but French, and more specifically her local dialect. Mary who appeared in France, Mexico or in Rwanda may have looked French, Mexican or African respectively, depending on the symbolic world that was available to the visionary. Similarly, when the prophet Isaiah had a vision of the Lord with the Seraphim in the temple, (Isaiah 6), it would be futile to envision this as an objective picture of the features of the Seraphim. Such spiritual truths pass through the inner framework of the person who experiences them.

Note that we are never proposing that such visions are necessarily *originating in* a person's inner life. We simply say that they are *passing through* the inner life of the visionary. An answer to the question whether they originate in God (as Jews and Christians believe in the case of Isaiah's vision) or in something else (inner psychological forces, demons, witchcraft, etc.) can only be given from the perspective of one's own beliefs.

The following example demonstrates how the separation of inner and outer worlds can bring clarity into a confused situation and define the scope for public action. The story sounds out of this world, but I beg the reader to give it a chance to be listened to; I believe that the story reflects a true experience and that the narrating person used to us the best possible words in order to describe it.

DRAMA 11: VIOLET IS MARRIED TO A LION, A SNAKE AND A GIRL

Violet was a youth leader in her parish in Kalingalinga, a Lusaka compound. When she approached me for help, encouraged by a member of our group, she was a nineteen years old, grade twelve High School student, in her final year. Violet has four older stepbrothers and sisters, but she is the only child of the union of her parents. Her parents had previous marriages before coming together, and divorced again shortly after Violet was born. She was living with her mother and some of her older stepbrothers and sisters. Violet was a member of the Charismatic Renewal. Here is her description of her spiritual attacks:

The first attack happened on a Sunday after a prayer meeting with the charismatics. I was going home accompanied by a friend. On the way, I started an argument, about nothing really. When I reached home, I started quarrelling with my stepbrother, again about nothing. My brother slapped me in the face and said: "There is nothing you are doing in this house. You are just troublesome to us!"

I took it badly and told him: "If it is true that I am only troublesome to you people, I'd better kill myself." I saw some painkillers lying on the table, which belonged to my sister. I took a few tablets, swallowed them and said: "Let me just die on my bed." I tried to rest, but got a hick-up and started *kusabaila* (to speak rapidly and in a different pitch, without making sense). It was like speaking in tongues with the charismatics. Everybody in the house was excited. Another friend was called in, a neighbour, who is a charismatic. In addition, a Pentecostal pastor came. This pastor had moved into our neighbourhood only a month earlier. He prayed over me, but I myself could not pray; after a few words, I just gave up. When it got dark that evening, all went home and I went to sleep. The next morning I stayed in bed, and still in the afternoon, I was feeling dizzy. I could not do anything properly.

That afternoon the pastor and his wife came to pray for me again. I remember that I fell down, and I could see myself leaving my body and look at my body from a distance. I heard my body speak 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, as I had left my body, and while the pastor was still praying for me, I saw myself on a beach. I was entering the ocean and there under the ocean I found myself besides a snake, 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."

I insisted to go, but the girl and other voices around insisted that I stayed. Meanwhile I could still hear the pastor praying, as if from far. The girl told me: "You are a princess, and you cannot leave your husband behind."

The husband was both the snake and the lion. "You have been married here already for seven years, and you are a princess. We need you here. Your husband is a son of Lucifer. You are the queen of Africa." Then they mentioned a former friend of mine, Sandra. "Do you remember how you were playing together with Sandra?"

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, and re-entered my body.

The pastor asked me whether I remembered where I had gone, and I told him what I had seen. The people also narrated what they had heard me saying; they could not hear the others speaking. At some point, all went to sleep.

Let me interject here a note about Sandra, who found mention in Violet's experience under the ocean: Sandra had been with Violet in Primary school up to grade seven. From grade one to five, they were not yet close friends, since they were in different classes. In grade six and seven, they were in the same class and became best friends. Whenever Sandra cut her hair, Violet would cut hers too. Whatever Sandra was wearing, Violet was wearing too. They were sharing their meals together, though Sandra was very touchy about food. Violet was the only one with whom Sandra shared food; she sometimes threw her food away, when somebody else just touched it. Such behaviour is in Zambia often associated with spirits who give dietary taboos; in present times, many associate it with Satanism. After grade seven, they went to different schools, just occasion-

ally bumping into one another. Sandra, however, came to be known as a weird girl. In her new school, she was rumoured to be a Satanist. Violet connected her involuntary initiation into Satanism with her childhood contacts with Sandra, thinking she had become initiated through sharing Sandra's food. Violet's narrative now continues:

The next morning, when I woke up and prepared myself to go to school, I saw the girl from the ocean, the snake and the lion, entering our house. It was not a dream and I was not sleeping but very much awake when this happened. The girl asked me to come back to the ocean, but I refused: "I don't belong there. You did not ask me for permission. I did not agree to anything you asked me, and I did not make any covenant." [With the term covenant, she referred to the terminology of initiation into Satanism.]

They told me: "We cannot bother you now, but we will come back tonight when we gather with more people, between 01:00 and 03:00 hours."

The vision left and I asked myself whether I was all right, whether all of this was real or not. During the day, I did not bother too much about it. However, that night I suddenly awoke shortly before 01:00 hours. I could see many people coming together with the same girl, the snake and the lion. I experienced myself to be outside the house with them—there were many high mountains around and people were coming from the mountains. I asked the people and the girl, "Where are you going?"

"We come to you," they said.

"Did I not tell you I don't want?" I asked.

"You have to come back, you are the princess," they said.

"You are wasting your time!" I answered. On this note, I re-entered the house. This was still in the vision. The people also entered the house after me, and the girl knelt down before me: "We give you time from 01:00 until 03:00 hours. If you refuse to come, we will kill everybody whom you love."

They started to show me my stepbrother, who lives with our father in Zingalume [another Lusaka Compound]. He was sleeping, but in the vision, I saw somebody standing just before him holding a knife, ready to kill him any time. He was just about to be killed, when I cried: "Jesus!" and the man with the knife fell down. Up to 03:00 hours, they failed to kill my brother because I was praying, and at 03:00 hours, everybody left.

The next morning my cousin called me to her place to explain to them what was happening. I was leaving the house, but felt that the same snake, the girl and the lion were following me. I could see them physically, but I just tried to ignore them. When I arrived at my destination and got off the bus, the creatures were still following. Throughout the day, they were around. Sometimes I could see them physically present, though they did not say anything, and they were a bit far. Sometimes I just knew they were there. I had this experience of seeing the creatures in daylight, while being awake, a few more times during that week and I even got used to them.

Violet narrated her story calmly, with no signs to me of exaggeration. I came to know her as a sound person, at ease with people and able to laugh at herself. I did not doubt that she described her experiences to me with the best possible words, and that she narrated them in the way she experienced them, making room for the fact that it is not easy to put such happenings into words. I asked her what she thought about it herself. Violet said that she connected it with a childhood experience that took place when she was in grade six:

My family had picked me up from a place where I had been together with my friend Sandra. I was sitting in a car on the backseat with my stepbrothers, and I watched myself in the mirror, where I saw that I had three eyes instead of two, one being on my forehead. You know, Satanists have this invisible eye on their forehead which gives them power, no? I asked my brothers: "Is it normal to have three eyes?" but they only saw two eyes and said I was just stupid. I remember this now. You know, they told me there under the ocean that I am a princess and that I am married already for seven years. I remember my dreams when I was in grade six, often I dreamed about flying over the ocean, very often. I sometimes played with Sandra to be a princess. The ocean I went to now, it felt very familiar, as if I had been there already many times.

Violet was afraid that these Satanists of another world had predestined her whole life. Apart from the events narrated above, she also remembered vivid nightmares of finding herself on the graveyard, being chased by people, by black horses, by dogs, and by snakes who were trying to marry her. What scared her most, she said, was that some of her dreams became true the next day, though she narrated only one of these dreams to me.

In our little chapel, I asked Violet about her faith, and she said that she did not want those spirits; she wanted to live her life for God. I encouraged her, saying, "You see, your faith has already prevented the Satanists to kill your brother. Your faith has also prevented them to do what they wanted to do with you. Your faith has enormous powers, more powers even than the Satanists."

We had some Bible readings and prayers, but at some point she started to avoid the Bible she was holding, dropping it down. Then she started to shiver. I allowed her to shiver for quite some time. When she became calmer, I laid my hands on her head while praying, and she started to vomit. She seemed to be in trance. When I asked questions, she answered with a changed voice, a deeper voice. "We have come a long time ago and we will not leave her!" We prayed the Our Father, and we made an appointment to pray again at the church a few days later. By now she was out of the trance. She looked composed and even relieved, though the unseen forces had evidently refused to disappear.

The second prayer proceeded very similarly to the first; now we had more time. Her friend was again present. Violet quickly entered into a trance. She was pulling at the rosary she was wearing, which I had given her after our last prayers. She said: "It is burning around my neck; take it off!" She also avoided the Bible, several times turning away from it. She told her friend: "I will give you a better job if you take me out here."

We continued to pray quietly from the rosary, as if nothing was happening. She looked at us with eyes as if full of hatred, and said: "I am Lucifer, you better stop now!"

"If you are Lucifer," I replied, "speak to me in German [my mother-tongue]."

She started to speak all kinds of words, but it was not German. "This is not German!" I said, "How is it that you are Lucifer and you don't even know any German?"

"I am just kidding," she replied.

"Then you are not Lucifer," I said. "So leave her now."

She stopped speaking and waved her hand as if saying good-bye: "We are leaving her now, but you must tell Rodrick that she broke up with him because of us."

We said a few prayers and then I escorted her home to her mother. When she had come to herself, we narrated to her what had happened during the prayers. I asked her about Rodrick, whom she had mentioned towards the end of her trance. Rodrick had been her boyfriend, but he had broken up with her, though she said that she still loved him. Her

friend and the mother asked me for another appointment for prayers. I gave Violet some Bible verses and told her that God had surely heard our prayer.

The visions about being in contact with the satanic world had occurred to her during trance. It was also clear that she was looking for God to free her from this satanic world; this caused her to easily fall into a trance, as if she was longing for it. Maybe she needed such experiences to assure her that her soul belonged to God, not to the devil. However, I felt that it was now time to work on her own inner resources and willpower in view of her own basic life-orientation. Going from trance to trance, being tossed around first by the devil and then by God, I felt, was no longer helpful. Nevertheless, I still passed by a number of times at her place where we had simple prayers together; nothing extraordinary happened. Her mother's focus now shifted towards school. Violet was performing badly at school, and the whole episode did not help her catch up and prepare for her final exams. Apart from school, we also tried to help Violet to build up a sense of belonging to God, to her family, to friends and to the Church.

COMMENTS

I have described Violet's experience in order to give an example of inner and outer worlds in our approach. We downplay neither of the two worlds—both are important and need to be acknowledged. Public action, however, is reserved for issues in the outer world. Statements and propositions that we place into the inner world provide us with materials for prayer in the private and confidential forum (interior forum) with trusted people.

Inner World	Outer World
Violet goes to the ocean.	Violet is on the floor, being prayed over.
Violet interacts with a lion, a girl and a snake.	Violet is in a trance, speaks words as if to an invisible audience, and vomits "slippery things".
Violet is told that she is married to a son of Lucifer.	Violet has split up with her boyfriend whom she still loves. She never spoke about him to her family.
Violet is declared a queen and has a third eye that gives her magical powers over others.	Violet performs poorly at school and alienates friends.

Inner World	Outer World
Violet belongs to the underworld.	Violet expresses that she feels not really belonging to her family and unloved by her mother. She is not allowed to visit her father whom she loves.

What can we say about the powerful visions of a girl, a lion and a snake? In our approach, we do not need to interpret these visions and resort to extraordinary analysis. The client can do that work herself where necessary.³ Fundamentally, the inner world belongs to the client, not to us or to the public. We did not engage in the work of active interpretation, but attentively listened a number of times to her interesting descriptions, grateful that she shared them with us. We tried to help her to come to terms with the visions in a new way. Since they had to do with marriage, I asked Violet what would symbolise for her a good marriage. Oddly, the figure of the lion came back, and she explained: “In my family, I always had to fight for myself. My husband must be a person who will fight for me!” This helped us to remove some of her fears about the spiritual lion she encountered, liberating the lion from a solely satanic image. In another playful association, we compared the lion with God and with Jesus: “God will always fight for you.” In this way, we allowed for a more playful engagement with the visions and so dispel some of her fears.

An immediate danger could arise for Sandra. This former childhood friend of Violet’s was already suspected and feared as a Satanist. If Violet’s story was becoming public (say in a testimony given to a charismatic group) then new fuel would have been added to tarnish Sandra’s reputation. I asked both Violet and her family not to mention Sandra’s name to anybody. Violet was told about Sandra “under the ocean”, not in the common world. “The Sandra mentioned under the ocean may not be the

³ A psychotherapist whom we consulted after the drama commented on a possible sexual connotation of the symbols of the snake and the lion. He asked whether Violet had been a victim of rape in childhood, of abuse, or if there were signs of a troubled sexuality. I saw no evident signs of such trauma. I believe that Violet told me all what she felt was necessary for me to know in order to help. Her sexual life was not part of what she talked about with me. I am mentioning this in order to stress that in our approach we restrain ourselves from forcing our own interpolations or interpretations on a story. Of course, the lion and the snake could be sexual symbols. They could also have been taken from the initiation rites (in the Bemba rites, the lion stands often for the husband, while the snake has a number of different connotations). I do not know whether this would have influenced Violet’s symbolic world. The point is that she did not speak about it, nor did her family. While we play with symbols in our approach in order to encourage such a playfulness also in our clients, we take care not to nail them down to any one single interpretation.

Sandra whom we all know,” I explained. Sandra belonged to the private forum for Violet, not to the forum for public action.

Violet and her friends were familiar with Zambian stereotypes of Satanism. During our interviews and interactions with her family, I was told of their family history with *ngulu* spirits. Violet’s grandmother had had *ngulu* all her life, and the family was well acquainted with this experience. I encouraged the family to look at Violet’s demons and “Lucifers” more in terms of *ngulu* than Satanism. Why? The family was becoming afraid of Violet. Satanists are said to sacrifice and kill their family members, or make them perish in mysterious car accidents. People with *ngulu* spirits do not inflict harm on others. They themselves suffer and are seen to be sick with spirits in the same way as one may become sick with malaria. They need compassion. Downgrading the experience from frightful Satanism to ordinary *ngulu* brought relief to the family. While they found it frightening to relate to Satanism, it had been normal for them to live with their “funny” grandmother. Indeed, family members remarked that Violet’s behaviour was often very similar to that of the grandmother. My aim was not to give a final verdict on the spiritual experience, but to take it out of a fixed category that left very little room for playfulness and growth.

In the outer world (exterior forum), we focused on school. Violet was in her final year, and with the help of some friends we organised a tutor to help her catch up on some topics that she found very difficult. This helped her to gain a sense of control over the pressure that was on her. Five months later, she told me that she still saw from time to time the girl, the snake and the lion, but they no longer bothered her. They were just there. She asked for prayers again, “just in case,” though by now the experience had lost its frightening impact. The prayers that we organised with our group were about thanksgiving. During the prayers, she shared: “Now I know I really belong to God. You know, I always doubted, even as a child. But I know that God will always be faithful to me.” From that point, all of us just wanted to turn the page and start a new chapter. We encouraged her mother to allow Violet to visit and interact with her father.

If we had not separated inner and outer worlds, Sandra would have been implicated into Violet’s troubles. Satanism could have become a confirmed reality in Violet’s family. Violet could have become even more alienated from her family than before. At school, pupils would have feared and avoided her. Our approach allowed the images of the inner world to fade away slowly. She had developed confidence that God was also there when she saw frightening visions; she did not need to panic about them.

Her task was to focus on the necessities of school and to balance out her life within a divided family, as best as she could.

When I wrote down this narrative for this book, I met again with Violet to see whether the story has changed. She could hardly remember the details anymore. The episode had faded from her memory like a bad dream. It no longer played any part in her internal autobiography. She clearly had moved on.

DISCERNING THE TRUTHS OF INNER WORLDS

In the Catholic Church, the process of discerning spiritual truths is not in the hands of an individual person, but of the Church at large, which is guided by the bishops. Therefore, the Church implicitly makes a distinction between an inner experience and the discernment process of the spiritual truths that are linked to this experience. St Paul made a similar distinction when he said that some people are given the gift of tongues, while to others is given the gift to interpret what the tongues mean and to another one the gift of discerning the spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10). While the visionary is the owner of his/her inner experience, he/she is not the owner of the spiritual truth of this experience as far as it concerns others.

Our distinction between inner and outer worlds makes room for pluralistic spiritual beliefs, but it does not rest on the secular worldview that bans religion into the private sphere. This is important for us. We want to engage with religion in the public sphere. But not to play out the truth-claims of one religious tradition (or prophecy or divination) against that of another. In our approach, a narrative of a specific inner world is not allowed to become the binding meta-narrative for the public.

In Zambia, Christian prophecies, as practised in various Pentecostal and charismatic ministries, often concern the life situation of individual people and the hidden, spiritual causes for certain negative conditions.⁴ Manifestations and utterances that occur when clients fall into a trance are often taken as evidence of direct contact with the spirit world, especially if they contain references to events or to people that the person could hardly know him/herself, yet are known by someone in the audience. “How could the person make up such a story?” Let us look again at the case of Faidess (drama 7 in chapter 5). She mentioned, while in a trance state, the names of relatives whom she had never met. While we do not down-play a mysterious dimension in trance experiences, we recognise that the

⁴ Udelhoven 2010.

influences on a person during trance are not just coming from the spirit world—and even if they are, Biblical wisdom teaches that not every spirit speaks the truth.⁵ People in a trance often speak with an altered voice; they project a personality that is different from their usual self. This projected personality derives its energy and knowledge from sources to which the same person, when outside the trance, has no longer access. The question whether these sources originate in their own mind (the human brain is very capable of producing “psychic frauds” and playing tricks on itself), whether they are of a transpersonal and intersubjective nature, or indeed of a spiritual kind (be it demons, angels, other spirits, or the Holy Spirit), is not answered in our approach in an objective way. We look at them in the context of the person’s faith, life-commitments and journey with God. They may contain prophetic messages that have the power to transform the person’s environment. But we also recognise that various stimuli on the person who is in a trance or in an altered state of consciousness easily result in a mix of truths and fictions. They may contain memories of childhood dreams or fantasies or colourful imaginings that pop up under the desire to please others. The evaluation of data extracted during trance is unsafe in the hands of marginally trained therapists, in whose ranks we include ourselves.

The neglect of a careful and critical approach easily gives rise to great injustices to a third party with grave consequences. Consider the following gruesome double murder that followed the trance revelations of a child that were taken at face value by her father and their pastor. It was narrated to me by the daughter of the victims:⁶

DRAMA 12: THE MURDER OF MY PARENTS

My uncle [father’s brother] has a daughter who has epilepsy. He brought her to various Pentecostal and charismatic prophets to be prayed over. At several occasions, the girl manifested [collapsed into a trance] under the prayers of the pastors. She mentioned details of my father’s life, that—my uncle thought—the girl could not have known by herself. She exclaimed that she was sick because of the witchcraft of my father, my mother, me, some of my uncles and aunts, and our entire family. At one particular occasion, a famous Pentecostal bishop prayed over her in Lusaka. My uncle

⁵ 1 John 4:1.

⁶ The full narrative of the woman, which I taped, is more than an hour long. Here I give back a brief summary.

trusts that bishop as if he came directly from God. While he prayed over her, she changed her voice, in a trance, as if the witches now were speaking through her. "Who are you now?" a member of the deliverance team asked. The girl mentioned my parents' names and then appropriated my own name, saying that I was stealing her uterus, making her barren, so that I could have children. I must tell you that I had problems giving birth to children, but it was at this time that I finally became pregnant and that God had answered my many cries.

Back to my niece: Whatever the child said under the prayers of the bishop proved to the church and to my uncle that we were a family of witches; they believed we were speaking through the girl while she was in the trance. Under the guidance of the bishop, my father recorded everything with his phone.

From here, terror started. Several times, my uncle phoned my father and played back the recordings over the phone. He threatened to kill him, if he would not remove the witchcraft from the girl. He forced my parents to go to Nigeria to see T. B. Joshua, but even then, he could not accept that my father was innocent, though the prophet said he was. We received death threats from unknown people nearly on a daily basis, calling us by phone from unknown numbers, "You will soon die by fire, knife or gun!" My own uncle uttered the same words to us on the phone. A short time later, somebody shot down my father with a gun, into the stomach. His bowels came out, but he did not die then. He spent two months in hospital. After being discharged, at night on our farm, unknown people threw a canister with teargas into our house. My parents panicked and switched on the lights to see what was happening. When they opened the window to get air, snipers killed them from outside the window; that night both of my parents died. Then they set fire to the house. I was also supposed to be in the house, but I had left a day earlier than expected, otherwise they would have killed me too.

I know that my father was not a witch. There was never witchcraft in my home—witchcraft was not something we spoke about or that troubled us. My mother and my father died innocently. Justice was never done. The police arrested a few people, but they were released after a few weeks—without our consent. My father's brother holds a high position [related to the government] and he was never questioned even when we testified against him. Our remaining family members continued to live in terror; anybody

mentioned by the girl, or by the bishop, could receive a death penalty. We went into hiding, knowing that the police were unable to protect us from being killed.

Cases like this one, unfortunately, are not rare in Zambia. People are killed because of revelations to diviners, Christian prophets, or—as in this case—words spoken by a child while in a trance.

In many cases we dealt with, families remained entangled in the prophecies and visions of charismatic or Pentecostal prayer groups and pastors; a dependency on divination had greatly compromised their discernment process. A Christian does well *not* to base his/her actions on the vision of another person, whether this person is a patient, a prophet or a diviner.

EVALUATING OWN INNER EXPERIENCES

Own spiritual experiences bring yet in a different challenge. Unlike prophets and diviners who claim absolute certainty about the nature of their visions, many people are puzzled by their own inner experiences with dreams that subsequently become true, premonitions, telepathic abilities or clairvoyance. As a result of such visions, some of them suffer from a severe loneliness. One person described this as follows:

After my dream, I knew that someone in my family was going to die. Many of my dreams have become true. But this time, it was also accompanied by a terrible loneliness and sadness. I could not speak about it to anybody, because I believe it would not have helped anybody, and nowadays you can easily be accused of witchcraft if you speak much about your dreams. I kept it inside myself and prayed, but it was very difficult. I went into a depression, which lasted for a whole month, until the death occurred, of a close family member that I had dreamed about.

The path that the above person took is the path that we advise in our approach: “Pray about what you see, but keep the vision to yourself.” A person should not feel guilty about not having done enough after a dream or a premonition to “save” a person from death or from an accident. It is a type of knowledge that, in our approach, is not meant to inspire public action. The gift of “seeing”, thereby, comes often with the dimension of loneliness that many gifted people need to pass through.

Sometimes it can help to talk things over with a trusted person, priest or pastor, and pray together about it, especially if the listener is able to feel him/herself into such experiences. The listener does not need to give an

answer about the dream's nature. The primary aim of listening here is to accompany the troubled person. I have often given the following advice:

Maybe your dream will come true, maybe not. Maybe what the dream says about this person is true, maybe not. Sometimes we mysteriously gain knowledge about something, but it does not mean that we have to act on it. If God wants you to act, He will show it also in other ways that touch the outer world. Leave in God's hands what belongs in God's hands. But apart from this, the dream also says something about you. Concentrate on how you yourself can grow through this dream. You cannot work on others, but you can always work on yourself.

In this context, one might also reflect on dream symbols. They constitute a mediating layer through which we can communicate inner experiences. Symbols are open to everyone. Though different persons appropriate them differently, symbols remain within the reach of communication, allowing oneself to somehow participate in other people's experiences and discover meaning. Some authors reduce symbols to an artificial and intellectual abstraction. This is a pity, because the symbolic layer of a spiritual insight is part of the process of experiencing. It is through symbols, not apart from symbols, that the spiritual world can appear as immediate. Violet whom we mentioned earlier in this chapter, who had seen in the lion a manifestation of Satanism, managed to develop a growth-enhancing perspective to her visions by relating the lion also to positive realities, like marriage, and even Jesus. Jewish and Christian traditions contain examples of playful ways of dealing with the symbolic layers of their religious truths. African traditions have equally preserved for us a playful dimensions with the symbolic layers—proverbs and stories are but a few examples of this. Where the symbolic world becomes subject to such a playful intellectual appreciation, it is also open to the possibility of reshaping the awareness of the spiritual world. Our approach rests on this possibility.

When our patients learnt to rearrange symbols in a playful and creative way, they also gained certain inner powers that helped them to become active agents rather than being passive victims of outside spiritual powers. The following example may illustrate this:

DRAMA 13: FAITH IS CHASED BY AN OWL

Faith, a young female teacher on her first appointment, had to struggle with witchcraft attacks which she regarded as emanating from her head

teacher at school. She approached a member of our group ("The Fingers of Thomas") for help, who was a former school friend. Here is the helper's narrative:

Faith was having a difficult working relationship with her boss, the headmaster. When she was given some responsibilities to oversee a project, she made at one point a decision, which caused her to be in direct confrontation with her boss, who in turn stopped speaking to her. After one week, she had a frightening dream in which a big owl was pursuing her, and it managed to corner her. It immediately transformed itself into her boss and this very sight shook her out of the dream in a torrent of sweat and fright. Being a devout Christian, she quickly jumped out of bed, knelt on the floor and prayed vigorously the evil away with "prayers of binding" the boss. This dream repeated itself several times during consecutive days: the owl chased her and changed into her boss, who at one time threatened to rape her and at another time insulted her.

Eventually, for one reason or another, she confided her condition to me. I inquired into some of the details of the working relationship. It turned out that the boss in question had poor administrative skills and hardly got along with anybody. He constantly spied on his juniors. I could not answer the question whether the boss was a real witch. The answer to this question is not important for our approach, as "Fingers of Thomas", and does not lie in our scope. For Faith, the boss had turned into an incarnation of evil; this was my starting point. As a first step, I tried to help Faith to see not only evil in him, but also some good, a person who makes mistakes but who is loved by God. Since Faith is a committed Christian, I tried to engage her into a theological conversation, which came easy to both of us.

Finger: "From the Bible it seems all creation is good."

Faith: "Yes, because God declared seven times that all is good."

Finger: "What is significant about the number seven?"

Faith: "Ah! You don't know?"

Finger: "Please, enlighten me."

Faith: "Eee-m, you see the number seven means fullness."

Finger: "Huum! So that means all creation comes out as good—even your boss and his owl!"

A long pause ensued.

Faith: "But-um! But everybody is free to choose good or evil. A man is created good but can chose to become a witch!"

Finger: "What about the poor owl who has no power of choice? Is there no chance for this poor creature to share in the renewal of creation brought about by Christ?"

Faith: "Aa-ah! I have never quite thought about the owl."

Finger: "Perhaps we can ask ourselves about the role owls play in ecology."

Faith: "Hee-ey! And coming to think of it, I have never bothered to find out how owls live and what they eat."

Finger: "Owls are nocturnal birds that feed on mice, rats, reptiles and small snakes. The owl allows us a decent measure of sleep and a good harvest even when our fields are infested with mice and rats."

Faith: "Oh! That's interesting."

Finger: "In other cultures, the owl is a symbol of wisdom. To dream of the person as an owl then could mean many things. He may not be a witch. Maybe the owl shows you that your relationship with your boss is bad and needs to be addressed. Maybe that is why God allowed the owl to enter your dream!"

The short dialogue ended with a prayer, which I spontaneously composed, inspired by a poem that is dear to me, of which I had to recall at that moment, namely the "Canticle of Brother Sun" of Saint Francis of Assisi:

"All glory, praise and honour to you, almighty Father, whose beauty is beyond all human understanding, whose light and splendour nonetheless shines forth in all your creatures, including brother owl. Honour and praise to you O Lord, for brother owl, who ensures a harvest even in mice and rat infested fields. Honour and praise to God for brother owl, who rides in the night, never losing his way, reminding us of your spirit hovering over the night of the waters, reminding us of your light, Lord, which cannot be quenched by the deepest darkness. Honour and praise to our God for brother owl, sovereign of the night, for inspiring the human spirit to seek the ways of you O Lord, which are darkness to our human understanding. We implore your Spirit of freedom to free the spirit of the owl of all the darkness that we have heaped on your poor creature. Through Christ our Lord Amen."

This short encounter with the helper provoked a creative engagement with the witchcraft symbol and concluded in a short and confident prayer. In subsequent meetings between Faith and the helper, Faith became more

assertive towards her boss when she felt he crossed boundaries at the workspace.

NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION

In order to address threatening or mysterious types of behaviour in the outer world, the principles of “non-violent communication”, as propagated by Marshall Rosenberg, are very helpful.⁷ Communication here moves from an awareness and acknowledgement of specific feelings (self-empathy) that are prompted by the actions of others to the identification of a corresponding need (for example a need for security, sleep, recognition, etc.) and the formulation of a request. Human needs are universal, i.e. others can understand them. Needs can be fulfilled or acknowledged in different ways, which gives room for manoeuvres and compromises. Rosenberg proposes that while listening, one needs to identify also the other person’s feelings, needs and implicit requests. One strictly avoids generalising statements and character assessments, or to be stuck in an evaluation of the meaning of another person’s actions as if that was the full truth. Instead, non-violent communication names the concrete and countable actions of the alienating person together with the honest self-expression of the feelings that are provoked through them. The Rosenberg method is fundamentally non-judgemental, humanising and enhancing compassion.

In a similar way, we abstain in our approach from making judgements about the presence or absence of witchcraft from what we see, as well as from using any labelling comments. Even if I see a physical charm, I cannot ascertain the presence of witchcraft in this charm. Who could prove that we are dealing with a very dangerous object that can kill a person, and not some superstitious item to secure, say, love? I can communicate, however, the feelings of fear and apprehension that are provoked in members of the community due to the presence of the charm or other practices. In the above example, Faith managed to stand up to the head teacher, formulate her feelings provoked by his menacing actions, and requested change, without accusing him of witchcraft. Since she inspired her co-workers to do the same, they eventually filed letters of complaints that led to him being transferred from the school. In spite of her inner negative experiences, they did not need to refer to witchcraft in order to affect positive change.

⁷ Rosenberg 2003.

Part Three

Helping people befallen by spirits

Helping people befallen by spirits

In African Traditional Religions, spirits play a different role than in the Christian discourses that speak of demons. In a person-centred approach, the pastor needs to know what the spirits mean for the client who struggles with them. In this part, I look at so-called nature spirits. Is exorcism the right approach to help people who are possessed or befallen by such spirits? The answer depends on each individual person. In our person-centred approach, we place much emphasis on the life-context in which such spirits express themselves.

Chapter 8 gives concrete examples of how such spirits played positive and negative roles in the different life-stages of individual Christians. We ask what the spirits mean in relation to the Christian vocation and in relation to the challenge brought by this vocation.

In chapter 9, I try to open a window into people's experiences with spirits that is provided by the cultural repertoire. On the example of one particular occasion of a public seance, I look at the songs and what they expressed and what they may tell us about particular experiences of the befallen. I want this chapter to be understood as an example of a tradition that should not be generalised; instead I encourage the reader to become acquainted with the cultural traditions that are present in his/her own area of concern—for example through the repertoire of common songs.

In chapter 10, I look at the hearing of voices and other pathological conditions that can accompany experiences with spirits. I argue that spiritual afflictions and medical conditions should not be seen exclusive of each other or in isolation of each other, even if both need their specific methods of intervention.

At some moment in life, many affected Christians want an exorcism or a ritual to mark a clear break with the past and the start of a new life. I conclude this part with a chapter on Christian ritual healing and prayer (chapter 11).

Part three does not deal directly with the negative forces of demons as understood in Christian narratives. I will do so in parts four and six, and also in the theological considerations of part seven. Nevertheless, I advise the reader who needs to deal with demons to start with part three, and look closely at the discernment patterns that I draw out. Demons too are rooted in specific life-contexts that we try to map out in our approach.

8

When spirits interfere in a Christian life

Journeying through conflicting vocations

So far, we have looked at people's experiences with spirits in view of unwanted and destructive powers that imposed themselves on people, who in turn sought relief and help from the Church. However, not all people, and not even all Christians, want their spirits to go. Members of the Zion or Mizimu Churches in Zambia regard their spirits as God-given angels. Though the spirits initially made them sick, they see themselves with a divine vocation and duty to work with these spirits and use them for something good. As one member of a Zion Church in Bauleni Compound, who in no way wants to get rid of her three *mizimu* spirits, explained:

Jesus also chose his disciples. Spirits are doing the same thing. They come from God as also Jesus came from God. They heal and they prophesy the truth.

Mainstream churches do not accept this way of reasoning but see in it idolatry; the Catholic Church forbids not only black magic but also white magic. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says:

All practices of magic or sorcery, by which one attempts to tame occult powers, so as to place them at one's service and have a supernatural power over others—even if this were for the sake of restoring their health—are gravely contrary to the virtue of religion. (§2117)

Nevertheless, there are Christians in Africa who feel an intimate connection with spirits who are closely connected with the inner life and experiences of selfhood of the person. A forty-eight years old woman (Catholic) expressed this to me as follows:

People always give you advice. Everyone who knows that I have spirits (*ngulu*) tells me I should pray hard so that the spirits go. "You need deliverance! They are demons!" I always had these spir-

its, and my grandmother had them. Already as a child, I heard their voices. These spirits belong to me. They are part of me. Casting them out is like cutting your own leg. Would you do this?

The woman tried to combine two ways of life: She was a member of a respected Catholic church group and proud of her church uniform, but she also worked as a traditional healer. In her home, pictures of Mary and Jesus, rosaries and crucifixes stood next to pots of medicines, leaves and roots, white beads, cloths and dishes that were supposed to attract the spirits, which she evoked for curing people. Her family and her church group disapproved, but the woman had developed a rather stubborn resistance to criticism. Combining the two ways of life did not work out. Confusion became evident both to her family but also to her church group. She alienated herself from both. We tried to help her to make a choice, "The two ways you are living don't seem to be compatible with each other," I said. "Mixing them seems to bring confusion!"

"But both are good. Jesus is good and my spirits are also good. They are angels," she answered.

"But who is more important for you, the spirits, or Jesus?" I asked.

"Jesus!" she answered.

I then compared the spirits with the figure of John the Baptist. "John was good, not bad. Yet Andrew left John in order to walk with Jesus, not because John was bad but because Jesus was better. To mix two ways of life can mean that in the end you follow neither of them in a way that helps you and others!"

My logic in this case was not making headway, but with another healer it did. He had the desire to come back to the church and at one point handed over all his charms and utensils because he felt that he had received something better in the Christian faith. Faith comes with choices. However, as a pastor, I cannot make a choice on behalf of somebody else.

In sharp contrast to the above two cases, there are also many Christians who have such spirits, but who want these spirits to go; they feel that the spirits contradict their commitment to the Christian faith. But the spirits refuse to go, even when they went for deliverance or exorcisms! Some of them feel a divided sense of selfhood and struggle with conflicting vocations. Giving pastoral help in such a situation can be a long journey that may demand looking at the whole life story. The following example can illustrate this point:

DRAMA 14: SPIRITS CALL ELISABETH TO DIG FOR MEDICINES IN THE VILLAGE

Elisabeth, now in her sixties and a leader in a respected Catholic lay-organisation, felt approached and affected by *ngulu* spirits since childhood.

My mother had spirits (*ngulu*). We all saw that it was not good for her; she lived a difficult life and had to follow many strange rules that did not make any sense to us. Therefore, I never wanted these spirits. But they have ever kept coming, how much I pray does not matter. Often I dream, I am digging medicines and curing people. Then they ask me to buy white plates. I never did—I do not want these spirits. Even today, I cannot go to a funeral house. When I enter where there is a corpse, these spirits are manifesting in me. I start to talk confusedly in an uncontrolled voice (*kusabaila*). When the church choir uses intense drumming, I have to go out, else the spirits come. I am a Christian, but I feel divided. Sometimes I thought that I owe it to my mother, maybe it is my duty to have these spirits, and maybe even to become a healer. But then again, this was never what I wanted in my life. It all started when I was getting educated. My father, who had worked all his life with the Catholic priests, wanted me to go to school. At that time, it was not usual for girls to go to school and even to college. The spirits did not want me to go to school. However, in spite of all the illnesses they sent, I managed. I never followed what the spirits said. And yet, they never really left me. Why do the spirits not just go? I do not want them!

As a coping strategy, Elisabeth avoided funeral houses and occasions of drumming, knowing that the drums, the wailing of people and the presence of a corpse provoked the spirits to manifest themselves. Her spirits had come in response to a choice she had made in her childhood. Persuaded by her father, she decided against social conventions to take up the opportunity of higher education. She went to boarding school more than 1200 km away from her home, in an area marked by a different language and culture than her own. Then she got the chance to study in Lusaka and even in England. While she believed in what she learnt, she was also aware that the physical and cultural distance alienated her from her roots in the village and from her family. Her brothers and sisters kept living a humble life. “I had become a stranger to them.” Though she tried to help them frequently, her help was not always received as positively as she had wished. One younger brother exploited her help and cheated her about

the money he received. Often her help to the family brought misunderstandings instead of peace. The *ngulu* spirits manifested in her life when she heard the traditional drums. There existed another world that could not be controlled by the skills she attained through Western education. The spirits threw her back into memories of traditional village life and the beliefs from which she had opted out. She could have opted for a very different career, as a traditional healer. Was she not missing something in her life? The spirits also reminded her that she was not really managing to fulfil her family duties, in spite of her good will.

During the pastoral counselling and prayers, we looked at the spirits in accordance with her own perception: as spirits that had a mysterious connection with her family (especially her mother) and with village life. This connection became the starting point for finding a meaningful way forward for dealing with them. She expressed the core values she was committed to, by which she also wanted to be remembered. Her spirits did not really work against these values; rather, they proposed an alternative way of life that she had totally missed out on, one that was connected to the family and the village. She started to develop an active interest in her own culture, by joining a group that studied initiation rites; once she had become an initiator herself, she taught initiation as a member of a larger group to couples and town girls. Using her education to better understand her own tradition was her way of reconciling within herself two conflicting vocations that had accompanied her since childhood. Incidentally, the Christian group of marriage initiators whom she joined brought her in touch with a lot of traditional drumming—and the spirits no longer manifested.

WHEN THE NATURE OF SPIRITS CHANGES

When people speak of spirits, our first step comes from finding out what they mean in the context of the person's life-orientation and core-values, how they help, and how they hinder. Spirits are not abstract entities but appear at certain stages of life in which they are tightly woven into the person's life situation. In Scholastic theology, spirits can never change their nature. They are either with God (angels) or against (demons). But African experiences are much more complex. The following case illustrates how spirits can come to mean different things to a person at different stages of life. The narrative comes from a woman whom I call Veronica, from the Luapula Province, who grew up along the shores of Lake Bangweulu. I was intrigued by her story, and asked her to write it down herself.

She did, in Bemba, filling a large copy book. I present a literal translation of the crucial parts.

DRAMA 15: THE SPIRITS OF VERONICA

The death of my mother changed things in my life. I was in grade four when she died. My mother loved me very much—more than my father. After her death, my father became very violent. We feared him, and everybody in the house was careful not to upset him. We nicknamed him “camp-commander”. Every day, he shouted at someone or beat someone. He said: “I have to do this because you need to be strong in life; life is harsh, and you need to be ready to stand alone.”

Our mother left a small baby behind. It was my task as the oldest daughter to look after the child. There was no time for rest any longer for me. Rest came only when my father married again; they took all my younger brothers and sisters, while I stayed now with my grandparents. I was doing well at school. I passed the exams with the best marks to go to grade five. My grandfather was very proud of my performance. I loved school and wanted to be number one in everything, in marks, sports and games, so much so that my fellow students called me with many nicknames.

NGULU COME FOR THE FIRST TIME

Now, a cousin of mine came; he was in grade nine while I was in grade five. He wanted to marry me and brought the *nsalamu* [the payment that gives the boy the rights for marriage] to my grandmother, who accepted. I hated the boy with all my heart. I started to hate my grandmother, too, who wanted to force me to get married to him. She no longer allowed me to be with friends or to see any other boy. In school, I started to be sick with epilepsy. They tried out local medicines and told me that I had spirits: *ngulu*. It was difficult for me to stay focused in school. Often I could not read the blackboard and I only memorised what the teacher was speaking. Everyone said, “She has *ngulu*.” All the time I went to school, I was afraid that I would get married to my cousin whom I hated. There was another boy at school, whom I loved. His name was Christopher. The devil tempted me to say to myself: “Let me have a child with Christopher. My cousin will say, ‘She is a prostitute!’ and then he will leave me alone.” I did not see any other way out; that is how the devil lied to me, and I became pregnant.

However, it did not work out as I had hoped. My family did not like Christopher and refused me to get married with him. They did not even allow him to see our baby when he was born. That was now in grade ten, and I stopped school.

A WASTED LIFE

There was a teacher, who had married one of my childhood friends. He was going out with many other girls and gave them money. He tried to sleep with me, too, but I hated him and refused. Then my grandmother told me to sleep with him, because he gave her many gifts and money. I hated it, but I finally gave in. I became like his other wife. He was an animal, a beast. Now it happened that his wife died while being pregnant. Everyone pointed at me, saying: "She caused her death by sleeping with her husband—let him and this girlfriend of his come to the grave to take out the foetus from the womb of the dead woman!"¹

I was sure they were going to kill me. I said to myself: "Fine, finally I can go and rest." I was ready to die and I was tired of life. I went to the lake where everyone had gathered, ready to kill us. However, suddenly the police intervened and took us out. I said, "Let me just go and die!" but they said: "You are too young to die. There is a purpose in your life that you have not yet completed." They called in the mobile unit and many police officers came to protect us from the violent crowd. They escorted the man back to his home village, where this beast died a few years later. They brought me to the chief for protection, and later I was freed. God had intervened and saved me from a sure death. After this, I dreamt a dream. The dead woman, my late friend, came to me, saying: "I did not die because of you. I died because of others." I asked her for forgiveness for what I had done, but she repeated three times that she did not die because of me. Since then I felt free from the death. Now I knew that my life still had a purpose.

Many men wanted to marry me, but my family refused them all. They wanted me to get married to a teacher, to someone who has money. Finally, I got married to a teacher. At first, there was some love in the house. We tried to make the house beautiful, and indeed, it looked better than the house of the head teacher. How-

¹ The teacher's wife was assumed to have died of *ncila*. *Ncila* is a traditional Bemba way of looking at the death of a pregnant woman during childbirth, understood as being caused by the adultery of her husband, in this case with Veronica, his girlfriend. The traditional punishment, to which Veronica alludes, consisted in the culprit being forced in the grave of his wife to cut out the foetus from her womb and say: "I have killed two people through my adultery!"

ever, I detested his drinking and his smoking. What brought real hatred in me was that he forced me to abort our children. At first, we had a child every year. I wanted to have many children, but he wanted only few children. Whenever I was pregnant, he said: "If you do not abort, I know it is not my child." He used to get medicines for abortions from the wife of another teacher. This brought hatred into my heart. I aborted many times out of fear. I would have walked out of the marriage if it was not for the children; I did not want to have children from different fathers. Then came a time when he was sent to study "Socialism" in East Germany. That time I was pregnant again, and he forced me to abort before he left. He said: "I cannot go to Europe while worrying about a pregnant wife at home. You must abort!" I prayed: "God, I hate what I am doing but I see no way out."

THE SPIRITS COME BACK

Now it was a few months afterwards, at Easter, I was with my friend who was also married to a teacher. Both our husbands were away in East Germany, and we talked about them and called them all sorts of names. Then I looked into the sky, there was darkness, the moon and so many stars, which looked beautiful. Then on the other side of the road was the church where people sang beautiful songs. The drumming was nice and orderly. I told my friend: "If today the end of the world falls on us, these people will go to heaven but we will go into darkness." Then I left and went to sleep. I fell asleep quickly, but suddenly I heard a voice in my heart, "Get up!"

I got up and lighted the candle. The voice said: "Kneel down and pray 70 times, 'I will never, never again kill a human being out of selfishness and hardness of heart!'"

I knelt and prayed the prayer seventy times. Then the voice said, "Go back to sleep."

I fell asleep immediately. Then the same voice came back, "Wake up!"

I woke up with this song in my heart, which I then sang, and while I was singing, other beautiful voices were all around me, singing the same song:

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you royal city so beautiful, Jerusalem the glory of the king. You, Jerusalem, even if you are so small, you have brought joy and peace to the people. People praise you, many thank you; this is the village of blessings from the Lord.

I felt such happiness that I had never felt in my whole life. The next morning when I was washing the clothes, the same song came back. Again, when I was going to sleep another beautiful song came, and again at night. This started to happen every night, whether I was sleeping with a light or without light, songs were coming. I sang and there were voices around me, singing with me. They all came by themselves. I had never heard these songs before, but in the morning, I would remember every single word and I could sing the song in my heart without forgetting anything. That is when I told my friends, "Let us join the church choir." We joined, but we did not sing my songs, because I was too shy to speak about what was happening to me. I wanted to tell the priests when they came, but when I saw them, I was afraid. I looked at the priests as real Christians, much more than myself, and I could not tell them.

Then after a year, my husband came back. He no longer allowed me to go to the church choir, "They are just singing rubbish!" I knew he was going out with a woman in the choir. He said, "There is no God!" That is what he had studied in Germany. He found my book in which I had written twenty-four songs that the voices had taught me. He tore it into pieces and threw it into the toilet. I was very angry but there was nothing I could do, except to obey him. We had two more children, and this time I refused to abort. He could say whatever he wanted; I had started to answer him back. I was no longer afraid of him.

It was clear to me that I would not continue to live with my husband. By now, I had courage in myself that I never had before. He pleaded with me to stay, and even when I left him, he kept on writing me many letters, asking me to come back. I left the bigger children with my relatives. I took the small children with me and settled in another place, far away from him. Being without a husband came with many challenges. Many men wanted to approach me—they thought I was free for all. And when I spoke with a man, his wife would think bad about me.

I went back to church because of another dream: I saw a cross in a dark grave in which I found myself. Next to the cross was a mysterious handwriting, which nobody could read. Then Jesus appeared to me, with Mary and another saint, unknown to me, called "Theresa". I dreamt this dream twice, and knew that God was calling me to do something for him.

The narrative continues to explain that she became active in church, was elected secretary of the prayer centre and started to help the poor with the

help of a small group that she initiated. The voices that she continued to hear gave her strength and courage to take initiatives.

So far, we could call the spirits angels. Veronica experienced them as such. They (she calls them *ngulu*) connected her with a purpose in life when she was despising herself. The first experience of having *ngulu* coincided with the onset of epilepsy, fears of a forced marriage, the rapid drop in school performance and an awareness of underusing her life-potential. A purpose in life seemed far off again when she became the girlfriend of a married teacher whom she hated. A mysterious police officer saved her from lynching by an angry mob at the death of his wife (her friend), for which she was held responsible by others and by herself. He prophesied for her a purpose in life. The *ngulu* spirits later helped her to come out of a very oppressive marriage. Their coming coincided with her own increased self-confidence; she no longer feared her husband. She slowly took life into her own hands through rebuilding relationships with her wider family. The *ngulu* also reconnected her to her Church in which she had grown up, her religious childhood identity. They made her resilient to many sufferings. The beauty of the songs and the happiness she felt in the presence of the voices was from another world, putting her in touch with her own purpose in life.

However, the narrative is not yet finished. In the second half of her book, she describes now the alienating effects of the spirits in her subsequent life:

When I came to my present location and became active in church, I finally told someone about my dreams in which I had met Jesus. However, the chairman of the church, whom people nicknamed “the bishop” because he looked like the owner of the church, became angry with me. “You are just lying to yourself when you say that you dreamt of Jesus! That is how the devil works! That is how all these other Churches started. You must not listen to these dreams.”

I was very confused and did not know what to do. One day I was walking through the long marshes after buying fish in a certain village, and the voice told me: “From now onward you must pray every day three times the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory to the Father.”

I obeyed the voice. Whenever I prayed, I became calm and my confusions calmed down. The voices also said I should eat only one meal a day, every day at 14:00 hours. For that meal, I was only allowed to eat a precise measurement of *ubwali* [the staple food]

prepared with maize or cassava flour and exactly one cup of water as measurement, and the leaves of sweet potatoes as relish. I was not allowed to add any salt, groundnuts or cooking oil. I started to follow the rules given by the voices. Even though I had no watch, I always knew exactly when it was 14:00 hours and I would cook for myself the prescribed food.

Then they asked me at church to become a catechiser, to teach the children, and to preach in church. During the training programme, I had a dream. I was supposed to teach in church, but I could not answer the questions. Then I started in the dream to speak confusedly without meaning (*kusabaila*), and the voices said: "That is how you will be teaching."

During the Easter celebrations, many people came. Exactly as the dream had predicted, I was asked to teach. First, I refused, but they insisted, so I read the Bible reading and started to teach as the voices told me to teach. The chairman and others came in front to grab me and stop me. When they had led me away out of the church, they said I was just teaching confused nonsense (*kusabaila*). When I was again myself, the chairman told me: "This happens because you are praying to the devil, not to God. Your spirits are demons."

Others said, "She is just becoming mad."

Because of this, I wanted to stop praying in church, but whenever I stopped, the voices told me to go back to church. They said: "Pray this way, pray that way, do this, and do that."

I had to follow. Especially when I prayed a lot, the voices came, but what they told me people did not like. Sometimes they told me just to start walking without any destination (*kuya iciyeyeye*)—I left everything I was doing, and went, without anybody knowing where I was heading to, even I did not know. I did not need to eat or to drink and felt no hunger, but sometimes I wished I could just die. Especially in the time of Advent and of Lent, the voices came and told me so many things. I was lost and did not know what to do.

Veronica became known within the community for her periods of temporal madness. She could go out of her little house and onto the road, find a lift in a car—without money or a bag—and go anywhere, *iciyeyeye*. It could be weeks until she was back. On one occasion, relatives found her confusedly roaming through Kabwe, 500 km from her home.

There had been a time when Veronica had experienced her spirits as helpful agents in her journey to find her purpose in life. The spirits, dreams and songs had provided a framework for deep mystical experiences. However, in the context of her ministry in the Church, they started to turn into compulsive and enslaving entities. She felt she had to follow the commands of the voices to the dot, with no room for alteration. At times, she still loved the voices and found comfort in following what they said.

However, something happened that made her change her attitude towards the spirits. Veronica was having a number of wrangles with her neighbours about a land dispute. She was aware of extensive gossiping about her singleness. One day after she had read a popular Church pamphlet about the dangers of Satanism, she was becoming afraid that her experiences with *ngulu* spirits could be satanic. When she met her neighbour on the road who greeted her, the voice inside said, “Kill!” Since she did not want to kill, Veronica gave her neighbour a hard slap in the face and ran away—*iciyeyeye*—to come back only after weeks. She could not explain what had come over her. The incident made her very uncomfortable with the spirits. It was as if angels had turned into satanic demons. She then asked for prayers in one of the rituals that we offered for people with *ngulu* spirits at the parish. She wrote in her copybook,

I know that God can speak through dreams and voices. But I also know that the devil can speak through dreams and voices. It is difficult to know what comes from whom.

We organised a dramatic ritual (similar to what I describe in chapter 11). We tried, however, to place this ritual into a wider context. She felt a deep desire to help the poor and for stability in life; in the ritual we asked for strength to live out this vocation more clearly. The prayer-ritual did not make the voices disappear. “The voices are still there sometimes, but I no longer feel compelled to follow them as before.” Today, the voices do not prevent her from orienting her life in the way she feels is right.

What is one to do with the changing nature of spirits? Our approach is not spirit-centred but person-centred. The nature of spirits therefore is allowed to change with the overall life-frame of the person. We can expel unhelpful spirits without denying that at one point in life they had fulfilled an important and positive function. At a time when Veronica was struggling to find her own destiny, the spirits were empowering her. There is no need to demonise the mystical experiences that she had at that stage in her life (as the chairman of the church council, “the bishop” had

done). At another time, when she was seeking a place of service within the church, the spirits had become disruptive. The goodness or badness depended not only on the nature of the spirits but also on the changing nature of her own life situation. Casting out spirits makes sense only in view of the person's larger life-commitment.

9

Feeling spirits and dancing with spirits

Learning from cultural traditions

In Africa, people's experience with spirits is shaped by rich cultural traditions that have proven themselves over centuries. In Bemba, such invading spirits are called *ngulu* (*liulu* means heaven), *myela* (winds) and *imfumu* (chiefs), and they are known to have individual characters. *Ngulu* have shown remarkable adaptability. Sometimes people linked them to indigenous peoples, or to past peoples no longer remembered. They were connected with the untameable forests, waterfalls or whirlwinds. At other times, they were linked to the realm of the foreign.¹ In Nyanja, they are called *mashawe*. The Tumbuka know of *vimbuza* spirits, who are associated with a class of sicknesses as well as with their specific healing rites and their songs and dances, sometimes culminating in the *chilopa* ritual where the befallen drink the life blood of a domestic animal (chicken, dove, goat or sheep). The *vimbuza* dances are highly developed. Among the Nsenga, the *mashawe* spirits are seen to be of rather recent origin, and some people have traced them to influences arising from encounters with the outside world.² The Tonga also know *masabe* spirits, who compete with the older *basangu* mediums, the newer *balengelenge* cults (from the *Nzila* of the Western Province) and other possession cults that are appropriated in different ways.³ At times, the *masabe* spirits denote something of the foreign; in Shona, so says Ute Luig, the *shabe* spirits refer to spirits of people who died in foreign lands. At other times, they bear connections to the wild forest and to nature. Luig explains that the *masabe*, whether referring to indigenous or to foreign elements, are always related to forces that are outside of human control. I believe this insight is applicable to all the spirits that I am considering in this chapter. Ritual specialists discern

¹ For similar reflections among the Lungu, see Willis 1999.

² Mensah 1970.

³ Luig 1998.

the nature of the spirits through their tunes and rhythms. In all traditions, drummers have developed a sensitivity for finding the rhythms of the dancing spirits.

In this book, I have often used the anthropological term “spirit possession” for such diverse phenomena. In Bemba, such spirits (*ngulu*) do not possess but rather befall (*kuwila*). The befallen (*abawilwa*) do keep certain taboos that are enforced by the spirits throughout their lifetime, but the spirits take over their personality and willpower only sporadically and temporally. Oger explains,

The Bemba expression [*kuwilwa*], in its passive and applicative form, implies clearly that such an experience is involuntarily seized by something external to them. What comes into a human being is a “thing”. The neutral pronoun “it” is used. ... “*Camwikata*”—“it seizes” him or her. It has no identity and no name yet and is, at that stage of the phenomenon called “*mwela*” (pl. *myela*), meaning: wind, because it is, like the wind, invisible, mysterious, free to move from place to place, and manifests itself where it wishes. The same word *mwela* expresses also the suddenness of the happening and its unexpectedness. “It is coming like the wind,” unseen, from nowhere, and a sudden gust, “creeping into a human being” (*kufumfuma mu muntu*) like the wind penetrating into a house.⁴

The spirit at this stage is compared with a mysterious sickness (*ubulwele bwa ngulu*). Once the symptoms of the sickness corresponded with people’s expectations of what the *ngulu* do in a person’s life (often associated with certain dreams and bodily or mental types of complaints), it was assumed that the person has *ngulu*. Now its name and nature needed to be discerned (*kutundula ingulu*—literally translated as “unplucking the spirit”). This happened with the involvement of the whole family under supervision of a prominent *ngulu*. (People befallen by *ngulu* are themselves known as *ngulu* or *bangulu*). During the ritual, the befalling spirit ideally started to reveal unknown things (*kusesema*) and to reveal its name. Oger explained that from here, the befallen was often compared to a new-born child who now needed to grow (*kukusha ngulu*) by means of special foods cooked in special pots. Sometimes other divining rituals were performed to ascertain the nature of a spirit. This was organised by the community, not by the person who was sick. The discernment process was in the

⁴ Oger 1972, p. 2.

hands of the family and ritual specialists. Today, rich descriptions of such cults in many Zambian cultures are available to us.⁵

The initial illness inflicted by the spirits became an experience that defined selfhood. Illness plays a crucial part in the autobiographies of many healers and people with spirits. In Western concepts, illness is often regarded as a presence of unwanted microbes or a pathological disorder. Once the problem is solved, one can go back to “business as usual”. Where sickness is associated with spirits, however, there can be no way back to the ordinary. Sickness is more than a painful, cruel or annoying experience. Its alienating effects on the person have been the occasion for many in Zambia to become more attentive to the unseen world and to establish a link to this world. It is the beginning of a vocation. Many healers define their selfhood in reference to sickness and healing through which they encountered the spirits for the first time. Their spirits continue to make themselves felt through the body.

STUDYING SPIRITS

Psychology and anthropology have looked at experiences with such spirits from their own specific angles. Their insights, explanations and attempts at contextualisation are important for our approach. Earlier schools of thought easily equated shamanic possession experiences with psychological, psychiatric or pathological disorders under various names (hysteria, schizophrenia, psychosis, dissociation, epilepsy, etc.) Some people with a biological bias proposed that spirit possession is common among people who suffer from a lack of certain nutrients.⁶ Others, in contrast, see in the shaman not a person with a *lack* of something (nutrients or mental stability) but with a *surplus*: The shaman is a person with an unusual ability to control and sustain drastic changes in consciousness. This way of thinking is a much better starting point for our own approach.

Within church circles in Zambia, some see demons in the spirits, while others translate them as hysterical episodes in a person's life. Both views lead into the silencing of possession experiences. Psychologists and anthropologists, in contrast, have often analysed African spirit possession cults in terms of giving access to creative healing resources and discours-

⁵ See for example Turner 1962, Lancaster 1977, Oger 1972, Jonker 1992, Luig 1993, 1998 or Willis 1999.

⁶ One formulation of the “nutrients-deficit theory” can be found in Kehoe & Giletti 1981. Another line of thought—driven by evolutionary and biological thinking—regards demon beliefs as a universal consequence of dealing with an evolutionary promiscuous sex drive in changing societal conditions (Braxton 2008).

es.⁷ I believe that the church has not listened enough to such approaches. Ritual expressions of the spirits help to discern negative emotions and destructive behaviour patterns of both individuals and the community, and to externalise them, project them onto spirits, name them, and subsequently to deal with them. Studies in altered states of consciousness have investigated the human potential for transcending a self-awareness of an individual self towards inter-subjective awareness that embraces not only humans but also animals and the cosmos, as happens in possession.⁸ Cultural ways of dealing with spirit possession may of course not only have positive results. They may also erode a sense of personal responsibility. New accusations and tensions can arise from possession cults, since spirits have also an affinity with the world of witchcraft.

In anthropology, spirit possession in Africa had long been studied under the frameworks of deprivation, compensation and counter-hegemonic theories, where people (mostly women) on the margins of political and religious power platforms consciously or unconsciously made up for their lack of status or influence through participation in the cults. While victims of spirits always point at the involuntary aspects of their condition, anthropologists and psychologists ascertained that their participation in possession cults gratifies parts of their emotional, social and religious needs. Often, a spirit cult provides a platform from which peripheral groups can address power relations, whereby individual possessed people are empowered by their spirits to advance their own social positions. Husbands of possessed women may remain cynical and sceptical about their wives' states of possession. But since the spirit world is part of the cosmology of their society, they can do little about it. The spirits can help the afflicted person to evade oppressive social obligations that they cannot otherwise avoid.⁹ Cultural proceedings keep such security valves

⁷ Reis 2013.

⁸ Willis 1999.

⁹ I. M. Lewis (1966, 1971) elaborated this theory in his influential cross-cultural study on spirit possession by introducing the distinction between central and marginal spirit cults. In central cults, the spirits are part of the political authority structures. Marginal cults in Lewis' terminology are those cults, where possessed people, the majority being female, may improve their own social position when their status of possession is socially acknowledged, without however greatly challenging the power structures of the wider community. Lewis makes room for transformation; peripheral cults can become central (and vice versa) with changing political constellations. Thus Louis Oger (1972) has traced the decline in the status of the *bangulu* in Bemba history from a more central to a peripheral cult. In our own approach, we turn the argument of the deprivation theory on its head. We regard possession by spirits not as compensating for a lack of something, but as expressing an excess of something that "bubbles out" into the public. Possessed people are often highly gifted persons whose talents are underused in society. A rigid separation of central from peripheral cults is difficult when one considers

open that protect the most vulnerable members of society, give them a space for self-expression and make possible certain ways of readdressing social positions through the idiom of the spirits.

Anthropological outlooks have moved on from here. Attention has shifted away from generalised theories towards contextualised analysis; care is taken not to treat spirit possession in reified or ahistorical terms. Zambian case studies have provided rich grounds for reflecting on concrete expressions of spirit possession in relation to wider issues. Victor Turner was able to show how “cults of affliction”¹⁰ among the Ndembu addressed simultaneously the healing of affected individuals and of the fractured community. Since then anthropologists have suggested that spirits often articulate wider issues and contradictions that are encroaching on the local scene.¹¹ The anthropologist Roy Willis looked at the discovery of an inter-subjective and connected selfhood through spirit possession within a network of concrete relationships.¹² Elisabeth Colson analysed how different cults of possession among the Tonga (contrasting *masabe* mediums with *basangu* mediums) addressed the drastic social, environmental and political changes. Ute Luig saw that spirits can reframe experiences of modernity. Together, Colson and Luig were able to historically link images and names of *masabe* spirits to localised experiences of colonialism among the Tonga. “Women came to be possessed by police spirits (*mapolisis*), by carriers (*matingatinga*) and by so-called ‘railroad followers’ (*matobela injanji*), spirits which embodied characteristics of colonialism as impinging on the local scene.”¹³ Possession cults revealed women’s experiences with new forms of power. The spirits associated with

that all cults evoke the negotiation of power structures—even if they concern only details that look insignificant to the onlooker.

¹⁰ Victor Turner defined the term “cults of affliction” as “the interpretation of misfortune in terms of domination by a specific non-human agent and the attempt to come to terms with the misfortune by having the afflicted individual, under the guidance of a ‘doctor’ of that mode, join the cult association venerating that specific agent.” (1968, pp. 15–16)

¹¹ See Turner 1962, Luig 1993, and Luig 1998. For a summary of the evolution of anthropological theory in relation to spirit possession, see van Dijk, Reis and Spierenburg 2000. For the cultural association of the drums with power (and male power) see Drews 2000. Van Binsbergen (1981) had tried to ground modern forms of spirit possession and cults of affliction (as well as popular witchcleansing movements) in tensions and contradictions that arose when new Western capitalist “modes of production” (systems that order relationships, obligations and rights in view of access to resources) encroached upon the older domestic modes of production, without being able to destroy or absorb the latter completely.

¹² The ethnography of Roy Willis on experiences with Lungu spirits is an example of attempts to relate *ngulu* spirits to a journey into human selfhood. (Willis 1999) His own personal struggles and frictions in his relationship with his co-workers become part of his somehow non-conclusive narrative.

¹³ Luig 1993, p. 348 (own translation).

aeroplanes, trains, graders or speedboats mirrored not only the social impact of new technologies in times of forced resettlement schemes during the constructions of the Kariba Dam that flooded people's ancestral lands, but they also mirrored the spiritual powers of the colonial white man who could through extreme interventions provoke the forces of nature, ancestors and spirits without being crushed by their wrath.¹⁴ Such ways of inquiry, as opened up by Colson and Luig, can be very helpful when looking at contemporary spiritual issues, including Satanism (part six). Instead of starting with abstract notions ("Satanism is this or that..."), we do well not to lose sight of the historical and social conditions within a specific local context, in which Satanism (or another new spiritual manifestation) pops up and becomes persuasive to many.

The pastoral approach of our book makes use of anthropological and psychological insights where they advance reflection upon the interplay between an individual person's experience with spirits and the community's struggles with contradictions, changes, common anxieties and responses to outside forces. However, our starting point concerns the affected individual and strictly follows a person-centred approach. Again, we do not start with the goodness or badness of the spirits or their inner nature. Different people will look at them in different ways. Our starting point is empathy towards the experiences of the person who has these spirits. We ask how those experiences shape the person's understanding of selfhood, of relationships with the world and with God. We also ask what the spirits may be saying about the person's life-orientation and how the community reacts to them.

FEELING THE SPIRITS

What are the ways open to pastors and priests to put ourselves in the shoes of people befallen by such spirits? The first step is to listen to people's own descriptions of the way the spirits act on their bodies. Take for example the notes of Father Bonaventure Kapompole, who was arguably the first Zambian Catholic priest to deal extensively and systematically with many patients with *ngulu* spirits. He taught us the importance of being sensitive to the body and recorded people's accounts of the symptoms they perceived:

pressure on the chest and backache "as if loaded with a heavy stone";

¹⁴ Luig 1993, pp. 349-350.

nausea and heartburn, “as if the heart is melting”;

repeated vomiting, speaking incoherently while “feeling hot in the heart and in the bowels”;

a feeling “as if something is travelling in your head that disturbs the mind, causing a feeling of falling down while one is no longer able to speak clearly”;

the body itching all over and swaying “as if something is rocking you” before beginning to dream;

feeling tired “as if someone has beaten you” and becoming irritated when approached by others;

uncontrolled belching when “a rumbling noise starts in your back and goes through your bowels”;

strong aversion to sexual intercourse.¹⁵

Such descriptions show that spirits are experienced in the body and with the body; they are not abstract constructs that people reflect about in a theological way. A priest who tries to translate such descriptions into Western medical categories may discover some hidden diseases that could accompany some specific cases of spirit possession. However, if he reduces the spirits to the disease, he misses the points that the patient communicates. The experience of sickness establishes a link with the spiritual world; its religious or spiritual meaning goes beyond the presence or absence of certain microbes.

Spirits act on the body, manipulate the body and are felt by the body. The body, not the abstract mind (Descartes), is the centre of human experience and communication with the spirit world. The *ng'anga* or traditional healer is a specialist in this: He/she cuts tattoos into the skin, sucks blood and objects out of the body, makes patients inhale and bath, shaves their hair, enforces dietary taboos, or brings the human body of the patient to significant places, like crossroads, rivers with running water, domestic rubbish pits or graveyards. The traditional healer addresses the spirits by connecting the body to significant landmarks. Some healers also try to stay close to the body of the patient, often eating with him/her, bathing him/her and sleeping close by.

Therefore, it is important for the Church to address the body in our own rituals as a way to reach the spirit world. Traditionally, all the Catho-

¹⁵ Kapompole n.d.; Oger 1972.

lic sacraments involved the body, a point that came to be downplayed in a time when a disembodied abstract mind was allowed to become the tyrant of all other modes of thought.

People possessed or befallen by spirits need the help of persons who are able to feel into their own bodies when relating to the experiences of the patient. Traditionally a 'doctor' needed to have spirits in order to help a patient befallen by spirits. Pastors and priests may not share the experience of being possessed or befallen themselves, but we do well to listen attentively to our own bodies when helping patients. The methods proposed by Gendlin (chapter 6), and the creative adaptations of such methods, are of invaluable help.

DANCING WITH THE SPIRITS

Zambian cultures and religions have placed the discernment of the spirits into the realm of performance. In songs and dances to the rhythms of drums, sometimes in conjunction with the help of medicines, the spirits reveal themselves, are partially tamed (never fully!), express themselves, and bestow an experience that goes beyond ordinary categories. The songs sung for the spirits, by the spirits or with the spirits, can give us a glimpse into the experiences that befallen people go through. They help us to feel ourselves into their world. Many healers across Zambian cultures can sing and dance literally hundreds of songs. Many songs are common and typical for an area; they are shared among healers, and children may sing them at any time. Others are composed by the healers or by their spirits. When singing goes on for a large part of the night or even the whole night, the repertoire of songs needs to be very extensive. Songs are sung in specific orders, for example before, during and after the naming of the spirits in the patients. Access to the spirits is granted not through some special prayers but through performance: dancing, singing, drumming, and in some cases through rituals.

Many Christians today refer to *ngulu* and *mashawe* spirits as demons and devils. When thinking of demons, pictures of dark agents from hell may come to our mind, sent by the devil to make our lives miserable. In contrast, the performances with *ngulu* and *mashawe* contain a lot of humour. The dances I attended proceeded in a relaxed atmosphere, and many used the event as an occasion for entertainment. The roles of daily life were laid aside. People amused themselves by looking at the befallen people who behaved out of the norm. Some of their spirits seemed to be clowns.

In what follows, I give an example of a dance for the *bangulu* (people who have *ngulu* spirits) at Kasepa Village, in the area of chief Sokontwe, in the Luapula Province, that I attended during my stay in Kasamba Parish. I got to know Doctor Dorika, a middle-aged woman who had a number of *ngulu* herself, and she invited me to the event.¹⁶ She worked as a resident traditional healer and was specialised in treating certain types of sicknesses, including some types of madness and some sicknesses specific to women. The dance was organised for two women with *ngulu*, but Doctor Dorika assured me that other people would also come and attend, “once the drums are beaten.” The two patients seemed to be coming regularly for dances; they were already diagnosed to be with spirits and followed their dietary taboos of not eating pig, catfish or cassava leaves. Another local healer of the same village, Doctor Kangwa, joined in to help. Four drummers arrived in advance; the families of the patients cooked for them and organised a little local beer to drink, to keep the drummers happy. At nightfall, they started the drumming. Children were the first to arrive. At one point, the two doctors drew a circle with white flour. The space inside was for people with *ngulu*. Onlookers had to remain outside. “If you step in and catch *ngulu* it is your own fault,” we were told.

Doctor Dorika made me the guest of honour, which gave me the privilege of sitting on a chair while all others (except for the drummers) were standing or occasionally resting on a grass mat. Doctor Dorika started to sing, and the surrounding women and children took up the songs. The children knew most of the songs by heart, and so did the women and the few men, who were clapping from outside. Sometimes Doctor Dorika went around pronouncing clearly the words of a song, when she felt that the onlookers were not singing properly. The two doctors, dressed in white, together with the two patients, danced inside. The first songs were about calling people to join and about calling specific *ngulu* with their specific songs.¹⁷ At times, some of the onlookers entered the circle and joined for a few minutes. Some smaller girls also joined and danced in an explicitly erotic way. Doctor Kangwa chased them out of the circle, saying: “It is dangerous to dance inside. Don’t come later and complain that you picked up spirits!”

¹⁶ I was able to attend several dances with Doctor Dorika and appreciated her openness and frankness. The following description refers to an event in September 2001.

¹⁷ In this case, the songs were specific to the *ngulu* Chishimba, Mwaba, Kabemba and Chimpembya. Each spirit was called with a specific song and mimicked by its dance; Kabemba, for example, is associated with the whirlwinds, and Chimpembya with hunting.

Two other women from the crowd eventually joined permanently. As the dancing went on, the faces of the dancers were smeared with white clay and flour. Dancing at times was erratic, maybe in imitation of the meaning of specific songs. Occasionally a woman fell into trance to lie on the floor for some minutes. They became very sensitive to the beats of the drums; the drummers also were sensitive to the movements of the women and experimented with different beats. At some points, the onlookers made comments to each other about the nature of the spirits, seeking clues in the dialects or words that the befallen people used. When a spirit mixed French words with Bemba, it was obviously from Congo, on the other side of the Luapula River. The spectrum of *ngulu* that people knew was international and included Belgian spirits and foreign *Mikalai* spirits. One woman came to me, provocatively dancing just in front of me, telling me things I could not understand, in a high-pitched and stuttering voice. My neighbour said she wanted to know whether I was also befallen, in which case I should dance. The vigilant Doctor Kangwa eventually chased her away from me. The atmosphere was light. The *bangulu*, being temporarily mad or acting as such, provoked much laughter. They seemed to enjoy being in a different mood. When a woman was on the ground, some onlookers made sure her legs remained closed to prevent her from exposing herself. Doctor Kangwa used a stick to continuously chase children out of the circle; few seemed to take his warnings at face value.

Altogether, between twenty and thirty adults were present, not all of them staying for the whole time. The drummers complained from time to time that their hands were painful because of the extensive drumming; they were rewarded with some distilled spirits (*lutuku*) to drink, to keep them happy and drumming. At 24:00 hours, only a few people were left, and we all went to sleep. Those who had danced were exhausted, one woman lying on the ground already for some time. The next day the two patients seemed tired but happy. "I had a headache before, but now it's gone. It is only dancing which frees me from this headache," one of them said.

SONGS OF THE SPIRITS

The next day I asked the children, in the presence of Doctor Dorika, to sing for me songs of *ngulu* that they knew. The children easily recalled thirty songs. I was interested to hear from Doctor Dorika how she looked at their meaning. She had been dancing for spirits for more than twenty years. Many songs are like an open window into the world of those befall-

en. The *bangulu* can put something of their life experience into the songs, and so can the onlookers who sing along. Like in the previous night, the children started with songs that were about inviting people to the dance:

*Imbililila umunobe we koni mu mobe
akakwimbilila.*

Sing for your friend, you little bird, at
your home it will also sing for you.

*Tamwimbilako abanenu na imwe muka-
wilwa, mayo, tamwimbilako abanenu.*

You are not singing for your friends;
you also, one day, will be befallen by
spirits, why are you not singing for your
friends?

“One cannot dance for oneself,” explained Doctor Dorika. Singing and dancing for the *bangulu* needs the support of others. Through its presence, the community acknowledges the plight of the sick. The songs encourage people to come; today somebody needs their help, tomorrow they themselves will need help from others. Lessons for our approach are self-evident: we need to do justice to the communitarian aspect of dealing with spirits.

Many songs communicate to the onlooker what it is like to be befallen. Below are those that were helpful to me to feel myself—with the help of Doctor Dorika—into such experiences of selfhood.

*Nalilele naloto mweshi, umweshi tabalo-
ta, nalilele naloto mweshi. Kalya kason-
gole katuto buluba kalya kali pe lungu,
kalya kasongole katuto buluba.*

I slept and dreamt of the moon; one
does not dream of the moon. This small
orange tree in the marshes is budding
flowers.

The song was very popular with the children, though the meaning of the song was not meant for them. To dream of the moon is a sign of having *ngulu* spirits. “Others do not dream those dreams but you dream them. People misunderstand you when the spirits start coming to you,” explained Doctor Dorika. The moon is a metaphor for a girl having her (first) menses, a sign of becoming ready for marriage, in this case marriage with the spirits. The small wild orange tree, standing lonely in the marshes, a place for the spirits, has started to bud flowers, like a girl who is developing small breasts and will attract men, or—in this case—spirits.

*Kamatete-kamyunga elelele na lelo kaisa
kunjipaya.*

The small reed full of thorns, today
again you have come to kill me.

“Having *ngulu* is like being tortured with much pain all over the body,” explained Doctor Dorika. If the last song spoke about an upcoming marriage with the spirits, then this song makes it clear that the relationship between the possessed and the possessing spirit is far from some romantic notion of love. As a marriage is full of misunderstandings and troubles, so is the relationship with the spirits. The spirits punish arbitrarily, beat, threaten and remain unpredictable. Maybe it is from this unpredictability that their potential to be transformative arises, because their nature is ultimately beyond appeasement.

Kupeshe lungu kulikonka, kwendamo. In order to cross the marshes, you have
Kupeshe lungu kulikonka kwendamo to walk through them.
yombwe.

“Marshes are places for the spirits,” explained Doctor Dorika. “Many people are afraid to cross the marshes. You have to be prepared for a long and difficult journey when you have *ngulu*. The only way is just to go and embark on this journey.”

Kakowa, koni kapale mpemba, kakowa, *Kakowa*, this bird resembles white clay,
ninshi wakalengele. *kakowa*, you have painted it.

The *nkoba* bird (in the Luapula called *nkowa*, *lukowa* or *kakowa*) to which the song refers is a strikingly white egret. However, once the feathers are plucked, its body is black. The song refers to the smearing of the faces of the *bangulu* with white clay during the dances. “The *ngulu* come into people, but then again people walk out again.” The song expresses transformation.¹⁸

Ba Mwaba, balemwikata, twabuke, lelo Mwaba (the name of an *ngulu*), today
mwela walala, ba cibanda, balemwikata, they will catch you, let us cross over to
twabuke, lelo mwela walala. the other side, today there is no wind,
the (bad) spirits will catch you, let’s
cross over, there is no wind.

¹⁸ There is also a story (a *kashimi*) of a *lukoba* bird that was killed, but a human being walked out. The same bird plays a symbolic role in girls’ puberty rites (*cisungu*), where it refers to lies (presenting black as white), and where it is mimicked in its pretentious way of walking (showing off). In a positive way, however, the bird also symbolises the required ability to keep secrets in a marriage. It is an example of a symbol that carries both negative and positive meanings depending on its situational usage.

“It is difficult to deal with the spirits,” explained Doctor Dorika, “because they are like on the other side of a big river that you cannot cross because there is always wind. But today we can cross. The dancing is like crossing the river. When we dance we go to the other side where the spirits are, where we can know them and deal with them.”

Dancing makes it possible for the *bangulu* to reach the spirit world; for Doctor Dorika, dancing is a privileged way of discerning where good and bad influences come from.

<i>Ine ndi kabula ka mutobo: nga napenuka</i>	I am like a leaf of the <i>mutobo</i> tree, when
ndeya no mwela.	I am mad (possessed) I go with the
	wind.

The *mutobo* tree is a big-leaved poisonous tree whose twitches are used to drive away snakes. Here, however, the song is danced to by mimicking the losing of balance of the uneven leaves, which are being carried away by the wind in an unpredictable manner. “The *bangulu* are like the *mutobo* tree: They lose balance and go with the wind for a very long time. The wind may carry them anywhere; they do not know where the wind is carrying them. *Bangulu* are not like humans. They can go over fire, run through thorns, climb on anthills; they can go anywhere when they are befallen by the spirits, and will not get hurt or tired,” explained the Doctor.

<i>Bakaluwe muleenda kutali mwandeta,</i>	Bakaluwe (spirits of the hunters), you
<i>mwandeta ku malungu mukutobela</i>	are moving on and have brought me
<i>ilungu. We ciloshi ufuleme</i>	very far, and you brought me into the
<i>fulamuka twakwishiba. Webo ulowa</i>	marshes to find relish. You witch who is
<i>abantu—fwebo tulowe nama.</i>	naked, run away, we know you. You are
	bewitching people, we bewitch animals.

The *bakaluwe* or *bakalwe* are spirits of hunters who help them find and trap game. While the hunters (those with spirits) are out at night to find meat, they interfere also in the trade of the witches who cross their paths. Their spirits give them eyes to see the activities of witches, invisible to normal people. People with spirits see the hidden world. However, since they see so many things, including the witches, their lives become troublesome. “When other people just sleep we are seeing all these things. It is not easy. We see witches passing by. We see lights and naked people. We see people walking backwards and even on their heads. We see so many things. It is better not to know those things.”

*Mu nindi abafwa mulanunka ngale
njemomo.*

In the grave the dead smell badly, now
let me enter inside.

This song was one of the last ones sung, to close the ceremony; people were tired and went to sleep. "We are not allowed to eat many things, so we smell like the dead. Moreover, sometimes the spirits do not allow us to wash ourselves. So we are like the dead." Being close to the spirits also means to be close to the realm of the dead.

The songs and the explanations of Doctor Dorika helped me to find an entry-point into the experiences of loneliness, pain, seeing something of the invisible world or being close to the dead. They also helped me to sense a certain excitement and transformation. Spirits may be difficult to deal with, but they point towards human experiences that should not remain foreign to the helper. Their creative loneliness can become a human resource that can benefit the community and reframe tensions that are felt by many.

APPROPRIATING THE MESSAGE OF THE POSSESSED

Christians have difficulties with dances that expressively call upon spirits (like the dances of Dorika), that allow the spirits to speak, and that give heed to their instructions. Catholics involved in such practices are often barred from the sacraments or given other sanctions. After the dances, Doctor Dorika asked me if I would also welcome her in the Catholic Church.

"I would," I answered. "All are welcome to pray. However, in the same way as your spirits give you rules and regulations, our Church also has rules. Your spirits forbid you to eat pig, barbell-fish and cassava-leaves. I also would not allow you to receive the Eucharist in our church. You cannot mix things else you will become confused, and so will we! You drew a line during the dances. Those with spirits were inside, those without spirits outside. We also draw a line in church. But we are always happy when you come to church and pray with us, just as you welcomed me to clap with you."

Doctor Dorika understood this. At some point down the road, church authorities need to make a judgement to discern what is compatible with the Christian faith and what is not. However, this stance should not lead to forms of disrespect. Pastoral policies could be more creative, and we can also come up with more non-exclusive norms.

Many patients who danced with the spirits have lived through extensive experiences of alienation from their families or from the larger community. They often feel exhausted after a night of dancing and may remember little of it the following day. Many of those I interviewed had a feeling of well-being afterwards. The night of dancing had relieved them of pain, be it outer pain or inner pain. I do not want to give the romantic impression that dances with the spirits always correspond with healthy, integrating psychological endeavours. They may also deteriorate into a form of escapism, encouraging the avoidance of responsibilities or, according to missionary sources, produce licentious behaviour.¹⁹ However, it is difficult to deny the curative and creative potential that lies in this cultural heritage. It can hardly be moral to forbid the dancing with spirits if one does not offer an alternative that addresses the needs of the patients in a way that equally brings relief and appreciation.

Our approach of abstaining from making definite conclusions about the nature of spirits enables us to focus on other important happenings during possession. We are dealing with a drama that involves also communication between the possessed and the onlookers. Victims have communicated to the onlookers that their weird behaviour is beyond their own subjective control; they are victims of the spirits. The community has accepted this and frees the possessed from blame and shame. The spirits are blamed. The drama enables both the victim and the community to externalise disruptive types of behaviour and evasive experiences onto outer spirits, express them, laugh at them and communicate with them.

The spirits also have a message for society. The possessed can say things that are half nonsense and half serious. Nobody can blame them for their utterances; it is not they who speak but the spirits. The community often expects some social commentaries to be part of the messages from the spirits. Onlookers may (or may not) take up one or two points into their local gossip—this is beyond the direct control of those whom the spirits befall). Nevertheless, there is always the possibility that a symbol catches the imagination of the community. The possessed often have an extraordinary talent for absorbing from the community tensions with which everybody struggles, which the spirits then express. In this sense, we can call them the artists of a community.

¹⁹ Some missionary sources stressed that possession cults could open the door to licentious behaviour: the spirits forbid their female hosts to have sexual intercourse with their husbands, but could allow them to engage in sex with other befallen people (Oger 1972).

SPIRITS AND GENDER

Why do spirits affect—at least in Zambia—more women than men (nature spirits, demons, even Satanism)? Modern discourses have often regarded the gendered pattern of spirit possession in terms of deprivation theories, suggesting that women compensate for psychological and social deprivation through the cultural and religious means available to them. When I asked this question during seminars and workshops, I received answers that differed from the deprivation theory:

We women are more emotional.

Women are more connected to the spiritual world.

Women are more sensitive to such things.

Women give life, so they are more connected to other forms of life.

Even in the Bible, spirits were marrying women, not men [Gen 6].

Such answers illustrate a general perception that the experience of life and the spirit world is gendered; women and men do not perceive spirits equally. Deprivation and compensation theories start with a perceived lack that a possessed person is presumed to experience in “real life”. In our own approach we prefer to look for the potential that is underutilised or idle. We do not start by asking: “What is wrong with that person?” Instead, we affirm: “This person has many potentials which are still hidden to the world but are calling to break through and bubble out into public life.” In our approach, we do not deny that experiences of possession by spirits or demons can be mixed with experiences of trauma, abuse, a lack of belonging, and other negative and limiting factors. Nevertheless, even here the ultimate aim is the discovery of the person’s hidden potential. People possessed by spirits have a message that needs to be heard. Trauma limits a person’s public potential and exiles many people into silence. The spirits, in contrast, force the person to cry out, become a public figure and leave the solitary confinements imposed by oneself or by society. The possessed start a process of symbolisation of invisible forces that many other people also experience without being able to put this into words. We help them to do this in a Christian framework.

Human life is supposed to grow and to create ever new layers of selfhood that are associated with certain types of relationships (see chapter 14). Relationships branch out with age and have a spiritual dimension. For many young women, however, social life can become very limited with the onset of marriage. While the man sees his role as going out into

the world, the role given to many young married women is to stay at home and look after the children. "I am asked to be the lock of the house," said one young woman who eventually was befallen by *ngulu* spirits. Before getting married, she had been active at church and at school. Now she could no longer attend the choir, have friends, be admired and play a public role. This had changed to a life of loneliness and depression. The *ngulu* spirits gave her back a public role, taking her out of the confinements of the house. They affirmed that she had something to offer to society also beyond her role as wife and mother. Any attempt to free such a woman from the spirits must go hand in hand with seeking an alternative way of bringing her out of the confinements of the domestic unit and giving her a meaningful role in the community, thus building on her talents and potentials. If in Zambia far more women are "befallen" by the spirits than men, certain questions need to be asked about the platforms given to women in the social, political and religious spheres, including the churches.¹

If we accept that the pattern of spirit possession is gendered, and if we want to go beyond the deprivation theory, then we need to acknowledge that women's experiences with the spirit world and with God cannot be translated directly into non-gendered expressions. If many women find it easier to gain access to the spirit world than men do, and if they find this access in different ways than men do, then their experiences need to be given a unique voice and place also in the Church. Only then can we say, as a Church, that we are dealing meaningfully with the problem of spirit possession.

¹ Older women find it often much easier to speak up and become a public persona with an own voice. But many older women with spirits got them when they were young.

10

Hearing voices

Psychopathology and spirituality

People who hear voices and act on them are often branded as psychotic in one culture and as demon-possessed in another. Yet many famous people had to cope with hearing voices, including many saints and people who had much to offer to the world. It is reported that Socrates heard voices, as did Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint John of the Cross, Saint Joan of Arc, Carl Jung, Mahatma Ghandi and many others.

Not all people with spirits hear voices. Many people in Zambia who do hear voices, however, associate them with spirits. Veronica in the case study of chapter 8 understood her voices first in terms of *ngulu* spirits, then as coming from angels, and later as coming from demons. In our approach, we encourage an indeterminate stance on such experiences. Voices and visions are allowed to be there, and we do not need to know the final answer about their nature. In a number of our cases, the inner voices disappeared after some time, maybe in response to prayers. In other cases, they did not disappear. Sometimes a person has to live with a certain condition throughout life. In England alone, the Hearing Voices Movement counts more than 150 support groups for people living with voices.² Once we delink these voices from the concepts of demons, people are more accepting and more capable of living with such experiences instead of living against them in continual fights, spiritual warfare and exorcisms. In a similar way, we should delink the condition of hearing voices from the mental disorder label (schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, delusional disorder) and the corresponding stigma of madness that is often attached to it and to other psychotic conditions. The Hearing Voices Movement has been advocating this for a long time, and additionally has provided us with ways to feel ourselves into the experiences of people hearing voices:

² <https://www.hearing-voices.org/> (assessed on 14th of October 2014)

We must accept that the voices exist. We must also accept that we cannot change the voices. They are not curable, just as you cannot cure left-handedness—human variations are not open to cure—only to coping. ... It takes time for people to accept that hearing voices is something that belongs to them.³

You may have had the experience of hearing someone call your name only to find that there is no one there. Indeed, research shows that, especially for people recently bereaved, it is not an uncommon experience to hear the voice of the recently deceased person. That is not the only explanation of what it is like. As well as hearing voices through the ears, people also hear voices as if they are thoughts entering the mind from somewhere outside themselves. This is not the same as a suddenly inspired idea, which people usually recognise as coming from themselves, rather the thoughts are not their own and would seem to come from outside their own consciousness, like telepathy.⁴

Some of the people who hear voices have likened them to the experience of hearing a tune, which pops up uninvited. It was not the conscious mind, which made a decision to think about the melody, nor is it easy to stop thinking about it, and many times the person does not even have a strong liking for that particular tune. It has just come up by itself, and the person continues to hum along with it. In a similar way, the voices come up and engage the person, who has no idea what the voices are going to say next.

There are many different ways to hear voices. Voices can be experienced inside the head, from outside the head, or even in the body. It may be one voice or many voices. The voice may talk to you or about you. ... Some people, for instance, experience non-verbal thoughts, images and visions, tastes, smells and touch. All with no physical cause and all sensations they did not call into being themselves. ... Voices can be like dreams. ... When we dream all sorts of strange things can happen to us, but we still believe they're really happening to us. Hearing voices can be like that—a waking dream—but something that is experienced as real.⁵

³ Romme n.d.

⁴ From Intervoces n.d.

⁵ From Intervoces n.d.

The contents of the voices differ greatly. Some people are warned or encouraged by the voices, while others feel abused, ridiculed and harassed by them. A number of people who came to our support group experienced their voices as forms of Satanism. The voices commanded them, “Kill!” or, “Be rude! Answer back!” The voices also gave them negative feedbacks, “You are stupid!”—“You are worthless,” and so on. One young adult narrated that he had many times left a meeting or even prayers because the voices told him to do so. At other times, he would stop talking to somebody on account of a voice which told him, “Shut up!”

Voices can have positive and negative consequences for a person’s self-image; they may also just be there, saying things that seem unrelated to any important matter in life. Voices can also be triggered by traumatic experiences. Amnesty International reported that many victims of torture and sleep deprivation were hallucinating during and after their agony.⁶ Eleanor Longdon, a psychologist and specialist in dissociation, who herself experiences the hearing of voices in very dramatic ways, explained that

Each voice was closely related to aspects of myself, sexual trauma, anger, shame, guilt, low self-worth. Crucially, the most hostile and aggressive voices represented the parts that had been hurt most profoundly. These had to be shown the most compassion and care.⁷

Longdon explains that from her experience, fighting against the voices in a “civil war within” is not helpful. Compassion with oneself (and others) and the acceptance of the voices as something that belongs to the person is a better approach. Voices can also be a coping mechanism. For some, voices can correspond to the emotional state in which they are experiencing aspects of the world. For others, voices can be a defence against overwhelming forbidden feelings. For others, voices can keep alive the experiences of powerlessness and injustice that were the effects of trauma or abuse, and such voices should not be silenced when their message has not yet been heard. Longdon proposes that one should not ask a person who hears voices, “What is wrong with you?”—but rather, “What happened to you?” and should do so without passing judgements on the answer. This point is important when considering exorcism: spiritual warfare against the voices can contribute towards alienation from oneself and can work against the goal of self-acceptance.

⁶ See for example <http://www.intervoiceonline.org/support-recovery/a-practical-guide> (accessed on 27th November 2014).

⁷ Longdon 2013.

INDIVIDUAL DISCERNMENT

Many people who struggled with voices had to come up with their own discernment strategies. Saint John of the Cross, for example, trusted voices which he felt came from inside himself. Some of them were very encouraging, faith-increasing and coming across so real and powerful that he could remember the details of the experience until the end of his life. He called them “substantial voices”. He discerned the presence of God in them and they became part of himself, his destiny and his life-orientation.⁸ Other voices that he heard came more from outside. It was as if somebody talked with him, like an invisible person. He mistrusted such voices and located them as belonging “to the world”. John of the Cross did not look at all his voices in the same way. The experiences of Saint Teresa of Avila were similar. She recognised that God speaks through voices. At the same time, she warned that one needs to be very careful with such experiences and to submit them under the authority of the Church, since we judge our own affairs with many blind spots.

What is the role here for the pastor? People often want to pray the voices away, and sometimes this may work. However, the crucial task of the priest is to help the person in the discernment process, provide an atmosphere of acceptance, promote patience, and gradually come to see which voices help or hinder, and help the client to develop an individual way of coping. The following case study is a powerful example:

DRAMA 16: CHENGO IS THROWN INTO HELL⁹

During the last year of his academic studies, Chengo collapsed into mental darkness. People who remained invisible to others followed him constantly. These people talked to him. Sometimes they beat him or threatened to kill him. He withdrew from social life. His family tried many ways to help him. In the psychiatric hospital, doctors diagnosed bipolar disorder. They put him on heavy medication. While the medication reduced his suffering, it also sapped energy out of his body, doing violence to his body and to his soul. He stopped taking them.

His family took him to churches and prophets. Pastors shouted at him and expected him to repent and accept Jesus Christ. He felt that such prayers were doing violence to him. He participated out of love for his

⁸ At this point, one may also draw attention to the fact that the religious vocabulary of “personal vocation” refers literally to experiences of hearing and following a voice.

⁹ Chengo’s experiences lasted many months. I can describe here only some episodes in rudimentary form.

family who were distressed because of his sickness. His journey from prayer to prayer, however, brought him close to other patients, for whom he developed a feeling of compassion. What he saw as exploitation of vulnerable people by some pastors disturbed him greatly:

One day I attended prayers, and I realised a woman next to me, vulnerable and distressed. She was being shouted at by the pastor who was casting out her demons. Anger filled me, against the pastor, and I became very courageous. When he came to pray over me, I fell down and pretended to be in trance. The pastor was excited, and so was the congregation. He shouted at me, "In the name of Jesus!"

I also shouted at him, "I am the devil! I am much stronger than you!"

When he bent down over me to cast out my devil, I gave him a punch on his face; his nose started bleeding. He continued, "In the name of..."

I gave him a second punch, which brought him down on the floor. I stood up, and told the congregation, "The devil has defeated Jesus!" and walked out of the church.

Not knowing what else to do, his mother took him to a young traditional healer, not far from their home, a member of a Mutumwa Church, who had spirits (*mizimu*); he had a good reputation for treating people with mental illnesses. The healer had not gone to school, could not read or write, and suffered himself from an eye sickness for which he refused medical treatment. However, at the healer's place, an unlikely process of recovery started for Chengo.

Chengo described one stage of his recovery in terms of connecting or reconnecting to nature, to his family (with its different branches) and to society. He considered also the setting up of a daily structure to be important; many rituals repeated themselves day by day. In the morning when the sun was rising, he had to bath near a crossing point of two paths. In the evening, he had to bath again, near a rubbish heap, facing the opposite direction, where the sun was setting. There was also a time for doing menial work. Routine gave him a sense of control. He himself tried to give meaning to what he was doing. "I am bathing at the crossroad, because crossroads connect me to any road in the world. I become connected to the world, to all sorts of people." When bathing at the rubbish pit, he saw his pain slowly reduce with the setting sun. Rituals created a sense of order.

His relationship with the healer was deep. They did not talk much, but spent a lot of time together. He liked his voice, which was soft. Chengo accepted that this healer had something to offer to him. "God likes to choose the small ones in order to humble the proud."

Every week people came to pray and to dance at the small Mutumwa Church—some were sick, others healthy. Oddly, also a Catholic priest, a friend of his, visited him regularly to bring Holy Communion and to discuss philosophy and theology. His visits helped Chengo to feel connected to his Church also in these strange and unlikely surroundings. Very different people came to the healer and became part of Chengo's world. Sometimes he could feel the pain of others in his own body. At this stage, it was not rational arguments that made him capable of coping with the voices. It was the sound of the healer's voice.

Sometimes it was the tone of a voice to which I connected with my soul. There was a connection between us. Equally, I loved to listen to the voice of Pope Jean-Paul II and felt a connection with him. Music also was important, and the songs sung at the Mutumwa Church reminded me of songs from my childhood. I remembered that my grandfather had taught me when I was a child: "Everything has a song. Every tree, every house, every stone, every animal, if you know its song you have access to its soul."

However, the negative voices continued to follow him also at the healer's place, to threaten and despise him. They told him to kill himself. Threatening people appeared in visions. Sometimes they took him as if they were lifting him up. A turning point came when the healer sent him on "a spiritual journey". After diagnosing the presence of witchcraft on his mother's side of the family tree (a diagnosis that Chengo refused to accept), the healer said he should now go back spiritually to his father's side where he could find healing:

Family members from this branch needed to be around during this process; they cooked food that is typical for our home area. This was the worst week in terms of experiencing visions and voices and I felt dependent on the presence of the healer. However, at one point the healer told me: "Now you have to be alone. I could come with you up to this point. But now you have to face these people alone."

All along that week, I was in a type of trance, maybe because of the teas and medicines that he made me drink. The threatening people wanted to throw me into hell. Then I had an inspiration.

Remembering the love I felt for my family, I told them: "Yes, that is a good idea. Throw me into hell, so that I can transform it into a place of love. I can even go and baptise the devil!"

The invisible people seemed to shrink away from me. At that moment, I realised that they had no power over me; I had power over them.

Subsequently, he transferred this experience unto other situations. Once, for example, he saw that invisible people sent a lion to devour him. In his mind, he told the lion: "You lion, from now on you are a pussy cat!" The lion in his vision started to shrink. Chengo had learnt not only to accept inner voices and visions but also to creatively transform them.

After staying at the healer's place for three months, Chengo emerged as a more peaceful and social man; he had also learnt how to look after himself (self-care) in terms of getting sleep and rest, and avoiding stress. His own experiences with visions connected him to many others in similar conditions, and he is now teaching them the method for transforming them through active imagination.

Coping with voices is an individual process. There is no easy, universal path that works for all. Chengo was helped by a traditional healer. The cure worked for him, but it may not have worked for others. Chengo did not buy into all the discourses of the healer. He refused for example to make witchcraft responsible for his condition. He also refused to shift the blame onto demons when various pastors prayed over him. He had the ability to selectively pick helpful elements from the healer's treatment. Maybe this sense of taking responsibility for his own treatment was one of the keys to his success. Like Saint John of the Cross, he developed a personal way of dealing with inner voices.

The terminology of mental illness or mental disorders may imply that there is no meaning in the random visions or hallucinations that a person undergoes, and no connection to the person's spiritual life. Chengo in contrast allowed his condition to become part of his personal spirituality. In Zambian traditions, the healer has always been a wounded healer. Chengo did not allow his condition to silence him; instead his own experiences, weird to himself and to others, gave him an entry-point to help others in original and creative ways that only he could own.

11

Deliverance, prayer, and ritual

Bringing spirits before God

The logic of the moral/ethic orientation of African Religion is unmistakable: wherever and whenever there is a diminishment or a destruction of the forces of life, something must be done to restore it, whenever there is a breach of order in the universe as established by God through the ancestors, humanity must see to it that harmony is restored.¹

This maxim, quoted from the work of Laurenti Magesa, holds true for situations where people have to cope with spiritual attacks. Something needs to be put right after such attacks that concern social relationships and the spiritual world (ancestors, God). African traditions are rich with rituals that address such breaches. By submitting to a ritual, affected families renew life and their relationships, thereby starting to live with each other on different grounds.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RITUAL

Living with an awareness of being overpowered by spiritual forces, many feel that their own powers are not strong enough to cope. They turn to a greater power for help. Some find such powers in the extraordinary abilities of diviners or Christian prophets. Maybe the power of an exorcism depends also on the faith of the possessed in the exorcist and on the faith of the exorcist in his/her own divine powers. But such an emphasis on the powers of one person comes also with a set of new problems. Some Christian prophets convey absolute certainty about their spiritual abilities and demand an absolute trust. This often gives rise to idiosyncratic forms of interpretation and interventions, sometimes with harmful consequences. The uniqueness of their powers puts them above any control

¹ Magesa 1998, p. 175.

and also above the opinion of medical professionals. In our approach, we have developed a certain sense of distrust to such extraordinary powers. We do not wish to downplay the spiritual powers of exorcism, but where it depends alone on the powers of the priest or pastor (real or imagined), it will hardly help the patient to develop own inner powers. We advocate instead a stance that focuses on the communitarian powers of the church community. Well-prepared rituals that engage the Christian community can give the support that people need, without falling into the trap of a showdown between the powers of the devil and the powers of the pastor. The healing rituals in our approach are community-centred, not “pastor-centred” or “exorcist-centred”; God’s powers are mediated through the local church community, however ordinary its individual members may look on first sight. Their faith heals.

In many African practices, the spiritual world is addressed through the human body. Dealing with unseen worlds is not a matter of formulating some intellectual prayers. It needs to involve the physical body and mediums that open the person up to the helpful spiritual dimensions beyond the cerebral level. In ecstatic charismatic prayers people are allowed to cry, to shout and to fall into a trance. However, the terminology of spiritual warfare often circles around the powers of some individual charismatic “prayer-warriors”, which we avoid. Alternative rituals can bring out more clearly the dimension of the power of the believing community and its faith, while also providing a peaceful atmosphere of prayer with an emphasis on growth, instead of extraordinary spiritual battles. A communitarian ritual can lead to an awareness of community support.

An example of such a ritual consists of a symbolic burial rite. We have used it successfully both in rural and urban settings. The rite rose out of common reflections in our community in Kasamba Parish (Luapula Province) together with some of the people we ministered to, and we came up with it as a team. Here the description of one incident. It concerned people with *ngulu* (“nature spirits”). At other occasions, we used this rite also successfully for the deliverance from demons and Satanism.

A SYMBOLIC BURIAL RITE

Seven people with *ngulu* spirits were registered to undergo the ritual. All wanted the spirits to go, but felt that they needed a ritual to help them pass to another stage of life, of which the *ngulu* spirits would no longer be part. All seven patients had been visited at home by one of the two priests and by church council members. In a preparatory meeting the

seven patients shared their experiences with the spirits with each other and with the group. It was attended by some church members, the patients' families, another priest and myself. They explained when it had started, and how the spirits affected their lives. The atmosphere of the meeting was accepting and non-judgemental; the sick had an occasion to publicly share their struggles. Some went as far as revealing their recurrent dreams, which they associated with the spirits. In the meeting, they also professed their Christian faith and their faith in the Church. We told them of the requirements for personal preparation: each day they had to pray in their homes. Those living near each other were to meet and have a short prayer together each day. The family members needed to be present for the ritual. They had to bring one blanket and one candle, which would be used in the ritual.

When the day approached, the patients were put in quarantine. A prayer leader stayed with them and accompanied them with prayers. In the meantime, choirs and members of the congregation decorated the church. Mats were spread out in the middle, and family members and the choir positioned themselves around the mats in a circle. One of us priests talked with the patients, encouraging them just to allow the ritual to take over. Its purpose was to bring their sufferings and spirits into the presence of God, in faith. We assured the patients that God is close to them in the ritual and, in his own way, will address the issues placed into his hands. "None of us sees the spirits, but God sees them." When everything was ready, the choir started to sing inside the church. One patient after another was led into the church by a church leader. They had to remove their shoes as an acknowledgement of stepping on holy ground. One of us priests sprinkled them with holy water at the entrance. Some walked calmly to the mats and sat down. Others started shivering upon being sprinkled and were accompanied to the mats, where they quickly fell into a trance, quietly shivering. After a penitential rite, some readings were read, showing the authority of Jesus over unclean spirits and the demands given to those who follow him. Those not yet overcome by trance made a profession of faith. Then they were buried symbolically: they had to lie down and their family members covered them completely with blankets. This ritual re-enacted their baptism in which they had died with Christ and rose with him to new life. After being covered, the choir and families sang a solemn funeral song. Then everybody threw some soil unto the blankets in a dramatic imitation of burial. A period of silence followed—the silence of the grave. One woman was still quietly shivering under the blanket, but was soon also overcome by the silence. A Bible verse was read

that talked about dying to the old life and being raised with Jesus to a new life. After some time, the choir burst out with Easter songs and people started to dance joyfully around the patients. The families lifted the blankets and liberated their members from the "grave". They gave each patient a burning candle. Many family members were holding their own burning candles. By now, it was night outside. Some patients joined the dancing. Others were too exhausted. The church was filled with an atmosphere of relief and energy, visible in the patients and their families, the choir and the congregation. After a time of extensive singing, everybody was blessed.

The families were asked to prepare for the patients the foods that the spirits had forbidden them to eat. A week later, everybody met again and the patients shared their experiences. In this particular case, all seven patients felt freed from their spirits; they had started to eat the forbidden foods. In subsequent months, each of the former patients had to commit themselves to a simple ministry that would benefit people in the church (visiting the sick, helping the poor, looking after church visitors, etc.)

During the ritual, we priests and the parish community abstained from building up a language of spiritual warfare. The source of power over alienating powers was not located in the priests or some extraordinary gifted individual, but the faith of the church community. Though some patients fell into a trance, a peaceful atmosphere prevailed. Experiences with such rituals have taught me that they tend to work well if they are well prepared (preparatory meetings, visits to the families, etc.) However, they can become chaotic when attended by patients who slip in without having undergone a process of preparation. Where the burial rite was viewed as too dramatic, we have sometimes chosen other symbols: fresh soil (death and new life), fire or burning charcoals (purification) or herbs and roots (life-forces). Such rites renewed not only the patients (now accepted as being reborn) but also the Christian community.

Part Four

Helping victims of witchcraft attacks

Helping victims of witchcraft attacks

In the English language, witchcraft means the craft of the witch. Also in Zambia, witchcraft is related to a craft or a technology. But the concept refers more to a force or a power. I will show that people understand witchcraft as *a living force* that the witch manipulates and that attains a connection with the witch's own soul. It is "living" in the sense that it maintains an immediate relationship to the soul of the witch but also to the soul and body of a victim, on whose life-forces it may feed. Even if it comes to reside in a charm or in some other manifestations (for example an animal familiar, or a tattoo), it is more of a force than an object. When a diviner defuses a charm, the force of witchcraft is no longer believed to reside in it. This force is not ordinary but mysterious and hides itself from direct observation. It deeply violates the moral fabric of society. The force of witchcraft can be manipulated by the witch, be it through inherent capacities that some people are born with, through initiation, or through learned (secret) knowledge. While it escapes common observance, people nevertheless recognise its presence through the ways it reacts with body and soul, causing dreams or visions, or authoring uncanny events. Despite being mysterious, diviners in Zambia generally believe in possibilities of detecting the forces of witchcraft by means of powers akin to it that are, again, not ordinary. Some healers and diviners are born with such an ability or acquire it through initiation. Others receive it from God or from the spirits, or obtain it by way of using specific medicines, performing rituals of initiation or by manipulating important nodes of the cosmos.

Africanists know a distinction between *witchcraft*, which they understand as an inherited faculty or substance that bestows to the person certain detrimental abilities, and *sorcery*, a learned art of tapping into the occult with the help of mediating medicines.¹ In Zambia, this distinction is blurred. I will show how the voluntary practice of sorcery and the involuntarily, inherited types of witchcraft merge into one another. This has much to do with the understanding of personhood (chapter 13), and my argument will be important also for part six, when I discuss Zambian forms of Satanism. I use the term witchcraft (rather than sorcery), because the term has entered all Zambian languages. By means of the same

¹ It goes back to Evans-Pritchard 1937.

reason, a witch may denote in this book both male and female practitioners.

I am aware that much literature deals with the inadequacy of the English term as a description for African realities.² The term witchcraft is loaded by its usage in European history, even though this usage was far from being homogeneous.³ It bears the danger of equalising African experiences. Nevertheless, people do compare, and people in Zambia often asked me about witchcraft in Europe, and they recognised from my descriptions more similarities than differences. Many anthropologists reject evolutionary interpretations, such as “what Africa undergoes today, Europe underwent some centuries ago”. But it would harm our cause to argue that no lesson can be learnt in Africa from the European historical experiences, for example in regards to the changing role of the judiciary and its methods.⁴

Chapter 12 functions as an introduction into the pastoral situation and our way of response. I present at the end of the chapter a simple grid by contrasting helpful and unhelpful interventions when dealing with witchcraft attacks. It gives the reader a quick guide into our approach.

In chapter 13, I look at a Zambian linguistic understanding of witchcraft, also in relation to an awareness of selfhood and the soul.

Chapter 14 forms the longest chapter of this book. I look with many case studies at long-established cultural concepts that help us to describe the effects of witchcraft and also of other spiritual forces, and how a Christian discourse can look at concrete relationships to which the concepts point.

In chapter 15, I focus on bewitched children and child witches. Any help offered to them must take into consideration important dynamics that develop between the world of children and the world of adults. Here I also include a personal experience with witchcraft and the way it changed through our interactions.

Helping people who feel victim of witchcraft attacks should not eclipse the task of pursuing justice for the accused. I deal with this in part five.

² Bongmba 1998, 2001a, 2001b, Geschiere 1997, Hallen 2001.

³ Ginzburg 2004.

⁴ Mair 1980.



Ku muntu takwaba cisuma: “There is nothing good with people (for people).”



Icikupempula e cikulya: “The one who visits you (and looks friendly) is the one who eats you (destroys you, or sleeps with your wife).”



Muntu mubi inkalamo iweme. “Humans are bad. A lion is better!”



Ifiswango fya lelo bantu bansensu. “The beasts of today are our fellow humans.”

12

Reacting to witchcraft

Helpful and unhelpful interventions

In rural Zambia, many houses bear a drawing or a slogan. The first two photographs speak of the evilness of the human heart. The next two photographs thematise the problem of witchcraft. They express the fear that, beneath the friendly surface of day-to-day relationships, the hidden forces of wickedness, greed, jealousy, envy and hatred play themselves out in secret witchcraft attacks. The witch is sought among the very people one lives with: family and friends.

The last photograph (taken along the Luapula River of the front of a small house belonging to a youth) depicts one or two people trying to escape an attacking crocodile. The slogan runs: “*Ifiswango fya lelo, bantu banensu*”. (“The wild beasts of today are the people we live with.”) The image could be understood in a symbolic sense: we humans can behave like beasts in the way we deal with each other. But for the owner of the house it has a literal meaning. Attacks by crocodiles on people have increased dramatically in the last twenty years or so.⁵ Many recognise the forces of witchcraft behind these attacks. The belief is strong in Zambia that human hearts are needed for businesses to prosper, and that witches can turn themselves into crocodiles in order to obtain the requested hearts. Such witches are known as *bacisanguka*—“those who change themselves (into crocodiles)”, and the term also denotes a traitor.

Personally, I do not share the belief that witches can turn themselves into crocodiles in a literal sense, and I have not yet met a person able to demonstrate this ability to me. While I respect people who hold different beliefs about human nature than myself, I do not hide my own

⁵ New methods of fishing grossly decimated the stock of fish, and hunger has made crocodiles very aggressive. Some also speculate that new breeds of crocodiles, more aggressive, have been introduced through an abandoned crocodile farming project at the lake. Such mundane interpretations of recent changes in the behaviour of crocodiles towards humans stand side by side with interpretations based on witchcraft beliefs.

disbelief and will protect, as much as I can, the person accused to be a human crocodile from lynch justice and character assassination. At the same time, as a pastor, I need to engage with the beliefs and the concepts of witchcraft held by the people I am ministering to, and the life situations in which they make sense. And to propose from here concrete ways meet the Christian challenge.

The pictures above link witchcraft specifically to the evilness of the human heart: the secret emotions of jealousy, envy, bitterness, hatred and greed, which people in Zambia regard as the root causes of witchcraft. These motions of the heart cannot be brushed away as false beliefs. When lived out, they have dreadful consequences on human communal living; they should be in the centre of the Christian challenge. I believe that no human being is completely free from these destructive passions; in this sense, all of us are witches.

In Zambia, the Church has never been a neutral bystander on the stage of witchcraft. On one hand, she always condemned the practice of witchcraft. On the other hand, she also condemned the accusation of alleged witches on grounds of evidence derived at by means of divination or even prophecy. Christians expect from the Church tangible means of protection against witchcraft attacks. The Church's spiritual powers are supposed to be stronger than the forces employed by the enemy; the witch is supposed to run away from the Christian. In practice, however, it is often the other way round. Christians run away from the witches, because the Christian remedies do not always seem to work. The Church needs to address people's life-situation in a way that is meaningful to them, that does justice to the Christian faith (for example with its drive towards reconciliation), and that engages also with the medical and social factors that may have contributed to the experiences. The Church also needs to challenge a way of thinking that compels a person to project the causes of misfortune onto scapegoats.

People in Zambia do not always regard the Church as competent to deal with matters of witchcraft. Some of the reasons I have spelled out in chapter 2. The State and the Church stand often accused of failing even to recognise the reality of witchcraft, and, because of criminalising the procedures of witchfinding (in Cap 90 of the Laws of Zambia, known as the "Witchcraft Act"), many regard the Law as binding people's hands to deal with the problem of witchcraft.

In the last hundred years, much work has been done by the Churches to counteract the beliefs in witchcraft. The approach has often been rooted in the conviction that people's fear of witchcraft is based on wrong beliefs:

a faulty assumption of cause and effect, where sickness and misfortunes are erroneously attributed to witchcraft. Many compare the mysterious sicknesses that are attributed to witchcraft with placebo and nocebo effects: any belief, if strong enough, will also have biological and medical effects on the human body. They hope that witchcraft beliefs will eventually die out with the advance of higher education, access to modern facilities, and the incorporation of traditional sectors into the modern State. A rigorous application of national and international Law that protects the human rights and reputation of the accused would take out the steam from witchhunts.

So far, this hope has not been fulfilled. However, it would be wrong to say that the Churches' efforts have born no fruits. On the Catholic side, a number of priests led massive campaigns against the procedures of witch-finding, sometimes working with former witchfinders to educate people through dramas about its trickery. Such endeavours empowered many people to challenge the procedures and esoteric knowledge of the witchfinders. Here one example, of which I was a witness:

DRAMA 17: THE TRICKERY OF A WITCHFINDER IS EXPOSED

During one of our workshops that we held at Kapalala in Kasamba Parish (Luapula Province),⁶ with the help of a team of former witchfinders that had been recruited by Father Robert Lavertu (then working in Serenje Parish), we were told that a witchfinder, a *muçapi*, had been called to a nearby village. "He uses the same methods which you have revealed here: He talks with a spirit hidden in a calabash and with a walking stick." With a few people, I went to see this person. A specific family had called him, and in the cause of his stay in this family, many other people were coming to consult him: some to receive medicines for their illnesses, others to bring suspected witches to be verified as witches, cleansed from their witchcraft and punished for their offences. When we arrived, we found a frosty reception. He was surrounded by a large, supporting group of youngsters and helpers. We could speak with him only for a short time, then he asked us to leave; so did the owner of the house, a middle-aged woman: "We have permission from the chief. You cannot deny us the right to heal people at our home!" On our way out of the premises, we saw two people lying in the grass, like dead. They had been administered *mwafi*, the divining concoction. While we put them in my car to bring

⁶ The event took place in 2002.

them to the clinic, a woman followed us, pleading with us to come back: "Yesterday a family member of mine was killed with this *mwafi*. Now he forces my brother to drink the same poison!" After bringing the people to the clinic, I went to the police post in Milenge to report the matter. Since the officers had no own transport available, they asked me to accompany them to the site; one was armed with a gun.

Upon arrival, the police officers tried to persuade the diviner to accompany them to the police station in Milenge, but he refused. A member of the local "neighbourhood watch committee" took away the firearm of the police and asked us to leave. The person was supposed to work with the police, but now openly worked against them, to protect the diviner. The police officers felt powerless and asked me to bring them back to Milenge: "We cannot do anything with this mob around." I also felt powerless, not knowing what to do next. The man returned the firearm to the police officer, and we left. The police officers spoke about getting reinforcement, but it would take many days, if at all there was a chance for such an endeavour, considering the long distance (150km) to the next police station in Samfya.

The following day, a member of a large family, who was present at our workshop, received a call-out from the diviner; his name had appeared in the divinations when the diviner was attending to a certain family. He was given a date when to come in order to drink the *mwafi* to prove his innocence. Upon receiving the call-out, and knowing the powerlessness of the police, the man decided to do things in his own way. He arrived at the diviner's place a day earlier than called, together with a number of strong men, family and friends. The owner of the house did not allow them to enter. Here the description from the nephew of the accused:

The diviner was inside the house. We could hear him talking with a spirit, the same way as we saw in the workshop. Obviously, he had a castor bean in his nose. We knew that he used only trickery. We told the owner of the house that we were angry for being accused of witchcraft. "If we are not allowed into the house or if the diviner does not come out to see us, we will burn down the house!" We lighted a match, and pretended to put fire on the grass roof. The lady panicked and asked the diviner to come out of the house to face us. The moment he stepped out, we grabbed him, took out by force the castor bean from his nose, and said, "Now speak again with your spirits!" The diviner was also known for talking to his walking stick, which was answering him. "Talk to your stick!" we said. Now, with the bean removed from his nose, the stick could

no longer speak. More and more people joined us, since we made a lot of noise. We showed them how he had been cheating. We put the bean into our own noses and started to speak with the stick. We exposed also the other tricks with the calabash. People were angry, because many had given the diviner a lot of money, and one person had died of his “tea” while others were still in the clinic. We then started to beat the diviner. We broke his nose, and people said: “Where are your spirits?” We beat him so much, and I believe we broke his jaws. Then we left him to the owner of the house.

The diviner left the village the following day, injured. Three months later he died. In the aftermath of this story, we also had some conversations with the chief, who committed herself no longer to allow witchfinders into her country.

“SHOW US NOW THE REAL WITCHES!”

Educating people on the methods and trickery used in divinations and witchfinding did always have positive effects. However, such programmes did not expel the beliefs in witchcraft. Here a comment that I heard several times after a successful workshop:

Thank you very much for the workshop. We have been cheated many times by witchfinders; if you had only come earlier with this workshop, we would not have lost so much money. Nobody can cheat us anymore. But now, you also need to teach us how to find the real witches. If we cannot trust any longer our diviners, how do we catch the witches? We know that there are witches. Without diviners, the witches are no longer afraid. They are now like mice in a place without cats. If you remove the cats, how do you catch the mice?

Education about the exploitation of witchcraft beliefs is a noble venture. However, the comment demonstrates (and I have heard similar comments many times) that the Church needs to be directly engaged with people’s beliefs and the life-situations in which they make sense.

INSIGHTS FROM ANTHROPOLOGY

Witchcraft in Africa has been a crucial subject matter for anthropology since the foundation of the discipline. Many explanatory schemes explained for the anthropologist the persistence of witchcraft beliefs and

practices. For example, some images of witchcraft that are persuasive to-day may have conserved for us experiences with the slave trade of generations of people whose life-forces, work and livelihoods were extracted to feed the insatiable hunger for resources in other continents, together with the desire for wealth and power of neighbouring chiefs and allies. Ideas are widely shared in Africa that victims of witchcraft have to work as zombies in the fields of the witches, draw customers to the witches' businesses and no longer have personal willpower. The soul of a bewitched person becomes the slave of the witch. Some authors suggest that such images may retain their persuasiveness in modern experiences of exploitation.⁷

But witchcraft beliefs may not only mirror exploitation. They may also cement and recreate it. Hugo Hinfelaar reminds us that the exploitive slave trade in pre-colonial history faced very little internal resistance on Zambian soil over hundreds of years, and he makes witchcraft beliefs and practices responsible for this. Alleged or proven witches were sold into slavery as punishment for their crimes; the institution of slavery was a convenient means to get rid of undesirable elements in society. These, however, could also be the creative, gifted and enterprising people who threatened the status-quo.⁸

Whatever the past, witchcraft beliefs have adapted themselves very well to the modern world. Already in 1935, Audrey Richards showed that divining witchfinders (*bamucapi*) in her time were no longer elderly men dressed in bark cloth who used some traditional utensils, but the smartly dressed young men, often in jackets and ties, partly using the English language and using utensils and registration methods derived from the modern health sector.⁹ Diviners clearly felt at ease in the modern world. Witchcraft beliefs seemed even to increase with the arrival of modern life. Anthropologists examined the social processes that introduced new tensions into personal relationships and family structures, where witchcraft beliefs and accusations played themselves out.¹⁰ They also recognised in witchcraft discourses (the way people talk about witchcraft) a way of commenting on wider social, political and economic processes: Gossip about the local witch is also a condemnation of the moral state of modern society.

⁷ Auslander 1993, Comaroff & Comaroff 1993, 1999.

⁸ Hinfelaar n.d. "Introduction to the History of the White Fathers in Zambia."

⁹ Richards 1935. Note that I use the word witchfinder to translate the term *mucapi* (pl. *bamucapi*). A better translation would be "witchcleanser". But in order to cleanse a witch, one needs to divine who is the witch—hence the common translation witchfinder.

¹⁰ Victor Turner 1957; Max Marwick 1967, 1970; Binsbergen 1981.

Some anthropologists went a step further. They interpreted the persistence of witchcraft beliefs in Africa against the countless attempts of eradication as a form of critique and resistance to Western forms of government and ideologies and also to the Church. Some saw in the idiom of witchcraft "a practical discourse of hidden agency" in the face of failure of economic development,¹¹ or a way of making sense and giving shape to power relations. Others saw in it a way of addressing the insoluble contradictions, paradoxes and the unfulfilled desires of modern life by both resisting modernity when it comes in unfavourable terms and by capturing the novel forms of power that modernity presents.¹² Persistent beliefs in witchcraft show, they claim, that there are many paths to modernity in Africa. People who believe in witchcraft and speak about witchcraft resist the unification of experience of reality under such principles as "natural causes" or "chance" that sever the link between the cause of a misfortune and the ambiguity of social relationships in which they take place.¹³ Where people in Africa believe in witchcraft and talk about witchcraft, they often address issues that are neither addressed by the State nor by the Churches. Through the language of witchcraft, people recognise a link between power and wealth and the occult. Power, wealth and occult forces all need to be controlled, because they can be used for the benefit of a community but also for personal enhancement at the expense of the community.¹⁴ Gossip about witchcraft establishes a "moral code" and provides an entry point into a people's ethical, moral and religious system.¹⁵

Some anthropologists therefore see in witchcraft beliefs an ethical and religious system that speaks about the unspeakable and untestable; it articulates what is beyond empirical knowledge.¹⁶ Witchcraft beliefs have religious and existential dimensions that easily evade Western thought conditioned by the thinking of the Enlightenment. Western thinking bans witchcraft beliefs into the realm of "African traditional thinking" where it poses no threat to its own presuppositions. But witchcraft beliefs have successfully evaded such attempts of confinement to the traditional world and become fully at home in modernity.¹⁷ Witchcraft and moder-

¹¹ Apter 1993, p. 124.

¹² West 2001, p. 122.

¹³ See the introduction in Kippenburg 1987.

¹⁴ Bongmba 1998, 2001a, 2001b, Geschiere 1997, Ciekawy 2001.

¹⁵ Schmoll 1993 and the contributors in Bond and Ciekawy 2001.

¹⁶ Binsbergen 2001.

¹⁷ Peter Geschiere coined the phrase of the "modernity of witchcraft" (Geschiere 1997). He, and the contributors to the work edited by the Comaroffs (1993), do not seek to define modernity by some structural opposition to tradition, but hope to overcome this dichotomy by

nity meet in their opaqueness and inherent secrecy, their immense potentialities—access to which remains hidden—and in the ever-growing inequalities.¹⁸ Some have drawn out the similarities between the logic of money and the logic of a fetish;¹⁹ witchcraft and the modern world of politics and economics are be riddled with comparable contradictions and sharing the same logic.²⁰ In the words of Jean and John Comaroff, witches are modernity's prototypical malcontents.

While the rich are accused by the poor of obtaining their wealth through the hidden practice of witchcraft, they themselves fear the witchcraft of their jealous and demanding families, maybe in an implicit recognition that the creation and sustenance of wealth in a context of surrounding poverty goes hand in hand with the severing of extended kinship ties.²¹ The modern economic world leaves not much space for the traditional extended family. Turning against one's own kin has always been a master-image for the African witch. The logic of witchcraft then has an affinity with the way the effects of modern life are experienced in Africa. The traditional solidarity structures of kin and family fall apart in the pursuit for money and a modern life.²²

Other anthropologists take (rightly) issue with the way that such an analysis can reduce witchcraft to social and economic problems. For people, it is a spiritual problem and witchcraft exists as a force in its own right, and we are reminded to allow our own anthropological concepts to be challenged by that of the people we describe. Here I want to address a concern that can get lost in anthropological analysis that claims to be challenged by people's own concepts. It is of crucial concern in the Chris-

liberating witchcraft beliefs from the "patronising gaze" of modernity, which can never accept the worldview of witchcraft on equal terms, since this would undermine the foundations of Enlightenment thinking. This also implies, as Eze (2001) reminds us, that studies about witchcraft in Africa reveal as much about the investigating anthropologist and about the discipline of anthropology as it does about witchcraft.

¹⁸ Geschiere 1997, 1998.

¹⁹ Masquelier 1993, and Eze 2001.

²⁰ Schmoll 1993.

²¹ Bastian 1993, Parish 2000, Ferguson 1999.

²² On a methodological level, I have a question about the usage of the term modernity in such an analysis. I would define modernity, apart from a stress on empirical evidence, also by an effective presence of overarching State institutions, of a system of law which can be effectively appealed to, and of some modern machinery that addresses in some reliable form the needs of people in regards to the issues of health, education and security. According to such a definition, the dealings with witchcraft are taking place in a space that would be better defined by an absence of modernity. When we speak of "many modernities" but leave the term modernity itself ill defined, we also need to ask, as also other critics say, whether it is possible to sever the notion of modernity from the specific conditions that gave rise to it in the Western world.

tian pastoral setting: Witchcraft discourses have dehumanising dynamics. There is no witchcraft without a witch, and a witch is no longer fully human. A witch is less than human (or more than human, but in either way no longer fully human) and can no longer claim inclusion into the moral community. In many Zambian expressions, a witch stands on a par with a wild animal that needs to be destroyed.

Witchcraft is fought out on the local level and within the realm of personal relationships. Blamed for the death of children in the village is the local witch, who may be the rich businessman with some opaque connections but who may also be the old widow with no connections at all. I agree with the view that witchcraft discourses are full of references to moral codes, to the markets and to transnational politics, but fundamentally, they intend to address the witches, not the markets. Too often, outbursts of violence are fuelled by a settlement of personal scores. I am convinced that a priest, pastor or pastoral worker cannot be a bystander when people suffer the consequences of witchcraft accusations. They have to intervene. They themselves must become actors on the stage. Thereby their own beliefs and disbeliefs are as much part of the events and deserve as much respect as the beliefs of those who look for witches.

Some anthropologists seem to argue that narratives about violence against witches in Africa are exaggerated in order to feed Western human rights discourses.²³ Maybe some are. Some human rights approaches try to force Africa into a Western hierarchy of values. Nevertheless, I find it difficult to separate the beliefs in witchcraft from the violence that flows out of the beliefs in Africa. I have given in the preface only some of my encounters with such violence.

My concern is for our engagements with witchcraft also to change the language about witchcraft. It should bring transformation. There exist proven cultural ways of mediation (some of which I will present in part five), and I believe that they epitomise the best ways of intervention on the local level. As Church, we should try to strengthen them, instead of crippling them. But not at the expense that we condone the search for scapegoats for people's misfortunes. The language of witchcraft itself needs to change through our mediating efforts and embrace a humanising and re-humanising dimension.

²³ Ashforth 2015.

HOW TO HELP (HELPFUL AND UNHELPFUL INTERVENTIONS)²⁴

By contrasting helpful and unhelpful interventions in the following grid, we attempt to engage with the symbolic world of the attacked and give the response a direction that can prove itself within a Christian framework. We build on the following guiding principles:

1. A person usually accepts help in ways that correspond to his/her own experiences. Many people see their lives marked by a realm of non-ordinary reality that is linked with the person through powerful symbols. The forces of witchcraft, too, affect a person through such symbols. Some are taken from nature (night-animals like owls or cats, hyenas, snakes), others from social life (rituals practised at the crossroads), from domestic life (rituals practised at the rubbish heap before the house), and from people's own bodies (hair, fingernails, or body fluids). If witchcraft forces are experienced as working through symbols and potencies to link up with certain realms of human existence, then meaningful symbols and rituals can also be used for the purpose of prayer and healing, within a Christ-centred worldview. We try to mediate healing from spiritual attacks through rituals and symbols.

2. Experiences of witchcraft attacks stand in relation with a person's worldview and understanding of the human body, with his/her family and social life, conflicts, ambitions, fears and plans. Given the multi-level reality that witchcraft represents, our interventions try to embrace all levels of human experience. Each level bears its own dynamics for healing. One may say, by using a concept from psychology, that the process of Christian healing is *over-determined*: We see the healing to be based not only on one single cause, but on multiple and complementary causes. Dealing with witchcraft attacks includes many dimensions: a quest for healing of the body, forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with the people one has been hostile to, reintegration into the community, finding one's place in society and in the world, and a realistic vision and mission for the future.

3. While many people expect from prayers to protect them from harm and to give some forms of instant relief from suffering, Christian healing presupposes that the mystery of evil and suffering is not outside the reality of God, as the canticle of Job so eloquently portrayed. We avoid in our approach to give the illusion of living in a perfect world. While not attaching a false value to suffering, and while encouraging the afflicted to

²⁴ The draft of this chapter was written by Chuma Mfuni for the "Fingers of Thomas".

seek all legitimate means of remedying their situation, we may learn a lot from a spirituality where even spiritual attacks are part of the economy of salvation.

4. Notions of evil tend towards a proliferation of concrete concepts of witchcraft, which becomes a world of its own. An equal belief in the powers of witchcraft and Jesus Christ is incompatible with sound Christian teaching. Witchcraft cannot negate the powers of life. While not denying the reality of witchcraft, we emphasise the pre-eminence of Christ and his power to liberate.

5. We see this healing process as a process of liberation: from being a mere victim of spiritual forces, towards becoming an agent of reconciliation, forgiveness and the building of a community by enhancing a sense of belonging. While the victim of witchcraft cannot change the heart of the perceived witch, he/she must work on his/her own heart and from here defeat the destructive powers of witchcraft.

According to these principles, we can now contrast a number of common interventions as helpful and unhelpful:

Helpful	Not helpful
Listening	
Attentive, compassionate and empathetic listening to the experience of the victims of attacks. It is difficult for the victim to find the right words, since witchcraft touches very intimate layers of life.	Overt scepticism or brushing away experiences with easy answers ("Don't worry, it's just a dream!")
Whatever the helper's attitude about witchcraft, to value the story as a true experience that is tied to a concrete life-situation.	Outright denial of the experience as a frill on the edge of human imagination, as illogical, or subtly explaining it away ("it's just psychological").
Working with and through the symbols of witchcraft	
To encourage the afflicted not to see themselves only as victims, but as actors with willpower, intellect, emotions, agency, and faith. To place emphasis on their own strength that has enabled them to cope with such difficult experiences.	Statements and ways of interacting that reinforce a victim mentality and increase fear and powerlessness in the face of the occult.

Helpful	Not helpful
While doing everything possible to get better, there should be a lot of freedom to see the experience as part of a greater development process.	Praying the experience away as a sole negative occurrence without a seed for personal growth.
To hold the symbols of witchcraft in a healthy balance with the symbols of life. Where the patient focuses strongly on the negative powers, the healer should bring in also the positive spiritual powers of life.	Over-emphasizing the symbols of witchcraft, or painting a very dualistic world where the threatening symbols are portrayed as totally disconnected from the forces of life.
To recall the areas of life which give the victim strength during the attacks (faith, family, church, friends, own spiritual resources) and to help him/her become more aware of the helping forces in life.	To be focused only on negative experiences or weaknesses (lack of faith, anxieties, broken relationship, injustice, the presence of evil in the family, jealousy...)
To find a positive value also in the witchcraft symbol. Encourage a free playing imagination and teasing with the symbol rather than sheer avoidance and fear. Find many associations with the symbol, even conflicting ones, creating a wider space of interpretation.	To have one single and fixed negative interpretation of the witchcraft symbol. "To see an owl means that something terrible is going to happen." Or to discourage the person from thinking about it at all.
To look for alternative explanations for the experience <i>within</i> the witchcraft discourse. "The person who visited you in the dream may not be the actual witch." And to leave room for explanations <i>outside</i> the witchcraft discourse and be open also to natural explanations.	To be trapped in only one way of interpreting the witchcraft experience.
To dissociate the symbols of witchcraft from the concrete person of the witch.	To identify the symbols of witchcraft with a concrete person who thereby stands accused of witchcraft.

Helpful	Not helpful
To encourage the person to rebuild a worldview where such an experience can be seen through the eyes of faith, hope, love and humour. To encourage the victim to see the alleged witch in a new way: as a person also in need of love and healing. To be sensitive to cultural discernment of the experience without being trapped in it. Such discernment by the families often shows where the lines of tensions and conflicts could be discovered to set the healing process on the right track. To discourage the victim from engaging herself/himself with forces of witchcraft. People, who use occult forces and medicines to manipulate others or to protect themselves, make themselves also vulnerable to these forces.	To be trapped in a dualistic worldview (good fighting against evil). To see witches as creatures of pure darkness, incapable of love and unloved by God. To brush away cultural discernments that the family has undergone as “un-Christian” or superstitious. To ignore people’s engagements with “magical shortcuts”, or to deny the existence of witchcraft and its practice from the outset.

Looking at the life context

To ensure security at home and if needed to look for an alternative place to stay (with relatives, etc.) where the home presents an abusive environment. To identify helpful people within the family. Spiritual attacks can be a way of communicating abuse that the victim cannot communicate otherwise. To work together with the victim’s family and restore the victim to vital and healthy relationships.	To send a patient back home after prayers, back into an abusive environment, without initiating any change, and without recognizing empirical elements of aggression. To deal with individuals isolated from their life context and families.

Helpful	Not helpful
While acknowledging that the victim is part of a family, it is good to distinguish clearly the victim's problems from the problems of the family and work also on a sense of personal responsibility.	The whole family to become absorbed in the story and to identify with it.
To discourage any accusation based on truth propositions of the inner world of a person.	To base one's judgment on the inner world of the victim or on a word from a prophet.
But to address those of the outer world (aggressiveness of the supposed witch, frightening words, etc.)	To neglect truth propositions of the outer world.
As a helper to try to remain detached from the events and from accusations. When accusations have been openly pressed, to listen to all sides. To maintain healthy boundaries. Not to use words which may come across as pointing a finger at a witch.	To be trapped in the story. To disregard what other family members (and the suspected witch) may want to say. To speak of a person as if he/she is a proven or convicted witch.
To encourage the victim to continue interacting with the alleged witches, giving them what is due to them (human respect, decent human interaction, etc.)	To avoid the suspected witch.
To look at the reasons why the witch would attack the person. Are some of them valid? Are there issues that the victim should address? To take the opportunity of reforming one's life and ways of dealing with others where necessary. This applies to both the accused and the accuser.	To easily buy into the "victim-story": the witch is evil while the attacked person has never done anything wrong.
To point out family issues or injustices that need to be spoken out in the family, even if people are reluctant to speak about them.	To ignore injustices and imbalances within the families or between the people accusing each other.

Helpful	Not helpful
To acknowledge that spiritual problems often have a medical dimension. Many illnesses, including HIV and AIDS, come with drastic bodily changes that play themselves out in dreams and visions. To acknowledge that spiritual problems are related to difficulties in the life-context (family, school, work, etc.) which also need to be addressed. To acknowledge that spiritual problems have a historical dimension that sometimes goes back to childhood. Traumas, sexual and physical abuse can play themselves out in the way attacks are experienced. To acknowledge that the spiritual problems of an individual is embedded in the beliefs and problems of the community. To discuss with the patient a realistic plan for the future (studies, work, marriage, etc.) that touch the major areas of life. To discuss how to go about these issues and agree on a timeframe. To help the patient come up with a realistic road map for the future.	To drive a wedge between biological and spiritual problems. To treat spiritual issues in isolation. To treat spiritual issues without reference to personality development. To treat the spiritual attack as if it had nothing to do with or to say about society. To leave the patient with an unrealistic plan that he/she will never be able to accomplish. To have no vision for the future. This makes a person more likely to be tossed around by spiritual forces.

Bringing the experiences into prayer

To bring the experiences of the victim into prayer, in which the helper feels comfortable, and able to radiate confidence and peace. To pray with a whole range of feelings, emotions, mental states, attitudes. (Like in the psalms...)	To refer the prayers to so-called "specialists" or to copy prayer-styles from others. To keep fixed images of God that remain unchanged by this experience.

Helpful	Not helpful
To pray with the materials of people's experience and at times to creatively present them in poetic and dramatic / or any other literary devices for the victims to experience them in a new way.	To pray away (exorcise) the experiences without giving room for transformation. This may entrench victims in their conditions, or cause relapse with greater severity.
Some people are in need of a ritual through which they can experience a transformation. Sacramentals should be given in such a way that they develop faith, hope and love, as patience, fortitude and humility.	Any purely magical understanding of the rituals or sacramentals.
To look for God in the ordinary events of life (breathing, daily food, sleep, rain, sunrise, etc.) A person who has learnt to find God everywhere will not easily feel separated in extraordinary experiences.	To focus prayers only on miracles and extraordinary manifestations. A miracle, even when it takes place, may not carry the person through their whole life.

Aftercare

To allow the experience of the victim to be integrated into his/her life story in a natural way. To allow the experiences to be retold in different ways.	Fixed styles of testimonies, which can lock the experience into one single interpretation. To narrate an experience under group pressure. To retell the story when no new insights are emerging.
To help with a sympathetic support group and helpful materials and films.	To think that a once-off prayer meeting has done the job.
To help the person to be grounded in the Christian faith and be at home in the church. To encourage a stable spiritual life.	To go from one powerful pastor, priest or prayer group to another.
Each witchcraft experience is different. Some may fade away like a dream after some time; others are remembered for life. Forgiveness and healing are sometimes a life-process. To acknowledge that the victim's experience is unique.	To universalise the experience of the victim and to see it present in different life-stories.

13

Seeing witchcraft

The grammar of unseen forces

When Christians in Zambia struggle with witchcraft, they do so with the help of African cultural and religious concepts that deal with life's ambiguities that call for discernment. It is not by working against the cultural and religious heritage, but by working with it, as far as possible, that the pastor can identify the areas of life that stand in greatest need of redemption in a person's and community's life. This and the next chapter are about this quest.

Pruning and testing cultural traits is part of the Christian life. Not everything is helpful. However, before we place the concepts of witchcraft into the realm of superstition (as is the trend of mission Christianity) or the demonic (as is the trend of charismatic Christianity), the Church has the duty to look at the concepts, stay with them, reflect, and try to understand their usage and meaning in view of the mysteries of life. This chapter and the next are the result of such a reflection. I hope it will trigger better attempts than what I am able to present myself.

WITCHCRAFT AND SEEING

To be blissfully unaware of the unseen world around us conveys innocence but also ignorance. The ability to see this world can bring excitement and possibilities, but also threats and danger. Many ghosts are better left undisturbed. "It is terrifying to see what we see every day," one healer told me, together with his wife. "We healers see so many things at night. You are lucky if you do not see those things. You can sleep in peace, we can't!"

In many Zambian languages, the practice of witchcraft is related to a verbal stem (-*lo*-) that has to do with seeing, or facing into a certain direction so as to be able to see something hitherto unnoticed. In Bemba, witchcraft is known by the term *ubuloshi* (from the verb *kulowa*—to be-

witch). The term *ubuloshi* is related to the verb *kul_osha*, which is the causative or intensive form of the verb *kul_ola*, namely to look, to see, to face (in a certain direction). *Kul_osha* means “to make somebody see” and “to look intensely”. It also means to mourn. The same stem *-lo-* is found in the word *kul_ota*, to dream, which is another way of seeing what one usually does not see. In a similar way, the Nyanja word *kul_odza* (to bewitch) has affinities with *kul_ota* (to dream), *kul_osa* (to divine, to foretell), and with *kul_oza* (to point to, to face: *loza uko*—face that way, and see what is there). Witchcraft in both languages has something to do with seeing and with making somebody else see. “*Ukacimona!*” meaning, “You will see it!” (*udzaona* in Nyanja, “You will see,”) is understood as a direct threat of the use of witchcraft.

The inherent affinity of witchcraft with knowing and seeing creates an implicit distinction and boundary between those who know and see (like the witches but also the diviners), and others who do not. People who do not see and know about witchcraft need the protection of those who do. The blind should not lead the blind. Daily talk about the activities of witches builds up subtle political coalitions between the different players, those inside the discernment process who know and those who have to stay outside. Diviners, chiefs, headmen and family heads establish a political space on the inside. The Church and the modern state apparatus with its schools and hospitals are excluded and placed on the outside. They may watch and see what is happening, or sometimes they may even stop the process of identifying the witches by calling in the police, but in principle, they do not know. The question posed to the Church is how to gain access to the discernment process, in other words how to become an insider, without becoming an actual witch oneself—since by knowing about witchcraft a person becomes a potential healer but also a potential witch.

In our approach, we become insiders not by knowing about witchcraft, but by knowing about the experience of suffering and loss. This is also an important dimension of “seeing”. Many priests (including myself) who have intervened in witchfinding activities have been told: “Not your children are dying of witchcraft, but ours!” A church that is not touched by the suffering of people does not deserve to be inside the discernment processes of witchcraft. Where, however, the church is present to the pain of people and where the Christian makes himself/herself a neighbour to the suffering person, he/she has the right to be inside the discernment process of witchcraft. “Seeing” then refers to being close to the experience of suffering and loss.

DIVINING

In many Bantu languages, the healer and diviner who can deal with such hidden dimensions is known by the term *ng'anga*. Healers know about the effects and side effects of countless roots and plants in respect to specific diseases. But they do not just follow human reasoning and investigation when healing. The *ng'anga* needs spiritual help for a proper diagnosis.

Sickness and death are terms whose meanings arise in the context of concrete relationships. Some healers who practise divination are part of various “cults of affliction” who divine with the help of spirits (*mashawe*, *mizimu*, *ngulu*, *vimbuzza*, etc.); others call on forces that are more sinister.

Another term with the same root, *nyanga* (in Nyanja), stands for the horn or a charm. A horn is often associated with the practice of witchcraft, because that is where medicines were kept. It is used also in a much broader sense for tapping into mystical powers or life-forces. In Bemba, the term *ubwanga* (a general word for a powerful charm) received a negative connotation due to its association with the practice of witchcraft. The term itself also refers to a fascination with the hidden powers (mostly found in the forest/bush—mu *mpanga*) that one can manipulate with the help of an object, be it for legitimate purposes to protect society, or for the destructive purposes of an individual witch. The verb *ukwanga* expresses a joyful exclamation in fascination and excitement. While witchcraft is greatly feared, it also fascinates. This fascination is the other side of the coin of fear that witchcraft radiates.

The *ng'anga* is the person who is supposed to bring clarity because of his/her access to the hidden world, through special eyes, dreams, visions, gifts of telepathy, or methods of divination. Divining techniques differ and are often personalised. Negative influences need to be divined (or diagnosed), so they can be expelled. The healer brings clarity into the diverse spiritual influences on the lives of individual people. This task should not be foreign to the Christian faith. The Christian entry-point into this discernment process, however, is a different one. As mentioned in chapter one, we do not call spiritual powers evil in our approach when they are experienced as painful, but when they derail a person from his/her life-orientation and relationship with the ultimate source of life. We help an afflicted person to place spiritual attacks into a wider context and larger horizon, and try to provoke a response that corresponds with his/her faith and direction and vocation in life.

MEDICINE

In Zambia, the discourse on witchcraft belongs into the wider discourse on medicines. Few people would come to a modern hospital to be treated against bad luck, the inability to find a husband, to find a lost or stolen item or to have the name of the thief revealed. Traditional healers, in contrast, easily group such quests together with physical healing.

Sickness, repeated failure, and general misfortune may share the same spiritual root cause: a curse, a spirit, a manipulated shadow or a spell. Medicines are able to channel away such negative influences.

People—especially in rural areas—have a vast knowledge of plants and their medicinal properties as well as other usages. Self-medication is widely practised. In many villages, there are specialists for various fields of treatment (for bone setting, women's diseases, children's diseases, treating swellings, snakebites, impotence, etc.) Sometimes such practices are called herbalism and compared with Western concepts, where medicines are understood in connection to biology; they are supposed to have ingredients that can provoke specific reactions in organs or microbes in the body. But concepts of medicine go beyond this level. Medicine is not just about the substances that may be hidden in them. They channel healing forces and specific powers that are tied to plants and animals and that they seek to appropriate. The administering of medicines—through drink, inhalation, or rubbing into the body—is often accompanied by ritually dramatized gestures, performed at significant places.

Medicines can also restore harmonies. *Umuti* in Bemba refers to both medicines and trees. *Umuti* and its Chewa equivalent *munkhwala* have a positive connotation in relationship to healing. Medicines are often used for the pragmatic purpose of curing a specific illness. At other times, they are envisaged to have spiritual properties that can accelerate the healing process. Medicines can mediate between the seen and unseen worlds and can connect to positive and helpful life-forces, especially when an illness goes beyond the known and controllable symptoms. Underlying this concept of *umuti* or *munkhwala* is an awareness of the connectedness of the human person with the cosmos, and specifically with certain plants and animals that can mirror human conditions. One can appropriate their characteristics to enhance the inner powers of the human being, but also to manipulate others.

The borderline between healing and doing harm can be vague. *Umuti* can do harm if misappropriated. The moment that *umuti* is used to manipulate others, one has somehow moved into the shadow of practising

witchcraft. People who complain about being bewitched by others may be using themselves medicines with the intention of manipulating others. In one particular workshop that we (the “Fingers of Thomas”) held in a rural area (Kaonde speaking), nearly all the women acknowledged that they used medicines to keep their husbands faithful. “Here no man will stay with you, if you do not put medicines into his food or burn them over the bed!” Women characterised such practices as a legitimate usage of medicines (“Why should I leave my husband in the powers of other women?”) The men, however, said that such women were practising witchcraft. What is medicine for one, may be witchcraft for another.

Umuti attains specific spiritual connotations when it is used with a *cishimba* (plural: *fishimba*). A *cishimba* (Nyanja: *chizimba*) can be an ingredient that is living or that is attached to life forms whose powers are channelled into the medicines. *Ifishimba* may be taken from certain insects, fishes and animals.

To treat a difficult sickness, but also to acquire a certain superhuman ability, the healer sometimes gives the patient (or his/her family) the task to find a *cishimba* that is rare and not easily found, for example the fat of a python, of a lion, a specific fish, or the heart of a specific animal. The administering of the *cishimba*, according to precise instructions, then goes hand in hand with a specific taboo (often a dietary taboo) that the patient subsequently may have to follow for the rest of his/her life. Upon being cured, the person lives in an awareness that, by following the specific taboo, he/she maintains the link to the specific life-force that is helpful to him/her. When used together with a *cishimba*, medicine (*umuti*) can also move towards the ambivalent and potentially harmful side, especially when the *cishimba* is taken from the graveyard, or from items connected with the realm of the dead (grass from the roof of a funeral house, a piece of the tree on which a person hanged himself, etc.) *Ifishimba* can also refer to the energy or force gathered by committing an abomination like incest or murder. The most powerful *fishimba* come from human body parts; the witch attempts to channel the life-forces of the person he/she has killed into his/her ventures to enhance his/her own powers and influence.

To better see where Zambian concepts of medicines could meet with a Christian discourse, I propose to look at medicines from (1) a medical or biological angle, (2) a symbolic angle through which a given medicine links together different realms of life, and (3) an expressed spiritual angle that connects it to the spiritual world, for example through the usage of *fishimba*. This is a heuristic division (for the sake of bringing my point across)—people do not make this distinction themselves, because bio-

logical, symbolic, and spiritual dimensions form one single reality that cannot be neatly divided.

Take for example the bitter root of a plant called *palibe kanthu* (in Nyanja) (*dicoma anomala*). It is used in various areas in Zambia for diverse purposes. On a biological level, the root is known to affect the heart-beat and is used by people with heart palpitations. In rural areas, affected people sometimes wear a piece of the root on a necklace, placing it quickly under the tongue when the need arises, from where the chemicals are absorbed into the blood stream. But the root is not only used for biological purposes. It is part of many love potions where it affects the heart of the lover. Most famous, however, is its usage in court cases: the root helps to conceal a crime and to protect a person from a negative judgement. The person places a tiny piece of the plant under his/her tongue. During the court proceedings, the person is said to appear calm and composed, as an effect of this medicine, thereby visibly demonstrating his/her innocence. He/she also talks less (because of the piece under the tongue)—“The less you speak to defend yourself, the more innocence you portray,” explained a healer. The medicinal properties would justify the choice of the *palibe kanthu* plant as a practical way to enhance an appearance of innocence.

However, the root is taken not because of its medical, but because of its mystical or spiritual components. Mystical qualities are channelled through the symbolic layer. The root’s name translates, “There is no case,” “It does not matter,” or, “No problem!” The user wants to appropriate for his/her court case the exonerating qualities of the plant that its name conveys. Of course, the user does not chew the plant because of its symbolic properties. People use it simply because a trusted person told them that it works. But, the name of the plant and its connotations help the person to make it work also mentally and spiritually. Because of the symbolic level, a person can relate to a plant or medicine and appropriate it for his/her own purposes, and—for those inclined towards such possibilities—channel mental or psychic energies as well as spiritual forces into certain directions for intended purposes. Spiritual forces are seen to be connected to the plants.

Human life is seen as being related to other life forms. Ants, birds and animals mirror human behaviour for people who have eyes to see this. They figure in a number of divining techniques, but also in practices of witchcraft.

All over Zambia, in the past, ritual hunts were performed to divine the cause of a death, or the will of the ancestors. Humans were seen as part of the world of animals and plants—hence they could also be manipulated through this world.

On the third level (the spiritual level), different rituals may be performed in order to connect the *palibe kanthu* plant to the world of the spirits, and to manipulate the spirit world through the plant for one's own purposes. Here is an example from the Luapula Province:

My uncle is known for the medicines he gives to help people win a court case, and I know of two cases where it worked. So-and-so was caught by the game guards with an animal. In the fight, one man was killed. Before the court case, my uncle placed tiny leaves of the *palibe kantu* plant into cotton together with pieces of the root of the *katenge* plant. He gave it to a woman who has given birth to many children, asking her to place it and keep it inside her vagina for a full week, only to remove it when going to the toilet. Each time she placed it inside, she said: "Those who are judging, we are all born of a woman [meaning, we should treat each other as relatives]." On the day of the court case, the woman tied the pieces on a string, which the culprit had to wear around the waist. Then he had to go to the graveyard to confess the truth to the dead, saying, "I committed the crime." He took a piece of grass from the grave and kept it in his pocket during the hearing. In court, the person proclaimed his innocence and was freed.

The fact that a man uses the most secret body part of a woman (not his wife) for this ritual, places it into the context of witchcraft. The episode on the graveyard brings the medicines explicitly in contact with the realm of the dead to whom the culprit confesses and whose help he/she employs. The power behind the medicine is related to the world of the spirits or to non-personal hidden forces that skilful people can enlist and use. The symbolic level is meant to work not only on the human mind, but to channel specific spiritual forces into intended outcomes.

I believe that such a usage is not compatible with the Christian faith. But the logic of this framework is not foreign to Christian theology. The sacraments in Catholic thought provide such a tangible and visible link between God and the Christian. Anointing oil, for example, has beneficial medicinal properties on the biological level. On the symbolic level, it inserts the believer into the Biblical narratives where anointing plays a key role—pointing ultimately towards Christ, "the anointed one". On the spiritual level, it becomes a channel of God's grace for the sick person. The symbolic and medical angles facilitate and mediate the spiritual connection. This insight is important in our approach. Mainstream Christian

approaches to witchcraft have often denied the possibility of medicines to mediate with the spiritual world (superstitious thinking). And yet, Catholic theology of the sacraments rests on the same principles. In our own approach, we do not negate the logic of the use of medicines, but we evaluate the moral and spiritual dimensions of concrete practices from the viewpoint of the Christian faith.

All mainstream churches have always maintained that practices on the third level, where people call explicitly or implicitly on different kinds of spirits or on the dead and manipulate them for their own advantages, are not compatible with the Christian faith but belong in the realm of idolatry or indeed of witchcraft. Furthermore, the process of channelling the help of spiritual powers by means of medicines is usually accompanied by specific taboos through which a given person maintains his/her relationship with the spiritual power. Where the Bible speaks of a “jealous God” it points to the exclusivity of the Christian faith and its demands. In the Christian tradition, a relationship with the spiritual world must always point to God as revealed through Jesus Christ. Where a Christian believer calls upon a spiritual force in isolation from this faith, he/she betrays it.

Nevertheless, the symbolic level, which allows medicines to mediate between different realms of creation, acknowledges a unity and an interrelatedness of the cosmos that is not foreign to the Christian faith. It is problematic that medicines are easily employed to provide shortcuts that bypass efforts of working positively on human relationships. Many times, the usage of medicines and charms does not restore broken harmonies, but is intended to bend such harmonies towards the satisfaction of self-centred needs. The Christian challenge is about developing meaningful symbolic worlds that help a believer to connect a crucial problem with the Christian spiritual world—as the Catholic church always tried by means of its many sacramentals (icons, holy pictures, crosses, rosaries, sacred candles, medals, holy water, incense, blessed salt, etc.) throughout its history. Also specific body parts are blessed by the church (the throat when calling on the blessing of Saint Blasius). The Church in my native Germany knows old traditions also of the blessing of medicinal herbs, for example on the feast of the assumption (15th of August) that connect the believer to the “shoot springing from the side of Jesse” (Isaiah 11:1). Such blessings seek to intensify the natural properties and powers of these plants through the grace of God. The prayer in the Roman Ritual acknowledges their medicinal usage not only for people but also for their animals.

Saint Hildegard of Bingen (acknowledged as “Doctor of the Church”) healed people through prayer, herbs and music. Her art of healing in-

cluded also the prayer for good luck and the aversion of misfortune. I conject that she would have understood Zambian women who use herbs in lucky charms (*vikondi*): instead of condemning them, would she not have called for their blessing to enable the user to turn to God in their quest for a blessed life?

If we acknowledge that medicines can heal, we need to acknowledge also that they can be used for harm. Here we come close to the concept of witchcraft:

WITCHCRAFT AND THE SOUL

According to the way people in Zambia speak about it, the witch, usually with the help of medicines or charms, channels hidden forces so as to manipulate the body or soul of the victim. The force of witchcraft needs an intimate relation to the human body or soul. Witchcraft in Zambia is not seen as a neutral or natural power, like electromagnetic waves or electricity, that some clever people manage to manipulate to their favour. Witchcraft has a connection to the soul of the witch. There is no witchcraft without a witch. Some people are said to have certain affinities to this force since birth. But even then, for witches to be able to employ a charm, they need technologies to work on their own soul by submitting themselves under a regime of restrictions or rituals. Let us borrow a term from Michel Foucault and call these “technologies of the self”. Witches are said to follow specific taboos in order to activate their evil medication, or learn how to dissociate the own shadow from their body and send it on an evil spree. Or to have established a mystical connection to an animal familiar: an owl, a hyena, or a snake. All these images show that the witch is known to gain affinity to the forces of witchcraft through works on the own soul, through technologies of the self. The witch is morally culpable, and basically no longer curable. The witch is no longer fully human and the soul has already mixed with that of an animal.

It makes little sense for people to study the world of witchcraft out there. Witchcraft becomes a concern the moment it unfolds its powers as part of a relationship. It is a relational power. People and diviners may locate the force of witchcraft in a charm. But the charm attains its power only in relation to the witch who employs the charm. There is no charm without a witch. The diviner may defuse a charm, but only when he/she also “defuses” the witch. But the charm that contains the forces of witchcraft also needs a link to the soul or body of the victim. Very often people speak of a needed relationship between witch and victim—witch and vic-

tim are often from the same family. In any case, the charm needs to build up a connection to the victim: through a footprint, a piece of cloth, the victim's name, shadow, hair or nails.

The chairperson of our local group of traditional healers (the KATEM-BE research group) explained the mysterious connection between the witch and the bewitched person as follows:

Witchcraft works in many ways. But it cannot work between people who have no connection with each other. It is difficult for us Africans to bewitch white people. Within a family, where there are so many connections between the witch and the victim, it easily works.

Apart from being of the same family, the healer mentioned also other factors that establish such a connection between the witch and the life of the attacked:

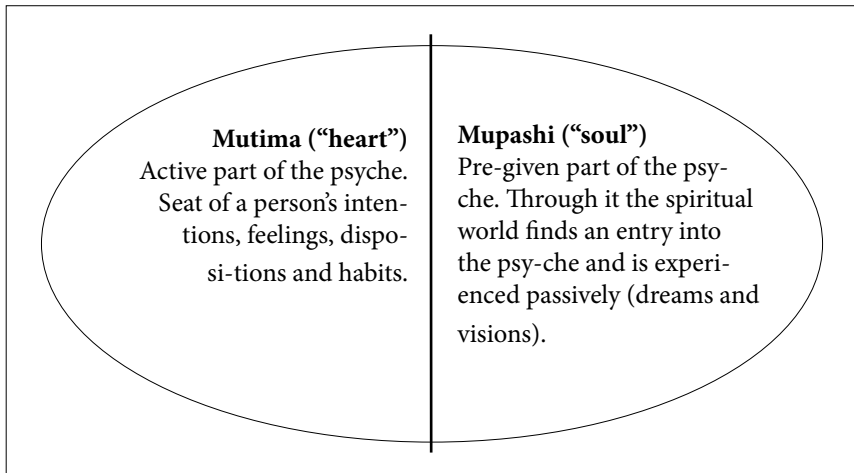
People who have fear are more easily attacked, especially if they fear the witch. Others are more vulnerable to witchcraft because they are guilty of something. They know that they have committed a crime. Avenging witchcraft works if the other person, or a member of his/her family, is guilty of the crime. It does not affect the innocent. For others, it may be long spells of feeling hatred, or compulsions to become rich—because also witches have these compulsions. Finally, witches know each other. That is why people who practise witchcraft find themselves in continuous fights with other witches.

It is obvious then that the complex life-situation and practices between witch and victim need to be at the centre of a pastoral solution.

HEART, SOUL AND PERSONHOOD

If witchcraft needs a connection both to the witch and to the victim, in short to their souls, we need to reflect on witchcraft also in relation to Zambian notions of personhood or notions of the soul. When we use terms such as soul, heart, or spirit (in any language), we speak in a way that is partly abstract, partly figurative and partly related to very personal experiences. Everybody understands something, but very few would be able to define such terms. Western secular thought equates the soul with a collection of diverse psychic or psychological phenomena. Christian thought—following ideas from Greek philosophy—often equates the soul with some immaterial, animating principles of life that can be separated

from the body after death. In early Hebrew thought, in contrast, the soul (*nephesh*) meant not some immortal spiritual aspect of a person, but the unity of the complete living organism, comprising body, mind and breath. Mainstream and Evangelical Christianity have developed different Biblical approaches towards defining terms like “body”, “flesh”, “heart”, “soul”, “spirit”, etc. In Zambian traditions, different people will use different nuances when discussing such terms. Here I present two possible ways of looking at them. Obviously, they are subject to discussion and to differences in opinions. I present them not as pretentious and essentialist descriptions of how Zambians, Bembas or Chewa people may think or should think about the soul, but as heuristic models meant to help the pastor to envision the soul, with the aim of gaining an entry-point for our pastoral interventions.



I start with an interesting interpretation of Bemba notions of selfhood, as proposed by Robert Badenberg, a theologian and missionary who worked in Zambia with the evangelical Liebenzeller Mission. His interviewees located the organ for human feelings and emotions (love, anger, fear, etc.), for willpower, secret intentions and thought, in the heart (*mu mutima*), in the chest (*mu cifuba*) or in the womb (*mu nda*). The three terms can be used more or less synonymously. The terms—I will refer now just to the heart—point to the organ that shapes personal character. From the movements and actions of the heart, a person develops his/her own way of being and acting, namely his/her personal habits, good and bad (*imibele*). This bodily organ also has a spiritual component, in Bemba called the *mupashi* (plural: *mipashi*). The *mupashi* has much in common with the

English term soul yet comes with important nuances. The Bemba term describes the immortal spiritual component of the person, but unlike the English term, it is closely linked to the realm of the ancestors, who are called by the same term. A person develops his/her own personal habits and ways of being (*imibele*), but the *mupashi* is pre-given to the person. Both heart and soul make up the human psyche: the heart as the locus of the person's own intentions and thoughts, and the pre-given soul through which the ancestors have access to the person.

In the past, the *mupashi* was seen to be acquired through the naming ceremony (*ukwinika umwana ishina*). Through the name, an intrinsic relationship with a particular ancestor, but also with the ancestors in general, and indeed the spiritual world, is established. Only when it is capable of a spiritual life that can benefit the community is the child truly human. (Children who died before the umbilical cord fell off were hardly mourned in public.) Traditional Bemba religion placed much emphasis on developing a relationship with the ancestral guardian spirit. This process was accompanied by dangerous hazards in early life: things could go wrong on the journey to personhood.

If a person's heart was incompatible with the *mupashi*, a child—after being named—would be sick and uncomfortable; the name needed to be changed. Once the *mupashi* was accepted, however, a life-long journey began for this person of attuning oneself to the spiritual realm that had opened itself up through the name.

The *mutima* is the seat for a person's inner life. But since the *mupashi* makes itself known to the psyche in dreams and visions, one could say that *mutima* and *mupashi* co-author the inner life of a person.

How do a person's character, located in the heart, and the pre-given soul that comes from the spiritual world, act together? Badenberg answers this question by referring to the meaning of the term *mupashi* that is related to the verb *kupasha*, the causative form of *kupala*, meaning "to resemble, to look like." *Kupasha* here means "to make resemble." A *cipasho* is a likeness, a resemblance. The *mupashi*, the soul, is the spiritual force, coming from the world of the ancestors that should make the character traits (*imibele*) of the person resemble the character of the soul one has received.

Imibele (personal habits) are acquired during life and the person has the power to work on them; hence bad habits need to be corrected by the elders and good habits need to be fostered. Growing to maturity means to make the personal *mibele* resemble (*kupala*, *kupashanya*) the *mupashi* that one has inherited. Badenberg describes how each stage in life has its own challenges of making the personal *mibele* resemble the *mupashi* that the person

received. It is, however, a privilege for the adults and elders (*abakalamba*) to be able to develop the full maturity to live in harmony with the world of the *mipashi*, where a person's *mibele* and *mupashi* are attuned and resemble each other. Here the person has developed his/her full potential. The spoiled person, in contrast, does not manage to come to a likeness with his/her *mupashi*. The *mupashi* turns sour. Instead of being a benevolent force and influence on the person, it may turn into a *cibanda*, an alienated spiritual force that will create disharmony in the person, the family and society, or that is consumed by revenge. The person now becomes driven by an unhealthy and unbalanced spiritual force. A person who resorts to witchcraft has ultimately lost touch with the benevolent spiritual world. Though the *mupashi* was received during the naming ceremony of the child, it would be wrong to think of the soul only in relation to one specific ancestor. During a lifetime, a person inherits different social roles, public duties and also different *mipashi*. At any inheritance ceremony (*ubupyani*), the family will choose a person whose character is visibly similar to the character of the relative who died, to inherit the *mupashi* of the late. A headman or chief inherits all the *mipashi* of his predecessors. A life that starts with one given *mupashi* moves towards a life in tune with the family *mipashi* in the plural, representing ever-larger segments and public roles in society.

The concept of the soul as interacting with the spiritual world is not exhausted by the intrinsic link to the world of the ancestors. Nature spirits (in Bemba *ngulu* or *myela*) are also known as *mipashi*. The *mipashi* can stand for the spiritual world at large. They also stand in communion with God. Protestant Bibles translated the Holy Spirit as *Mupashi wa Mushilo*, the Spirit set apart. The entire spiritual world, human and non-human, is related. The Bemba concept of the soul has multiple planes and levels that cannot be reduced to a modern Western understanding of one individual soul being hidden somewhere in one individual body understood in its singular, self-possessing and autarkic dimensions.

Today, however, this idea is for many Christians no longer meaningful. Names are often given without any reference to the ancestors—though the very fact of naming still establishes an authority structure into which the child is integrated; the act of naming also today indicates a link with the parents. In our workshops, many people shared the belief that the soul refers to a God-given element in every human being. Traditional Bemba religion had linked the soul primarily to an ancestor and through the world of the ancestors indirectly also to God. Christian frameworks have linked the soul directly to God. The logic, however, of conforming one's

way of life to the pre-given soul remains intact; the same logic is acknowledged in Christian thought as being at the root of a Christian identity. Christian life, after all, is very much about the struggle to conform the desires of the heart and one's ways of being with this divine image, unique to each person, that needs to be accepted, cultivated and expressed in a person's lifetime.

A pastoral approach that builds on this insight will try to avoid isolated magical remedies against witchcraft attacks, but re-connect the affected person with his/her benevolent source of life (God, Christ, the Holy Spirit). The affected person needs to find the "counter-medicines" against the attack in the divine image within the own soul. A proud witch will be overcome by the meekness of the Christian response, a jealous witch by an affirmative, upbuilding and appreciative response, and so on. From such a spiritual awareness, the victim is hopefully able to relate with the suspected witch from an own sense of agency.

I have looked at Bemba traditions. What's about other Zambian cultures? Nyanja and Chewa notions are comparable with the Bemba ones, but come also with their own nuances. The Chewa term *mzimu* refers, similar to the Bemba *mupashi*, both to the soul and to an ancestor who becomes re-embodied in the person who receives his/her name. The term may be related etiologically to the process of disappearing (into thin air—as expressed with the term *kuzizimira*). *Kuzima* describes the extinguishing of a fire. The soul vanishes from the body after death, disappearing into invisibility, no longer embodied.

Kuzima may also refer to the fires that are extinguished at the funerals and the association of the ancestors with the cold spheres of life: the forest and the sexually inactive periods. A human person after death is transformed into a *mzimu*.

The composite character of the soul can also be encountered in the Chewa and Nyanja notions. According to the anthropologist Arne Steinforth, in his research conducted in Southern Malawi, many ritual specialists distinguish between a pre-given soul that remains unchanging (*mzimu wa umulungu*) and the changing personal soul or spirit that grows with life (*mzimu wa umunthu*) and that is related to the human heart (*mtima*), not unlike the Bemba concepts as seen by Badenberg:

These two spirits do not conjoin, nor are they thought of as an integral whole, but they constitute separate categories... The *mzimu wa umulungu*, spirit of divinity, represents the spark of life which is received during conception and which returns to the Supreme Be-

ing after death, and which is associated with the vital force (*moyo*) as well as the conscience of a person ... It is utterly divine and unchanging, and—due to its strong bonds to body and blood—it only leaves the person at the point of his or her physical death. ... The *mzimu wa umunthu* or spirit of personhood is the faculty that controls a person's decision-making processes and voluntary actions. Sometimes referred to as shadow or image (*nthunzi* and/or *chithunzi*) of a person, it represents personal fortune (*mwayi*) and character, and it is associated with the heart or *mtima*. The *mzimu wa umunthu* is a variable entity that changes throughout lifetime and grows by personal experience and age.

This description brings out, apart from the composite character of the human soul and the person, the connection of the soul with the person's blood (given by the mother and tying a person to the matrilineal line) and the shadow. By growing through life, the soul will make other important connections through which it appropriates strength and life. The *mzimu wa umunthu* is vulnerable to witchcraft attacks, for example when the witch gains access to the shadow, which we will explore in the next chapter. Being tied to a person's conscious focus and willpower, the *mzimu wa umunthu* can leave a person during sleep and during dreams—hence the body is vulnerable to witchcraft especially at night. The *mzimu wa umunthu* is affected also by relationships and emotions, and is of a much less stable nature than the *mzimu wa umulungu*.

As mentioned above, terms like “soul” and “heart” attain different meanings for different people; an analysis of the Chewa or Bemba soul in terms of Steinforth's or Badenberg's descriptions should not be understood in timeless and abstract terms. Based on etiological reflections, I present them as heuristic descriptions to help the pastor to come to terms with a fundamental experience: the soul or the human psyche is active and passive at the same time. It works on itself and is worked upon by others. To many Christians in Zambia it makes sense to say that a part of the soul or human psyche is pre-given, connecting a person directly with God, or with the ancestors, while another part develops throughout life and comes in different stages with specific challenges. For example, many people in Zambia believe that a legally married couple becomes “one blood”; the mixing of blood through adultery will bring disaster to the innocent spouse. “Blood” is often understood in an interpersonal dimension, and this could be said also about the soul. Also evil forces can gain access into a person's life that are experienced passively, for example

in dreams or visions. But, hopefully, the healer will also find a pre-given part of the soul, we could also say: a person's life-vocation, that cannot be bewitched and that is beyond manipulation by human means. The healer's task is to help the patient to be in touch with what he/she is living for (and maybe also ready to die for) and develop from here a sense of agency.

THE VOLUNTARY AND INVOLUNTARY CHARACTER OF WITCHCRAFT

The double character of selfhood, active and passive at the same time, is mirrored by the double character of witchcraft, which is both active and passive in Zambian concepts. Some forms of witchcraft are learnt and practised voluntarily; the craft is supposed to make the witch rich or powerful, or to channel hatred and revenge into harmful results. The Chewa term *mfiti ya nyanga*—"the witch of the horn" refers to this type of witch. But the *mfiti yeniyeni* ("the real witch") can be a person without a proper motive for pursuing an individual act of witchcraft. The *mfiti yeniyeni* is driven by an unstoppable addiction to practise witchcraft or eat human flesh. Such forms of witchcraft can be inherited through the family-line. In pre-colonial times, the bodies of convicted witches were sometimes burnt to prevent the spirit of witchcraft from coming back into the family. The name of a witch was not passed on to a new-born child. Beyond conscious individual motives, a person who inherits witchcraft has certain invisible powers that bring harm to society by being channelled through the negative emotions of hatred, jealousy, a desire for revenge or greed.

In Zambia, the distinction between learned practices of witchcraft and inherited forms is fluid. Some people have confessed to the crimes of witchcraft: "I may have some powers whose origins I don't know." Not only the involuntary forms, but also voluntary practices of witchcraft (sorcery) can easily get out of hand. People who acquire medicines will often stand accused of allowing such powers to run havoc, unnoticed by themselves. An example is the *lilomba*, a familiar, a mythical snake intrinsically tied to the person and body of the witch whom it resembles, which gives powers and wealth to the witch but needs to be constantly fed on blood (often of close relatives); or else it goes around looking for food, bringing harm wherever it goes, without the owner's knowledge. Powerful witches are said to grow their *ilomba* in unchanged bathing water and feed it with own blood, linking it to the own shadow, a concept that I will describe in the next chapter. The *lilomba* dies when the witch dies, and the witch dies when the *ilomba* is killed, as also the shadow of a person dies

with the body. Voluntary and involuntary modes of witchcraft easily flow into each other.

Such blurred boundaries are again found in the modern images of Satanism. Many people testified that they were initiated involuntarily. "I did not know what was happening to me." At the same time, the person said to have made a covenant with the devil. The soul is experienced as having individual agency and simultaneously as being tied to other spiritual agents beyond the person's control. The soul is an open window through which other agents and forces enter in and relate to mind, willpower, and body.

Witchcraft is also a crime against one's own family and the world of the ancestors, from which the witch excluded him/herself. The ultimate aim of the ancestors consisted in the unity of the family. By enhancing a sense of belonging to each other, one was also pleasing the ancestors and God. Any pastoral approach to witchcraft will try to strengthen the family and enhance forgiveness and cooperation. The concept of a connected soul has repercussions for the notion of responsibility: people who feel that their soul is easily affected by the deeds of others also easily see themselves as mere victims of witchcraft. In our approach, we cannot acknowledge the powers of witchcraft without also developing a sense of co-responsibility. This does not mean to propagate an image of selfhood as autarkic, individualist and independent, as Western thought sometimes does. We strive towards a position of healthy interdependence, believing it gives enough room for positive personal agency and input, without denying fundamental experiences of a relational soul.

DRAMA 18: HOW I OVERCAME A WITCH

One group member of the "Fingers of Thomas" explained this with the following narrative. He had moved with his young family into a new neighbourhood, and was warned about a witch living next door, a middle-aged woman, known for her strange types of behaviour.

At the beginning, I tried to react normally with this woman. But I had concerns about my young children and was not at ease when she interacted with them. It did not take long for me to dream about her. The most frightening thing was that, the next day, she seemed to be aware of my dream, as if it had not been a dream at all. She told me, "Hah, you too are strong!" which were the same words she had used in my dream.

Though I felt a strong dislike and repugnance for her, I became aware of a mysterious connection between us. This frightened me. Could it be that I had some powers of witchcraft myself? The next night, again, I dreamt of her. She wanted to play magical tricks on me, but before she could start, I took the initiative and played tricks on her. In my dream, I lifted her up, as if through my mental powers alone, making her to float above the ground. When I let her down again, she just turned around and left me alone. The next morning when we met, she repeated what she had said before: "Ah, you too are strong!"

I am convinced that there is a mysterious connection between the two of us that makes us interact in our dreams and in our inner lives. Am I myself a potential witch with mysterious powers? The experience frightened me. I thought about her the whole day and imagined that she also thought about me. The next night I remained awake. At 03:00 hours, I heard her sweeping outside my door. I got up, went out, took the broom out of her hands and forbid her to sweep. "Never sweep again at this time of the night! This is the time for sleeping!" She went back to her home, and I to mine. Since then this experience has not come back.

The narrator followed the principles of our approach. He pursued the issues of the outer world by stepping in to challenge her unsettling behaviour (sweeping at night) that was creating suspicions and rumours in the neighbourhood. He kept the mysterious intersubjective connection (of the inner world) to himself, though he pondered about it a lot. He did not allow himself to be trapped in a victim role but became aware of his own powers with which he seemed even able to outwit a witch.

In our approach, we do not give a definite answer about the mysterious connection between these two people. (Did it happen only in *his* imagination or was it an intersubjective, shared psychic reality? Was it of a spiritual nature?) I have given this example in order to make another point: As it takes two to pick a quarrel, it may also need two to make the powers of witchcraft work. Witchcraft is a relational power. Even if witchcraft comes from hateful and evil people outside, there must also be an element in the affected person's way of life that resonates with these powers. I cannot change my neighbour, but I can always work on myself and pursue a humanising way of life. A Christian victim of witchcraft cannot talk about witches in fundamentally dehumanising ways, where the witch is no longer presented as being human. Also the victim needs to develop a readiness for a humanising discourse. How this can be possible, I will explore in the next chapter.

14

Addressing the layers of a connected soul

How the soul is reaching out



from inside to outside:

1. God & life-forces
2. Connection to ancestors
3. Family bond
4. Life-forces affected by my *mdulo* / *amankowesha*
5. Gender roles and attractiveness
6. Marriage bond
7. Bond between families of a married couple
8. Spiritual bond of parenthood
9. Creative skills
10. Public roles in society
11. Shadow

Where human life is fundamentally understood as “being with”, the quality of life is evaluated in terms of belonging (especially to the family) and relationships. If the family is well, the soul is well too. If obligations to the family are not met, the soul cannot be well. The soul has open windows through which one is connected to significant others. This shows itself also in dreams, which many regard as spiritual encounters with others—not just with oneself in introspection, as Western psychology often suggests.¹ Different spiritual agents can act on the soul and manipulate the soul and the human body. Many people also feel affected by the moral actions of significant others. In Zambian beliefs, for example, sexual intercourse in a legal marriage links the spouses intrinsically to each other so much so that they become “one blood”; thus, the unfaithfulness of one

¹ For an application on a study of dreams in Zambia, see Rosner and Udelhoven 2013.

spouse will have repercussions on the spouse and children, and will bring pollution, sickness and death. Witches, it is believed, can manipulate the “shadow” of a person, thereby gaining access to the body and the person’s willpower. Those who regard such beliefs as superstitious remain with the yet unfulfilled task of providing alternative constructions of meaning that recognise the dimensions of inter-subjectivity and their spiritual aspects.

LAYERS OF RELATIONAL SOULS: THE SOUL AS AN ONION

Human life develops in relation to one’s family, social roles, domestic life, and so on. The soul develops many layers, each layer adding something important to the human person. My friend Chuma Mfuni often compared the soul with an onion that comes with many skins (see the diagram). In a new-born child, many layers of the soul are not yet developed. The child will receive a name (and with it an intrinsic connection to the ancestors), will be made fit for social life (often through a ritual), will pass through puberty rites, will get married, will inherit different public offices and roles, will have success in his/her enterprises, etc., with each phase adding a layer to the soul. The soul points outwards, not inwards. Where a sense of belonging is paramount for a person’s self-awareness (*being* means *belonging*), inner drives or struggles also develop within specific relationships.² The diagram portrays the soul as a spiritual animating force that connects the body with the outside, the world, family, ancestors and God. And also with significant nodes of the cosmos. While physical bodies can be separated from each other, souls cannot.³

All layers can be affected with spiritual afflictions. The outer layers, especially the shadow, are seen as being specifically vulnerable to witchcraft attacks. But also the inner layers nest specific spiritual conditions and come with their quest for healing. The above diagram can help to place specific spiritual afflictions into their proper relational contexts. Note that I neither intend it to depict what the soul really is like, nor what people in Zambia imagine it to be. It is a heuristic aid for the pastor that shows

² Applications of socio-cultural psychological approaches (Lev Vygotsky), inter-subjective psychoanalysis (Heinz Kohut) and relational psychoanalysis (Stephen Mitchell and others) are promising in African contexts where relationships and a sense of belonging are paramount in experiences of selfhood and self-identification. Primary motivations of the psyche in such approaches are located in concrete relationships. The existence of inner subconscious drives, sexual or aggressive struggles and repression is not denied in such approaches, but they are seen as firmly embedded in the context of the relationships within which they arise.

³ The diagram does not show that the journey continues after death, when a person slowly becomes an ancestor. Our “onion” is still incomplete.

layers that point to specific relationships on which, I suggest, we focus in a first line of reaction to a spiritual attack.

GOD AND DIVINE FORCES (1)

The innermost layer is constituted in our diagram by the animating life-forces that connect the soul directly with God. Christians call God's presence in the human person the Holy Spirit. Others speak of God's grace. In Zambia many connect it with life-forces. It constitutes a dimension, which transcends the human person and goes beyond human scopes. While witches are believed to gain access to some life-forces of their victims (for example through vital organs such as the heart and genitals), the human being ultimately has a connection with the ancestral world and with God, to which the witch has no recourse.⁴ Responses to witchcraft that are driven by negative emotions, such as anger, fear, frustration or desolation in the face of loss, may make a person yet more vulnerable to the witchcraft attacks that are experienced; they can constitute the space in which the forces of witchcraft unfold themselves. Our pastoral approach tries to reconnect the person to the inner layer that cannot be bewitched, and to find inner resources and a sense of dignity also in the face of adversary. In other words, to allow this layer to flood the other layers too, through the right actions and proper behaviour at each layer.

ANCESTORS AND FAMILY (2, 3)

Looking at the diagram, after the layer of the life-forces that come from God, the deepest and most penetrating layers that form in a human soul are constituted by ancestors (2) and family/kin (3). Most African cultures recognise that a person has a spiritual connection with his/her kin, which is animated by the ancestors. In Zambian experiences, the ancestors can appear in dreams, warn a person of immanent dangers, name a new-born child (for example through dream revelations to relatives), or make a person sick when taboos are broken and concrete demands unmet. In the past, it was acknowledged that ancestors could also speak to their de-

⁴ This was said in the KATEMBE group of traditional healers, and some distinguished vital forces like those that are tied to the human heart and genitals from the divine forces that are beyond human manipulation. Specialists may make such distinctions when they are asked. But, in my interviews, they were not worked out systematically and I am not able to assess the level of idiosyncrasy in the descriptions.

scendants through the animal world, through which people divined their will or thoughts.⁵

Spiritual relationships exist also between the living family members. The survival and continuation of the family or clan, upheld by the ancestors, can be deeply woven into the self-awareness of a person. Today, many people still expect to dream of each other when a family member is sick or in dire need, or dies. We collected countless examples.⁶ In our approach, there is no need to downplay such important experiences. While a Christian cannot allow the ancestors to derail the Christian vocation, he/she can accept a spiritual link with one's ancestors and family as an integral spiritual dimension of the human person. The family is sacred also in the Christian discourse.

In Zambia's cultural traditions, ancestors would cast blessings and curses in order to uphold the moral order. Today, the ancestors have been dethroned from the central position. In everyday speech, blessings come from God and the power to bring misfortune comes from the devil. The ancestors no longer punish offenses against society. God, however, often seems too merciful with the sinner—unwilling to provide concrete forms of direct punishment when the peace of the social order is threatened. This creates a quest for alternative mystical ways to punish offenders. Also today, many people experience a mysterious connection with one's parents. Take the following example:

A DREAM OF GRACE

Grace, a middle aged woman living in Lusaka, dreamt she was sweeping her house. When she looked up (in her dream), she saw her mother coming towards her, as if she wanted to greet her. She was happy to see her mother and looked for a chair so mum could sit down. (Her mother was living abroad for a long time, and it had been long for mother and daughter to see each other). When she turned around with a chair, the mother was gone. She woke up, with a feeling that mum had come to greet her. The next morning she received a phone call, saying that mum had died.

Grace is a Catholic prayer guide and a psycho-social counsellor trained in different psychological models of making sense of dreams. From psychology she knew that dreams teach symbolically about the dreamer's own inner life, about her desires, anxieties, hidden wishes or conflicts.

⁵ For example, through ritual hunts.

⁶ See the contributions in Rosner & Udelhoven 2013. "A dream of Grace" below is taken from this earlier publication.

While she was quite aware of her inner wish to see her mother again, she felt that she was not doing justice to her dream if it was understood by introspection alone. She had literally seen her mother, not as a symbol, but in a way that was as real for her as a physical visit. She knew that there is an inner connection between her own life and the life of her mother. For Grace the dream was rooted in the wish of her mother to say good bye to her. Mum had come to make her strong for the time of mourning and she would continue also after death to support her. In fact, the whole family drew strength from the dream and it helped them to stay united after the funeral. A few years later, while Grace was in a difficult situation, she saw in another vision (in daylight) her mother coming towards her—in much the same way as she had dreamt, with a happy and peaceful face. As she looked for a chair for mum to sit down, the vision disappeared. Another confirmation for Grace: “Mum is still with us!”

Sharing her dream experience with other counsellors during our workshop on dreams, nearly each person present could tell of similar experiences of dreams that announced deaths or illnesses within their families. Introspection alone, they felt, was not doing justice to such dream experiences. Many of the counsellors took for granted that significant dreams originate in real interpersonal connections between family members and that dreams open up a person to different spiritual forces. Western psychological approaches that they had been taught, they felt, were not able to deal with such important dimensions of dreams.

At the same time, such interpersonal dimensions to dreams could also be very fear-provoking and give rise to many suspicions. Grace's dream was very consoling and strengthening. Other attendants of the workshop shared “bad dreams” of interpersonal encounters with witches that made people wake up with compelling questions: Which actions need to be taken? Which relationships need to be cut? Who is threatening me?

Ordinary dreams, the group felt, could be dealt with by Western psychological models. But when it comes to ground-shaking inner experiences in extraordinary dreams, people looked towards Zambian cultural approaches for meaning. These beliefs easily eclipsed Western psychological approaches even for professional and semi-professional counsellors.

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could also speak to their descendants through the animal world, through which people divined their will or thoughts.

Where people experience a spiritual link with their ancestors, there is no need in our approach to downplay such important experiences. While a Christian cannot allow the ancestors to derail the Christian vocation, he/she can accept a spiritual link with one's ancestors and family as an integral spiritual dimension of the human person. The family is sacred also in the Christian discourse. However, the family will not dethrone God.

Sometimes, however, the will of the ancestors seems to clash with a person's orientation in life and his/her Christian faith. An elderly man explained to me how he shaped his life according to a dream:

DRAMA 19: MY FATHER CALLS ME TO BECOME A HUNTER

Back in my youth, I dreamt a compelling dream of my late grandfather who was a hunter. He approached me, holding his gun. Then he placed the gun into my hands and said: "You will become a hunter too!" I could never forget this dream and I did become a hunter in response to the dream, using the very gun that my grandfather had left behind.

The person lives in the Luangwa Valley where game is still abundant. However, poaching is illegal, and the wildlife became more and more protected. Prison sentences for poachers are long and harsh. His life-orientation brought him in frequent conflicts with the law, jeopardising the future of his family. At the same time, he was a committed Christian, and even the founding figure of the Reformed Church in his village, which he built near to his house. He took a leaf from Simon Peter in the Bible, who abandoned his profession of being a fisher of fish to become a fisher of men. "I keep the gun, but I have stopped long ago shooting animals. I don't even have ammunition any longer. When I brought the Reformed Church in Zambia to our village, I became a 'hunter of men'! In that way I followed both Christ and my grandfather. My life is not about bringing animals to the village but about bringing people to the church." The man managed to keep the dream as part of his autobiography, but he reconciled its meaning with his Christian vocation. Instead of standing opposed to each other, they became mutually reinforcing. I have given this example to show that one does not need to silence dream experiences, even if they point towards a conflict with the Christian faith. If one dares to be creative and playful, one will often find a way to shift the meaning of

a compelling dream towards a direction where it unites with the dynamics of the Christian faith.

GENERATIONAL CURSES

For the younger generations in Christian Zambia, Christian teachings and new social settings have long displaced the ancestors from a once central position. However, while the ancestors no longer intervene with detailed directions, another, more indirect level of ancestral influence, has become very prominent in Christian Zambia: Many Christians blame spirals of “generational curses” for their failure to live successful lives. Many charismatic and Pentecostal ministries remove generational curses, which suggests that many feel a spiritual link with the ancestors, even if in a negative way. A born-again Christian framework tends to see the past in entirely negative terms: Ancestors become associated with witchcraft, idol worship and even devil worship. The misdeeds of the ancestors are seen to contaminate the future generations, unless one breaks the curse, as the following preaching (in a Pentecostal church of Bauleni compound) illustrates:

Maybe your ancestor was a witch. Witchcraft is inherited through the blood. It goes from grandfather to grandson. Your grandfather was a witch; the grandchild will be a grand-witch. The grandchild of the grand-witch will be a Satanist. That is how witchcraft is inherited. The power of the curse needs to be broken by the blood of Jesus.

The preaching was spiced up with references to the Old Testament, but its logic was also based on misplaced cultural roots. After death, a person was believed to become an ancestor and have a benevolent influence on the living family members. However, a misfit to society, a witch, or a person who died an unhappy death or with many grudges would continue to create havoc in the family as an alienated shade (a *cibanda* or a *ciwa* in Bemba) even for future generations.

What are we to do with this perceived negative spiritual influence from the world of the ancestors? Many deliverance ministries today engage in removing such curses—reminding us of periods in the Old Testament before the Babylonian exile, where generational curses played a role in the explanations of misfortune, whose echoes reached into the time of Jesus. The practice begs questions. Theologically speaking, it shows little awareness of the grace of baptism. The blaming of ancestors for one’s

misfortunes can eclipse a positive awareness of being blessed through a connection with parents and ancestors and a rootedness in one's family. This dimension is very important in the Bible: Israelites and Jews, including Jesus, built their identity on this awareness and on the promises made to the patriarchs. Whole lists of the ancestors of Jesus are preserved for us in the Bible—very few of them were saints! For the baptised Christian, the language of generational curses is misleading, especially if it conveys the notion of an utterly negative spiritual power.

At the same time, however, we cannot deny that certain issues run in families—not only alcoholism, divorce or suicide, but also other patterns of destructive behaviour. Unresolved family issues continue to play themselves out in behavioural patterns across generations. The concept of generational curses or of ghosts from the past that still haunt future generations can remind us of a sense of responsibility that lies within any given family to do something about the family baggage, hidden grief and wounds, unshared secrets and guilt, unforgiven issues and poisoned memories. Such issues are by nature evasive (they are not talked about), and yet they are carried forward into new relationships and future marriages. The ritual dimension of healing becomes therefore very important, since it can address dimensions of life of which we may hardly be conscious. Catholic theology, by encouraging prayers for the dead, but also in the doctrine of purgatory, has always ascertained a mysterious interconnectedness between the living and the dead; prayers for the dead can have a healing influence also on the living and create a new sense of unity in the family.

Take the following example, given by a 25 year old woman, who grew up with her grandparents and siblings, and was now about to get married:

DRAMA 20: A SILENCED SUICIDE

Our father killed himself when we were little children, too small to remember what happened. He bought petrol, took us children out of the house, locked himself inside, doused himself and set himself alight. We were never told about it. All the time we grew up, nobody in our family wanted to speak about our father.

Two years ago, my brother became very violent and he started to have periods of madness. In one occasion he stabbed a family member living with us with a knife and nearly killed him. The whole family was puzzled about this incident. We took him to the

mental hospital, but the drugs made him to be like a vegetable. They did not really help. It was only then that our grandparents started to speak about our father. They asked themselves: “Why does this boy behave in this way?” and the family elders gave the answer: “Because his father was never properly mourned.”

We need prayers for our father; else, we can never progress as a family! Now I am getting married. I don’t want my children to commit suicide! I want to be free.

Such a request to the Church is legitimate. The elders had rightly seen that the father had never been mourned. This still needed to be done. In the above case, the sisters of the violent boy sat down with the grandparents and other family members a number of times, to inquire about their father’s life—not only about the suicide, but also about his character, motivations, and about what he wanted to achieve in life. Eventually, we organised family prayers for the father. By then, the father had received a concrete face and was seen by his children as a human being, not some faint ghost. Before that, he had been a “blank” about whom nobody was allowed to talk. We also asked the question what the father would have wanted to achieve in his life, had he not killed himself. They answered: “He would have lived for us!”—“He would have provided for our education. [Some of them had dropped out of school because of the family’s financial constraints]”—“He would have rebuked us when we do wrong! [Hinting at a period of alcohol and drug abuse of the above boy]”. The siblings achieved a greater sense of unity after this experience. Sustaining this sense of solidarity and mutual help and having the courage to intervene when someone did wrong was their way of putting the father to rest.

While we recognise an influence of the past on the living in very subtle ways, the dead must not be abused by making *them* responsible for contemporary family issues. Unfortunately, many deliverance ministries that remove “generational curses” turn the dead ancestors into scapegoats for the problems of the living. In our approach, the dead are put to rest and mourned by the process of remembering them, but also by addressing outstanding family issues *among the living*. Together with prayer, acts of solidarity with the living family members remains the prime way for healing the wounds carried forward by the ancestors.

BOUNDARIES IN SOCIAL LIFE: POLLUTION (4)

Zambian cultures have elaborate traditions about concepts of pollution. Women on this point may have far greater sensitivities than men; they were, after all, in charge of protecting the cooking fire, food and children from the ritual heat of sexually active people and from ritually precarious life-forces, like menstrual blood. Many anthropologists have described the logic of the cosmology that separates ritually hot and cold spheres of life in relation to important events and activities.⁷ Today, many Christian women continue to seek remedies against ritual pollution and the overstepping of ritual boundaries. Especially sexual transgressions bring strong polluting influences that can cause coughing sicknesses and death for small children but also to the partner of the adulterous spouse.

Here I am interested in the fact that a human being needed to be ritually prepared to become strong enough to survive ritual heat, including the sexual heat of its parents. Only then would a baby be able to live in the adult world. For the Chewa, this was achieved through the *kutenga mwana* ceremony (“holding the child”), for the Bemba the *kukafya mwana* or *kukusha mwana* ceremony (“to heat up the child”; “to make the child grow strong”), performed by the parents who now resumed sexual intercourse after their period of abstinence since their child’s birth.⁸ Now it was ready to be handled by different adults, though the adult world continued to be very precarious for the child.⁹

In the past, people were consciously aware of separating hot (sexually active) and cold spheres of life to create the right conditions for fecundity and avoid ritual disaster.¹⁰ In Chewa cosmologies, the *mdulo* complex constituted sexual and dietary taboos that accompanied the human person from birth to death. Children exposed to the sexual pollution that arose from the world of the adults became sick; something cut through their breath, cutting them off (*kudula*) from the forces of life—they became like a withering plant. Among the Bemba, a child who was polluted became thin and lean (*kukowela*) and the coughing sickness that troubled the child (*amankowesha ya cifuba*) carried over notions of ritual defile-

⁷ See for example Hinfelaar (1994).

⁸ Various traditions were followed (and are still followed today), including passing the child to each other over a small fire and smearing it with the sperm of the father, thereby imparting the father’s strength. For a full description of the past ritual, see Labrecque 2001 (1931-1934), pp. 13-14. For modern days’ applications, see Rasing 1995 and 2001.

⁹ Note, though, that the child was not protected against sexual pollution imparted by adults other than the parents. It continued to need constant protection against *amankoweshaya cifuba* and *mdulo* (defilements).

¹⁰ Hinfelaar 1994.

ment. However, beyond the parents, *amankowesha* also came from the wider world of anonymous adults who secretly transgressed against the rules and boundaries imposed by tradition.

Also today, many families scrutinise each other on the lines of such beliefs in times of misfortune. Today the concepts have become more pluralistic. Some Christians bring the child to church to be blessed, because they do not want to follow “pagan rites”.¹¹ Many grandmothers smear the baby with protective medicines soon after birth, since it is difficult in modern conditions to confine a child even for a very short period inside the house. An awareness of pollution has in no way disappeared. Zambian understandings of life acknowledge that exposure to “the world” has consequences on one’s life-forces. People can suffer from involuntary pollution encountered through the sexual promiscuity of spouse or companions (especially when on a dangerous mission)—something that is beyond their control. For many healers, it is a daily affair to give or sell to clients medicines against *mankowesha*.

The notions of *mdulo* and *mankowesha ya cifuba* have been classified by churches and by modern discourses as superstitions. Children and women become sick because of microbes, not because of taboos that someone has broken. The symptoms of AIDS, however, have confirmed for many the wisdom of cultural notions regarding sexual pollution. Infected adults and children show visibly the cultural signs of *mdulo*, when they suffer innocently from the consequences of the sexual promiscuity of others.

In the Catholic Church, women come for holy water—some of them every day. Some bath in it, drink it, or iron their clothes with it to ward off the polluting effects of the world of immoral adults. Ritual pollution is said to bring ulcers and boils, and holy water is seen as an effective remedy. When we consider Zambian concepts of Satanism later in this book, we will see that mere encounters with strange people or satanic items bring new forms of pollution from which people seek protection.

What can a Christian response to this be? Many beliefs are no longer helpful in the modern world. However, the awareness of pollution from the world is not foreign to Biblical thinking. It has accompanied Jewish history with many taboos and traditions. Jesus, of course, challenged Jewish notions about pollution: He touched the unclean and did not seem to care much about ritual cleansing rites. But he did not abolish the concept of pollution. When Jesus said, “Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what de-

¹¹ This, of course, does not exclude that some parents do both.

file” (Mark 7:15), he shifted the sphere of pollution into the heart that needs constant supervision and reworking, to prevent the salt from losing its taste (Matthew 5:13). The polluting effects of the world are defeated not by buckets of holy water, but by reminders of the Christian vocation of bringing light to the world and “being salt”. In Jesus’ teaching, it should not be the world that pollutes the Christian, but the Christian who endeavours to transform the world.

In the Catholic Church, we may associate the layer of the soul that makes a person fit to encounter the world with the sacrament of confirmation. The Christian comes out of his/her confinement to leave his/her mark on the world, not to be polluted by the world. At the same time, the New Testament acknowledges that “staying in the world” comes with the need for constant prayer and alertness. From ancient times, Christian traditions include sacramentals, like the sign of the cross or short prayers said at regular intervals throughout the day, to remind the Christian of his/her vocation in the world.

But there is also another dimension involved. Many women’s awareness of pollution comes from the transgression of limits set by tradition. Modern life has removed many restrictions and social boundaries that were taken for granted in the past, leaving many people disoriented. They feel with their bodies that something is not right: something that has no name and that they find difficult to explain. When women come again and again for holy water, or when they need to counteract pollution by means of various traditional medicines, they may also be expressing that they feel uncomfortable in their neighbourhood or family in which social boundaries are constantly overstepped and violated; they seek an ad-hoc remedy that counteracts the estranging effects. No hospital can deal with this dimension. A pastoral approach therefore will also include dialogue about appropriate boundaries and gender roles.

DRAMA 21: BANA JUDI DRINKS A CONTAINER OF HOLY WATER

Bana Judi and her husband, Bashi Judi or Jacob, are living in a Lusaka compound. I know their respective families very well from a previous appointment in a rural area, near their home villages. Whenever I visit the family, Bana Judi brings—before I leave—a container with water to be blessed. We have a prayer with the family, and I bless the water. She then asks me to sprinkle everybody in the house, her husband and children. Their marriage was mutually joyful and happy, though she never felt ac-

cepted by her husband's family. She struggled to find her own place, first in her husband's family, and now in the town environment.

The husband, a businessman, was often away for many days. While the wife did not have concrete suspicions of infidelity, she nevertheless felt it was good to have a kind of cleansing and blessing from time to time—"you never know!" I looked at the simple prayers and sprinkling ritual as a beautiful means that strengthened and renewed the family bond; everybody, I believe, accepted it in good faith.

One evening, after I blessed the container with water, she took the container and drank the water before my eyes—to my surprise—finishing the whole container. I objected: "Holy water is not there for drinking!"

She rebuked me: "You don't trust in holy water, though you are a priest, but I do! I have ulcers in the stomach and small wounds in the mouth. The only thing that helps is holy water."

I laughed and left. The next day she phoned to say: "I know you do not believe, but the ulcers and wounds are gone!"

I was amazed by the extraordinary powers of holy water that went beyond my faith. At another visit, I tried to give her a lesson about the use of holy water but I aborted my ill-fated attempt since we were evidently talking on two different levels. Then I asked her, why she thought the holy water had cured her.

She said: "There is something wrong in this neighbourhood. The woman who rents next door is a prostitute. Always new men come to see her. You see, the children play there. Last week, we know she had a secret abortion. That day, after she greeted me, these wounds started in my mouth. Your skin is white—for you, these things cannot touch you, they have no effects on you. But we Africans, we are black. That is why I became sick! Holy water cleanses from inside."

Referring to our racial differences was a joking way of making a point about our different levels of understanding. Beneath the joke, she also expressed that "being black" brought a specific vulnerability. In other conversations, "being black" had expressed a race-specific exposure to witchcraft attacks and to destructive forms of jealousy. In this particular conversation, the relational soul was affected by the behaviour and pollution arising from the neighbour's house. I, the white-skinned friend, was evidently not sensitive to these issues and would not be affected—I was not part of the social web of belonging, in which the acts of one person, however secret, will affect everybody else.

I tried to encourage Bana Judi to become more proactive in her relationship with her neighbour. Instead of seeing herself as a victim of her

moral behaviour, always on the defensive and looking for protection, I advised her to have a genuine interest in her life-situation. “The more you greet her and try to be close to her, the less you will be affected. But when you avoid her, the polluting effects will catch up with you. Remember, you are black—you attract them like a magnet! So instead of running away from them, you better convert them!”

During my next visit, to my surprise, she called in her neighbour to be part of the sprinkling ritual. As usual, there was a lot of laughter in the family. Bana Judi was herself scarred by her history of the long uphill battle to be accepted by her husband’s family. It was awesome to see how she had now created a sense of belonging for others, by reaching out to a “polluted” neighbourhood. Our views about the correct use of holy water are still very different. But the shift from a protective attitude towards an inclusive assertiveness, I believe, expressed very well the Christian faith.

PROTECTION

Another element that concerns boundaries in social life has to do with protection. As seen above, in the absence of the ancestors, a spiritual police force, and in the beliefs of a Christian God who always forgives and is too benevolent to punish any offences, people look for alternative ways of protection. Medicines rubbed into tattoos are supposed to make it more difficult for witches to gain access to the shadow or to the body. Often such tattoos are cut into the back of the body—where we have no eyes and are vulnerable to attacks. In the absence of other provisions of security, property and fields also need to be protected. Consider the following example from the Luapula Province (Samfya), of a protective medicine called *ikai*:

Burn the following three ingredients into a powder and place it into the field or the property that you want to protect: feathers or body parts of the *cikwekwe* bird [of the *coracias* species],¹² a left-behind handle of an axe or hoe taken from a deserted village site (*cibolya*), and a used nappy of a baby that is not yet able to walk. As *cishimba* (activating medicine) use the lonely large black ant (*munyaunyau* or *munyang’unyang’u*) that follows behind its column of ants. Wait for the column to pass by. After some time it will be followed by the lonely ant, which you keep alive in a matchbox.

¹² Hoch 1960, p. 232.

Explanation: The *cikwekwe* bird is commonly known in the area for predicting funerals. When one single bird leaves the flock, flies up and lets itself fall down in flight, while singing *kwekwekwe* [hence its name, *cikwekwe*], somebody has died in the family. The tool from the deserted village site also hints at death [in the past, villages moved because of death, and those who lived there are all dead]. The child that cannot walk corresponds with the inability of the thief to run away. The ant that follows its column from a distance predicts that the thief will bring himself to the owner of the stolen goods and confess—being haunted by misfortunes and bad dreams.

In many parts of Zambia similar medicines have become common, even among Christians. In the Eastern Province they are known as *chambu*. A *chambu* is made specifically for a purpose: to protect a garden or goats from thieves, or a wife from adultery (which, interestingly, seems to place the wife on the level of the husband's property.) They reveal the need for protection. In the rural areas, the police are far away, and are often powerless. A person whom nobody fears is easily robbed. Many feel the need to surround themselves with medicines to provoke fear in others. Even churches surround themselves with an element of fear: "God will punish you if you steal from the Church," many say. Maybe society cannot hold together without any reference to the punishment of unseen crimes. Ultimately, however, a Christian approach for protection cannot build on fear, revenge and mistrust. A Christian symbolic framework would rather strive to enhance solidarity in the neighbourhood and communication with the neighbours and the extended family. Good relationships with the people in the area and mutual concern for each other are the best protection. Then, one has also honoured the ancestors, the traditional police force to deal with unseen crimes.

GENDER ROLES (5)

Puberty initiation rites, according to many Zambian traditions, transform a person and make the person fit for the adult world. We could figuratively say that they add another layer in the soul. This expressed itself through appropriate and respectful types of behaviour, and through specific cultural knowledge that one does not easily speak about outside of the appropriate forum. The initiated person, by means of appropriating and internalising the cultural traditions and the moral order, secured life and fecundity for him/herself and for the family. He/she was able to

live a spiritual life in union with the ancestors. The uninitiated person, in contrast, was destined to become a havoc to family and society. An uninitiated girl may be returned by the husband to her family, which has failed in the duty to prepare her properly for married life.

However, everywhere in Zambia, traditional gender roles have long been challenged. Traditional initiation rites have lost some of their persuasiveness for modern people and are sometimes sidelined into the realm of folklore. "Our children do not listen anymore", is a complaint of Christians in towns and villages alike. Cultural disorientation can go hand in hand with spiritual confusion. Puberty rites instilled fear of spiritual punishment. Such concepts were ridiculed both by modern and Christian discourses. In the Luapula Province, among a fishing community, I heard this comment: "Today even youths resort to witchcraft. This was unheard of in the past, when the witches were old people. There is nothing anymore that the youth fear!" The question about a positive spiritual input that helps the adults in their task of integrating the youth into the moral order still needs to be answered.

After puberty, many youths disappear not only from the authority structure of their families but also from the church. Many have the feeling that unresponsive youths more easily develop a liking for witchcraft. This point comes out very strongly today in new concepts of Satanism.

Initiation and puberty rites transmit gender specific roles, and the question arises about specific role models for the modern Christian adult and youth that build on the cultural heritage. Exposure to Western concepts and habits, and also the United Nations' bills of rights and international pressure groups for diverse sexual orientations challenge the Zambian gendered order of society in fundamental ways. Discourses of Satanism today feed on the arising insecurities associated with sexual freedom; Satanism is supposed to be actively undermining gender specific roles. "In the underworld we had to attend a school of homosexuality and lesbianism, and of prostitution," a Satanist claimed in a public testimony (see chapter nineteen). In Zambia, many Christians describe the perceived attacks on traditional gender roles as clear signs of the approaching end-times, predicted in the Bible.

In a time when the moral order of society is questioned or rejected, the Church needs to become relevant in processes of reflection in which people (including the youths) seek a moral basis that is meaningful in a global village, and that also gives a sense of rootedness in tradition. The Catholic groups of Marriage Encounter, for example, foster dialogue among couples and mutual reflection about gender roles in a changing

world. Christian initiation groups (like the Bemba *ifimbusa* and the Chewa *Alangizi*-groups) try to adapt initiation rites to modern Christian life forms.¹³ They also seek answers to the question how to experience the world in a spiritual way as a man or as a woman and to arrive at complementary understandings.

Part of a gender specific role is a person's attractiveness to others. Everybody wants to be attractive, and Zambian traditions know of many shortcuts to increase this force, spiritually or magically, be it for finding a marriage partner or for attracting clients to one's business. The usage of medicines for this purpose is prolific, and many speak openly about the medicines they use. Take the following description from Lusaka; the ingredients for such *vikondi* (medicines to procure love) are used throughout Zambia in different variations.

Bath in water in which you soaked the bark of the *mwemwe* tree or the *cimwemwe nseko* tree, taken from the east, and the roots of the following trees: *lwito* (*mwito*), *mphetu*, *kumbukirani*, *palibe kanthu* and *luntheuntheu*. Add the white wool (*cikoka*) of the nest of the honey-bird (*nsolo*). You may also use them in Vaseline for anointing or for rubbing them into tattoos in all the joints. Mix one red seed of the *kalunguti* tree into the anointing oil. When you approach the man you want, look into his eyes and smile. He will marry you.

Explanation: The *cimwemwe nseko* tree (the name means "happy and laughing") is known for its pleasant light radiating in the morning sun—hence the bark is taken from the eastern side of the tree: "When you use it, you will shine and radiate happiness." It is to be used in conjunction with smiling at the wanted man and looking into his eyes. *Lwito* comes from the verb "to call" ("The preferred man will come by himself when you mention his name.") The orange *mphetu* roots make the man make a corner to see you. The name of the *kumbukirani* plant means, "To remember". ("He will remember you.") *Luntheuntheu* comes in two different types. The grass-type plant (*luntheuntheu wa pa mwamba*) is known as a bringer of good luck, when caught in the wind. The onion-like root (*luntheuntheu wa pansi*) has very potent hallucinating effects known to bring out the secrets of the heart, "He will dream of me."

¹³ Individual Christian *banacimbasa* (marriage instructors) do this also. (See Rasing 1995, 2001.)

It is used by many diviners to make people see for themselves.¹⁴ The leaves of the *kalunguti* tree are used by women as aphrodisiacs and to facilitate “dry sex”. The honey-bird, rarely found, is a bringer of good luck: it goes ahead of hunters, guiding them to find honey or pray. It leads or drags (*kukoka*) people to find good things—hence the name of the wool for the nest (*cikoka*): the medicine will bring good luck in marriage.

As a consequence of Zambia’s age pyramid (many are young, few are old) and marriage trends (men marrying younger women), many women in their forties find themselves without a husband, while nearly all men in the same age group are married; for the men it is easy to marry into a younger age group after divorce.¹⁵ Finding a husband is not difficult for young women, but not for those who are no longer young it is. They look for spiritual help to come to a fulfilled life and to find a partner. Medicines like the above show the awareness that many hidden forces work on our affections. Some can be used to our advantage; God himself placed them into the trees and the cosmos. On the other side of the coin, many people feel that even their secret feelings may be manipulated by such forces. While Christian love cannot be based on manipulation, churches (choirs, youth groups, lay-groups, etc.) have always provided “a market” for the Christian woman. Many Pentecostal and charismatic Churches have taken up the challenge of extensively praying for marriage and for a good marriage partner. They have helped single people to have their longing for marriage recognised in church, and to bring it before God. Beyond prayer, it is not wrong to investigate different means of raising people’s self-confidence for approaching others. Christian prayer is not about bending the will of others, but about making oneself conform to the divine image in the soul, which—we believe—always comes with its own beauty and attraction for others.

MARRIAGE AND DOMESTIC BODY (6)

Legitimate marriage constitutes another layer of body and soul—husband and wife become “one blood”. In Zambian traditions, the “mixing of blood” (Bemba: *kusakanya imilopa*) which comes from adultery affects

¹⁴ For the purpose of inducing hallucinations, some traditional healers boil the plant (*boophane disticha*) for many hours and administer the tea while simultaneously exposing the client to direct sunlight before taking them into a dark room, where the medication starts to produce the intended effects. (KATEMBE research group)

¹⁵ According to the national census data of the year 2000, 81.6% of men above 55 years of age were married, but only 41.1% of the women in the same age group.

the life of the spouse or the children and can bring death. A pregnant wife will die before or during childbirth in consequence of the adultery of the husband (Bemba: *ncila*) or after childbirth in consequence of her own adulterous behaviour (Bemba: *ncentu*). Children touched by a returning unfaithful husband will suffer from various forms of pollution (Bemba: *amankowesha*) causing loss of appetite and various sicknesses that can lead to death. Traditional healers know of countless rites to counteract sexual pollution.

In the Church, some have noted the positive effects of such beliefs with regard to maintaining domestic morality, while others regard such beliefs as a source for constant fears that are counteracted through endlessly increasing magical acts. Hugo Hinfelaar, in his study on the changing religious beliefs of Bemba women, has strongly argued that many women felt powerless and thrown into spiritual perils when control over the sexual behaviour of their husband was progressively taken out of their hands.¹⁶ In our approach, it is important to start with acknowledging the spiritual bond that exists between legitimately married couples.

In Zambia, husbands can easily walk out of a marriage and find a new partner, but not vice versa. Prayer by itself does not necessarily enhance communication between partners. The challenge is to link prayer in a marriage with a symbolic framework that allows a couple to recommit themselves to each other and to facilitate bonding. The sacred emblems of the initiation rites (the Bemba *mbusa*, the Nsenga *vilengo* and the emblems of other Zambian peoples) provide such frameworks and have been meaningfully employed in Christian settings by those who have tried.¹⁷

The emotional life within a marriage is a mystery. Many couples experience that their affection changes over time. A couple's love can be destroyed by witches and by jealous neighbours. The affected couple then behave towards each other in ways that they themselves cannot understand. Their relationship contains a bitter taste that they find hard to explain. A Christian response towards fostering the sacred spiritual bond between husband and wife will try to enhance the life-giving forces of mutual trust, love and communication; this comes with the demands of working hard at maintaining a caring relationship.

Such demands, however, are today often replaced by quick solutions to "fix" domestic problems. Innumerable medicines are used in Zambia to

¹⁶ Hinfelaar 1994.

¹⁷ See for example the fruitful work of the Mulenga family and their *fimbusa* groups in Mulenga & Mulenga 2008, and the vast, still unpublished work of Mrs Bwalya, Father Pierre Lafollie and their *fimbusa* groups of Kasama Archdiocese.

secure the faithfulness of a spouse. Such “quick fixes”, however, also come at a price. The husband won through medicines can also be lost to other women who use more powerful medicines. Take the following example from a description from Samfya (collected in 2004):

To keep a husband faithful, you burn the *nkalambatila* plant [*pseudarthria hookeri*] over the marriage bed, starting with the feet and going up to the head. Make sure your child is not with you; else, it will always follow you instead of your husband following you. Then pound into a powder the remains of *nsoni* [stings of the hedgehog], fur taken from the neck of a sheep, the heart of a dove and the brain of the blue-headed lizard (*gumugumu*) and mix every day a little bit into the food for your husband.

Explanation: The name of the *nkalambatila* plant means, “To stick, to adhere to,” since the leaves or seeds stick to the clothing of a by-passer.¹⁸ (“My husband will stick to me.”) The hedgehog is known for not running away when touched; it just stands still. (“He will not run away from me; I can control him.”) The sheep is known for its docility, the dove for always coming back home and for sticking to its partner, and the blue-headed lizard for always being found around the same tree (“He will always be around the house”) apart from also being a symbol of a fulfilled sexual life, its rhythmic movements resembling slow motions of the penis during intercourse.

If love can be procured through medicines, then it can also be destroyed by medicines. In our seminars, people talked openly about medicines employed to destroy love, out of jealousy, which fall under the popular category of the *kavundula*, which is used with the help of highly dramatized actions meant to channel destructive energies into a marriage. Take the following example (given by a traditional healer in Bauleni/Lusaka):

Pick leaves of the *kafifi* plant [*psorospermum febrifuga*] from behind, without looking at it. Walk home without greeting anyone on the way. Put salt, which you begged from someone (*mucele wa cilombelo*) into two opposing leaves of the *mwenge* tree [*diplorynchus condylocarpon*] and burn it. Throw a piece of straw, taken from the middle of a broom into the fire and say: ‘You will be swept out of the marriage!’ The next day, draw water with a cup from a

¹⁸ The *nkalambatila* comes in two types: one with large leaves that magnetically stick to a person’s clothing (*nkalambatila ikalama*), and the other with small seeds that also stick (*nkalambatila inono*).

river. Empty half of the cup into the same river. The other half you empty into another river.

Explanation given by the healer: The name of the *kafifi* plant symbolises darkness. Picking it from behind without looking at it and walking home without greeting a person enacts the couple's alienation. The *mwenge* tree is not used as firewood, since it burns with very unpleasant and penetrating smoke. ("Tonight there will be smoke in your house, and you will see nothing good in each other!") The crackling salt in the opposed leaves creates sparks in the fire, simulating a fight. The water divided between two rivers symbolises divorce—each partner will go separate ways.

DRAMA 22: A POISONED RELATIONSHIP

A twenty-four year old woman, a youth leader in a Catholic parish, gave this testimony:

I was in a relationship with my boyfriend for seven years. He knows all the members of my family. They love him, and I know all his relatives. It was clear for everyone that we were getting married. Then he had a child outside. First, I knew nothing about it. However, I found out that this woman was using medicines to destroy our love. Things changed from nowhere. There was always a bitter taste when I was together with my boyfriend. We quarrelled for no reason at all. I went to a diviner and paid 120 Kwacha. I was supposed to bring two eggs; he would stop the influence of that woman on our relationship. He asked me to smash one of the eggs I had brought. Inside the egg, we found very strange things. "You see, she has put poison into your relationship." He wanted 1000 Kwacha for taking away that influence. I did not have the money. But at least I knew why we behaved like that to each other.

I encouraged the woman, instead of seeking medicines to counteract the influence of the witch, to speak with her boyfriend: "If there is goodwill between yourselves, no witch will be able to destroy it. But honest communication between them was not possible. The boy eventually married the other woman, with whom he had the child. He had been over years in two relationships, simultaneously, a truth to which the first woman remained blind for all these years. Once she accepted the truth of this and moved on, she also felt free from the poison in her shadow. It did not take

time for her to enter into another relationship with a man to whom she then got married. No medicines were necessary for this.

The above case came to a good outcome. But I don't want to downplay the experience that relationships can be manipulated by outsiders. And that jealousy itself is a destructive force. A Catholic marriage instructor explained:

In the past, a married couple would never show love to each other in public. This has only come with the white people and modern life. Here in Africa we know that jealousy kills. Couples showed love only when they were alone. In public, they would even pretend that they quarrel.

During our research, a number of people openly said that they feel such destructive powers present in their relationship and that this affects also sexual performance. Attempts at downplaying the effects of jealousy, witchcraft or medicines on marriage life conflict with the experience of many people.

In our approach, we try to show the powers that radiate from forgiveness and from the mutual efforts and commitment to work on trust and openness. The following remarkable testimony illustrates this point. It is based on the written narrative of the affected couple, written by the husband, and corrected and agreed on by the wife.

DRAMA 23: A WITCH TRIES TO DESTROY A CATHOLIC MARRIAGE

We, Bana Beauty and myself, are an active Christian couple. Throughout our marriage, we have attempted to bring up our children in the Catholic faith, tried to go to attend Sunday Masses as often as possible and were involved in various church activities. Our marriage, however, came with challenges. After several years of marital bliss, our common life became characterised by feelings of sadness, apprehension, discouragement and rejection. A sense of coldness, harshness and bitterness towards each other characterised the climate of our relationship. In the words of my wife:

"Our marriage was no longer exciting. I felt disappointed, and dejected. We did not talk as often as we had done at the beginning of our marriage. We argued often and never came to any conclusions or agreements on how to solve our problems. The most frustrating part of our marriage was that my husband would stop talk-

ing to me for one or two weeks. This infuriated me. I felt chocked and unappreciated by my husband.”

Me also I experienced marriage life in similar terms: Our marriage was stretched to the limit. Nothing seemed to work. My wife was always nagging and complaining about everything. It seemed as if my wife never loved me, liked me or respected me. She just tolerated me.

Frustration, hopelessness and destructive speaking in the relationship led Bana Beauty to seek solace in the arms of another married man, whom she found in her business circles. Her relationship with this married man quickly blossomed into a fully-fledged extra-marital affair that was characterized by animated and buoyant feelings of excitement, joy, hope and happiness. After a while, the excitement of the infatuation started to wear off and Bana Beauty decided to break the relationship with her male friend. Before she could formally break-up the affair, I found out about it, and our marriage now was in a serious crisis. After several discussions and an acceptance that our common life had been marked in the past by some failings, we agreed to sincerely forgive each other. However, the intruder did not stop making improper advances towards Bana Beauty, even when both of us challenged him. He could not take “no” for an answer. Despite our attempts to reconcile their differences, a common nightmare started to overshadow our marriage.

The intruder had had frequent access to our house in the past. We discovered to our chagrin that he used medicines and charms to trap the heart of any woman that he fancied. A number of mutual male friends confirmed this to us and cited numerous examples of marriages that were in disarray because of this man’s charms and medicines. At one point, this I researched among our common friends, the man had relationships with thirty-eight different women including Bana Beauty. We also learnt that of the thirty-eight women that he was having sex with, some twenty-eight women’s marriages were in turmoil. The relationships with their husbands were bitter and acrimonious and were in the process of either separation or divorce.

Despite Bana Beauty’s firm resolve to mend our marriage, the intruder man would not accept her refusal to continue the affair. In a desperate attempt to get Bana Beauty back, the trespasser resorted to using witchcraft and black magic on us. My wife and I started to experience strange phenomena in our home. On some nights, we both felt the presence or a shadow of someone in the room.

This shadow would either be leaning over us or staring at us. Other nightmares started to manifest themselves, especially for me. I would dream of the intruder making improper advances towards my wife. On other occasions, I would dream that the intruder was having sex with my wife. Other nightmares included fighting with the intruder or being choked by the intruder. When we subsequently found several small charms hidden around the house, we knew intuitively that our nightmares and strains in our relationship had something to do with occult medicines prepared by the intruder. Some charms were fabricated with the skins of lizards. Nocturnal animals (owls, bats) also made themselves known around the house and even inside the house. We became more alarmed when we found a tiny charm tied to our marriage bed, which depicted a woman in miniature, tied and captured by a snake whose head was penetrating the vagina. On two different occasions, Bana Beauty found an owl in our locked and fully secured bedroom. It was a mystery how the owls had gained access. It was an even greater mystery to learn that the damage inflicted by Bana Beauty on the wings and legs of one of the owls in an attempt to kill it resulted in a broken collarbone and a sprained ankle on the person whom we knew as the intruder! These injuries on the intruder occurred at the same time as the owls had received their injuries, we were told by reliable friends.

As the number of charms being found in and around the house increased, we renewed all the locks of our house, since the witch had had open access to our house in the past; in fact he had installed (while we still considered him as a friend) our electrical wiring system, and he was also familiar with some of our workers. However, we also looked for spiritual help to combat the witch's powers. Thus we decided to tackle this issue together. We adopted to share all our dreams with each other, however awkward they had been, and to pray about them together. Even the step to consult a priest, known to both of us, was taken in mutual agreement. As a ritual that was to mark our common step into the future, we again confessed to each other our love, asked for forgiveness for past failings and forgave each other. Then we solemnly renewed our marriage vows in the presence of the priest, who in turn blessed us.

Instead of destroying our marriage, the intruder who used occult medicines and charms—unintentionally—strengthened our marriage, and our mutual trust and communication. The experience of being intruded by a foreign spiritual power in the bed-

room, having formerly instilled a sense of powerlessness, slowly changed into a feeling of compassion for that man, who had at one time been a mutual friend. Today, the intruder's life is totally broken—domestically, financially and socially. We were told by reliable friends that, despite bewitching and killing his own firstborn daughter so as to regain his financial and social status, he remains a broken and unhappy man. In the past, we had prayed for liberation from the forces of witchcraft. Today we are praying for the witch, who has trapped himself into an occult world that is centred on his own passions and on the need to destroy other people's love and marriages, including ours.

Bana Beauty and her husband had overcome the dark powers of witchcraft by many small steps, which they took in common to rebuild their mutual trust and love for each other, however small this love seemed at times. They knew intuitively that the positive powers radiating from the steps of rebuilding their relationship were infinitely greater than the negative powers of the witch. They wrote down their story as a witness to this, knowing that others go through similar experiences. The quantity of charms found around the house was impressive. Some of the charms I saw myself, including the one that had been tied under their bed, depicting a miniature woman encoiled in a snake who entered her vagina. It must have taken the person much time to manufacture these charms and, maybe with the help of an insider, plant them inside and outside the large house in so many places. I have no doubt that someone tried to do harm to the couple's love by instilling fear and by calling on destructive powers. Had the couple resigned itself to victimhood, the drama may have ended in a different way.

THE SPIRITUAL BOND BETWEEN FAMILIES OF MARRIED COUPLES (7)

Marriage traditionally is not just a venture between two individual persons but more so between their families. Negotiations about marriage payments and the gradual marriage rites slowly create a bond between the families. This bond becomes very visible when one of the spouses dies: only the family of the deceased has the ritual authority to cleanse the widow/er from the shade of the spouse, the spiritual condition of death that remains attached to him/her until these rites are performed. Until this time, the widow/er is subject to a spiritual bondage.

At first, any contact with the spirit of the dead person is precarious for everybody. Many families take great care to follow the correct cul-

tural procedures and thus avoid to offend the dead. But very soon, the way of dealing with death becomes different for the two families. For the kin of the deceased, it is a process of continuity: mourning and remembering the dead person goes hand in hand with bringing his/her spirit back into the family.¹⁹ The dead person's social functions must continue to be carried out by his/her kin.²⁰ The soul of the dead person is slowly transformed into a benevolent life-force for the family (*mzimu* in Chewa, *mupashi* in Bemba). A future child will inherit the name of the deceased.

For the remaining spouse, however, a journey starts of separation, not of continuity. The widow/er needs to be cleansed from the remaining shade of the late spouse, which is a spiritual force related to death, known as *cibanda* in Bemba (*chiwanda* in Chewa). To achieve this, the remaining spouse was, in the past, subjected to ritual intercourse with a relative of the late spouse. This was a way for the family of taking back a kind of mythical substance from the body of the widow/er to which some parts of the soul was still clinging; it had formed itself through the sexual union in marital life (which made them one blood) and needed to be removed in the same way. Today, most families and cultures have come up with alternative cleansing rites. Traditional healers also know of medicines that can free a person from this shade, but no such medicines can be legitimate since only the family has ritual authority over the spirit of their dead.²¹

The fact that even a happy marriage needs a cleansing ritual after death shows also how precarious the relationship of the remaining spouse with the other family becomes after death. Here a way of looking at the spiritual influence of the dead from the perspectives of the two families:

<i>mupashi</i> (Bemba); <i>mzimu</i> (Chewa)	<i>cibanda</i> (Bemba); <i>chiwanda</i> (Chewa)
For insiders of the family (kin)	For outsiders (non-kin). This includes the spouse. It also includes people who may have found the corpse.
Benevolent & re-embodied into the family (name of new-born child).	Hazardous object, clinging to the person as a foreign body. If such a person remarries in such a state, or has sex, the partner will become mad.

¹⁹ In some traditions, the soul of the dead person finds itself in a hostile environment after death, where it encounters unfriendly and foreign spirits; appeasement comes from the movement of bringing the dead back to the family.

²⁰ In inheritance rites across Zambia, the family identifies a close relative, who inherits significant clothes or items that stand in close relationship to the life of the deceased; this person will carry on some of the deceased's responsibilities.

²¹ I have earlier described the Bemba *cibanda* as a spiritual marker of transition that shows who no longer belongs to a family.

<i>mupashi</i> (Bemba); <i>mzimu</i> (Chewa)	<i>cibanda</i> (Bemba); <i>chiwanda</i> (Chewa)
The kin have ritual authority over the shade of the dead, his/her body and his/her social functions. Associated with inheritance rites.	The spouse has no ritual authority over the shade, but needs to be cleansed by the family of deceased. Associated with cleansing rites. (Cleansing is not necessary when the remaining partner remarries within the same family; the relationship between the two families remains intact.)

Christian Churches have always attacked specific aspects of the cleansing rites that follow the death of a spouse, also on grounds of injustices against the widow that can flow from them. Cleansing is withheld until the remaining property and inheritance issues are settled in the after-burial rite (in Bemba *isambo lya mfwa*), including the adoption of the children in the sense of placing them under a new authority structure. In matrilineal societies, when a man dies, his family may show little concern for his children, since they belong to the clan of their mother. This results in claiming all his property (known as “property grabbing”). Sometimes it can go together with blaming the wife for the death.

The Church proclaims that the evil powers of the dead are not to be feared, and that the spirit of a loving spouse in a Christian marriage will not reappear as a ghost to bring havoc to a person whom he/she had loved. But the fact that the *cibanda* continues to bother many Christians, even after the experience of a happy marriage, shows that it touches a spiritual dimension that also the church needs to engage with. What is this dimension? The cultural understanding of the *cibanda* is multi-layered, and depends on the relationship it is tied to. In our approach, we see in the *cibanda*, when used in the context of the death of a marriage partner, the spiritual baggage that the remaining spouse carries, tied to an ambivalent relationship with the late spouse’s family, until he/she is cleansed. The rationale is simple: This spiritual bond between two families is not just broken through death. The process of appeasement and of putting the spirit to rest, and that of cleansing the widow or widower from the *cibanda* (shade), goes hand in hand with negotiations between the two families concerning possible grudges and outstanding issues. It is clear that such spiritual baggage “carried forward” into another union can lead to disaster for the new marriage.

In our approach, we look at the *cibanda* not in reified terms (as a concrete, external spirit or ghost) but see in it a description of a spiritual experience with a negative power that can create havoc in the new union

if grudges with the old family are not addressed. This experience is tied to the relationship with the late spouse's family. After the death of the spouse, this relationship—even after a good marriage—becomes ambivalent. This ambiguity is aptly expressed in the concept of the *cibanda* that clings to the remaining spouse and that can only be freed by the other family when outstanding issues are cleared up. We address spiritual realities by addressing the relationships to which they are tied. Prayers for the dead to free the spouse from the negative influence of a *cibanda* should go hand in hand with negotiations, dialogue and honest talk with the late spouse's family. I have already given an example of a positive way of dealing with a *cibanda* (see the drama “Haunted by dreams of having sex with my late husband” in chapter 6). The following drama brings out clearer the interplay between the two respective families:

DRAMA 24: SUSANNE BECOMES MAD

Susanne, living in a fishing village along the Luapula River, had been married to Paul for some years, but remained childless. Paul died after a long sickness, which may have been HIV related, though this is mere speculation; neither Paul nor Susanne were ever tested. Susanne was also sick. Paul's family blamed her for his death. “She did not care for him when he was sick; instead she slept with other men.”²² Because of this strained relationship between the two families, Paul's family refused at first to cleanse Susanne from the *cibanda* of Paul; they wanted to teach her a lesson. She appealed to the chief for arbitration. At the chief's court, the family of Paul agreed to cleanse her, but they demanded in return a large amount of money, as punishment for her alleged misdoings. Susanne and her family said that they were unable to raise such a large amount. The chief tried to come up with a compromise, but Susanne's family walked out of the negotiations, saying: “We are Christians and don't believe in cleansing anyway.” This expressed lack of belief, however, did not prevent Susanne from being tortured in subsequent attacks by Paul's *cibanda*. She experienced periods of temporal madness, especially when she engaged with other men. Men in turn avoided her: “Any man who sleeps with her becomes mad!” At one point, she even stood accused of trying to sleep with other men in order to pass on the *cibanda* and free herself. She admitted

²² The death of Paul was attributed to a sickness called “*ubwali*” or “*nshima*”. Lumps of porridge and food cannot pass from the mouth into the stomach because of the unfaithfulness of the wife; “the chest is tied up.” Death by coughing blood and loss of weight comes as the consequence.

that she had seen several traditional healers who tried to wash away the *cibanda*, to no avail. She became widely known as “the woman with the *cibanda*”. In the meantime, Paul’s family agreed to cleanse her, and eventually performed the required cleansing ritual. However, the *cibanda* did not go! Experiences of temporal madness continued.²³

During a large Holy Week gathering, several hundred Catholics from different villages gathered in a camp, as is the practice in that parish. Susanne attended, though she was not Catholic but belonged to a different Christian Church. While I was presiding over the Mass, she collapsed into a trance and had to be carried away because she was disturbing the prayers with her loud shouting. After the prayers, we attended to her. The place where people fall into a trance can give a hint from where they hope to find help. Susanne, as a non-Catholic, had brought herself to the gathering as if drawn by a magnet. The camp was attended by her family members and by some of Paul’s family members. Susanne was a public figure (“the woman with the *cibanda*”) and she may have needed a public drama, witnessed by many, to have the *cibanda* removed. Since Holy Week and Easter are very much about reconciliation, we thought that we should at least try to do something in terms of mediating between the families.

During the coming days, Susanne’s family repeatedly asked for such prayers, but family members of Paul’s lineage were somehow reluctant. It turned out that they were afraid of their own families at home; “We are too young, we cannot speak on behalf of the elders of our family.” However, they were ready to send for other family members to come. When those arrived, they proved quite willing to participate in prayers for Susanne. “We have freed her already from the *cibanda*. But we are willing to assist in prayer.” They did not want to give the impression that they had performed fake cleansing rites; participating in Christian prayers was for them a way to show to the public that they too wanted Susanne to be cured of her distress. They did not want to remain known as “the family who refused to free Susanne from the *cibanda*.” It was clear that by now both families looked for a solution and for reconciliation.

²³ Susanne was blessed with white flour, and a chain of beads was tied around her arm; when it fell off by itself, she was supposed to be free of the *cibanda*. However, when subsequent events showed that she still was with the *cibanda*, her family alleged that she had been cleansed with “cold flour” (*ubunga ububishi*). Meaning that Paul’s brother did not have sex with his wife when the flour was under his bed to be ritually prepared. (Before the era of HIV, the widow was cleansed from the *cibanda* through sexual intercourse with a brother-in-law.) They accused Paul’s family of purposely falsifying the ritual, so that Susanne had to continue to live with the *cibanda* as punishment for her causing the death of her husband.

In preparation for the rite of healing, we asked Susanne and the respective family members to participate in the liturgy. On Sunday, after the Mass, we had a symbolic burial rite for Susanne, similar to the one that I described in chapter 11. The rite fitted well with the symbolism of the Easter celebrations. People from both families participated, standing at opposite sides during the ritual, she sitting and later lying on a mat in the middle. The symbolic burial rite lasted for about an hour. The readings were read by members of both families. They were visibly happy after the rite, and so was Susanne.

Throughout this episode, I had my suspicions that Susanne could very well be HIV positive. Episodes of temporal madness can be an AIDS related symptom. Obviously, I encouraged her to go for testing, and spoke about this to her family. However, neither the presence nor absence of HIV would invalidate our approach. Susanne, her family, and the public, understood her condition as a spiritual problem, be it related to HIV or not. This spiritual issue needed to be addressed spiritually, and I believed that a Christian ritual in the presence of both affected families was the best way to do this. The two families had done something in common, mediated by the church, to address an outstanding ritual and spiritual issue. Beyond Susanne's condition, they had become more at ease with each other, ready again to work with each other rather than to work against each other. The public cleansing rite thus cleansed the two families as much as it cleansed Susanne.

PARENTHOOD (8)

By becoming a parent, people change their identity and role in life, which is acknowledged in Zambian languages by a change of name. Parents are known as the mothers and fathers of their children (Bashi Junior, Amake Grace, etc.) The spiritual bond between parents and their children is expressed by their powers to bless or curse their children. When we incorporate the notion of blessing into the notion of responsible parenthood, we come to a view that is not foreign to Christian thought: We measure blessings by the amount of time and efforts taken by parents to bond with their children, be a good parent to them, and in this way share in God's own parenthood.

In the turmoil left by AIDS and other calamities, many children grow up as orphans in Zambia today. They are shifted from one aunt to another uncle, often separated from other siblings after the loss of their parents, and they can grow up without building a healthy sense of belonging to

any one family. Many feel like second-class citizens in the household. They are in turn labelled as difficult by the foster parents. This point will play a great role later in this book, when we consider notions of Satanism among pupils who feel they belong to another world. Churches have the vocation of offering a place of belonging and of helping Christian homes to become places of belonging for everybody under the roof. The inclusiveness of African traditions offers many examples for this.

People who remain barren see themselves often as victims of witchcraft or curses. A woman's and a man's reproductive organs and systems are very vulnerable to witchcraft attacks. Often own relatives stand accused of having caused this condition. Some Pentecostal approaches blame "spiritual husbands" for the barrenness. Witchcraft accusations may have been avoided, but people who are unable to become biological parents continue to feel that there is something spiritually wrong with them. We challenge this notion. Also a person who is unable to become a biological parent can lead a healthy spiritual life and be a blessing for others. We stress a spiritual parenthood that goes beyond biology. Celibate Catholic priests and nuns experience this dimension and also want to share their experience with couples who are unable to have children. African inclusive notions of parenthood lead the way. Giving barren people a meaningful place in the Church—since they may have an open heart for orphans and other neglected people—can develop into meaningful apostolates and give rise to spiritual forms of parenthood, which has always been recognised in the Church (for example in the office of the god-parents).

PLACE IN SOCIETY, PUBLIC ROLES, SKILLS (9) AND POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY (10)

We have already seen that a person who holds an important public office (headman, chief, priest, etc.) has inherited the *mipashi* or *mizimu* of all his/her predecessors. In a Zambian understanding, finding one's role in society has a spiritual dimension, and so does public office.

Witches are said to be able to attack this dimension; a victim will be disabled from finding work, getting a promotion, finding a marriage partner, or even writing exams at school. Traditional healers and diviners spend much time freeing people from the spiritual influences of bad luck that prevent people from progressing in life. One traditional healer spoke of the following treatment:

We have to take away the bad spirit that prevents the person from progressing in life, the forces of witchcraft that have contaminated

him. We bath the patient in a river. He faces the source of the river and is not allowed to look backwards. I am before him, and drop medicines in the water: the same roots that we use to wash a person from a *cibanda*. The roots float towards him and touch his body, and then follow the river down the water. He must not see where the roots are going, but steadily looks towards me and towards the coming water. Going home, he will not look backwards, nor greet anybody on the road. This cleanses him from foreign influences on his body. Those who wish him evil can no longer control him.

Another healer washes the patient at a crossroad. We have seen in chapter 10 the example of Chengo, who gave his bathing at the crossroads the connotation, “All roads meet somewhere.” However, some healers’ interpretations about washing at the crossroads were more sinister than that of Chengo:

A *cibanda* needs to find a living host to attach itself—else it will come back. When people bath at crossroads, they know these places will be very busy, and an innocent person passing by will pick up the *cibanda* accidentally. Every day we may pick up bad spiritual influences without even realising it.

Such practices show that failure to progress in life is often projected upon others. A victim mentality rarely enables a person to take responsibility in life. However, brushing away people’s explanations as a sheer scapegoat mentality has at times prevented the Church from addressing the spiritual dimension that people associate with public life. Traditional treatment options show that finding one’s own talents presupposes a certain freedom from unhealthy influences. A person who lives all the time according to the expectations of others, trying to please everybody, will hardly find his/her own way in life. A dramatic ritual (for example bathing in a river; not greeting people when going home) may increase a sense of personal responsibility. But—if we understand such rituals on the psychological level and neglect that the person feels crippled by spiritual forces then we easily slip into a patronising role: we know better than the patient. In the past, uncommon and difficult skills needed help from the spirit world.²⁴ In our Christian life we have the notion of a person’s vocation and even of a life-vocation. A vocation builds on a person’s own talents, but acknowledges that it comes from outside: from God, from the source of life. The following drama shows how help against witchcraft

²⁴ This included the arts of the blacksmiths, hunters, warriors, beer-brewers and pot makers—that were clouded into taboo systems and secrecy.

attacks may correspond with finding a meaningful public role in life: an own sense of vocation.

DRAMA 25: FRANCO IS ATTACKED BY CATHOLIC WITCHES

Franco is the fifth-born out of seven children. By the time we were approached for help, he was in his early twenties, still living with his parents. He was the only child in the family who had dropped out of school, not even finishing grade nine. His siblings were educated at college level; even his younger brother and the lastborn sister were now in university. Since he had left school, Franco had held occasional jobs, but never for long. It was obvious that Franco had not yet found his place in life. The high expectations of his family and the comparisons with his successful and intelligent siblings did not help the process.

Franco's first attack by witches happened suddenly and without warning. On his way home, a feeling of acute thirst overcame him and he bought water to drink. Then he felt dizzy. "A flu caught me out of nowhere and I couldn't breathe anymore." He was surprised how quickly the sickness developed while he was walking. Reaching home, he took some painkillers, but he developed acute breathing problems and was admitted to hospital. He was treated with quinine against malaria. After this initial treatment, the doctors did not find any other infections, but kept him in hospital for observation.

The next attacks by witches happened while he was in the hospital. At first, he saw two of his "mothers" (his mother's sisters, in the wider sense) who came as shadows (*vimbwirimbwiri, finshingwa*). In later visions, the identity of the witches changed. A figure whom he described as "grandmother" became dominant in his visions. "She is the chief of the witches, organising everything." In his first vision, he saw them only when they had already reached the hospital. In later visions, he saw them already coming when they were starting off from their home, like in a film, until they reached the hospital, coming straight to him. Whenever they reached him, he became stiff and could no longer move and hardly breathe. This happened several times, and when he tried to pray, or when people tried to pray for him, the invisible witches would turn his head towards the window to prevent him from praying. His family did not give up, however, and called in different people with a reputation for helping with prayers. Some charismatics prayed for him, and so did a Catholic priest. Franco himself said that he wanted prayers, yet failed to pray himself. "Things are disturbing me too much!" The hospital chaplain gave

him the sacrament of the sick, but still the witches kept coming. Before he was dismissed, the shades told him that they would attack him wherever he went. Once he was at home the shades came back to torture him. The family prayed, neighbours prayed, a charismatic group prayed, and the matron of the youths prayed. However, the witches seemed not to be disturbed in any way by these prayers. This time, one of the “mothers” came as a giant owl, invisible to others, and sat on the roof. Then he saw, in a related vision, that one of the people had a knife, ready to kill him. When people in the house started to pray, the owl on the roof was getting confused. Finally, the people of the vision, together with the owl, left. At last, prayer seemed to have some effect.

The family members had no doubt about the identity of the chief-witch. This “grandmother” was identified as their neighbour at a previous location in Lusaka. She was a committed Catholic, very active in their parish, with a domineering character, and part of the Franciscan Tertiary lay-movement. The family suspected that the same person had also killed their daughter some years earlier, through a sudden death when they still lived in her neighbourhood.

We lost already one child through her witchcraft; we do not want to lose another one. It makes us think. This woman’s talking is not good. She makes many allusions to things in other people’s lives, which she cannot know. How does she know such things [if she is not a witch]? Ask anybody at the section; though she is sick at present, nobody visits her because all know she is a witch, and her children are in the same trade.

The suspected “grandmother” was actually crippled through an accident three years earlier and could not walk; this seemed not to prevent her to be very movable as a witch! Franco’s family came up with more and more episodes and evidence about the activities of this witch. When I asked why the witches were attacking this particular family, the answer was, “Jealousy. We never did anything wrong.” The witches were just evil, while they as victims were not at any fault. “They attack us without any reason.” For our approach, this is not a good starting point!

I witnessed twice the seizures that the young man went through, once in hospital and another time at their home, after his family asked me to stay overnight. He started glaring at something for some time, seemed to be in a trance and mentioned different names. The seizures I witnessed lasted less than thirty minutes, but the family told me that he could remain in that state for hours or even the whole night. He was wearing three

rosaries, one on his neck and on both arms, but the witches kept coming. “We sprinkle holy water around him when he starts, and we went with him for a Novena, but it does not help.” Though everybody in the family seemed to identify strongly with the Catholic Church, they were slowly losing faith in the Catholic remedies that had been made powerless by a Catholic witch!

Experiences as the one described above have many layers. The symptoms of freezing visions would, I assume, also have a biological component, maybe being part of extended hypnagogic or hypnopompic states or of deeper psychotic experiences rooted possibly in an onset of schizophrenic conditions or other disorders. Franco had a known history of taking marijuana and alcohol (and maybe other drugs), “but he has stopped some time ago.” The family approached me as a priest and looked towards a spiritual solution. I told them that a spiritual answer should not exclude taking advice from specialists in mental healthcare. But we would also pray.

The spiritual layer that seemed most obviously affected or wounded concerned Franco’s social position in society and his position in his family. He had no real job and no training that could support a viable future. The family no longer saw a meaningful place for him that would make them proud. As a priest, I saw my role in this situation not as a giver of more holy water or rosaries (he had already three!), but as drawing attention to his place in the family and in society. He had artistic qualities, played the guitar well and could compose music. In Zambia, it is difficult to make a living out of such talents, but at least they could help him in his search to find his place in the world. Mostly, however, I found it odd that he still lived with his parents, remaining also financially totally dependent on them. I wondered if we should not encourage him to start living on his own.

We have already seen that the way in which the person expects help has often something to do with the people present during the attack. Franco’s freezing experiences and visions took place always in the presence of family and church members (different prayer groups, priests, etc.) All were Catholic. Social life for the family had much to do with the Catholic Church. Franco had been active in the church as a child, but had lapsed. He expressed that he needed prayers and wanted prayers, but he was unable to pray by himself. A first step was to link him up again with a group in which he could feel at ease and be creative. He joined a choir.

The content of his visions also pointed towards the Church. The “chief witch” was prominently Catholic, of a domineering character, and with a

public role in the Church. On a symbolic level, the “chief witch” represented for me an experience of church that was controlled by very few people who had taken ownership and left little room for others. A spiritual task was to give Franco and his family back a sense of spiritual ownership and of responsibility for their own faith and spiritual life. Franco’s visions expressed a crisis in the faith of the whole family. The Catholic Church, so central in their social life, no longer worked for them on the spiritual plane.

Being from another parish, I did not know the “chief-witch” personally. Usually in our approach, we would encourage a guided visit to the person in an attempt to give back to him/her a human face. However, when they described to me her domineering character, it struck me that Franco’s mother also was very domineering; she would not like to see other people in her way. I wondered indeed whether the vision that haunted Franco, of a powerful woman who paralysed him, did not have something to do with the character of his own mother. I kept this thought to myself. Yet, I tried to find guidance from it in my dealing with this case.

First, however, I tried to reposition the whole family back in church, as part of the strategy to help Franco find his place. The whole family was disillusioned by their faith and needed to make some efforts to own it again, I thought. I encouraged each one to take up a meaningful role or ministry, something they believed in themselves, that nobody—not even a witch—could take away from them. To heal Franco was not a matter of heaping more prayers on his head; each member in the family had to make an own effort to own his/her faith. “We have only one way available to break the powers of such a domineering witch,” I said. “We need to counteract her influence with humility. This will break her powers.” We read together the beatitudes of Matthew 5:1-8. “If we practise this as well as we can, the witch will only see light in this house. This is not only Franco’s task. Franco says he is too weak. It is the task of us all.”

The method did have some effects. A family that was totally convinced of its own goodness and flawlessness, while seeing utter evil in the witch, started to ask itself some soul-searching questions. For me, this was already a success on the spiritual level, whatever the outcome about Franco’s condition. However, Franco told me that even the visions eventually stopped. Franco also could develop a more playful and creative way to find his place within the family of achievers. A joyful group of the charismatic renewal visited him often, to pray with him but also to joke with him, which made him visibly happy. Eventually he left his parents’ house and started to live his own life. Up to today I do not know what was most

helpful for him: leaving home? Laughing? Regular prayer? Challenging the whole family? Other priests of pastors would have still find other ways to come in. In the end, Franco was better, and we don't always need to know the reason.

THE SHADOW (11)

As the last layer of the onion—the layer that meets the physical world—we have placed the “shadow”. While the divine forces in a human person (layer 1) are beyond the powers of witches, the shadow (layer 11) is most easily associated with and manipulated by witchcraft. This concept of the shadow plays an important role for our group of healers (the KATEMBE research group) for understanding witchcraft. According to them, the spiritual shadow is related to the physical shadow (Bemba: *icinshingwa*; Nyanja: *mtshunzi* or *cithunzi*; Tumbuka: *chizghezghe*).²⁵ Unlike the physical shadow, the spiritual shadow can be manipulated. If a witch gains access to the shadow then he/she can also manipulate the physical body. Fingernails, human hair, footsteps, a piece of cloth or underwear that the person often wears, used bathing water, etc. are the physical counterparts of this shadow through which the human body and heart can be accessed and manipulated by the witch. Such objects are part of the body, and yet are also not really part of the body; this ambivalent status makes them powerful to represent the shadow.

Many healers understand this shadow as a mystical substance that is part of the body and of the soul, though it does not share the soul's aspect of immortality; it dies with the body. When the shadow (or a part of it) is “stolen”, something of the “self” feels missing. The person feels manipulated, not being fully herself or himself. The person does not feel fully alive, as if not owning the self. His/her own willpower has lost its sharpness. The Western concept of depression could be an analogy for the concept of a lost shadow. Corresponding physical features are a loss of appetite, loss of energy and power, weakness of the body, and chronic tiredness. Indeed, the Bemba word for dizziness (*ulunshingwa*) is etymologically related to the term for shadow (*icinshingwa*), and the same applies for Tumbuka (*chizghezghe*, *chiszwezwe*).

In the way people speak about it, the witch can manipulate this shadow or mix it with the shadow of an animal. The bewitched person then

²⁵ For some, the spiritual shadow is identical with the physical shadow. For others, the two are related but not identical. People whom I asked did not reflect much on the difference—it was my distinction, not theirs.

leaves an inexplicable bitter taste in others after interacting. The person becomes incapable of engaging in lasting relationships. Witches thus manipulate shadows to prevent a person from getting married, find customers for their businesses or get a promotion at work. By extracting a shadow of a victim, witches can also extract the victim's spirit (while still alive or shortly after his/her death) and use it for their own sinister purposes. Such extracted spirits or spiritual forces can animate for example the feared *tuyobela* (gremlin like figures, dolls, or small animals) and/or *ndondocha* (zombies) that obey their masters and secure for them wealth (by stealing) or revenge (by killing).

Traditional healers know many procedures to reintegrate the missing parts of the shadow or to cleanse the shadow from its foreign parts. Here is a description of a simple ritual for bringing back a person's shadow, described by a Tumbuka *ng'anga* in Misisi Compound (Lusaka):

To bring back the shadow the person needs to come with a new pot and a new blanket that is still unused. We heat up medicines in the pot, mainly roots and leaves of the *chizyumbwe* shrub, which helps a person to keep water in the body and not become dehydrated. The sick person sits up, facing the late afternoon sun. Then he/she bends over the pot and is covered with the blanket, inhaling the steam for some time. Then the healer throws the blanket away from the person, towards his/her back, in a rapid and unexpected manner. Then we place the water of the pot into a dish and mix it with cold water, with which the sick person has to wash the whole body. If this will not do the job, we burn the remaining medicines and pound them into a powder, which we rub into incisions made in all the joints of the body.²⁶

The cleansing steam bath, a new pot and a new blanket do not only refer to a new life; being unused by other people, they also point towards a new freedom from other people's influence. This goes hand in hand with a new sense of responsibility, self-worth and one's own willpower. This is of course a symbolic interpretation, not a spiritual one. But I would not hesitate to recommend it also to Christians who seek a ritual/religious dimension to find themselves—bringing it also into prayer in view of discovering the person's life-vocation.

The shadow is a powerful concept that many people suffering from witchcraft attacks use to describe their experiences. In our approach, we use it neither as a mystical substance nor as a theoretical premise. It sim-

²⁶ Doctor Chimphepo, Misisi Compound, Lusaka (7 August 2013).

ply is “the shadow”: a term that people use to mediate experiences with witchcraft. Our work on the shadow focuses on helping the person to find his/her own inner powers, develop self-esteem, believe in the purpose of life and make some plans for the future. Meaningful and prayerful rituals, performed in an appropriate context, can provide a rupture that marks a new start (see chapter eleven). If traditional healers in Africa are creative in coming up with such rituals that address people’s awareness of a manipulated shadow, then Christian rituals can reach this level too. Such prayers help to hand over a situation into the care of God. They also increase the awareness of the divine image in the soul, which—we believe—always comes with its own beauty and attraction for others. Beyond this, we also look for the broken relationships towards which the shadow may point:

DRAMA 26: ESTER CANNOT GET MARRIED

Over time, Ester saw all her friends getting married and starting their own families. She herself has a rather independent character. She also obtained a degree at university level. Even so, she neither found a job nor a husband. She was not at all unattractive to the male community. But none of the relationships she engaged in went far enough. Her family became concerned, and her mother started to look for traditional medicines that would enable her to get married. I thought that she herself was not yet ready for marriage: treasuring her independence, she may have wanted to keep her options in life open. Or maybe the men who proposed to her were not good enough. But she had another explanation, which sounded at first weird to me:

I feel I have the shadow of a dog. Men look at me, but then when things are just starting to develop, they turn away and never come back, as if I am not a human being.

She believed that a paternal aunt had bewitched her. When she grew up they lived close to each other in neighbouring homes. Later the aunt moved out, also because of some misunderstandings in the family. The paternal aunt in Bemba culture plays an important role in the female initiation rites at puberty and marriage. In her cultural position, if not duly honoured, she can cause infertility to the niece, should she have an evil heart. The woman asked to be prayed over and have this disturbing shadow removed. I started with some forms of private prayers in my office, but later thought that we really should approach the aunt, whom I hap-

pened to know. Visiting her together with her niece, I honoured her as an authority figure, saying: “We have come because your niece is still not married. We need the advice and the prayers of her paternal aunt.” She assured us that this was also her own concern. We involved the aunt in our prayers for a good husband, which we hoped would also contribute towards the rebuilding of their relationship. To my own surprise, she soon had a good job and she got married within the same year. Too fast for my own liking!

Was the blessing by the aunt only coincidental in the whole episode? Did a new understanding with her aunt (so important for marriage), make the girl more ready for engaging in a lasting relationship with a man, thereby also signalling a different body language to the male community? Or did it actually work wonders and remove the contaminations in her shadow? I do not know. Since the girl explicitly linked the shadow to the aunt, I believe that invoking her blessing was a meaningful prayer in a culture where marriage negotiations include whole families and go far beyond the feelings of two individuals. Peace with her own family was very important in order to found herself a new family.

While the lost shadow describes an experience of estrangement with oneself, the presence of another person’s shadow can symbolise the influence that aExplanation given by the healer: The name of the *kafifi* plant symbolises darkness. Picking it from behind without looking at it and walking home without greeting a person enacts the couple’s alienation. The mwenge tree is not used as firewood, since it burns with very unpleasant and penetrating smoke. (“Tonight there will be smoke in your house, and you will see nothing good in each other!”) The crackling salt in the opposed leafs creates sparks in the fire, simulating a fight. The water divided between two rivers symbolises divorce—each partner will go separate ways.s (see the drama “A poisoned relationship” in chapter 14). Witches, healers confirm, can manipulate also their own shadows. They can send their shadow ahead into a room to attack people while remaining invisible. To access his/her own shadow, the witch hides medicines in his/her mouth, nose, anus, or vagina—openings of the body where the inside and outside are blurred and overlapping. People come to feel the presence of something or someone, but this presence evades the physical senses. A male witch can use his shadow to sleep with a woman of his choice in her sleep. I have already described that the shadow can also be used to produce a so-called familiar, like an *ilomba* (see chapter 13) which is regarded as a second self in form of an animal, a snake, hyena, or owl. The animal will be intrinsically connected with the person and will give

the person superhuman powers. Such examples show that the presence of another person's shadow, in whatever shape, is experienced as something inherently destructive to the people who live in its presence.

Some people have experienced that a person who is physically absent continues to manipulate the life of the bewitched person. Here is an example in the words of a young woman in her early twenties, who had just started education in college:

DRAMA 27: FOLLOWED BY THE SHADOW OF MY FATHER

After mum died, I felt uncomfortable to live alone with my father. My older brothers and sisters had long left home. He is a loner. Somehow, I always felt uncomfortable with him. I associated him with some forms of witchcraft or Satanism, because he was part of a mysterious church or group and they wore black robes. I told him that I wanted to live with mum's relatives; I just was too lonely in the house. One day, when I felt very disturbed by something he did, which I think has to do with witchcraft, I left him without saying bye. My relatives were also convinced he is involved in witchcraft. Now, where I was staying with my mum's sister, we became haunted by a certain presence of dad. His shadow was surely there. Sometimes it was behind me. Sometimes I could see it. The feeling was terrible and it was real. Once it even pushed me from behind into the cooking fire.

When the family approached me for help, we prayed and I blessed the house. However, the negative experiences continued. The family of the young woman asked me to bless the house again. I refused. "We prayed and God has surely heard our prayer. God is doing his part, but we also have to do our part." I explained that we needed to make an active move towards reconciliation with the father, at least to re-establish contact. "Otherwise the shadow will not disappear." The family refused; they were afraid that the father would initiate his daughter into his sinister activities of witchcraft if she dared to go back to him. However, after a few months they changed their minds and asked me to accompany her back home. They could no longer bear the presence of his shadow. By now everybody in the house felt him, sometimes smelled him, sometimes saw something of the shadow physically. "We are all getting mad!" The shadow was no longer a sole concern of the daughter, but everybody in the house felt haunted, watched and harassed. Children started to get sick. "They will die if this story goes on like this."

I brought the daughter to the father for a brief visit. It was a difficult and at first a rather frosty venture, but it gave him the opportunity, for the first time, to openly air out his grievances about the behaviour of his daughter and his late wife's family. He felt despised by them since they had never communicated to him about why she had left in such a haste and how she was doing. In our meeting, the daughter did not explain herself, but we listened to the grief of the father. When we left, the daughter committed herself to come back. She explained to me that she was no longer afraid of her father. The experiences with the shadow ceased from one day to the next, not only for the daughter but also for the extended family.

In my own view, the cause of this liberation had also another dimension. The father was very rich. Apart from his large housing complex, he also owned several cars. He told me in our conversation: "I would have paid for the education of my daughter in university, but she has chosen to run away from me."

The girl felt very uncomfortable with her father who was also disliked and shunned by her late mum's family. But she also knew that her mother's family could not afford to pay for her college fees. Even when she had run away to be physically separated from him, she still remained dependant on his money. This was true also for the family on her mother's side. They told me, "Her father is rich, but for us it is not possible to pay for her college education." They hated the man but could not afford to walk away completely.

On his side, his financial muscle seemed to be the main focus in considering his relationship with his daughter. It was incomprehensible for him why she chose to jeopardise her financial security by running away. Other elements of a relationship between a father and his daughter seemed to evade him. In the meantime, this girl had grown up and become a woman in her own right, of which her father knew very little. During our visit, the father committed himself to continue to help towards her education.

As an endnote to this drama I may add that the father died just a year after this incident. Reflecting on this case, while writing it up, I was struck that his daughter had managed to make peace with him before his unexpected death. I am sure that she is too. There was no time to waste. In this sense we may add that the shadow had come to haunt the girl at the right time. If she had not been tortured by this shadow, who knows whether she would ever have made any step towards him. Some haunting demons come for a reason!

CONCLUSION

I have looked at ways in which experiences with forces of witchcraft and with other negative spiritual powers interact with cultural understandings of selfhood. The aim was to allow a Christian perspective to build on a spiritual awareness of personhood that is often downplayed in Western and modern understandings of human life. I presented the image of the layers of an onion as a tool for the helper that points to the specific relationships that may be directly linked to the attack and that may stand in need to be addressed in the pastoral interventions. It gives the helper an idea where to start. We pray for the person and with the person, but we also help the person to redress the relationships that have a connection to the attack. For example, if the patient is disturbed by ancestral dreams, we start by looking at the solidarity between the living family members. If the patient is disturbed by the shade of the dead spouse, we look at the relationship with the late spouse's family. If the patient suffers from defilements (*midulo* or *mankowesha*), we look at the way that important social boundaries are maintained or disregarded, etc. It goes without saying that this is only a start. Attacks can mutate from one layer to another. No person's spiritual life will fit the neat categories that I have presented. But the principle of our approach is valid on all the layers: We demand from the patient the readiness to make a step forward in good faith towards the alienated "other". How the other will react, is of course beyond our control. In our own experiences, the other party was often very willing to cooperate, even if the initial moment was somehow awkward or difficult. Our aim is not to turn the alienated parties into mutual friends. It is much more humble: to go on with each others' lives and take away the uneasiness that these encounters bring along. To take away the poison in the relationship, and to deny the poison to affect other relationships and life-choices. I close with the advice that we (the "Fingers of Thomas") often give to people attacked by witches. It builds on the Christian vocation and acknowledges that love too is a spiritual power:

Visit the person whom you suspect. Prepare yourself to think positively about the person. Try to have positive regard and to understand his/her point of view. Before you see a witch, you must see an image of God. Now, with these thoughts, go and greet the person. Establish eye contact. Show that you harbour no ill feelings against this person. The spiritual power that develops when you do this will break even the powers of witchcraft.

15

Witchcraft and children

Ghosts of children or of adults?

That children can be expelled as witches or as possessed by Satan—often through the mediation of Pentecostal pastors who offer them exorcisms—has made headlines in a number of African countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, DR Congo, Angola).²⁷ New social contexts accompany the appearance of the “child witch”. In Africa’s shanty compounds, parental control is very difficult to exert. The AIDS crisis in Africa created numbers of orphans on a scale never seen before. While most find a home with relatives, many are shifted around between distant family members. Orphans who are welcomed as a burden are easily placed into the category of the difficult child.

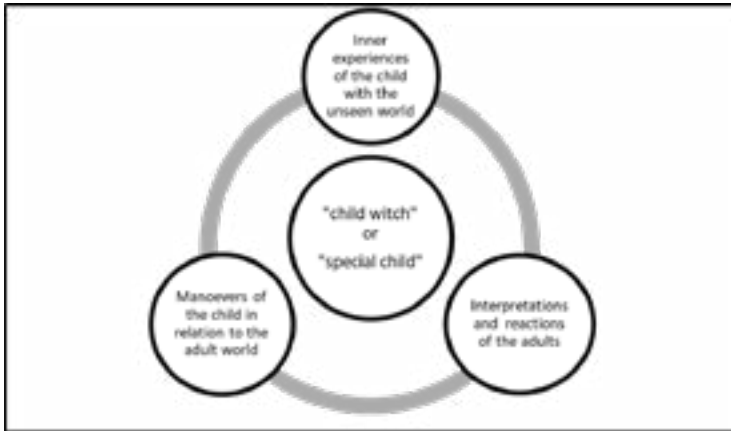
A number of popular Nigerian movies deal with the theme of the “child witch”, through whom wicked adults infuse spiritual evil into a given family.²⁸ Also the Zambian scene has become exposed to new ideas about the connection of children with the occult. Diverse deliverance ministries highlight the concept of inheritance of witchcraft through the family line. People are encouraged by their pastors to break generational curses, purge their family trees from witchcraft and repent for the sins of their ancestors. In families torn apart by witchcraft accusations, some see in troublesome children with unusual forms of behaviour a re-embodiment of the witchcraft of their wicked adult relatives.

But children are not only accused of witchcraft; they also take part in the creation of witchcraft phantasies or narratives, accuse others to be witches, and develop behaviour patterns that are opened by the cultural space that is given to the “special child” in touch with occult forces. Some

²⁷ See for example the work of Felix Riedel on child witches in Africa. Riedel reminds us of the human rights dimension in witchcraft accusations that, in his opinion, has been downplayed in many anthropological studies. (Riedel 2012)

²⁸ For example, *Enjoyment in Hell* (2007) or *The End of the Wicked* (1999). See the commentaries of Felix Riedel on these films (Riedel 2012).

children do feel themselves in touch with occult forces and may exploit at times the powers they hold over fearsome adults:



When children are manoeuvred into the category of the child-witch, they risk to become abandoned, subjected to torturous rituals of exorcisms or even killed.²⁹ In a pastoral approach, we need to protect children from such abuse, which includes recourse to the law to bring perpetrators of accusations (for example accusing pastors) to court. However, we need also to engage with the dynamics within the relationships in which witchcraft discourses play themselves out, between the children and their guardians or wider families, as well as with the concepts of the community.

HISTORICAL TRADITIONS

Worldwide, different historical traditions of associating children with witchcraft have been documented, ranging from punishing children for their alleged witchcraft to making use of child-witches' abilities to identify adult witches.³⁰ In Zambian historical traditions, children's association with the world of witchcraft was rather indirect. One widespread pre-colonial cultural tradition has some affinities with the concept of the child witch. Children who developed the upper teeth before the lower ones had to be killed or left to die (unless the parents managed to hide or redress this development with the help of medicines), to prevent them from bringing negative spiritual influences into the village community. In the early years of the 20th Century, missionaries in Zambia still encountered

²⁹ For example, *The Guardian*, 9th December 2007; *Mail Online*, 15th April 2014; *CNN*, 28th August 2010; *The Telegraph*, 8th November 2008; *International Business Times*, 20th May 2013.

³⁰ See for example Wikipedia's entry "witchcraft accusations against children".

some cases of infanticide that they attributed to this belief. Here a description from a missionary (Eduard Labrecque), who wrote his treatise on the Bemba at the beginning of the 1930s, but referred to pre-colonial practices:³¹

There remains a crucial moment in the child's life: the appearance of the first teeth. ...It is of common knowledge among the Africans that the first teeth in a baby's mouth usually appear in the lower jaw. If the first teeth happen to show in the upper jaw, the child is then regarded as a monster: it is a '*cinkula*', not a human being, but a monster. This child can never be ill, the Natives say, for it rejects onto its neighbours any sickness with which it could eventually be affected. This '*cinkula*', they say, is a '*wa fye*', a nothing, and even the demon ('*ciwa*') will leave this child strictly alone. If the '*cinkula*' is allowed to live, it is certain to reach a very ripe age, which is quite understandable, since it rids itself of all illnesses onto its neighbours. It is therefore much better to get rid of a '*cinkula*' at once. That is what the people were doing before the colonial times: they would simply put to death such a child on the ground that it was a public danger for the whole village. Were it allowed to live on, bad luck of all sorts would hit the community: the rain would not fall, and the whole country would suffer from famine; fish and antelopes would no longer let themselves be caught in the nets of the fishermen and hunters; many villagers would be bound to die somehow or other, at one time or another, especially among the relatives of the '*cinkula*'. The conclusion is unavoidable: the '*cinkula*' must be put to death. The mother or the '*nasenge*', the paternal aunt, is to execute the death sentence. Early in the morning she picks up the child and makes her way down to the river. She turns her back to the flowing water, unties the skin in which the baby has been wrapped up and drops it into the current. This done, she moves away from the river and goes back to the village without a glance backwards. ... It is easy to understand why mothers await so anxiously the appearance of the first teeth of their babies, and how happy they are when those first teeth show up on the lower jaw, and all danger for them of losing their babies is definitely set aside.

Labrecque's description locates the concept of the *cinkula* on the ladder of possible perils within the developmental stages towards human personhood; it was not part of a discourse on the "child witch". Such customs

³¹ Labrecque 2001, p. 15.

were successfully banned by the colonial administration.³² Unlike colonial interventions concerning witchcraft accusations, the policy concerning child protection seemingly found open ears among the population; mothers of affected children may have been happy to be liberated from a cultural practice that had instilled much fear. Associating children with bad omens and spiritual evil was subsequently not a major issue for most of the colonial and postcolonial periods. If the “child witch” has become again a concern today, we have to look for explanations in terms of recent developments. Christian churches, unfortunately, are not always innocent of this:

DRAMA 28: MARY BRINGS HER BABY FOR PRAYERS³³

Mary consulted a Christian “prophet” in Lusaka because of failure in life. Her business was not progressing, and her husband had run away with another woman. The pastor found the spiritual root cause:

God has revealed to me that there is witchcraft in your family. Witchcraft has entered through your grandfather’s line. You must free yourself from this bondage. Otherwise, you can never prosper. This form of witchcraft is inherited in the family line. If we do not break its power now, it will pass on to your children. You will be the mother of witches!

While the pastor offered healing and deliverance (for which Mary had to pay quite a bit of money for procuring the prescribed “holy oils” from the same pastor), the prayers became a source for suspicions, fears and division in the family. Mary started to hate her grandfather, and transferred this feeling onto her own child:

I started to avoid my grandfather and to speak ill of him. In hindsight, this is strange, because I had been close to him as a child. He had often bought me gifts, and he liked me more than he liked the

³² Some incidents of infanticide, however, continued to be recorded in the colonial district notebooks and mission diaries. In Chilubula, the missionaries encountered a death of a small girl, drowned, in 1903 (Chilubula Mission Diary 28th October 1903) that was killed as a *cinikula*, according to the missionaries’ guess. Also in Chilonga, a case of infanticide was reported and attributed to the said beliefs (Chilonga Mission Diary, July 1903). See also Kaliminwa, third Quarter 1908 (White Fathers Quarterly Reports, Archives of the Missionaries of Africa, Lusaka (FENZA). The Bisa chief Kambwiri II (Salimu Mulilo) in the Luangwa Valley was deposed in 1920 by the colonial office because of child killing (according to local narratives a *cinikula*), and so was his successor Bulyani three years later, who had authorised the killing of a child in his own family (Lundazi District Notebook, Volume 3, p. 42, National Archives, Lusaka).

³³ Narrated by Mary to the “Fingers of Thomas” in March 2014.

other children. Now, however, I was not only convinced that he was a witch. I also feared that my grandfather had transmitted the powers of witchcraft to my own child, barely two years old. I thought since my grandfather was close to death, he needed somebody to pass his witchcraft to, before he died. At times, a feeling overcame me of detesting my child, seeing evil in him. I felt this evil with my own body. I also dreamed of my child in bad ways.

Mary brought her child for prayers to the “Fingers of Thomas”. In our subsequent meetings, we tried to help her to think positively about her family, her grandfather and herself. In our prayers, we looked at the child as a source of blessings, and at the challenge of witchcraft as a call for reconciliation in her family.

Mary’s child was only two years old and unable to perceive what the fears of the mother could be about. Older children, in contrast, are often able to assimilate and apply the vocabulary of witchcraft. In our ministry, we came into contact with children who identified themselves with the world of witchcraft or “Satanism” (how *they* understood it), sometimes due to highly traumatic events, or because they felt out of place and had internalised negative messages spoken by the adults: “You are not my child.”—“I do not know where you come from!”—“You are useless, stupid, you will never learn!”—“You are not like your brothers and sisters.” Others had internalised blame: after being abused or raped, sometimes by their own family members, the world of Satanism became a welcome escape route that placed an acceptable storyline on their weird and painful experiences, which they could not put into words.

Witchcraft also becomes a label that some guardians place on behaviour patterns or emotional developmental issues of children that in the Western world would be analysed and treated under psychological parameters, for example the effects of trauma, affection disorders, sleeping disorders or sleep-walking.

DRAMA 29: MARTHA IS PROPHESED TO BE A SATANIST

Martha (now 20 years old) gave the following testimony about her childhood.³⁴

³⁴ Martha joined the support group “the Fingers of Thomas”, to whom she gave this testimony. We published it in the *Zambian Post Newspaper* (August 2013), which was for her a way to find some justice.

I was a difficult child. Many people say that orphans are difficult. For me it was true. After the death of my parents, I never really settled with my foster-parents. Already in my early childhood, I was compared negatively with my stepbrothers and sisters. I was the odd one out, and they said that I was never grateful for what I got. They told me that I could have been on the streets without their charity. They said I should not desire fancy and expensive things, but I wonder which fancy things I ever had.

When she was around twelve years old, she mentioned one morning that her foster-father was going to have a car accident. The father did have an accident that day, in which—fortunately—nobody was hurt, though the car was damaged beyond repair. From that day onward, he started calling her a witch. At another occasion, she walked out during prayers for a sick relative who was cared for in the house, refusing to pray with the others. The sick person eventually died. Some family members said she was responsible for the death.

Martha performed poorly at school. Paying her school fees was another drain on her family's scarce resources. "They told me that they paid my school fees out of charity, but it was a waste!" Martha experienced the truth of this. Whenever the time for exams came, she became dumb. Her voice physically disappeared. She could not speak for days and sometimes weeks. "She has a spiritual problem", people said of her. She thought the same. It was a way for her to understand why she was odd and always out of place. Even when she had a voice, she felt voiceless. Maybe the fact of literally losing her voice at exam time was a subtle cry for help. But it was understood in the wrong way and she came into the wrong hands.

When I was sixteen, my guardians brought me to a prophet, a "man of God" on the Copperbelt. "She has a spiritual problem," they told him. I agreed. I was prayed over, and fell down [into a trance]. I cannot remember what I said when I was lying there on the floor. I remember that the people in the congregation were excited by my confessions. Several men were casting out demons left and right with a loud voice. My family said that I confessed I was a Satanist and that I wanted to sacrifice them. The pastor confirmed I needed deliverance and prayers. He ordered the family to bring all my clothes, which he burnt during another prayer service. Then he ordered me to hand over my cell phone [the old phone of a school friend] to be burnt as well: "It is full of demons". I refused. "You

burnt already my clothes but did not buy me new ones,” I said.
“Who will give me a new phone”?

Martha stood in defiance against the pastor and family, and indeed the whole church congregation. She knew that she would now be called a Satanist. She had no fears anymore of demons. This incidence was the turning point in her life. To boldly cling to her phone, was a way of taking back her life against the complicity of the pastor, church and family. It was costly. In retaliation for not giving up her phone, her family evicted her from their home as an unrepented Satanist. “She will sacrifice us all if she stays—she can no longer live in our house unless she repents from Satanism!” She was shifted to a distant relative in Lusaka, who agreed—against the wish of her husband—to take her in.

In Lusaka Martha also found new friends among the “Fingers of Thomas”, who visited her regularly and who also tried to take away the fear of Satanism in her new family. Her aunt, in contrast to other family members, did not believe that she was under the influence of Satanism. “It is not you who needs deliverance, but your family and the pastor!” she said. Nevertheless, Martha continued to look for prayers. In subsequent prayers with members of the “Fingers of Thomas”, the phone, which she had refused to hand over to the pastor, became a key symbol for her own voice, which she had been denied ever since her parents died. For this, she had to stop blaming her situation on demons, her foster-family or on herself. Much of her life had been about being blamed and dishing out blame. She saw herself as a victim. Now she had to learn how to become a person capable of self-esteem and of being a contributing and positive influence in society.

Martha managed to pick herself up. The aggressive prayers of her family’s church had been hypnotically hammering into her body reinforcing that there was something bad inside herself that needed to come out. But her chains fell off only when she started to believe in the power of good inside herself. She needed support to find her own voice in life, the strength to shape her own destiny, and someone who believed in her.

In the case of Martha, her family had found in her alleged Satanism a convenient excuse to suspend their duty to care for a troublesome person. She was saved by a helping hand among members of the wider family who were capable of developing feelings of empathy for her. Only then could she develop self-esteem. Where children (often much younger than Martha) are expelled as witches or neglected for the convenience of the adults,

we try by all means not only to exert pressure on the parents to live up to their responsibilities, but also to find helping forces in the wider family.

GHOSTS OF ADULTS AND OF CHILDREN

In many cases, the relationship between children and their guardians is much more subtle than in the above case. Many parents of “child witches” love their children and feel for them, yet the children easily become focal points for the “ghosts” of adults who are unable to cope in a world of spiritual uncertainties. Children in turn can pick up cues from the adults that they may not have ever mentioned. “It is a very remarkable thing that the unconscious of one human being can react upon that of another, without passing through the conscious ... the fact is incontestable,” said Freud.³⁵ Between children and parents, much is transferred and absorbed without saying a word. Such dynamics are crucial when we deal with witchcraft experiences that concern children.

Children often ask concrete questions about the spirit world that the adults find hard to answer. The child assimilates concepts from his/her parents, guardians, adults and peers, and fills them in with his/her own experiences, thus understanding them in personal and situational ways that are often very concrete. Images of the unseen world are woven into the child’s relationships with the people from whom the ideas have been assimilated. When children cannot develop a sense of belonging to their families, their spiritual world, as well as their sense of selfhood, may become negatively affected.

Even when children develop a healthy sense of belonging to their families, the extended world of significant adults remains a precarious world, where the child easily sorts adults into good and bad ones, in shifting categories. Such sorting affects also the child’s dreams and mystical experiences. The features of known adults and stories about them can become the monsters of the children with whom they have to cope in their sleep.

The spiritual world is thus not only a reservoir for situational, intellectual and symbolic frames with which the child constructs reality, but it impacts itself on the child beyond his/her control. One issue with which many children have to struggle with are ghosts. Martin Smith, a psychologist and practitioner-manager of emergency social workers in England, looked at ghosts as an apt psychological archetype for indeterminate realities that break through fixed structures:

³⁵ Freud in *The Unconscious*, quoted in Smith 2008, p. 297.

Fear of ghosts is a characteristic of most people's childhood. Children are apt to misperceive noises and sights, particularly when these are half-heard or only partly seen. The curtain that is disturbed by the wind, the shadowy sense of something indistinct moving in darkness at the far side of the bedroom, the unusual noise that cannot be placed entirely... Plausible explanations need to be constructed for these things. Ghosts are powerful archetypes that feature in stories young children hear and films and television programmes they see.³⁶

Such "ghosts", of course, are part not only of children's lives, but also of the lives of adults. As archetypes, Martin Smith suggests, they can link up with those disturbances that threaten to destroy our stable illusions and categories through which we process the world and ourselves. Ghosts mark boundary conditions. A ghost does not give any time to be investigated or to be studied; a ghost creates a distance, as if to say, "Don't come nearer, don't disturb." Ghosts break into the world and threaten the securities within which people manage their lives. Martin Smith suggests in his thought-provoking reflections that ghosts—understood by him as archetypes—are easily transposed on ambivalent human relationships and on evasive truths. Intimacy and distrust are not always far from each other. Here the metaphor of the ghost provokes paralysing thoughts: "Do I investigate the truth that will shatter my illusions, or do I better leave some ghosts undisturbed?" Living in stable illusions can come at the price of living with ghosts. Smith encountered ghosts in many of his adult patients for whom a world had collapsed: "Such experiences have a profound effect as people become aware of a *pit of insecurity beneath the surface of life* that they were blissfully ignorant of previously."³⁷

Smith asserts that children, especially one's own children, can trigger long-forgotten memories in the adults. Ghosts from the past and memories that seemed dead, when triggered by the children, reappear without warning to disturb the present peace of the adults. Like ghosts, children can themselves become a category of thought. Adults try to keep children in stable categories that are emotionally charged. At the same time, the adults' memories and their personal "ghosts" can easily be projected onto children, even if these ghosts come from a world and from a past in which the children did not belong.

³⁶ Smith 2008, p. 290.

³⁷ Smith 2008, p. 292, italics in the original.

If we apply Smith's insights onto the category of the child witch in Africa, then the task of the healing Church consists not just of exorcisms and deliverance ministries forced onto the children. Ideally, prayers for healing should go hand in hand with naming and confronting the spiritual insecurities that threaten the lives of the adults. If this is not possible or feasible (for various practical reasons, including the lack of time and openness), the pastor can still attempt to work on the relationships within which the suspicions play themselves out.

I do not wish to totally reduce ghosts and other spiritual invaders to psychological categories or "archetypes" that break into people's lives, triggered by strange events, to disturb the illusion of a peace of mind that we constantly build up in ourselves, and through which we project onto others the evils with which we cannot cope. In our approach, we never negate a spiritual dimension with which people struggle. We must, however, be aware of a grave danger that is often neglected in charismatic ministries: that mystical experiences of children are used and exploited for the adults' personal agendas, of which the children know very little. Adults apply a child's vision, a dream or their strange actions to their own situation in their own way. At the same time, children also can manipulate and exploit their parents' fears and can become at ease within a constructed identity as the "special child". When children experience spiritual attacks, we help them by placing their experiences into the context of the concrete relationships and suspicions between the significant adults, while simultaneously working on the children's sense of belonging. Helping a child implies dealing with the adult world.



DRAMA 30: SOPHIE IS TAKEN TO THE GRAVEYARD EVERY NIGHT

Sophie was ten years old when her paternal grandmother approached me for prayers. Strange things were happening to the child at night. Because her parents could not cope with these experiences, Sophie was now staying with the grandmother. Here I paraphrase what Sophie's grandmother told me:

At night, sometimes there are lights in the house and different noises. Nearly every single night Sophie wakes up in the house in a different place. At other times, if one of us gets up at night, we may just find her sleeping at the door, though she had gone to sleep with the other children. We find that her body is stiff like a corpse and cold, and we fail to wake her up. Every morning Sophie tells us the same story: that Bana Maunda, her great-grandmother (a grandmother to her mother) had come at night with a winnowing basket, that she entered the house through the closed door, took the child away on the basket, brought her to a graveyard and made her dig the whole night at a grave. This has been happening for many months, first in her parents' house, and now in mine.

I started to visit the family regularly. Nothing was happening to the other children in the house (at least four others in a similar age group, both siblings and cousins of Sophie), but all of them heard strange noises at the door and on the roof, and some of them were seeing lights. Sophie was open and friendly with me; she often came running out of the house to welcome me. When I asked how this had started, Sophie explained:

When I stayed with Bana Maunda on holidays [five years prior to these events], I was with other children in her house. She made us do strange things, and she made us drink blood. It looked like juice, but in reality, it was blood.

It was difficult for me to find out what happened in the house of Bana Maunda, and Sophie was not concrete about the nature of the "strange things". She did not want to talk about it and avoided such questions. Her great-grandmother (Bana Maunda) was from the Luapula Province, and she was known in the whole family as a big witch (*iciloshi*). She was now living in one of the suburbs of Lusaka, quite far from Sophie's place. Sophie's family was sure about her nature as a witch. The grandmother explained,

She killed all her own children and then she killed the children of us relatives. Some years back she had lived in our neighbourhood,

but after many deaths in the family, we expelled her and made her leave the township. The last person whom she bewitched and killed had been sick for a long time. The parish sister came to pray a number of times for the sick person, but whenever she prayed, Bana Maunda would go outside; she could not stay inside the house when somebody prayed. The parish sister also found her behaviour strange. When we called a diviner (a *ng'anga*). Bana Maunda even confessed that she was a witch and that she had to go on killing people. She cannot stop. Many times different diviners removed her charms, but she always started again. Once you have tasted blood, you cannot stop; you have to go on killing people.

Bana Maunda was not the only witch in the family. Her uncle had died as a convicted witch. "Witchcraft runs in her family," the grandmother explained. She was sure that Bana Maunda needed to initiate somebody else into witchcraft before she died. The family believed that she took Sophie to the graveyard every night, and that she gave her meat to eat, the standard food for witches. If nothing was done, the child would become a witch. At the same time, Sophie was seen to be very innocent, a mere victim.

I asked whether I could spend a night with the family and see for myself what was happening. The family was happy about the suggestion. I arrived in the afternoon to find a relaxed atmosphere. I found the grandmother with Sophie, her younger brother and three cousins, all between eight and eleven years old. During the evening, we watched TV and told each other stories, played some games, and then we went to sleep. It was a tiny two-room flat. I slept with the children on the floor at the entrance door, next to Sophie, while the grandmother slept in the tiny adjacent bedroom, separated from us by just a piece of cloth. The children quickly fell asleep, but I remained awake for some time.

I had slept in many homes before, where witchcraft attacks were said to be taking place, but I had never myself witnessed anything of a strange power. This time, however, something did happen to me that I find difficult to put into words. At around 23:00 hours, as if out of nowhere, I started to feel uncomfortable, and heard some sounds at the door, maybe like a dog carefully scratching at it, without making much noise. A moment later, I felt the presence of something or someone in the room that I thought of as evil. For some minutes, I felt paralysed by fear of this silent but overpowering and filling presence. Did something enter the room? Was I imagining things? Fear shifted my consciousness into a different mode of perceiving what was real. My gut reaction was to pray in my

heart. The grandmother was awake on the other side of the room and whispered: "Father, are you awake? Do you hear? She has come!" I was obviously not alone with my perception. Sophie continued sleeping. With the arrival of the "presence", she had started to breathe very heavily. She had bent her knees towards her tummy and folded up into a strange position. The other children seemed awake now. After a few very long minutes, I slowly regained my confidence, though the "presence" was still in the room. I took Sophie's hand; her temperature seemed normal, but her body had grown stiff. She remained in that position for quite some time (maybe 20 minutes), breathing very heavily, without waking up. Then she stretched out into her previous relaxed position and seemed to be sleeping again normally. It felt to me as if also the "presence" in the room had now left. During the night, this experience repeated itself two more times: first around 01:00 hours, and the last time around 03:00 hours. At neither time did I hear any noise at the door (as was the case the first time). Sophie folded up into a stiff body position each time, and the others in the room were silently awake. These times, however, I did not feel the paralyzing fear that I had the first time. I was more relaxed about this "presence", though I still felt uncomfortable with it. The "presence" also seemed to stay for shorter times than at first—a few minutes I would think, though time passes differently in such moments.

The next morning Sophie looked happy, as if she had had a normal night. "How did you sleep?" I asked her when we got up.

"I slept well. Bana Maunda came at night. She wanted to put me into the basket, but she could not lift me up. She came three times and tried to take me, but she failed."

The grandmother was quick to interpret: "You see, she failed to take Sophie because the priest was next to her!" For the other children this seemed to have been a usual night—they were used to Sophie's way of sleeping and to this strange presence. The children went back to school, and I went back to the parish, with very inconclusive thoughts and feeling confused.

In the afternoon, I came back and we had a family meeting. I said that I needed to visit Bana Maunda. The family was very reluctant. Everybody feared her, and people went as far as to say that those going to bring me there would be the first ones to be killed by her witchcraft. Finally, when I insisted that this was the only way to cure Sophie, Sophie's mother, together with a cousin, agreed to bring me to her place. It took us a long time to find the place, because neither of them had been there for a long time. We found Bana Maunda in a little settlement of small-scale farm-

ers, in a tiny hut at the very end of the settlement. A younger relative lived nearby, also in poor housing conditions. Bana Maunda gave Sophie's mother and her cousin a rather frosty reception; they did not greet each other, and Sophie's mother remained at a safe distance. I asked to talk with Bana Maunda alone, and we entered her small hut. It was difficult not to feel compassion. Bana Maunda was an old and feeble woman, who was approaching the end of her life. There was nothing inside her mud-hut but some plastic sheets on which she put a few rags to sleep on, and a few worn-out pots. The mud floor was wet; it was still rainy season and the roof was leaking.

I introduced myself as the family's priest, saying they approached me for help because they experienced witchcraft attacks. I said that whenever I deal with witchcraft, I try as a priest to bring together family members who are not at peace with each other.

She answered: "Is that what you have come for, Father? There is no need to trouble yourself with this story. I can tell you straight away that I am a witch, before you even trouble yourself to ask. I have told already so many *ng'angas* (traditional healers) that I am a witch. There is no need to lose time on that. Why do you come with such an old story?"

Surprised at her answer, I inquired about her witchcraft. "Do you use charms?" I asked.

"I must be using charms," she said.

"How do you make them?"

"They just come to me."

"So you don't make them yourself?"

"No."

"But how do they come?"

"I don't know how they come. But whenever a *ng'anga* comes, he finds charms in my house."

"But I see your house is empty. I cannot see any charm. Where could they be?"

"I don't know. Only a *ng'anga* can see those things. They follow me."

"They follow you?"

"Yes. Many pastors have prayed over me. Maybe the charms have stopped coming to me. I think they have stopped."

"But are you a witch?" I asked.

"Yes, I am a witch. Everyone says so."

I was confused. Did she agree she is a witch because for the last twenty years she had been accused of and made responsible for so many deaths, and because her family expelled her as a witch? Did she believe herself to

be a witch? I could not tell. When I asked her whether she still was a witch or whether she had stopped being a witch, she answered in the affirmative to both propositions. Was she confused in her old age? It dawned on me that it was not possible for her to answer the question about witchcraft as a marker of identity and self-awareness with a simple yes or no. Witchcraft is not a punctual and strictly factual thing—that you can be a witch at one moment and can stop being a witch at another. The presence or absence of witchcraft is situational and depends on different parameters, including deaths and accusations. She did consider herself at least as a potential witch. In addition, she explained how it started:

I was not a good person. I was a drunkard. I did not care well for my children. I was insulting everybody. I changed when my daughter committed suicide. I was in Mansa, and my daughter was here in Lusaka. She killed herself while she was nine months pregnant. My daughter left a suicide note for me, but my family never gave it to me. Until today, I do not know why my daughter killed herself and what message she left for me. People who read the message said that she killed herself because I am a witch. I stopped drinking beer that day, and I have changed.

Another daughter became sick. I kept her in my house. [She was then living with Sophie's family]. She had a big boil on her back, which never healed. I called a *ng'anga* to treat her, and he gave me medicines to apply on the wound every day. However, my daughter got worse. I called back the *ng'anga*, telling him that the medicines did not work. The *ng'anga* replied: "My medicines are very good. It is you; you are not good! You have bad things inside yourself, which is why the medicines cannot work. I will cleanse you." The *ng'anga* made incisions between my breasts and rubbed medicines onto them. Then he shaved my hair and made incisions all over my body, from head to toes, deep incisions into which he rubbed medicines. Look, my whole body is full of scars. Afterwards, I continued to treat my daughter, and this time the medicines worked very well. After only a few days, the boil disappeared completely. However, since then, I have dreams every night, and I wake up in the morning as if I had been out the whole night. The incisions are very old, but they are still paining.

Then people started dying: all my children died, the children of my sisters also died. They all had AIDS. My relatives called a famous *ng'anga* all the way from Kazembe [900km from Lusaka]. When the *ng'anga* came, I told him exactly what I told you today:

“Don’t trouble yourself; I know that I am a witch.” He took away all the charms from my house, and he cut again incisions into my body, from the head down to the feet. He told me that I would die, if I used witchcraft again. I have not touched witchcraft ever since; otherwise, I would have surely died. My uncle was also caught, and he was told the same thing. However, he went on practising witchcraft, and just after a few months, he died. Some other diviners (*ngànga*) also came, and I told them exactly what I have told you.

You cannot understand this, Father, but call my younger sister, she knows all this, and you should have come with her. Why did you come with this girl [pointing towards Sophie’s mother] who does not know anything? She is too young!

The aim of my visit was not to discern the presence or absence of witchcraft in Bana Maunda. I wanted to help Sophie and her family to find a way forward out of the attacks they experienced. Nevertheless, her answer showed me how different discourses were being blended together to form a complicated identity. Bana Maunda did believe in the forces of witchcraft; she had frequented many traditional healers and diviners throughout her life. She often used traditional medicines to tap into spiritual and protective forces. Whether at one point in her life she consciously tried to call upon occult forces through a craft associated with the witch, I cannot tell. She identified, however, her early life as a drunkard with witchcraft, especially since she was made responsible for the suicide of her pregnant daughter. She was aware that witchcraft was being practised in her family. Her uncle had confessed to being a witch in the confrontations with the diviners and family, and she was convinced that eventually he died because of his witchcraft. Diviners confirmed her as a witch, and found charms in her own house (which they may have planted themselves?) The public experience of being caught with charms corresponded with her own alienated experience of selfhood in the context of the accusations from her family. She seemed happy and relieved when the diviners took the charms away—a visible expression of the evil forces that had penetrated her life story; it did not need much group pressure at that moment to make her confess to being a witch. However, this “evil” that she wanted to expel from her body escaped neat categories. The incisions all over her body were meant to take the evil out of the body. Strangely enough, at other times it seemed that the very incisions had rubbed this evil into her body in the first place. The contradictory meanings of the incisions, the simultaneous presence and absence of charms, and the fact that all her

children had died not only of AIDS but also of witchcraft, mirrored the ambiguities in her life-story. Witchcraft for her was not a matter of yes or no. She noticed that I could not understand this. Sophie's mother would not understand either—"she is too young." Only her sister who was still alive would have understood: someone who had journeyed in the same family and had passed through the same events.

I brought the conversation now to Sophie, explaining that she experienced witchcraft attacks every day. Bana Maunda gave this answer:

I have nothing to do with the child. Why should I bewitch such a little child? I hardly know the mother, and it would make more sense for me to bewitch other family members with whom I have a grudge. I have no grudge with the mother, and I do not know why she came here today. I have nothing to do with the dreams of the child. I stopped long ago to be a witch. Maybe I go out during the night, I do not know. I sleep badly. I dream badly every night. I have pain. I wake up in the morning as if I was out the whole night. Still, I cannot go to this poor child. Somebody else is taking the child, not me.

Before I left, I asked about her church. She belonged to a Reformed Church nearby. The pastor and the members of the congregation visited her regularly. For her, that was other proof that she could no longer be a witch. "How can a witch pray in church?" We left, and Sophie's mother at least greeted her grandmother by saying good-bye.

The next day we had another meeting with Sophie's family. They asked me whether Bana Maunda confessed to being a witch. "Yes and no," I said. I told them of my conviction that Bana Maunda was innocent of what was happening to Sophie. I also told them that I had great pity for Bana Maunda. She was an old woman, close to death, living in very poor conditions and in great need. It was the responsibility of her family to look after her. God could not bless this family if they themselves rejected their own family member in great need, I said. Bana Maunda's younger sister (the only living biological sister, whom Bana Maunda would have liked to see) was present at this meeting. She proved to be the biggest antagonist and was angry that I had visited her sister. She seemed to be the driving force behind the accusations against Bana Maunda. "Of course she is a witch. She is still killing. She cannot stop. Once you taste blood, you have to go on killing. She never stopped. She killed all her children, and most of our relatives. There is nobody left."

I continued to visit Sophie and her mother regularly. “Bana Maunda has stopped coming,” the child explained. The visions and strange events had seized, though Sophie had now started to wet the mattress at night.

At some point, there was a funeral of a family member within Lusaka, which was attended by both Bana Maunda and her younger sister. It was the first time for years that they met face to face. They did not show hostility towards each other, and they even greeted each other. Sophie also met Bana Maunda face to face. The next time when I came to her house, she came running to tell me: “The one who was taking me at night is not Bana Maunda! It is someone else. Bana Maunda is very short and old. Even me, I am taller. The one who comes is like three meters tall. It is someone else!”

The experiences of having a mysterious presence in the house never came back. As I am writing now, five years have passed, and Sophie has developed into a “normal” teenager, with new problems, but sleeping well, doing rather well at school, and not overly concerned about witchcraft. Other things and people today fill her imagination. A year ago, I asked her about those past experiences. She says she has forgotten about them. I continued to visit Bana Maunda from time to time. We did not speak about witchcraft again. Her family still sees a witch in her, but they see a little bit of a human face in her too.

COMMENTS

I do not know the cause of Sophie’s experiences, nor of my own experience that night. Experiences of witchcraft are over-determined, meaning they have multiple causes on different layers. We do not need to reduce such an experience to any one single cause. Nevertheless, we can say that the experiences in the house were dependent on Sophie, and on her relationship with Bana Maunda—the place of Bana Maunda in her worldview and family image. In another way, we can also say that Sophie had gained power over all of us. We had become part of her story, and she was becoming part of our story. The neighbours in the house, separated from us through a very thin wall, felt nothing of any attack; they were not part of Sophie’s life, and Sophie was not part of their life. Those of us who experienced the strange powers—whether of a spiritual, a physical, or an intersubjective psychic nature—were part of the problem and thereby could also be part of the solution; we had entered Sophie’s life.

The child had picked up a fixation from the family: Bana Maunda had become the embodiment of evil. Whatever evil happened to Sophie, it

would have involved the symbol of Bana Maunda. Sophie's dreams and inner experiences confirmed the convictions of the whole family. They were retold throughout the family; her dreams and experiences affirmed what they already knew. The family, especially Bana Maunda's younger sister, was longing for Sophie's dreams. Sophie—judging from the feedback and approval she got from the family—grew more and more into the role of being the special victim of a very specific person hated by the whole family. Without excluding the possibility of the presence of occult forces (we remain indeterminate about them in our approach), it was clear to me that to heal Sophie meant to heal the family.

I believe that the fact of a priest sleeping in the house gave Sophie a sense of trust. Sophie believed that a witch could not attack a priest. My visit to the “witch” established a bridge, if only a tiny one. The visits negated the absolute separation of Bana Maunda from her family. In our workshops on witchcraft, we often liken the forces of witchcraft in an analogy to electricity: the building up of electric voltage needs the sharp separation of the two poles. The more one builds up an absolute separation (for example through fear and hatred), the more power one seems to give to the forces of witchcraft. I was seen as a family friend, but was also building up a friendly relationship with Bana Maunda. This disturbed the family. I tried to present Bana Maunda as a human person with her own struggles, who, should she indeed be a witch, was herself a victim of witchcraft. This challenged the dehumanising discourse. Sophie eventually met Bana Maunda face to face, talked to her and interacted with her. Face-to-face encounters can “discharge the voltage”. Running away from a witch has the opposite effect. Both parties, I believe, wanted at that moment to make a small step towards each other. After the face-to-face encounter, Sophie was no longer afraid of Bana Maunda. “I am even taller than her!” The powers of witchcraft, of whatever ontological nature, had to pass through Sophie's inner world, in which an image of a monster had been building up ever since her childhood. When the monster transformed itself into a human person in her inner world, the attacks seized, not only for Sophie, but also for the family.

WITCHCRAFT AND CHILDREN

Did Sophie manipulate the fears of her family? Yes and no. We can place the reactions of children who are victims of witchcraft attacks on a continuum. On one end, children believe themselves to be victims of witchcraft. On the other end, some children can also exploit the victim role and

the fears of the adults for their own purposes; some enjoy the role of being the special child. They learn how to trigger and manipulate responses in the adults. Often a situation contains elements of playacting as well as elements of sincere belief, merging into one another. Sophie did use the aura of innocence and victimhood a little bit to her own advantage. Teachers in school complained that she had developed some disruptive behaviour. Sometimes, she had been absent with no explanation given to teachers and family. She evaded her parents' questioning by running away to her grandmother. The family saw in this signs of witchcraft ("She is being initiated!") and Sophie willingly played into this. In our approach, we proactively address disruptive behaviour, deteriorating school performance, or absenteeism. We don't condone such issues by referring to truth-claims of the "inner world". I encouraged the family to put Sophie under stricter supervision.

In Sophie's case, I consider these motives secondary. However, we also dealt with other cases, where children clearly manipulated the fears of adults, by willingly becoming the "possessed child", the "initiated child" or the "child Satanist" and using this status for their own perceived advantages. Also here, as the prime way of intervention one deals with the adults and their ghosts, since the child's responses feed on the fears of the adults. However, it also means to actively create an environment that sets clear boundaries to the child that correspond with the needs of children and the necessities for their own security and wellbeing. Here is an example:

DRAMA 31: ESTELLA DISAPPEARS INTO THE UNDERWORLD

Estella, who was twelve years old, started to see magical snakes in their house that were sent by her paternal grandmother (her father's mother). Her parents were separated, and her mother considered her mother-in-law as a proven Satanist. Two "prophets" of the Charismatic Renewal confirmed her suspicions; the "Holy Spirit" had given them the revelation, during prayer and fasting, that her mother-in-law was the head of 144 Satanists in their parish. But God was going to reveal the Satanists through mere children. Their visions brought much spiritual excitement to the charismatic prayer-group who prayed and fasted for the repentance of the Satanists whom God was about to reveal to them. The mother-in-law of Estella's mother had been in a position of authority in church for a long time; some people harboured ill feelings towards her, and this made

it more likely that the label of a witch or a Satanist could stick to her reputation.

At the suggestion of the charismatic prophets, the mother started to pray with her children every night at 01:00 hours, to protect them from the Satanists. "Satanists attack those who are not prayerful! It is between 01:00 and 03:00 hours that they have the devil's powers." The more they prayed, however, the more Estella seemed to become initiated into Satanism. Estella testified that her grandmother was taking her under the ocean, giving her meat to eat and blood to drink, "but the prayers stop the Satanists from completing their work". The mother had the house blessed by several priests and was sprinkling the corners of the house with holy water to cast out the snakes that her daughter saw. The daughter several times disappeared for a few days, coming back with new clothes. She evaded answering questions about these clothes, but at one point she said, "I have received them from grandmother under the ocean".

When the mother challenged her mother-in-law, the latter denied the charges and threatened to bring the matter to court. "Furthermore, I don't want to be prayed over by this group. I am Catholic and if I need prayers I go directly to the priests!"

By then, the mother-in-law had suffered already from much gossiping in the community about her alleged Satanism. Her refusal to be prayed over by the charismatic prayer group confirmed to them that she was indeed a Satanist. Why would somebody refuse their prayers? Estella's mother knew that her daughter, growing up without a father, was evading parental control. Satanists, after all, are said to be rude, disobey their parents and follow another chain of command. During the prayers with the charismatics, Estella proved creative, playing into the imagination of the group by giving regular testimonies:

Last time you prayed, they tied me as a punishment with a big chain that was winding around my body. When the chain was about to choke me, your prayers reached the underworld, and they could not continue to bind me. They said: "We must be careful with this girl else her prayer group will destroy the whole of the underworld—they are more powerful than us." They also said, "We must be careful that she does not reveal our names to the group!" I was nearly delivered by the prayers, but there remained just a small bit of the chain that still needs to be removed.

They all had reasons to continue believing in the child's game: the prophets had their extraordinary prophetic gifts confirmed to the community,

the mother had her suspicions confirmed about her mother-in-law, and the child had won freedom over and against her siblings. I found it difficult to have discussions with the prophets. They were without any hint of doubt that their version was coming directly from the Holy Spirit. I therefore discouraged Estella's mother from associating with the prophets. The story was heading towards disaster unless it was stopped.

Trying to help, we followed our rule of enlarging the outer world, by making inquiries with more people and seeing the common points that were crystallising, and on which we could base public action. Propositions about the ocean, the underworld and the satanic position of her grandmother were not part of the outer world. The children of the neighbours confirmed to us what we were suspecting: The girl had tasted freedom on the streets of Lusaka. She was getting used to the benefits of begging from tourists and pitying motorists, who gave her money, food and gifts, as she played the hungry girl without parents. Life near Lusaka's flamboyant shopping malls was more exciting than life in school and at home. Judging by the items she was bringing home, we feared that she was becoming a child prostitute.

The most difficult part of the story was the attempt to reconcile the mother of Estella with her mother-in-law. In all cases introduced in this chapter, it was crucial to examine the experiences of the child within the dynamics of the relationships among the guardians and other family members. When a child needs spiritual healing, the wider family also needs this healing. In the above case, we took sides with the mother-in-law: She was the accused person; the mother of Estella was the main accuser. I encouraged the latter to apologise to the former about the accusations. This apology helped and prevented a court case. However, it still took years for the two parties to build up a sort of functioning relationship.

Part Five

Helping the accused

Helping the accused

A meaningful approach needs to bring help to people who suffer from witchcraft attacks (the focus of the previous part) and to those who suffer from witchcraft accusations (the focus of this part). This may seem contradictory: how can one help both those who experience attacks, and those who are (often innocently) accused of having caused these attacks? In Zambia, the Catholic Church has often stood only on one side, by siding with the victim of witchcraft accusations—giving the accusers who experienced attacks the cold shoulder. A number of charismatic prophets in turn side with those who experience witchcraft attacks, sending the curses and dark forces “back to the sender”. Can one be on both sides of the equation with full empathy? I believe that the Christian message calls for this. The balancing act of the mediators, trying to feed both parties with something of the viewpoint of the other, can make reconciliation possible in many cases. Quite often, fears and suspicions about the other party’s involvement in witchcraft are mutual.

Help offered to the accused must take note of different dimensions, starting with his/her safety. Secondly, it needs the backing of the law. In a number of African countries, the laws about witchcraft and about protection from witchcraft accusations have many loopholes. The Zambian law is rather clear: It criminalises the naming of witches and protects the accused. Without this law, it is difficult to imagine an end to the downwards spiral of distrust and witchcraft accusations. Referring cases to the official courts and provoking the punishment of accusers can be a necessary step in the process of helping the accused. In Christian churches, there should be no room for condoning witchcraft accusations based on divinations—whether they come from the traditional healer or from the modern Christian prophet or “man of God”.

The Catholic Church in Zambia has built up a consistent reputation of non-tolerance to witchcraft accusations by following the following steps:

1. Challenge the discourse of the diviner. Treat the accused as innocent of witchcraft.
2. Show with tangible steps that going to the diviner is not compatible with the Christian faith. If the accused are Catholic, this may imply the need to bar them from receiving the sacraments,

to show visibly the incompatibility of accusing others of witchcraft—be it on evidence from a diviner or a prophet.

3. Educate people about exploitations of fears and trickery performed by many diviners.
4. Help the accused with access to the Zambian law to seek justice.

However, beyond these steps, meaningful help offered to the accused must also include having his/her reputation restored *in the community*. This cannot be solved alone by access to the courts. It demands a meaningful engagement with the worldview of the community. Efforts at helping the accused are successful not when the accuser is in jail, but when the accused is reintegrated back into the community and is no longer associated with witchcraft.

In chapter 16, I present a case study, based on the written account of a victim of accusations (a human crocodile). It demonstrates the types of pressures on the accused, the different compromises that they may seek when manoeuvring through difficult terrain, and the means available to them to have their reputation cleared.

In chapter 17, I look at the concrete steps of interventions at different levels during the process of the escalation of witchcraft accusation.

How Chiluba Lwando became a crocodile

Navigating through a world of compromises

Priests who regard witchcraft beliefs as superstitious will naturally side with the accused, regarding them as innocent victims of a community trapped in their own beliefs. If witchcraft does not exist, then there are no witches. The accused, however, believe as often and as strongly in the forces of witchcraft as the accusers do. Witchcraft dramas therefore take unforeseen twists. The accused quickly become entangled in a web of fear—fear of making a wrong move, of being rejected by their own family, and of the forces of witchcraft that others may call against them. Moreover, witchcraft beliefs are part of a much wider net of other beliefs, traditions and networks of authority. We need to consider this when we want to help the accused.

I want to show these dynamics with the help of events in which I was a participant. One of my parishioners, I call him here Lwando Chiluba, was accused to be *cisanguka*—a witch-crocodile.¹ I asked him to write up a diary. I am presenting in this chapter his diary (in an abbreviated and translated form) together with my comments. Lwando Chiluba was accused to have killed an innocent boy as a crocodile. This accusation was to stick to his name until his death, and at one point he even came across as confessing to the crime. His narrative gives insights into the complex world of traditions into which this particular witchcraft discourse was entangled. At one point during the unfolding of the events, I involved the police. The scope of the police to provide protection in a hostile envi-

¹ The term *cisanguka* describes a witch who transforms him/herself into an animal (lion, crocodile, hyena, etc.). The tradition was encountered already by the earliest missionaries. Note that this ability is not restricted to witches. In some Zambian traditions, powerful chiefs could also turn themselves into animals and back into humans, as part of their powers to protect their people. Moreover, the spirits (*mipashi*, *mizimu*) of departed chiefs could be embodied in animals (especially lions), and many burial traditions for chiefs have references to this transformation. Witches turning into animals do so for greedy and unsocial reasons, while the spirits of chiefs who became embodied in specific animals remained part of the moral order. The term *cisanguka* also means a traitor.

ronment was very limited. The actions of all protagonists, including the accused, were formed on a cultural logic that belonged to a layer of which neither the police, nor the State, not the Church, was part of. This case forms a strong lesson for the need of the Church to find access to this layer. I will first give some background information about the location and the protagonists:

DRAMA 32: HOW CHILUBA LWANDO BECAME A CROCODILE

Yongolo is a location with a fish market, at the edge of the vast Bangweulu Swamps. Due to its closeness to a new tarmac road that connects the area with Zambia's towns, Yongolo has developed into a flourishing trading centre. Men and women who go to fish deep in the swamps, where they stay for weeks and months, can get fresh supplies in Yongolo. Here, they trade their fish, or they just spend a few happy days with the money they made through their harsh work in the fishing camps. During the main fishing season, the area also attracts buses and business people from afar. Locally, Yongolo earned itself the nicknames Sodom and Gomorrah: for people in the neighbouring villages it is a copy of the infamous biblical towns (incidentally also on the transit routes) due to the availability of beer and women, and the fast turnover of money. Yongolo is also known as a place of flourishing witchcraft.

Yongolo is also a locality of constant conflicts between state power and people's fish trading initiatives. Often, the fish trade as well as hunting of the few remaining wild animals takes place in an illegal realm. People in Yongolo have won the reputation of being very assertive. This reputation mixes with the history of the surrounding Kalasa Mukoso Flats and the vast Bangweulu swamps. Yongolo is often referred to as "*ku But-wa*", which depicts a culture without overarching rules and much secrecy, feared for its mob justice. The Batwa were known in local history as a chiefless society who, in their difficult swampy terrains, evaded various forms of centralised authorities. Witchcraft discourses easily picked up this image.

The Catholic Church has had a presence in Yongolo for half a century, but due to the instability of the community, it was known in the past as one of the "lousy" Catholic centres, compared with the more stable agricultural villages. However, three years before the following events took place, Catholics in Yongolo elected a new leadership, and much to our surprise, the Catholic community transformed itself into one of the most active centres of the whole parish.

Chiluba Lwando, a slim, middle-aged man, was one of the people involved in this shift. As he had four wives, he was barred from church leadership positions. Nevertheless, knew how to read and write and remained a member of the church council. With his quiet and unassuming character, he contributed much to the running of the church. He was known for his generosity and availability for whatever work needed to be done. At his home, he received many visitors for the church. We priests also enjoyed his hospitality frequently. Generally speaking, he was doing well: he was headman of a small village, had a paid job as a game guard and was investing his salary into a small grocery stand, which looked unassuming but brought him a regular income. He also had a bicycle, a sewing machine and bricklaying tools; these items marked a small contrast to the surrounding poverty. Having to sustain four wives (and four families), his resources were always strained, but he used to say, "I manage because I don't drink."

When the government reorganised the game guards, they laid off many workers. Lwando also lost his job, but received a generous payout. He invested his money into buying three fibreglass boats ("banana boats"), which he rented out for a fee, as well as some bales of second-hand clothing to sell in his shop. At that point I joked with him, saying it would not be long before he would be accused of witchcraft. He answered: "People know where I got the money from: everybody knows it is the pension from my work, therefore nobody will accuse me."

I had no idea that my joke would turn into reality only a few months later. A young man called Peter had gone missing after drinking beer in Yongolo. He had left the place in his dugout canoe to go back to his fishing camp in the swamps, a kilometre away, but he never reached. Lwando was accused of killing him—"to put him into his business."

Lwando fled the village in fear of being killed by the Yongolo mob justice, spearheaded by members of Peter's family. When he came to seek help from us priests, I advised him to go the police. I promised assistance with transport, if needed. I also gave him a copybook and advised him to write down exactly what was happening.

The following narrative is based on this copy book. Lwando wrote it in Bemba, and I give a literal English translation, putting my own interjections or summaries in brackets. Local customs and traditions became key points in the accusations of his enemies, but also in Lwando's own manoeuvres. This makes the narrative very rich. Lwando entitled his book "*Bucisanguka bwandi*"—"How I became a human crocodile." As usual, I have changed the personal names of the main protagonists in the narra-

tive as well as the village names. The main person who accused is called in my narrative Muleba. He was a close relative of Peter. But Peter was also a relative of Lwando: Lwando considered Peter as a classificatory father. The narrative starts when Lwando heard of Peter's death:

I heard of what happened to Peter when we were making bricks for the house of Mwelwa Kakulu in Mwaba's Village [a village within Yongolo] to make some money for the church. On the 22nd September 2000, at 3.00 p.m., a girl called Chini Supuni arrived to work with us and asked whether we had heard the news that Peter was lost [in the water] and that people had already gone to fetch his mother from the fishing camp. "They have arrived at the harbour at Mwaba. Look, all the people there, who you see: They are searching for Peter's body in the river."

We continued our work and then went to the house where our food had been prepared. After finishing eating, people left. Together with Headman Mwaba, I went to the harbour to see what was happening. When we arrived, a crowd of people had gathered with the search party.²

THE CALLING ON THE ANCESTORS TO RELEASE THE BODY

Then I, Lwando Chiluba, asked: "Who are the traditional priests in charge of praying and blessing the part of the river where Peter got lost?"

They answered: "The family of NaChitoshi, the *bena Mumba* [people of the clay-clan] of Katumba 'feed' us here." [meaning: they have authority over the spiritual forces of this part of the river].

I also asked whether Peter's family had already placed a *lutembo* [the invocation of the ancestors]. I asked these questions, because this is what people do when a person drowns and the body is not found: Someone from his mother's or father's side, or the chief, has to place the *lutembo*. They told me that Mwewa Lameki, from Peter's father's side, had already placed the *lutembo*. I asked these questions, because my father was a *mwina Ng'oma* [a member of the clan of the drum, which was Peter's clan.]

² The narrative goes on to describe how headman Mwaba (name of his village changed) tried to make Bana Peter, the mother of Peter, feel comfortable in these tragic circumstances, making her sit in the shade at a larger house belonging to a person called Mundeli Mulenga, mentioned later in the narrative.

Comments: Lwando wanted the traditional blessing for the river to take place. Each part of the river is spiritually entrusted to a specific clan, the traditional owners of that part of the river. People who fish here are expected to pay a small tribute to the owners who have ritual powers over the river. They in turn are responsible for praying to the ancestors to assure that no calamities happen. Such prayers are supposed to be effective to keep crocodiles and hippos away, lest they harass people. At that moment in time, prayers were needed in order for the river to release the dead body.³ In the history of the area, such prayers played important roles in confirming spiritual ownership over the fishing banks and hunting grounds.

Apart from the blessing from the “owners” of the river, Lwando also asked about the *lutembo*, which is a calling on the ancestors of the dead man by his family as a form of divination. The text does not specify which specific questions were asked to the ancestors while placing the *lutembo*. Often it is about the nature of a death or about finding out the guilty party. Peter was of Lwando’s father clan; thereby Peter was a classificatory father to Lwando, which gave Lwando responsibility to take part in the funeral arrangements.

AT THE VIGIL: REQUIREMENTS OF THE LOCAL TRADITIONS

(The text goes on to describe how Lwando joined the search party. People eventually found Peter’s sunken canoe in the river together with his fishing-nets. However, they did not find his body. When it was getting dark, people moved to the place of mourning at Mathew Muleba’s house, of Peter’s family, who later in the story becomes Lwando’s main accuser. At one point, Lwando, in his function as a village headman, was called out to settle a case between fish traders. Here I resume the narrative:)

When the fish traders had left, some women traders remained behind and asked: “Lwando and Muleba, is this how you Catholics conduct funerals? It is not right to sing songs for a person who has drowned when the body has not yet been found! In addition, when you were searching for the body today, you people did not remove your shirts [as local tradition requires]. We know how searches are supposed to be conducted for people who drown. [...] People must take off their shirts. So, tell the people to take off their shirts tomorrow when they go to look for the body.”

³ Drowned people often surface after a few days, when their bodies have swollen up.

Muleba and I went back to the large fire of the vigil where the choir was singing, and Muleba asked me to convey the message to the funeral gathering. Therefore, I said: "Dear people of God. Please excuse us for speaking, but just when we were talking over there, the elders, who know about deaths on the river, told us not to sing. We are only supposed to sing once the body has been found. In addition, we should remove our shirts tomorrow when we go searching for the body. Mr Muleba, is this not what we have been told?" and Muleba said, "That is what we were told."

The choir then stopped singing, and thus we slept at the vigil on the 22nd of September.

LWANDO'S DREAM OF THE LOCATION OF THE BODY

On the 23rd of September 2000, on Saturday at 05:40am, ... people got up and folded their blankets together, and Bashi Chilufya asked people to hurry so there would be sufficient time to search for the body. Now I, Lwando, when we had woken up, started to explain to the crowd a dream I had dreamt that night: "I dreamed of Peter who told me: 'Uncle, I am not there where you found the boat and the dragnet. Come and find me behind the stream.'"

Then Bashi Chilufya said: "I also dreamed. Peter came to me in the dream and spoke to me: 'Uncle, the place where you found the boat with the net is not where I am. But you will find me today, though my body is no longer in one piece; they have torn me to pieces.'" ...

Thus, we folded together our belongings, Bashi Chilufya, I, and all who had slept at the funeral house. This was at 06:15 am.

Comments: Dream revelations from family members, according to Zambian traditions, are expected in response to following the required traditions of the ancestors. Lwando here considered himself again as Peter's family member, a classificatory son; thus, he qualified to have dream revelations from Peter. However, Lwando later became accused of dreaming of Peter because of being haunted by his shade (*cibanda*), which would imply he was guilty of the death, or of having faked the dream: since he was the human crocodile who killed Peter, he obviously also knew the location where he had hidden the body. It was important for Lwando in his narrative to point out that another person, Bashi Chilufya, had also had the same dream and had narrated it openly at the vigil.

FINDING PETER'S BODY

(The narrative goes on to describe how Lwando joined the search party on the river, after he had met other people on the way; together with them, he then formed his own search party with whom he went to the place he had dreamed about. Here I continue his narrative:)

I took the small canoe. Then we went. When we were near the place where the water lilies had been ripped apart, I showed it to Musolo Makoyo and Chibale Kasompe [members of his search party]: "Look over there!"

Musolo Makoyo said: "Even if it is difficult (to believe): no doubt, this is where the body must be found!" ...

He dove into the water and pulled out of the water Peter's arms, ribs, head and neck. He climbed back into the boat. When they started to row, Chibale again banged the paddle into something. Chibale Kasompe and Musolo Makoyo were in the same boat. He took out of the water yet another chunk of the body, a piece with no flesh left, cut at the knee. Then Musolo went back into Chibale Kasompe's boat. While everybody was rowing back to the harbour, Bashi Chilufya said: "My dream has come true. I dreamed at the funeral that Peter said, 'You will find me, but they have torn me into pieces.' I would have found the body myself! Yesterday I had asked you to give me nets so that I could search here, but you people refused, and said, 'Don't go! There are too many crocodiles.'" ⁴

In the meantime, we were rowing back to the harbour.

THE FIRST KUSUNGULA (CLEANSING/BLESSING)

Musolo Makoyo and Tolomeyo, the younger brother of Peter, whose body had been picked up, were now in the same boat and wanted to bring the body to Muleba Kosamu's house in Sondashi Kasakala's village, but Chishimba [an elderly local traditional healer (*ng'anga*)] told them: "Don't bring the boats on shore. First, wait. The one who first picked up the body must not enter the village unless he has undergone the *kusungula*."

Comments: The *kusungula* is a traditional cleansing and blessing of those who pick up a corpse; it allows them to enter the village; else, they will bring bad omens or the *cibanda* (the shade of the person who died) into

⁴ According to this sentence, Bashi Chilufya would have dreamt his dream two nights earlier.

the village, which may turn into a curse and create havoc. According to the local tradition, people who pick up a corpse of another family need to stay outside the village until the *kusungula* has taken place.

Muleba then said: "OK, you are our elder, but show us how to do the *kusungula*."

Chishimba told him to find a *cooni* tree.⁵ Muleba hurried to pick the leaves of a *cooni* tree. Then he rolled them with a paper into a cigarette, lighted it, gave it to me to smoke and asked me to rub the smoke into my face and head. Then Chishimba said (to Musolo Makoyo): "You too, who went into the water to take it out, you must also smoke."

When Musolo had finished smoking, Chishimba told me: "You who first saw (the body), put your shirt on the body."

I brought my shirt from the shore and put it on the corpse [supposedly to bring back the shade of death, the *cibanda*].

THE SECOND KUSUNGULA AFTER THE BURIAL

(Lwando's narrative goes on to say that Muleba gave him a jacket to wear, since it was getting cold and his shirt had to remain on the remains of Peter's body, to prevent its shade to follow Lwando. Some drunken people came to disturb the funeral. Lwando organised Catholic prayers at the funeral with the choir and a prayer-leader from a nearby prayer centre. He went with friends to collect money to help with feeding the crowd at the funeral and gave this money to Peter's mother, who accepted it with thanks.)

I remained behind with Peter's mother, while the others went into the house of the funeral. By then they had buried the body. There under the mango tree Chishimba said [to Peter's family]: "You need to find proper medicines for the one who first saw the body. Otherwise, when he goes back to sleep at home, especially since he has married many wives, he may be a target for other accusations in future. Find for him the leaves of the *cooni* tree and let him inhale. Once this is done, prepare a porridge for him to eat in which you put some ashes. But first tie a small white cloth around his arm, bless him, and give him a bit of money."

⁵ At other times, the *cooni* is a general name for medicines used to protect a village, often stored in a *lukombo* (a gourd) with various ingredients. See Garrec 1999 (1910-1920), pp. 17-18 and Labrecque 2001 (1931-1934), pp. 78-79 for early Bemba concepts of the *cooni* medicines.

When he had finished talking, Muleba got up and went into the bush to pick some *cooni* leaves. Chishimba also left, and I don't know where he went. I remained behind with Peter's mother and Tolomeyo. Then Tolomeyo started to talk: "The shirt which you placed on the body got lost."

I told him: "But how could it get lost, as there were only the two of you: you and Musolo, who were carrying the body. Take care that it will not get lost when somebody picks it up to wear it." [because of the misfortune coming from the realm of the dead that may accidentally befall the unlucky person wearing the shirt that touched the corpse]

Then Muleba came back from the bush with leaves of the *cooni* tree. He asked: "And where is Chishimba [so that he explains again how to do the blessing]?"

We told him that he had gone. Muleba went to look for him at Mwenshi's small shop where he used to sleep, but he had already gone somewhere else. Then Muleba came back to the funeral and said that he could not find Chishimba. Then he said: "We can't do it wrongly with Chishimba's explanations! [Let us just do it ourselves.]"

He went into the house to fetch a small white cloth and gave it to Peter's mother. Then Peter's mother asked for water in a cup. She tied the white piece of cloth on my left arm, spat water on it [a blessing], gave me 100 Kwacha, and said [addressing the dead man], "Look Peter, the one who picked you up is your son, may he go in peace [don't follow or bother him]."

After saying these words, she asked us to go into the house to inhale the medicine. However, Mulenga Muchona, my cousin, the maternal nephew of my father, said: "It is not necessary for the one who picked up [the body] to inhale. Enough has been done since you blessed him."

They replied: "No, let us just follow what the elder Chishimba has said."

That is how we entered the kitchen of Muleba's house, where Peter's widow was resting. [The widow or widower of a deceased person is usually kept apart from the funeral gathering.] Peter's mother asked her to leave for a moment so that they could prepare the medicines. She brought in the medicines, the leaves of the *cooni* tree, straightened them out and set fire to them with a match. Thus, I bent down, and the smoke covered my head and my face. In the meantime, Peter's mother was outside preparing the porridge.

When the fire of the medicine was extinguishing, Peter's mother brought in the small pot in which she had prepared the medicine, took some ashes from the place where the medicine was burnt and put it into the porridge. Thus, she gave me the pot with the porridge and told me to eat only one mouthful. I, Lwando, took the pot, took a lump from the porridge and ate. When I had eaten, the mother of Peter took back the pot and went with it outside. Then Bana Katai came to the door and entered our room. She had some flour in her hand and asked: "Come here with your arm, my son (so that I can bless you)."

I stretched out my left arm, and she anointed it with flour and said: "Look Peter, the one who picked you up is your son. Let him go in peace, and let him be prosperous in what he is doing [do not turn against him]."

That is how they finished and we went outside.

Comments: Lwando explains elaborately why he was cleansed twice—first by the healer, and then by Peter's mother and another female relative. As Doctor Chishimba explained in the narrative, "He has many wives". Any sickness or death in one of his four families could be seen as a consequence of Lwando not being cleansed. He would have made himself liable to future charges from his in-laws in case of forthcoming accidents or deaths. The fact that he could explain to the families of his wives that he had been cleansed and blessed (twice even) after picking up the corpse should pre-empt such accusations.

Lwando's account conveys a certain passivity on his side. Decisions about the funeral came from outside, and he portrays his double cleansing as the initiative of Chishimba. This may be a defence against the charge of his accusers (see below) that he manipulated the family into blessing him. To me, it suggests the insecurity surrounding the local traditions (*ntambi*): nobody really knows the precise procedures to follow, though everybody is sure that somebody does know.⁶ The *ntambi* remain surrounded by ambiguity. In the interpretation given later by the accusers, this double cleansing became part of the evidence showing that Lwando was in fact Peter's murderer: Lwando was trying, through the blessings, to get rid of Peter's shade (*cibanda*) that was seeking revenge.⁷

⁶ Ashforth 1998.

⁷ The narrative then describes how food was prepared for the men at the funeral, and how a case needed to be settled about outstanding debts in which Peter had been involved. Then Lwando went back to his home to sleep. All this happened on the 23rd of September. The next day he gave back the borrowed jacket to Muleba and helped with the preparations for the church service of the coming Sunday.

THE FIRST OPEN ACCUSATIONS

On the 30th September 2000, I came to hear the announcements of Chola Makoyo [from Peter's family, a *mwina Ng'oma*, shouting from the road towards Lwando's house]: "You who killed Peter, we know you! Come for a meeting, and we will tear you into pieces! [uses the impolite 2nd person singular] Since when are you having dreams, you who never dream? You have put Peter into your grocery, and now you are even selling shirts and have boats. Let us sit together, and we will tear you into pieces!"

I, Lwando, did not answer him. This happened at 21:47 hours. I went straight to the village headman Mwaba and asked him whether he had heard the announcement of Chola Makoyo, but he said that he had been out fishing. Then I, Lwando, told him what I heard of the announcement of Chola Makoyo: "You, who have a grocery and three boats, who have started selling clothes, who have dreamed the dream, you think nobody knows you, but we know you! Into your grocery, that is where you have put Peter. Let us call you and tear you into pieces, unless I find you have run away."

I asked the headman Mwaba what he thought about it, but he said that he failed to give advice. I said: "Then let me go to Chief Mushili Mufwaya, Ba Cheswa [the nearest chief, 25km away from Yongolo], and I will also go to Senior Chief Kalasa Mukoso [35km from Yongolo]."

That is how I came out of the house of the headman. I started to walk to Chitundwa [to the palace of Chief Mushili Mufwaya]; this was on the 30th of September. However, when I reached her palace after midnight, I found out that the chief had gone to Lusaka. Therefore, I went straight to Kalasa Mukoso [the location of the senior chief] and reached the palace at 04:00 hours.

(The narrative then describes how he went to the chief's constable to give an account of what he had come for. The constable explained that the chief was away in Mansa, but that he was due to return on Monday or Tuesday. Lwando answered that he would wait for the chief. However, the chief was only to come back on Saturday, which allowed for a number of other events to happen in Lwando's absence.)

Comments: Unknown to Lwando, Peter's family had gone to several diviners to find out who had caused his death. One of the diviners was Doctor Makumba, a heavy-weight among diviners with a powerful reputation, who lived in Kabalika, 160 km away from Yongolo. The diviner divined

that the one who had found Peter's body was a human crocodile, who had killed him in order to put his heart into his new business, to make it grow. He had received the required medicines for changing into a crocodile from Yongolo's local herbalist (Chishimba), with whose help they were also evading being caught by Peter's revenging shade (*cibanda*). Through their devilish pact, they had twice tricked the family of Peter into cleansing Lwando from the *cibanda*: through the pretence of the traditions surrounding the finding of the corpse and the fake dream. Lwando's dream claimed that Peter had granted him privileged access to the world of the ancestors. Why then did Peter cling to his own relative (son) as a foreign *cibanda*? Peter's *cibanda* would not rest until it had hunted down his murderer. An eagerness to be cleansed from a *cibanda* without an obvious reason can easily be interpreted as an admission of guilt. The diviner (Doctor Makumba) furthermore suggested that Lwando did not act alone; other people helped him, though he had not yet discerned their names.

Open announcements of witchcraft accusations are usually made early evening (as in this case) or early morning. People are at home, and many people hear the announcement. This announcement functioned as a call-out for Lwando to a meeting with Peter's lineage, the *beni Ng'oma*. Such meetings are frightening events, as the accused faces the wrath of a large angry family, without outside arbitration. Hence Lwando's quick decision to run away and seek protection at the palace of Chief Mushili Mufwaya (Cheswa) and Kalasa Mukoso, the senior chief. He intended to involve both chiefs because, at the time of the accusation, the area of Yongolo was contested; both chiefs considered the area their territory and were frequenting the area to look for taxes. Furthermore, Lwando belonged to the royal clan (the *beni Ngulube*) and considered the chiefs as his distant relatives.

While Lwando waited in Kalasa Mukoso, I met him at a relative's place where he was hiding. By then, two of his wives had also fled Yongolo and had gone back to their respective families; the third wife was still in Yongolo, while his fourth wife had come to meet him in Kalasa Mukoso to report about the confiscation of his grocery shop. I advised him to bring the case before the small police post in Kalasa Mukoso (staffed with only two police officers without their own transport, 90km away from the next, bigger police station).

In the meantime, Peter's family in Yongolo assaulted the local herbalist Chishimba. News reached us that he then confessed to have given medicines to Lwando to become a crocodile, confirming Doctor Makumba's

verdict to Peter's family. The family also confiscated Lwando's three banana boats, his bicycle and the sewing machine. These valued items were taken by Peter's distant family members who hardly figured in the story. They thought they had the right to take whatever they wanted from Lwando, because they were of Peter's clan. Lwando thus lost, within one single week, his pension for a lifetime's work.

SEEKING HELP FROM THE POLICE

In the meantime, on the 4th of October 2000, before the chief's return, my wife came from Yongolo. She told me that people had taken away the keys of the grocery [...] I reported to the chief's constable, Mumba Adam, who said I should go to the police [who had a small station in Kalasa Mukoso] as he did not know when the chief would return. We gave our report to the police officers, namely Oscar Chimponda and Mwila-Mwila, who said they would go the same day to Yongolo. ...

When they [the police] came back [to Kalasa Mukoso], they gave me a report and said: "Things have been too tough; even your grandchild Chalwe with whom we came was beaten up. There was a mob and they insulted the priest, Fr. Bernard. Tomorrow we will go to Samfya [the nearest Police post for reinforcement, 90 km from Kalasa Mukoso and 120 km from Yongolo]." They did not go on the sixth of October, but only went on the seventh and came back on the eighth.

Comments: That day Lwando's wife had approached me together with the two police officers, reminding me of my promise. I gave the two officers a lift to Yongolo. There the police started to negotiate with Matthew Muleba's family about the grocery stand. More and more people gathered around Muleba and the police. When the police asked Muleba to come along to Kalasa Mukoso, about a hundred people united with the *bena Ngòma* against the police. When the police entered the grocery shop to save Lwando's belongings, a woman slammed the door behind them shouting: "Let us burn down the shop of the crocodile and also the police inside!"

The police came out, agitated. The mob also threatened to turn over my car, should Muleba be arrested. Some people then pursued a young relative of Lwando (a classificatory grandchild), who had reported the raiding on the belongings to the police in Samfya. While he tried to run away, one

police officer fired a warning shot in the air. A woman shouted: "Just kill twenty of us. We are more than 200!"

People were also angry with me that I had brought in the police. They threatened to exhume Peter's body for me so that I could see for myself what sort of people I was protecting. "Have you ever buried only head and shoulders?" A number of people shouted they would leave the Church, since we protected the witches. Matthew Muleba accused me of partiality.

There was no way that two police officers could secure any items from the shop in such circumstances. Anything could have happened. Emotions were running high. A few people who sympathised with Lwando stood quietly with me. However, it was clear that the village population in general had taken the side of the accusers, far beyond Peter's family. The police officers asked me to take them out of the village before the situation turned violent. We also took with us the grandchild (who had been beaten up previously) and slowly drove off through the crowd. I told people that I would be back soon to discuss the situation. Though I had come with the police, I wanted to show that I was an actor in my own right.

The police officers felt humiliated; they talked about bringing in reinforcement from Samfya. A few days later, I returned to Yongolo alone. People were afraid of a forthcoming police attack. "One of these days they will come in the middle of the night with cars and guns and take people from Yongolo to jail—just anybody they find!" Some people from Peter's family went into hiding in nearby fishing camps.

AT CHIEF KALASA MUKOSO

(The narrative continues to describe how the chief arrived in the evening of the 7th of October, and how a relative of Lwando pressed the chief to listen to the case as soon as possible, as Lwando was in a state in which he could commit suicide. The chief agreed to listen to the case the next morning.)

On the 8th of October at 07:00 hours, we went to the palace of Chief Kalasa Mukoso, and I saw Mwelwa Moloton arriving [Mwelwa Moloton was related to Lwando, and lived 15 km away from Yongolo]. He told me: "Lwando, how could you bring these troubles upon me?"

I asked: "How did I bring troubles on you? No my friend, this can't be true."

Mwelwa Moloton said: "The *beni Ng'oma* [Peter's lineage] came at night to my house and told me, 'Mwelwa Moloton, let us go to

Yongolo because Lwando has denounced you [as working together to kill Peter]. We have caught Lwando and tied him up in Yongolo.”

Then I, Lwando, told him: “So here where you have found me [in Kalasa Mukoso, 40 km away from Yongolo], are we here in Yongolo? [Meaning the *beni Ngoma* were lying.] No, I, Lwando, deny these charges. How could I have spoken about you [telling people that you are my accomplice] since we have not seen each other for so long? The same goes for the *beni Ngoma* with whom I have not been sitting down to discuss anything.”

While we were still talking, we saw Bana Kabunda Nsemuka and her son Lumbwa arriving together on a bicycle. They came to sit near the place where we were sitting. [These two people were from the accusing family.]

Then the chief’s constable Mwewa Fumpa called us in. We went in, knelt down and clapped to greet the chief. Then I, Lwando, took 5,000 Kwacha [the amount a person brings to the chief so that he may listen to a case, at that time equivalent to around 1.50 US\$] to greet the chief. In addition, the people who were with me took out money, each one as much as he/she could give. The chief then greeted us, and Lumbwa took out a letter. The chief asked him, “Where does it come from?”

He answered: “It comes from some village headmen in Yongolo...”

“Give it to the constable to read,” said the chief.

Constable Mwewa Fumpa started to read out the letter. [In the letter, two headmen in Yongolo asked the chief to shift the trial to Yongolo, so that many people could attend, since the case concerned the whole area.]

When he finished reading, the chief asked Lumbwa [his constable]: “What about the money for transport, so that I can go to Yongolo together with my constables? As there is no money in the envelope, you three have to give me the money yourselves, and then we go together to Yongolo.”

I told him that I did not have money, and Mwelwa Moloton said the same, as did Bana Kabunda Nsemuka. The letter read: “*Kanabesa* (title given to the chief), it is better to settle the case in Yongolo, because they have given Lwando and Mwelwa Moloton medicines to be *bacisanguka* (human crocodiles). [...] We have caught him [referring to Chishimba, the herbalist] and he was not paid for the medicines [meaning: he was ready to cooperate with the *Bena*

Ng'oma and confess his guilt, because Lwando had not paid him for the medicines he had received to become a human crocodile].”

Then the chief asked: “Who is that one [whom the letter talks about]?”

Lumbwa replied: “The one who denounced Lwando in his statement is Chishimba.”

Then the chief said: “O.k., as things are like this, I am sending a letter to all village headmen: ‘You *bena Ng'oma*, all of you should come on Tuesday for the case, together with that *shing'anga* (traditional doctor) Chishimba, who gave them the medicines to become crocodiles, as he is the one who has the proof to finish this case.’ As for Lwando and Mwelwa Moloton, I keep them here at the Palace in custody. Take care to hurry up, because this case is already in the hands of the police [meaning, let us finish this case ourselves according to our traditions, before the police get involved.] I have met them [the police] already in Samfya and know they want to come soon. So hurry now, you *bena Ng'oma*. As for Lwando and Mwelwa Moloton: you remain here, you are the accused.”

This happened on the 8th of October 2000.

Comments: Lwando was surprised that Mwelwa Moloton had also come to be accused of helping him, when it would have been more logical to accuse Bashi Chilufya, who had had the same dream as Lwando, yet was never accused of playing a part in the alleged murder.

Chief Kalasa Mukoso wanted to settle the case without the police. He had carved out for himself a space for dealing with traditional matters, like witchcraft. Zambia's Witchcraft Act would protect Lwando from witchcraft accusations, but it went against people's feelings of justice. The chief's way of administering justice was different. When serious witchcraft accusations were brought to him, the accused person had to be proven innocent by three different diviners who were chosen by the chief himself. These diviners would write letters to the chief with their verdicts. The chief's activities were illegal, but he had the support of the headmen who often looked to the chief for the arbitration of difficult witchcraft cases. The chief did not always have the support of the local population, though. Many had experienced unjust and corrupt judgements where the wealthier party had bought its way out of the court or bribed the diviners. The chief himself together with his approved diviners were known to make a personal profit with each case they handled.

Why did Lwando run to the chief if he knew that he had to place himself under the judgement of diviners who would easily confirm him as a witch? I asked Lwando this question. He answered that he hoped the diviners would clear his name from the witchcraft accusations. He did believe in the powers of diviners, “They know I am innocent.”

However, he added: “Even if the diviners are cheating, the chief can provide arbitration. Even a witch is under the protection of the chief. Otherwise the *bena Ng’oma* will kill me.”

Lwando had in fact three options for arbitration. In the first option, he could face the *bena Ng’oma* on their own grounds “*mu nsaka*” (in the palaver hut), where he alone, with only few family members, would have to face the wrath of a whole family who wanted to “tear him into pieces.” Such gatherings are useful for other matters, like marriage disputes, but they have a bad reputation when emotions run high. The accusing family may press exuberant demands for compensation or pursue violent options. A second option was to ask an official court to arbitrate in accordance with the laws of Zambia. Lwando had gone already to the police to give his statement, but it was evident that the police had little power in Yongolo where the wrath of the village had turned against him. Two police officers on bicycles, 50km away, would not be able to protect him. In an official court, Lwando could have turned the accusation around: his accusers would become the accused on the grounds of defaming his character. However, such a court could not have freed him from the witchcraft accusations in the village; he had to continue to live with the people who were sure he was a witch. As he was born and brought up in the area, he knew of a number of accused witches who had disappeared in the swamps, killed by the accusers. The third option for arbitration was through the chief, the option he had chosen, against our advice. Here he was hoping for a compromise.

JUDGEMENT

On the morning of the 10th of October, Mwelwa Moloton and I arrived at the palace to wait for the *bena Ng’oma*. [...] We saw that some members of the *bena Ng’oma* were arriving, those who had gone ahead of the others. The chief said that [...] the *bena Ng’oma* should enter now.

They answered: “There are still others on the way who haven’t arrived yet.”

We had not yet started the case, when the police of Samfya arrived together with the police of Kalasa Mukoso and with them Chalwe [the grandson of Lwando, who had been beaten in Yongolo]; they had gone to Yongolo to fetch my belongings from my grocery store.

(Early in the morning on that day, a combined force of Samfya and Kalasa Mukoso police had come to Yongolo to secure the goods at the grocery. The police arrested one person, Spaida Kalela, of the *Bena Ng'oma*. This time the police did not encounter difficulties, because—unknown to them—most people involved in the case were on their way to the chief's palace in Kalasa Mukoso.)

The chief did not know that the police had gone to Yongolo and had already come back [to Kalasa Mukoso]. The chief called the police to the palace, and I, Lwando, was there too. The chief started to question the police about what they had been doing.

"We came today from Samfya and went to Yongolo," they answered.

The chief asked: "Have you hurt my people over there?"

The police answered: "We did not shoot a single bullet with our guns, but there was nobody in the village who knew anything about the case."

The chief then said: "And I thought that you had come now to fetch me, so that we could all go to Yongolo [by car]."

Officer Mwila-Mwila answered: "No, *Kanabesa* [praise name for the chief], they [the enforcement police troops] came at night and we went [to Yongolo], and there was no trouble. Everything went all right."

Then the chief said: "Friends, leave some *ntambi* (traditions) still to me [don't get involved in everything.] Do you want all our traditions to disappear?"

Then officer Mwila-Mwila answered: "*Kanabesa*, a case like this is part of our law."

Then an officer of Samfya said: "Anyway, *Kanabesa*, the situation is not difficult as the 'owner of the case' [Lwando] himself is there to clear it up." [He implied that Lwando, who brought the case to the police, also had the power to withdraw it, which Lwando later did. Thereby he withdrew implicitly the case from the realm of the state, handing it over into the competence of the chief to judge it outside the provisions of the Zambian law.]

Then all the police officers left the palace and went for good. The police of Samfya went back to Samfya, and those of Kalasa Mukoso remained in Kalasa Mukoso. While all this was happening, the *beni Ng'oma* had not yet arrived.

With this meeting between the police and chief Kalasa Mukoso, Lwando's narrative ends. Lwando later complained that he never received back a number of the items that the police had secured, another incident that tarnished the police's reputation.

THE CONFESSION

When the police left Kalasa Mukoso, the *beni Ng'oma* crowd arrived at the court. The court case then took place, in the absence of the police. Lwando's guilt was established by way of compromise. The chief condemned the actions of the *beni Ng'oma*. They should not have taken Lwando's boats and property without the consent of the chief. To show their willingness to cooperate and submit under the chief's authority, they had to bring everything to the chief. Lwando in turn was condemned as being guilty of the charges. The chief announced that he himself had consulted a reliable diviner about the matter, and that he knew the whole truth, that Lwando was indeed a *cisanguka*, a human crocodile who had killed Peter, and that he should just confess. Thereby Lwando answered: "What is the need to confess if you know already everything?"

Lwando was afraid to say more. His accusers took his statement as a confession of guilt. The chief ordered Lwando to pay Peter's family with some of his goods as compensation for killing a member of their family. Furthermore, Lwando was ordered to pay money to the chief. The news of Lwando's confession travelled fast and far, and many people, who were still undecided as to which side to believe, took it as the final proof that Lwando was a witch who turned into a crocodile to kill innocent people in order to prosper.

REPERCUSSIONS ON THE FAMILY

Lwando was soon hit by a second drama: the death of his wife, who had remained in Yongolo. This put Lwando under enormous pressure. He could not go to attend the funeral in Yongolo without the risk of being killed. However—especially in view of his other wives—he was dependent on his late wife's family for the ritual cleansing. While his late wife's next of kin were on good terms with Lwando, a number of influential family mem-

bers convinced them to refuse performing the customary cleansing. They had consulted another diviner about the cause of her death and were told that she had been killed by Lwando's familiar (*lilomba*, a mystical snake familiar related to Lwando) which had become hungry since Lwando was away for too long. Lwando was by now established as a long-term witch, because to sustain a *lilomba*, a snake-familiar, a lifetime commitment.

Members of his late wife's lineage, the *bená Mpende* (the clan of the breams) raided what was left of Lwando's belongings in Yongolo. In order to secure a cleansing, Lwando took refuge at the palace of Chief Mushili Mufwaya (Cheswa). The chief ruled that Lwando had a right to mourn his late wife and to be cleansed; moreover, he had lived in good relationship with his wife and her family. During one hearing that took place at Chief Mushili's palace, Lwando's accusers physically attacked and nearly strangled him in the presence of the chief. Lwando was saved by the intervention of some headmen and court members, who took him to the local clinic where he recovered. This attack backfired on the accusers, as people understood it as a direct attack on the chief's authority. The chief told me: "Where will they go now when they are themselves in need? Since they have publicly undermined my authority by attacking Lwando at my palace. They have destroyed their own case."

In April 2001, Chief Mushili Mufwaya and I accompanied Lwando on his first (and only) visit back to Yongolo to mourn his wife. He was accepted by parts of the *bená Mpende*, but when we were leaving Yongolo with Lwando, the *bená Mpende* were fighting among themselves; some did not agree with letting him go, and a number of women publicly undressed before us in protest.

AFTERMATH

Lwando had great difficulties finding another place to live: nobody wanted to live with a crocodile. Eventually, a village headman 40 km away gave him a place, but Lwando was under no illusion that he would again be accused of witchcraft in case of any mysterious deaths in the village.

Lwando withdrew from people. Many outsiders and even his friends were uncertain or undecided how to position themselves.⁸ I knew that the Catholic community in Yongolo and beyond was divided about the case. Many believed that Lwando was guilty, but it was less evident who was on

⁸ Erdmute Alber's description of the repositioning of people with regard to the unfolding of a witchcraft case in Benin aptly applies to the case discussed here. (Alber 2001).

his side. Those who are vocal during the process of making accusations are the accusers; the supporters of an accused often remain quiet.

During the on-going negotiations with the chiefs, the *bena Ng'oma* eventually returned some boats in return for Lwando dropping the case with the police, after which Spaida Kalela was released by the police. Lwando's other two wives never came back, but the fourth wife stayed with him. Matthew Muleba, Lwando's main protagonist, also left Yongolo and many people stopped associating with him. Due to his heavy consumption of alcohol and marihuana, he had developed an unpredictable character. We priests barred him from receiving the sacraments. Nevertheless, we maintained contact with him at his new home (30km away from Yongolo). In 2003, he approached the Church for reconciliation. We coupled this to a reconciliation with Lwando. A meeting was arranged between Muleba, Lwando and us priests. Lwando was ready for such a reconciliation on condition that Matthew Muleba cleared him publicly from the charge of being a *cisanguka* by means of our parish newsletter. Muleba accepted. However, before this happened, Lwando died of an illness. The story had no winners but only losers, including our church. The conflict left a flourishing prayer centre divided. It took many years for it to recover to its former strength.

LESSONS TO LEARN

The accusers based their knowledge and public actions on the verdict of several diviners who claimed, by means of esoteric knowledge, that Lwando was a witch who could transform himself into a crocodile. Lwando also defended himself in reference to esoteric knowledge: He had found the body of Peter by following a dream revelation that he had obtained in response to following the local traditions of the ancestors. When people made sense out of the different narratives, they were not choosing between an African way of explanation that involved spiritual forces and a Western way that allowed only for empirical evidence. Both sides called on the spiritual world for evidence to support their case. Onlookers had to buy into one or the other narrative: Either Lwando had access to dreams to gain supernatural knowledge to find the body, or he had powers to change himself into a crocodile.

The police had nothing to say during the hearing. They more or less encouraged Lwando to withdraw the case from the official courts. The chief had managed to carve out a political space, which he called "tradition", outside the modern and the Christian discourses—the only space, he

claimed, in which one can deal with witchcraft. The *Zambian Witchcraft Act* has not succeeded in closing down this space. Hence the importance for the Church somehow to be present in this space.

We, the priests, had taken a clear stance in the drama by barring Muleba from the sacraments and leadership positions in the Church, and by helping the police. We could not condone the verdicts of a diviner who had already provoked mob killings in other instances. The Church needs to take a public stance that is based on truth claims of the outer world, not on those that we need to place into the inner world of diviners or dreamers. There was no evidence in the outer world that linked Lwando to Peter's death. In addition, he had manifested no threatening or antisocial behaviour, as far as we could see, that needed to be drastically corrected. The police achieved through their arrest of one family member the return of some of the boats. Maybe such force was the only language that these family members understood at that point. In hindsight, I still believe that such a "show of muscle" was necessary.

However, I believe we priests did not explore enough the relational side of the accusations. I had sat down with Lwando, but not with Muleba and his family. Maybe that is why Muleba accused me of partiality. We had neglected the work of accompanying the family, who had to cope with a tragic loss, and which they attributed to ritual crime. We had good relationships with both conflicting parties, and even with the local herbalist, and could have tried to bring the conflicting parties together apart from engaging the police. We would not have managed to bring *all* members of the conflicting parties together, but we could have managed to bring *some* family members of both parties together. They could have fought, but the fight would have taken place in our presence. The Church would have remained part of the discernment processes and could have fulfilled some functions of arbitration, since both parties respected us. The fact that Lwando went to the chief for arbitration before he came to approach the church shows that he considered the chief more competent in this issue. To build up a reputation for arbitration takes time.

What we did well, I believe, is that in the aftermath we actively sought contact and created occasions to meet with both families, also with Muleba. Though we barred him from the sacraments, we continued to visit him. We attended funerals of his family members. These efforts were bearing fruits. His children did not seem to notice that we had a clash with their father; they remained friendly and uninhibited with us priests. Unfortunately, Lwando was already very sick, when the terms for reconciliation were mutually spelled out. But there was now a bridge.

Intervening in witchcraft accusations

Removing poison from rumours and suspicions

Many scholars have written about witchcraft in Africa. However, very few proposed concrete steps of intervention. One of those who did is Walter van Beek.⁹ In his approach, the problem of witchcraft accusations is addressed on different levels, from preventive interventions up to the time when violence has erupted. Witchcraft is by nature hidden and invisible to the empirical eye. However, it is sustained and fuelled by visible issues and rifts in family and in society. By engaging with such issues openly, we can take away much of the poison that will fuel concrete witchcraft accusations. In this chapter, I engage with van Beek's ladder of interventions and adapt it to our approach.

NOTIONS OF EVIL

The way that tensions are experienced in society is related to the notions of evil that are held and with which people engage. Related to these are concepts of personhood, the human body and the spiritual world. How do specific witchcraft beliefs link up with such notions, and how does the Church link up with them?

This book has been dealing with such questions. The powerful symbols of witchcraft can lose part of their grip if alternative discourses can stand next to it side by side. This presents a call to the Christian Churches to engage creatively with people's spiritual concepts. Churches can provide a forum for discussing such questions, which can help to develop a readiness for alternatives. One point, however, needs to be stressed. In the context of tragedy, secular discourses are limited in their quest to help people find meaning. Witchcraft is a spiritual discourse; it can only be replaced with another spiritual discourse. Churches are challenged to make

⁹ Beek 2007.

the heavens open for people in tragedy. Where Churches focus only on secular answers, they have lost their significance.

For more than a hundred years, the Church in Zambia has tried to address the worldview through which witchcraft accusations are formulated. While success has been limited, it would be wrong to say that success has been totally absent. Many people have come to embrace wider notions of causalities that do not pin down suffering to witchcraft. This should encourage the Church, in spite of many setbacks, to continue engaging with the worldview underpinning witchcraft discourses.

THE LEVEL OF PERSONAL ANGUISH

Christians may be able to recall the catechism in their head. However, coping with suffering when it strikes is another matter. Witchcraft comes with its own space and codes, but also opens up a way to vent one's anger on scapegoats, on people whom one detests. A Christian discourse challenges dehumanising gossip and tries to provide possibilities for inner healing and acceptance. This can help to forego the need for projecting evil onto others. When the Christian Churches are present at key moments (for example at funerals) where emotions easily burst out and people are more vulnerable to buy into witchcraft discourses, they take away critical momentum from the witchcraft discourses. This also applies to long-smouldering resentments in life (barrenness, sickness, being deserted by a husband, etc.) The Christian discourse needs to meet these human wounds. A committed provision of personal pastoral care at this level translates into reductions of witchcraft accusations.

THE LEVEL OF SUSPICIONS: TENSIONS IN KINSHIP RELATIONS

Witchcraft accusations in Zambia mostly take place within families and between people who know each other. Questions about the development of tensions are important. Who has control over the resources? Who carries the burden of work? Is there competition for authority? How transparent is the distribution of resources? How easy is communication? How easy is it for family members to point the accusing finger at each other? Such questions play into the level of suspicions.

When witchcraft suspicions arise, it is not always helpful to start with the assumption that such suspicions are always baseless. Those who press witchcraft accusations are often the voiceless who have little access to the official channels of power. Women can be at the forefront of airing ac-

cusations. Where office bearers are appointed for life and social structures do not provide regulating mechanisms, witchcraft accusations can be seen as the only way of redressing a situation. Max Marwick called witchcraft accusation patterns a “social strain gauge”, proposing that they follow fault-lines in kinship systems and regulated competition for office (headman, chief). Also Victor Turner suggested that witchcraft accusations could break up oversized village communities against an ideology of eternal kinship.¹⁰

One needs to propose alternative ways of redressing an oppressive situation. Families have their own councils and meetings. Such meetings have the potential to defuse witchcraft suspicions but also address critical issues. It is important to give everybody a voice.

The changing forms of witchcraft also correspond with changing social structures of exploitation that are felt by many. As an example, one can point to changes in witchcraft conceptions among the Tonga of the Gwembe Valley, as described by Elisabeth Colson.¹¹ Starting with the 1980s, she and her research teams would witness many sons (often of divorced or junior wives) accusing their fathers of witchcraft, a phenomenon that was unheard of before the time when land now became registered under the names of their fathers. Ambitious men in new resettlement schemes were dependent on male labour for their cattle; their sons got very little in return for their yearlong services, and they failed to make themselves economically independent of their fathers, because of the difficulties in obtaining fertile land for themselves. New patterns of witchcraft accusations revealed new fracture zones within family patterns. New symbols of witchcraft can show new experiences of alienation. Witchcraft symbols that are plausible to the community—beyond their personalised application to specific individuals—can point to the fracture zones that tear families apart.¹²

We also need to ask why specific persons are associated so easily with witchcraft. People who abuse their authority, who are unfair to their families, who are non-transparent, who display threatening behaviour or who come across as arrogant, are readily accused of witchcraft. Such destructive behaviour (in the outer world) makes certain people more accusable. If this behaviour is not addressed, suspicions can easily slip to the level of accusation. Intervention at this level addresses family relationships and

¹⁰ Marwick 1964, Turner 1957.

¹¹ Colson 2000.

¹² Niehaus 1995, 2001.

tries to improve communication. Prevention is better than cure. At the same time, the community also needs to engage with the question how best to deal with people who are not conforming to social norms.

A diviner is often called to confirm a suspicion that is already there; the diviner expresses as an outsider what the insiders do not dare to say openly. The need to bring in an outsider for this purpose can be made redundant by the Church. Some parishes in the Eastern Province (Chipata Diocese) have had fruitful experiences by calling divided families together for a meeting at the church, well before the families would call a diviner. Such meetings would be rough and noisy, and sometimes erupted into a physical fight between the two parties on church premises. However, they fulfilled their purpose: there was no longer any need to call in a diviner because, during the noisy meeting, the different accusations and hidden issues had already been aired out.¹³ At this level, it is also important to build positive relationships with the authorities (chiefs, headmen and headwomen, councillors, police) whose cooperation may be vital for saving lives in the future.

THE LEVEL OF GOSSIP: CLASS STRUGGLE

Witchcraft accusations that start in the families are fuelled at a higher level. Wider frustrations are often projected on the alleged witch, providing the fuel for gossip. The accusing finger at witches can point to the elite (they are rich and powerful, while often cutting themselves off from their extended families). But it can also point to the marginalised (people tempted to practise hidden witchcraft out of jealousy or powerlessness).

Gossip touches issues of power, authority and justice: Who are the power brokers? What tensions are found in society between men and women, the young and the old? Who has access to the best land, the best fields, to the chief, to government resources or to influential persons? Who can command labour from the wider family for the fields during agricultural peak-times, for example at the beginning of the rainy season when time is very short but the workload very heavy? Who are the people who are not gaining much from their hard work? Churches have a role to play by calling for transparency, and by naming and clarifying the issues with which people struggle.

I have already mentioned studies that see in witchcraft discourses an engagement with wider structures of exploitation (see chapter 12). While

¹³ Personal communication with Toon van Kessel.

witchcraft is seen as a spiritual force, its images may be more persuasive when they are accompanied by an awareness of political powerlessness. Unfortunately, anger is often vented at scapegoats in the community.

Karl Marx and many followers regarded the spiritual world as an ideology that is self-evident to the believer but that cements the position of the ruling class and of exploitive relationships that determine the modes of production and distribution. We do not need to accept such theories as all-encompassing explanations of the spiritual world. Nevertheless, they show that spiritual notions are embedded also in political structures. Beliefs in witchcraft support the authority structures of the specialists, healers, chiefs, and headmen or headwomen who know about such realities and who determine the process of divination. Lines of power established through witchcraft beliefs run into every family. Beliefs in witchcraft can also play into the hands of the Christian Churches, prophets and “men of God”. Questions like the following should not be missing from our engagements with witchcraft: Who benefits from the witchcraft accusations? Who stands to benefit in terms of money, influence or power from people’s fears of witchcraft? Which power structures are cemented by discourses of witchcraft? Whom does society marginalise through such discourses? Who needs to be discarded?

Here we also need to pose some awkward questions to the Church. Dealing with invisible forces has become a powerful business in Africa that today provides the livelihood not only for many traditional healers but also for many Christian prophets and “men of God”. People who pay tithe and “sow a seed” are often in dire vulnerable situations. How much are Churches themselves guilty of perpetuating the fear of evil powers in order to sell to people powerful spiritual protection?

THE LEVEL OF ACCUSATION: AFTER THE DIVINER

Bereaved or sick people have consulted a diviner who has attended to their suspicions. The diviner has named the witch responsible for their misfortune. A key question now is whether the accusation will stick to the person and be credible to the community. Many accusations are not taken seriously, while others are immediately accepted. When the diviner confirms rumours that already exist, the accusation is more likely to stick. Gossip is now transformed into a full-blown accusation. The accused person is seen as proven guilty.

Interventions at this level focus on the diviner’s discourse and on help for the accused. It is useful to know the verdict and to engage with its

logic, bringing alternatives into play. In traditional places of mediation, for example at the chief's court, the church can try to help to re-humanise discourses about witches. The accused can also be encouraged to seek recourse in court to have his or her reputation restored—the earlier, the better. The accusers, including the accusing diviner, should be brought to justice. This demands courage. Often one needs to look, together with the accused, at the reasons, threats and fears that may prevent him/her from seeking legal action.

In European history, the judiciary played a crucial role in halting the persecution and prosecution of alleged witches. In Zambia (unlike many other African countries), an alleged witch can receive help in an official court, but the person also risks being ostracised by the family or community back at home. Extra-judiciary spaces, for example at the unofficial chiefs' courts, can contribute to judicial confusion. Lobbying for a firm judiciary system may bear fruits in curbing violence against alleged witches. One can help the accused to stay focused and not become intimidated. Possible helpers must now be identified and approached. It is also helpful for the accused to keep a factual diary with dates and details of the daily events. Churches can play important mediating roles, the more so when they manage to act in a unified way. Ecumenical efforts are crucial.

PUBLIC PRESSURE AND THREATS OF VIOLENCE

At this point, the witchcraft discourse now may enter into a violent phase taking its full swing. Alleged witches are forced to confess and be cleansed. Group pressure is high. Can the accused counter the allegation? Is he/she willing to be cleansed of witchcraft by a diviner and thereby buy him/herself into the witchcraft discourse? Being cleansed may help the person to live on after the events, but it is taken as an admission of guilt, bringing fuel for further accusations. Accusations escalate into real agitation. Pastoral intervention and peace-making at this stage is difficult and needs courage. Interventions focus on the security of the alleged witch. It may be necessary to find a new living place far away from the troubles. Zambian law protects against witchcraft accusations. However, the ability to enforce the law can be very limited. Agitation often turns into mob violence and witch-hunts. Accused witches are sometimes killed secretly or even openly. Intervention at this point can focus on providing legal help to restore the reputation of the alleged witch and be close to the family. It is sometimes helpful to put some pressure on law-enforcement: police, chiefs, headmen, reminding them of the penalties that they may have to

face according to the law. Involving the public media has twice led to crucial turns in events in which I was involved in our own parish. Because of the publicity of the events, pressure is put on the chiefs and authority figures to abide by the law.

AFTER THE CLEANSING

As a result of witchfinding and witchcleansing that may sometimes lead to the death of the suspected witch, whole communities become fractured for years and even for generations. Churches should play a role in long-term community building. The diviner's verdict is well known to people. At this stage, it can be important to give a voice to the victims, or to their families, who have not yet been heard. Often the community has silenced them. Testimonies given in church can provide a platform for the victims of accusations to tell their story, provided this path can be pursued in a constructive way.

REFLECTING ON EVIL WITH NEW SYMBOLS

When intervening in witchcraft accusations, as pastors we work with individuals and their specific life-contexts. However, when certain patterns repeat themselves, we also need to ask questions that go beyond the individual affected persons. While we abstain from reducing witchcraft beliefs to a symbolic level, we should not neglect the important road into the world of meanings. The Church does well to keep reflecting on the symbols of witchcraft and on their appeal at the different levels. Here the circle closes, by going back to step one, a reflection—with new symbols—on the notions of evil.

Part Six

Helping the victims of Satanism

Helping the victims of Satanism

Satanism has become a disturbing issue in Zambia since the late 1990s. New forms of the occult are emerging and new fears have started to divide families and communities. They mix with the older discourses on witchcraft and spirit possession, yet come also with new nuances. In chapter eighteen, I look at Zambian Satanism, what people understand by it and the help that people expect from their Church. Panics about Satanism have arisen especially in Secondary Schools, and I look at its dynamics in chapter nineteen. Testimonies of deliverance have provided for the Christian public the main source of information about the internal functioning of the satanic world. In chapter twenty, I look at the dynamics of testimonies of “delivered Satanists” to Christian audiences and propose that the testimonies are co-authored products of both confessor and audience. Satanic rumours and testimonies can open up a window to the moral concerns that many people (especially youths and women) share about a future Africa.

18

Zambian Satanism

A new tree with old roots

Elderly people in Zambia grew up without ever hearing the word Satanism. They knew of witchcraft. During colonial times, they also knew of invasions of evil people known as *banyama* or *bakamunyama* who were feared to be practising ritual killings and stealing human body-parts. In critical times, the *banyama* were dreaded in all villages.

Satanism is a new word. By the year 2000, however, the vocabulary of Satanism was commonplace. Within a rather short period of time, the term had emerged as a catchword for the occult, one that has also reached the rural areas. As panic broke out, people sought answers from their Churches. Concerns were raised about the safety of children at school (including Catholic schools), where Satanism was said to be breeding and recruiting. Clinics, hospitals and health services were suspected of obtaining human blood or body parts for rituals or consumption by Satanists.¹ Strange and diverse events were linked to the new world of Satanism: people going missing, accidents, suicides or the discovery of large sums of money. This panic was fuelled especially by testimonies given by people (many of them youths) who claimed they had been Satanists themselves, but now they were delivered; such “delivered Satanists” shared the details of the workings of a hidden parallel world ruled by the devil that was infiltrating all the public institutions of Zambia. While the Catholic Church (and a number of mainstream churches) promoted a cautionary approach, calling for empirical inquiries, a number of neo-Pentecostal pastors testified to the threat of an all-pervasive Satanism, which became the subject of many prayer rallies.

¹ Kingori et al. 2010.

THE EMERGENCE OF SATANISM IN ZAMBIA

Most pastors whom we interviewed in the course of our study (more than 30 between 2007 and 2015) saw Satanism emerging as an issue in Zambia only in the 1990s. This timeframe corresponds with a study by Kayuni about Satanism in Kabwe, where the majority of his respondents had become aware of Satanism in the 1990s or the 2000s.² By then, however, Satanism had firmly entered the public forum; the press referred to it, and different churches, institutions, the Zambian Police as well as different political parties were forced to make statements or answer questions about this new form of the occult.³ The term Satanism crossed into the local languages where it stands side by side with the old discourses on witchcraft. Today, private radio stations in Lusaka regularly air deliverance sessions in which known pastors cast out demons, and delivered people testify about Satanism in their families, work places and among their neighbours.

Individual people, as well as whole groups, have fallen victim of being labelled as Satanists in Zambia. Of course, not all labels stick. Catholics, for example, have been labelled as satanic in discourses of Seventh Day Adventists, who claim that the Pope is identical with the Biblical Anti-Christ. However, no angry mob of Seventh Day Adventists in Zambia has ever vandalised a Catholic church in outrage over such perceived Satanism. The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) in Lusaka, in contrast, was vandalised by an angry mob of people; it was labelled as satanic across multiple sections of society. A village of the exclusive Goshali Church (meaning, "God shall live forever") of Chongwe District was burnt down in an act of public outrage (2011).⁴ A new industry in Choma had to rebrand its products after people boycotted it as satanic due to an application of a Nigerian prophecy. We measure the weight that satanic labelling bears by the way it mobilises or fails to mobilise public action.⁵

² Kayuni 2013. Out of 137 respondents, 25 answered that they became aware of Satanism already in the 1980s.

³ See for example *Zambia News Online* (6th June 1997) with comments on Satanism by representatives of the Christian Unity Ministries, the Zambian Episcopal Conference, the Zambian Church of God, the Lusaka Baptist Church, the Zambian Police, and the National Democratic Party. I have not seen any press report dating earlier than 1997 about Satanism in Zambia.

⁴ The incident happened in Kanakantapa area of Chongwe District in January 2011. The Church is a splinter group of the Seventh Day Adventists.

⁵ One researcher on Satanism in Zambia, Johanneke Kroesbergen-Kamps, has investigated the high frequency with which an online opposition news magazine (the *Zambian Watchdog*) used the term Satanism in 2013 to describe Zambia's political and moral situation. A number of its articles road accidents to satanic sacrifices of the ruling party. She showed that such

Public outrage expressed itself in Zambia especially when rumours of Satanism were connected with very concrete suspicions of ritual crime. The UCKG was stoned and vandalised when people talked about abductions and human sacrifices taking place within its premises (unproven in subsequent investigations).⁶ Also other riots started because of rumours of Satanism linked to concrete ritual crimes. Near Mansa (in March 2012), the police apprehended a lorry with unaccompanied children at the border with Congo that belonged to a known businessperson. Shortly after, Mansa residents apprehended another man who was allegedly seen carrying a child in a bag. He claimed, while being beaten, that he was working for the named businessperson who wanted to sacrifice the child. These two events provoked a riot that saw the businesses of the said man go up in flames, together with those of other suspects; Mansa town was paralysed, and a number of people were killed during the mob justice.⁷ In April 2013, riots broke out in Katete, after the body of a gang-raped and murdered schoolgirl was found; her death was rumoured to be linked to ritual crime of local Satanists. Shops of Zambians of Asian origins and of local businesspeople were burnt down. Police were unable to stop the riot, in which many other shops were looted; the Zambian army had to move in, and 288 people were arrested.⁸ Equally, riots in Chambeshi Township of the Copperbelt, during which four businesspeople perished and the market of Zambia Compound was gutted, were initiated by rumours of ritual crimes.

It is arguably the strong connection between Satanism and concrete ritual killings with empirical dead bodies which mobilises public riots. Often such riots went against the police who were accused of allowing the ritual murderers to escape. In contrast, all the testimonies of delivered

attempts of framing can be understood as political acts (Kroesbergen-Kamps 2014b). How these prolonged attempts of political framing, in spite of inspiring many comments by the magazine's online readership, translated into the mobilisation of concrete political responses is of course another question.

⁶ The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) at Kafue Roundabout Lusaka was vandalised, and a branch of the Church in Kanyama burnt. Because of rumours about human sacrifices in the church and about a hidden mortuary, the UCKG was deregistered by the Registrar of Societies. Following an appeal by the UCKG, the verdict was overturned by a decision of the High Court. The UCKG had been previously banned in 1997, on grounds of similar charges (then worshipping at the former 20th Century Cinema Hall); also then, the court order had been revoked after appeal.

⁷ Personal communication with police officer Obed Mponda, who was present during the riots.

⁸ <https://www.zambianwatchdog.com/soldiers-mobilised-to-handle-katete-riot-288-arrested>; <https://www.zambianwatchdog.com/katete-residents-riot-burn-shops-over-sacrificed-school-girl/comment-page-1>; <http://m.lusakatimes.com/2013/04/05/police-arrest-people-who-rioted-in-katete>. (Accessed on 1 October 2014.)

Satanists that I listened to were never understood as cases for the police or indeed for any outside investigation. Even when Satanist testified to have committed uncountable human sacrifices. People clearly understood such sacrifices as a spiritual matter with which pastors can deal, not the police. I call it the spiritual form of Satanism.

SATANISM IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Zambia's fear of Satanism were preceded by similar panics in other African countries, like South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya.⁹ Such fears, of course, are not a specific African phenomenon. Arguably the first Satanic panic erupted in the United States of America, starting with the end of the 1970s, peaking in the 1980s and then subsiding in the 1990s.

Concerning the Satanism of the Western world, it is important to distinguish two concepts: (1) the way how practising Satanists define themselves, and (2) the way they are seen and defined by others. Practising Satanists in the USA have succeeded in openly defining their own way of life and their own versions of Satanism. The *Satanic Bible* of Anton Lavey, written in 1969, is one such example. Various Satanic Churches develop their rules and understanding of life as defined by practising Satanists themselves.¹⁰ Satanism, as a new form of religious or anti-religious expression, became popularised by explicit satanic groups or churches, for example the Church of Satan, founded by Anton Lavey in 1966. Some Western satanic Churches with theistic and polytheistic beliefs see in the figure of Satan a pre-Christian life-force, an energy or a dark spiritual power. For Satanists of a philosophical or even atheist nature (inspired by Laveyan Satanism), Satan stands for a principle that stresses the priority of chaos and darkness over order and light, a will to power and self-worship, a symbol for a rebellion against organised religion, or an acknowledgement of a focus on this-worldly pleasures. Such different types of Satanism vary in their beliefs. What unites them is that they define themselves with the help of a Satan-figure, even if Satan may stand for very different realities, spiritual or philosophical. Some Satanists of the Church of Satan neither believe in God nor in the existence of the devil as a spiritual enti-

⁹ See Dunbara and Swarta 2012 for the South African scenario and Meyer 1995 for Satanism in the Ghanaian context.

¹⁰ Examples of international Satanists' groups, churches or covens with spelled out beliefs and running their own websites include the Church of Satan, the First Church of Satan, the First Satanic Church, the Order of Nine Angels, the Temple of Set, the Church of Lucifer, the Satanic Temple, the Modern Church of Satan, the Redeemer Church of Satan, the Church of Azazel, the Church of Satanic Brotherhood, and the Joy of Satan Ministry.

ty; but others do, and they seek access to dark powers. Lavey's Satanist is a non-conformist person, inspired by Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, who forces his/her own meanings on life. One becomes a Satanist not because of the influence of others, but through living out one's own resources and will to power.¹¹ By its nature, this form of Satanism cannot be defined by outside doctrines, of which Satanism, after all, seeks to free its followers. In American Satanism, two Satanists will understand their way of life in very different terms.

Explicit satanic churches in the West went through different phases of defining and redefining themselves, often with the help of spectacular events, like the Satanic Mass, meant to be shocking and desacralizing what religious people hold as sacred. What scandalises some, attracts others. Occult symbolism found an entry into pop music and other cultural expressions, not tied, however, exclusively to Satanism. Many youths bought into occult symbolism, be it as a form of protest against the religious and secular establishment, a way of presenting themselves as belonging to a different class, or out of reasons as diverse as the people themselves.

In turn, many Christians across the religious spectrum saw the roots of Satanism in the erosion of the moral fabric of their society. Christian Churches preached their understanding of the true nature of Satanism to the public. Satanism boiled down to devil-worship, be it open or concealed, with disastrous effects. Popular books made the threat of Satanism and of the presence of an all-compassing demonic world, which was victimising especially children and youths, plausible to many. This gave rise to deliverance ministries and exorcisms countrywide and coined new words, for example Satanic Ritual Abuse.¹²

Various Christian denominations disseminated a message that contained the image of Satanism as a single, organised and global underground society, with fixed symptoms that could be observed. This view-

¹¹ In many ways, Lavey's Satanist resembles Nietzsche's *Übermensch*.

¹² Ideas about the universal symptoms of demonic possession were popularised by Malachi Martin's *Hostage to the Devil* and given wider credibility by the bestselling psychiatrist Scott Peck in a chapter in *The People of the Lie*. For a wider discussion of the literature that formed a consensus in charismatic and Pentecostal circles, see Cuneo 2001. According to the sociologist Jeffrey Victor, the satanic panic of the USA had been fuelled by an alliance of moral crusades of Christian Churches, psychotherapists who gave a voice to self-styled survivors of satanic abuse, sections of the mass media who gave them the limelight, parts of the feminist movement who had some of their viewpoints dramatically confirmed, child-protection units and marginal experts of the occult who verified the stories of the "survivors". They built up consistent fears about an underground network of deviants of society. The panic, so Victor, was sustained through false confessions and false memories, often made by persons with a history of dissociative personality disorders, false accusations and unreliable indicators, so-called symptoms of demonic possession or of satanic ritual abuse, that could point to any form of personality disorder (Victor 1993).

point was exported also to Africa. Take the following Gospel cartoon of 1987, entitled *The Poor Little Witch* of the influential *Chick Tracts*, used by many evangelical churches in the United States. I give back the comic strip storyline (that I found in Victor 1993) as a narrative.

MANDY IS INITIATED INTO SATANISM (FROM CHICK TRACTS)

A girl called Mandy has no friends at school and desires to have the skills that other girls have, whom she admires. The devil knows her secret desires. The next day, her class teacher, who is—unknown to Maundy—a practising Satanist, invites her to a party, where people introduce her to occult practices, through which Mandy gains some occult powers. By unknowingly calling on the help of a demon, she manages to humiliate her enemy at school. In the next scene, her teacher makes her to participate in a satanic ritual. On the way to the coven, the teacher starts shivering in the car, when they drive past a spirit-filled church that is based on the true teachings of the Bible—even from a distance, she is physically uncomfortable with their prayers. After having arrived at the coven, Satanists slaughter a baby in honour of the devil and drink its blood. A note under the picture reads: “Police estimate between 40,000 to 60,000 ritual homicides per year occur in the U.S.” Mandy is forced to drink from the cup. Her teacher notices that she is uncomfortable and convinces her that she has joined for good: “Don’t even think of going to the police. Our high priest is the chief of police! There is no way out.” The cartoon continues to show that many popular Christian churches have long been infiltrated by Satanists. However, Mandy finds a delivered Satanist in the church. She confesses her sins to the pastor, where she accepts Jesus as her personal saviour. The demons leave her after a deliverance session. Satanists, however, follow her up at night and kill her, since she knows too much. The pastor also dies, mysteriously, in his sleep. The story ends with the assertion that Mandy did not renounce her faith and is accepted into heaven.¹³

The comic strip presents Satanism in the framework of a satanic conspiracy that cannot be detected through empirical means, since human sacrifices are kept secret, traitors are killed and Satanists have infiltrated all public institutions. Features of the inner, spiritual world (mysteri-

¹³ Chick 1976. I refer the reader to Victor (1993) for a view on the influence of such passages in fuelling the moral panic.

ous powers, mysterious deaths) mix with alleged facts of the outer world ("Police estimates between 40,000 to 60,000 ritual homicides per year.")

The sociologist Jeffrey Victor placed the American concerns about Satanism during the 1980s into the wider category of the *moral panic*, which he defines as

a form of collective behavior characterized by suddenly increased concern and hostility in a significant segment of a society, in reaction to widespread beliefs about a newly perceived threat from moral deviants. Careful, empirical examination at a later time, however, reveals that the perceived threat was greatly exaggerated or nonexistent. ... Local rumor-panics, riots and ethnic programs may occur in reaction to belief in the threat.¹⁴

He lists as examples of moral panics diverse spells of anti-Semitism in European history, the witch-craze and the anti-Communist "Red Scare" in the U.S. of the 1950s. Moral panics may circle around diverse issues, but they have in common that they communicate shared anxieties about a newly perceived threat. Victor adopted the term *moral panic* from the work of Stanley Cohen, who defined it as a social scenario during which

a condition, episode, person or group emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnosis and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes visible.¹⁵

Many facets of Zambia's Satanism would fit such definitions of a moral panic. But it also comes with its own dynamics.

ZAMBIAN SATANISM

In Zambia it is not official Satanist groups who define what Satanism is about, but Christian prayer groups, movies, pamphlets, and especially testimonies of "delivered Satanists" (now born-again Christians); they determine the place of Satanism in the public imagination. "Satanists know each other. They cannot share their secrets with those who are not

¹⁴ Victor 1998, p. 543.

¹⁵ Quoted from Cohen's book *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* in Victor 1998, p. 452.

initiated. But there are ways you can know them,” a delivered Satanist testified, who is today active in the deliverance ministry. Here is her list of symptoms of Satanism: not wanting to pray, wanting to be alone, avoiding eye contact, looking downwards or looking at somebody with an evil eye, talking while the head is slightly bent, not eating with others (because Satanists have their own food), drop in school performance, sleep walking or talking in one’s sleep. “I can even detect a Satanist from afar, by the way they walk,” she explained. Needless to say that she saw Satanists nearly everywhere. Apart from signs of Satanism, the above person knew also of indications of demon possession, which included the “dreaming to have sex;”—“hearing your name called, but there is nobody behind you;”—“having addictions from which you cannot free yourself;”—“failing in all you are doing;” and “having sicknesses that do not heal.” I found similar lists, but in greater detail, in photocopied pamphlets that we collected in various Pentecostal churches in Lusaka.

Such descriptions, of course, are not universally accepted. Many charismatic and Pentecostal pastors preach much milder versions, and practise deliverance ministries only in the wider context of a quest for inner healing, even if they consider Satanism in Zambia as a real threat. It is also important to make room for situational answers. Some people may be rather sceptical about the world of Satanism and demon possession; however, when they take part in a charismatic deliverance session, listen to testimonies and prophecies, and see people manifesting the symptoms of demon possession, they may come to a different awareness and accept the world of Satanism and/or demons on a different note.

In a recent PhD thesis, Joseph Kayuni investigated the prevalence of Satanism in Kabwe. Eighty-nine percent of the people interviewed by him confirmed that they thought that Satanism was a big issue in Kabwe, and that it was a reality. The following is a summary of what Satanism meant to the respondents of his questions:

To most of the people (46%), Satanism meant ‘Devil Worshiping’. This was followed by the twenty-five per cent (25%) of the respondents to whom Satanism implied an ‘Anti-Christ religion’. Other respondents took Satanism to mean the evil sort of science, a practice where human blood is either drunk or used for sacrifice (11%). There were also those who saw Satanism either as a practice of un-holy things or as a kind of religion with hidden doctrines (8%). Nevertheless, there was still another category (7%) that con-

stituted people who conceived Satanism as a mere religion, just like any other religion of this world.¹⁶

Kayuni investigated Zambian Satanism as an empirical cult that resembles a religion or a secret society, which a person joins for personal benefits or out of religious or anti-religious convictions. Satanic rumours consequently led him to abandoned homes, Freemasons' lodges and other suspected groups, concrete places, residences and buildings at which people pointed. Various investigations revealed, however, that such places or groups had nothing to do with Satanism as a cult. Kayuni therefore concluded that Satanism exists in Kabwe in terms of rumours but not in terms of facts. Various separate groups, charities that remained obscure to people, new churches, and rich businesspeople whose sources of wealth remained incomprehensible, were all lumped together in popular rumour under the label "satanic".

In our own workshops, when we asked participants about their concepts of Satanism, people expressed similar views. They added, however, the important category of a spiritual form of Satanism, in which people did not join voluntarily, but where Satanism *happened* to them, overpowered them, took away their willpower and led them to an invisible world that lies beyond any empirical method of investigation. This form cannot be investigated with empirical methods. The young, particularly those not rooted within the Christian faith, were said to be especially vulnerable to such experiences. "Those who do not pray enough are easily initiated into this world, without even knowing what is happening to them," said a so-called delivered Satanist during a public testimony.

While Zambian forms of Satanism, real or imagined, are very different from the Satanism that is officially advocated in Western satanic Churches (for example the Church of Satan), ideas of Western Satanism have also reached Zambia as part of a globalised world, especially through the internet. In schools, many pupils are attracted by occult powers and identify with a dark kind of identity over and against their peers, sometimes enhanced by pop cultures that promote occult symbolism. Satanism in Zambia is a category that contains quite diverse ideas, which influence each other. A working definition that is of use to the deliverance ministry needs to go beyond that of an empirical cult. Who can be called a Satanist?

¹⁶ Kayuni 2013, pp. 130-131. The sample was comprised of 137 people.

DEFINITION OF SATANISM

While Zambian concepts of Satanism are very similar to witchcraft discourses, they become distinctive through the figure of Satan. Most people in Zambia, I would stress, see in this figure of Satan the devil as understood in the Christian and Islamic religions, and not a pre-Christian Satan-figure as advocated by Western satanic churches. By looking for a definition that refrains from labelling others as Satanists against their own self-understanding, but by also making room for those experiences where people feel initiated into a parallel spiritual world against their own will, I come to the following working definition:

A Satanist is a person who has dedicated himself/herself to Satan (or a Satan-figure) or who feels he/she has been dedicated (by others) to Satan to such an extent that this defines his/her experience of selfhood and personal identity.

This working definition is based on a given person's experience of selfhood and self-identification—with which our pastoral approach wants to connect: "To whom do you feel a fundamental belonging? To God? Your family? The devil? To unknown forces?" It is not based on one person's judgement over another. The person X does not become a Satanist because the person Y says so, nor because X does evil things—many Christians and members of other religions do evil things, yet do not want to be called Satanists. We use the term Satanist as a marker of a self-identification in reference to a Satan-figure (whether this is the devil, as understood by Christians, or whether the Satan has idiosyncratic meanings). Many people who come to church for help, seek to be freed from a foreign realm that affects their soul and to which they feel a sense of belonging—even against their own will.

HELP SOUGHT FROM THE CHURCH

Some concerns about the actual or imagined prevalence of Satanism in Zambia fall more under the realm of the police than under the pastoral care of the churches, especially when they involve criminal activity. In the remaining part of this chapter I want to draw out the questions that are of pastoral concern: What does Satanism mean for people who seek help from the Church? And what help do people expect and how can it be given in a meaningful way? I answer these questions by looking at the concrete cases that were brought to me and to the group of the "Fingers of

Thomas" (I have already introduced the group in the Preface) during the duration of this research.

Our research started in 2007, and since then hundreds of people of very different backgrounds have approached the group, especially in connection with workshops that we were giving throughout Zambia. We were quickly linked up with people who testified that they were themselves former Satanists, before they were delivered by a Christian church. The majority of those who approached our group, however, felt attacked, manipulated or victimised by Satanists. By approaching a church-based group, people expected prayers that helped them defeat the satanic powers.

I divide the different situations of help sought from us into three groups. The first refers to people affected by a spiritual type of Satanism that exists in a parallel world and that becomes interwoven with their own spiritual experiences; it would be futile to investigate this world with empirical means. The second refers to people affected by tangible, empirical crimes that seem to have been committed for ritual purposes and become associated with Satanism by the victims. By ritual crime people understand cruel offences that are committed for the purpose of practicing witchcraft, for example cutting out body parts of a person (often a living person) that the perpetrators want to use for magical purposes or that they want to sell to other witches. Or that a person commits an abomination, like having sexual relations with a child, in order to harvest occult powers, be cured of a sickness, or activate occult medicines. Ritual crime falls under the competence of the police, not the churches. However, where people fear that ritual crime has spiritual consequences, they also approach Christian churches for help. The third group consists of people who fell victim to accusations of Satanism, branded so by Christian prophets and pastors. They looked for help with re-establishing their reputation. This categorisation draws out what kind of help the affected families expected from the Church.

1. SPIRITUAL SATANISM

People who sought help against spiritual satanic powers came with different experiences that I have divided into four sub-categories. (a) Some confessed to have been active Satanists and to have enjoyed tremendous spiritual powers from the satanic world prior to their deliverance. Deliverance happened, according to their testimonies, not because they had themselves sought prayers, but because the prayers of others had over-

powered them. Now they needed to remain consistent in prayer, “else the Satanists will come back.” (b) Others felt invited to join the satanic world, feeling dedicated to Satan by others (involuntary initiation), but—unlike the first group—had never identified with their satanic role; they resisted being drawn into the satanic “magnetic field” and asked for prayers to be freed from these powers. (c) Other people feared they were in the process of being “sacrificed” by Satanists, that they (or other family members) would die a mysterious death, while their blood and life-forces were being used for satanic purposes and “magic”. (d) Some felt a negative spiritual influence impacting on their lives through strange churches in their neighbourhood that they associated with Satanism. I now look at these subcategories in more detail:

(A) CONFESSING, TESTIFYING SATANISTS

In their first year of their research, we were already in contact with eight people (mostly teenagers or young adults) who called themselves “delivered Satanists”, and who confessed to horrendous crimes, which they claimed to have committed during their satanic spells. More cases followed in subsequent years. Nearly all of them said they had been initiated involuntarily, without even knowing what was happening. One asserted that she had been a Satanist since birth (dedicated to be the wife of Lucifer himself), some felt they had been initiated by family members during childhood, and others had picked up satanic items (clothes, a ring, a necklace) without knowing what these items were about; they were slowly drawn into another world—irresistibly. They had never consciously chosen to become Satanists; Satanism was something that happened to them. Once initiated, they no longer felt a sense of belonging to their families but to someplace else. Most said they became aware of this through dreams, and then through events in real life that connected to the dream events. They identified with the role of being Satanists, (“I made a covenant,”) and spoke of experiences like flying, walking through walls, going under the ocean or under the “Red Sea”, visiting Nigeria, the Kilimanjaro, or the USA, where some claimed to have wives or husbands. All said they were delivered through Christian prayers that had snatched them away from the satanic world. Their deliverance—like their initiation—happened involuntarily; they resisted the prayers, but the godly prayers of their family members or prayer groups proved to be stronger than the satanic powers.

People in this group defined the selfhood of their past lives in reference to Satanism: “I was a Satanist, but now I am delivered.” While the Satan-

ism they confessed to often had some tangible components in the outer world, the testimonies referred especially to a spiritual parallel world that evades empirical validation. Their testimonies followed the charismatic/Pentecostal language of deliverance.

The “Fingers of Thomas” placed such experiences into the inner world of the person, according to the method described in chapter 7. We cannot empirically investigate this satanic underground world beneath some specific ocean, lake or waterfall. Nor is the Nigeria, USA or Kilimanjaro of the testimonies necessarily identical with the places of the physical world. The people who called themselves “delivered Satanists” often distinguished in their own testimonies between the spiritual and physical worlds, though not without difficulties.

Self-confessed Satanists pointed at concrete places, commonly suspected of Satanism, where they claimed to have met with other Satanists in large gatherings. Our investigations, similar to the study of Kayuni, brought no concrete evidence of any such meetings. Some girls who had confessed before Christian audiences to be meeting in a named Lusaka church—commonly suspected of Satanism—gave descriptions of that church that had little to do with the physical features of the church, making it doubtful that they had ever seen the inside of the church with their own eyes. Others pointed to houses in which, they claimed, satanic prayers took place with hundreds of people coming with big cars. Neither people living in these houses nor their neighbours had seen crowds of people or even cars parking nearby. One girl organised funeral prayers at school, attended by all pupils and teachers, for her twin-sister whom she said had suddenly died after she was “sacrificed” by Satanists as compensation for her own deliverance. When I phoned her parents (who lived 600 km away), we discovered that the twin-sister was alive and had not even been sick. Others confessed to having been given enormous riches, cars and bodyguards but their families had seen nothing of such riches. According to our method, public action should always be based on truth statements that can be verified by empirical means. The “satanic riches” and the “satanic places” to which many testimonies referred did evidently not belong into the outer world. Nor did a number of sacrifices that the Satanists claimed they had committed.

Without trying to reduce such testimonies totally to psychological and social issues, we read satanic confessions within the framework of their life-context. A number of confessing Satanists with whom we dealt were victims of very disturbing and traumatic experiences during childhood or adolescence. Some had been sexually abused. Some never felt a sense

of belonging to their families. Others had to cope with a sexual orientation that is not acceptable in Zambian society and felt themselves to be evil. Testimonies were given in the context of born-again Pentecostal frameworks (often during prayers) in which a Godly future is accepted as opposed to a dark, devilish and sinful past. The audience often expects a “juicy” confession, and the person being prayed over is sometimes ready to give what the audience wants to hear (see the next chapter). Many of the confessors were in adolescence or in the developmental stage of restructuring their awareness of selfhood, of belonging, and of their place in the world.

A number of people retracted their statements after deliverance, saying that they no longer remember what they had been confessing. Their families also feared reprisals with regard to possible future deaths or sicknesses that people might attribute to the reformed Satanists. Neighbours for example accused one delivered Satanist, who had given testimonies before a number of church congregations, to be responsible for the mysterious death of their child: “She is still in Satanism; her so-called deliverance is just a satanic trick that allows her to enter so many churches where she continues to sacrifice people and to initiate even priests.” Another “delivered Satanist” had to go into hiding from her own family and subsequently changed her name and identity. In the next chapter, I will deal specifically with issues that should inform a pastoral approach when dealing with such testimonies.

(B) INVITED TO BE INITIATED INTO SATANISM

Some people, very similarly to the above testifying Satanists, felt overpowered or invited by a strong, dark, spiritual force, which led them into another spiritual world, very much of the nature as described above. They felt a sense of belonging to this world against their own will, and felt as if they were dedicated to it by others. Unlike those who came to identify with their satanic role, however, they never embraced Satanism nor the promised satanic powers as their lot, but they tried to resist. They felt weak and powerless against the seducing forces and asked for prayers so as to facilitate deliverance. I have given an example of this in chapter 7 (in Drama 11: Violet is married to a lion, a snake and a girl). During the first year of research, fourteen people approached us for help with such experiences, a number that was to increase considerably in subsequent years. As in the first category, some life histories revealed patterns of trauma.

Nine out of the fourteen cases became aware of their connection with Satanism during or after intensive prayers, during which they had an experience of the underground world (like Violet in chapter seven). Charismatic circles regarded such revelations as a result of the actions of the Holy Spirit whom they had invoked; He was showing them “in the spirit” the real truth about their lives. People who are more inclined to look for psychological explanations refer to the hypnotic conditions as triggering events that prevail during charismatic prayers. Some patients were pulled towards prayers of deliverance as if through a magnet. Manifestations during prayers for deliverance were dramatic and included trance experiences, sometimes accompanied by displays of extraordinary physical strength and acrobatics.

Our strategy for helping people who experience their selfhood in reference to Satanism (in positive identification, as in the first group, or in negative identification, as in the second) consists of developing a different sense of belonging: to their families, to the church community and to God. For many, the satanic world simply faded away (with prayers or without prayers) once a sense of belonging to church or family had developed in a tangible way.

(C) SACRIFICED BY SATANISTS

Many people came for prayers because they feared that they (or other family members) were in the process of being sacrificed by Satanists. Some had been victims of long spells of various kinds of misfortunes that were accompanied by mysterious events and dreams. Satanism offered a name to connect together various events into one single narrative. Here the name, i.e. Satanism, functioned as a diagnosis. People hoped that prayers of deliverance would address the root problems that underlined the diverse tragedies in their family. Some understood Satanism as a form of contamination that affected the whole family, similar to a family curse, whose power needed to be broken.

A number of people, including children, were also harassed by inner voices and other psychotic experiences. One middle-aged man and one elderly woman felt beaten by invisible people for hours, over a number of consecutive nights. In some cases, people felt haunted by close family members (some dead, some alive), feeling their presence as a dark force; they felt this force was manipulative and intervening in their affairs (exams, marriages). 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 husbands who were sacrificing their spiritual babies down in the satanic underground world. People in this category were sometimes very embarrassed by their experiences. Some felt that they came in response to their own past sins or because of undigested family issues. They felt like victims not of involuntary initiation (as those in the previous categories), but of harassment that would lead to their death. Apart from helping with meaningful and reassuring prayers, the approaches of the international "Hearing Voices Movement" (chapter ten) have proven very helpful, and so have the steps that we have outlined in regards to witchcraft attacks (chapters twelve and fourteen).

At other times, the fear of being sacrificed by Satanists followed a specific incident. Take the following case for example:

DRAMA 33: SILVIA IS PUT INTO THE BUSINESS OF HER MOTHER

Silvia, who was ten years old, had picked up a large note of money nearby her home, where her mother was selling beer. She showed it to her mother—who became very agitated about her picking up money. The girl ran away with the money and bought with it some items for herself and some gifts for her grandmother whom she adored. A few days later during a Catholic Church service, she started to pray in a loud and uncontrolled voice, saying that her mother had sold her to the Satanists, "to put her into her business." She ran away from her mother to stay with relatives, remaining in a confused state. Consequently, a story circulated that the mother had intentionally dropped satanic money in order to sacrifice an arbitrary person, but that out of a tragic coincidence her own daughter had picked up the money. The girl eventually attended a prayer service for deliverance; a few days later, her mother unexpectedly died. The story was widely talked about, and subsequent rumours linked the death of the mother to her failure to sacrifice the daughter who had picked up the money. "Since the daughter was delivered, she had to pay the Satanists with her own life."

Dealing with this case demanded many meetings with the grandmother, the child and other relatives. We focused on the good and human side of Silvia's late mother: how she had managed in very difficult circumstances to support her family. Surely, she was not perfect. While the girl had come to see her own mother in satanic terms, we tried to help her to appreciate her parent as a human person and cherish positive memories of her.

(D) PEOPLE FEELING THE IMPACT OF "SATANIC CHURCHES"

A number of cases of alleged Satanism concerned various new churches. Youths returned from church services, not behaving like themselves, and talking about Satanism in the churches they had visited. Their families asked for prayers, to prevent them from becoming initiated. We (the "Fingers of Thomas" and others who participated in the research) did not find evidence of Satanism in any of the churches we approached (and prayed with) after being alerted by concerned families. However, we saw the reasons why some of the churches were easily rumoured to be satanic. They preached a strong version of the Prosperity Gospel, promising instant riches in return for generous tithing. They provided many testimonies of such instant returns, which did not fundamentally differ from what people expect from Satanism: fast riches. Some church groups talked about overnight prayers where people were made to drink (after prolonged fasting) mixtures of milk, salt and olive oil, which provoked vomiting. Drinking unknown substances is easily associated with rumours of Satanism. Other new Churches and faiths were simply strange and unfamiliar in people's eyes, thus becoming easy targets of suspicions.

In our approach, we encourage the affected people to seek nourishment from their own faith: "How can another faith affect you spiritually, if you have your own church and your own faith? Concentrate not on the negative powers that seem to come from the faith of your neighbour, but develop positive powers by deepening your own faith."

2. SATANISM, STRANGE EVENTS, AND RITUAL CRIME

In all the above cases, Satanism was thought of as a spiritual realm that by nature evades empirical investigation. However, in a number of cases, people also connected Satanism with disturbing events and crimes in the outer world that begged for an explanation. One family approached us for prayers when unknown perpetrators cut out, with a knife, the testicles of their son in Bauleni compound. This happened following a number of other incidents in the same compound that the police had investigated as ritual crimes, including the discovery of two corpses with missing genitals and breasts. The boy survived the ferocious ordeal; his family asked for prayers to prevent the Satanists to abuse his life forces for their sinister purposes.

Obviously, ritual crime need not be satanic, since practices of witchcraft have been associated with abominations long before the advent of Satan-

ism. While many people in Zambia understand Satanism as one massive underground organisation under a single chain of command, the police investigate ritual crimes case by case. There seems to be no evidence that the known cases are connected to each other on an organisational level. The label of Satanism binds such instances together into one narrative.

Some came to us for prayers for missing persons, feared to be abducted by Satanists. One of them, a young man who was reported missing for ten days, was subsequently found by a pastor lying in a pool of mud, far from home, dressed in clothes that were not his own. We could not make much of his own descriptions:

After drinking with my friends, I entered a black car, where people took off my clothes and gave me new ones. Then my memory stopped. Then I found myself for a long time under water, with dead bodies floating all around. After one week staying in the water, a white horse entered the water and took me out; then I was found by the pastor.

People in his neighbourhood, however, did not lack an explanation: "He stole money from his drinking friends, who in turn put medicines into his beer and sold him into Satanism to recover the debt."

Another man went missing after he had come home half naked and in a confused state, holding some money and telling his mother that they would be rich within a matter of days. During the night he ran away, going missing for two weeks. A local diviner (*ng'anga*) in the compound prophesied to the family quite accurately his day of return. The boy then was unable to narrate anything of what had happened. For the family, it was a clear case of Satanism.

In another incident, a teenage girl and her aunt approached us for help: the girl had run away from her father, saying that he entered her bedroom at night with lots of money, wanting to force her to go to a neighbouring house, "to meet men and do what they say." She refused and ran away the same night to her aunt. I was thinking of forced prostitution. The aunt and the girl thought of Satanism and linked also other behaviour patterns of the father to this notion.

Other sad incidences connected to Satanism concerned child-defilement. In one case, a mother brought her little son for prayers after he had been sexually abused by her cousin. She feared that the cousin was initiating her son into Satanism through the sickening acts.¹⁷

¹⁷ The defilement of children in Zambia can be the result of sexual obsessions or of exerting power over others, but it can also proceed from the advice of some diviners who claim

Other events pointed towards coercion. One man drowned himself in the Kafue River; the suicide note read: "I have done what they asked me to do, but I cannot do what they ask of me now." According to the family, the person was lately exhibited increased anxieties and secrecy, but nobody had any idea about the identity of the "they" in the note. They only knew that they were Satanists. In another case, a man in Nyumba Yanga (Lusaka) found a parcel with money before his doorsteps. He took it to the police. "Obviously, it was satanic money. I heard of other cases where people were forced to join after they accepted money."¹⁸

Several people approached members of the "Fingers of Thomas", usually by phone and anonymously, hoping that the group had some information for them how to join Satanism. One young teacher desperately needed a lot of money. He had impregnated an underage pupil at school, and her family wanted a huge sum of money within two weeks, or they would take the case to court and he end up in jail. By the way he talked, we reckon that he meant that he was ready even to kill, if this would secure him the money to buy himself out of the court case. Another man wanted to sell some years to the devil in return for a few good years on Earth. He needed money now.

Ideas such as "selling one's years to Satan" or of committing an abomination for the devil in return for riches may appeal to some youths and also to people who find themselves in a desperate situation. Satanism thereby has become a catchword for very different facets of tapping into the occult, and has often come to be used synonymously with witchcraft. One person during our research did confess that he tried to enter a form of Satanism voluntarily while he was on a business trip in another African country:

A friend told me about the riches that one could gain from Satanism. I approached a known Satanist woman. People said she had initiated many people who all became very rich. She did something to me and gave me something to drink, but it did not work. I was not getting rich at all. Instead, I started to have terrible dreams and experiences. When I came back to Zambia, I was a broken man. In Chibolya compound, I found other people who promised to prepare medicines for me, to succeed in business. They said they

that sex with a child or acts of incest would release powerful spiritual and economic energies, or to cure incurable sicknesses (HIV/AIDS). Sexual acts feature in many testimonies as means of initiation.

¹⁸ I heard the first time of rumours that Satanists recruited people whom they had given much money in Mansa in the late 1990s.

needed to kill a human being to make the medicines work. I feel haunted by people, night and day. I am having terrible dreams.

The man was seeking help from the Church to be delivered from the occult powers and from his own sins; he was highly traumatised and lived in very insecure conditions. A number of traditional healers confirmed to us that they also had been approached by different people who sought medicines that produce wealth, and who were ready to do “whatever it takes.” The healers declined.

While prayer is very important when helping victims of ritual crime, without justice being done and the perpetrators being punished, help for the victims can hardly be complete.

3. PEOPLE ACCUSED OF SATANISM

A few people joined the “Fingers of Thomas” after being accused of being Satanists. They looked for a support group to help them with the process of reintegration into their families. Some had also been expelled from school. They were considered weird because of their looks, because others had dreamt about them, or because of their preference for being alone and not moving with the crowd.

In chapter 15, I gave the example of Martha, who was expelled by her family as a Satanist. Another girl who was referred to the “Fingers of Thomas” suffered a similar fate after her own family accused her to have caused her uncle’s car accident and several deaths. A third girl in early puberty, who was dragged before a male pastor by her grandmother, had to undress several times to have her breasts and private parts “anointed” to cast out the demons hiding there. Many victims of Satanism accusations were coerced into abusive forms of prayer, often by their own families, which left traumatising and damaging effects on their soul. Such incidents, driven by panic about Satanism, highlight the need for a pastoral approach that is also investigative and that tries to distinguish rumour from fact, truth propositions of the inner world from those of the outer world (chapter 7).

THE TWO FACES OF ZAMBIAN SATANISM

In this chapter, I have suggested that Satanism in Zambia is imagined in two interdependent faces. It is seen in new, secretive churches or groups that are obscure and hidden to the public. Satanism has become a catchword for labelling very diverse groups, which only have in common an

aura of secrecy. They are grouped together into the image of a satanic cult that recruits rich people with hidden international connections, who are securing wealth and power through ritual crimes. The usage of human body parts (genitals, hearts and other vital organs) for occult purposes is attested in some instances, and their presence in rumour mongering is prolific. Images of secret societies in Zambia have also cultural and historical connotations, and carefully shared secrets belonged to the modes of power.¹⁹ New in the imaginary of Satanism is that diverse modern secret societies are woven into one single and global narrative or conspiracy theory that is directly connected to the devil. It is a Christian narrative.

The second face of Zambian Satanism shows itself in the inner world, in experiences of a spiritual type of Satanism that avoids being pinned down to verifiable features of the outer world. While the first face of Satanism is seen in the strange, the foreign, and the obscure, the second face is much closer to home: rude behaviour of children, accidents, and misfortune. It enters the world of dreams and experiences of selfhood and self-identification. The former form of Satanism is imagined as a voluntary cult that one enters for riches, powers and fame. The latter form happens involuntarily, and is seen to be everywhere, including in the own family. It is woven into moral discourses about sexual deviance and greed that are seen to have polluting effects. A number of people interpret their past sinful lives in terms of Satanism. Some women, for example, developed fears that they may have been contaminated by Satanism through lesbian sex. The concept of Satanism has the ability to link together very different discourses, global and local, into one single narrative that reaches into the heart of the Christian family.

¹⁹ Ellis & ter Haar 2004.

19

School Satanism

Dealing with a disconnected self

Schools in Zambia, especially boarding schools, and more predominantly girls' schools, have witnessed massive panics about Satanism. Hardly any school has stayed unaffected. Surprisingly, panics in boarding schools have received very little interest in the public media and in academic research. Yet, many teachers make the experience that Satanism hardly stops; even when a whole age group completes school, it seems to start afresh in another group.

School authorities often fear to make public statements about a crisis with Satanism, since this will ruin the reputation of the school. Some expelled their suspected Satanists in attempts to restore a calm and conducive atmosphere: not on grounds of Satanism, but because of "disruptive behaviour". One set of parents explained to me that their daughter was expelled only because another girl dreamt of her. She had to leave school, and, fortunately, the label of a Satanist did not follow her to the next school where she performed very well. School authorities find it very difficult to deal with Satanism. Teachers themselves figure in the narratives of the pupils: "So-and-so has a high position in the underworld." Silence about it seems the best option.

That spiritual diseases attack school life is nothing new in Zambia. Spirit possession (with the Bemba *ngulu* or the Nyanja *mashawe*) was common in many schools before the advent of Satanism. An elderly female teacher with a lifetime of experience in a girls' boarding school explained:

It would start with one girl, and we knew, if we allowed it, soon many other girls will be reacting in the same way. That is why we treated the girl with a few slaps or a bucket of cold water over her head, sent her home and told her only to come back when she was cured. This gave a message to the others that this behaviour is not

acceptable at school. We have seen schools where all school life was paralysed because of *ngulu*.

The symptoms of girls with *ngulu* had many similarities with those of the modern Satanists. Girls were possessed involuntarily. Their performance at school diminished; the girls (and of course also boys) were sometimes unable to study or even to read on the blackboard. Trance experiences were common, with imitations of snakes during trance (crawling on the floor) and speaking with another voice. Satanism, however, brings in also differences: Satanists threaten to kill and to sacrifice, or to initiate others. *Mashawe* or *ngulu* never had such macabre connotations.

Both discourses, however, develop within special parameters and life orientations that we find at school. I refer to this special type of Satanism in Zambia therefore as “school Satanism”.

CONSTRUCTION OF A MODERN SELF

In view of offering pastoral help, I consider the best option for analysing school Satanism in relation to the processes through which pupils construct and reconstruct their sense of selfhood and belonging. At school, pupils go through puberty, restructure the world, their bodies and others. Relationships with parents, guardians and family change; obligations and mutual expectations are in the process of transformation. In many ways, school functions as an initiation rite: Many pupils are aware that the status of education in an appraised school lifts them onto a level that goes beyond the possibilities of their parents.¹ For some pupils, only the sky is the limit of their aspirations and desires. Images of Satanism and of unlimited powers and riches can link up with such imaginations.

Pupils communicate in English, learn biology, science and maths, and are trained for life in a global village. They are connected through their phones and through Facebook; they treasure remote and international friends and pen pals. Expectations open up towards a modern lifestyle. Exotic, foreign and international curiosities, instilling both fear and lure, attract comments, rumour and gossip when they can be localised and imagined in something that is at hand. In many ways, the curiosity surrounding the dark but exciting world of Satanism captures the imagination of numerous students.

Life at home, however, follows very different parameters. During school holidays, many girls go through puberty rites with remote relatives

¹ Simpson 2003.

where a different logic is imprinted on their bodies that differs from what they learn in biology classes. Family members who pay the school fees have expectations for the girls that have little to do with the life to which the girls are exposed at school or with their own ambitions. Life at home follows different rules and values.

The spiritual world with its ancient and modern concepts imposes itself on the students as a diffuse and confused world. Church life also brings in its own parameters. At school, most pupils in Zambia profess a Christian faith, but Christian discourses vary significantly. Evangelical fundamentalism, Pentecostal strands of the prosperity gospel that demand a radical break with the past, and mainstream Christian discourses compete against each other to “win souls” at the schools. Even in confessional schools, one finds religious counter-discourses that rule the dormitories or prayer groups. Tony Simpson has described how the competing worldviews of Seventh Day Adventists and of born-again Pentecostals challenged in open and in hidden ways the official Catholic discourse of a Catholic boarding school.² Catholic religious concepts and authority figures were ridiculed in alternative discussions. Fundamentalist Biblical views also challenged lessons taught during science classes. The concepts of evolution, which pupils learnt in biology, were regarded as false knowledge since they contradict the Bible—some believers proposed learning such concepts only for the exams, but not for life. Besides the classroom, pupils find themselves in emotional debates, where others are easily condemned to hell and where the whole project of being “born again” means different things from student to student. Pupils are also familiar with an occult world of witchcraft, brought home to them through gossip and rumours, and through popular Nigerian movies. They use symbolic frames from very different sources in order to look at the world, at themselves and at others. The spiritual world of Satanism at school is born out of several different wombs; it is a hybrid world.

At the same time, school Satanism mirrors the characteristics of school, which is marked by competition (tests, exams, sports, games and rivalry for the office of prefect), punishments, and hazing rituals that accustom newcomers to the hierarchies among the students. In turn delivered Satanists testify that the world under the ocean has different classrooms through which one climbs up the hierarchy of the satanic world. They compete for the office of “queen” and “prince” and taste new forms of powers but also of punishments for failing in their assignments.

² Simpson 2003.

SYMBOLISATION

Each pupil who comes to school carries a personal life history that contains baggage of which few people at school know about. The life histories of some students beat the scenarios of the worst Nigerian movies. Sexual, physical and emotional abuses have cut deep wounds into their sense of self. Take for example the background story of one school-Satanist:

My earliest childhood memory is from my elder sisters telling me: "It is because of you that daddy died!" Mum had been married to a civil servant who left the country for studies in Europe. While he was out, she became pregnant with me by another married man. When he came back and found her pregnant, he did not say a word. He just went out, and the next day they found him dead. He had hanged himself. Everybody blamed me for the death though I was not yet even born! Mum had no money to take me to school. That is why, when I was seven years old, they gave me to my father and his family, who was married to another woman. I never confided in him and my stepmother, never!

The girl grew up with little emotional bonding to her father and step-mother. When she heard of Satanism at school, she knew intuitively that she was one of them. Many children grow up in Zambia without a deep feeling of belonging to their families. They are disoriented in the wake of the ravages of AIDS that have taken parents and many loved ones away, leaving whole families perplexed. Add to this also other common traumatic events, like physical aggression, sexual assault, robbery, a severe accident, natural disaster, or the unexpected death of a loved one, and we come to notice that the quiet surface of school life, especially in boarding schools where pupils come from far and from different areas, can hide many turbulences that are just waiting to erupt in one way or another.

For example, in one instance two girls were suspended from a boarding school after they had been caught having sex within a lesbian relationship. Both had also developed "signs of Satanism" in their school and identified themselves later as Satanists. When prompted in deliverance, they confessed to horrible crimes—one of the girls confessed to have caused the Tsunami in South-East Asia. Was it easier to confess to crimes of Satanism than to explain to parents and friends that they had a same-sex relationship? Same-sex sexual desires unfold outside the realm of what is considered possible (and legal) by many Zambians. Having emerged out of puberty, Satanism, which is said to promote prostitution, homosexual-

ity and lesbianism, may have been the lens through which to explain why they behaved in the way they did.

In the next chapter, I will look at possible links between experiences of Satanism and trauma. I am not suggesting that school Satanism always follows childhood traumas or that it is often linked to sexual orientations that are not acceptable. I am saying that highly stressful and traumatic events as well as life-threatening occurrences will occupy an important place in any person's autobiographical memory. The storyline of Satanism together with its dark images can provide a vehicle for some students to express experiences for which a person has no words.

DRAMA 34: THE TESTIMONY OF LUCIFER'S WIFE

Take the example of another—very beautiful—young woman who found it difficult to develop feelings of love and of belonging, at an age when many of her friends had boyfriends and dreamt about being with someone in a relationship. As a child, she said, she had twice escaped rape. She said that the rapists were overcome by unseen forces that protected her. During the last stage of Primary School, an aunt looked after her, far away from her parents; she abused her physically (beating), sometimes denying her food as a form of punishment; the girl knew that the aunt hated her. She could not develop any feeling of belonging to her and felt also alienated from her parents who had given her away. A few words, maybe lightly said by her father when she was very young, stuck in her memory and became part of her personal autobiography: "You are not my child—I don't know where you came from!" She felt since childhood that she was different from others, and that she belonged somewhere else. Even neighbours commented that she looked physically different from her siblings. When the world of Satanism became an issue in Zambia, she found herself at the centre of this world. Though she had never consciously known or chosen Satanism, she knew instantly that she had been watched over by this world since birth, and that she was a very special person in the world of Satanism. She became aware of it in dreams, and one day the powers of the underworld came to claim her also "in the real world". "I would dream of a black cloth and wake up with a real black cloth in my hands" [which others never saw]. "This repeated itself every night, and every morning I had yet another piece of black cloth." According to her testimony, she found herself as the highest queen, not through achievements and trials (like other Satanists), but by nature of her extraordinary birth. She had many bodyguards and could split herself into hundreds of bodies to bring

demons, confusion and “sleeping minds” into many different Christian churches.

I was the wife of Lucifer; that is why I could never have a boyfriend or think about marriage. The devil took my heart of flesh. You know, Satanists have no love and no feelings. The devil wants no joy. It took me a very long time to be delivered. So many people prayed for me so many times. 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. As long as I wore these rings, I could not feel affection for any human being. It took still a long time for me to get my feelings back. Even though I was delivered, I had no feelings, for years.

The narrative of her deliverance introduces objects that stand in some relationship with her inability to develop feelings and relationships. I conject that she was never short of admirers. A ring symbolises for many a commitment to a relationship. Here, however, the invisible satanic ring invalidated the very possibility of a healthy relationship. She belonged already to Satan. In her testimony, Lucifer protected her twice against rape, because he wanted her exclusively for himself.

Personally I was not involved in the deliverance of the above girl. Her deliverance had taken place over a long period of time, with a number of priests and prayer groups involved, before I even started my own research into Satanism in Zambia. When I interviewed her, she was well known in the deliverance ministry of the charismatic renewal and had developed a public persona as a former Satanist; she was giving testimonies in different Catholic Churches, two of which I attended. I later interviewed her several times and was struck by her calmness, candour, consistency and by her way of being able to formulate her experiences coherently, without any embarrassment. I have no doubts that she had lived through extraordinary experiences. Her testimony left me speechless, and others too. In our approach, we place such testimonies about experiences that we cannot share into the inner world.

I never felt at ease about her public testimonies, to which she was invited in several parishes. I was aware that it always struck a chord with the listeners. But I felt it was also freezing up her satanic past. In my opinion, this prevented an ongoing reinterpretation in different terms, as the person continued to grow through life. She remained the special person, the former “wife of the devil”, “chosen before birth”, “a higher queen than all the other queens”. Other confessed Satanists whom I accompanied even-

tually turned a page and even allowed their memories of the satanic world to fade away like a dream; they were no longer necessary to mark the person's own autobiography. It became a relief for them to be no longer very special in the sense of being totally different from others. They could develop a sense of gratitude for other people around and feel a new sense of belonging with them. The above young woman had become a public figure, known across Lusaka. As such she could not escape other rivalries and jealousies in the church, which easily come when one person is more special than others. Worse, in spite of being delivered, she continued to remain associated with the label of Satanist in her neighbourhood. Even years after her deliverance she faced serious harassments when a child died in her street: "She is still a Satanist and has already initiated many priests!" The family of the child made her responsible for the death, because she had "made some very strange prophecies over the child". She could no longer free herself from the label of Satanism. Also her family (parents and sisters) found themselves in the spotlight of many rumours. I believe that public testimonies help neither the Satanist nor his/her family.

Satanic testimonies have also given rise to witchhunting in Zambia. They promote an interest in the occult and a curiosity of the satanic world, which, in Catholic teaching, is as harmful as the practice itself. One long-term researcher on Satanism in Zambia, Johanneke Kroesberger-Kamps, furthermore suggests that public testimonies bring glory to the delivering pastor, while the social costs and consequences are born by the person who testifies, who is often in a very vulnerable position in a very unequal relationship in the triangle of pastor, audience and the delivered person.³ This opens up a minefield of ethical considerations, of which many deliverance ministries in Africa seem hardly aware.

In her testimonies, the girl explained that she was first initiated in dreams. "You need to be vigilant about what you dream. When you are chased by dogs, or you fly, or you dream about the ocean, or an unknown person wants to have sex with you: these are not just dreams. They are following you and soon you are part of that world and you don't even realise what is happening. We initiated so many pupils at school and in different churches. You think your child is going to church. But we knew how to get them into our world." I am not giving back here her list of symptoms by which the audience should recognize Satanism in their midst. I rather want to emphasize the power of her testimony on the audience. It started with a

³ Personal communication with Johanneke Kroesberger-Kamps.

prayer to protect the listener, which she prayed in a feeble voice that knew of the presence of the devil and of God. She emphasized that the listener needed prayers too, because “the devil is real”. The rest of her testimony became calm and clear: there was power in every word she spoke. From time to time she had to stop: she seemed overcome by her own emotions, while remembering her past. “It is too dreadful, what I have seen and done.” She connected her testimony with known tragedies and accidents. At the end she narrated her dramatic deliverance which lasted several years, since Lucifer did not want to let her go. The testimony was simple, calm, with no dramatic change of her voice, somehow monotonous. Yet it produced a drama, the stage being our own minds and imagination with which we could see and witness the satanic world. Many people wanted to listen to her again, in another church, bringing along friends and family, and even whole prayer groups. After one such testimony, I received several phonecalls for help: “What the girl spoke about, it is happening in my life too.” “My daughter has exactly the same symptoms; we need prayer!” The testimony provided a storyline on which to project many different family tragedies, and it also offered a solution: deliverance.

Why do I bring this drama in the context of school Satanism? Such testimonies flourish in Zambia’s schools. Pupils have them and share them on tapes or in form of photocopied pamphlets. Students in school become themselves prayer warriors who deliver others from Satanism. Satanism becomes the storyline for many personal evils and that of society.

CONNECTING THE DOTS OF A LIFE STORY

When engaging with the descriptions of afflicted persons, we place the narrative for a start in the inner world of the person. We consider it to be true—true for the person, but not necessarily true for us, in the sense of an objective description of the world that we are able to verify. People understand it mostly as a description of the spiritual world. The question for the helper is about taking it out of a destructive downwards spiral of blame. Such narratives have given rise to witchhunts of individuals and even of whole groups, especially of minorities. Can we give the vocabulary a direction for growth?

When a pupil finds him/herself in Satanism, he/she is often in want of self-understanding. We can help the person to reflect on his/her life also apart from the story of Satanism. One possible way of achieving this has to do with helping a young person to “connect the dots”, meaning the important but disconnected experiences that he/she has made in differ-

ent spheres of life, with parents and family, in the village and in school. Apart from traumas that one can clearly localise in time and space, there exist also other factors of alienation, often more diffuse, that play into school Satanism. In many cases we dealt with, we could ascertain that a person was overcome by events, sometimes in consequence of his/her own actions that he/she was unable to comprehend. Life did no longer fit together. Self-identification with Satanism became a way of finding a new life, but also of exerting power over others while being in an incomprehensible and desperate situation. The following case is an example of this.

DRAMA 35: RUTH MAKES A COVENANT WITH SATAN

Ruth, originally from the Luapula Province, was separated from her mother in the village at the age of seven because of school, and she went to live with her elder married sister in the outskirts of Lusaka with whom she developed a very difficult and tense relationship. Their father had died when she was a small child. She felt that her sister was very demanding, giving her too little freedom and too many tasks, for example looking after the small children. Her place in life was defined by her elder sister. She went to a day school to another part of Lusaka. Depending on the availability of public transport, she sometimes took a long time to reach school; she also needed pocket money for bus fares. This provided her with a sense of freedom and with excuses when she missed school.

One day, by now Ruth was seventeen years old and in grade eleven, the older sister got a warning from the school authorities that her sister was often absent from school. A teacher told her: "She has a spiritual problem and needs prayers." Becoming alarmed, she went through her sister's schoolbooks, where she found various printed papers that hinted at devil worship. On one pamphlet her sister had put her own handwriting, addressed to Satan, saying, "Satan, I worship you." This was enough evidence to confirm her suspicions that her sister had joined Satanism, which explained to her the sudden outbursts of rudeness, mood swings, and avoidance of prayer at home. She challenged her sister upon her return from school. Ruth collapsed into a trance and confessed that she had intended to sacrifice her elder sister that very day but now failed. "They will punish me, I better die!" The sister contacted a charismatic prayer group for help, but Ruth refused to go there. Her sister took the satanic letters to the prayer group, who burnt them under prayers. Ruth continued to go to school, but a few days later collapsed again into a trance, this time at school, and was taken home. Now she agreed to be prayed over

by the prayer group and confessed in detail about her involvements in the satanic world. She was eventually delivered by the prayer group.

Her sister, however, was not yet fully convinced that Ruth was truly delivered. Her behaviour had not fundamentally changed. Moreover, she and her husband were afraid to keep her in their home, since Ruth confessed she had already “sacrificed” their children. In school, Ruth was by now known as a Satanist. Students were afraid of the way she looked at them, saying that she has an evil eye.

A social worker who had come to deal with Ruth contacted our group (the “Fingers of Thomas”) for advice. I met with Ruth and her sister several times, while the social worker met also with several of her teachers. Ruth narrated her story to me in a monotonous voice, as she had done with many other people before. Any questions that I asked about the details remained unanswered in long periods of silence before she would pick up again the threads of her story, continuing her narrative in her own way. Like many testimonies, it is a fantastic story (in a sense that I will explain later), with many catching symbols, narrated by a seventeen-year-old girl. The story made a big impression not only at school but also on the charismatic prayer-group. Many readers will dismiss the narrative as pure fantasy. They should, however, not fail to acknowledge the girl’s ability to live a perplexing story that captivated multiple peer and adult audiences over many months, including several teachers at her school, several large prayer groups, and also her family. Here her story of how she herself described the above events. She spoke mostly in English:

THE BEGINNING: FINDING A MYSTERIOUS WALLET

Two years ago, my sister sent me to a Shopping Complex to buy things. On my way, I met a man who had a wallet. When I came back from the shops, I found the wallet on the road. And then, when I looked at the wallet, it was like looking at a mirror with water. I touched it, and then I put it down again. I went home. I did not tell anybody. That is how it all started. When we closed school in December, I went to visit mum in the Luapula Province and told her about that wallet. Mum told me that I could have even taken the wallet, nothing would have happened. Last year mum then came to Lusaka. She went to stay with my other sister in Chipata compound, while I was with my sister here in Makeni. I went to visit her, and then I was joking with her: “Mum, one day I will be your guardian angel. I will be getting close to you wherever you will be.” Mum never said anything.

FIRST DREAM

That night I had a dream. This dream was an example of the powers of Satanism that they wanted to show me. I met a friend who was a classmate of mine; her name is Carol. When I met her in the dream, she took me to a certain place. This place was like a very big hall with a long passage. She gave me a box, which was a coffin. Inside the box was a needle. From where the passage starts, a pastor came. All those people I was with disappeared, passing through the walls. Myself, when I looked at the walls, they looked like white curtains. When those people left, I was alone and the pastor came towards me, commanding me to give him the box. When I gave him the box, the needle inside melted. When he opened the box, he found the needle had melted. This was just an example showing me how clever they can be. Then I woke up.

VISIT BY TWO MEN

It was another day, when I met two men who greeted me, and then they asked me to be their friend, and I didn't deny, I accepted. On the second day, they came to visit me at my sister's house. When they came, I went outside the gate with my sister's child and they asked us about our names. When I told them his name was Michael, they told him, "So you are an angel, you" [Michael is an archangel in the Christian tradition]. Then they wrote my name down in their book together with his. Then those people told me: "We would like to invite you to our church."

I asked them: "At what time does your service start?"

They said, "It starts at 21:00 hours."

I said: "My sister can't allow me to go in the evening."

That is how these people left. When they got my name, they were using me without me knowing. They were coming to get me through my name.

THE FIRST VISIT TO THE UNDERWORLD

Now there was a day when I was asleep in the night. Then they came, they woke me up. That day they wanted me to see them in real. They said: "We want you to know where we live."

I asked them: "How can I go? Where do you live?"

It was around 01:00 hours and they said, "We can show you."

I was given some perfume to spray over my body, and then we disappeared. I found myself near the ocean, and I wondered how I could find myself there. Afterwards I saw them, they told me, "Welcome to our kingdom."

I was told to go two steps forward. I stepped two steps forward, I walked in the water, then I sank and I went inside the water. There I found a world like earth, only the problem was that it was a dark world. Here, for us, God gave us a sun. Them, they do not have a sun. It was midnight now. I was given two weeks to know them. I was now introduced to their boss. In front, where we meet in the hall on the left-hand side that is where Lucifer comes from; on the right-hand side that is where the wife of Lucifer comes from. They call her queen of the coast. When they came, I was given a calabash to drop my blood in, and so I did. Then Lucifer drank my blood. Then the elders of the congregation were told to mix their blood with mine. I confounded my blood with theirs and became one with them. Now I was told to start their ways. There is a place, which they call the secret of chambers. In this place, there are four chambers you need to go through. The first chamber is at the end. It shows the way people are living, how strong these people are, how weak they are, the way you see them, how you can work on them—you even know that this person is weak, that person is strong. In the second chamber, you see all living creatures. Trees have their own job here on earth. Whatever tree you see around, it has its own work. It is not just there standing, no, it has its job. In the third chamber is a jungle of life. There are some fruits, which you can eat when you are weak for you to be strong. In the fourth chamber are heaven and hell. Heaven and hell are just on the earth here. Then I was told by the devil that I belong to hell. From there I was divided, my body was divided into four. After I was divided, my body was sent home. That was the first thing. They made the body into a human being and then it was sent home. That was me at home. Then my mind was put into an idol to work like me. Then my heart was locked with a hundred keys. Nobody can open without those keys. My soul was sent into the fire of hell—that is where it was stored. Then I was told that I belong now to hell.

"I WANT TO STAND AS A QUEEN": THE TASK TO KILL THE SISTER

From there I started doing their jobs. Since I had started working for them, I said: "I want to stand as the queen of this world."

My name was changed. I was called, "Silvia, queen of the darkness". I was given some rules: "For you to be the queen of the darkness, you have to kill 365 people in every country of this world."

Then I said: "I will do that, because I want to be the queen."

I started doing their job. I destroyed 182 people in my country Zambia and from there I went back to them and asked: "You people drink blood, why can't I drink as well?"

I was told: "The blood which we drink has rules. So if you want to drink blood you have to start with your own family."

I said, "I can manage to follow these rules."

They said: "If you want to drink blood, you first have to kill your mum or your dad."

Then I told them that my dad passed away a long time ago. About my mum, I said: "She is the one I am doing this for, because I want to protect her from all her enemies. So I can't sacrifice her."

They said: "Ok, someone else whom you love very much."

Then I said: "I love my sister so much, our first born, I can do that to her."

Therefore, I was allowed to go through the job. When I went to my sister, I was as if coming from school. I went to her, wanting to kill her with a knife. Now I was thinking: "I am going to kill. But since we are two of us in the house, if she dies, who is going to say, 'No, maybe she has killed herself?'" I had different thoughts, maybe of saying, "She has killed herself." Or of saying: "Maybe the husband has killed her." All those thoughts never worked.

After my sister had prepared supper, she called me, "Ruth, let's talk about something."

I was passing through the kitchen to wash my hands. When I wanted to go to the dining room, I thought of killing her. I wanted to do that. But there was light all around her and fire burning on the door, pushing me backward. I failed twice to enter into the dining room. I saw her with my papers from the underworld and I fainted.

PUNISHMENT FROM THE UNDERWORLD: THE SACRIFICE OF CHILDREN

Then those people came to me and said, "We are still waiting."

I told them: "No, I failed to do the work, my sister is very strong".

I was given a two weeks' fast without drinking, eating or doing anything. My throat was turned into scales and I was given

some bodyguards to look after me. I was told to take my beloved children, my sister's children. I took Elisa, who is my second-born sister's firstborn daughter. I took her there into the building. She was killed. They drank her blood and in two seconds the whole body-blood finished. Then I took Michael who is the last-born to my firstborn sister. When I took him, he was behind a snake. He was also sacrificed and they drank his blood.

COLLAPSE AT SCHOOL

I had a bodyguard who was a snake. I was given the powers of the lion and of the starfish, so that whenever troubles came, I was able to overcome them. I was given three types of clothes to put on. I was putting on pink, black and red clothes. Pink symbolised that I had to sleep with boys to initiate them. Black meant that I belonged to the dark world. Red, that I was on a mission of danger.

I was doing well in school activities. There came a day when we had a test for mathematics. I used to get 100 percent every time. That day I only got 85 percent. My classmates were despising me, "100 percent," calling me all sorts of names, so I was annoyed. Then I fainted. When I got up, I had lost all my memories. I lost my voice. My eyes were somehow confused; I was not seeing that clear. When I wanted to look at something, it was just white. Then we went to the administration. On our way, we met a certain teacher. She asked, "What is the problem with this girl?"

They said, "We don't know, she just fainted."

She said, "Let me look at her."

She called me, "Ruth!"

When I looked at her eyes, I saw fire, and I was afraid to look at her again. Then they took me to the administration. They asked me many questions, but I could not answer because I had no voice. Then the same teacher came and told her fellow teachers: "This girl has got a problem; she has got an evil spirit."

The deputy and my teacher took me home with my other classmates. When we reached home, they called my sister and asked her, "Has this happened before to your sister?"

My sister said, "No, we have never seen this before."

I could not even speak. My sister was calling my name but I failed to answer.

PRAYERS WITH A CHARISMATIC GROUP

From there I was taken to church. We met a certain charismatic member. When we found him, my sister said: "I brought the sister I told you about."

She had told him about me, because she had found in my room some pamphlets that I had brought from the satanic world and hidden in my schoolbooks. She had burnt all the papers. When they started praying for me, my voice came back. Different voices were speaking through me. My hands were locked because I was married to three men. I had three rings. Two of them I wore on my hand, the golden one and the silver one. When they were praying for me, these rings were cut into pieces and fell on the ground. They were invisible rings but when they fell on the ground, everyone saw them. Those people were afraid, and said: "This girl, she has a lot of things on her body, check her."

They checked, but they never found anything. Around 18:00 hours I fainted again and the power of God came upon me. Then my heart was opened, the heart that was locked with a hundred keys. When that heart was opened, I had evil thoughts, the thoughts of killing only. I tried by all means to kill those people who prayed for me but I failed. From there I fainted for the third time and they asked me: "What shall we tell Jesus? We won't let you go home until you mention the name of Jesus."

I said: "Tell Jesus, 'Thank you for saving my life.'" That is when I went home.

VISITED AGAIN BY THE UNDERGROUND PEOPLE

When I reached home, I did not talk to anybody and I locked myself up. When I sat alone on my bed, it was now midnight, those people came. They started shouting at me. Then they said: "How can you allow those people to pray for you?"

I said: "It wasn't me. I just found myself there."

They said: "Be careful with your life. I have given you the last chance."

That is the way those people went.

PRAYERS AT A CHURCH AND AT HOME

Saturday I was just at home. Sunday my sister came, "Ruth, let's go to church!"

I told her, "I won't do what you say."

She asked, "What do people do at church?"

I said: "Since you know what people do at church, you can go by yourself."

That is how she went. My brother-in-law spoke about me to a workmate who advised to take me to a certain church where people pray for Satanists. He took me there and we entered. The priest asked me some questions, "Why did you do that?"

I said I wanted to be a guardian angel to my mum. They said, "Where is your mum?"

I said: "My mum lives in the village in the Luapula Province."

Those people said, "Let us pray!"

While they prayed, a big insect entered through the window. It entered me on the left side and then I became strong. They prayed and prayed, but nothing happened. The insect took away their power of prayer without them knowing. We went home and prayed there together with the priest. When the priest left, he burnt incense. There was smoke all over the house, everywhere.

ANOTHER VISIT BY UNDERGROUND PEOPLE

When these people came back to me at midnight, they were failing to enter because our house was full of incense. We were communicating through the wall. They were outside, whereas I was inside. We were communicating. They told me that I had failed to do what I was told to do, but I told them that it was by mistake that I did this. They understood and went back.

THREE MONTHS OF PRAYERS

The following day, the charismatics came with a priest. These people started praying with me from June to August until I was delivered. When I was delivered, I lost all the powers, I lost the memories. I had to start to work now to know my memories. These people who prayed for me were angels of warfare, and these angels were fighting against me spiritually, and then my soul was brought back to me, the soul that was locked in the fires of hell. It was the angel Michael who brought it back to me. The mind in the idol was removed and brought back to me. However, the mind that came was the mind that forgets things, when you tell something immediately I would forget. Afterwards they prayed over those things

and then I became silent. Now from there all the rings I had been hiding were revealed, and then they were burnt, and all the clothes I was given were also burnt. That is how I delivered myself.

FINAL DELIVERANCE: ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS

But somehow it was hard for me to accept Jesus. I believed he was just stealing me. Nevertheless, I accepted, because he showed me miracles. I saw something that was strange. I saw his heart with fresh blood moving, and I accepted that Jesus is a living God. I saw Jesus in my room with blood all over his body. I bowed down before him and said: "You are the God, you are the living God, and I worship you from today onwards."

That is the way I accepted Jesus. Nevertheless, it was hard for me to mention the name of Jesus, because the devil had put a spear within my heart. When I wanted to say the name of Jesus the spear was moving, cutting into my heart. It took a long time, but now I am delivered.

COMMENTS

What follows is my understanding of the story, together with the social worker's. We talked a lot with Ruth; she recognised that she needed help. Her elder sister's husband gave her a deadline by which she would be expelled from their home; nobody wanted to live with a Satanist, and trust was fully eroded. Talking with Ruth, we tried to connect her dots in life: her far-away mother, her life at school (of which her sister's family knew hardly anything) and her ambitions. One issue popped up eventually that took us all by surprise: Ruth was pregnant in her sixth month—unnoticed by us and by her own sister with whom she lived. Obviously, her state, which she managed to hide away from her family and the school, would have played a big role in the way she had lived her story!

Did Ruth believe her own story or was it her way of drawing attention away from her problems or her pregnancy? Whatever the answer, she lived it over months to such an extent that it *became* her story, her life, her way of expressing who she was. I call it a fantastic autobiography. Fantastic means extraordinary and creative, but the fantastic is also very remote from the outer world reality. It is related to fantasy, which connotes something in one's thoughts but unreal (mere phantasms). But it also connotes something too good (or too bad) to be true, and yet it became true. It is also a way to express reality in non-ordinary terms. I use the term fantastic in all these senses. While the fantastic story, in one

sense, is at odds with what others can experience (in the “outer world”), it also (re-)formulates reality and defines it.

Ruth was undergoing drastic inner and outer changes over which she had lost control. Was she a Satanist? Yes—she scribbled in her notes that she belonged no longer to her family or to God, but to the devil, as she understood him. She had appropriated for herself the identity of a Satanist. But she was not part of any outside group of Satanists whom one could have visited or interviewed. The fantastic story engaged other people’s fascination and gave them creative images and beliefs through which they could look at reality with new eyes. The story was retold by people and often believed.

For me, a German priest, it was fantastic in the sense that there is no satanic world in form of a tangible, objective reality under any ocean that would have determined the girl’s behaviour. Her sister, however, looked at the narrative as a story that could somehow be true. Maybe not word for word. But as a description of spiritual realities and causalities, of a parallel, spiritual world that can break into our seen world through manifestations that cannot be explained by science alone. We will see, however, that her sister developed also a sense of cynicism about the satanic world. Believing in a testimony in a prayer group or in school gossip is one thing. Believing it as someone who needs to live a common life with the person day to day is another thing!

Ruth located her initiation into Satanism in the event of finding the wallet of a strange man at the shopping mall, though she stressed that she did not steal any money from it. What was brushed away by the mother as an unimportant event, is interpreted by Ruth as the long-planned occasion of the underground people to finally break into her life. The wallet was a satanic item that could initiate her through mere contact. As the narrative unfolds, Ruth presents herself as embracing the possibilities and powers of Satanism as a way to do something for her mother and be united with her. The opening paragraph suggests that Ruth was very fond of her mother. Maybe her pregnancy also brought her thoughts back to her own mum, from whom she had been separated since the age of seven. “I never understood why I was forced to go to my sister,” she explained to me. She wanted to become her mum’s guardian angel. Ruth dream world rotated around a faraway mother in contrast to her elder sister with whom she now lived.

Ruth’s mother was the second wife of her late father. Ruth remembered much hatred and many disputes between the two wives:

Some family members died by witchcraft. Before the first wife of my father died, she confessed that she was a witch and that she had killed many people in the family. Then, when my stepsister died, she confessed that she had been initiated into witchcraft by her mother and that she was practising the same witchcraft. In addition, the sister of my father was known to be living with spirits, spirits that later went into one of my sisters.

Witchcraft and demons were firmly embedded in Ruth's childhood memories. These forces were now also present in her life of which she was no longer in control.

In the first dream, a friend from school appears. This friend was known at school, as we learnt from Ruth's sister, for helping pregnant girls to abort. Ruth was herself pregnant at the time of the dream. One could look at the dream in psychological terms: Did a miniature coffin and the disappearing needle (a symbol for abortion?) that melted in the presence of the pastor (Christian conscience?) while other friends escaped through the walls of a long corridor reflect Ruth's struggles with an unwanted pregnancy? Or did the coffin reflect a fear about being HIV positive? Did maybe also the magical wallet stand for paid sex with sugar daddies? With any such interpretation we have entered the realm of speculation, because Ruth did not make such connections explicit to us. She spoke about spiritual realities, not psychological, and her audience understood her as such.

It was, however, public knowledge that Ruth had been going out with several boyfriends; she was known in school for "being loose". Maybe she was in great need of bonding. We asked her what it could mean for her to "walk through walls" and "out of a long corridor". She explained that she was longing for a home away from her sister, already for a long time. We asked about her HIV status and she said that she would like to take a test but that she was scared to do it alone. A member of our group accompanied her.

According to her narrative, she felt more and more belonging to the satanic kingdom that had shown itself at the beginning only in dreams. Slowly this world of extraordinary powers and senseless deaths became her own world. The satanic world under the ocean mirrored a school life of competition, hierarchy, and a strict following of rules. There were chambers, classrooms and teachers. "Once you are in, you have to follow the rules of the game without questioning the instructions," she said. A visit by two mysterious but friendly members of a new church (the Mor-

mons, as we found out), made the world more real to her. There were rumours in the neighbourhood that the church was satanic.

Ruth's freedom was restricted by her sister and her sisters' children after whom she had to look. The children were the focus of her sister's expectations for Ruth's life. She sacrificed them in the underworld without too many scruples! Note that neither Michael nor Elisa died in the outer world; both are still alive today. Here, as in many other satanic narratives, we find a blatant discrepancy between inner and outer worlds—though her sister at first continued to look for prayers to protect Michael and Elisa from physical death that could still follow such a spiritual sacrifice. Slowly, however, the sister's fear of Ruth turned into anger.

The more fantastic Ruth's story, the less responsibility could be placed on her for what she was doing. Interestingly, she took responsibility for many far away crimes ("to kill 365 people in every country of the world") out of her own initiative ("I wanted to stand as a queen.") But she could not speak about her pregnancy. Listeners to the story understood very well that she referred to some kind of a spiritual world, and that it would be futile to investigate this world in any empirical way. But once the pregnancy became visible, there was little room for spiritual stories about it. Ruth failed to sacrifice her sister (a common theme in many testimonies). She had no problem to "destroy 180 people in my country Zambia" whom nobody knew. Maybe a fantastic story gets shattered at one point when the demands of outer life can no longer be sacrificed.

Ruth had been good at school up to grade nine, but she was getting herself into serious trouble when she passed into High School (grade ten). The two years culminated in a breakdown at school. When she says that people from the satanic world were in control of her life then we know at least that she felt out of control herself. Our task as helpers consisted in helping her to gain some control. For this we needed to confront her forms of escapism. For example, when I asked her about some discrepancies between her narrative and the narrative of her sister, she replied that her sister saw only "a doll" while she was in the underworld, "but it was not me." Her sister, sharply and cynically, asked her: "Who are you now, the doll or my sister?"

Nevertheless, we had to recognise that the image of the doll that was left behind with her family expressed well Ruth's experience. When I asked her about her relationship with her sister, she said that she felt treated "like a doll", and I was struck by the same word; her family was stuck in memories of the past, but she had grown out of childhood long ago. Her family was no longer part of the "real me" that had moved into rela-

tionships of which the family knew nothing. The family remained with just “a copy”; they no longer knew the real Ruth. Again, the description of her body being separated from her heart and from her soul—each item locked away in a different place—shows a deep sense of alienation. She was no longer in control of her heart (her feelings), her willpower, and of her body (now pregnant). Of course, we have again psychologised the story: Ruth spoke not about her feelings of alienation but about a real doll, animated by spiritual powers, that looked like her. But, she agreed that such feelings were there too.

The story of Ruth contains many elements, like the miraculous perfume, the ocean, the kingdom without light, the chambers, the satanic positions or the calabash of blood, that are copied or inspired by other testimonies that are circulating in Zambia. But she had made this testimony her own story to such a degree that she was known and feared at school as the Satanist, and eventually other parents complained to the school authorities that she was initiating their children into Satanism. This was her narrative, her way of telling us what happened to her, what she had been up to, and why.

The understanding of the story as a “fantastic autobiography” helped us with our interactions with Ruth and with her sister’s family. It enabled us to take the symbols out of the context of an objective world of Satanism (as it was understood by the family, some teachers and the charismatic prayer-group) but relate them nevertheless playfully to Ruth’s own life, including her spiritual life. From there, we explored with Ruth a realistic vision for her future. We concluded that it would be beneficial for her to go and live with another sister, who stayed in another Lusaka compound. She needed visible changes in the parameters of her life.

Both Ruth and her family additionally asked for an exorcism. “We need to be sure she is really delivered,” they said. We agreed upon a dramatic ritual, as described in the chapter 11, which marked for her—and for her family—a visible break from her satanic past and a fresh start. Note that just a year later, Ruth, now a mother, hardly remembered any longer the details of her experiences with Satanism. “They have faded away like a dream,” she said. The demands of motherhood brought her to another world. The fantastic story could fade away from her autobiography when it was no longer useful.

So far, I have tried to relate the symbols of the story playfully (not dogmatically) to Ruth’s own life. At the same time, for the extraordinary narrative to create enough excitement to be passed around, it must fulfil some criteria that made it so attractive to others. People who buy into

such stories also make a moral point about specific institutions, for example schools. Presenting mere schoolchildren in a light where they have extraordinary destructive powers paints a dark and alienating picture of Zambian society. Parents who have little control over their children are puzzled by their behaviour and reactions; they see them under the spell of other forces. The magical wallet found at one of Lusaka's flamboyant shopping malls demonstrated the destructive powers of luxury goods on schoolchildren: once touched, they find themselves in the grip of new desires and unseen forces that have a life of their own, whose effects will be felt by the whole family. People could relate to some of Ruth's dream symbols, like the coffin, because of the close presence of death in their own families. Sacrificing others through magical means shows the powers of death at work even where people still seem alive. Also, the theme of ineffective prayers, illustrated in this story by an insect that gave extraordinary strength to the girl to neutralise the power of Christian prayer, showed that conventional worship cannot get to the bottom of Satanism; it is a call for a new spirituality that can deal with the spiritual dangers found in modern life and in school life. Listening carefully to people's reactions to testimonies can give hints about the areas that conventional faith leaves untouched.

20

Following people into another world

Satanic testimonies and Zambian society

Satanism (like witchcraft) in Zambia is known for its secrecy and for occult powers that are beyond the possibilities of open and empirical investigation. Testimonies of delivered Satanists therefore became not only the main source, but the only source able to reveal the details of the underground world. “To know the Satanists you have to be one of them.” In the 2000s, several publications of self-confessed ex-Satanists, giving details about the Satanist underground, appeared in Zambia. One could call such testimonies grassroots multi-media ventures. Within a short period of time, testimonies of Satanism reached church circles of most denominations throughout Zambia in the form of photocopies of books, audio tapes and videos of recorded testimonies. They were often accompanied by solemn warnings to read them only after extensive prayers for protection. An example of such a testimony is the influential book *Transformed from Satanism to Christianity* by Evangelist Gideon Kabila, who claims that he was delivered by the Apostolic Church in Zambia in 2005. Within a short time of its publication, many photocopied versions of the book circulated throughout Zambia.¹ In the book, Kabila describes that he had been a Satanist since birth, since his mother came from a Satanist family. He made his first journey to the underground world at the age of seven:

It was at this hour [midnight] when I started hearing strange voices of people, whispering outside, and I switched off the light. The room became darker than I expected it to be. Then I saw a very dark person, huge and tall coming near my bed. He opened up his voice and said: “Time had come to go to another world.” He said that I needed no transport because it was a spiritual world. Then he commanded me to hold his hands so that we might go, and

¹ Kabila n.d. I was shown photocopied versions in Lusaka, on the Copperbelt, and even in a small village in the Luapula Province.

immediately I gave him my hands I disappeared and found myself into another world with electricity and well-designed but with tough principles. It was the world of death. They welcomed me as the prince of the coast. I did not know what it meant till I saw my mother dressed in a red and black coloured garment, with a sword in her hands and then she surrendered me to one of the fat giants who were called the grandmasters. Then they took me to a certain room where I was told to go and make a covenant.²

Evangelist Gideon Kabila continues, on over 50 pages, to describe the underground world, the different covenants with the devil, the Satanist commandments, the Satanist schools and universities, the different types of demons that are in league with Satan, and the missions that Satanists have to perform in the world in order to advance in the Satanist hierarchy. He writes about sacrificing family members and loved ones, causing road accidents, disturbing Christian prayer meetings, practising lesbianism, homosexuality, prostitution, causing confusion, breaking marriages, and about the means of initiating other people into Satanism. He gives descriptions of underground factories in which Satanic foods and consumer goods are produced out of human blood and body parts, to be used throughout Zambia for initiating more people. In the end, he gives an account of his dramatic deliverance through the Apostolic Church in Zambia and the power of prayer that is stronger than the powers of the underworld.

Such types of testimonies became a regular feature of crusades, prayer services and overnight prayers of a number of Pentecostal Churches, charismatic prayer groups and even mainstream Christian Churches. The stories circulated at a grassroots level, which allowed people to connect the stories with their own experiences, for example of strange car accidents, deaths of relatives, or the strange behaviour of youths in the family. Specialists from charismatic circles who “knew” about the internal workings of the underground world travelled from one church group to another to give workshops, which often included deliverance sessions where people could witness for themselves the presence of Satanism in their midst.

Testimonies of delivered Satanists were becoming a literary genre of their own; they established a common jargon, a new vocabulary, through which the satanic world, its locations and hierarchies were described. We hear of “entry-points”, specific covenants, and mysterious positions and characters within the hierarchy (“queen”, “queen of darkness”, “queen of

² Kabila n.d., pp. 9-10.

the coast”, a mysterious “Olieva”, “sons of Satan”, etc.). Testimonies put us in touch with categorised missions (“missions of prostitution”, “lesbianism and homosexuality”, “killing”, “causing confusion”, “recruitment”), satanic clothing with its own colour code (“pink for prostitution, red for danger, black for Satanic gatherings”), and specific locations, schools and chambers in the underground world. Through such testimonies of insiders, the listener gains a certain familiarity with the hidden satanic world. Testimonies often connected people to known tragic events that were widely talked about.

THE TRUTH OF A TESTIMONY

A Testimonies is seen as a spiritual act: it is prompted and sustained by the Holy Spirit, and it is doing something to the listener who is open to receive it. The testimony demonstrates the power of God and helps the audience to “give their lives to Jesus”. A testimony about Satanism does not just narrate what has happened. It is part of a specific dynamics in a congregation, something alive, that is doing something to the audience: a form of Godly power that breaks, where people accept it, the bondage of the Devil.

In contrast to so-called ritual crime that comes along with some physical, empirical sort of evidence (for example missing body parts of a corpse), testimonies of Satanism in Zambia have no corroborating evidence for its truth-claims. Demons or satanic forces who cause a car accident or suicide do not show up in the radar controls of the police! Instead, truth is discerned by comparing the testimony with the church’s accepted propositions of faith, and by scrutinising the act of the testimony (the way it is given) and its effects on the congregation. If the testimony helps people to “give their lives to Jesus”, then it must somehow be true on a spiritual level. And since the spiritual level controls the physical realities, some factual dissymmetry or failure of corroboration on the empirical sphere is not necessarily seen to disqualify the testimony. The message of the testimony needs, however, to match the known pattern of spiritual truth. In view of Satanism, this is established through the body of previous testimonies of Satanists that support each other in their structure. The world of Satanism “under the ocean” has established its specific pattern that functions to evaluate truth-claims of a new testimony.

Part of this pattern is the acknowledgement of the grave danger of giving a testimony. Since the devil is exposed not through police investigations but through former Satanists who have seen his world with their

own eyes and who know his tricks and powers, he tries by all means to prevent such a person to testify before an audience and to expose his strategies. A testimony is therefore always a struggle. During the testimony, the former Satanists, supported by prayer and the Holy Spirit, are again struggling with the powers of the Devil, who will in the end (again) be overcome and defeated. Even when testimonies are video- or audiotaped, they are often accompanied by a solid warning to pray before listening to it: the testimony poses a chance but also a danger.

DRAMA 36: THE TESTIMONY OF SALOME

Take the following example of a testimony by a young woman, whom I will name Salome: A member of the Fingers of Thomas, who worked in a studio that was owned by a church member, videotaped her testimony in the presence of the pastor who had already delivered her. She had already testified to some church congregations about the powers and workings of the satanic world, and also about the powers of the delivering pastor. Now the pastor, I call him Pastor Vincent, wanted to have a video recording of the testimony, that would help other Christians “to know the danger of Satanism”. (My own presumption is that he also wanted listeners to know his own new status as a powerful pastor). Salome herself said that she wanted to give this testimony, “because Satanism is real—I did not know at first what was happening, before it was too late, and many people do not know.” The full narrative took more than an hour. It is very engaging: when I showed it in workshops, people often did not want me to stop it halfway (for lack of time). Towards the end, she collapsed into a “spiritual attack”, on camera, which came across to me like a supplementation of a visual proof of the satanic world. She fell down from her chair, and while she was lying on the floor (semi-unconscious), the pastor took stage and explained: “What you are witnessing here is that Salome now is struggling with demons because she revealed the secrets of the satanic world. We are in a struggle and we all have to support Salome now in prayer.” The pastor then stood over Salome and started praying over her in a loud voice, commanding the devil to leave her. Salome then recovered, and the member of the Fingers of Thomas stopped the recording. Here I paraphrase only the “highlights”:

My grandmother initiated me into Satanism when I was still a child. She gave me the blood of a chicken to drink and I felt very strong. There was a power in me that God had not created me with. I went to a school which was run by Satanists. I did not know this, but it was revealed to me later when I started to go under the ocean.

There I met so many known people, head teachers and politicians: Satanism is everywhere. I started longing for blood and I was killing four relatives a year with the help of a knife and a mirror that I was given. I became a queen when I killed my father. I was allowed in the underground world to see the devil himself, but I could only see him from far, and his head was covered. I killed many people, more than 100, maybe 200. Their blood flowed out of the mirror after I sacrificed them. I could also change my body into a rat, a hyena or a Dona-fish [mermaid]. Like that, I caused the Nkalamabwe Bridge to collapse—you remember when the bridge collapsed in Chongwe? I did that because I was given the mission to delay the coming of a very powerful pastor who was to preach in Lusaka; he was feared very much in the underworld. I caused many accidents, and I became more and more thirsty for blood. Blood is like water for Satanists. At home, my family wondered why I was not eating. They did not know that I had other food to eat. I had snakes around my waist, and whenever I slept with a man, the snakes sucked his blood and he would die the next day. I did that when I was sent on a mission in Chilenje. This man I was supposed to sacrifice, I knew he had a weakness for women. You know, if you give the devil a chance, he will take it. I had the third eye on my forehead, the eye of attraction, and when I looked at him, he could not resist. He had to sleep with me. I sucked all his life through his manhood, and I just left a few powers in his body so he could still walk a bit. He went into his car, drove off and caused an accident that killed him. They did not find any blood in his body. I also sacrificed babies. Whenever I was given a chance, I helped pregnant women to abort. You know those chickens we buy in the supermarkets, those big chicken in the freezer? They look and taste like chicken. Satanists have a lot of magic. But they really are aborted babies and it happens under the ocean that they make them to resemble chicken. That is how they initiate you. You eat without knowing that you eat human flesh. Then you develop a craving for it. They know we women are weak. You know these perfumes? And these wigs we like to wear? These lotions? The [hair] extensions? If you knew how they are made under the ocean, because it is through human hair and body parts of the people we sacrifice. Through them we get power over you. I am telling this to warn people. They must know about it. Knowledge sets you free. Ignorance is very bad. But there are prayers that make the underworld shake. When pastor Vincent

and pastor Mwaba prayed, there were earthquakes under the ocean and we had to go into hiding. Oh no, these things were too terrible.

Are the details of the testimony absurd? The audiences were glued to the testimony. Several people said: "It must be true, how could somebody come up with such a story if it were not true?" Others said: "This is just a confused girl!" But they too were captivated by the story and by Salome's way of narrating it, and they too wanted to hear the story until the end.

Some of the events that Salome referred to were well known to the listeners: the collapsing of the Nkalamabwe Bridge had caused long traffic delays—heavy vehicles were stranded for a week. The Chilenje car accident was widely talked about as a senseless act of the driver, seemingly a suicide. The head of the driver got severed from his body. In other testimonies, world events (earthquakes and tsunamis) were tied to concrete local Satanists who claimed to have caused them. The local landscape becomes of significance to the global world, through the world of Satanism.

In a dramatic development, the delivering pastor confessed a year later, again on camera and filmed by the same member of the "Fingers of Thomas", to himself being a Satanist: Satanist women who were sent from the underworld to stop his successful deliverance ministry initiated him through sex, capitalising on his weakness, just as Salome had explained in her own testimony. Now another pastor was delivering him: while in trance, or maybe in hypnosis, he tore all his clothes and behaved indeed like a possessed man, until he was overcome and delivered. After that event, I interviewed him, but he said he remembered nothing. He watched the recording with the member of our group who shot the video and seemed perplexed. He pleaded to have the recording deleted (which the owner of the studio did). Nevertheless, the story was out. Not long afterwards I met him as a taxi driver. By then he had lost his small congregation that he had built up and that thrived on dramatic forms of deliverance. He, the pastor and specialist in Satanism ended up himself as a pawn in the game with another pastor with whom he had been working. Maybe the spectacular event in which he allowed himself to enter into a trance was meant to be another visible and dramatic demonstration of the satanic world, but it backfired on him and ended his career as a pastor.

I asked Salome about her plans for the future. The pastor told her that she had to stay at an unknown location, since the Satanists now wanted her life. She was dreaming to attend a Bible school on the Copperbelt and to become a pastor in her own right. The pastor encouraged her dream and even promised help. Eventually, she enrolled herself in some cours-

es, but stopped after a short time: she had neither the resources nor the necessary education to pursue her dream. Was that dream part of her motivation to give the testimony? She had tasted some forms of power over a congregation when she was testifying. Was she thinking that she could make a living out of her satanic experiences? In any case, her testimony raises two obvious questions:

1. Why does a person accuse herself voluntarily, without pressure from outside, of horrendous crimes for which she risks social repercussions?
2. Why do people believe in such testimonies, even when they come with very little external corroboration?

I argue in this chapter that the two questions are best answered together: satanic testimonies are co-authored by the person who testifies and by the audience who longs for such a testimony.

I start by looking at the perspective arising from the testifiers' inner lives, bringing in a psychological dimension. In line with our approach, I am not reducing satanic testimonies to psychological case studies. But I am not ignoring this level either. Especially, if an awareness of being part of the satanic world has a clear link to trauma, for example in childhood. In some of our cases we could establish such a link. The case of Salome is not so clear, because she was very restrained to talk about her personal life to me. But it was clear she never had any form of a stable childhood. I managed to interview her guardian who took her into his family after the death of her parents. He experienced Salome as a very difficult child, and he expelled her from their home after she helped his daughter to have an abortion. He believed that she was indeed a Satanist and cut all links with her. In some other cases, that our group dealt with, however, a link between trauma and an identification with the satanic world was made explicit by the family to us. Here is one such case:

DRAMA 37: MATHILDA FREEZES AFTER RECEIVING A SATANIC LETTER

One girl, Mathilda started to behave strangely during grade eleven in a girls' boarding school after receiving a love letter from a boy that contained some money: she froze. She was unable to talk and remained in a very passive state. Pupils and teachers thought this was a passing moment, but it lasted for more than a week during which she was unable to

speak, just sitting passively in class. She was prayed over at school and collapsed into a trance, during which she manifested many standard signs and symbols of Satanism, like crawling like a snake, tremendous bodily agility, speaking with another voice that revealed that she had been initiated into Satanism and that she was starting now to kill. The story then circulated that the boy initiated her with satanic money, since his letter had provoked her reactions. Prayers continued, but change did not come about. She had to leave school, unable to write her exams. Back at home, her guardians and her sister revealed that the girl had undergone ordeals of sexual abuse by her uncle when she was a child. The abusive relationship had lasted for a long period of time and had involved also her sister as another victim. The abuser was her uncle, and her parents knew of the abuse. The uncle was expelled to a far-away town, but never prosecuted by the law. There was even talk that the uncle wanted to come and live again in the neighbourhood. One can easily imagine that the thought of this would be enough to trigger a reaction of freezing. Or, maybe, that memories of the ordeals came again to life through the sexual advances of the boy. The money in the letter implied that he asked for sexual favours. Maybe her own developing sexuality added a new level of trauma. Satanism may have provided an acknowledged storyline with which she could identify and through which she could symbolise her experiences.

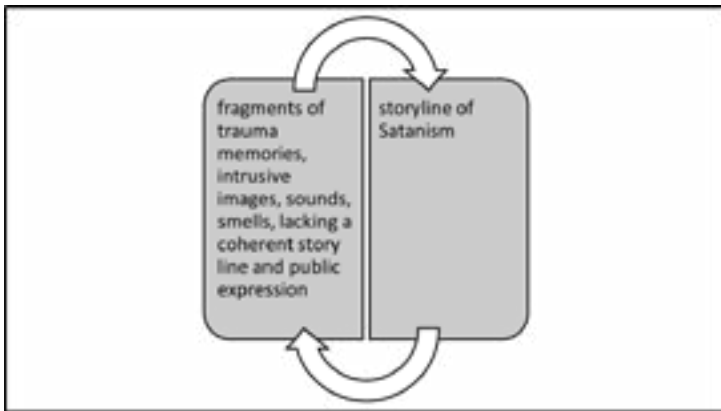
I am not suggesting here that this is the only explanation. Experiences of Satanism are over-determined; they may have several causes, on different layers. Prayers alone did not work in this case. She embraced psychotherapeutic treatment that included counselling sessions but also medical help in the form of anti-depressants. She said many times that this treatment was more helpful than the prayers she received, especially prayers of a violent kind, where men shouted at her from above “as if they were raping me again.” She cut herself from church, to the dismay of her sister, who identified a refusal to pray again with Satanism, and we supported her treatment decision and continued to explain it to the family. We encouraged the family to start legal actions against the uncle.

SATANISM AND CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

Today it is widely acknowledged that trauma can influence a person's memories. Memory fragments of the traumatic events can cause the person to feel overwhelmed by extreme negative emotions. Victims of traumatic events may manifest symptoms of acute and chronic stress, anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, substance abuse and somatic

disturbances. Some findings suggest that traumatic memories tend to be confused, fragmentary, involuntary and unconscious, containing vivid fragments of images, sounds, smells and bodily sensations. They are not easily remembered, but impose themselves on the person as intrusive and recurrent recollections that are often beyond the person's control. They can take the form of disturbing somatic symptoms, prompt a variety of avoidance reactions, and may be associated with special defence mechanisms, one of them being dissociation.³

According to betrayal trauma theory, survivors of childhood sexual abuse may dissociate their memories of abuse.⁴ As the diagram suggests, the storyline of Satanism can be a way to process dissociated fragments of childhood trauma that continue to impose themselves on the victim in later stages of life. Images of Satanism here give the shape and form to powerful negative emotions and feelings for which the person has no name, no public storyline (common for sexual abuse, which is silenced by the family), and no coherent memory. The images of Satanism can provide potent symbols and narratives onto which a person can "fix" powerful emotions for which he/she has no words.



It is important, however, to avoid the conclusion that manifestations of Satanism or testimonies of former Satanists are simply cultural expressions for working oneself through childhood traumas. The family of Mathilda mentioned trauma. In many other cases we dealt with, neither the family nor the victim of attacks could recall any substantive trauma; we do not presume the existence of a trauma if the concerned persons do not mention it. When I interviewed Salome she also made it clear that she

³ Sotgiu & Mormon 2007.

⁴ McNally, Ristuccia, & Perlman 2004.

had a very scattered childhood and that she never developed a feeling of belonging—a disposition that I have already talked about several times in the context of Satanism. We defined Satanism through the angle of belonging (self-identification), and also our pastoral approach addresses the question of the person's place in the family or with meaningful groups of mutual support.

FALSE MEMORIES, CONFESSIONS AND MORAL PANICS

I also want to take a leaf from studies about the American panic of Satanism, which was fuelled by testimonies given by so-called survivors of Satanic Ritual Abuse. A much discussed example is the famous Canadian book *Michelle Remembers* of Michelle Smith's and Lawrence Pazder's (1980), in which Smith describes her repressed childhood memories of horrific satanic ritual abuse, that she retrieved while being in treatment with her psychotherapist Pazder, much of it during hypnotic trance and so-called abreaction.⁵ She consulted Pazder after a nightmare, and knew that she needed to tell him something, but she did not find words and did not know what it was. When the treatment commenced, she started to scream, and different "memories" of her childhood popped up, which Pazder recorded and processed into a bestselling book. It contains many graphic details about the "true story" of her traumatic childhood abuses by an ancient satanic cult. Being treated against depression by her psychotherapist, she "recovered" memories of her mother initiating her into Satanism (when she was five years old), and making her pass through all sorts of abuse that involved torture, murder and cannibalism. During the lengthy satanic rituals, she encountered the devil himself—she remembered.

The book was published at a time (1980) when many psychotherapists in America experimented with hypnosis and with the quest of retrieving repressed memories. The underlying theory stipulated that repressed traumas continue to play themselves out negatively on the affected person, and that healing needs remembering. Psychotherapists helped people who had emotional problems, which had no apparent root cause, to retrieve forgotten and repressed memories of traumas, hoping thereby

⁵ One hypnotherapist (Simon Cartwright) describes abreaction as "an emotional or physical reaction caused by re-living (re-vivifying) highly emotional thoughts and feelings associated with the memory of an earlier traumatic event. Abreaction may occur more often during a hypnotherapy session because the subconscious is accessed and given more 'free range' to bring past thoughts and feelings to the fore." (<http://www.momentumhypnotherapy.com.au/what-is-an-abreaction-in-hypnosis>, accessed on 18th December 2014)

to cure the present condition of mental stress. Unfortunately, many “retrieved memories” that were produced through therapeutic means turned out to be “false memories” that were induced through the therapeutic process itself. In America, this led to a witch-hunt. This, of course, does not imply that people consciously lied when in trance. The sociologist Jeffrey Victor explains that,

Memories recounted by people during hypnotic trance states are not photographic recordings of their past experience. People’s memories during trance states are constructed from their current interpretation of their past experience, their memories of childhood fantasies, and vivid imaginings designed to please others.⁶

Are such memories that are derived from trance experiences actually helpful for the healing process? The theory that they may help to symbolise repressed memories comes also with a downside. Marita Sturken, for example, who analysed the data around satanic ritual abuse, remarked that

One of the most striking aspects of many stories of recovered memory is the way in which the memories grow (from vague feelings to suspicions of abuse, from unidentified figures to fathers, from a memory of a touch to satanic rituals of sacrifice and cannibalism) and become, finally, the central activity of someone’s life.⁷

This brings her to the question what one has won when an initial vague memory of something indefinite grows into a “memory” of satanic rituals, through which the person then identifies his/her whole selfhood (“I am a survivor of child Satanism.”) It leads more often than not to broken families and to blaming others for own failures and conditions. Such considerations strengthen our approach of (1) not extrapolating experiences of the inner world as “facts” into the outer world, and (2) of not fixing the inner world into a narrative that is subsequently no longer allowed to change. Both dangers are bound to happen when people with inner experiences of Satanism are encouraged to give public testimonies: vague feelings of something bad that happened in one’s childhood grow more and more into detailed stories of involuntary Satanism that give an all-encompassing explanation and excuse for all personal problems and burdens.

⁶ Victor 1993, p. 89.

⁷ Sturken 1998, p. 120.

IDENTIFYING WITH OTHER PEOPLE'S TESTIMONIES

In spite its inconsistencies and lack of external evidence, the book *Michelle Remembers* provoked a wave of hundreds of people claiming to have gone through similar experiences of satanic abuse. It symbolised anxieties that were shared by many and greatly contributed to the satanic panic that erupted in the United States and Canada during the 1980s.⁸ The history of the American panic about Satanism shows that certain types of testimonies can speak to an emotional level of many people, for whom events suddenly become plausible that had been implausible during other modes of thought. Many applied a similar storyline to their own life, turning it into an explanatory model for their own inner and outer conditions, failures or misfortunes. The panic about satanic ritual abuse subsided in the United States only when vigorous investigations of the testimonies of the “survivors” of Satanism revealed the lack of any corroborative evidence in the outer world. Many testimonies were proven outright false. Somebody needed to put the finger of the “doubting Thomas” on a testimony. The doubting Thomas is, however, hardly a role model in charismatic and in Christian fundamentalist circles. This does not mean, of course, that Satanism did not exist in the States during the 1980s, or that satanic ritual abuse did not take place at all. Cuneo puts it aptly:

No less (but probably not much more) than in previous decades, children undoubtedly suffered cruel abuse at the hands of self-styled occultists, and adolescents undoubtedly created mischief (and occasionally brought harm to themselves and others) while experimenting with satanic rituals... On balance, however, all of this activity was disjointed and sporadic—a far cry from the closely choreographed conspiracy that antisatanists seemed desperate to uncover.⁹

WANTING TO BELIEVE

Voluntary confession of horrendous crimes which the persons have never committed, could not possibly have committed, or which were evidently committed by other persons, do not belong to the realm of Satanism

⁸ *The Guardian* reported on the overturning of court cases in the United States of people who were previously convicted of “Satanism” on grounds of testimonies, including testimonies of children, that were later recognized as false memories that were often induced through the therapeutic process itself in the wake of a witchhunt. (*The Guardian*, 5 December 2013.)

⁹ Cuneo 2001, pp. 54-55.

alone. Juridical studies are well acquainted with voluntary false confessions. A much-cited example refers to the USA in 1932, after the baby of the famous aviator Charles Lindberg was kidnapped: more than 200 people confessed, on their own accord, to committing this crime.¹⁰

According to psychologist Saul Kassin, some false self-accusations are made as a result of confusing the sources of one's own thoughts under extreme conditions. Also a pathological need for attention, even for notoriety, or very strong feelings of guilt and delusions of involvement can become contributing factors for false confessions. Kassin asserts that also the nature of the circumstances under which confessions are made greatly contributes. This applies also to testimonies given in charismatic circles. In chapter four, I have described how charismatic groups easily build up an atmosphere of heightened suggestibility. Satanic confessions can radiate from the hypnotic effects of prayer groups, where the vulnerable person becomes sensitive to the subtle signs of expectations offered by the group members longing for a spectacle. Under such conditions, the past is re-evaluated in terms of new insights gained at the present moment.

But the audience also gains something from a testimony. In Zambia, testimonies of Satanism attribute a privileged position to the listener. This already starts with the location. Satanists in Kabwe confessed that Kabwe was the headquarters of international Satanism. But similar rumours went around also in the Copperbelt, in Livingstone ("the headquarter is under the Vitorai Falls"), and even in Mpika, at the foot of the Muchinga Escarpment. "The University of Satanism is located right here in the mountains, where we learnt these things, and Mpika is in fact the headquarter of the devil worldwide," revealed a satanic teenager in a boarding school near Mpika. This school experienced a panic of Satanism, in the course of which several girls testified to their involvement, claiming they were flying daily to Lusaka to meet and pray in a certain church with other Satanists while the others had their school assembly prayers. During their deliverance, a priest burnt piles of satanic clothes. A school in a rural area found itself suddenly in the spotlight from where the devil schemed his global plots.

Satanism is credible not only as a framework to deal with tragedy and uncertainty in the modern, urban world, but also because of the privileged position that it attributes to the Christian believer, illustrating the spiritual powers of the Christian faith that, in the end, always defeat Sa-

¹⁰ Payne 2011. More recently, according to the same source, a study suggested that one quarter of the persons in the United States exonerated from crimes through DNA evidence, had been arrested on grounds of their own confessions for crimes they never committed.

tanism. Testimonies are adapted to the audience. In the ones that I witnessed, a relationship developed between the testifier and the audience. Many testimonies are a product of this relationship. I have argued earlier in this book that people who are overcome by spiritual powers can be very gifted people with an ability to symbolise and link up to the unspoken fears, neuroses and hopes of the surrounding community. The audience in charismatic and Pentecostal settings participates in testimonies through shouts of affirmation (“Amen!”) whenever the testimony reveals a Christian principle or when it highlights the powers of the Christian faith that overcomes the powers of the devil. The testimonies of delivered Satanists always end in positive deliverance and affirm the Christian audiences in their faith. One elderly person put it to me very aptly after she listened in church to a Satanic testimony: “We all believe in angels, but we never see the angels. Now we know it is all true what we believe.”

In one Catholic charismatic group, to which the parish priest had invited us (the “Fingers of Thomas”) to give a talk on our findings, we had no chance to present our method of establishing the outer world—we were silenced by Bible verses even before we could start to put forward our arguments. The group took great pride in having delivered many Satanists. Already the mere desire to follow up a testimony and to corroborate it with external evidence was interpreted as a clear sign of not being born-again. In the words of the coordinator of the group,

Satanism is real. It is true, because demons really exist! These are spiritual things you can only understand when you are a spiritual person. We know it is true, because we ourselves see these things in the spirit. We are on another level.

One group member of the “Fingers of Thomas” was subsequently diagnosed by the group’s prophets to be demon possessed. We just left, unable to proceed with the workshop. Many Christians want to believe and need to believe that Satanism is a grandiose threat and that they alone have the power and privilege to overcome it. While even the most fervent believers in the satanic underworld doubt some of the details of such a testimony, (“After all, the devil confuses people and those things are in the spirit and they are difficult to comprehend,”) they stress the spiritual truth of it, because it demonstrates the power of their faith over the devil.

The ending of a testimony is easily adapted to the audience. Compare these two testimonies (of two different people), one given before a Pentecostal, the other before a Catholic audience:

[*Before a Pentecostal audience:*] The devil is afraid of the spirit-filled Churches. Once the whole underworld was shaking when there was this crusade with bishop [name mentioned]. The devil does not fear the old Churches that do not have the Holy Spirit. Such Christians are easy targets of the Satanists. The devil does not bother about the Catholics or other Churches because they are not born-again. When they sprinkle people with holy water, it is in fact the urine of the devil. You know, we feared real prayers. It is very difficult to attack such a prayerful person. That is how I was delivered. When someone prays in the spirit, the underworld shakes.¹¹

[*Before a Catholic audience:*] The devil is really out to destroy the Catholic Church. You know these other Churches, those who just came recently, they are used by the devil to bring confusion. The Catholic Church is the real Church, and the devil knows it. He knows that he has no power over it. When somebody was wearing a rosary and we had an assignment to attack this person, we could not do anything. There are angels around the person wearing a rosary. We had to wait until they take it off, only then we could sacrifice.¹²

We received the recording of one testimony that was given before a Seventh Day Adventists audience, in which the delivered Satanist describes how the gates of heaven are opened every week on the Sabbath day (Saturday) and close again at the end of the Sabbath. Such examples show that Christian audiences are co-authors of satanic testimonies. The testimonies confirm audiences in their spiritual beliefs and give them a privileged position. The pastor delivers the Satanist in a dramatic way; the Satanist in turn testifies before the congregation about the spiritual powers of the pastor and the congregation. Some pastors are dependent on such deliverance sessions in order to manifest their spiritual authority.¹³ An inherent uncontrollability of deliverance, however, gives such a warfare a unique appeal (see the drama of Chengo in chapter 10). Testimonies have

¹¹ Testimony given in Bemba, recorded in the Luapula Province. We listened only to the recording: the woman testifying is not known personally to me.

¹² Testimony given before a Catholic group and in interviews with me. The person was delivered by several Catholic priests.

¹³ Johanneke Kroesbergen-Kamps looked at the aftermath of a number of testimonies where the testifying person became marginalised by the community, while the delivering pastor earned all the glory. Her research reveals the uneven balance in the relationship between pastor and testifying Satanist (personal communication).

a strong appeal where the audience becomes actually part of the drama, whose outcome is often not clear from the onset.

WHAT SATANISM SAYS ABOUT SOCIETY

Christian deliverance services have spread the idea that there are precise signs and symptoms through which one can detect a Satanist in the neighbourhood or in the own family. I have witnessed in the last twenty years far more than a hundred deliverance sessions across the denominational spectrum, in which people were diagnosed to be possessed by demons or of manifesting Satanism, either by pastors or onlookers. I can explain for myself the signs of Satanism or of demonic possession that I have witnessed by reference to psychological and social categories. The fact of me having my own explanatory models does not say anything about the demonic world in and for itself, nor does it devalue other interpretations of people who have witnessed the same events as myself, yet came out fully convinced that they had seen demonic manifestations. In our approach, we abstain from forcing our own interpretations and categories on the owners of a spiritual experience. Yet we aim at keeping the dialogue alive about the different ways of interpreting the events.

Doing without a definite and objective answer about demonic manifestations allows us to concentrate on other layers of truths in the inner world narratives that have something to say about contemporary society. Satanic testimonies and manifestations become plausible and appealing to an audience only if they can also link up with the stories and life-histories of its members and become the focal points for various emotions and anxieties that are felt by many people. With this premise in mind, I will contrast now contemporary rumours and experiences of Satanism with similar panics that have occurred in Zambia. What are the new dimensions that the ideas of Satanism brought, which could not be expressed in the old paradigms of the occult with which people were familiar before the advent of Satanism?

THE NOVELTY OF SATANISM

Many images of Satanism overlap with images of witchcraft. For centuries already, witches have been accused of buying and using human hearts or other body parts as ingredients for some occult procedures and for providing the witches with riches, powers and daily food. Also many other abilities that people in Zambia attribute to Satanism, like flying, invisibili-

ty, changing into animals or causing accidents at a long distance, belonged in the past into the common discourse on witchcraft. Why then the need for the new concept of Satanism? The word appeared first in Zambia's towns (first in the Copperbelt, and then in Lusaka). Satanism started as an urban discourse. Here witchcraft is often imagined as closely connected to village life, to kinship and to close-knit relationships (neighbours, workmates, etc.) Concepts of Satanism, however, capture the novel. Satanists are supposed to drive in black cars and fabricate modern consumer goods (computers, cameras, TV screens, etc.) and fashionable clothes under the ocean in hidden factories that are run by "magic". Compared to the Satanists, witches are often imagined as a stereotype of old grandfathers and grandmothers back in the village who kill as a result of grudges and jealousy in their limited world. Satanists fill the imagination of modern people, upward moving, with international and global connections. "A witch knows only very few things, like a student in grade three or four. A Satanist is really advanced, like in grade twelve", a delivered Satanist testified. Another one said: "In Dubai, business men and women sell their years to the devil in return for riches and fame. Satan gives nothing for free. If he gives you riches, he wants your life." Witches may meet in small groups, but a Satanist is seen to be connected to many other Satanists, hierarchically organised and following a strict line of command that spreads throughout the globe, though the Satanists themselves are kept unaware about how the chain holds together. In spite of these difference, both witches and Satanists share a precarious existence: the forces they employ are ultimately beyond their own control. Satanists, like witches, are themselves controlled by other powers.

Initially, the Satanist was the stranger. Satanic items were seen in impersonal money notes, new cosmetics, fashion articles or strange foods. Churches and faiths new to Zambia (the Mormons, Eckankar, Buddhists and a number of new Pentecostal Churches) were rumoured to be satanic.¹⁴ Secret societies (especially the Freemasons), but also charitable organisations (like the Rotary and Lions Clubs) have often been identified with Satanism in rumours.

¹⁴ Satanists are rumoured to use the cover of new churches to look for members and keep the public unaware of their activities. I mentioned before that some Seventh Day Adventists call the Catholic Church satanic. Such accusations have a different pattern than those described in this chapter: Catholics were not accused of occult crimes (sacrifices, etc.) but of following dogmas that were introduced by the devil. Their connection with Satanism is seen on the level of meaning (heresy), not on the level of occult powers. Such discourses therefore do not belong strictly into the concepts of Satanism as shaped by the neo-Pentecostal worldview.

In this dimension, we notice striking similarities with older historical cases of panic that arose in colonial times, concerning the *banyama* and *bakamunyama* stories, which had caused much concern in colonial times and beyond.¹⁵ The *banyama* or *kamunyama* were people said to abduct innocent victims, extract human blood and, by magical means, take away their willpower, minds and life-forces. They sold blood to Europeans for large amounts of money, who in turn needed the blood for the fabrication of modern medicines. The *banyama* would find their victims through prostitutes, in hidden pits into which their clients (the victims) fell, through magical rubber tools that took away the victim's mind and through night raids that aimed at lonely or drunken people. The *banyama* of the past were believed to operate at very specific hours of the night (especially between 01:00—03:00 hours); once the specific time was over, their mystical powers vanished, making it difficult to attack their victims. They were said to use specific types of vehicles for their evil purposes. During the 1940s, the Copperbelt was seized by fears about fashion articles and cosmetics that were said to be mystically charged to initiate their users, without their knowledge, into the sinister trade with the *banyama*. The *banyama* were also said to be canning African victims as “corned beef”, to be consumed by unsuspecting customers. All these stereotypes come back in today's concepts of Satanists, who are imagined to mix human flesh and blood into all kinds of food and drink, “to make people addicted to blood,” and who operate at specific times of the night.

In colonial times, the *banyama*, and the concepts surrounding them, constituted a new phenomenon. The historian Louise White has argued that new ambivalent experiences with modern life in that time needed new concepts of the occult that could not be captured with the old discourses of witchcraft.¹⁶ The images in the *banyama* stories could uniquely embody the new experiences, but also an awareness of new forms of exploitation and fears that the all too familiar image of the witch, belonging more strictly to the realm of the family and the village, could not encompass. The images of the anonymous *banyama* working for some vaguely identified white people, using modern tools, depicted the experiences of alienation at a time when people were being massively drawn into the Copperbelt in search for money. Traditional family structures collapsed while new moral demands and relationships arose, as did new fears. In a similar vein, one could argue that the liberalisation of Zambia's economy,

¹⁵ Described and analysed by Musambachime 1988.

¹⁶ White 2000.

starting with the 1990s, together with a rapidly widening pluralism in politics and religion, brought new experiences to the spiritual awareness of young and urban people. Markets today are swamped with modern but expensive consumer goods, giving rise to new desires and expectations, but also new tensions and fears. A new word needed to be coined to describe the occult world related to this new experience.

Many images of Zambian Satanism are based on the Book of Revelation (especially chapter 13). In the Biblical narrative, the devil is thrown from heaven onto Earth where he resides on the sand of the sea; from here, he continues to scheme, mislead, and deceive the earth with his demonic powers. In Zambia, many testimonies of delivered Satanists give “eyewitness accounts” about this world under the ocean, seen as the physical residence of the devil, where he produces counterfeit money, magical computers, flashy vehicles and enticing cosmetics, all fabricated with human body parts for which the devil and his Satanists need constant supplies of human sacrifices and blood. Yet, the underworld shakes when Pentecostal Christians pray. This is the important and crucial difference that distinguishes the contemporary stories of Satanism from the old *banyama* stories: Satanism is submersed in a Christian narrative. Throughout the Christian history of Zambia, witchcraft discourses stood separated from the Christian framework, like water and oil. Mainstream Christianity was not seen to be competent to deal with witchcraft issues; the authority and power over witchcraft were vested in alternative discourses upheld by chiefs, diviners and healers (see chapter 2). In contrast, the Christian faith is seen as very capable of dealing with Satanism. Pastors, not traditional healers, deliver Satanists. While witchcraft discourses eclipsed the Christian narrative, Satanism strengthens it. The knowledge and competence to deal with Satanism is vested in the spirit-filled Church; in the popular Christian imagination, the blood and name of Jesus are the only weapons with which Satanism can be defeated. Unlike witchcraft and *banyama* stories, concepts of Satanism presuppose and firmly build on a Christian worldview and feed on the idiom of spiritual warfare.¹⁷

Looking at the two new elements brought forth by Satanism in distinction from witchcraft—its submersion into (1) a global and (2) a specific Christian narrative—we can correlate the panic to two deep-cutting social changes that corresponded with its emergence in the 1990s: (1)

¹⁷ Note, though, that the usage of the term Satanism for very diverse phenomena makes the concept unclear as an analytical category. As a category for new forms of the occult, traditional healers and diviners today have also come on board to deal with Satanism, much like witchcraft, outside of specific Christian discourses.

with the changes brought about by the liberalisation of the economy that swamped Zambian markets with global consumer goods, new life-styles and desires, and (2) with the explosion of the Pentecostal Churches, together with the inroads of a charismatic/Pentecostal worldview.

WHAT SATANISM SAYS ABOUT MODERN AFRICAN SOCIETY

Since the Christian Church engages on the level of meaning—not only for the individual but also for communal living in society—questions about new anxieties are obviously very important. Stories and rumours about Satanism can point at communal values that many people fear are being undermined. Widespread rumours can function as indicators of the prevalence of common uncertainties with regard to the inner workings of economic, political and public realities.¹⁸ Belief in a satanic underground world is gratifying if it offer something to people: an explanation for their tragedies that corresponds with a new awareness of global realities impinging upon contemporary society. But it also offers a solution: Christian prayers. Rumours about Satanism in Zambia and in other countries are part of a moral discussion. People who participate in cementing the stories make a moral point about Zambian society and its key values that they see are being undermined.¹⁹

The fact that the Zambian debate on Satanism centres especially on the deviant youths needs to find pastoral considerations. Adults see the youth as being particularly vulnerable to Satanism. We have seen that Satanism developed especially in schools. Witchcraft discourses had affirmed and maintained the dominance of the elders; they, not the youths, knew about witchcraft and could control it. The elders dominated the discernment processes surrounding witchcraft. Today, many youths have made the world of Satanism their own, in which they have discovered their power over the adults. A pastoral approach that tackles Satanism in Zambia needs to address wider questions that relate to the place of the youths in modern Zambian society, their ideals, values and fears.

¹⁸ Ellis & ter Haar 2004.

¹⁹ Satanic panics have been analysed in similar terms also in other African countries. “Moral panics betray a host of anxieties in the society, or segment of a society, in which they erupt,” wrote Dunbara & Swarta in their analysis of the South African Satanic panic among the white community between 1989 and 1993, the time when the apartheid regime was collapsing. Crosscutting segments of the white community feared that the morality of their own social strata, once a hallmark for their separate identity, had been hollowed out; they saw Satanism as being widespread among white South African youths, who had turned their back on the moral standards and the social order that had defined their parents. Dunbara & Swarta 2012. The quotation is from the abstract (p. 601).

The anthropologist Birgit Meyer analysed stories about Satanism in the Ghanaian context. She proposed that Pentecostal images of Satanism articulate a critique both of African traditional religion that, in Pentecostal discourses, is easily equalised with witchcraft, and of the modern markets and consumption that are seen to be driven by the same inner logic, namely unlimited desire for this-worldly wealth and power. Images of Satanism became a Pentecostal critique of wealth. On one hand, new wealth and consumer goods come with new tensions that include the disruption of family solidarity, which the beliefs in satanic sacrifices express so vividly—especially the sacrifice of family members. On the other hand, Pentecostal worshippers themselves dream about and pray for wealth and prosperity. The Pentecostal faith values wealth and prosperity; they are worthy gifts to long and pray for. However, they need to be part of the divine order; if they are pursued apart from God, they turn into disaster, which is expressed in the satanic stories of illegitimate wealth. This is also the subject matter of many Nigerian movies.²⁰

Johanneke Kroesbergen-Kamps brought out a similar point. She entitled one of her recent articles on Satanism *Dreams and Nightmares of Modernity*. The title brings out well the two sides of the same coin, which is the dream of a prosperous future. Analysing the videotaped interview with the already mentioned self-confessed ex-Satanist Gideon Kabila Mulenga (available on *YouTube* and posted on many other internet sites), she noticed that Kabila applies the term Satanism sometimes to an evil empirical organisation or cult, while at other times he denotes with the term the sinfulness of people. “Satanism is when a person is like Satan ... telling lies, gossiping, killing people, adultery.” She comments that

This is a shift from Satanism as an organisation to which you can belong, to Satanism as a state of mind. I think other parts of the interview are also more, or something other, than factual descriptions of what happened.²¹

It is this something more or something other, which, beyond the details of the story, expresses a non-negotiable truth for many believers. It has to do, as also Birgit Meyer said, with the right and wrong ways of appropriating modern potentials and opportunities. In Zambia, people do look forward to the promises of modernity, which they want to realise within the attainable future. Modernity is part of global life, and so is Zambia. The prosperity gospel has introduced into the Christian scene a critique of

²⁰ Meyer 1995, 1998b.

²¹ Kroesbergen-Kamps 2013, p. 106.

those parts of mainstream Christian teaching that devalue earthly wealth. The believer now can openly pray for prosperity and for the blessings of modernity; they are part of his/her inheritance, since the believer is part of God's family in a global village. On the downside, those who do not manage to secure for themselves the blessings of health and wealth may find themselves in the grip of demonic forces. But also the wealthy are often viewed with suspicion: they may have gained their riches through occult or satanic means. Prosperity can be godly or satanic. It is in need of a moral dimension. Through the shift in many testimonies from Satanism as an empirical cult of wicked others towards Satanism as a state of mind that can even be found among Christians, the satanic testimonies place the moral struggle right into the heart of the believer. The shift that we have recognised in the last chapter, from voluntary Satanism (joining an empirical cult for personal benefits) to involuntary Satanism (being initiated against one's own will), says the same thing: nobody should dodge the question about the right and wrong ways of appropriating modern life.

When we understand the satanic panic as a moral discourse, we possess a handle that enables us to engage with it on a positive note. Rumours about Satanism link us up with the aspirations of the youths whose dreams for the future clash dramatically with the expectations of their parents. They also link us up with the fears of their mothers (and sometimes fathers), who know that their children's aspirations have dramatic spiritual consequences. The youths themselves look for moral rules and standards that can embrace *their* imagined future, in which consumer goods and wealth play an important role. In the olden days, the concepts of the witch had provided an inverse mirror image of the moral structure of family solidarity; today, Satanism has become the counter-discourse of the dreams of the forward-looking youths. Through it, the youths, and their Christian audiences, formulate a dramatic moral dimension for their own aspirations: Where wealth and prosperity have no moral basis, they become satanic, with dire consequences on everybody.

Beyond the offer of deliverance, the Church needs to offer a platform to the youth on which the moral dimensions (and consequently the spiritual dimensions) of social life, with its aspirations and fears, can be meaningfully discussed. The discussion is about how to embrace global possibilities in a global village, while remaining true to Christian as well as Zambian cultural values, including family solidarity.

PASTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS

While we strongly advocate taking the satanic panic serious as a moral panic that demands a creative engagement with the ways of appropriating the promises of modern life, we abstain in our approach from putting more oil into the flame of the panic. The panic is there and must be listened to, but we do not need to feed it. I therefore wish to close the chapter with some cautionary remarks.

People with experiences of evil powers deserve to be listened to and to be taken seriously. This, however, does not demand that they give public testimonies. In order to make the details of an experience (its truth-claims) the focus of public action, we need to subject it first to rigorous empirical investigation (outer world). Where Satanism exists in the outer world—be it in form of Laveyan types or as devil worship as understood by Christian churches and as subsequently practised by deviate Christians—it does not belong strictly into the competence of the Church. Where it involves criminal and illegal activities, it belongs into the domain of police investigations.

Truth-claims of the inner world, however, need different tools. It is embedded in a person's unique life history and awareness of selfhood, and is formed by the world of faith. People share with their pastors deep and frightful experiences that they cannot explain. Some people who are otherwise not easily swayed by moods and feelings have passed through experiences in which they felt overpowered by an outside force: in dreams, daytime visions or voices. The language of Satanism provides a vehicle through which such experiences are communicated and understood. Satanism is seen as a spiritual issue, not an issue that the police, the courts or the hospitals can deal with. It is an issue where people expect help from their church: with regard to individual and family care, and with regard to guidance when it comes to issues such as intolerance, suspicion and panic.

Anton Lavey wrote in the *Satanic Bible*: "Satan has been the best friend the church has ever had, as he has kept it in business all these years!"²² Some churches benefit from a spiritual panic where people start praying out of fear. Fear brings business! But fear also breeds suspicions and poisons communities. In the long run, churches have little to gain from such

²² It is the ninth satanic statement of Lavey's *Satanic Bible* (Lavey 1969, p. 25). Lavey explains at a later point: "The false doctrine of Hell and the Devil has allowed the Protestant and Catholic Churches to flourish far too long. Without a devil to point their fingers at, religionists of the right hand path would have nothing with which to threaten their followers." (Lavey 1969, p. 55).

a fear of Satanism, but they have much to lose. While we advocate sympathetic listening to affected people, their experiences should not provoke church leaders to project their status of truth into the outer world (see chapter 7). Satanic testimonies have given rise to witchhunting.²³

We discourage the giving of public testimonies by delivered Satanists also on other grounds. It promotes an interest in the occult and a curiosity of the satanic world, which, in Catholic teaching, is as harmful as the practice itself. For the testifying person, it is also not a helpful process. In our experience, a number of self-confessed Satanists never moved away from the label of Satanism attached to them. The giving of testimonies can freeze up an inner experience and can prevent an ongoing reinterpretation in different terms, as the person continues to grow through life. In contrast, many of those who did not testify to the public could allow their memories of Satanism to fade away like a dream, once they were no longer useful to their understanding of their selfhood.

Satanic rumours express also people's feelings of powerlessness, manipulation and exploitation in the modern conditions of life, but the beliefs provide very little basis for engaging with these conditions beyond prayer. Churches therefore need to struggle for alternative discourses that connect with people's anxieties but allow for constructive public action. Such a venture may start with the exercise of listening to rumours and with reflecting on the social issues and uncertainties that accompany specific rumours. The images of Satanism should also be picked up by theologians since they deserve to be engaged with on that level (see the next part).

Important is also the question about the role of gender in the dissemination of satanic rumours. In our workshops, both men and women believed in the existence of Satanism, while other had doubts. However, I received much more details about the satanic realities from interviews with women than I did from men. Men focussed more on the aspect of ritual crime. Many women associated own inner experiences with Satanism. Without wanting to take this point out of proportion,²⁴ gender remains

²³ Two teenagers, for example, had to defend themselves at Chifubu Local Court in Ndola against grounds of defamation because they had implicated in their testimonies the Ward Councillor to have initiated them into Satanism. They testified of having sacrificed and killed 300 people. (*Times of Zambia*, 2 July 2009). Note the charge was not about the 300 people whom they claimed to have killed, but about the person they implicated. Some members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal also had to defend themselves in court in Ndola because they publicised the testimony of a Satanist they had "delivered" who claimed to have been initiated by a known Pentecostal bishop. The bishop's church brought them to court, but later withdrew the case after receiving apologies.

²⁴ Kayuni did not analyse his data in a gender specific way, and I am not aware of any other study on Zambian Satanism that does.

important when reflecting on the underlying frustrations and anxieties that are expressed through the vehicle of satanic stories. If such stories circulate especially among youths and women, could this be an indicator that many of them feel excluded from the discussions that define morality in a modern African society? Can the Church open healthier platforms for moral discussions?

Part Seven

Spiritual worlds and the Christian faith

Spiritual worlds and the Christian faith

A pastoral engagement with unseen worlds cannot exclude the level of theology. I address questions that were pertinent in our workshops. In chapter 21, I look at concepts that are strongly condemned in the Bible but often associated with African traditional religion, like divination and practices of magic. Christian discourses have rejected them, often, however, without engaging with the deeper questions that make them necessary. The rejection of African spiritual notions has not led to their abandonment, but has pushed them underground, making their potencies even more attractive. The Biblical prohibitions did not just fall from heaven. They arose out of long discernment processes that led to the transformation of many old beliefs. In our approach, we build on the same dynamics, striving not towards the suppression of non-Christian religious notions, but towards their transformation through reflective and testing engagements from a perspective of faith.

Speaking of witchcraft, demons and Satanism primarily in the terminology of spiritual warfare has led many Christians in Africa—across Christian denominations—to embrace a worldview where God and the devil fight against each other in constant battles. In chapter 22 (a kind of appendix to this book), I look at Biblical concepts of the devil and the demonic, showing that a strictly dualistic worldview has found no place in the Bible.

Chapter 23 (another appendix) learns from the teaching of the Catholic Church about the devil and the demonic, which is reflected in the seminary training of today's priests. Since this book wants to mediate between European and African Christianities, it is important to also engage with the history of the Western theological concepts.

In chapter 24, I engage again with the charismatic theology of healing and the prosperity gospel.

I close this book with the question how to go beyond witchcraft beliefs, without however losing sight of their powerful symbolic world that crystallises for us experiences with raw evil (chapter 25).

21

“The Bible says...”

A Biblical journey from divination to discernment

Africa has many divining traditions, and also many modern Christian prophets divine the will of God for their flock, clients or customers. Divining practices seek access to the spirit world for extraordinary knowledge or powers. The Christian faith has always stood in opposition to such practices where they involve other gods. The Bible speaks of a jealous God who does not tolerate other gods besides himself to be invoked for protection or help. A choice needs to be made. In Catholic theology, before the second Vatican Council (1963-65), this choice was often portrayed as a choice between light and darkness. However, when the Church today recognises seeds of divine truths in non-Christian religions, the choice becomes more complex. Catholics can no longer condemn to hell the African spirit world in its totality. In this struggle, it is helpful to recognise that the Bible did not fall down from heaven as a divine instruction manual, passively received from God by the Biblical authors. Rather, we recognise in the Biblical heritage a product of historical discernment processes of a people on a faith journey with God and guided by God. The people of Israel struggled to see which of its neighbours' practices were compatible with their own history of faith and which were not. Also today we are in need of the same discernment processes when we look at African expressions of the spirit world and of its powers. We hope for their transformation beyond mere attempts of suppression. In this chapter, I complement our approach with a short Biblical exposé of a few relevant aspects of that journey.¹

¹ I make use in this chapter of the work of Arnold 2004, Blumenthal 1995, Bower 1999, Rubenstein 2010, Wethmar 2006 and Louis 1996.

THE GOD OF ISRAEL AND THE GODS OF THE PAGANS

The Bible condemns witchcraft, magic, idol worship, divination and the appealing to spirits or other gods in strongest terms. We find a much quoted example in Deuteronomy 18:9-12:

When you come into the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you, you shall not learn to imitate the abominations of the nations there. Let there not be found among you anyone who causes their son or daughter to pass through the fire [human sacrifice], or practises divination, or is a soothsayer, augur, or sorcerer, or who casts spells, consults ghosts or spirits, or seeks oracles from the dead. Anyone who does such things is an abomination to the LORD; because of such abominations the LORD, your God, is dispossessing them before you.

Many read this passage as a clear instruction from God that simply needed to be followed, given to his people before they entered their promised land. The authors of Deuteronomy placed these words into the mouth of Moses in his final instructions to his people. Mainstream Biblical scholarship today dates the text, not without controversy, into a much later period, seeing in the prohibitions the result of a long discernment process within the context of specific historical circumstances.² I want to trace some aspects of this discernment that seem very relevant for an engagement with Africa's religious heritage:

A. SACRIFICE AND WITCHCRAFT

The first prohibition speaks about child sacrifice, which is repeated several times in the Bible.³ We remember that Abraham was ready to sacrifice his firstborn son Isaac to God (child sacrifices were not uncommon among the Canaanites), when he felt this was the command of God. God praised him for his obedience (Gen 22:1-18). Later generations identi-

² Elaborating on the earliest suggestions by de Wette (early 19th century) and Wellhausen, many modern Bible scholars agree (not unanimously) that some parts of the Book of Deuteronomy were composed or edited during the time of the reforms initiated by King Josiah and his court (seventh Century BCE). The influx of influential refugees after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom (722 BCE) who advocated a stricter monotheistic faith, and a rapidly weakening Assyrian kingdom prompted the religious circles of Judah to rebel against Assyria and base the cancellation of the covenant with Assyria on the covenant with YHWH. God's people owe loyalty to God alone, not the Assyrian king. The later parts of the Book, according to this hypothesis, were composed or edited during the Babylonian exile (reflecting on the causes of the absolute disaster) and at the occasion of the re-founding of the Jewish kingdom after the exile. (Rogerson 2003, pp. 153-154; Rofé 2002, pp. 1-4)

³ Leviticus 18:21; 20:3; Deuteronomy 12:30-31.

fied the mountain on which Isaac was to be sacrificed (mount Moriah) with the hill in Jerusalem on which the Jewish temple was built, seeing in Abraham's act of obedience the foundation narrative of the Holy City. New foundations in Canaanite religions demanded human sacrifices that were to secure the blessings of the gods. Archaeological evidence and the Bible itself show that child sacrifices did not stop with Abraham. Jephthah sacrificed his beloved and only daughter to God to keep his vows (Judges 11:30-40). The story has some parallels with Abraham,⁴ but does not come to a happy end. Isaiah 30:33, Jeremiah 7:31-34 and 2 Kings 23:10 speak of the Thopheth, the pit of human sacrifices (especially of one's own children given as burnt offerings to Moloch or Baal), which was located in Jerusalem itself. Solomon himself had built a temple for Moloch near Jerusalem (1 Kings 11:7). We also read of the king of Moab sacrificing his firstborn son and heir to the throne as a burnt sacrifice in a last effort to avoid defeat in the onslaught by Israel. He succeeded, because the enemy left. (2 Kings 3:27). King Manasseh of Judah sacrificed his son (2 Kings 21). His grandfather, King Ahaz, had sacrificed his son (or even several sons) before him (2 Chronicles 28:1-4). In ancient Carthage, this practice subsided only with the destruction of the city by the Romans. The Law of Moses hints at the uncomfortable suggestion that child sacrifice was not only part of Israel's neighbours' practices, but at one point had been part also of Israelites' own religious memory. As the Book of Exodus proclaims: "You must give me the firstborn of your sons," (and also the firstborn of cattle) (Exodus 13:1-2; 22:29; 34:19). The law then makes provisions for redeeming the firstborn son from the Lord by providing a substitute (34:20). In Numbers 3:44-48, the Levites are consecrated to God in substitution for the firstborn of the Israelites, and the exceeding number of firstborn Israelites are redeemed with five shekels each. The offering of five shekels, up to today in Jewish ritual, substitutes the sacrifice of the firstborn.⁵ This point of redeeming a sacrifice played an important role in the theology that came to be applied also to Jesus' sacrificial death. Motives for child sacrifices that are known in the Bible range from the highest notions of obedience to God or one's own vows (Abraham and Jephthah) to the lowest manipulative practices of witchcraft (Ahaz and Manasseh). Abraham, and generations of Jewish people who reflected on their ancestor, transformed the need for sacrifice into the need for obedience. Blessings from God were secured no longer through twisting

⁴ One significant difference is, of course, that Jephthah made the vow to God on his own initiative; Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac at God's direct command.

⁵ Rubenstein 2010.

the mind of God (through sacrifices) but through allowing oneself to be twisted by God (obedience). The prophet Isaiah responded to the failures of King Ahaz with a messianic prophecy (Isaiah 7:14), the promise of God's new entry into human history through a new-born child. The Jewish people allowed their own nightmare of child sacrifice to be redeemed and transformed into a new and unique spirituality. For Christians, God is not manipulated by sacrifices, but—reversing roles—he sacrifices his own son for his people in a covenant that brings God closer to the human race than what was ever imagined before.

APPLICATION

The images of witchcraft and Satanism in Africa are very often linked to ideas of sacrifice. New beginnings and new businesses demand that human life be taken and channelled into the new venture. People have to die (sacrifice) so that others gain powers and riches. This common nightmare of witchcraft, through which many calamities of life are interpreted, leads to the destructive downward spiral of suspicion that we have witnessed too often. The example of the Biblical journey suggests that a transformation of such destructive beliefs comes about not from a repression of the symbols of witchcraft, but through creative engagements with the common nightmares. Such an engagement lies at the centre of the approach exposed in this book. The Biblical journey illustrates that the most frightening symbols of a common nightmare can be transposed into a different logic, where they fuel a life-giving spirituality that is rooted in one's own history. The transformation of African witchcraft beliefs into a life-giving spirituality has hardly yet begun.

A. IDOLATRY AND AFRICAN SPIRITS

The Bible condemns idolatry in the strongest terms, though archaeological evidence suggests that Jerusalem and other cities in Judah and Israel, especially in the time before the Babylonian exile, gave much space to many gods; Israel's God, despite the many prohibitions, was one god among others on whom Israelites and Jews relied for various needs.

But how does one know the idol from the true God? The true God was revealed to Moses as YHWH (and this name, out of respect for its holiness, was not to be pronounced). Also other legitimate divine names appear in the Bible, like El, Elohim, Elohah, Elohei, Shaddai and Tseva'ot. According to Rabbinic traditions, any one of these seven holy names of

God, once written, was not allowed to be erased. The names were also used by neighbouring peoples, and by the Canaanites, the original inhabitants of the land. Furthermore, Elohim was not only a common Biblical name for God, but was used also to describe God's actions and the created beings and forces through whom God's providence worked.⁶

Many of the functions of YHWH were not fundamentally different from the functions that other gods had for the people who invoked them. Like them, also YHWH was invoked in treaties between different parties as a witness and a guarantee in case of default,⁷ in war to bring success (1 Sam 4—though it did not work!), and for fertility (1 Sam 2). What was special about YHWH was the quality of the relationship and covenant that he had initiated with Israel's descendants. At times, God was seen as Israel's God; other peoples had their own gods. At other times (especially after the destruction of the Northern kingdom Israel, and during and after the Babylonian exile), the Jews had developed an awareness that YHWH was the only God. Other gods were but pieces of wood that their makers had chopped, as Isaiah ironically said, using one part of the tree to warm themselves at the fire or to bake bread, and the other part for carving out their god, crying to it in times of need, "Save me, save me!" (Isaiah 44:14-17)

What about the worship of gods, like Baal, which was strongly condemned in the Bible? We remember Gideon pulling down Baal's altars at the command of God (Judges 6), and Elijah's showdown with Baal's prophets who were imported by the foreign queen Jezebel (1 Kings 18). When these texts were written, Baal was used synonymously with idols and foreign gods of the neighbouring pagans that threatened to contaminate the faith of Israel and Judah. The name of Beelzebub (one of the names given to the devil in the New Testament) contains the name of Baal in its root. However, Baal did not always have the connotation of evil and of a foreign god in Israel's history. Saul and David each named a son after Baal (Eshbaal and Beeliada), and even Gideon was nicknamed after him (Jerubbaal—meaning, "God strives"—though this came to be interpreted as ridiculing Baal.)⁸ At times the title Baal simply meant "Master",

⁶ Blumenthal 1995, p. 81. In contrast, the term is used in Isaiah 8:19 to describe the forbidden consultation of ancestors.

⁷ See Lewis 1996.

⁸ In the Book of Judges, this name of Gideon is interpreted as a sarcastic provocation to Baal, meaning: "Strike me, if you can!" It implies that Baal cannot revenge because he has no powers. A number of scholars regard this as a re-interpretation coming from the time when Baal was associated exclusively with pagan gods. See Lewis 1996 for a discussion on the functions of Baal in the development of ancient Israelite religion, and Avioz 2010.

or "Lord", and some scholars suggest that "El" and "Baal" were sometimes used interchangeably in Israel. They have the same semantic root. Words for God could change their meaning in different historical circumstances. It was when the people of Israel had to show their pure faith and trust in YHWH as distinct from the surrounding gods that the title Baal came to be exclusively associated with an idol and with foreign gods. The meanings given to God, to gods, and to the names of gods have a history. It was not sinful for David to name one of his children after Baal: for him, it indicated trust in God. But such an act was highly idolatrous in later times, when Baal was seen as competing with Israel's God. God revealed himself in relation to other gods or spirits not in abstract Bible verses but through concrete historical events that called for a decision or an attitude and spirituality.

APPLICATION

Today, many Christian discourses equate African divinities (again) with idols, and even directly with the devil. In contrast, we saw in chapter 2 that the British explorer, David Livingstone, associated them with God and with angels. In the centralised cults, African divinities had the function of upholding morality and order. I want to give a concrete example from the area of my former Parish along the Luapula River: The divinity of the Baushi people and the Bena Kabende, known as Makumba, detested adultery, lies, thefts, murder and other forms of injustice. The Baushi and the Bena Kabende (both peoples are related) knew Makumba as their divinity (*ngulu, imfumu*), whom the creator God had assigned to them when they emerged as a people (constituted on their journey from "Kola" to their present location): for protection, warfare against enemies, fertility rites and the upholding of morality.⁹ Makumba's functions find parallels in the Biblical functions of God or of those of God's angels that were given to the nations.¹⁰ Some of the earliest Christians in the area had recognised in this divinity a stepping stone towards their Christian faith, while others saw in it a demon—maybe in line with the Christian preaching of the time, or in a bid to make a clean break with past.¹¹ For the former people, a comparison of Makumba with the biblical figure of John the Baptist does more justice to their positive experiences than Makumba's condem-

⁹ Chimba 1943.

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 32:8-9; 10:13; 10:20-21; 12:2.

¹¹ See Udelhoven, B. (1999). *Makumba in Kasamba Parish*, unpublished materials in the Archives of the Missionaries of Africa, FENZA, Lusaka.

nation into the camp of the devil. Today, Makumba continues to make him/herself known as a possessing spirit that troubles not only pagans but also committed Christians. Makumba in the 21st Century has a different meaning and place in society and in individual people's lives than the Makumba of the 19th Century.¹² In chapter 8, I have explored the conflicting vocations that many Christians go through who see themselves in touch with such spirits. In some cases, it is possible to make a transition from a commitment to such spirits to a commitment to Christ and the Christian faith, without demonising the spirits (as also the disciples of John the Baptist left their master for Jesus without condemning John!) In other situations, this is not possible: The adhering to spirits can seriously derail a Christian vocation, in which case they need to be evaluated in very different terms: as obstacles (in Hebrew "Satans"), rather than stepping stones. The evaluation requires an engagement with the life history of the person and reflections on his/her personal faith. Beyond catechesis, our approach depends on the efforts of spiritual direction and accompaniment. A third option besides "stepping stone" and "obstacle" is explored by Zambia's Zion and Mutumwa churches, who see in many African spirits angels of God that can be entertained *within* a Christian vocation, as much as Catholics revere the saints not apart from God but with him. Before one settles for condemnation or for approval of this third path that has been developed outside the historical mission churches, its evaluation in the light of the Christian heritage demands the element of dialogue that dares to listen to the experiences of its adherents with their spirits and with their Christian faith.

B. MAGIC, WITCHCRAFT, SPELLS AND SORCERY

Magic, sorcery, divination, witchcraft, Spiritism and the reading of omens are forbidden in Deuteronomy as practices of the pagans that must have no room in the new Israel. However, the writer of Deuteronomy does not define the practices that fall under magic or witchcraft, and how they are constituted. Sociologists of religion today propose that religion and magic are not two distinct categories that one can define from the outside with essential and neutral characteristics. This insight has left its marks also

¹² In the terminology of Ian Lewis (1966, 1972), Makumba's possession cult today would no longer be classified as being central as it was during the 19th century (upholding the unity and morality of a people and linked to important political authority figures), even if Makumba still plays a significant role during traditional ceremonies.

on Biblical scholarship.¹³ What was magic for some was a mighty deed of God for others.¹⁴ In the sociology of religion, the terms religion and magic are therefore often placed on a continuum, where the balance tips towards one side out of a striving to mark off the socially acceptable (which will become known as religion, prophecy, or mighty deeds of God) from the peripheral, potent but dangerous (which will be labelled magic, divination, or witchcraft).¹⁵

Boundaries between the acceptable and unacceptable are drawn in the Bible from a theological perspective that is rooted in the covenant with God. ("This given practice reflects our covenant with God."—"This specific practice rests on a logic that sidelines God and prioritises other powers.") In the Old Testament, we remember that Moses performed miracles before the eyes of Pharaoh with the help of God; however, the king's magicians could perform the same types of miracles. Moses' superiority was a matter of degree. To Pharaoh, Moses was a magician much like his own. It is not the belief or disbelief in magical practices that constituted the defining difference of Israel's faith, but belief in the superiority of God, trust in him, and a total subjection of practices that tap into the unseen world under this relationship.¹⁶

Our passage in Deuteronomy forbids the casting of spells. However, nearly all the prophets in the Bible were casting spells on their oppo-

¹³ "There is no essence of religion outside the discourse of religion. There is no religion *per se*," writes McKinnin (2002, p. 81). What we are left with as a definition is a family resemblance in the sense of Wittgenstein, which we establish in a circular way from those exemplary forms that we already know to be "proper" religions, thereby necessarily proceeding from a biased angle. "Since there is no 'essence' of religion, no such thing as religion, such a conception must be non-essentialist. Sociologists of religion agree that religion ... is a social construction." (p. 79). The same applies also to the familiar notions of "cults" or "magic", but also to words like the "occult".

¹⁴ Followers of Jesus, for example, saw in his miracles the hand of God, but Pharisees the hand of Beelzebub. In a similar way, we can discern in the Acts of the Apostles (chapters 16 and 19) that the mighty deeds of the apostles, described as actions of the Holy Spirit, were confused by others with pagan magic.

¹⁵ Bower 1999. According to Nancy Bower, a radical opposition between religion and magic on a phenomenological basis (through observance of outer characteristics) has been made obsolete through recent Bible scholarship. "This is not to say that societies, including Israel, do not make such distinction. But the distinction is a social distinction. In general a society will distinguish between that which is a socially approved or acceptable form of activity and knowledge (religion) and that which is a socially disreputable or unacceptable form of activity and knowledge (magic)." (Bower 1999, p. 420.) The same applies for other categories that I discuss: prophecy versus divination, or mighty deeds of God versus deeds of witchcraft and magic.

¹⁶ Attitudes towards religious practices were not static. What was considered acceptable at one point and called prophecy was no longer considered acceptable at another time but labelled as magic or divination. The passages about the divine magic of Moses belong to the Priestly source, which shows a different understanding of magic than the writers of Deuteronomy.

nents, on other peoples and even on their own people, to warn them that they had departed from the covenant with God. Jesus himself cursed not only a tree (Mark 11:12-14), but also whole cities (Matthew 11:21-24). Acceptability, in Biblical thought, depends on the question of legitimacy in a relationship with YHWH. Magicians or casters of spells were those who followed their own initiatives, their own whims, delusions, spirits, self-gratification or the interests of their clients; they fell under the category condemned by the law. A true prophet cast spells out of an awareness of the incompatibilities of people's practices with the covenant for which the prophet had an undying passion. However, the dividing line could be thin and in need of discernment. The genuine prophet of one group was often the false prophet and illegitimate caster of spells of another group. This comes out in the Bible in the example of the prophet (or magician?) Balaam in the Book of Numbers: At times, he is regarded as a follower of the true God (Shaddai), but at other times as an apostate and a symbol of the practice of filthy witchcraft and magic—and was therefore killed when the Israelites took the land. While his messianic blessings on Israel (Numbers 22) were seen to be effective, his immersion into the surrounding religious world ultimately proved his incompatibility with the faith of Israel.¹⁷

At the core of the religious identity of Israel was the covenant and an awareness that God guards this relationship very jealously. The chosen people and later the early Christians had to discern, among competing practices in a given situation, what was to be counted as idolatry or as true worship, as legitimate prophecy or as unlawful casting of spells, as a mighty deed of God or as an act of magic and witchcraft. When Elisha, at the beginning of his ministry, cursed forty-two boys who were subsequently killed by two bears because some of them had called him "bald-head" (2 Kings 2:23-24), how many of the boys' parents saw him as man of God and how many as a witch or magician? Both prophet and witch needed to be feared for their powers, and sometimes the distinction was one of nuance; in order to come to a conclusion, one needed to look at the whole of the person's life and his/her place in the wider picture of the people and their struggles.

¹⁷ Lutzky 1999.

APPLICATION

Many take for granted their own concepts of idolatry, magic or witchcraft, which they associate with a fixed set of practices and then apply them to the African spirit world, the traditional healer or practices of divination. Such clarity is sought especially in view of teaching the Christian faith (catechesis) and passing it on to a new generation. In catechism classes, the dividing line between the acceptable and the non-acceptable is presented in clear strokes:

Christianity	African beliefs
Priest, pastor, "man of God"	traditional healer (<i>ng'anga</i>)
true God	idols and false gods
true religion	false magic
prophet	diviner, medium
mighty deeds of God	witchcraft

Such a simplification has often turned into a violent narrative, which looked at African practices in isolation from their contexts. The pursuit of this dualistic narrative has led to underground religions. The world of spirits and ancestors, ghosts and demons, magic and divination has not lost its grip on today's Christians. They quietly accept that this world contains very potent powers, which are for many more compelling in times of crisis (death, sickness, misfortune, disaster) than the Christian discourse. Many people (including Christians) use medicines to keep their spouses faithful, find promotions, get a job, win a football match or secure customers for their businesses. All Churches (rightly!) forbid such medicines. However, people's need for such medicines is rarely transformed—for this we need some forms of creative engagement. In the Catholic Church, many priests try to cope with increasing demands for rosaries to ward off bad luck, or holy water, which in Zambia is widely used for drinking and ironing clothes. Priests and pastors know that the practice of tithing easily borders on simony: "I bring my tithe to the Church and God will bless my business." Christian remedies have replaced pagan medicines, but the need for the remedies has not been transformed. Therefore, one cannot easily walk away from "the other camp", even if one renounces it every Sunday. Even the zealous charismatic Christian, who has become most outspoken in condemning African medicine, needs constant deliverance from its contamination. It is therefore necessary to engage more positively with "the other camp", by identifying the needs that are addressed by

recourse to an illegitimate access to the unseen world, and by reflecting on how these needs can be transformed from the perspective of a lived Christian faith. There is need for a platform, where such issues can be discussed.

C. DIVINATION

Our passage from Deuteronomy prohibits divination and the reading of omens. Divination is a means of obtaining access to hidden knowledge from spiritual sources. Many passages in the Bible forbid the pagan practices of soothsaying, of astrology and of reading the future. Divination was associated with the pagans and with idol worship. At other times, such practices were regarded as useless, as Isaiah says (19:3),

The courage of the Egyptians shall ebb away within them, and I will bring their counsel to nought. They shall consult idols and charms, ghosts and clairvoyants. [It will not help them!]

Divination seems wrong when the person inquires from other gods. Nevertheless, the Israelites themselves used different forms of legitimate divination—to discern the will of YHWH. We remember when Rebecca had difficulties in childbirth and asked, “Why is this happening to me?” she “went to enquire of the LORD,” (Gen 25:22-23) which seems to imply that she inquired through a recognised prophet (or maybe a midwife with religious functions).¹⁸ Laban found out, through divination, that he was blessed because of Jacob (Gen 30:27). Joseph worked with a divining cup (Gen 44:5; 15). Extracting an oracle from God through the recognised prophets was one way that ordinary people also used to obtain guidance for very concrete issues. Young Saul (before he was made king) inquired from Samuel “the seer” the whereabouts of the missing family donkey (1 Samuel 9). We also know of approved forms of divination in the laws of Moses to test the guilt of a person, for example the “bitter water” administered by the priest to the woman whom her husband suspected of adultery. If guilty, her stomach would swell, and she would have miscarriages as proof of her guilt (Numbers 5:19-24). Such practices hardly look different from traditional African poison ordeals. The difference between legitimate and illegitimate forms of divination depended on their radical submission under a relationship with God.

¹⁸ Bower 1999.

Such a dividing line is drawn in the two books of Samuel. Legitimate forms of divination are known as "consulting YHWH". The Bible scholar Bill Arnold has argued forcefully that the contrast between Saul and David is built up around legitimate and illegitimate divination, the former characterising the rise to power of David and the latter the fall from power of Saul.¹⁹ The books know three legitimate forms of divination:

(1) The correct use by priests of the divining dices or lots, known as the Urim and Thummim. According to the laws of Moses, the Urim and Thummim were used to inquire whether a planned venture was approved by God and was successful (Exodus 28:30; Numbers 27:18-21); it was also used to inquire from God about the guilt of a person.²⁰

(2) Access to acknowledged prophets, and

(3) Divinely inspired dreams.

In Saul's state of alienation from God, the Spirit of God left him for David. Saul also lost the divining lots to David (after he had massacred the priests);²¹ he had already alienated himself for a long time from the legitimate prophet (Samuel), and had stopped dreaming. All three ways of legitimate divination no longer worked for Saul, because they were supposed to be firmly embedded within a living relationship with YHWH. Saul was not condemned because he used divination, but because he determined his own types of divination. As Arnold says,

Saul is forced to rely on his own instincts and intuition, such as they are. David, by contrast, frequently turns to the priestly ephod [containing the Urim] for cleromantic guidance (1 Sam 22:10; 23:2, 4; 30:7-8; 2 Sam 2:1; 5:23; similarly also 1 Sam 22:13,15—all of which contain the collocation "inquire of Yhwh/God"). David's rise to power is, in fact, characterized by the importance he placed on seeking guidance from God; indeed, this dependence on Yhwh for guidance came to characterize David and is partly what it means to describe him as the ideal king of Israel. By contrast, Yhwh eventually stopped answering Saul's inquiries altogether, presumably because Saul summarily made up his mind before asking (1 Sam 14:36-37).²²

¹⁹ Arnold 2004.

²⁰ 1 Samuel 14:41 gives an example of how it was used.

²¹ 1 Samuel 22; 23:6.

²² Arnold 2004, p. 210.

In his state of inner terror (1 Samuel 28:5-7), Saul turned to consult an illegitimate witch-medium, whom he himself had outlawed under the penalty of death. Ironically, the outlawed witch-medium (who brings up the shade of Samuel) confirms Saul's approaching death. His kingship and anointing that had begun with a banquet prepared by the recognised prophet Samuel (1 Sam 9:22-24), ended with a last supper prepared by a diviner-witch who had mercy on him! Saul's rank in the eyes of God had become lower than that of a witch—his relationship with YHWH was non-existent. Divination in early Israel was legitimate only when it went together with total submission under the will of God, following procedures laid out by the law. Deuteronomy also lays out rules of discernment for prophecies and dreams.¹ Saul—Arnold reminds us—had rejected the structure of authority into which his kingship was placed at the time of his anointing. Divination was not to turn God into an instrument of the divining person.

While divination extracts a clear answer from God (or from the spirit world), discernment is a process where the human heart has to make a decision or a judgement in the light of one's life-orientation and love for God. Divination in the Bible was not to be used outside a framework laid out through a discernment process. Slowly the legitimate use of divination was becoming obsolete in Biblical history. The disaster of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the first temple marked the end of priestly functions. The exile to Babylon meant an end to all sureties in religious life for the Jews. Recourse to divination became suspect and doubtful. When the prophet Ezekiel reflected on the exile, he predicted a radical break between the worship before and the worship that was to come. Israel—here I follow Nancy Bower in her eloquent analysis of the book of Ezekiel—must pass through absolute death, punishment, and extinction of the old covenant (the vision of the dry bones) if there is to be a hope for new life and a new covenant (the visions of the resurrection and the new temple). Then the laws will no longer come from outside (divination), nor will they be written on stone (as the Law of Moses); they will be inscribed in the human heart (discernment): "I will write my law into your hearts"... "I will take out the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26). For this to happen, all known forms of prophecies that mediated between the people and God had to stop—hence Ezekiel's

¹ See for example Deuteronomy 13:2-6.

condemnations of the various guilds of prophets, male and female, that were still divining God's will.²

This journey from divination to discernment continued into the New Testament. Jesus needed new skins for new wine. For St. Paul, the new law of freedom brought by Jesus was not compatible with the logic of the old law where a person relied on some pre-given, outer rules. For the Gospel of John, a "spring of living water" wells up in the heart of the believer—who will worship "neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem" (according to received traditions)—but "in spirit and in truth" (John 4). The follower of Jesus has to make the shift from the logic of divination (the outside voice of what is right or wrong) towards the logic of discernment, the law of freedom, of the new wine. Isolated recourse to divination was still used at times also in the New Testament (we may recall the election of Matthias to replace Judas through the casting of lots, a form of divination), but discernment had become the main channel for seeking access to divine knowledge. The letters of the New Testament stress the need "to discern the spirits" (1 John 4). St. Paul speaks of the "fruits of the Holy Spirit" as signs of the presence of the Spirit (Gal 5:22) that can be used for the purpose of discernment. Proof of the Holy Spirit comes from discerning the changes in the person's and the community's life.

In short, the Bible acknowledges the need at times for direct infusions of knowledge from the spiritual world: "Where is my lost donkey?" (Saul)—"Is my wife innocent or guilty?" (Leviticus)—"Can we win the battle?" (David)—"What is wrong with my pregnancy?" (Rebecca). By allowing these needs for divination to be expressed, but placing them firmly under an obedient relationship with God, they gave way, during a long Biblical history, to a quest for discernment, in which Christians need to learn to come to their own decisions in the light of their life histories and their faith. It was a journey towards the courage for inner freedom—from reliance on outside voices to the finding of God's voice within. Discernment replaced divination.

APPLICATION

The need for divination in African Christianity is visible today in the success of the ministries of Christian prophets, where people are given answers from heaven about their life conditions or the lives of their families. Many Christians build their life-decisions ("Shall I marry this per-

² Bower 1999.

son?”—“Shall I embark on this journey?”—“Shall I apply for this job?”) on oracles, visions and dreams taken from truth claims of the inner world of other people.

We can assist the shift from divination to discernment by emphasising a Biblical narrative theology that the Catholic Church today encourages throughout Africa in the Bible sharing methods of the Small Christian Communities. Instead of distilling abstract divine truths and principles out of Bible texts (outside knowledge), the reader accepts a Biblical story as it was handed down to him/her by the Christian community, as a narrative, finds him/herself in it, and passes him/herself through the inner transformations that the protagonists in the story went through. In our work with the inner world of afflicted people, we have made positive experiences with guided Biblical meditations as proposed by Saint Ignatius of Loyola. Narrative theology furthermore leads into an experience of being church. Bible stories are the product of the self-awareness of the Christian community in which the person participates. Liturgical celebrations nurture this awareness. Questions that were once urgent for the individual (they paved the way for divination) are now replaced with other sets of questions about how to prove one's faith in a given situation, as a member of a concrete community (discernment).

22

Devil and demons in the Bible

*From reified to relational terms*³

The missionaries' tools from scholastic theology (chapter 2), with due respect to their tremendous achievements in the Western Church, were too blunt to engage with a complex African spiritual world in a relational paradigm. Today, the devil plays again a prominent role in Christian preaching, by being associated with the potencies of the "bad camp". Christian preaching often builds up a world of two opposing principles whose battleground is the human soul:

God	Devil
Heaven	Hell
Angels	Demons
Saints	Satanists
good	evil
light	darkness

This image is dualistic and, in its strict form, is not compatible with the monotheistic Judeo-Christian faith. All that God created is good. God created light; he also created darkness. He is in heaven as well as in the underworld (Psalm 139). No power or realm—however demonic or satanic—is outside His providence, knowledge and presence. Yet the Bible also speaks about evil spirits. God himself sends evil spirits to King Saul (1 Sam 18:10), after God's Spirit has left him; the evil spirit continues the work of alienation, revealing the consequences of disobedience, and making room for the rise of David to the throne. The evil spirit here is not evil because he opposes God (in fact, he obeys God and is his servant) but be-

³ This chapter does not contain own original research. Instead, it summarizes research of Awwad 2005, Carter 2000, Dale 2010, Page 2007 and Wink 1984. It forms an appendix to the book to balance it with a Biblical approach.

cause of the effects on Saul, taking him further and further from God. In a similar way, the figure of Satan appears in the Old Testament sometimes as a servant of God, a tool, not his enemy, with specific functions. These functions are very unpleasant and risky for humans. By bringing temptation, punishment and suffering, Satan unwittingly strengthens, prunes and purifies the chosen ones, making them true children of God, which—for mysterious reasons—cannot be achieved without passing through difficult trials. This connotation is carried over into the New Testament. The concept of Satan as a servant of God does not imply, of course, that Satan is seen as being consciously devoted to God. The prophet Jeremiah (25:9; 43:10) sees even Israel's most destructive enemy, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (who destroyed the temple and the sanctuary) as a servant of God, who punishes Israel on God's behalf, opening a journey of purification—though Nebuchadnezzar never worshipped the God of Israel but tried to destroy him.⁴

When classifying the spiritual world and spiritual powers as good or evil, we deal not with fixed categories but with terms that are embedded in concrete situations that call for a choice or an attitude in which a person will prove his/her relationship with God or deny it. Incidentally, the figure of Satan plays a crucial role in Biblical thought in this process: He tempts, accuses and purifies on a level where personal choices need to be made in relation to faith.

BIBLICAL MONOTHEISM AND THE FIGURE OF SATAN

The earliest traditions of the Bible do not know the devil, nor do they know about a spiritual, God-opposing force. Some early Biblical sources acknowledge the existence of other spirits besides God,⁵ but these were of little concern; God alone has the power to create, and he is dealing directly with human affairs, not only with Israel, but also with universal history (Genesis 1-11). God did not create any evil creature; everything he made was good (Genesis 1). Genesis 3 speaks of a serpent seducing Adam and Eve, not of a devil. When the word Satan is used in this early Old Testament thought, it does not stand for a personal name of a specific angel or devil. The Hebrew שָׂטָן (*ha-Satan*) means “to be hostile”, “to accuse”, “an obstacle”. Satan here stands for a function. Also human beings (David, Hadad and Rezon) were at times called “Satans” in the Bible in this sense

⁴ Sidney Page 2007, p. 409 (footnote 2).

⁵ For example, Genesis 6:2, which speaks of the “sons of God” who married earthly women who then gave birth to giants (the Nephilim), who were all destroyed in the flood.

of being opponents. Even YHWH himself, or his angel, became a “Satan” (an obstacle) to Balaam to prevent his mission against the Israelites.⁶ The word Satan possesses no demonic qualities in the Torah writings. Instead, in Old Testament thought, God himself had a dark, fearful side that could destroy and bring evil if people persisted in foolish or misguided actions. In the Book of Exodus, it was not a devil who hardened the heart of Pharaoh; it was God. As Isaiah says,

I am the LORD, there is no other,
there is no God besides me ...
I form the light, and create the darkness,
I make weal [bring prosperity] and create woe [bring disaster];
I, the LORD, do all these things. (45:5-7)⁷

In later centuries, during the Babylonian Exile and especially under Persian rule, the people of Judah stood in contact with worldviews that were shaped by strong dualistic religions. A Persian example is Zoroastrianism, which is based on the belief that the human mind is the battleground for two opposing spirits or principles: the good, creative and holy one (God, who will eventually prevail), and the hostile and evil spirit. In this cosmic battle, people choose whether to do good or evil. Jewish faith, in contrast, remained not only monotheistic, but embraced monotheism under this new influence in a much more radical way than before the exile. There was no God besides YHWH. Even when the figure of Satan now came to be seen as an individual spiritual being who could bring great harm to people, he remained answerable to God.

In the story of Job, we meet Satan for the first time in the Bible as an independent, personal and spiritual being. Satan appears among the sons of God (angels) in the council of God (Job 1-2), though it is not clear whether he is a son of God himself. The book deals with the suffering of the innocent and with wrong attitudes and wrong ways of speaking about suffering. Satan, in this book, is described as a kind of prosecutor in the heavenly council, the one concerned with quality control, to evaluate peo-

⁶ In 1 Samuel 29:4, the Philistines refer to the danger of David becoming a “Satan” to them in battle (the English versions usually translate this simply as *adversary*). In 1 Kings 11:14 and 23 YHWH stirs up two human adversaries (the Hebrew says “Satan”) against Solomon: Hadad and Rezon to teach Solomon a lesson and give him a punishment. YHWH himself or his angel are referred to as “Satan” in Numbers 22:22 in the story of Balaam. The English translation says: “... the angel of YHWH took up a position on the road as his adversary”; the Hebrew text says that the angel of YHWH stood in Balaam’s way as a Satan to him.

⁷ See also Isaiah 54:16 or Amos 3:6.

ple in regard to sin. In this function, God allows him to test Job.⁸ Satan seems over-zealous in his task; even the faithful ones can hardly escape his sharp eyes for sins. He hates Job because he has no fault. He tests people so as to make them fall into sin. Nevertheless, he cannot perform anything without God's consent. He is not a second God, nor is he independent, but remains part of God's mysterious plan, which eludes human wisdom. The book states at times that the evil falling upon Job came from Satan (Job 1:12, 2:7), while at other times the same evil came from God (Job 1:11, 2:5, 19:21, etc.) Even when Satan kills and takes, Job acknowledges the sovereignty of God, by saying,

Naked came I forth from my mother's womb,
and naked shall I go back there.
The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away;
blessed be the name of the LORD. (Job 1:21)

Instead of blaming Satan, Job praises God as much for the bad things that happen in his life as for the good.

Another Old Testament narrative, in which the figure of Satan features as a spiritual actor, is found in Zechariah 3:1-10. In Zechariah's vision, the high priest Joshua, dressed in rags, finds himself in the heavenly court with God's angel and with Satan at his side: one to defend him, and the other one (Satan) to prosecute him. The angel and the Satan are both agents of God and seem to represent the judgement of God. Joshua's dirty clothes represent the sinfulness of the exiled people. The angel of God rebukes Satan for making Joshua appear so dirty before the Lord. The prosecutor (Satan) would have won the case (Joshua is guilty indeed), but God orders the angel to dress Joshua in clean clothes: his sins are forgiven—the exile has purified him.⁹ The Satan-figure of Zechariah sums up the arguments of the peasant population (those who had not gone into exile) against the returnees, led by Joshua. The episode shows the returnees as the purified people.

In the books written in a time closer to the New Testament writings, the devil is acknowledged as a spiritual opponent to God. In the Books of Chronicles, Satan is seen as an evil spirit who tempts people into sin. Many evil desires come from this evil spirit. In 1 Chronicles 21:1, Satan tempts David to count his people, while in the original narrative (2 Sam-

⁸ Maybe Satan is also related—as if in a parable—to the accumulation of gossip that reaches the throne of God.

⁹ Such ideas prefigured Paul's insistence on grace that was to become fundamental to his theology.

uel 24:1), YHWH himself tempts David. Also in the Books of Chronicles, Satan remains—as in Job and Zechariah—a servant of God, even if he harms.¹⁰ The Book of Wisdom sees in Satan the enemy of Israel and the enemy of God. Satan brought death into the world (Wisdom 2:24), and the book now recognises the presence of the devil in the serpent who seduced Adam and Eve. By now Satan was taken for granted as an agent of evil who opposes God's plans, tempts people, and leads them into sin.

Looking at the New Testament, we find Satan mentioned very often, much in contrast to the Old Testament. The development of angelologies and demonologies can be traced to the Jewish and Christian Apocrypha (books that have remained outside the Biblical canon), which tried to satisfy people's hunger for knowledge about these entities that was not answered by the books of the Bible.¹¹ The devil in the New Testament cannot be reduced to any one single concept. We can discern different strands of meanings, some going back to the Old Testament, others to the Apocrypha and to popular thought. We know of theological wrangles about the devil within Jewish thought. At the time of Jesus, the Sadducees did not believe in angels, demons or the devil (Acts 23:8), while the Pharisees did. New Testament thought does not expose a doctrine about the devil, but is interested in this negative spiritual force that tempts, harms and alienates in relation to the saving role and authority of Jesus Christ.

In the temptation narratives (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13), Satan is presented as the setter of choices. The three temptations of greed, pride and power, remind us of struggles that Jesus also faced in his ministry, when he clashed with popular expectations about the Messiah: People looked for a giver of bread, a performer of miracles, and a restorer of an earthly Jewish nation. Such ideas looked good for their followers, but they are unmasked in the temptation narrative, as Walter Wink suggests, as second-good choices, leading eventually to self-glorification and to the glorification of the Evil one, instead of the glorification of God. Jesus walks out stronger, not weaker, from the devil's temptations. Where humanity had failed in Adam, Jesus remained faithful, opening for the believer a new path of obedience that can master temptation and remain united with God's heart.

In other New Testament narratives, Satan seems to be a member of the heavenly court (as in the Book of Job and the prophet Zechariah). Jesus for example tells Peter that Satan asked God to sift him like wheat (Luke

¹⁰ Sidney Page 2007.

¹¹ For example, in the books of Enoch, the Book of Jubilees, or the Testament of the twelve Patriarchs.

22:31), while Jesus prayed for Peter, knowing that his followers were too weak to be allowed to be tempted too strongly. The presence of Satan here warns the believer, in moments of foolish pride, of his/her weakness and dependence on God's strength and mercy. Satan can also stand for any human being who is an obstacle to God's plan. Jesus called Simon Peter a Satan (Mark 8:33) when he tried to find alternatives to his journey to death in Jerusalem.

Other images in the New Testament are nearer to the Apocrypha and to dualistic popular thought. Demons are seen as hierarchically ordered, Beelzebub being the one in charge (Mark 3:22). Devils afflict people with all sorts of illnesses and obstacles, and Satan is held responsible in particular for some specific sicknesses (Luke 13:16). Satan is the evil one, opposing God's will, strongly present in the world (Luke 8:28-34; Mark 4:15; Matthew 13:28; Luke 22:3), but Jesus is stronger (Mark 3:27). Jesus' teaching, parables and miracles take the devil for granted, but they offer no explanation why the devil must be there or where he comes from. Satan entered Judas and led him to betray Jesus, but Jesus went to the cross not because of Judas or the will of the devil, but because of the will of God. In the first letter of Peter, the devil is "prowling around like a roaming lion looking for someone to devour" (5:8). The Christian is warned to remain vigilant and to believe in one's own inner strength to resist: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7) In James, moreover, temptation is seen as coming from our own evil desires which we need to control (James 1:12-18).

Finally, the devil appears with many symbols and images in the apocalyptic writings of the Bible that are concerned with the future of the world, the end-times, but also with the spiritual conditions that sustain the hostile forces that God's people encounter. These writings acknowledge that whole nations can be under the influence of spiritual powers. Events take place that cannot be attributed to a single human being; spiritual forces are at work in a history that develops beyond the mere sum of individual actions. Already in Deuteronomy, we find the idea that God had given nations specific angels to lead them; only the people of Israel did not receive an angel, since God himself was taking care of them.¹² As the nations were divided here on earth, so the angels were divided in heaven, each one with specific tasks to look after their nations. In this line of thought, angels were seen to have a certain autonomy. In the apocalyptic parts of the

¹² Deuteronomy 32:8-9; 10:13; 10:20-21; 12:1. At times the archangel Michael is seen as Israel's angel—staying in close contact with God himself, and acting in direct response to God and on God's behalf.

Book of Daniel, in chapter 10, we find the story of the prophet receiving a terrifying vision about a war that is about to take place. He prays and fasts so that God may spare his people. The angel Gabriel is sent to him with a message, but is delayed by the angel of Persia. Since Persia was known at that time as the mightiest nation on Earth, its angel had equally proportional might in the spiritual world. A powerful political reality on earth reflected a powerful spiritual reality in heaven. In Wink's interpretation, the angel of Persia was looking after the interests of the Persian nation, but did not know or care for the wider vision that God had for Israel; he stood in the way of God's plan. The angel of a nation stands in relation to the concrete manifestations of the cooperative actions and identity of his people. Angels influence and in turn are influenced by the behaviour of their people. The goodness of an angel here seems defined in relation to his helpfulness or hindrance for bringing about God's will or revealing God's immediate presence. An angel became evil (according to the interpretation of Walter Wink) when the narrowly defined good of the angel's specific nation ran against the wider plan of God's universal outlook.¹³

In the same sense, the first two chapters of the Book of Revelations are addressed to the angels of the Christian churches. When the churches needed repentance, their angels needed repentance too. The heavenly patrons were linked to concrete communitarian realities on Earth (a church, (or a nation, or an institution). Some Bible scholars interpret the angels as referring to the bishops of the specific churches. Even then, the terminology of angels acknowledges something of a communal identity.

In some later writings of the New Testament (the Letters of John and the Book of Revelation) Satan is associated with an Antichrist. In the last book of the Bible, there are fierce battles to be fought, too terrible to imagine. The devil is locked up several times. Nevertheless, he continues to roam around, tied up with different beasts, to lead people astray until his final defeat at the end of time. The image of Satan in these later writings has more dualistic touches than the teachings of the Gospels and the Letters of Paul. The Book of Revelation was written when the Church was persecuted and when Christians were threatened with extermination. They experienced very destructive powers at work. The book acknowledges the difficulties of those times while giving the firm hope of Christ's

¹³ Walter Wink formulates his view on angels within the framework of a much wider view on Biblical powers and principalities. "Every Power tends to have a visible pole, an outer form—be it a church, a nation, and economy—and an invisible pole, an inner spirit or driving force that animates, legitimates, and regulates its physical manifestation in the world. Neither pole is the cause of the other. Both come into existence together and cease to exist together" (Wink 1984, p. 5).

victory over evil. It identifies Satan with the angel of Rome and associates him, beyond Rome, with a universal rebellion against God. Satan sums up all the wickedness in individuals as well as in nations and institutions according to the principles of apocalyptic literature. The message is that Christians will encounter persecution because of the Christian message, but Christ's victory over the devil is coming at the appointed time. The book is not about the powers of the devil, but about the authority of the risen Christ over all existing spiritual and human powers.

TRANSLATING THE DEVIL

How does one translate spiritual concepts into another language where people know different types of spirits that fit different contexts? The Jews had to struggle with this question when they translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek, to make it accessible to the Greek speaking Jews who no longer knew Hebrew. Today, any Bible translation has to struggle with this question too. Many connotations that a given term has in one culture cannot be carried over into the other; these connotations get lost in translation. At the same time, the translated term receives, in the new language, different connotations that were absent in the original.

The Septuagint, which is the Jewish authoritative translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek for the Greek-speaking Jews (dated to the second century before Christ), translated the Hebrew word Satan (שָׂטָן) of the Books of Job and Zechariah with the Greek term *diabolos* (διάβολος), which means slanderer or accuser.¹ It is from this Greek word that the English word “devil” is derived. The Septuagint uses the Greek words *daimon* and *daimonion* (δαίμων and δαίμόνιον) to translate six different Hebrew species of spirits. These six Hebrew species all became summarised into this singular Greek term, and from that Greek term is derived the English word “demon”. These Hebrew species of spirits—here I am following the Bible scholar Martin Dalek—have in common that they refer to gods or to superhuman beings who were worshipped by the pagans and to whom pagan people offered sacrifices. While in Christian theology demons are usually known as fallen angels, in the Hebrew Bible and in the Septuagint demons describe different types of spirits, but never angels.² Angels have their own Hebrew and Greek terms, *mal'ak* in Hebrew (מַלְאָךְ) and *angelos* in Greek (ἄγγελος), from which the English word

¹ In the New Testament, the Greek word Σάτανάς (pronounced *satanas*) is often used. Since then, *satanas* and *diabolos* have become synonymous with the devil.

² See Dale 2010.

“angel” is derived. (Note that in classical Greek, the *angelos* was a secular messenger more than a heavenly being.) On the other hand, angels in Hebrew thought, unlike demons, were associated strongly with the presence of God. They could be terribly fearsome; we may recall for example the incident where an angel of the Lord slaughtered 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one single night.³ Angels in the Bible are sometimes messengers of God, and at other times also rule over nations (and in the Book of Revelation also over churches) and judge them. Different from both angels and from demons in the Septuagint are the evil spirits (such as the one sent by God to Saul in 1 Sam 18:10; 19:9), which are rendered in the Greek translation as *ponera pnoimata* (πονερά πνεύματα). In both Hebrew and Greek, they were perceived as wind-like beings.

For the Jews, it was not so important to find an exact word for each type of spirit, but to pay attention to their impact on the relationship of the chosen people with God. Demons in Greek thought were not bad spirits as such. The Greeks worshipped their gods as demons and offered sacrifices to them. They knew them as spiritual creatures, some of them good, others with their whims and unpredictable behaviour, who could be appeased with sacrifices. However, for the Jews, they could only be bad, because, unlike the pagans, they knew themselves as God's own heritage. This way of handling translations is mirrored in our approach, in which we evaluate African spirits not in terms of their outer characteristics but in terms of what they are doing to a person's relationship with God.

WORKING WITH BIBLICAL IMAGES OF THE DEVIL

The demoniacs responded to Jesus' new message of the kingdom before anyone else was ready to accept him. They disrupted the “nice worship” in the synagogues. They were also the first to experience the radical new life brought by Jesus. Mary Magdalene “from whom he had driven out seven demons” (Luke 8:2) was the first to witness the resurrection, of which the others were not yet capable. Ignoring the demonic does not seem to be an appropriate approach—engagement with the images is helpful for gaining a glimpse into the newness and authority of the message of Christ.

When Mark, for example, narrates the story of Jesus curing a demoniac in non-Jewish territory and commanding the demons into a herd of two thousand pigs, which in turn drowned themselves in the lake (Mark 5:1-20), we may look at the story as an unlikely historical event that will

³ Isaiah 37:36-37.

hardly repeat itself again. But the believer may also allow the images of the story to speak to him/her and become a mirror for his/her own experiences with evil. Then the herd of unclean animals, the tombs on the graveyard where this miracle happens, or the destructive powers of the naked demoniac may come alive also in those who find themselves entangled in unrestrained addictions, in destructive thoughts and actions, in shame, cut-off from the community, or in a life lived without meaning and purpose. Unlike humans, the pigs—however unclean they are for the Jews—realise immediately that they cannot live with the demonic presence and opt for mass-suicide, revealing the self-destructive nature of embodied evil. Demoniacs are aware that they cannot liberate themselves and that healing comes with a price; inner peace is precious and should not be taken for granted.

Biblical images of the devil are not given to provide an intellectual understanding of heavenly realities. While they should not be reduced to the symbolic as if there was nothing else to them, images and symbols are good to think with. They do not only have a pole to which one can attach meanings and truths, but also a pole that appeals to the feelings, thus bundling hopes and fears that can be addressed through the vehicle of the image.⁴ Images of the devil are not just “out there”. Where an image appeals to a believer, it crystallises and formulates a life-situation and an experience. Symbols bring heavenly realities nearer to the believer’s life.

⁴ Turner 1969.

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The devil according to the teaching of the Catholic Church

*A historical consensus*⁵

Our approach does not start with a definition of the devil, but with people's descriptions of their experiences that they attribute to him (or to demons, or to witchcraft). However, in order to be rooted within the ministry of the Catholic Church, it needs to be in touch with the framework given by the teaching office of the Church; else, it evaporates in an ocean of personal opinion that makes its application to Church practice difficult. The documents of the Second Vatican Council were supplemented with a paper that clarified the position of the teaching office on the devil. This study, commissioned by the "Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith" on demonology in 1975, summed up a list of common points in Catholic teaching and practice that have crystallised across the many centuries. The Pope (Paul VI) did not sign the document, but recommended it nevertheless as a "sure foundation for the reaffirmation of the teaching of the Magisterium."⁶ Its crucial points are also documented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The document positions itself against two frontiers:

(1) Against the tide of Western enlightenment thinking, the document upholds the Church's belief in the devil, reacting against the dangers of downplaying the demonic side and the presence of evil in a personal and spiritual form. This consensus is derived from Biblical and doctrinal foundations, liturgical traditions and the lives of the saints. The Church teaches that the devil cannot be reduced to a symbolic, psychological or

⁵ Like the previous chapter, this chapter does not contain original research from my part. It functions as an appendix to show the position of the Catholic Church on the devil.

⁶ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 1975.

social construct. She stresses the need to guard oneself from the demonic world and to combat against it, especially by fighting against temptations.

(2) Against the tide of easy identification of sickness and misfortune with demons, of fearful or eccentric fascination with forms of the occult, and of increasing expectations for spectacular and dramatic deliverance from demonic powers, the Church calls for prudence, and for a critical mind, avoiding any form of spectacle when engaging with the occult world. When beliefs in witchcraft and demons are taken out of the overall context of faith, become prolific and bypass reason,⁷ they are as dangerous and sinful as the practice of occultism itself. The preoccupation with and the entanglement into the morass of superstitious beliefs is seen in itself as a mark of the devil who entraps his victims in their own fearful webs of imagination that creates a world of its own, one of superstition.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines superstition as “a departure from the worship that we give to the true God. It is manifested in idolatry, as well as in various forms of divination and magic” (article 2138). Beliefs are called superstitious when they are out of balance with the Church’s teaching and when they bypass the available rational faculties. Superstition is linked with the abandoning of reason; faith and reason must walk hand in hand if one wants to be guarded against superstitious beliefs.⁸ Article 2111 looks at forms of superstitions *within* the Christian faith:

Superstition is the deviation of religious feeling and of the practices this feeling imposes. It can even affect the worship we offer the true God, e.g., when one attributes an importance in some way magical to certain practices otherwise lawful or necessary. To attribute the efficacy of prayers or of sacramental signs to their mere external performance, apart from the interior dispositions that they demand, is to fall into superstition.

The Church also positions herself against the denial of free will and the refusal of taking responsibility for one’s own actions. The devil tempts (which is his prime way of influence), but cannot overpower God’s grace that is available to fight against temptation. “Man is responsible for the evil he does.” The document quotes Saint John Chrysostom: “It is not the devil but men’s own carelessness which causes all their falls and all the ills of which they complain.”⁹ It is false to speak of the kingdom of the devil as

⁷ See also *Fides et Ratio*.

⁸ See Pope John Paul II’s Encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio* no 48 and no 37.

⁹ In Austin Flannery’s edition (1982) the quote is on page 476.

if it exists on the same level as the kingdom of God; the devil cannot exist outside God's realm and providence. God's power and sovereignty does not fall short to include the demonic world, nor does the devil diminish in any way the goodness of God. The power of Satan cannot go beyond the limits set by God whose victory is assured. The Church warns against unnecessary speculations about demonic realities. She resists from giving doctrinal statements about the demonic world beyond the necessities of faith. When confronted with possible demonic interventions, the Church calls for a critical mind.

About the means of protection from the devil, Church teaching stresses a person's firm integration into the spiritual and sacramental life of the Church, seeking and submitting under God's will in daily life, together with the practice of "good works". The Church gives to the faithful so-called "sacramentals" (holy water, crucifixes, rosaries, pilgrimages to sacred shrines, relics and holy pictures, holy medals and a variety of rituals and prayers) as blessings and means of piety. Sacramentals should help Christians to remain dedicated to their baptismal promises and thereby to unfold the grace of the sacraments. If used in this way, sacramentals also protect against attacks by the Evil One.¹⁰ Among the sacramentals, the Church lists the solemn rite of exorcism (revised in 1999) as the Church's means of freeing a person from demonic possession, which is linked to the office of the bishop. Such an exorcism is constituted when "the Church asks publicly and authoritatively in the name of Jesus Christ that a person or object be protected against the power of the Evil One and withdrawn from his dominion."¹¹

In the footsteps of the Biblical tradition of Old and New Testaments, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* strongly prohibits any use of magic or witchcraft, and sees this prohibition rooted in the first commandment:

All practices of magic or sorcery, by which one attempts to tame occult powers, so as to place them at one's service and have a supernatural power over others—even if this were for the sake of restoring their health—are gravely contrary to the virtue of religion. These practices are even more to be condemned when accompa-

¹⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No 1670 – 1679. Sacramentals are different from the sacraments in catholic theology; they prepare a person to stay receptive and cooperative to the grace received through the sacraments.

¹¹ The fact that the rite of exorcism is listed among the sacramentals (not the sacraments) shows that it is not seen to work "*ex opera operato*" through the correct usages of words and gestures, but that it presupposes the faith of the exorcising priest (hence the stress to select "holy and worthy priests" for this function) and that its efficiency is seen in the context of the Church's sacramental life.

nied by the intention of harming someone, or when they have recourse to the intervention of demons. Wearing charms is also reprehensible. Spiritism often implies divination or magical practices; the Church for her part warns the faithful against it. Recourse to so-called traditional cures does not justify either the invocation of evil powers or the exploitation of another's credulity.¹²

NOTIONS OF THE DEVIL

The Catholic Church's teaching as outlined above has been shaped by a history of 2000 years. In the face of the widening gap in Christian outlooks, it is important to look at the struggles that have led to the Catholic consensus as outlined above, even if I am not able to do this in an adequate way.¹³ I do it in a schematic way, not as a study but as an appendix to this book.

We have seen that in the Bible different images of the devil were allowed to stand side by side. However, in subsequent centuries, Christian teaching built up the image of a single and hierarchical demonic world that has been persuasive until today. Origen and Tertullian applied the images of the kings of Tyre (in Ezekiel 28) and Babylon (in Isaiah 14) to the devil; hence the teaching that the devil fell from his glory in the presence of God because of pride. From these texts comes the naming of the devil as Lucifer, the light-bearer, which is the Latin name for the morning star, Venus. This name received support from 1 Corinthians 11:14 where Paul speaks about Satan disguising himself as an angel of light.¹⁴ Revelations (chapter 12) speaks of the stars that the dragon (the devil) cast down with its tale from heaven; many Patristic writers saw in these stars fallen angels, who followed Lucifer's rebellion.

The new view of a single hierarchical demonic kingdom ran the risk of being understood in a dualistic way. Christians now envisaged a kingdom of darkness fighting against a kingdom of light. The teaching office of the Church had to step in repeatedly to condemn a belief in two opposing cosmic principles or camps. The Church maintained, in its consensus of the first centuries, that the devil is a creature of God. God, not the devil,

¹² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No 2117.

¹³ Any short overview over a period of 2000 years is selective and inept. Here I rely on insights of F.A. Campagne, M. Denike, L. Mair, P. M. Quay, and C. Wethmar.

¹⁴ Satan in Judaism did not stand for a fallen angel; "Eden" referred to by Ezekiel refers not to the actual place of the lost paradise, but to a virtual heaven in the praised city of Tyre where all known "good things" could be indulged in. See Dale 2010.

created and sustains the material world. The devil was created good but fell because of pride. He tempts people and tries to lead them away from God. He rejoices in human suffering and in the corruption of humanity brought by sin, but is himself placed under the power of God.¹⁵

During the early centuries of the Church (the Patristic times), when the most fundamental Christian doctrines were established, evil was conceptualised in different ways. The Eastern Church stressed a personal embodiment of evil in the presence of the devil and of demons. This tradition (following Irenaeus, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus) envisaged the victory of Christ over the devil on the cross as a cosmic drama where God defeated the devil not by an outside decree but by entering himself into human history and thereby deifying fallen humanity. The way of humanity towards maturity in God proceeds through purification and pruning, for which even the devil plays a part. In the Western Church, among the Latin Fathers, a view developed of a more impersonal nature of evil. Augustine developed the idea of the alienating consequences of sin in a fallen world that fundamentally disturbed the order of creation.¹⁶ The teaching of the Catholic Church builds on both traditions (Eastern and Western), and looks at evil both in terms of personal embodiment (the devil) and in impersonal ways brought by corrupt structures and a broken world. The two views for the Church are not exclusive of each other but complementary.

The early Church shielded both views from two religious and philosophical trends that reformulated Christian ideas in strong dualistic notions: Manichaeism and Gnosticism. Manichaeism is the belief in two cosmic principles of good and evil, while Gnosticism (in some of its schools) postulates a radical opposition between a spiritual world and the material world; Gnostics were in search of divine experiences through direct infusion and enlightenment that bypassed human natural facilities and theological concepts. (Today, the position of many charismatic Christians in search of direct infusions of the Holy Spirit can come close to this line of thought.) The human body, “the flesh” together with “the world” (many Gnostics borrowed vocabulary from the Gospel of John and the Apocrypha) needed to be overcome through the shedding of ignorance; only “the spirit”, which is that part in us that realises its divine origin and destiny, will last. Gnosticism could be pessimistic about the

¹⁵ Campagne 2011.

¹⁶ See Wethmar 2006, pp. 4-5. Anselm of Canterbury developed Augustinian thinking: By paying the price for sin that dishonoured God, Jesus saved creation from the necessity of being destroyed by his death on the cross.

material world (which was seen as being under the control of the “*de-miurge*” who became, in Christian circles, easily equated with Satan). Gnostics often relied on guidance through astrology or the use of mystical words that were to overcome the predicaments of evil. When both themes of dualistic views, Manichaeism and Gnosticism, came to be appropriated by many Christians in popular thought, most of the Church Fathers felt the need to protect the Church doctrines from being swallowed up by this influence.

How did the Fathers of the Church in the first Christian centuries conceptualise the devil in order to avoid such dualistic pitfalls? One important theological view, influenced by the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus and taken up also by Augustine, understood evil not as a substance but as deprivation. Blindness becomes an evil for the blind person because his/her eyes miss a faculty, namely the capacity to see. Blindness is not an evil for a tree, but it is an evil for a human being who has eyes but cannot see. Evil in this paradigm is understood not as the presence of something bad, but as the absence of something good that belongs to the God-given order of existence. Throughout the first Christian centuries, icon writers depicted the devil (in spite of the name Lucifer) with the colour black, which symbolised less the presence of darkness than the total absence of light. He had lost the state of grace and the state of being in the presence of God, which belonged to him by nature of his being.

AUGUSTIN

In the Western Church, St. Augustine’s teaching about the devil (he himself not always free from a dualistic worldview) became dominant and shaped the field of theology for the first Christian Millennium. The historian and theologian Campagne describes the Augustinian view as follows:

What are the features of the devil configuration of the first millennium? For Saint Augustine, the devil is the tempter par excellence, a tireless inducer of deviant behaviors ... Evil is not a substance. It cannot be considered a principle opposed to goodness: evil is a deficient cause, a perversion of the will. Therefore, Satan’s favorite scenario to enact is the soul of man, his consciousness, his mind, his fantasy. Patristic demonology does not deny demons the capacity for producing real effects in the material world. These actions may acquire, at times, the nothingness of illusion, the non-corporeal features of a mirage ... Augustine compares Satan to jugglers and theatre stagehands ... whose performances presuppose fantasy

and reality at the same time. In certain circumstances, however, the devil was able to transcend the role of a mere buffoon and produce effects of an overwhelming materiality; an example of these can be seen in the *Dialogorum* by Gregory the Great, where Satan pulls walls down or throws vulnerable children into the fire. No matter the case, Patristic demonology stresses once and again that the devil can never produce any effect in the material world without a *sine-qua-non* pre-requisite: God's permission. This non-negotiable doctrine transforms the enemy into a powerful but strictly limited entity. That is why Augustine says ... "the devil is a certain power, but most of the time he wants to hurt and he cannot, because he is a power that is under other power."¹⁷

In this theology, the devil plays—unwittingly—a part in the plan of God's providence. He punishes the wicked and tests the righteous. Augustine, and many other theologians of his time, also connected the devil with pagan idols and gods, trapping their followers in an ignorance of darkness.¹⁸ The person situated in the realm of God's grace, in contrast, is assisted by temptations to reach perfection:

When Saint Anthony the Great reproaches the deity for his lack of intervention during some of the brutal beatings he suffered at the hands of the evil spirits, God replied: "I was there Anthony, but I waited in order to watch your fight." Satan and his followers play a specific role in this perspective, main characters in the Christian economy of salvation. Even against their own interests, demons become vectors of the divine will. ... And it is this thesis that makes understandable one of most famous maxims ... by Gregory the Great: "even when the will of the devil is always unfair, any power exerted through divine permission is fair."¹⁹

Catholic theology accepted that the devil wants to destroy but cannot, because he remains under divine restrictions. However, following the prophecies in the book of Revelation, Augustin made room in his theology for the end times, when the devil will be left unrestrained before his final defeat, so that the children of the light can see which terrific powers the sacrifice of Jesus overcame. In those times, the devil will be a much more frightening enemy against the Christians, and many will not be strong enough to resist. This apocalyptic image of a devil of a much

¹⁷ Campagne 2011, pp. 475-476.

¹⁸ Denike 2003.

¹⁹ Campagne 2011, p. 476.

more unrestrained nature came to the forefront in Christian history when people expected the end of the world to be near.

In recent times, many theologians have turned for inspiration to another influential Father of the Church, Irenaeus of Lyon, to counterbalance the pessimistic outlook of Augustine on fallen creation. While Augustine saw the world to be irreparably damaged through the devil, the fall and sin, Irenaeus (according to an influential interpretation) regarded sin and the expulsion from paradise as steps from immaturity to Christian maturity on a journey of growth.²⁰

While the Church Fathers shared a fundamental consensus about the devil, they had quite different opinions about the details of his works and place in the history of salvation. The early Church defined certain parameters, but allowed for a pluralistic way of looking at the function of evil in the world on the journey towards God.

THOMAS AQUINAS

What about the Church teaching of the second Christian Millennium? In the Latin Church, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) became a powerful magnet who shaped the consensus of theology for centuries to come. I feel the need to include his demonology into this book, not only because the first missionaries to Zambia were all trained in Scholastic theology (based on the principles laid out by Thomas Aquinas), but also because of its influence in modern seminary training in Africa.

Thomas wrote in a time that witnessed a different interest and emphasis on the demonic, which often corresponded with end-time expectations. His order (the Dominicans) was founded to counteract the doctrines of the Cathars, who preached the ideals of Christian poverty—in a dualistic framework—against a rich Church. The Cathars associated the devil with the material world; baptism in the spirit, as a personal experience with the divine, was the mark of salvation as opposed to baptism by water as administered by the official Church.²¹

²⁰ John Hick contrasted the Augustinian view of the fall (a total and perverse restructuring of creation through the original sin of Adam and Eve) with that of Irenaeus (the fall as a step on the journey to life from immaturity to maturity). While his description of Irenaeus is not accepted by all scholars, he nevertheless shows forcefully that Christianity in its first centuries allowed for various different typologies side by side. See also the discussion of Badham 1998.

²¹ The order of the Dominicans tried to convert the Cathars by embracing poverty; yet the subsequent wars that accompanied the violent crusades against the Cathars and other groups that were branded as heretics transferred many religious issues into political concerns. The conflict also led to the establishment of the inquisition with the task to eradicate heresy in the Church.

Thomas composed his writings around questions and counter-questions, exposing a theology that intended to rest on philosophical principles that are universal and timeless; he tried to provide to the Christian elite a firm ground in times that were marked by unrest and expectations of the end of the world. He incorporated into his theology Aristotelian philosophy, with the aim of providing a philosophical basis for the understanding of all spheres of life. The Aristotelian concepts of potency and act allowed him to elaborate subtle distinctions in the order of being, giving birth to a variety of new metaphysical concepts. Thomas saw angels and demons as belonging to an order of being whose substance is totally immaterial (unlike Patristic notions that generally attributed to them forms of material, ghostly and ethereal bodies). Their knowledge does not come from the senses (as human knowledge does) but from the nature of their intellect. They can interact with material objects, but they cannot alter the principles that govern the cosmos.²² He placed the world of angels and of demons into that part of the world that is accessible to the application of logic. Thomas looked at the possibilities and impossibilities in each different sphere or order of creation. He brought the devil and the demonic world under the gaze of logical thinking: since the devil and his demons were bound to the order given to them by God, their actions could actually be studied and classified within the realm of science. Such a gaze could become, in subsequent scholastic theology, detached from the studied object, analysing it from the outside, as if the observer was unconnected to the reality that he/she studied. Theologians worked out various concepts of demonic possibilities, sometimes by taking up popular myths of the time. Possibly the most well-known of these are the *succubus*, which is a female demon that can have intercourse with a man to steal his sperm, and the *incubus*, which is the male counterpart that sleeps with women to make it conceive a child (often a witch) who will be more receptive to the powers of the devil. Thomas himself had affirmed these concepts, which, however, came to be contested in different theological schools; the teaching office of the Church has restrained itself from formulating doctrinal statements about the nature of demons in such terms. Some conclusions of Thomistic ideas show a marked contrast to Augustinian teaching and to the general perceptions of Patristic times and the first millennium in general.²³ One scholar (Fabián Alejandro Campagne) argues, however,

²² Campagne 2011.

²³ Some of the teachings of Thomas also seem to run against earlier doctrines (for example of the Council of Braga) that limit the material effects of the devil. Take for example the following canon of the Council of Braga. "If anyone believes that the devil made some creatures

that one understands Thomas' view on demons and the devil better if one does not oppose it to Augustinian and Patristic thought, but sees it as an extension, mapped out in different philosophical principles, before the background of popular end-time expectations, with which the Christians in his context struggled.²⁴

Today, Thomas' distinctions inform many Catholic exorcists. I have already alluded in chapter 1 to the Scholastic distinction between the natural, the preternatural (angelic and demonic interventions), and the supernatural (God's intervention) in the Vatican guidelines for the official exorcism. Through it, the exorcist differentiates between true demonic possession and manifestations that mirror demonic possession yet go back to psychological disturbances. The exorcism is meant for the former, not the latter. The guidelines presuppose the ability to distinguish real demonic possession from pseudo-possession by gradually excluding the natural and the supernatural causes in what is observed and examined, whereby one is left in the end with the preternatural causes, which is the sphere of the demonic. (I refer the reader back to the section "Diagnosis?" on page Diagnosis?35 concerning my own reservations about this ability but also about creative possibilities of using the distinction in a person-centred approach.)

THEOLOGY OF THE "WITCH-CRAZE"

While Thomas placed the demonic into the realm of logic and science, it is important to see that he embedded his notions into the context of a *negative theology* that he embraced, which stresses the inexpressible mystery of God and, by implication, of the spiritual world. In brief, negative theology acknowledges that we cannot say what God is, but only what God is not. The reason is that any positive statement about God ultimately reifies God (placing God under the order of things and of creation), since such statements originate in observable phenomena in the created world in which God cannot be contained. Positive statements about God (like "God is good;"—"God is all powerful;"—"God all knows") may place God above created entities, but since God remains comparable (he is the greatest of all, etc.), he remains part of the same order, and thereby is turned into an idol. Negative theology understands such statements only in an al-

in the world and by his own authority the devil himself causes thunder and lightning, and storms and spells of dryness, just as Priscillian has asserted, let him be anathema." Thomas' view on the devil's influence on the physical world went far beyond lightning and thunder!

²⁴ Campagne 2011.

legorical sense, never forgetting that they cannot fully describe God. The transcendence of God means that God remains ultimately unknowable. Such a theology allowed Thomas to retain a sense of mystery and to prevent the colonizing mind to fix God into its own schemes and categories.

The history of the European witch-craze (largely between the 15th and 17th century) demonstrates the inherent violence of Christian dogmatic narratives that are taken out of the framework of the negative theology that the Christian mystics advocated. When Thomas' notions of the demonic became divorced from this framework, scholastic theologians facilitated a constitution of knowledge about the demonic with fatal consequences. Assisted by various religious and political constellations, they provided a theoretical foundation for the prosecution and execution of many tens of thousands of alleged witches. Witchcraft was no longer seen as a sin amongst other sins, but—through identification with heresy and devil-worship—as a threat to the moral ground and foundation of the Christian society.¹ Since Thomistic theology had placed witchcraft into the realm of science, it could be proven or disproven by recourse to special judicial procedures, tests and ordeals. Theologians provided manuals, the most famous being the *Malleus Maleficarum* (in English *Hammer of the witches*), which was an influential treatise on the practices and prosecution of witches used by the Catholic Inquisition, and was written in 1486 by Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger. What looked like and was presented as a scientific approach for identifying witches, became an instrument that allowed scapegoats, undesired people and objects of personal vendettas to be easily eliminated. The extraordinary status given to the crime of witchcraft allowed and legitimised methods of inquiries (for example extracting confessions under torture, or the guarantee of anonymity for the accuser) that were outlawed for other crimes. Since witches were executed by the state powers, not the Church, the political chessboards of those times forced their own dynamics on the prosecution procedures.

The witch-craze halted in Europe, many historians argue, because judges, though themselves believing in the forces of witchcraft, eventually no longer recognised the validity of the judicial proof brought against witches in court. By placing the forces of witchcraft again outside the discourses of science and physical evidence, one could no longer convict witches in the courts. Once witches could not be convicted, there was no longer any point in prosecuting them.

¹ Mair 1980.

THEOLOGY IN A SECULAR WORLD

At the onset of religious pluralism after the reformation and subsequent religious wars, the certainties of the religious world were losing ground to secular ones. Theologians were no longer in the driving seat for providing the foundations for communal living in a pluralistic world. In modern times, following the rapid changes brought by scientific discoveries and subsequently changing modes of thought, theologians needed to make the Christian faith more compatible with the outlook that was shaping the modern Western world. Aristotelian concepts were no longer persuasive; scholastic theology had thereby lost the ground it was built on. Influential voices in the enlightened elite saw in the concepts of demons and witchcraft misguided and dangerous beliefs that could be easily abused by religious fanaticism as proven historically during the witch-craze. People did not necessarily stop believing in demons and in witchcraft, but such beliefs were, like other religious premises, marginalised into the realm of subjective views and banned from the public sphere.

Religious ideas continued to be valued in a separate religious sphere of meaning and morality (many enlightened people were inherently religious), but were stripped of propositional value when explaining the physical world. "The Bible teaches us the way to heaven," said Galileo (and later Newton), "but not the way the heavens go." Theology could no longer determine the principles of physics, nor of the workings of the brain. Symptoms once associated with witchcraft and demons came to be explained as physiological malfunctions in organic medical models. Since 1905, it has become common medical knowledge that progressing syphilis infections can cause sudden seizures, memory-impairments and insanity; demons were no longer necessary to explain such phenomena. Regular hallucinations, the hearing of voices or temporal states of psychosis, in which the senses and one's personality become seriously disorganised, could be explained now with reference to conditions of the brain or to nerve damage, chemical imbalances or inadequate levels of neurotransmitters. Spirits and demons evaporated from the explanatory models, and so did witchcraft. Biological, psychological and anthropological models took their place. Through its long history in Europe, Christianity was becoming compatible with the epistemological systems of Western health care, Western education and Western systems of governance. The Enlightenment, however, never managed to break the fascination with witchcraft and the occult even in the Western world (see chapter one). It did manage, though, to contain this fascination within segments of the

population with situational beliefs (esoteric bubbles) that could no longer force their premises on wider society.

I have outlined, in the first chapters of this book, some of the consequences of marginalising devil and demons from theology. What about my own distinction between inner and outer worlds as outlined in chapter 7: Does it not rest on the secular worldview that bans the spiritual world from the public realm? While it is marked by a secular experience that makes room for plural spiritual beliefs, it does not rest on the secular worldview. Our distinction is not formed on an ontological level but on that of statements and truth-claims. I have explained that we do not play out the truth-claims of one religious tradition (or prophecy or divination) against those of another; a given inner world narrative is not allowed to become the binding meta-narrative for the public. Thereby we do not ban religion to the private sphere. We engage with religion in the public sphere and acknowledge that for many believers the public sphere cannot be separated from the religious. What we deny is the violence that comes from giving truth claims of the inner world the status of a binding truth for all.

A CALL FOR FURTHER REFLECTIONS

Augustine formulated demonology through engagements with the neo-Platonic philosophy of his time, to provide a basis for a consensus for the first Christian Millennium. Thomas Aquinas looked towards Aristotelianism to shape demonology for the second Christian millennium. The question is still open about the line of thought that can close a widening gap between the different demonologies at the beginning of the third Millennium, mediating between the gulfs that were drawn between “northern” and “southern” ways of looking at the devil.

“The devout Christian of the future will either be a ‘mystic,’ one who has experienced ‘something,’ or he will cease to be anything at all,” predicted Karl Rahner.² The theological virtuoso of the twentieth century had elevated human experience over abstract ideas as the ground for a theology of the future. When we apply this to the demonic, we may also hold that any theology dealing with evil forces should start with an exercise of listening to concrete *experiences* with this unseen world—from a perspective of faith—without being trapped in its labyrinths. This was the first step with which we started our approach: Striving for genuine

² Rahner 1971, p. 15.

listening that does not do violence to a person's experience (by pressing it into outside categories), but which will be sensitive to cultural nuances and will engage with them. An approach that arises from listening will build on the positive life-orientations that a person has taken and will be affirmative. The understanding of human life as "being with" and as "belonging" comes with distinctive opportunities to engage with spiritual powers (evil, good, or ambivalent) by addressing concrete human relationships. In this book, we have pursued this path.

At the beginning of the third millennium, the charismatic approach has become an important force that engages with concrete experiences with the demonic. In the next chapter, I will engage with some relevant questions that deal with this experience.

Charismatic theology of healing and deliverance

Dialogue with the prosperity gospel

Witchcraft comes with its own space or sphere in which it unfolds its powers over people (chapter 13). The same can be said about demons. Outside of this space, in the many day-to-day encounters, witchcraft is irrelevant even among strong believers. But when witchcraft beliefs become alive, they force their own logic and symbolic order on the believer. Unfortunately, God and the Christian faith seem often irrelevant inside this “witchcraft space”, that appears even in the lives of the most ardent Christians.

If witchcraft and demons become alive and persuasive in very specific situations, and if it comes with its own space or sphere that functions according to its own rules, then the language of deliverance needs to make sense not only in the catechism class but inside the “witchcraft space”.

The charismatic experience has enabled many Christians to find a way to bring their experiences with witchcraft and with demons into prayer. During prayer and trance they can relate to their experience and bring it to God. The whole body of the possessed and afflicted, not just the mind, becomes the medium through which to engage with the unseen world. In charismatic theology, the human body is allowed to symbolise the attack as well as God’s intervention.

Deliverance in the charismatic experience is a communitarian event. This helps the victim of witchcraft to elevate a private concern to the public level. While Western approaches have silenced and marginalised the sufferer of witchcraft attacks and of demons, the charismatic experience is giving it centre stage in the public space. This corresponds with the African way of dealing with witchcraft and with spirits. It fulfils an important function that was nearly totally neglected by mission Christianity. Owen

Sichone has made the point that a reference to witchcraft (and we can say the same about demons) enables a person to elevate a private concern to the public level.³ Witchcraft concerns the community because it is an affront against everybody. Witchcraft and demons are exciting. People like to talk about them. They come with a drama—a public drama. A private concern of a person who is struck by misfortune becomes a public event. In Europe, many Dioceses have reintroduced the office of the exorcist. But exorcism is often a very private event. Some Dioceses have even installed soundproof rooms for their exorcism! The public is shielded from the concerns of the possessed. In contrast, deliverance in the charismatic experience is always somehow a public or semi-public event, and, if we apply the argument of Owen Sichone, it needs to be.

But when deliverance finds a public outlet, it becomes also crucial to create opportunities for reflection about this experience, including theological reflection. Charismatic Christianity has become in Africa a dominant lens through which many Christians view spiritual attacks. It will benefit from an engagement with the church's struggles in previous ages in view of its theology of grace, or the doctrinal positions over and against Gnosticism, dualism or, for example, the theology of the Cathars—as discussed in the last chapter. Charismatic thought also benefits from a discussion about the relationship between faith and reason. According to Pope Jean-Paul II,

Deprived of reason, faith has stressed feeling and experience, and so run the risk of no longer being a universal proposition. It is an illusion to think that faith, tied to weak reasoning, might be more penetrating; on the contrary, faith then runs the grave risk of withering into myth or superstition.⁴

In this chapter, I want to reflect about the relationship between experiences with witchcraft and demons, as part of the charismatic experience of deliverance, and the prosperity gospel. I have argued in chapter 4 that the prosperity gospel “breeds demons”, since it invites the believer to view personal misfortunes in spiritual terms. It shapes the imagination of the demonic in a specific way where it stresses power over meaning, the spiritual over the material, and the future over the past. But the charismatic experience also seeks the challenge of conversion: deliverance ends with “giving one’s life to Jesus”. Conversion entails that one looks at the world with new eyes. In this chapter I want to draw out what these new

³ Sichone 2006.

⁴ *Fides et Ratio* 48.

eyes could mean in view of the charismatic notions of healing and deliverance, as well as prosperity.

A THEOLOGY OF DELIVERANCE AND HEALING

The Charismatic Renewal Movement, learning from Pentecostalism, has brought back the healing ministry to a central position in Catholic church practice, where it belongs. From the viewpoint of Catholic charismatic theology, Betty Igo understands healing as

a process of spiritual, relational, intellectual, emotional, and physical reconstruction under the guidance of the Holy Spirit... The basis of all authentic healing rests in God's merciful, unconditional (agape) love. Wherever God's love exists, healing power is present. God loves all He has created. Therefore, God's love (healing power) is present in all creation whether consciously recognized by us or not. In fact, daily we receive much healing from God without our awareness of it.⁵

Or again,

Inner healing extends the Lordship of Jesus into our past memories and future anticipations, giving us more freedom to be our authentic selves, to obey the call of the Father and eventually allow ourselves to be drawn into deeper peace with God, others and self... Truth is at the heart of all healing. Any truthful thought, feeling, word or action that we have performed or have taken in from others in peace will become a part of our being. That which we have done or has been done to us that opposes who we are called to be is still agitating within and stealing our joy or peace creating conflict or a restless heart. Our peace is found in our being the person the Father has called us to be. This is our authentic call or true self... God's love is always the initiating principle in healing although the degree of faith and openness on the part of the intermediary (minister of healing) and/or receiver (person seeking healing) seems to hasten or hinder the healing process. The exact extent of the degree of faith needed on anyone's part is a mystery but the focus of the minister should be on becoming one with Jesus and letting Him heal instead of measuring the degree of our faith or worrying about [it].⁶

⁵ Igo 2007, p. 8.

⁶ Igo 2007, p. 10.

The reader will notice how neatly this vision also fits into Zambian visions of personhood (chapter 13 and 14). It furthermore speaks of the universality of healing beyond the Christian faith, while acknowledging a specific Christian dimension that Christ entrusted to his Church. All prayer-life, sacramental life, worship, and groups in the Church work together in unity to bring this healing to the world; the Christian healing ministry flows from the unity with the Church. The Church prays for the healing of the sick and works for the alleviation of suffering, but does not deny that suffering can have meaning on the road to life. She encourages the sufferer to unite him/herself with Jesus on the cross for the sanctification of the Church.⁷ The catholic deliverance ministry will therefore not distract from the Christian hope in eternal life, which is linked to a person's life-vocation: What am I living for? And what am I ready to die for?

The roadmap for a theology of Christian deliverance is laid out in the "Our Father". The prayer closes with a petition to free us from the controlling presence of evil or the evil one. It does so by addressing God, not the devil. Before praying for deliverance, we have already longed for His kingdom, His will, His help in providing for our daily needs, and His forgiveness. And we have confessed our own willingness to forgive. Only then do we pray for deliverance.

People in Africa know that witchcraft is rooted in hatred, greed, selfishness, feelings of exclusion, despair, lust for power and jealousy. These negative emotions will stay with us as long as there are human beings in this world. Christians know that they can open us to powers that lead us away from God. Witchcraft in Africa is understood as one such power. Deliverance removes neither devils nor witchcraft from this world. Instead, deliverance repositions us into a new relationship with God and with others. Therefore, deliverance is not some powerful act that removes unwanted circumstances or misfortune—even if many understand it that way. God's intervention has freed nobody if we continue to live our lives as we did before: with our own priorities that remain untouched by the offer of Christ's Kingdom, inappropriate relationships and attachments, animosities and suspicions, lack of love, happy in our addictions, and content outside the embrace of God.

Witchcraft is a relational power (chapter 13). I have shown in this book that also deliverance is a process that repositions people in a new relational way. Success must be evaluated by the question whether it has transformed a victim of witchcraft or demons into an agent of reconcilia-

⁷ *Lumen Gentium* 12.

tion. Where pastors or priests simply send witchcraft attacks “back to the sender” (a common practice in Zambia), we may question what kind of transformation and reconciliation has taken place in the healing process! The deliverance ministry cannot enforce reconciliation, but it can demand from the person who comes for help to open channels of communication and make concrete humanizing steps, however small, towards the “witch-other”. Deliverance from witchcraft demands that the victim acknowledges a shared humanity with the person of the witch. Prayers for deliverance seek to be a humanising and re-humanising experience for all parties involved.

Trance and hypnotic effects (temporal loss of pain) that accompany many forms of charismatic and ecstatic prayer can accompany the process of healing, but are not the measurement of healing. Nor are they sure signs of possession—neither by a demon, nor by the Holy Spirit. In the right conditions, many people go easily into an altered state of consciousness (chapter 4). God may work through trance experiences (in the Bible he sometimes does), but not every trance comes from God or from a demon. We are aware that those who see demons in others may be projecting their own demons onto the sick. According to St. Paul, any prayer for healing that is answered by God will also be accompanied by the “fruits of the Holy Spirit”:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22).

Such fruits help the Christian to engage on a long-term basis with structural, social and political realities that cannot be simply prayed away but that need active Christian involvement.

The charismatic experience of healing in Africa is often also marked by a stress on prayer, fasting and intercession. These have proven helpful in the deliverance ministry—where they did not go against the medical requirements of the sick. They can be understood as an acknowledgement of one’s own powerlessness and dependence on God, rather than attempts of twisting God’s mind and forcing him into one’s own schemes. Prayer and fasting are means of searching and uniting oneself with God, who—we trust—always gives life.

In Catholic charismatic theology, individual “gifts of the Spirit” work in union with the whole Church and in harmony with the other gifts. Discernment is a weighing of different options in the light of the whole deposit of faith. The process of discernment cannot bypass the leaders of the Church. Since different people are given different gifts, which—

together—work for healing, Catholic charismatic deliverance cannot be understood as a power-game between a singular gifted Christian and a demonic entity. In the praying community, all are part of the experience of deliverance and healing.

In catholic theology, the “gifts of the Spirit” are not seen as contradicting but as complementing natural gifts and talents; faith healing does not develop in opposition to the medical and science-oriented professions. They work on different layers or levels which have influence on each other but which also each have their own internal dynamics. The ministry of healing is about the needs of the sick, not the needs of the healer or pastor who may want to prove his/her God-given powers. The healer must never blame, coerce or manipulate the sick, who need always to be treated with respect. Truth, humility and honesty accompany prayers for healing. When manifestations of the demonic accompany the deliverance ministry in Africa, some charismatic Christians seek to “bind” the devil, as if he were a sort of pet who can be easily handled. Apart from the theological considerations, there are also grave ethical issues attached to the delivery ministry. Many people who come for deliverance are in a very vulnerable state of mind, are emotionally charged and are easily manipulated by the subtle expectations of the prayer groups. Some are teenagers or even children; attitudes of prayer that focus on demons, and that take little consideration of the developmental stage of a person, can cripple a healthy self-esteem and leave damaging effects, of which this book contains some examples.

DELIVERANCE AND THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL

The wide acceptance of the Prosperity gospel in Africa has entered mainstream Christian churches through the back doors (through popular grassroots initiatives) and sometimes through the front doors—when priests and pastors capitulated before its popularity, portraying their own theological bankruptcy: “If we do not preach it here, people will go somewhere else!” Obviously, it has also entered Catholic charismatic practice.

Mainstream Christian life in Africa has much to do with lifting people out of poverty, providing health-care, education, and working for justice and peace. Christian social teaching seeks to secure the conditions for general prosperity to flourish. Pentecostal churches have made another contribution, which has at times been neglected in Catholic life: a faith-driven self-confidence: “It is possible! If I live an honest life along

Biblical lines, I can make it! God is with me! Before God's eyes, my life will be a success—not only in heaven but also here on Earth!”

Prosperity as such therefore cannot be the point of contention in catholic theology. It holds, with the prosperity gospel, that God is angered by the appalling conditions of poverty, which can lead people to despair and breed many vices. Catholic and prosperity theology assert that true prophets are moved by people's poverty and that they try to show a way out. Material rewards are part of an understanding of blessings and of the prayer for “daily bread”. Furthermore, both assert that miracles happen when people meet in faith and surrender their lives to the demands of the Gospel. The point of contention is the identification of “life to the full” with “life in prosperity”. It excludes the majority of those Christians in Africa who live in poverty or with incurable sicknesses as cursed or brands them as people who lack faith.

Christians advancing the prosperity gospel see themselves as “born-again” Christians, meaning they claim to have abandoned the standards of their old lives. Critics from older Pentecostal, Evangelical and Catholic angles have long been asking what kind of conversion is needed for a person who looks for God's blessings in terms of success, business and happy marriages.¹ Surely, even the pagan expects just as much from life. Conversion implies a reshaping of a person's hopes and fears. Where demons—real or imagined—continue to feed on hopes and fears that have not been touched and reshaped by the Gospel, a deliverance ministry needs to ask itself some soul-searching questions.

In the following table, I present two different ways of looking at the notion of prosperity. On the left side (“living with the gifts of the giver”) I present a focus on prosperity that, in my mind, needs to be challenged or corrected in a charismatic theology that wants to be catholic. (All statements on the left side are taken from lengthy discussions that I had with charismatic believers who advocated a strong version of the prosperity gospel in a Lusaka Parish that I have described in chapter 4.)

The right side (“living with the giver of gifts”) presents the mainstream corrective.² The approach of deliverance outlined in this book needs the willingness on the side of the victim of demons to move (where necessary) from the left side to the right side of the table as part of a process of conversion.

¹ See for example Banja 2009.

² Living with the giver of gifts: see for John Piper (2001), who built his theology on the notion of Christian joy (he called it “Christian hedonism”).

Living with the gifts of the giver	Living with the giver of gifts

Life to the full

***"I came so that they might have life and have it abundantly."
(John 10:10)***

Life to the full is found in a life lived in health, good relationships, and general prosperity, as part of the covenant. A person living with the giver (God) also lives with the gifts. A Christian can claim his/her blessings!

Life to the full is a promise of rewards: "You will receive a hundred times: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands..." (see Mark 10:30).

Life to the full is a gift from God that is given to people of faith through the spiritual order of existence (God's blessings) which determines all other aspects of life: the economic, material, biological, social, etc.

Life to the full means that the future is bright. However much you suffer at present, you cannot count the blessings that God bestows on the believer tomorrow, in all aspects of life.

Life to the full refers to life lived with the giver (God) more than to life lived with the gifts. As such it belongs also (and even very specifically) to the poor, the outcast, the mourners who lost their loved ones, and those who can no longer claim life in terms of the standards of this world. Life to the full also focuses on the Christian communities, where joys and sorrows are shared.

Life to the full starts with a demand: "Whoever has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel... (see Mark 10:29).

Life to the full is a gift from God that is given to people of faith with the demand to work actively on the material, social, political and economic levels of existence.

Life to the full is not dependent on my future economic standing. The future is uncertain, but we live in hope that at the end of the day all will be well thanks to God. It is oriented towards the present moment, the "now". The promise of future fulfilment of "life to the full" refers especially to eternal life. Glimpses of it are experienced also in the now when the values of the Kingdom are lived.

Living with the gifts of the giver	Living with the giver of gifts
Life to the full shows itself in the fulfilment of the believer's needs.	Life to the full shows itself in the ability to live life for others, grow in compassion, and become the person who conforms to God's image in the soul.
Prosperity here on Earth is a sign of divine grace and blessings at work in the believer's life.	Prosperity, good health, a good spouse and children are worthy gifts to be sought and to pray for. They can be signposts on the way to life to the full. However, they are neither its measurement nor its condition.
God is most glorified in me when I am most satisfied in him, in the midst of prosperity.	God is most glorified in me when I am most satisfied in him, also in the midst of loss. ¹

Our needs

“God will fully supply whatever you need, in accordance with the glorious riches in Jesus Christ.” (Phil 4:19)

Our God is a rich and generous God, not a poor God. He is not only able, but also willing to meet all your needs in every area of your life.	Look at the life of Jesus Christ and dwell on it to see what his glorious riches are about.
Your needs for marriage, for food, children, prosperity, health, a job, are the steppingstones for God to come into your life.	Life to the full starts with an attitude of surrender, including your own desires. It starts where eyes open for the needs of others. Your own needs and desires will be transformed in the process.

Poverty & misfortune

“He has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor.” (Luke 4:18)

Personal experiences of poverty, misfortune and sickness are signs that Christ's covenant is not yet fully effective in your life, that there are spiritual blockages, or demons, or curses, or a general lack of faith.	Personal experiences of poverty, misfortune or sickness don't alienate you from the Kingdom of God, since the meaning of life does not depend on the standards of this world. Life can be yours also in poverty and mourning. Even when the gifts are withdrawn, God's glory can shine through suffering and weakness.

Living with the gifts of the giver	Living with the giver of gifts
With God, there is no sickness. Sickness comes from Satan not from God. That God can use suffering or sickness for something good is a deception of Satan who wants to keep us in the trap of poverty.	Suffering is part of a mystery for which there is no easy answer. The believer does not look for suffering or sickness. Yet when they come, they can make him/her open for the values of the Kingdom. The suffering believer is encouraged by the Church to unite him/herself with Christ in His sufferings.

Healing & Miracles

“Your faith has healed you” (Mt 9:22)

Total healing of the body is part of the covenant. Bodily health is the fruit that shows that the authority of the devil is broken and God’s life can come to fulfilment in the person. Jesus brings physical healing for those who accept him, reform their lives, ask Jesus for healing and have faith that this healing will materialise. Supernatural powers, miracles and life to the full are manifested in total healing, in a breakthrough in finances, in marriage and in personal success.	Great healing powers are granted by God in the presence of faith, prayer, surrender, reconciliation, forgiveness and believing the Good News. However, not all sicknesses are always healed. Health is not the absolute measurement for life. Supernatural powers, miracles, and life to the full are manifested in the ability to have compassion, live life for others, experience God’s peace in the present moment even in the worst circumstances, and live in Christian fellowship.

The Cross & Resurrection

“By his wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24)

We are a people not of the cross but of the resurrection. Jesus is risen. He is no longer at the cross. We have preached for too long a religion of the cross. The cross is a sign of defeat. The resurrection is a sign of success. It is time to preach a religion of glory.	We are people of the resurrection through the cross. Jesus is risen. Yet he is also suffering in all those who suffer. We cannot move away from the cross—because it is at our own doorstep. We take it up in the growing awareness of the Easter that is to come.

The table shows two different ways of looking at prosperity. However, my corrective should not lead us into a simplistic dismissal of the prosperity gospel. Its message resonates in Christian hearts, across all denominations, throughout Africa. It resonates with the struggles of many and is also a critic of a prayer life that fails to engage (intellectually and spiritually) with the new global realities and with people's aspirations, including those of an emerging middle class.

I wish therefore to conclude this chapter with a thought of philosopher and theologian Hermen Kroesbergen. He says that the mainstream Christian has two options. We can dismiss the prosperity gospel as unchristian and as foolish; it often simply does not work. Or can look at it in the light of what people actually do.

We need to look at the prosperity gospel not as a set of apparently false statements, but as a religious ritual, a puzzling ritual, that requires an examination of the way it is taken up in people's lives. How do they use it?³

Its believers pray for prosperity, but usually also work for prosperity, and often do so with a sense of Christian dignity. Its theology can be questioned when prayer for prosperity is about manipulation, when it is enacted mechanically, lacking a personal faith perspective that fears and trembles before God, and when it is not about God at all but about the needs of the believer. However, Kroesbergen asks, who is there to judge from the outside that this is the case with the praying individual? It is easy for mainstream Christian thought to develop a judgemental attitude, on doctrinal grounds, with the prosperity gospel. It is also easy to miss the ritual challenge and critique that it poses to mainstream Christian thought where the latter fails to connect with modern African aspirations. Dialogue with the prosperity gospel must not stop with the doctrinal statements. It starts with the lives of those who live it: their sense of dignity, joy, courage, community, and resolve that they try to translate into all the aspects of their existence. How this reflects also into the notions of witchcraft, demons, and Satanism should be of much concern for any approach that starts with people's actual life-situations. I believe this gives much scope for further investigations and research.

³ Kroesbergen 2013, p. 82.

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Conclusion

Beyond witchcraft and Satanism

Many victims of spiritual attacks experience witchcraft and Satanism as raw and senseless evil, which is at once personal and social, interior and exterior, physical and spiritual. Visions, dreams and symbols describe these experiences better than does abstract thought, by showing forth the evil's power and destructive force *in action* that cannot be frozen into a fixed, intellectual discourse. In this conclusion, I want to come back to these concrete experiences and ask about a way that could lead a person beyond the concepts of witchcraft, because witchcraft is a concept that sees much darkness in the face of the suspected neighbour but very little light.

In this book, I have proposed to address such experiences through the world and life-situation of the victim, not apart or aloof from it. It is possible to help without pretending to know the evil's metaphysical or ontological character. We listen and feel ourselves into the descriptions, value them as the client's true experiences, try to "unfix" them from any frozen interpretation, think about the scope for public action (outer world), and place the events into a wider personal narrative that calls for a response from the faith perspective of the affected person. We focus especially on broken relationships and on a sense of belonging to a community. Since witchcraft is a relational power, something in the life situation of the victim needs to resonate with the forces of witchcraft. The non-participation in witchcraft discourses becomes, according to this logic, the safest way of being protected from it. One woman, a single parent, living in the rural Luapula Province, illustrated this point:

People attacked me when I got a prestigious job. Here in the village, nobody has formal employment. When people saw me, a woman, get the job for which many others had also applied, they were jeal-

ous. After a month, early in the morning, when I came out of my house to sweep, I found a leg of an animal sticking out from the soil just before my door, pointing upwards. I dug out the animal and saw it was a dead dog. I was surprised to find no footprints around even though it was in the rainy season. How can somebody bury a dog before your door, leaving no footprints? I knew that somebody wanted to make me afraid, but I was ready to show him or her that I was not afraid. I did not talk about it to my neighbours—we were not getting along well. But I talked to a priest who prayed with me and advised me I should not think about it too much. “Just let it be,” he said. “The witches will bewitch themselves.” This made sense. I thought, “If I have to die because of this job, so let it be!” Another morning, I found strange medicines—roots of trees and pieces of a broken pot—around my house. I collected them and threw them in the rubbish pit. I told my children: “If you find strange things around our house, do not touch them, but do not bother about them either.” After some time, it all stopped. Maybe the witches just got tired.

The woman defeated the jealousies (and witchcraft?) of her neighbours through non-participation in any witchcraft discourse. She did not allow fear to prevent her from doing what she knew was right.

I wish to conclude this book with this insight. We have gone a long way trying to help people to make sense out of their experiences with witchcraft and Satanism. After moving through witchcraft attacks, however, another aim crystallises in our pastoral engagements: to move away from the witchcraft discourses to other ways of spiritual growth. In many families, the grandparents had been struggling with witchcraft attacks. Their children struggled with other witches and their grandchildren find themselves again under constant attacks.⁴ Witchcraft proliferates and perpetuates itself, and so does the fear of it. The long-term aim of a pastoral approach comprises to break the vicious cycle and to move out of the witchcraft discourse. When we work through the attacks, we hope that one day the person can just start a new chapter in life in which witchcraft no longer plays a central role.

Does this mean that we aim at producing “enlightened Christians” for whom witchcraft no longer exists? To be enlightened in the sense of de-

⁴ This point was made to me by Elisabeth Colson when she read a draft of this book. She has a long-time experience of studying witchcraft accusations in Zambia (spanning over seventy years!) She talked to me about families where individual witchcraft accusations could sometimes be defused, but in which new accusations flared up generation after generation. Such experiences pose the question how to overcome this cycle.

mystifying a fear-provoking spiritual world and looking for alternative and better explanations is a good thing. At the same time we acknowledge that witchcraft discourses have existed for thousands of years, in most cultures of the world. They crystallize experiences with senseless evil and loss, alienation, and an awareness of being controlled and exploited by others. These experiences remain, whether a person believes in witchcraft or not.

The denial of the forces of witchcraft (or of demons, spirits or the devil, for that matter) should not rob the “enlightened Christian” of openings to engage with evil that is at work in society and that evades rational thought and the conscious mind. “The one thing we refuse to admit,” said Carl Jung, “is that we are dependent upon ‘powers’ that are beyond our control.”⁵ Whether or not I believe in the devil, and whether or not I believe in witchcraft, we will not cease to be under the influence and even control of powers, whether they are located in the unconscious mind, in social pressures and norms, in the mind-shaping forces of institutions, or in spiritual realms (heaven and hell), to which we have no access. One’s own commitment to the struggle of seeing, resisting and addressing evil therefore depends on great inner resources and courage, and on a “handle” and a name to bring elusive evil into grip. Naming a demon is already part of the exorcism while powers without a name remain beyond our control.

Witchcraft beliefs, through their complex symbolic worlds, give a name and a face to evil and trigger powerful and multi-layered emotions and actions, but tend to air them out on scapegoats, who are made responsible for all the evils in the world. This tendency of airing anger onto scapegoats does not cease with the abandoning of witchcraft beliefs.

Christians know of their own way of dealing with evil. In the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5-7), Jesus’ alternative path, which has been described as one of active and non-violent resistance, demands an alert sense of one’s own human dignity and of the dignity of others, which evil denies.⁶ The narrative of the sermon on the mountain is preceded by Jesus’ own encounters with Satan (Matthew 4:1-11). In Matthew’s account, it was not in some abstract meditations that Jesus’s vision crystallised, but through an encounter with the devil, which brought him to the core of his being and identity. The devil became the handle through which Jesus discerned the wrong choices he could make after his experiences with the Holy Spirit.

⁵ Jung 1969, p. 21.

⁶ Wink 1998, pp. 98-111.

People who struggle with witchcraft understand the attacks in spiritual terms. Purely secular approaches to witchcraft have not managed to reach this experience. The Christian faith, however, has the potential to link up with it.

I close with a Biblical reflection given by Chuma Mfuni, whom I have introduced in the preface, a reflection given to the “Fingers of Thomas”.⁷ Witchcraft discourses, he said, engage with personal misfortune. Biblical discourses, however, do not make personal misfortune the measuring stick for evil. No Biblical book unmasks the presence of evil below the surface of everyday life in stronger terms than does the Book of Revelation. Like witchcraft discourses, this book is about seeing things that are hidden to others. However, it places concrete experiences with raw and senseless evil into a much wider context than do witchcraft discourses: into a cosmic context, of which the risen Jesus has taken control. By reflecting on the symbols of the external images of the devil, the believer is warned to resist from participating in evil, in which the whole cosmos is entangled. The symbols of the satanic beast become also a mirror that shows a collective fallen nature, the dense web of negative influences (spiritual, physical, social and psychological) in which everybody is immersed even before a person learns to think or act for him/herself, filling us with predetermined ways of thinking and acting. Early Christian ascetic traditions have located the “spiritual warfare” of each Christian not so much on the battle field where outer demons are fought, but in the inner realities of the own heart, and in the great and small issues and relationships of everyday life.

The challenge to resist evil can demand a high personal price. The Book of Revelations brings before the believer’s eye not the promise of a breakthrough for health and prosperity, as many Churches do today, but the tangible possibility of martyrdom. By having his/her eyes fixed to heaven, the believer places his/her personal tragedies into a much larger context. The author of the book (John) fears not so much the persecution of the Christians (for him the devil has already been overcome), but the conforming of his seven churches to their surroundings (Revelations 2-3). During their experiences both with brute evil and with the temptations to adapt to the comforts of an easy life at the expense of losing one’s faith and a deep awareness of the heavenly dignity, the visions of John lead the Christians up to heaven, to the throne of God (Revelations 4:2-11),

⁷ Compare also with Walter Wink 1992, pp. 65-85.

communicating to them something of the joy and triumph of those who are at peace with God, and his ultimate victory (11:17-18; 12:10-12). The soldiers in the army of the Lamb were lost on the battlefield where they have to give witness to their faith amidst a fallen world (13:10). Thanks to the visions, the Book of Revelation leads them back to the battle with courage (14:12; 17:14). They have learnt to contemplate their struggles with the eyes of God.

In a similar way, we engage with the symbols of witchcraft, instead of brushing them away. Only then can they be transformed and placed into a wider context. This, then, sums up the approach of this book: Through listening to the stories of the afflicted, we gain eyes and symbols for experiences with senseless evil, and we try to help the afflicted to view their struggles with the eyes of God.

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Bernhard Udelhoven, born 1968 in Trier (Germany), is a Catholic priest (ordained 1996) and a member of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa. He lives in Zambia since 1989, working in the Luapula Province, the Luangwa Valley and in Lusaka. He studied theology (Trier: 1987–1989 and London: 1992–1996) and social anthropology (London: 2002–2003). Presently he works in Lumimba Parish, Chipata Diocese. He has written about Zambian interpretations of dreams and prophecies, challenges to the Christian faith in the Luangwa Valley, the history of the Bena Kabende in the Luapula Province, and the changing face of the Christian landscape in Bauleni Compound/Lusaka.



“Unseen Worlds offers a totally new Pastoral approach, a first set of tools how to practically resolve this antagonism between Christianity and the traditional African life experiences.

Bernhard Udelhoven presents a framework how pastoral care can rescue those who are afflicted by spirits, witchcraft and demons, with numerous case studies and practical examples. These cases are often matters of death or life.

Experience teaches that the possession by demons is always closely connected with problems on an interpersonal level. Consequently, the core point of Udelhoven’s approach is to thoroughly study and heal the frictions in these relationships.

For me as a professional counsellor Udelhoven’s path to healing coincides very often with methods developed in modern schools of psychology. The importance of his findings and proposals should not be underestimated. This book is a must for every pastoral agent.”

Dr Toni Görtz, MISSIO

By building on cultural and relational experiences of life, the book provides a new entry into the deliverance ministry. It goes beyond quick fixes and also beyond the timeworn divide of the superstitious versus the real.



Photo: The author (centre) with traditional healer Maria Mwanza (left) and Chuma Mfuni of the “Fingers of Thomas” (right).
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