

Satanic 'Zombified' Religion Making Inroads in United States

While the United States makes entertainment out of the undead, missionaries south of the border know a horrific truth: Zombies walk.

No, it's not a Halloween stunt, but a tenet of voodoo: the official religion of Haiti, along with Roman Catholicism. But don't expect for Haitians to separate the two.

"In churches, there's a lot of syncretism (or the combination of multiple religions)," says David Vanderpool, a missionary and doctor in Haiti. Vanderpool is the founder and CEO of LiveBeyond, a faith-based, humanitarian organization bringing medical and maternal health care, clean water, education, orphan care, community development and the gospel of Jesus Christ to the oppressed in Thomazeau, Haiti.

"Voodoo is the culture, the way they think. They view the world through a lens of voodoo, and it colors what they do, what they see. They bring it unwittingly into the church, and see mainstream denominations as no different from voodoo."

The satanic worship can be traced to colonization when the French demanded African slaves convert to Catholicism. Rather than fully converting, the slaves named their idols after saints, and the worship of the demons was incorporated into the church.

For many who visit the churches, it's difficult to tell the difference between the Catholic Saints and African demons. According to the *Associated Press*, many of Haiti's 10 million residents consider themselves followers of both voodoo and Catholicism.

The presence of voodoo is so strong that Vanderpool has seen strong Christians get swallowed up in the spiritual battle.

He attributes their losing struggles to a desensitization of evil, including the rise of zombies in Hollywood. Look only to apocalyptic thrillers like *The Walking Dead*, *Resident Evil*, *28 Days Later* and *Dawn of the Dead*—or even comedies like *Warm Bodies*, *Zombieland* and *Life After Beth*—to see the cultural transition.

“Hollywood for many years (has been) trying to implement these kinds of evil practices on children,” Vanderpool says. “When (it’s a) childhood game or movie, (we) see actual damage that’s done. It’s not just a little toy.”

In Haiti, zombies aren’t horror monsters meant for a good scare. Rather, they are men and women who have been cursed by a voodoo priest. The priest will inject them with a poison, which will cause intense paralysis and breathing so shallow family members will bury the person.

The priest will place hollowed sugar cane in the grave so that when paralysis wears off, people claw out of the grave, essentially becoming the walking dead.

The zombification of someone sounds like a hoax and one many would attribute to a film stunt and not spiritual warfare.

Former voodoo high priest Max Beauvoir, who died earlier this month, fought the perception of voodoo as an evil and tried to publicize it as a way of life.

“Haiti has a Western veneer, with an educational system, courts and a government,” Beauvoir told the *New York Times* in 1983, “but this has very little to do with the way things really work. We should stop being ashamed and recognize what we are: a country with an African social structure that revolves around the voodoo community. Voodoo governs everything, our moral codes, the way we rationalize, eat,

cure, and work the land.”

Beauvoir was known for his passionate fight to inoculate the Western world to the intrinsic values of voodoo, removing its demonic stigma.

But the spiritual warfare continues, and missionaries like Vanderpool must ready for the battle every day, covering himself and his patients in prayer.

“If God doesn’t show up, people suffer,” Vanderpool says.

But when God does show up, the blind can see, the deaf can hear, the lame can walk and lives are transformed as former voodoo followers become radical soldiers for the gospel.