

Discourses of Demonization in Africa and Beyond

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Pentecostalism and the Other

The work of those scholars who see an implicit relationship between religion and violence has of late assumed greater prominence and relevance. For example, in a recent volume entitled *Religion and Violence*, Hent de Vries states: '[v]iolence . . . finds its prime model – its source, force, and counterforce – in key elements of the tradition called religious. It can be seen as the very element of religion. No violence without (some) religion; no religion without (some) violence (Vries, 2001: 1). He elaborates further: “‘religion’ is the relation between the self (or some selves) and the other – some Other . . . “‘religion’ also stands for the other – the Other – of violence. It evokes *its counter-image, its opposite, its redemption, and critique*’ (*ibid.*, my emphasis). Similarly, Bruce Lincoln, writing of the social and political processes that underpin cultural, especially religious, groups, states that “‘culture’ is the prime instrument through which groups mobilize themselves, construct their collective identity and effect their solidarity *by excluding those whom they identify as outsiders*, while simultaneously establishing their own internal hierarchy, based on varying degrees of adherence to the values that define the group and its members’ (Lincoln, 2000: 411, my emphasis).

The present article grounds these theoretical perspectives in a discussion of the discourses of demonism and satanism which have become increasingly prevalent in many parts of Africa today.¹ They stem primarily from the popular deliverance-oriented Pentecostal ministries which flourish in countries like Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa. These movements are prone to violent condemnations of other (competing) religious options, in particular, traditional African religions. The article also links these local expressions of ‘spiritual warfare’ to more globalizing discourses of satanism, and points to the deleterious effects of such religious orientations for civil society, religious pluralism and freedom of religion.

As an analyst of the Nigerian religious scene from the mid-1970s onwards, I have observed a number of important religious developments take shape. I say important,

because Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation, and these developments have repercussions for the whole continent. People and ideas circulate more than ever due to the new media, regional economic arrangements, and improved forms of travel and communication. Nigeria's Christian-Muslim relations have been projected into the world spotlight, not just because of their deterioration in the last two decades but also because of their relatedness to the rise of radical religion on a global scale. Another major religious development is the rise of Pentecostal and charismatic forms of Christianity, both exogenous and indigenous. These grew out of the evangelicalism that was planted in Nigeria from the 1950s onwards (Ojo, 1995), as well as the general quest for religious self-determination which began at the end of the 19th century and blossomed as the Aladura prayer-healing revival gained momentum from the 1920s onwards (Hackett, 1987).

My recent research on these newer religious formations, or 'new generation churches' as they are sometimes termed locally, has centered on their appropriation of modern media technologies for the purposes of proselytizing (Hackett, 1998). Furthermore, I am interested in how the astounding growth and increasing influence of Pentecostal movements are changing the stakes of religious co-existence in Africa, especially Nigeria (Hackett, 1999). Several Pentecostal and charismatic leaders are outspoken in their condemnation, overtly or covertly, of alternative, 'unsaved' religious options. Along with other scholars of religion who analyse these types of discursive and interpretive ploys for their potential to stifle dissent and establish hegemony (Lincoln, 2000; McCutcheon, 2001; Said, 2001), I want to argue that the power to define what counts as 'religion' or as 'good religion' can have profound consequences. This may be in terms of state response, access to the media and education, and membership growth in the competitive public spheres of contemporary African nation-states (Hackett, 2001). The type of scholarly 'critique' (rather than criticism) which studies how groups constitute and wield power, and reinforce difference is, according to Michael Herzfeld, central to the 'very praxis of anthropology' (Herzfeld, 2001: 124–5; Bongmba, 2001: 17ff.).

It goes without saying that antagonism between competing religious groups is hardly new. Nor is the recourse to accusations of false prophecy, wrong authority, or evil foundations. But the impetus to label the religious Other as evil received a major boost from the civilizing and primitivizing discourses of colonialism (Chidester, 2000; Torgovnick, 1990) and the insecurities produced by the encounter with modernity (Benavides, 1998). Birgit Meyer's work on Ghanaian Christianity, in particular among the Ewe people, persuasively demonstrates that 'images of the Devil and demons are means by which to address the attractive and destructive aspects of Ewe's encounter with global economics, politics and culture' (Meyer, 1999: xxii).²

The demonological strain in African Pentecostal Christianity is sustained both by local understandings of human misfortune and spiritual agency as well as the teachings of foreign evangelists, nowadays often American, Korean and Brazilian (cf. Gifford, 2001). The mega-evangelistic crusades across Africa led by the German Pentecostal evangelist Reinhard Bonnke, where millions gather for miracles and blessings, accord a central place to public confessions of witches and the dramatic burning of the 'tools of the trade'.³ The highly developed demonology of Korean Pentecostal churches – an intriguing blend of American deliverance theology and

shamanic exorcism – has become known in both West and East Africa (cf. Cox, 1996: 225). Prominent church leaders such as Paul Yonggghi Cho and Kim Ki Dong receive invitations to speak in Ghana not just because of their successful church growth techniques but also because of the central place they accord to ritual practices of exorcism and aggressive prayer. Publicity in Ghanaian newspapers anticipating their August 2001 visits described this as ‘depopulating the kingdom of Satan’. The prominent Brazilian Pentecostal church, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, has branches in several Africa countries, with over 50 in South Africa (Freston, 2001). It is known for its high media (and political, in Brazil) profile, aggressive evangelism and exorcizing practices.

The continuing emphasis on evil is nurtured and sustained by the abundance of texts dealing with ‘spiritual warfare’ which can be found these days in many (particularly West) African Christian bookstores. The works of popular American deliverance specialists, such as Derek Prince, Rebecca Brown, Marilyn Hickey and Lester Sumrall, are widely available.⁴ Despite the popularity of American works, there is also a growing indigenous textual production. In Nigeria, the process was somewhat reversed with local Christians, and some Muslims, active from the 1950s onwards in preaching against secret societies and occult organizations.⁵ Their work received an impetus in 1976 from the moral campaign by the government of Muritala Muhammed, which banned secret society membership among government officials. Several churches took their cue from this. For example, the Nigerian Baptists from 1977 incorporated a public declaration for members to state openly that they had no association with any ‘secret society’. A major initiative was provided by the Christian Students’ Social Movement (CSSM), which began looking for evidence of ‘occult powers’ in public life. An early target was FESTAC (the major black arts festival held in Nigeria in January/February 1977), with its emphasis on traditional cultural performance. Also during this period two prominent religious figures added their own anti-satanic rhetoric. Ajagbemonkeferi (‘the one who makes noise against unbelievers’) was a well-known Muslim preacher in Ibadan, renowned for physically attacking traditional masquerades. W. F. Kumuyi, the founder of the Deeper Life Bible Church in Lagos who, as part of his holiness and anti-worldliness message, demonized television as ‘Satan’s box’, also had strong words for fashionable dressing. Pa Elton’s influential *Demon Manifestations in the Last Days*, published in the early 1980s, together with the popular CSSM prayer bulletins, gave a strong local flavor and agency to the Christian campaign against ‘satanic dealings’.⁶

The Last Outcast, by the former music celebrity, Chris Okotie, founder/leader of the Household of God Church in Lagos, Nigeria, on the subject of the future anti-Christ (who will be cloned and European), is an example of contemporary output on this subject.⁷ Many of the more recent texts go further than conventional evangelical teachings on the powers of evil – they engage in ‘spiritual mapping and strategic high-level warfare’ (Meer, 2001). This growing phenomenon involves the identification of strongholds of opposing spiritual forces and their attempted destruction by groups of ‘prayer warriors’. Some of these texts might also be classified as anti-cult literature in that they are concerned to alert Christians to ‘dangerous’ organizations, whether ‘dead churches’ or ‘occult’ organizations (such as the Rosicrucians or local secret societies). American anti-cult organizations were active following the

massacre of several hundred members of the Ugandan, apocalyptic Marian community, known as the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God (Hackett, 2001). It is as yet unclear as to how many African governments have been (or may yet be) influenced by these types of organizations or by former colonial powers in the management of religious pluralism. Belgium, Germany and France, for example, have all taken measures in recent years to restrict the activities of minority religious groups.⁸

One pertinent example is the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Devil Worship established by the Kenyan government in 1994 in response to public concern, mainly voiced by Christian clergy. Its report was presented to Parliament in August 1999.⁹ According to the US State Department's 2000 Annual Report for International Religious Freedom, the Kenyan report alleged that 'Satanists' had infiltrated non-indigenous religious groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons and Christian Scientists, as well as the Freemasons and the Theosophical Society. The State Department report notes significantly that most members of the Commission were 'senior members of mainline Christian churches'.¹⁰ A local journalist wryly commented that '[t]he commissioners overlooked the fact that Kenya is a secular state and went on to prescribe standards that only Moses the Lawmaker could think of recommending to the Jews'.¹¹ In a trenchant and humorous piece, *The Nation* journalist G. K. Waruhiu wrote, 'It is also highly defamatory, scandalous, and poorly presented, full of cliches and empty statements which were not properly researched, and which in the final analysis amount to a new-fangled Kenyan Spanish Inquisition, or simple witch-hunting.'¹² He calls on the government to apologize for wasting taxpayers' time and money, and putting minority religions at risk.

Of the minority religions it is the spiritual science movements, with their esoteric, metaphysical and occult leanings, that are particularly subject to harassment by conservative Christian groups (Hackett, 1992).¹³ The local president of Eckankar in Liberia, in an attempt to dispel rumors in October 2000 about its 'dubious and secret activities' in the country, opted to go public using the media and explain the key tenets of the organization.¹⁴ Efforts to proscribe the Freemasons in Kenya have come from several fronts.¹⁵ Summit Lighthouse members reported to me in Calabar in August 1997 that they had been physically harassed and publicly abused by militant Christians, and eventually forced to cancel their planned public rally at the central sports stadium. Nowadays, however, Nigeria's Cross River State has a popular governor, Donald Duke, who is publicly known to be a member of the Grail Movement. While his non-Christian affiliation is a problem for some in this Christian-dominated state, his successes as governor, notably in beautifying the state capital with flowers (believed to have symbolic importance for Grail members) and good roads, have gained him many supporters.

The spiritual science movements seem to enjoy greater tolerance in Ghana and South Africa, perhaps because of their associations with the political elite, and their longer presence there. For example, Summit Lighthouse was closely associated with the Acheampong regime in Ghana in the 1970s. In South Africa, the New Age movement is growing – mainly among the white middle class – particularly as a quest for alternative healing strategies. On the whole, though, this type of movement has a limited appeal for most Africans. Ironically, while the secrecy cultivated by some of

these groups is a source of stigma, it may be eventually what protects them from more frequent attacks. Some are dismissed as being 'Eastern' or 'Oriental' religions. Their public lectures are frequently held on university campuses. Economic demands on members, whether for initiation purposes or the purchase of inspirational/instructional materials, such as in the case of the Holy Grail Movement and AMORC, may also preclude or limit access. Let us return to the Pentecostal ministries and examine a little more closely their discourses of demonization.

The business of deliverance

In this section I wish to focus on a fast-growing deliverance ministry, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM), that I encountered in the summer of 2001 while visiting Lagos, the commercial capital of Nigeria. Before one even enters the sprawling church compound on a Sunday morning one is struck by the stalls in the street selling MFM's numerous publications. There is a weekly newsletter and numerous books written by the founder and general overseer, Dr Daniel K. Odukoya. On closer examination one notes that the illustrations on the book covers graphically depict battles between human and nefarious spirit forces. For example, *Power Against Local Wickedness* shows a David-like figure trying to slay a demonic-looking Goliath, whose body is covered with charms (pig's head, skull).¹⁶ The long, black fingernails and toenails are eye-catching. One is informed that the book 'contains over 1,000 prayer points to enable you to disgrace your Goliath and destroy local satanic military technology'. The newsletter, *Fire in the Word*, which is basically the weekly sermon by the leader and some correspondence and testimonials from grateful members, sports such titles as 'Prisoners of Local Altars', 'Breaking Destructive Linkages' and 'Deliverance from Family Captivity'. There are also vivid images of despairing and despondent people chained to 'idols' and struggling to break free.

The description of the Battle Cry Ministries (a sub-group of MFM) summarizes well the orientation of the organization. It is 'devoted to a) teaching and disseminating information on Christian spiritual warfare, b) making available life-changing Christian articles and books at affordable prices and c) preparing an army of aggressive prayer warriors and intercessors in the end-time'. It is following the sermon that one can observe the aggressive prayer in action. People pray using violent words and physical gestures in small groups, often to chase away evil forces in a person's life that may be hampering their health, well-being or success. This is the tone of many of Odukoya's sermons and writings. He wants to offer deliverance from what he calls 'bad foundations', 'destructive linkages' and 'wrong connections'. He targets the home and the family as the most common source of spiritual problems, and encourages supplicants to root out 'family curses', 'family taboos' and 'family idols'. Basically this means expunging one's life of any connections with traditional religious beliefs, symbols or practices. This may involve destruction of objects, plants or animals that have ancestral linkages, changing one's name, and avoiding those places where evil spirits lurk such as the river, the market or the family home. 'Absolute holiness within and without' is recommended as the 'spiritual insecticide' required for entry into heaven.

The distinctive feature of this particular Christian ministry is indeed its elaborate demonology, and its advocacy of a 'Power against Power' approach to life's vicissitudes. The leader's professional background and education in microbiology and molecular genetics are vaunted by MFM, and his scientific training is reflected in the rigorous prayer schemes or 'prayer points' he has drawn up, as well as his microscopic demonological analysis.¹⁷ He describes MFM as a 'do-it-yourself Gospel Ministry, where your hands are trained to wage war and your fingers to fight'. He lays much emphasis on regular prayer, especially at night when Satan and his agents are most active. He also provides extensive analysis of dreams, and detailed descriptions of the machinations of particular spirits, especially marine or water spirits.

While MFM describes itself as a Christian organization – a 'full gospel ministry' – and indeed members are taught to invoke the name of Jesus as a powerful weapon, the attention given in writings, ritual acts and symbolic communication to satanic forces is overwhelming. When I asked my companion, a woman lawyer who is an avid member of MFM, whether this call for constant vigilance against demonic forces was not an admission of the insufficiency of Christian salvation, she replied that as a non-Nigerian I could not understand the negative powers that beset Nigerians in particular. Obviously many others agree with her as around 100,000 people – claimed by MFM to make it the largest Christian congregation in Africa – flock to the Akoka-Yaba site each Sunday morning, and for the popular 'Power Must Change Hands' program each month.¹⁸ Many others visit the Prayer City on the outskirts of Lagos for the Friday prayer meetings.¹⁹

Witches, terrorists and snake-men

One might reasonably ask to what extent these current expressions of demonism and satanism are simply 'modern' reformulations of traditional ideas about witchcraft. Anthropologists have provided us with some excellent scholarship on the persistence of witchcraft beliefs and practices in contemporary Africa. In her fascinating study of reports about witchcraft in the Nigerian popular press, Misty Bastian demonstrates that 'the idiom of witchcraft retains its value and continues to give meaning to certain West African life experiences' (Bastian, 1993: 133). She emphasizes the relevance of beliefs about these predatory, immoral spirits for the urban as well as the rural context. Similarly, Andrew Apter, also writing of Nigeria, states that '[w]itchcraft persists as a practical discourse of hidden agency because economic "development" in the larger sense has failed' (Apter, 1993: 124). Adam Ashforth's moving account of his South African friend Madumo's efforts to rid himself of bewitchment in post-apartheid Soweto leads him to situate witchcraft within the overall 'spiritual insecurity' of everyday life (Ashforth, 2000).

Two studies of witchcraft in Cameroon both address its relationship to economic and political power, one from a philosophical, the other from an anthropological, perspective. Elias Bongmba finds *tfu* or witchcraft among the Wimbum of Cameroon to be a means of both interpreting and acting in local political issues (Bongmba, 2001: 42). *Tfu* discourse allows questions of improper economic gain and abuse of power to be addressed in the community in the face of changing national circumstances. In

his extensive study of the ambiguous relationship between politics and the occult, also in Cameroon, and the 'accumulative' and 'leveling' effects of witchcraft, Peter Geschiere observes that democratization from 1989 onwards did not result in a reduction in witchcraft notions (Geschiere, 1997: 205). Rather than countering the occultism of witchcraft, the new public space created uncertainties which allowed rumors about the involvement of witchcraft in politics to flourish. Interestingly, he suggests that the successful rise of the Pentecostal churches, which developed later in Cameroon than in Nigeria or Ghana, was in part due to their ability to provide a public space where witchcraft was both existentially recognized and effectively dealt with using ritual techniques.

While I doubt that many Africans are familiar with the much debated and contested Huntington thesis of the impending 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington, 1998), many more are aware of the US-initiated War on Terrorism and attendant pronouncements by President Bush on the 'axis of evil' and the 'absolute evil' of the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks on the US in 2001.²⁰ The dualistic, at times Manichean, tone of some of these political speeches, and the labeling of the enemies of democracy as 'terrorists', have found resonance in the Nigerian context. For example, a recent publication from a fledgling Nigerian research organization, the Centre for Religion and Public Issues, is entitled *The Search for Terrorists* (Awoniyi, 2002). The sub-title reveals the focus as more local than global: *A Case Study of the Council of Ulama of Nigeria*. The author, Dr H. O. Awoniyi, is concerned to expose the 'terrorist traits' of the Council of Ulama in Nigeria and their threat to democracy and stability in Nigeria. He also wants to condemn the public support shown for bin Laden by some (northern) Muslim groups, and to this end tries to situate Nigerian developments within prevailing understandings of global terrorism.

It seems only a matter of time before others latch onto the terrorist trope and anti-Christ depictions of bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, and adjust their writings accordingly. In the meantime, what Toyin Falola calls the 'hate literature' and 'verbal violence' that pervade and shape Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria grow apace (Falola, 1998: 247-65). Much of this 'war of words' is very stereotypical and perpetuates misunderstandings between the two religions. Two of the most popular and inflammatory texts are *Why You Should Never Be a Christian* (Sanni and Amoo, 1407 A.H.) and *Who Is This Allah?* (Moshay, 1990). Texts written by apostates/converts are some of the most highly prized and advertized. Some churches discourage, even censor, their use, but many circulate informally.

It is not uncommon for ex-members as well as competing religious groups to attribute a religious leader's purported miracle-working powers to Satan or his agents. The Brotherhood of the Cross and Star, a religious movement that has frequently hit the headlines in Nigeria because of the claims of its leader, or about its leader, Olumba Olumba Obu, is an excellent case in point. For the last few years they have been experiencing a leadership tussle and each camp has been publicly showcasing its supporters. This has meant that several apostates have had a field day in denouncing the now aging leader. For example, Helen Ukpabio, now an evangelist and general overseer of the Liberty Gospel Church with headquarters in Calabar (where the Brotherhood is also based), published a book in 1992 entitled *The Seat of Satan Exposed*, which describes how she was initiated by Obu into inner circles of

spiritism, occultism and satanism.²¹ In Zambia, former church members of the Brazilian Pentecostal church, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, publicly alleged that ritual murderers operated from within the church with members being required to donate blood for satanic rituals.²² Similar indictments have been leveled at the Unification Church of Reverend Sun Myung Moon in Zambia by the Pentecostal churches there (Chanda, 2000: 1024).

Sometimes the accusations can fly within the same camp. In the highly competitive environment of the Nigerian Pentecostal scene one church leader is particularly renowned for his public (television and radio) condemnations of fellow pastors. Not only does he attack them on the moral, but also on the supernatural, plane. For example, he claimed that the reason that so many people flocked to a popular Redemption Camp every Wednesday was because someone 'buried something' there.²³ Narratives of satanic initiations and exploits can be put to good use by ambitious pastors, especially when broadcast to a larger audience. Rev. Gerson Ananias Azafe, the Mozambican founder of a South African church, The Last Word To All On Earth Jesus Is Coming Ministry in Matsulu, enjoyed a rise to local fame when he paraded four young women – all purportedly ex-satanists – on Radio Ligwalagwala.²⁴ These women recounted amazing stories of nocturnal flights to neighboring countries, as well as to distant lands such as India and China. Snakes, dragons, human blood, cannibalism, bizarre births and car accidents on demand are recurring features of the stories. Yet, according to recent reports, church attendance is down and local residents are expressing skepticism about Pastor Azafe's exorcizing prowess.

In the context of the Liberian civil war, the animosity of evangelical and Pentecostal Christians toward traditional religious practices in Africa assumed national significance. They posited that the war was caused by 'people diluting the purity of the Christian gospel with ancestral beliefs which they take to be the work of Satan' (Ellis, 1999: 270). They have opposed any attempt to revive traditional religion by those who attributed the war to the abandonment of tradition. The newer Christian groups also view as demonic the popular local spiritual healers or 'healing churches' by referring to them as 'Sixes', recalling the mark of the Beast (666) in the Book of Revelation (*ibid.*, p. 273). They are also very fearful of Nigeria, for they believe that its ECOMOG soldiers introduced a modern 'snake society' into Liberia, whereby men can transform themselves into snakes when having sex with women. The women fall unconscious and later wake up, unaware of their fate. They die soon thereafter. Ellis suggests that this belief is connected with the spread of AIDS, but also with the widely held belief that Nigeria is a center of great power, usually malevolent (*ibid.*, p. 272). The conspicuous wealth of many Nigerians who occasionally visit Monrovia is generally deemed to be satanic in origin, for many Christians believe that Satan endows people with worldly riches and power in return for their 'everlasting souls'. Likewise, those Liberians who visit Nigeria may be suspected of having been initiated into some 'Satanic sect' (*ibid.*). This suspicion extends, understandably, to the current head of state, former rebel leader Charles Taylor, because of his political and economic powers.

Satanic panic?

Religious tolerance has historically been a defining feature of African societies. This article has argued that the resurgence of satanic discourses has generated new forms of religious intolerance in many parts of post-colonial Africa, occasionally resulting in serious conflict and violence. Four principal causes may be identified to account for this change in patterns of religious co-existence:

1. increased religious pluralization: resulting in greater competition between religious groups over resources, members, access to public sphere, etc.;
2. mediaization of religion: greater use by religious groups of public and (increasingly) private media outlets; mass media as new interface for dialogue or conflict, with resultant escalation in tensions; governments unable to control standards of tolerance in private and small-scale media sector;
3. marked increase in religious revivalism and militancy, notably among Christians and Muslims; greater sense of exclusivism and moralism;
4. increased constitutional and human rights awareness, expectations of religious freedom

The consequences of this intolerance are, of course, manifold. For example, 'born-again' Christians may refuse to share the stage at national events with imams and traditional priests. One religious group (or a coalition) may seek to curtail the activities of another (Hackett, 2001). The intolerance can extend to the social realm, such as not allowing a more comparative, multi-religious curriculum in public schools. Fortunately, the post-apartheid South African government has seen the merits of such an educational foundation for national integration (Chidester et al., 1994). In contrast, Nigeria is witnessing more polarization with Muslims not wanting their children to be taught in school anything about Christianity and vice versa (Hackett, 1999). There is a trend towards private, and more confessional, education as people worry about moral and social dislocation. More generally, ecumenical or interreligious cooperation may be weak due to balkanization and/or non-recognition of unpopular or indistinct groups. Alternatively, efforts to promote religious tolerance through joint projects, councils, meetings or programming can fail due to lack of funding, lack of representation, or mistrust.²⁵ For example, practitioners of African traditional religion were under-represented at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Cape Town in December 1999, in part because they had not been involved in planning at the local level. Conservative Christians, nervous about the 'ecumenical' agenda, withdrew from the event, whereas New Age and Neo-Pagan religions were well represented (Hackett, 2000).

In sum, the opportunities for positive interaction and shared knowledge between religious organizations appear somewhat diminished in the present circumstances of many African countries. One saving grace might very well be the sheer pragmatism of popular religiosity as many Africans, in quest of quotidian healing and survival, shun institutional religious difference. In fact, a recent meeting of a newly formed Council of African Religious Leaders was held in Nairobi to address the dire needs of Africa's AIDS-infected children.²⁶ That notwithstanding, the beginning of the 21st

century seems to mark an inversion of the 1950s and 1960s when African states, on the threshold of political independence, celebrated their traditional cultural and religious heritages (cf. Gifford, 1998: 324). Tactics of avoidance, sanitization, and vilification, usually spearheaded by the 'born-again's, are now more the order of the day (cf. Mndende, 1999). Somewhat exceptionally, traditional religion (*vodun*) is officially recognized in the People's Republic of Benin. Ironically, the head of state, M. Kérékou, who, in an earlier political phase, championed this cause, has now become a 'born-again' Christian. However, he is powerless to undo the new, democratic constitution. Since *vodun* is specifically mentioned no rhetorical strategies can be employed to deny its status as religion.

But why have satanic discourses assumed such prominence in contemporary Africa? Why is it that, as Paul Gifford rightly notes in the conclusion to his valuable study, *African Christianity: Its Public Role*, that 'the growth areas of Christianity are those that demonize African traditions and culture' (Gifford, 1998: 324)? Is it that these discourses of demonization provide the lens of an exotic, yet culturally meaningful, underworld/underwater imaginary with which to interpret and debate social and political problems? Or do they provide a theory of supernatural agency which can plausibly account for deviance and misfortune in the lives of individuals, families, communities, nations, nay even the global community?²⁷ For a leading member of the Christian Council of Kenya the 'rise of satanism' can explain not just cannibalism and human sacrifice, but also drug abuse, rape, kidnaping, divorce, and ghastly road and train accidents.²⁸ Is this not a form of externalization, of not assuming responsibility for problems, and unscrupulously manipulating popular opinion? A classic example of this would be former Zambian President Chiluba's claim that in declaring Zambia a Christian nation in 1991 he 'provoked the devil' who had been fighting him ever since, and causing him many political and economic problems.(!)²⁹ Or perhaps, more charitably, is the invocation of the Devil simply a cogent rhetorical device for communicating the gravity of Africa's predicament, and mobilizing more effective responses?³⁰ Or is it a foreign-policy type ploy by church leaders to stimulate church growth and revival at home, let alone an exercise in boundary maintenance? Consider, in this regard, the widely publicized opinion of Nigerian Pastor Matthew Ashimolowo, General Overseer of the London-based Kingsway International Christian Centre, that Nigeria's ethnic clashes and problems of development were attributable to satanic forces and its present state of 'demon-crazy'(!), and that, consequently, Nigerians needed to turn to Christ.³¹ Not forgetting the burgeoning influence of the mass media, do their sensationalist preferences drive the use of demonic terminology and satanic stories? To what extent does the popular entertainment industry promote the demonic, as has been argued for the US context? (Cuneo, 2001; Ellis, 2000). The BBC World Service obviously thinks so, as this featured prominently in a recent program which examined the Ghanaian and Nigerian film industries (cf. Meyer, 1999).³²

In this article I have wanted to highlight the prevalence of discourses of demonization in Africa today, suggesting their provenance, and accounting for their appeal. I have also pointed to the problematic implications of these discourses for scapegoating particular sub-groups and for generating religious intolerance.³³ While US-based studies have analysed satanic beliefs and practices with a constructionist lens

(Richardson et al., 1991; Victor, 1993), and this would arguably have applicability in the African context, the perdurance of the satanic paradigm seems more assured in present-day Africa for several reasons. As stated appositely by Meyer in her conclusion to *Translating the Devil*, Christianity cannot displace beliefs about the Devil because people themselves have to live with contradictions and ambiguities at all levels of their existence (Meyer, 1999).³⁴ In other words, a dualistic worldview allows for the apparent failure of good up until the end-time, and the call to arms for the faithful provides a means of empowerment (ritual, symbolic, eventually social) in the face of powerlessness and disorder, if not chaos.

Moreover, in Meyer's words, 'Satan is "good to think with" about the ambivalence entailed by adopting the new ways and leaving the old' (*ibid.*, p. 111). Taking this notion a little further, Satan is 'good to think with' about local malevolent forces such as witches and water spirits who are viewed as his agents, as well as global conspiratorial forces such as the United Nations, Islam, Christianity, Western civilization, al Qaeda, or the Zionist-controlled mass media. Or, to extend Geschiere's point about witchcraft bridging family and state (Geschiere, 1997: 24), and Bastian's about linking rural and urban (Bastian, 1993: 154ff.), we might say that satanism adds globalization to the formula. Bastian is reasonably sanguine about the capacity of witchcraft to continue to provide descriptions of deprivation and evil in a changing world. Likewise, Geschiere writes of the 'incorporative faculty' of witchcraft discourses, and their ability to address, notably through personification, new inequalities 'from below' (Geschiere, 1997: 24–5; cf. Corten and Marshall-Fratani, 2001). As articulated in the teachings of deliverance pastor Olukoya, Satan can be behind the evils of television just as he can be behind a family 'idol'. Much more research needs to be done on the multivalency of the satanic paradigm in contemporary African contexts,³⁵ its communicative networks, its gendered aspects, and implicit political and social critique.³⁶ Scholars will also want to observe how effective will be the growing backlash against demonizing discourses on the part of theologians and human rights advocates. Africa may be low down the geo-political scale, but it must surely rank high in terms of geo-religious interest!

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Daniel Headrick, J. J. Rosenbaum and Matthews A. Ojo for their helpful comments on my work.

Notes

1. See, e.g., Donal B. Cruise O'Brien's (2000) review article on the subject.
2. Cf. Veronique Faure's work on South Africa (Faure, 2000).
3. See, e.g., 'Satan's Power Broken', *CfAN Telegram Revival Report*, March 2002. www.cfan.org
4. Paul Gifford has a more extensive list of sources used by Ghanaian pastors (Gifford, 2001). Reports on the worldwide persecution of Christians are also available in some locations (Marshall, 1997; Shea, 1997; see, on this topic, Hackett et al., 2000).
5. I am grateful to Matthews A. Ojo for this information. Personal communication, 25 June 2002.

6. A number of popular texts detailing conversion from satanic and occult societies circulated in the 1980s and early 1990s. See, e.g., Emmanuel Eni, *Delivered from the Powers of Darkness* and Kalu Abosi, *Born Twice: From Demonism to Christianity*.
7. Olayiwola Adeniji, 'Parable of the Last Outcast', *This Day* (Lagos), 19 March 2002. Geoffrey Ekenna, 'Will Cloning Undermine Christianity?', *NewsWatch* (Lagos), 10 March 2002.
8. For current and recent information on these developments, see www.hrwf.net and www.cesnur.org. For example, the Eritrean government closed all churches except the Orthodox, Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran churches in June 2002. Information from the WEA Religious Liberty Commission/HRWF International Secretariat (03.06.2002).
9. It was originally scheduled to remain under government wraps for four years but the report was leaked by the *Daily Nation* newspaper.
10. http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/irf/irf_rpt/irf_index.html
11. Otsieno Namwaya, 'Dark Forces, Bloody Rituals under Probe', *The East African* (Nairobi), 17 August 1999.
12. 'Devil Worship Report the Height of Naivete (Commentary)', *The Nation*, 13 August 1999.
13. Following the revelation in January 2002 that the late Attorney-General of Nigeria, Bola Ige, was a member of the Rosicrucian Order (AMORC), there was fervent public outcry against such organizations, considered to be 'secret societies' in the Nigerian context.
14. "'We're Not in Dubious Activities" Eckankar Followers Dispel Rumours', *The News* (Monrovia), 23 October 2000.
15. Tervil Okoko, 'Religious Bodies Trade Accusations Over Devil-Worship', Panafrikan News Agency, 3 October 2000.
16. Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 1997.
17. http://www.mountain-of-fire.com/prayer_ministry.htm
18. Presumably they mean at any one service, as there are churches with larger membership. Details of the various branches of MFM whether in Nigeria or overseas can be found on its website: www.mountain-of-fire.co
19. The deliverance camps which grew rapidly in Ghana in the 1990s are described by Gifford (2001: 68) and van Dijk (1997).
20. See, e.g., <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011110-3.html>
21. Obong Akpaekong, 'He is Evil, He is God', *NewsWatch* (Lagos) 35(19), 13 May 2002.
22. After three years of operation in the country, the movement was proscribed (under section 17 of the Societies Act) in 1998 on the grounds that it had not operated 'within the laws of the land'. See Namasiku Ilukena, 'Zambia Church Banned for "Satanism"', *Mail and Guardian*, 9 September 1998. It is interesting that the public accusation of 'satanism' (as with accusations of 'witchcraft') had to be translated into a more neutral legal violation.
23. Olusegun Adeniyi, 'In the Year King Uzziah Died', *This Day* (Lagos) 7 March 2002.
24. Thuli Nhlapo, 'Heart of Darkness', *Mail and Guardian* (Johannesburg) 9 March 2001.
25. Cf. the case of the South African Broadcasting Company (Hackett, 2003).
26. http://www.hopeforafricanchildren.org/Country%20Programs/Nairobi_Assembly_061202PR.htm (accessed 15 June 2002). It is unclear whether religious leaders other than Christians and Muslims were invited. The meeting (9–12 June 2002) was organized under the auspices of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (www.wcrp.org), which aims to create 'multi-religious partnerships that mobilize the moral and social resources of religious people to address their shared problems.' The status of indigenous religions is ambiguous here. Interestingly, the newly created international network of religious women's organizations does have an 'indigenous' category but only lists bodies from North and Central America and Australia.
27. Dr Odukoya (MFM) attributed the tragic ammunition explosions on 27 January 2002 in Lagos to witchcraft, and advocated prayers to prevent more trouble for the nation. Idowu Ajanaku, 'Pray To Avoid More Disasters, Olukoya Urges Nigerians', *The Guardian*, 19 May 2002.
28. 'Des églises s'inquiètent de la "montée du satanisme"', Panafrikan News Agency (Dakar), 2 April 2001.

29. 'Chiluba Seeks God's Mandate in Synagogue', *Post Express* (Lagos), 14 November 2000. Consider also the invocation by Governor Orji Uzor Kalu of the State of Abia in eastern Nigeria of 'Holy Ghost fire' to consume those who were working to destroy the good works his government has been doing for the people of the state. In his words, 'the battle we are doing today is against principalities and power and spiritual wickedness' ('Kalu invokes Holy Ghost Fire on Saboteurs', *Vanguard* (Lagos), 11 March 2002).
30. For example, in search of a more 'tangible solution' to the increase in 'devil worship' in learning institutions in Kenya, the Christian Churches Education Association of Kenya set up its own investigative commission in 2000 (Panafrican News Agency, Nairobi, 10 December 2000).
31. Babs Bello, 'Cause of Ethnic Crisis Identified', *P.M. News* (Lagos), 30 October 2000.
32. Omnibus, 28 May 2002. Information from Dr Jonathan Scurlock.
33. For a general collection of essays on religion and (in)tolerance, see Stern and Seligmann, 2002, especially the chapter on the tolerance of traditional African religions by Wole Soyinka, 'The Teachings of the Orisha'.
34. This scenario is also affirmed in the Bible, e.g. 1 Peter 5: 8–9, Ephesians 6: 11–17.
35. See, e.g., the Muslim Brothers' violent condemnation of an international fashion festival (with proceeds going to fight poverty) in Niamey, Niger, as allegedly inspired by Satan ('Fundamentalists Protest Against Forthcoming Fashion Festival', Panafrican News Agency, 8 November 2000). Cf. also the crackdown by Egyptian authorities in January 1997 on 'Satanist' high school and university students in Cairo who were into heavy metal music, drugs and black clothing (Sedgwick, 2000: 223–4). It seems the youth were also in possession of satanic literature from the Church of Satan in San Francisco, and its founder, Anton LaVey. On this question also, see (O'Brien, 2000: 522–3).
36. For a critical overview of scholarship on satanism, see Frankfurter, 1994.

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