



***POWER DISPUTES: A MISSIOLOGICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN STRATEGIC LEVEL SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND
AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION***

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DECLARATION:

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December 2025

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ABSTRACT:

This research is examining whether there is a connection between the powers and principalities and the demonic as taught by some western missiologists on the subject of strategic level spiritual warfare (SLSW) on the one hand and mystical powers as found in African Traditional Religion (ATR). The study is engaging with the dialogue between the two parameters and examining whether there is continuity or discontinuity, embrace or hostility. The study also examines whether practising SLSW and its associated spiritual mapping can bring about community transformation and enhance evangelism. The study is also investigating why sections of the Pentecostal Christians in Africa, particularly neo-Pentecostals seem to identify so easily with these teachings.

The key western missiologists who are proponents of this are C. Peter Wagner, Charles Kraft, George Otis Jr. and Cindy Jacobs among many others. Their teachings are compared with what is prevalent among adherents of ATR as indicated by Yusuf Turaki, John S. Mbithi, Philip Steyne, Kwame Bediako and Byang Kato among many others.

The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization played a midwifery role from one of the tracks that was running at Manila Congress in 1989. This culminated in post-congress seminars, conferences, prayer rallies and literature which were propagating a new model of prayer that was more effective in bringing about evangelism and community transformation. Some of the sources used were cultural and traditional, while others were anecdotal, including fictional. But of great influence in the worldview of the proponents were their experiences as missionaries in other cultures, thus reflecting a missionary counter-influence impact. Some of these cultures were African or Latin American.

The study examines the African perspectives on mystical powers and compares how this relates to the understanding of powers and principalities as seen in strategic level spiritual warfare. In analysing the nature of this dialogue and whether it enhances continuity or discontinuity, the study engages with the views of existentialists, structuralists, emergentists, accommodationists, realists and Biblicists.

The study adopts a dialogical framework that examines encounterology, dialogical processes as presented by Lochhead, and contextual models. It engages with the critical contextualisation of Paul Hiebert as a valid criterion for evaluating the level of hybridity or dualism. Using a historical case study as an illustration, the study affirms that revival times have often produced similar kinds of outcomes as those attributed to SLSW.

Commented [CS1]: Is not the correct spelling Mbiti?

Finally, the study looks at the missiological implications of these teachings and gleans both what can be learned by the wider church and what should be avoided. The possibility of negative syncretism is extremely high, while at the same time this openness to the supernatural is a window that the church can actually use to propagate the Gospel. The study points out that this may be the reason why Pentecostalism is spreading so rapidly in the continent of Africa.

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“To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” (Jude 25).

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my supportive and loving wife, Elizabeth, who walked the journey with me and my three wonderful sons Victor, Benson and Michael, who cheered me on as I ran the race.

"There is a place up there for people like you." Morgan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

DECLARATION:.....	i
ABSTRACT:.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF ACRONYMS:	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
CHAPTER 1	1
1.1 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and Traditional African Spirit World.....	1
1.2 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare: Background and Development	3
1.3 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare: Resurgence of Interest in the Spirit World	5
1.4 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: Problem Statement....	6
1.5 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: Research Quest	6
1.5.1 Primary Research Question	6
1.5.2 Significance of the Research	8
1.5.3 Limitation of the Study	9
1.6 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: Definition of Terminology.....	10
1.6.1 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare.....	11
1.6.2 Spiritual Mapping	12
1.6.3 Contextualisation	12
1.6.4 African Traditional Religion	13
1.7 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: Literature Review.....	14
1.8 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: Chapter Overview....	24
1.8.1 Chapter Outline	24
1.8.2 Chapter Overview	25
1.9 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: Conceptual Framework	26
1.9.1 Encounterology.....	26
1.9.2 Critical Contextualisation	27
1.10 Research Design and Methodology	28
1.11 Ethical Guidelines	29
1.12 Conclusion.....	29
2 CHAPTER 2.....	29

2.1	Power Conflicts in Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: An Introduction:	29
2.2	Power Conflicts in Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: A Conceptual Framework	30
2.3	Power Conflicts in Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: A Theoretical Framework	41
2.3.1	Encounterology	42
2.3.2	Dialogical Imaginations.....	48
2.4	Power Conflicts in Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: Contextualisation	63
2.4.1	Contextualisation Maps	63
2.4.2	Models of Contextualisation.....	64
2.4.3	Critical Contextualisation	71
2.5	Power Conflicts in Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: Research Design and Methodology	74
2.5.1	Qualitative Research Design	74
2.5.2	Qualitative Research Methodology	77
2.5.3	Desktop Comparative Critical Analysis	78
2.5.4	Historical Case Study: Kiambu	79
2.6	Conclusion	81
3	CHAPTER 3	83
	POWERS AND PRINCIPALITIES IN STRATEGIC LEVEL SPIRITUAL WARFARE	83
3.1	Introduction	83
3.2	Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare: Definition and Beliefs.....	86
3.3	Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare: Origin and Sources	106
3.3.1	Cultural and Traditional Sources	107
3.3.2	Extra Biblical Sources	109
3.3.3	Anecdotal Sources	110
3.3.4	Fictional Sources.....	111
3.3.5	Historical and Archaeological Sources	112
3.3.6	Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphic Sources	113
3.3.7	Missionary Counter-Cultural Influence Sources	116
3.3.8	Biblical Sources.....	117
3.4	Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and Powers Motif	127
3.4.1	The Concept of Powers	127
3.4.2	Powers and Principalities: Jewish Folk Religious Views.....	129
3.4.3	Powers and Principalities: Main-stream Christian views	131
3.4.4	Powers and Principalities: Neo-Pentecostal views.....	134

3.4.5	Powers and Principalities: Alternative/ Dissenting Views	140
3.4.6	Powers and Principalities: Structural Views.....	152
3.4.7	Powers and Principalities: Existential views	157
3.4.8	Powers and Principalities: African views	160
3.4.9	Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare: Engaging in Conflict	162
3.5	Conclusion	163
4	CHAPTER 4.....	164
4.1	Introduction:.....	164
4.2	Understanding the Meaning of “Africa”	164
4.3	Understanding African Traditional Religion	169
4.3.1	African Traditional Religion: Definition.....	169
4.3.2	African Traditional Religion: Historical Development.....	177
4.3.3	African Traditional Religion: Beliefs, Identity and Philosophy	184
4.3.4	African Traditional Religion: The Practice.....	197
4.4	African Traditional Religion and Mystical Powers.....	199
4.4.1	Definition of Mystical Powers in African Traditional Religion.....	199
4.4.2	Manifestation and Influence of Mystical Powers in African Traditional Religion	203
4.5	African Traditional Religion: Responses to Mystical Powers	210
4.5.1	African Responses to Mystical Powers	210
4.5.2	Neo- Pentecostal Responses to Mystical Powers	213
4.5.3	Structural Responses to Mystical Powers	217
4.5.4	Existential Responses to Mystical Powers	222
4.5.5	Mainstream Christian Response to Mystical Powers.....	226
4.6	Conclusion.....	231
5	CHAPTER 5.....	233
5.1	Introduction:.....	233
5.2	The Nature of the Dialogue: Encounter Between Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion.....	234
5.3	The Nature of the Dialogue: Continuity or Discontinuity?	238
5.3.1	The Nature of the Dialogue: Existentialists View- No Dialogue:	247
5.3.2	The Nature of the Dialogue: Structuralists View- Inadequate Dialogue:	251
5.3.3	The Nature of the Dialogue: “Emergentist” View - Composite Dialogue:	253
5.3.4	The Nature of the Dialogue: Accommodationists’ View:	262
5.3.5	The Nature of the Dialogue: Realists View:.....	279
5.3.6	The Nature of the Dialogue: Biblicalists’ View:.....	286
5.4	Engaging in the Dialogue: “Metasystemic” Thinking	301
5.5	Engaging in the Dialogue: Contextual Analysis	304

5.5.1	Ideologies of Dialogue: David Lochhead:.....	304
5.5.2	Models of Contextual Theology: Stephen Bevans:.....	305
5.5.3	The Process of Encounterology: J. N. J Kritzinger:	307
5.5.4	The Criteria: Paul Hiebert:	309
5.6	Engaging in the Dialogue: Kiambu (Kenya) Historical Case Study:.....	311
5.7	Conclusion:.....	317
6	CHAPTER 6.....	318
6.1	Introduction: Summary of the Study.....	318
6.2	Insights into the Dialogue Between Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion.....	319
6.2.1	Some Positive Contributions of the Dialogue	319
6.2.2	Some Negative Aspects of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Motif.....	322
6.3	Missiological Implications	324
6.3.1	Neo-Pentecostal Churches.....	324
6.3.2	Mainline Churches.....	325
6.3.3	Evangelism and Missionary Work	325
6.4	The Biblical Mandate in the Warfare Dialogue	328
6.5	Recommendations for Further Reflections.....	330
6.6	Conclusion.....	331
6.7	Bibliography:	331
	ADDENDUM A:.....	349

LIST OF ACRONYMS:

LCWE - Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

IWG - Intercessory Working Group for Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

OCRPL – Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life

SLSW – Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare

ATR – African Traditional Religion

NRSV- All Bible quotations are in the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise stated.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Maxwell's Concept	31 ³²
Figure 2: Conceptual Framework: Kivunja, Crawford & Ravitch and Riggan	32
Figure 3: Conceptual Framework Overview	33
Figure 4: Johari Window of Human Relations Training News 1961 5(1), P.6	45
Figure 5: Emotional Distance Scale (Kritzinger & Mande,2016)	46
Figure 6: Map of Models of Contextual Theology.....	71
Figure 7: Critical contextualisation outline, (Hiebert, 1991:188).....	74
Figure 8: Tiers of Spiritual Powers.....	139
Figure 9: Strategic Level Spiritual Overview.....	162
Figure 10: Syncretic Spectrum Chart- Adapted from Steyne (Steyne, 1999:46-48)	180
Figure 11: ATR hierarchical beliefs in the spirit world.....	188
Figure 12: Continuity - Discontinuity Subset Model.....	247 ²⁴⁸
Figure 13: The Continuum Model.....	278
Figure 14: The Spectrum Model	279
Figure 15: The Eclipse Model.....	286
Figure 16: The Barrier Model	299 ³⁰⁰
Figure 17: Models of contextual Theology (Bevans, 2002:32).....	306
Figure 18: Cycle of Praxis (J. N. J. Kritzinger, 2008: 771-772)	308
Figure 19: The Critical Contextualisation Criteria Map, adapted from Hiebert (Paul G Hiebert, 1994: 182-190).....	311
Figure 20: Map of Kiambu County (Kiambu County Government, 2018:1)	312
Figure 21: Revival Gathering in Kabete, Kiambu, 1950 (Barrett, 1973:114)	315
Figure 22: Revival Gathering in Kikuyu, Kiambu, 1970 (Barrett, 1973:110).....	315

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: POWER CONFLICTS IN STRATEGIC LEVEL SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

1.1 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and Traditional African Spirit World

A growing trend among predominantly neo-Pentecostal circles has seen an escalation in engagement in spiritual warfare in order to confront spiritual powers which may affect or hinder believers through ordeals, witches, curses, taboos and evil spirits. Some of these mystical powers, according to these teachings, are also based in geographically delineated regions, where they control both the behaviour of the people and the development of these areas (Wagner, 2015a:42). These powers could also be located under certain sacred trees or mountains, among the different communities and even within certain cities. These powers could resist or hinder the receptivity of the word of God among such a community (Dawson, 2001:20)

When these powers are confronted through strategic level spiritual warfare (SLSW), then the community is set free such that they do experience spiritual, social and even economic transformation (Otis, 1999:22). Examples have been given of such transformed communities, whose changed welfare has been attributed to SLSW (Otis(Jr.), 1999). Although these teachings were initially propagated mainly by Western missiologists, yet they have received a warm reception among many neo-Pentecostal individuals and churches in Africa.

Is it possible that there may be some connection between these beliefs and practices and the beliefs and practices in the mystical powers in African Traditional Religions (ATR)? (Lowe, 1998:104) This raises the question as to whether these two worldviews are partners or opponents or whether there are having an interface at deeper levels that actually interact with one another. Could it be that the beliefs in powers and principalities as propagated by the neo-Pentecostals and the belief in mystical powers as practiced in ATR are in collaborative dialogue with one another? (Anderson, 2018:3) Could we be able to determine whether there is continuity or discontinuity between the two? Could it be that there is a shared worldview that would make these teachings

resonate with the needs of Christians in Africa which cannot be met by the cerebral Western oriented Christianity?

While Christianity in some parts of the world has been struggling with the impact of post-modernity leading to a post-Christian era, Africa, on the other hand and parts of Kenya in particular, has been experiencing a resurgence of ATR. This has been observed during marriage ceremonies, weddings, funerals, and ancestral veneration or honour. Allegiance by some of these devotees to ATR seems to be more, a question of identity and cultural emancipation. To be African is to be devoted to the way the forefathers lived, including their concept of the spirit world (Gehman, 2005:6).

Is it possible that this might provide us with an answer to the dual allegiance that we occasionally encounter among some Christians in Africa? If these teachings are mainly propagated by some Western missiologists, is there a possibility that these missionaries went through a reverse-missionary counter-influence where they were transformed by the worldviews of the mission fields where they were serving? Having processed these, have they in turn begun propagating what they learned from the mission field? Andrew Walls might be right in referring to this as “theft of symbols” (Walls, 2016:146).

The Kenya television station K24 on third August, 2017 aired a documentary in which sections of the Kenyan elders from some of the communities conducted prayers in African traditional way for the peace of the country just prior to the national elections. These prayers were offered next to Mount Kenya and included offering sacrifices under *migumo* (fig) tree which is considered sacred and releasing a blindfolded sheep into the wilderness, akin to the biblical scapegoat in the Old Testament. What was interesting to note was that there was a clergyman who was also involved in these ritualistic traditional prayers. This seems to erase the dividing line between Christianity and African Traditional Religion, particularly for this clergyman (K24 TV, accessed on 29th August 2021)

Matters touching on spiritual conflict are not new to the continent of Africa as Mark Antony entered what was believed to be the territory of demons and engaged them in spiritual warfare during the patristic era (Athanasius, n.d.:37-42). Commenting on this Andrew Walls affirms that Antony saw the desert as a place of conflict that required one to be spiritually equipped in order to enforce the victory of Christ (Walls, 2005:437-438).

In his treatise to Scapula, the proconsul of Carthage, the early North African Church Father, Tertullian shows that he was quite familiar with matters touching on spiritual conflict as many

people of prominence had been delivered of demons (Roberts & Donaldson, 1903). This study, however, will not take a historiographic dimension but points out as a mention that African Christianity has always been engaged with issues touching on spiritual conflict, with spirit powers from its nascent days.

We note that monks like Francis of Assisi at one point is said to have engaged in spiritual warfare with demons in the city of Arezzo, that saved the city from strife and conflicts (Little, 1920). John Milton, in the 17th century, also captured the more biblical aspects of spiritual warfare in what he presented as a vision in *Paradise Lost* (Milton, 1895). Jessie-Penn Lewis also produced a book which was seminal in its days as she examined the way Satan waged wars on the saints and the means of deliverance that God has in place for the saints (Penn-Lewis & Roberts, 2005).

This study will investigate whether there is a connection between the strategic level spiritual warfare motif and African Traditional Religion and whether practicing this alters evangelistic impact in a community. The study will examine whether it is a model of bringing about faster community transformation and conversions. Of special interest will be an enquiry into the reason why SLSW and its wider application of spiritual mapping seems to resonate so well with the majority of Christians in Africa, although most of the scholarly documented proponents are Western missionaries. The study will investigate whether this emphasis is reinforcing ATR thus resulting in a dualism among Christians or whether it is actually an answer to the dualism that may have been created by the inadequacy of Western-propagated Christianity as we know it.

1.2 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare: Background and Development

During the Lausanne II Congress in Manila in 1989 one of the tracks was the Spiritual Warfare track that was led by C. Peter Wagner. After the congress this track continued under the umbrella of AD 2000 Movement. Its main emphasis was a new strategy for evangelism that involved prayers, that seem to be producing better results than the previous evangelistic models which had been used before. Concerns were raised in evangelical circles about some of the teachings of this track although at this time they were mainly at Biblical and theological levels since its missiological implication had not developed.

The Intercession Working Group (IWG) for the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization met in London in 1993 and after a whole day's deliberations on the subject of spiritual warfare, they issued a statement. Among the issues raised were the following:

There is a danger that we revert to think and operate on pagan worldviews or on an undiscerning application of Old Testament analogies that were in fact superseded in Jesus Christ. The antidote to this is the rigorous study of the whole of Scripture always interpreting the Old Testament in the light of the New (Intercessory Working Group (IWG), 1993).

The statement further points out that:

We are concerned that the subject and practice of spiritual warfare is proving divisive to evangelical Christians and pray that these thoughts of ours will help to combat this tendency. It is our deep prayer that the force for evangelization should not be fragmented and that our love should be strong enough to overcome these incipient divisions among us (Intercessory Working Group (IWG), 1993).

I was both at the Lausanne event in Manila and was also a member of the IWG that issued the statement referred to above. The Nairobi consultation of 2000 by Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization (LCWE), dubbed "Deliver us from Evil", produced some significant papers and one pointed out how technical and militarized this mode of prayer had become (Moreau, 2000:1).

According to these proponents this was the new tool for evangelization of the world by identifying specific spirits which are ruling certain territories through spiritual mapping, naming them and disabling them one by one. The identification can either be through revelation, research or folklore. It can also be through visiting sites or shrines where pre-Christian religious activities used to take place (Wagner, 2009:37-44). Through this means evangelization will take place unhindered and much faster.

Two decades later sections of the church in Africa are engaged in both beliefs and practices which seems to be closely associated with African Traditional Religion in the area of spiritual warfare. There seems to be a sudden shift from what was traditionally considered in Christian circles as agreeable spiritual warfare to practices and teachings that one might consider as syncretic in the "new Spiritual Warfare".

These have raised concerns in some circles and particularly in Africa as people seem to be attracted a lot by these teachings. Is there a possibility that they synchronize with African Traditional Religion and that is why people identify with them so easily?

I come to this study from a mixed theological background. Having been raised Catholic and gone through Catholic schools in my younger days, I am quite familiar with the Catholic beliefs and concepts. But I also participated in the Lausanne Congress for World Evangelisation movement and still do. I served on staff for over 20 years with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES), allowing me to develop in mainstream evangelical circles. I have also had the privilege of pastoring various Pentecostal churches giving me the privilege to be a practitioner in a number of these areas dealing with deliverance. In ministry, I have had the unique privilege of being “loaned” by my Pentecostal church to a conservative Baptist church as a pastor for six years before being recalled back by my Pentecostal church. All these mixed backgrounds and experiences contribute to shape my reflection on this study.

1.3 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare: Resurgence of Interest in the Spirit World

More recently there has been a resurgence of interest in matters touching on spiritual warfare and the spirits to the extent that Robert Rakestraw asserts “Anyone unaware of the attention given to angels and demons in recent years would have to be either a hermit or a recent arrival from another planet.” (Dockery, 1998:270). A number of popular books have been in circulation like those of Lindsey and Carlson, *Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth* (Lindsey & Carlson, 1972) ; Rebecca Brown’s *Prepare for War* (Brown, 1992); Frank Peretti’s two volumes, *This Present Darkness* (Peretti, 2003b) and *Piercing the Darkness* (Peretti, 2003a) have had a great influence to the extent one scholar thinks they gave these teachings the impetus that they experienced as “Third Wave” Christians (Kraft, 2000:12). Most of the scholars who have written on the subject under consideration by this study from the Western world would consider themselves as the Third Wave¹.

There is also anecdotal literature from Africans like Emmanuel Eni, *Delivered From the Power of Darkness* (Emmanuel, 1988) and Kaniaki, Koech and Mukendi in *Snatched From Satan’s Claws: An Amazing Deliverance by Christ* (Kaniaki & others, 1991). These unveil the world of spiritual powers

¹ Third Wave movement forms a category of believers who believe and practice the Charismatic gifts but do not originally have links with the Pentecostals or the Charismatics in terms of origin or dates of commencement. They mainly come from the evangelical background.

according to the authors and have been in circulation on the continent. Some of these books are fictional novels, while others are personal anecdotal narratives which are rather subjective in nature and apart from a mention of their contributions may not form part of the literature for this study. Hollywood has also not been left behind as it has produced such films as *the Exorcist* (Blatty, Peter; Marshall, 1973), *The Omen* (Stephens et al., 2012), *Prince of Persia* (Mechner et al., 2010) and a host of others.

John Mbiti acknowledges that although there has been serious interest in the spirit world as far as Africans are concerned, yet apart from a mention here and there, there is a gap in serious academic studies on the subject (Mbiti, 2015:73). This points to the gap that this study hopes to fill, at least, in part. Perhaps the fear that this area is the domain of the *shamans*, *sangomas*, the *juju*-men, the witchdoctors, the medicine-men and the ceremonial elders might be making it a stigmatized area for one to venture into as a research area, especially as a Christian.

1.4 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: Problem Statement

This study will investigate whether the teachings of strategic level spiritual warfare have any correlation with mystical power concepts in African Traditional Religion and whether this has any impact on evangelism, missions or community transformation in Kenya in particular, and Africa at large. It will also examine whether the impact is positive or negative and what the implication is for the church and for missions.

1.5 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: Research Quest

1.5.1 Primary Research Question

To what extent do the teachings of powers and principalities as practiced through strategic level spiritual warfare promote continuity or discontinuity, conflict or embrace with the beliefs and

practices of mystical powers in African Traditional Religion and how has it impacted on evangelism, missions and community transformation in Kenya in particular, and Africa at large?

1.5.1.1 Secondary Research Questions

1. What are the origins, developments, teachings and practices of strategic-level spiritual warfare?
2. What are the concepts of mystical powers as seen in African Traditional Religion, which interface with strategic-level spiritual warfare?
3. Is there continuity or discontinuity, divergence or convergence when strategic level spiritual warfare is in dialogue with mystical powers in African Traditional Religion and what is the nature of the dialogue?
4. What is the missiological implication of this dialogue to the church in Kenya in particular, and Africa at large?

1.5.1.2 Hypothesis

The teachings and practices of strategic-level spiritual warfare manifest a continuity with certain aspects of African Traditional Religion and have made both a positive and a negative impact for the course of missions in Kenya in particular and in the continent of Africa at large.

1.5.1.3 Research Aims/ Goals

1. This study will examine how strategic-level spiritual warfare engages with the mystical powers in African Traditional Religion and determine the positive and negative elements.
2. This study will enquire into why Christians, particularly among the neo-Pentecostals in Africa would identify quite closely with the teachings of strategic-level spiritual warfare and whether there is a deficiency in Western-oriented Christian worldview as propagated by most churches that this emphasis is actually meeting.
3. This study will investigate whether the practice of strategic-level spiritual warfare in a community will enhance or inhibit evangelism, missions and community

transformation and whether this was experienced in the Kiambu area in Kenya (Otis, 1999:48).

1.5.1.4 Research Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between strategic-level spiritual warfare and mystical powers in African Traditional Religion and identify any correlation between the two.
2. To determine the nature of the dialogue or interface between strategic-level spiritual warfare and mystical powers in African Traditional Religion and whether there is continuity or discontinuity between the two.
3. To investigate why some Christians in Africa would identify so closely with the teachings of strategic-level spiritual warfare and whether it has correlation to dual allegiance that is often observed among some Christians.
4. To authenticate the validity or lack of it, of whether strategic-level spiritual warfare can be used as a missiological tool that will enhance evangelism, missions and community transformation in a locality.
5. To outline the impact on the church and the possible direction the church should take in view of the outcome.

1.5.2 Significance of the Research

There have been several studies which have looked at the whole aspect of spiritual warfare from the Judeo-Christian perspective. These would include Gregory Boyd in *Satan and the Problem of Evil* (Boyd, 2001), *Hidden Powers* (Khathide, 2007), and *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness* (S. Noll, 1998). Rene Holvast also gave a historical view from the Americas in *Spiritual Mapping in the United States and in Argentina* (Holvast, 2008), while Hio-Kee Ooi looked at it from the Chinese angle (Ooi, 2006).

Acolatse made a significant contribution in comparing the African and Western worldviews in *Powers, Principalities and the Spirit: Biblical realism in Africa and the West* (E. E. Acolatse, 2018). Similarly, Van der Meer looked at the aspect of spiritual mapping and its missiological implication in Malawi (Van der Meer, 2010) in his doctoral studies. He however does not delve into the praxis of encounterology between spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion.

A number of studies have made significant contributions to various aspects of African Traditional Religion (ATR). Andrew Walls traces the origin of the studies in African Traditional Religions in *Crossing Cultural Frontiers: Studies in the History of World Christianity* (A. F. Walls, 2017), while Kwame Bediako (Bediako, 1992) looks at the lessons that the Christians can learn from the patristic era and its encounters with Greco-Roman world and how these can enhance Christian relations and African Traditional Religion in our day today. Other studies have purely looked at African Traditional Religion like Mbiti (Mbiti, 2015a) and others like Turaki (Turaki, 2006) have attempted to look at the mystical powers in African Traditional Religion.

Very few have made the incursion into examining whether there might be continuity or discontinuity, a conflict or an embrace between strategic-level spiritual warfare and mystical powers in African Traditional Religion and how this is impacting the church. This research will attempt to fill this gap, at least in part.

1.5.3 Limitation of the Study

Although the research will be in the area of spiritual warfare, yet it will not look at the entire scope of spiritual warfare but the narrow area that coalesces around what has been called the strategic level spiritual warfare (SLSW) which also embraces the domain of spiritual mapping (Wagner, 2009:16-17)

This study will look at the interface between mystical powers in ATR and the area of powers and principalities in SLSW, yet it is not a comparative study between Christianity and African Traditional Religion. The dual allegiance that has persisted among some Christians in Africa will be examined and a probable explanation and a recommendation made.

This will also not be a study of African Independent churches, which have been in existence, especially in Kenya since 1927 (Kinyanjui, 1973:124) and which might be considered to espouse certain aspects of what we are studying. In a paper entitled "Theological Issues Related to Kenyan Religious Independency" in the same book, Malcolm J. McVeigh captures an idea that is quite pertinent to this study:

The interest of Africa's independent churches in healing has often been noted.

However, to date little attention has been directed to the theological thought which lies behind the pre-occupation and how it manifests a concern to provide Christian answers for traditional problems. As with African traditional religion, the independent churches

show great interest in the problem of misfortune... They however do not have traditional answers to the cause of illness (McVeigh, 1979:140).

This interest in “providing Christian answers for traditional problems” may be part of the reason why SLSW has gained ground in the continent. Although McVeigh asserts that “African Christians” (one supposes that this refers to Christians of African origin, living in Africa) do not have traditional answers to illness (McVeigh, 1979:140), this is a misconception. One of the reasons why a number of Christians practice dual allegiance is because they have discovered that the Christianity presented to them may not answer some of the critical life questions especially those that touch on powers and the spirit world, which are traditionally viewed as the main causes of ill fortune and sickness.

Kraft, in his experience as a missionary in Nigeria, points to the fact that Nigerians considered the evil forces to be the cause of “disease, accidents, death, infertility of humans, animals, and fields, drought and the disruption of relationships” (Kraft, 1990:5). Due to this, a number of Nigerian Christians adjusted to a parallel dual existence where they paid allegiance to Christianity as they were taught but turned to traditional juju experts when confronted with power needs (Kraft, 1990:5). The study will however look more at the trends in the so called “Third Wave” (Wagner, 2015a) and the neo-Pentecostal churches.

The study will also not attempt to get into detailed biblical exegesis on texts on spiritual warfare nor theological discourses on demonology, however some biblical writers like Chuck Lowe (Lowe, 1998) and theologians like Frederick Leahy (Leahy, 1990) and Esther E. Acolatse (E. E. Acolatse, 2018) will make their contributions to this research.

1.6 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: Definition of Terminology

A shift has taken place over the last twenty years from the “old spiritual warfare” to the “new spiritual warfare”. The “old spiritual warfare” was captured by writers like Harold Lindsell (Lindsell, 1973). In the preface to his book, *The World, the Flesh and the Devil*, he points out that “the Christian faces three foes-the world, the flesh and the devil.” (Lindsell, 1973:viii). These however have given way to the “new” warfare as Charles Kraft highlights what he considers as a weakness

of evangelicals in merely making an acknowledgement of the temptations of Satan and presuming that this is what spiritual warfare entails (Kraft, 2002:14). It would be proper to say that some of the recent writings of some scholars under this study have elevated this subject area from a mere orthodoxy and orthopraxis into a whole new science with technical language and *modus operandi*, complete with measurable results as Wagner points out (Wagner, 1993:15-16). It is therefore important that one gets acquainted with the various nomenclature often used.

1.6.1 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare

The motivation and the reason behind the proponents of SLSW is actually great concern for world evangelization and community transformation (Otis, 1999:70). Thus SLSW was developed as “smart bombs” (Wagner, 2015:12), that Christians could use to disarm the forces that have been holding people captives in regions and set them free to be evangelized. It was meant to be an easier and quicker method for winning communities to Christ. One would still wonder whether there would have been a difference in the results if they just engaged in intercessory prayers for the communities as have happened in many regions of the world before, which resulted in revival and community transformation as recorded in *Festo Kivengere: a biography* (Coomes, 1990) or *God Among the Zulu* (Koch, 1981).

Wagner and his colleagues came up with three categories of spiritual warfare. The “Ground-level spiritual warfare” was the basic and was primarily concerned with deliverance and casting out demons from individuals (Wagner, 2009:201). The second level is the “Occult-level spiritual warfare” and deals with organized demonic forces “like witchcraft, shamanism, freemasonry” and the like (Wagner, 2009:202). The final level is “strategic-level spiritual warfare” and is what one engages in when confronting higher-ranking spirit powers that are in charge of geographically delineated areas or societal human networks. It is here that he introduces the term “*territorial spirits*” to make reference to these dark angels (Wagner, 2009:202). Thus, the subject would be referred to as *territoriality*.

His colleague at Fuller Theological Seminary then, Charles Kraft calls this third category “Cosmic-level spiritual warfare” and pronounces his convictions:

I assume that cosmic-level spirits have a good bit of authority over ground level spirits, probably assigning them and ruling over them. I assume also that cosmic-level spirits gain and maintain their rights only through human permission (Kraft, 2002:15).

This naming system that they adopted is quite subjective and anyone could have come up with their own nomenclature and the assumption that one could assign the spirits into specific geographical areas of operation is questionable.

1.6.2 Spiritual Mapping

It was John Dawson who first introduced the concept of spiritual mapping in his book *Taking Our Cities for God: How to Break Spiritual Strongholds* (Dawson, 2001). He explained that it is “discerning the nature of principalities at work in the city...” (Dawson, 2001:74) . Later on George Otis popularized this by turning it into a curriculum he called *Informed Intercession: Transforming your Community through Spiritual Mapping and Strategic Prayer* (Otis(Jr.), 1999). He gives anecdotes coming from different parts of the world on the effect of spiritual mapping but reserves the definition to the appendix where he defines it as:

The discipline of diagnosing the obstacles to revival in a community. Through fervent prayer and diligent research, practitioners are able to measure the landscape of the spiritual dimension and discern moral gateways between it and the material world (Otis, 1999:256)

Although the steps given by Otis looks more scientific than a prayer model, it compares well with what would normally be called “people group profiling” which one engages in to know the status of a people group before embarking on an outreach or church planting among them (MARC, 1975). However, the sources of the data gathered is crucial here for it does not just come from questionnaires. Sometimes it is spiritual, anecdotal, folklore, interviews with demons and historical information that one would gathers. This certainly is a departure from people group profiling. John Föder also uses the term “mapping” in his book *Neighbourhood Mapping: How to make Your Church Invaluable to the Community* (Föder, 2014), but refers more to the traditional way of analysing and data gathering in a community or a city that one is trying to reach with the Gospel.

1.6.3 Contextualisation

Contextualisation is the attempt to make the message communicated relevant to a specific culture by using cultural symbols that make the recipient audience understand, identify with and

appropriate the message. This is the main definition that this study will use. Paul Hiebert further speaks about *critical contextualisation* as that process by which both the old and new beliefs and customs are evaluated and critically examined before being implemented in a new setting (Hiebert, 1986:186-190).

Scott Moreau defines contextualisation as

...the process whereby Christians adapt the forms, content and praxis of the Christian faith so as to communicate it to the minds and hearts of people with other cultural backgrounds. The goal is to make the Christian faith as a whole- not only the message but also the means of living out our faith in the local setting- understandable (Scott Moreau, 2012:323).

1.6.4 African Traditional Religion

It is Mbiti who famously commented and said that "Africans are notoriously religious..."(Mbiti, 2015b:1). He further clarified that traditional religion permeates every sector of the African's life to the extent that there is no distinction between the sacred and the secular. "The African carries his religion wherever he is", Mbiti asserts (Mbiti, 2015b:1). In the preface to the second edition of his book *African Religions and Philosophy*, Mbiti acknowledges that although initially he had talked about "African religions" in plural, he had since considered the commonalities and the unity and was therefore emphasizing more of "African religion" in the singular rather than in the plural (Mbiti, 1990:xiii). While each African community may have its version of its religions, the singular version encapsulates them all and allows room for the occasional diversity.

Mbiti (Mbiti, 2015b:2), like Kenyatta in *Facing Mount Kenya* (Kenyatta, 1991:128), asserts that African religion is not for the individual, but the community beginning with the family. Mbiti further points out that African religion is seen more by its practices which have been passed from one generation to the next, rather than by a set of dogmas or creeds. Thus these practices are observed anywhere the African is as he is religious all the time (Mbiti, 2015b:3).

These beliefs include the assent to the existence of a supreme being and other deities including the belief in the spirit world where there are both good and evil spirits. Some of these are created while others are ancestral. There would also be laid down procedures on how to engage with God in order to appease him or the spirits (Kenyatta, 1991:128).

Yusufu Turaki, in *Foundations of African Traditional Religion and Worldview* (Turaki, 2006), delves into semantics and gives four aspects of religion in his definition: 1) religion as a theory of meaning; 2) religion as explanation, prediction, control and communion; 3) religion as theory of being; and 4) religion as a feeling, behaviour and beliefs (Turaki, 2006:12-13). These four aspects would therefore contribute to making a wholesome religion if they are present in one's pilgrimage. African Traditional Religion therefore would be that mode of contact with deities that the Africans had before there was interruption either from other non-African modes of worship, religious belief systems or a scientific worldview. It may include ancestral veneration, belief in powers and the spirit world, belief in a supreme being and systems of appeasing the deities or spirits.

1.7 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: Literature Review

From the observations above, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization played a midwifery role in the initiation of the SLSW. The communication that was made through the IWG to respond to the new direction did not go far enough. The statement produced (Intercessory Working Group (IWG), 1993) did not give a comprehensive list of concerns and is therefore too shallow and cautious in what it was attempting to address. Neither does it address whether spiritual warfare as propagated by Wagner and a few others can enhance evangelization or not. The writers above will all form part of the literature review.

This research has therefore engaged with academic books, journals, and popular literature both from the West and from Africa and elsewhere and documentary videos, all which have been rich resources in availing data used in the reflection for this study. These sources have been critically examined and analysed against the two parameters in the study. The outcomes, therefore, gives a critical comparative view on the relationship between African Traditional Religion and strategic level spiritual warfare in the power dimension domain.

Renè Holvast in his *Spiritual Mapping in the United States and Argentina, 1989-2005: A geography of fear* (Holvast, 2008) traces the historical development of this teaching, but perhaps illegitimately draws in other earlier groups like the classical Pentecostals as part and parcel of these teachings from their earlier origins (Holvast, 2008). The teachings are much more recent than the origins of classical Pentecostalism (Hollenweger, 2015). In his *Warfare Prayer* (Wagner,

2009b), Wagner also gives the historical developments both in its theory and practice. Wagner refers to his visits to Argentina as participating in what he called "a laboratory for relating strategic-level spiritual warfare to evangelism" (Wagner, 2009:13). He further acknowledges the significant role that Argentina played in helping him and his wife to learn about the "spiritual dimensions of world evangelization." (Wagner, 2009:13).

Wagner points out the three levels of spiritual warfare as 1) Ground-level, which deals with ministry of deliverance from demons; 2) occult-level, where shamans, which doctors, witches and warlocks operate; 3) SLSW where the conflict is against territorial spirits (Wagner, 2009:16-17). Although there seems to be sufficient scriptural and practical missiological evidence for the first kind and one would perhaps say occasional encounters with the second, Wagner seems to be hard pressed in giving evidence on the third category except turning to the fictional books of Peretti (Wagner, 2009:17) or anecdotes gathered from the mission field. He does makes reference to wrestling with the principalities in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians Chapter six (Wagner, 2009:11). This again points out the influence of encounters in the mission field in the formation of this worldview.

One would almost be right in saying that, without the Argentine experience, there would have been no development in SLSW as an organized teaching as it is now known. Reading through the reports that they have produced does not sound too different from what has taken place previously in other revivals, except for the miraculous as we can see, for example, in the East African Revival in H. H Osborn's *Pioneers in the East African Revival* (Osborn, 2000). There certainly has been a connection between prayer and large numbers in a community experiencing conversion. These prayers may not have emphasized the aspects of spiritual warfare but just a burden for the unconverted.

In his *Breaking Strongholds in Your Cities* (Wagner, 2015b) Wagner draws on the "expertise" of eight individuals who have covered various aspects of spiritual warfare in their writings. These include George Otis Jr., Cindy Jacobs, Kjell Sjöberg, Harold Caballeros, Victor Lorenzo, Don Beckett, Mark McGregor and Bev Klopp. All these contribute to the book in their areas of specialty. The new tool for evangelization of the world is by identifying specific spirits which are ruling certain territories through spiritual mapping, naming them and disabling them one by one. He also acknowledges that they have made some errors in previous teachings which they were in the process of correcting, but he does not highlight what these errors are (Wagner, 2015:21).

Although there is an attempt at the beginning of the book to answer the question whether spiritual mapping is biblical, no biblical exegesis of scripture is given, and this area is left quite wanting. Some of the independent literature by these individuals where they bring out the same themes will form part of this research. Perhaps, worth mentioning here is McGregor and Klopp in "Mapping and Discerning Seattle, Washington" (McGregor & Klopp, 2015) where they narrate their experience in conducting spiritual mapping in Seattle, Washington and encountered powers and spirits that they identified as Apollyon, Beelzebub, Belial, Asmodeus, Angrogyny, the Dragon and 'the Great Spirit'. Some of these are names taken from the Bible, others from the apocryphal writings and some from social-historical backgrounds (McGregor & Klopp, 2015:352-353). Since the naming of these powers are quite arbitrary or subjective, a different person would perhaps come up with very different spirits affecting Seattle.

George Otis Jr, a protégé of C. Peter Wagner wrote *Informed Intercession: Transforming Your Community through Spiritual Mapping and Strategic Prayer* (Otis(Jr.), 1999) in which he defined what spiritual mapping is (as referred to in the taxonomy section in this study) and turned it into a training manual that has been used widely throughout the world. Furthermore, he has produced some documentary films giving case studies where the methods have been used with great success. These are available on YouTube as "Transformation I" (Otis(Jr.), 2014:Accessed 11th August, 2020). and "Transformation II" (Otis(Jr.), 2020:Accessed on 11th August,2020).

His website, the Sentinel Group (Sentinel Group, Accessed 11th August,2020), says that these documentaries have been watched by over 250 million people in more than 75 countries. A particular locality which he mentions in his book is Kiambu in Kenya, where he points out that crime rate has significantly dropped (Otis, 1999:48). The writer is acquainted with the area, and this is the area where the historical case study is in this research is covering.

Charles Kraft in *Christianity with Power* (Kraft, 1990) emphasizes the state of Christianity particularly in the West and points out that the world view that is predominant among Christians hinders them from encountering and experiencing the spiritual world and the power of God. His discussion on reality and worldview is crucial in capturing the essence of the discussions in the paper. He comes out just as strongly as Wagner in his support of strategic-level spiritual warfare in an article *Contemporary Trends in the Treatment of Spiritual Conflict in the Mission of the Church* (Kraft, 2002), perhaps because they were contemporaries. In this article he dissects the various aspects of spiritual conflict in a way which is slightly different from Wagner's, particularly when he

talks on cosmic spiritual warfare (Kraft, 2000:15). This again show the subjectivity behind some of these classifications.

Both Cindy Jacobs in *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy: An Intercessionary Prayer Manual* (Jacobs, 1991) and John Dawson in *Taking Our Cities for God: How to Break Spiritual Strongholds* (Dawson, 2001) also discuss the subject with Jacobs pointing out her main area of concentration as “high-level warfare” (Jacobs, 1991:225), while Dawson developed the questionnaire used in mapping (Dawson, 2001:82-84). There are others like Ed Silvano in *That None Should Perish: How to Reach Entire Cities for Christ Through Prayer Evangelism* (Silvano, 1998); Evelyn Christenson in *Battling the Prince of Darkness* (Christenson, 1990); and Peter G. and Beverly Smith Riddell in *Angels and Demons Perspectives and Practice in Diverse Religious Traditions* (Riddell & Riddell, 2007). All these will form a basis for the study.

Those who emphasize a wholistic biblical view are also considered in this study. Rudolf Bultmann in *New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings* (Bultmann, 1985) dismisses the New Testament concept of the demonic world and declares

We cannot use electric lights and radios and, in the event of illness, avail ourselves of modern medical and clinical means and at the same time believe in the spirit and wonder world of the New Testament. (Bultmann, 1985:4).

In his attempt to demythologize the Bible Bultmann was left with a book that was neither historical nor cultural in that he had to rewrite history and change the facts and at the same time dismiss the modern-day encounters with the spirit world. His own student Eta Linemann, who defines herself as a “Bultmannian turned evangelical”, in *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology?* (Linnemann, 1993), did justice in pointing out the faults in the historical- critical method that Bultmann was using in handling the Bible.

Walter Wink, in his widely circulated books on powers: *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence* (Wink, 1993); *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Wink, 1984); and *Engaging the Powers*, (Wink, 2017) takes both an etymological and a semantical approach in examining the usage of “principalities and powers” both in classical Greek and in the New Testament. In looking at Colossians 1:16, Wink highlights the concept that “the powers are both heavenly and earthly, divine and human, spiritual and political, invisible and structural.” (Wink, 1984:59). He asserts that “The language of power in the NT is imprecise, liquid,

interchangeable, and unsystematic." It ranges from the power of Satan, of human authorities, and of rulers to the more structural principles of power and even jurisdiction (Wink, 1984:54).

Wink finally broadens the study to include other New Testament words as well but concludes on powers and principalities that:

It is necessary to survey the full sweep of this usage in order to make clear that the expression 'principalities and powers' did not exist in a vacuum. The normal daily usage of the terms described the political, religious, and economic structures and functionaries with which people had to deal (Wink, 1984:66).

Wink points out that the powers are "the systems themselves, the institutions and the structures that weave society into an intricate fabric of power and relationships." (Wink, 1984:1). Lesslie Newbigin in *The Gospel in a Pluralist Culture* (Newbigin, 1989), acknowledges that he has borrowed the language of powers and principalities, particularly when dealing with structural and institutional evil, from Wink.

Wink seems to struggle in acknowledging the reality of the personality of demons although he affirms the existence of Satan. Most anthropologists today would find the term *animism* as derogatory and almost offensive and would rather it was done away with and be buried for good (Mbiti, 2015a:7-8), yet the description that Wink gives to the institutions, while at the same time glossing over personal demonic presence is pretty close to Nida's definition and analysis of *animism* (Nida & Smalley, 1959).

In the African context where John S. Mbiti sees the spiritual world of Africans as "densely populated by spiritual beings, spirits and the living-dead"(Mbiti, 2015a:73), Walter Wink would be hard pressed to respond to this rather spiritually conscious world. Peretti's novels (Peretti, 2003b and Peretti 2003a) present demonic personal powers as in charge of institutions and even cities, but Wink's worldview is that the powers are not literal demons but psychic inner forces. Reading Wink, one begins to think of New Age energies and amorphous forces, which are quite different from the Biblical demonic entities which are personalities as Leahy refers to them (Leahy, 1990). In *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness: Thinking Biblically about Angels Satan and Principalities* (S. Noll, 1998), Stephen Noll makes a response to Wink and expresses his amazement with his kind of exegesis. He sees Wink as indulging in a postmodern exegesis which sometimes denies the identity and personality of Satan but attributes adversarial roles to God (Noll, 1998:128).

He makes reference to Wink as one such interpreter. His concern is that some modern theologians:

...prefer to think first about evil as an abstract entity and then (if at all) about Satan as the symbol of evil. They speak of natural evil (plagues), moral evil (sin) and metaphysical evil (imperfection). But they ignore or dismiss personal evil... (Noll, 1998:119).

In his thesis entitled *A Comparative Study of the Role of Traditional Religion in Some South African Churches and the Church in Korea*, Sin Hong Kim (S. H. Kim, 1997), examines the similarities and differences between African traditional religious beliefs (Zulu traditional religion) and some African Independent Christian churches. He compares and contrasts these with the belief in *shamanism* among Koreans and how Korean churches have also engaged with them (S. H. Kim, 1997). While he talks about the various beliefs like the spirit world and respect for ancestral spirits within the African context, he does not capture the aspect of spiritual warfare and how this relates with the practices of neo-pentecostal churches today.

He however, acknowledges the contributions to these beliefs in the growth and development of Christianity both in South Africa and Korea:

Even though there is little resistance to new religions, *Animism* and shamanism offer a form of preparation for evangelism as there are some elements of these religions which are beneficial to Christianity. Therefore, the role of traditional religion in Christian church growth in both South Africa and Korea has been extremely important (S. H. Kim, 1997:376).

Claudia Margarethe Nolte-Schamm also studied the dialogue between Christianity and African Traditional Religion, but her emphasis was on how the relationship between these two religious traditions could foster a dialogue of reconciliation in the South African context (Nolte-Schamm, 2006). She, however, does not get into the spiritual warfare domain and the mystical power dynamics within African Traditional Religion.

Graham Russell Smith examined the spiritual warfare dimension in his thesis *The Church Militant: A Study of "Spiritual Warfare" in the Anglican Charismatic Renewal* (G. R. Smith, 2011). His emphasis however was on Charismatic Anglicans and the perception of evil among them. After engaging some of the pioneers of the Charismatic Renewal movement in the Anglican church in interviews, Smith then engages in conversations with Nigel Wright, Amos Yong and Gregory Boyd, all who have written substantially on the subject and whose contributions are also covered in this

study. Smith, however, does not engage with the strategic level spiritual warfare and neither does he examine the African traditional context and the mystical powers therein (G. R. Smith, 2011).

In a similar manner James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views* (Beilby & Eddy, 2012), introduces several authors with different view points in conversation with one another. These include Walter Wink, Gareth Higgins, David Powlison, Michael Hardin, Gregory Boyd, C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood. Beilby and Rhodes have acknowledged that the interest in spiritual warfare is one of those subjects that does not seem to disappear with time. They attribute this longevity to either a fascination with the mysterious among people in general or due to the “disagreements” and “debates” among Christians. They assent to the fact that “there has been more double monologue than dialogue, more of talking at each other or past each other than with each other” (Beilby & Eddy, 2012: n.p.)

Beilby and Rhodes identified three issues which they consider to have raised controversies and are worth investigating. These are: 1) the objection to the usage of the phrase “spiritual warfare” on moral grounds; 2) whether spirit beings and entities called demons and Satan exist and finally; 3) what Christians think about the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of spiritual warfare (Beilby & Eddy, 2012). However, in their book, they do not consider engagement of the spiritual warfare motif with other religions, like African Traditional Religion as part of the discussions.

Pascal Fossouo investigated the issue of change and continuity, in other words, discontinuity and continuity in his study on *African Sacral Rule and The Christian Church: An Investigation into a Process of Change and Continuity in the Encounter Between Christianity and African Tradition, with Particular Reference to Cameroon and Ghana* (Fossouo, 2003). He however, concentrated more on the issue of the chieftain in the Cameroonian and the Akan community in Ghana and how this was impacted by the arrival of Christianity. While not addressing matters of spiritual warfare, his discussions on what could be allowed within the Christian context to continue from the African traditional setting engages with a few of the issues discussed in this study in terms of continuity and discontinuity.

Matthew Monnig has made a significant contribution to this discourse in his Biblical studies on *Satan in Lukan Narrative and Theology: Human Agency in the Conflict between the Authority of Satan and the Power of God* (Monnig, 2019). He highlights the role that Satan has played from the Old Testament through the New Testament with a concentration on Luke’s views in the books of Luke and Acts. He affirms the personality of Satan as a created being who is engaged in attempts to thwart the plans of God. He underscores the coming of Jesus as an apocalyptic event that

introduces spiritual conflict right from the first event of the life of Jesus, the temptation of Satan, leading to the final triumph of Jesus on the cross (Monnig, 2019). However, he does not engage with issues touching on African Traditional Religion.

Sello Isaiah Maboera, has also carried out a significant study on *The Influence of Numinous Power in the African Traditional Religion and the Zionist Churches in Soweto-A Comparative Study* (Maboera, 1999). Maboera examines the correlation of the numinous power, whether as spiritual power from the Holy Spirit, or as mystical power within the African Traditional Religion in the African traditional setting and the Zionist Churches with reference to Soweto. His research entails matters of healing, exorcism, witchcraft, ancestral engagements and issues touching on mystical powers.

While not directly dealing with spiritual warfare, he explores the experience of the numinous power within the Zionist churches as the major contributing factor to their growth which the mainline churches were not experiencing. He observes that this may be so because of the proximity to the cultural context of the society (Maboera, 1999). Maboera's comparison gives some insights which are affirmed by this study as well.

Erwin van der Meer also contributed significantly to the subject area of strategic level spiritual warfare, in conversation with C. Peter Wagner, in his study *The Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Theology of C. Peter Wagner and its Implications for Christian Mission in Malawi* (Van der Meer, 2008). Van der Meer highlights Wagner's metamorphosis from a conservative evangelical to a charismatic practitioner, mainly under the influence of the Church Growth movement and his missionary encounters. Van der Meer examines the historical development of the teachings on strategic level spiritual warfare and analyses what he understands it to mean (Van der Meer, 2008).

He draws on the perspectives of a few other scholars, the majority of whom differ in view from Wagner. While acknowledging the necessity of prayers, van der Meer asserts that the model used by Wagner may not be beneficial to the mission cause in Malawi. As such the negative elements should be discarded. In the final end, van der Meer does not delve into power issues and the dialogue with African Traditional Religion. In his opinion van der Meer acknowledges that this concept can bring confusion with matters to do with witchcraft in the Malawian context (Van der Meer, 2008).

Chuck Lowe (Lowe, 1998) offers a Biblical critique of the SLSW. Although his views are fairly well balanced, he underemphasizes the issues touching on the demonic and perhaps falls into the trap

of Western rationalization. Some insights could also be obtained from the pseudepigraphic books of Jubilees and Enoch as well as the apocryphal book of Tobit which also show some engagements between forces of evil and God's angels. Common Biblical references which are often used in these discussions also form part of these studies. Scott Moreau on his part, captures both the traditional and the modern trends in the area of spiritual warfare in his article *Gaining Perspective on Territorial Spirits* (Moreau, 2010). He highlights new areas of concern and is more of a critic of SLSW as used by Wagner than a supporter and thus gives us the view from the other side of the spectrum.

Several authors have adopted the historical perspectives that have been used in the study. David Barrett in *Kenya Churches Handbook: The Development of Kenyan Christianity from 1498-1973* (Barrett, 1973); Rene Holvast in *Spiritual Mapping in the United States and Argentina, 1989-2005: A geography of fear* (Holvast, 2008); Roland Oliver in *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (Oliver, 1970), which is mainly a historical book with some analyses of the developments and the impact of the missionaries at that particular time. Of interest is the struggle of the young churches to contextualise the message and the rejection of the message by some churches coming up with the African Independent Churches as they were known. These churches adopted some cultural practices which were similar to African Traditional Religions. The question raised is whether the emphasis in SLSW is likely to produce the same results.

Kwame Bediako takes a historio-cultural approach in *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Africa* (Bediako, 1992). Bediako draws a connection between the Greco-Roman world and the modern day and shows how it is important that Christianity in Africa be given an African cultural identity. In comparing the second century and today, Kwame Bediako reaches the conclusion that there should be continuity with African culture as opposed to the discontinuity that some of the missionaries taught.

Byang Kato on the other hand struggles to accept this view and insists that such a close interaction will actually lead to syncretism, which he views as the greatest threat to the African church. Bediako appears to people like Kato more traditional than Christian (Kato, 1975). In his *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Kato, 1975), Byan Kato has often been viewed as the nemesis of Mbiti. He however agrees with Mbiti on the practices of African Traditional Religion, but he takes completely the opposite position to Mbiti when it comes to relating to them as he sees them as a danger that will lead Christianity into syncretism (Kato, 1975:56-67). Kato's writing is helpful as an

examination of the other side of what Mbiti is saying. He takes an extreme position on the spectrum as well, that alienates cultural identity of an African, although his caution is important.

John Mbiti, from Kenya, contributes towards this study by comparing and contrasting some of the emphasis in SLSW with those of African Traditional Religion so as to bring out the similarities and the differences (Mbiti, 2015a). Although writers like Kato have viewed Mbiti more as an advocate of a Christian faith syncretic with African Traditional Religion (Kato, 1975), the reaction might be farfetched as it lacks objective assessment of Mbiti's point of view. Lamin Sanneh's insights on translatability of the message is crucial in this study as we look at how the various attempts to translate some of the spiritual warfare teaching resonate with the African worldview because it brings them liberty. One always needs to have eyes on the spectrum in an attempt to make the message more translatable as one can easily end up in universalism that would diminish the message of Christianity. However there is a need to clarify this boundary as Sanneh observes (Sanneh, 1997:150-153).

Yusufu Turaki is concerned that a gap exists in the area of theological approach (Turaki, 2006:9). He presents the belief in God, divinities and spirits and also the aspects of power as part of the belief system of Africans. Turaki highlights the various aspects of what religion is and explains what the African traditional beliefs are. Turaki is fairly cautious in his views and seems to tread more on a middle-ground, if any, as he points out the weaknesses of Mbiti, but does not demonize Mbiti as Kato does (Turaki, 2006:62-105).

Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, a former president of the Republic of Kenya (Kenyatta, 1991) captures the traditional religious practices of the Gikuyu community in Kenya. This is useful in evaluating the connection between strategic level spiritual warfare and the Gikuyu religious traditions. He writes as a non-Christian. Jane Achien'g in the English translation of Paulo Mboya's *Luo Kitgi, Gi Timbegi, (Luo Cultures and Practices)* (Achieng, 2001), similarly writes about the traditional cultural practices of the Luo community in Kenya. Paulo Mboya writes from a cultural perspective that does not bring in the Christian aspect at all. Richard Gehman's book *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective* (Gehman, 2005) has very helpful insights on mystical powers and the spirit world. Although he uses the Kamba community in Kenya as the major narrated case study, yet he makes references to other Kenyan communities as well. This book is critical to the studies at hand as it gives insights to the Kamba community and their interaction with mystical powers.

Paul Hiebert's two volumes, among many others have also been helpful. In his *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (P. G. Hiebert, 1994), Hiebert insists on the necessity of studying

both the Scriptures and the socio-cultural contexts of the people we are trying to reach if we are to make the gospel relevant to them. This requires clear understanding of the theory of knowledge and avoiding the danger of imposing foreign views on the host culture. This book is critical for the study as it brings out three main areas for consideration: contextualisation, excluded-middle and spiritual warfare. The study also draws from Hiebert's other book *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (P. G. Hiebert, 1991) which gives insights to missionaries in matters dealing mainly with contextualisation. His view of contextualisation is quite helpful as one thinks through developing a framework of judgement or a criterion of discrimination. He is comprehensive in the subject he is handling except he does not list certain criteria that one should consider. Stephen Bevans comes out here much more clearly (Bevans, 2002).

Hiebert has also written articles which have formed part of the research. These include *Spiritual Warfare and Worldviews* (P. G. Hiebert, 2000) and *The Flaw of the Excluded Middle* (P. G. Hiebert, 1982).

Sammy Muindi in *Pentecostal-Charismatic Prophecy: Empirical-Theological Analysis* (Muindi, 2017). makes a significant attempt in trying to apply empirical data analysis studies to charismatic prophetic experience. He also brings out the discourse between Western theologians' perspectives and the African cultural context. He looks at the hermeneutics and biblical concepts as well. Although this study is mainly in the area of prophecies, yet certain principles that he draws would be relevant to the area of strategic spiritual warfare as well, especially the discourse between the West and Africa. Muindi's methodology is certainly daunting. It appears to be an inter-disciplinary study touching both on biblical studies and practical theology. The research will draw some lessons from his studies.

1.8 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: Chapter Overview

1.8.1 Chapter Outline

Chapter 1: Introduction: Power Conflicts in Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion

Chapter 2: Power Conflicts in Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare with Africa Traditional Religion: A Conceptual Framework

Chapter 3: Powers and Principalities in Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare

Chapter 4: Mystical Powers in African Traditional Religion

Chapter 5: Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare in Dialogue with African Traditional Religion

Chapter 6: Conclusion: Missiological Implications of The Dialogue Between Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion and Some Recommendations:

1.8.2 Chapter Overview

Chapter one captures the introduction and background to the study. It also sets out the research question that the study is looking at together with the objectives of the study. It also gives the definition of the frequently used terminologies as well as the scope and limitation of the study. A brief literature review of some of the literature that is considered pivotal to this study is also covered.

Chapter two presents both the theoretical and conceptual frameworks upon which the study is based. It also introduces the concept of encounterology as a theoretical framework and defines the nature of the dialogical concepts that underlies this study. It examines critical contextualisation as a basis for determining the nature of the encounter between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion. The chapter highlights the necessity of using a qualitative research method and the reason for a combination of desktop comparative analysis and historical case study as methodologies.

Chapter three takes an in-depth look at the origin, background and meaning of strategic level spiritual warfare. It engages with the way powers and principalities are used by the major proponents and brings out the truth claims they make and the impact they have attributed to this. It also highlights the powers concept as understood by those who have been on the forefront of this concept. The chapter refers to how various individuals have looked at the powers and principalities concept from the Judeo-Christian background and converses both with those who support the concept of strategic level spiritual warfare and those whose opinions differ. It also engages with those whose viewpoints are neutral.

Chapter four delves into the concept of the mystical powers in African Traditional Religion. It presents the development of African Traditional Religion and brings out the meaning of mystical powers in ATR. It engages with some of the contemporary examples of how ATR is still deeply

rooted among Africans and sometimes has a foothold among Christians as well. It highlights those concepts which are very close to or similar to concepts in strategic level spiritual warfare. It also examines some practices that seems to correlate with both African Traditional Religion and strategic level spiritual warfare.

Chapter five analyses the information gathered and examines the nature of the dialogue that exists between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion. It also evaluates whether there is a power conflict or not and if there is, the nature of the conflict. This chapter looks into the possibility of continuity or discontinuity of mystical power concepts in ATR with strategic level spiritual warfare. It engages with the issue of dual allegiance and the question of identity. It explains why encounterology and critical contextualisation may be key in unravelling the nature of the relationship and perhaps provides an answer to the rapid church growth among neo-Pentecostal churches in Africa.

One of the areas where the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare have documented as having experienced a significant and noticeable change when this model was practiced is a place called Kiambu, which is a county on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya. This writer has taught a mission class in the church that is said to have been at the epicentre in Kiambu. Chapter five will also analyse the historical records whether this was actually the case and even if there was community transformation, whether it could be attributed to something else as well.

Chapter six gives the conclusion to the study. It also points out the missiological implications for the church and gives other possible recommendations for further study.

1.9 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: Conceptual Framework

1.9.1 Encounterology

A theoretical framework that addresses the nature of the dialogue that lies between SLSW and African Traditional Religion will require critical engagement. Lochhead (Lochhead, 2012) outlines the concepts of dialogue as negotiation, integration and activity. He concludes that dialogue is best expressed as relationship that is the opposite of monologue. John Hick's (Hick, 2010) approach is more universalistic or as Lochhead refers to it, a "theology of partnership". In championing the cause of pluralism, Hick has made an attempt to dismantle the difference

between various faith communities. Subsequently, the more traditional communities have rejected his version of dialogue.

David Tracy (Tracy, 1990) looked at dialogue but from a hermeneutical angle, borrowed from the more traditional Platonic view of dialogue that emphasizes understanding, especially the text based understanding. Kritzinger (J. N. J. Kritzinger, 2008) takes dialogue to a different level when he views it as encounterology that relies on certain praxis. He points out these dimensions as agency, content analysis, ecclesial analysis, theological reflection, spirituality, practical projects and reflexivity. Kritzinger's encounterology therefore forms a major framework that guides in the dialogical relationships between the variables, ATR and SLSW.

This study also examines the closely related usage of "encounter" by John Wimber (Wimber & Springer, 2009) and the concept of "power encounter" that is often found in some writings of proponents of SLSW (Kraft, 2002a). The study reflects on the positive aspects of encounter as presented by Kritzinger which leads to relationship and the alternative view by Wimber which leads to a dispute or conflict. This power dispute is examined through the framework of encounterology.

1.9.2 Critical Contextualisation

In the African context, the question would be raised whether there are dynamics that would contribute towards understanding of mystical powers in the African Traditional Religion and the influence they would have on the teachings of SLSW. Stephen Bevans (Bevans, 2002) outlines six models of contextualisation that would help in engagement in this area and would perhaps give insight to the relationships between the different contexts or cultures. He points out the models as anthropological, transcendental, praxis, synthetic, translational and counter-culture. The research engages with these models and compares them to Paul Hiebert's (P. G. Hiebert, 1994) concept of critical contextualisation. These concepts contribute to deciphering the relationships which exist between the main variables which are under investigation in this research. Thus, the theoretical framework that guides this research is a combination of encounterology and critical contextualisation.

1.10 Research Design and Methodology

Qualitative research is the method that this study has adopted since the study deals with people's beliefs and their behaviour (Cassim, 2017). The study combines desktop analysis and historical case study as the preferred research methodologies.

An empirical attempt to conduct the warfare prayer in an area, carry out evangelism in the area to see the responsiveness of the people, and to observe the validity of community transformation would require perhaps much more time than the duration of this study. It is much more practical to examine the case studies already recorded and evaluate their validity. George Otis (Jr.) has documented some cases (Otis(Jr.), 1999), on top of the ones that Wagner also lists down (Wagner, 2015a).

This study I therefore, takes a qualitative approach of examining the resources (literature and documentary films), which are available on the subject, gathering the data and then analysing them as we compare and contrast (Kumar, 2019). The study also examines areas where there are overlaps between SLSW and ATR, indicating continuity and where there are disparities, indicating discontinuity. The study engages with the literature that documents issues touching on strategic level spiritual warfare to understand the perspective and the conviction that led the proponents to believe that this is a model that will speed up world evangelization. Thus, the proponents of SLSW give their insights into the areas that they are teaching as their voices through this research. The study also examines one historical case study from Kiambu region in Kenya, which has been quoted as an example of where SLSW was effective in transforming the society (Otis, 1999:48) and examines it in the light of other comparative incidences both in the history of the church and in Africa in particular.

The study gleans from some earlier researches that have been conducted in the subject area offering different perspectives. Holvast offers historical perspectives (Holvast, 2008) with reference to Latin America; Samuel Hio-Kee Ooi (Ooi, 2006) offers an Asian perspective with special reference to Chinese Culture and Van der Meer did research (Van der Meer, 2008), on the missiological implication for Malawi in his doctoral thesis. Some biblical and methodological literature are also examined as well. Thus, the Bible, Bultmann, Linnemann, Lowe, Noll, Winks, Wagner, the Jewish Apocrypha, Riddell and Riddell and others offer varying perspectives which are helpful to the research. The study also distinguishes these from the fictional perspectives of Frank Peretti.

In studying Pentecostal- Charismatic prophecy, Muindi adopted the Empirical- Theological approach and set up “case studies entailing congregational participant observations, focus groups interviews, in-depth interviews and documentary analysis...”(Muindi, 2017:22) Since some of the literary data on the African concepts of powers that would have necessitated an empirical approach are already available and documented, the study turns to these sources in this research. Thus Mbiti, Turaki, Bediako, Oden, Gehman, Kenyatta, Tienou, Barrett, Sanneh and Moreau who all give African traditional religious insights contributes to this study.

Chapter two gives a detailed examination of the preference for this design and methodology.

1.11 Ethical Guidelines

This research has been conducted in a way that fulfils the ethical standards and guidelines of the Practical Theology Department of Stellenbosch University.

1.12 Conclusion

There has been an account of the significance and contribution of this research and the direction that the study takes. The next chapter examines in details both the theoretical framework and the design and methodology used in this study.

2 CHAPTER 2

POWER CONFLICTS IN STRATEGIC LEVEL SPIRITUAL WARFARE WITH AFRICA TRADITIONAL RELIGION: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Power Conflicts in Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: An Introduction:

The previous chapter highlighted the research background, research question, problem statement, research aims and objectives and part of the literature review. This chapter presents the

conceptual framework, theoretical framework, the research design and methodology. The chapter examines the conceptual framework upon which the study is anchored, the diversity of the interreligious dialogical concepts that have been used to engage in various studies and also points to the preferred theoretical framework that clearly elucidates the relationship between the two parameters of strategic level spiritual warfare (SLSW) and African Traditional Religion (ATR).

The chapter similarly highlights the various models of contextualisation in order to investigate the possibility of continuity or discontinuity in the relationship between SLSW and ATR in a cultural setting. The chapter points out a possible relevant contextual model that might highlight this relationship. Finally, the chapter presents the research methodology used in this study and highlights the advantages of the qualitative research method with an emphasis on desktop comparative critical analysis and historical case study.

2.2 Power Conflicts in Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: A Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is important in mapping out the direction that research should take. However, views on what it actually means have been diverse and scholars differ on whether it is the same as a theoretical framework or not (Crawford, 2019:36). Others like Charles Kivunja, although underscoring the importance of a conceptual framework in a study, nevertheless declines from recommending it in one's research writing (Kivunja, 2018:49).

Linda Crawford defines a conceptual framework as

An argument from the study that...establishes the importance of and the intended audience for the study... It demonstrates alignment among research questions, data collection and data analysis, as well as the use of vigorous procedures to conduct studies. (Crawford, 2019:36).

She pictures it as the blueprint of a house that provides the structure of the design for the study, the justification for the study and the contribution to new knowledge that the study would make (Crawford, 2019:35). Joseph Maxwell however, equates conceptual framework with a theoretical framework (Maxwell, 2013:4), an idea which Kivunja negates as he points out that while a conceptual framework is like a master plan for the whole research, a theoretical framework is only a small subset of it and therefore should not be equated to the whole which is the conceptual framework (Kivunja, 2018:47).

Sharon Ravitch and Matthew Riggan explains that there is a distinction between a conceptual framework and a theoretical framework (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017:28). In their definition of conceptual framework, Ravitch and Riggan, emphasizes that it is an explanation justifying the importance of the topic and subject matter to be studied and explains why the intended tools of study are the most convenient and the most rigorous enough for the research project (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017:14). Kivunja defines a conceptual framework as

the total, logical orientation and association of anything and everything that forms the underlying thinking, structures, plans and practices, and implementation of your (one's) entire research project. (Kivunja, 2018:47).

Kivunja argues that it is an entire conglomeration of the thinking that has gone on to develop the topic, the problem of concern, the kind of questions which are being raised alongside the literature that one covers. It also entails the theories considered appropriate to the study, the methodology applied, and the method used in the data collection, analysis and eventual interpretation. He envisions it ending with the recommendations and the conclusion of the study (Kivunja, 2018:47).

Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman highlight the fact that conceptual framework is an "argument" that one puts forward on why the study is of significance. At the same time it draws connections to key "theories and theoretical perspectives, policy issues, problems of practice, social and of political nature" (Marshall & Rossman, 2014:58). They argue that it is an important guide to the study and assistance in the identification of the gap the study is filling (Marshall & Rossman, 2014:58). Figure 1 captures the view presented by Maxwell, while figure 2 illustrates the views of Kivunja, Crawford, Ravitch and Riggan.

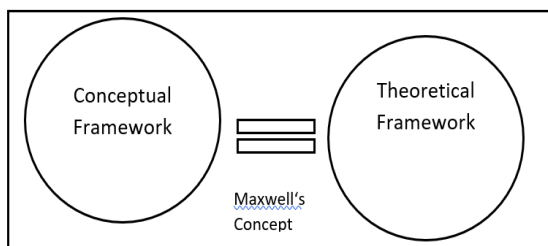


Figure 1: Maxwell's Concept

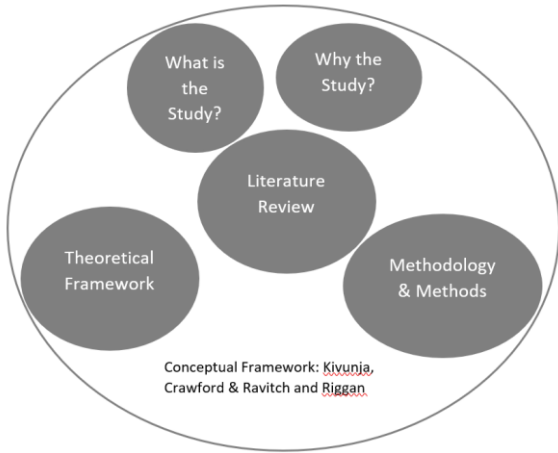


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework: Kivunja, Crawford & Ravitch and Riggan

When it comes to the presentation of the conceptual framework, Crawford leaves the option open on whether this should be done through a diagram or in a narrative form (Crawford, 2019:44). Maxwell points out the possibility of the conceptual framework changing as a result of the insights that one gains in the course of the study (Maxwell, 2013:86). This study adopts both the diagram and the narrative genre in presentation of the conceptual framework as seen in figure 3.

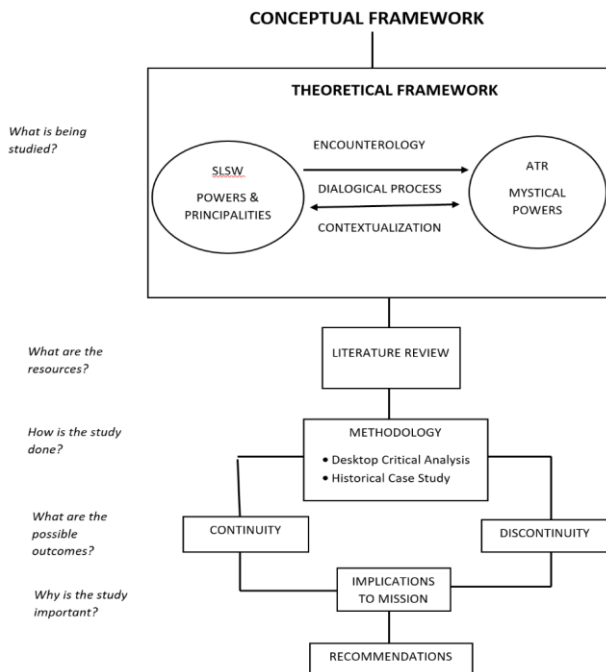


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework Overview

This study adopts the definition of Ravitch and Riggan for the conceptual framework and that of Kivunja for the theoretical framework and in so doing affirms that they are distinct from one another with the theoretical framework serving as a subset of the conceptual framework. At the same time the study acknowledges the position of Kivunja that "... the preferred approach is to synthesize the contents of existing theories into one that is custom-tailored to (one's) problem statement and research question" (Kivunja, 2018:49).

The study investigates the extent to which the teachings of powers and principalities as practiced through strategic level spiritual warfare promote continuity or discontinuity, conflict or embrace with the beliefs and practices of mystical powers in African Traditional Religion. It also examines whether this has had any significant impact on evangelism, missions and community transformation in Kenya in particular and Africa at large.

The Lausanne Congress for World Evangelization (LCWE) had previously subscribed to an aspect of spiritual warfare as reflected in article 12 of the Lausanne Covenant that came out of the first Lausanne gathering in 1974 in Switzerland, which stated that:

We believe that we are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers of evil, who are seeking to overthrow the Church and frustrate its task of world evangelization. We know our need to equip ourselves with God's armour and to fight this battle with the spiritual weapons of truth and prayer. For we detect the activity of our enemy, not only in false ideologies outside the Church, but also inside it in false gospels which twist Scripture and put people in the place of God. We need both watchfulness and discernment to safeguard the biblical gospel... (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE), 1974: accessed on 4th November 2021)

In the subsequent congress in Manila in 1989, the LCWE underscored the issue of spiritual warfare as indicated in the 11th article of the Manila Manifesto in the abridged version as follows:

We affirm that spiritual warfare demands spiritual weapons, and that we must both preach the word in the power of the Spirit, and pray constantly that we may enter into Christ's victory over the principalities and powers of evil (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE), 1989).

The definition that LCWE gave to spiritual warfare was basically engaging the spiritual forces with "truth and prayer" that would give victory to the Christians over "principalities and powers".

However, during the Manila Congress, a track on spiritual warfare, led by C. Peter Wagner, developed after the Congress under the umbrella of AD 2000 Movement, as a prayer network. Its main emphasis was a new strategy for evangelism that involved prayers, which seemed to be producing better results than the evangelistic models which had been used previously in church history according to Wagner and Beckett (Wagner, 2015a:11; Beckett, 2015:151). This was based on anecdotal information on community transformation that they had received, mainly from the Majority World (Wagner, 2015a).

Wagner defined the new model as "strategic level spiritual warfare" and explained that it would bring about world evangelization by identifying specific spirits which are ruling certain territories through spiritual mapping, naming them and disabling them one by one. Through this means, Wagner asserted, evangelization will take place unhindered and much faster. The identification can either be through divine revelation, research or folklore. It can also be through visiting sites or shrines where pagan activities used to take place (Wagner, 2015a).

Much has been said and written about this emphasis by different individuals from different cultures. However, a closer examination is necessary to determine whether it synchronizes with the concept of mystical powers in African Traditional Religion. Yusufu Turaki advances the idea that these powers can also be referred to as "mana, the life force, vital force, the life essence and

dynamism” (Turaki, 2006:24). This is also affirmed by Richard Gehman who sees the mystical powers as the “impersonal supernatural power that pervades the universe” (Gehman, 2005:85). He also calls these powers as “mana”, which affects the hunter, the farmer, the resources of an individual and even the health of a person (Gehman, 2005:85). Both Turaki and Gehman point out that these powers can be used either for good or for evil (Turaki, 2006:24; Gehman, 2005:87).

This study, therefore, delves into the relationship between strategic level spiritual warfare and mystical powers in African Traditional Religion and interrogates whether there is continuity or discontinuity between them.

In a consultation dubbed “Deliver us from Evil”, organized by LCWE in August 2000, which brought together both scholars and mission practitioners in Nairobi, Kenya, the subject of spiritual warfare was again discussed. In his presentation A. Scott Moreau indicated that:

What Wagner and others are calling “strategic-level spiritual warfare” is praying against these territorial spirits, seeking to “map” their strategies over given locations by discerning their names and what they use to keep people in bondage and then to bind them in turn so that evangelism may go unhindered. The idea of “spiritual mapping” is one in which people research an area and try to identify the spirit(s) who are in charge over it so that “smart-bomb” praying may loosen the hold of territorial spirits over the people in a territory who may then come to Christ more freely (Moreau, 2000: accessed on 4th November 2021).

Moreau captured some of the terminologies, which developed around this subject, combining both geographical and perhaps, American military jargon that made the subject of spiritual warfare become quite technical. On the other hand, some of the concepts and practices which developed from this seem to resonate quite closely with some concepts in African Traditional Religion.

Two decades later, sections of the neo-Pentecostal Churches in Africa seem to be struggling to strike a balance between the teachings of SLSW and those that normally would be found in ATR. Mookgo S. Kgatle defines the neo-Pentecostals as a new movement that gives a lot of emphasis to deliverance as opposed to the classical Pentecostals who mainly stressed speaking in tongues and the other gifts of the Holy Spirit (Kgatle, 2017:2). While pointing out that the neo-Pentecostals closely interface with traditional religious practices, in that they take issues of spiritual power seriously by acknowledging that certain objects can be animated, Kgatle acknowledges that the neo-Pentecostals at the same time reject these objects. Although they reject items which they consider to have mystical powers like amulets and fetishes, at the same time they replace these in

their practices with artifacts and emblems like anointing oil, blessed water, holy candles and other items, which play almost a similar role (Kgatle, 2017:3).

Other areas would include visits to shrines where ancestral spirits had been venerated; the necessity for ceremonial cleansing of certain spots to neutralize negative events which had taken place in those spaces in generations gone by; the transmission of curses or spirits genealogically to the next generation; the necessity for perambulatory prayers over some spots and the need to break curses placed upon people to set them free. These engagements have raised the possibility that there is a vacuum that has been left unattended due to the rather cerebral Western model of Christianity that does not engage with the matters of powers which are quite pertinent to the African context (Rommen et al., 1995) .

This study engages with this vacuum and attempts to identify whether there is an interface between the teachings of strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion. The study encourages a healthy dialogue that examines whether Western missionaries, who were originally influenced by their field experiences in different cultures where they previously served in, “borrowed” concepts from these same cultures, which were later repackaged and returned to the original source, which perhaps would explain the close association and identity. The study also offers insights into the hybridity between Christianity and African Traditional Religion as is sometimes seen in sections of the church in Africa.

There is a great resurgence of people going back to traditional African religious practice with sacrificial systems, rituals and pilgrimages to ancestral shrines in some parts of the continent. One parliamentary speaker of the Kenyan National Assembly, spent ten days in seclusion in a traditional shrine, going through a cleansing ceremony by the Kikuyu Elders so that he would gain political power (Thiong’o, 2021: 8). The following Sunday he was kneeling in a Christian Cathedral being blessed by the provost of church (Correspondent, 2021:6). John Ng’ang’a in *Christianity and Culture* points out how in events like weddings and funerals, traditional religion is slowly becoming acceptable in many communities in Kenya (Ng’ang’a, 2019:68).

This kind of re-emergence of ATR seems to be on the increase on the African continent to the extent that Matthew Michael also, captured it when he wrote

In sub-Saharan Africa in particular, there is a growing resurgence of African traditions among the elite and educated classes despite the increasing westernization of the African political, economic, social and religious systems (Michael, 2013:222).

The efficacy of the Christian faith and practice in the continent of Africa is therefore, brought into question, especially in the way in which it is engaging with the issues of mystical powers. It appears as if Christian faithfuls hold their traditions under a veneer of Christianity, but when faced with metaphysical questions that Christianity does not provide answers to, they easily slide back into traditional African religions. These would include issues that, in the African setting, would be considered as taboos, omens, dreams and curses. These seems to be extended to perceptions of why evangelism may be strained in certain contexts and even why in some regions there is resistance to the spread of the Gospel.

The African continent has had some world- renowned theologians who have been passionate about theologizing for Africa although their emphases has not necessarily been on the area of spiritual warfare and its interface with African Traditional Religion. The claims are that some African theologians have written for a different audience, as Tite Tienou claims: “The audience for whom the articles and the books were written was not the African church but the writers’ peers and mentors.” (Tienou, 1990:74). This view has however, been questioned, as this would also diminish Tienou’s contributions as well. It is Bénézet Bujo who underscores the fact that theology in Africa and discussions on African theology is mainly elitist, abstract and academic and subsequently, has mainly had an impact in scholarly circles (Bujo, 2006). This may also be disputed as not capturing the broader spectrum of the scholarly work within the African context, some of which have influenced the grassroot levels (Kinoti & Kimuyu, 1997).

One however may engage with the question of why the ordinary Christian may not be influenced much by the writings of Kwame Bediako or even be familiar with him and yet the Christian author Peter Wagner seems to be quite well read among average Christians. It may be the same reason that would make people like George Otis Jr be much more renowned among ordinary Christians in Africa than Lamin Sanneh who is well known in scholarly circles (Priest & Barine, 2017:179-180). This could perhaps be a pointer that Bediako may not be shaping the direction of Christianity in Africa at the grassroots level, although he certainly does in the world of academia, while Wagner seems to be influencing the ordinary grassroots Christians.

This could also explain why the transformation documentaries by George Otis Jr. (Otis(Jr.), 2014; Otis(Jr.), 2020) have gained more traction in the continent than Sanneh’s “*Whose Religion is Christianity: The Gospel Beyond the West* (Sanneh, 2003)?” Perhaps, it is the way they have written, the subject matters of their discussions and their target audiences which have made this difference. Robert Priest asserts that seminary professors tend to write with the academic world in

mind and subsequently cannot compete with some of these authors who both speak and write for broader consumption (Priest & Barine, 2017:183).

These same African theologians have however, come out very strongly in arguing for development of African theologies that is contextual and that takes African culture seriously but in the process as Tienou has argued:

... some of these authors appear at times to be more of apologists for non-Christian theology and religions... but one does not think that the Christian theologian's calling is to rehabilitate the 'pagan' religious past (Tienou, 1990:74).

While Tienou and others would argue that the usage of the word "pagan" is appropriate for describing and dismissing African Traditional Religion, from the African context the term has derogative implication today as the phrase is taken not just to refer to the religious allegiance of individuals but also cultural. As such some would desist from using the term as it is viewed almost the way the term "primitive" is viewed². One would disagree with Tienou, both in his language in dismissing African Traditional Religion as "pagan", and also thinking that when one begins to look at the possibility of continuity with Christianity they are attempting to "rehabilitate paganism" as

² F. Eboussi Boulaga equates African traditional cultures to paganism which in his opinion is "'unfaith', faithlessness, the condition of infidels." It is also equivalent to "ignorance and misconception of the true God, the one who has personally revealed himself." As such it can only be seen as "an evil life." (Boulaga, 1984:19). He further states without elaborating that since paganism is contrary to nature, it is "inhuman" as it is accompanied by "slavery, infanticide, cannibalism, polygamy, and all manner of aberration and imperfection." (Boulaga, 1984:20). The only solution therefore to this malady is to "Christianize" and "civilize" it (Boulaga, 1984:20). He asserts that those participating in such practices are "Big babies" or worse still, operating on animal instincts. (Boulaga, 1984:20).

Abimbola Adedokun is of the opinion that there is a deliberate projection of African traditional religion with a "metaphorical index that aligns barbarism, evil, violence and the occults acts with the hue of African skin and has been used to justify racialized violence (Adedokun, 2018:110). As such they are presented as the "pagan other" (Adedokun, 2018:113).

On the other hand Jonathan Skinner does not see paganism as an issue in Africa only as he acknowledges both its resurgence and spread in the Western world in what he terms "neo-paganism" (Skinner, 2006:11-12). In his view, it is modernisation and recalibration of some of the traditional ideologies, rituals and practices which were previously demonised as paganism by majority western Christian culture, but are now being domiciled as part of the new panacea for effective living (Skinner, 2006:59).

It is such kind of attitudes that makes some Africans reconsider the usage of the word "paganism" or "pagan" as stigmatised and would prefer that it is never used to make reference to African traditional religion. Some have even suggested the need for a more positive evaluation of the pre-existing religions of Africa (Bediako, 1992:431-433).

he calls it. This kind of perception and attitude, closes out any possible attempt at investigating the terrain of interreligious encounters and dialogue.

This calls for some kind of liberation from the insistence that to study effectively at higher academic levels, one has to replicate the ideas of some Western authors who are considered authorities and thus more ancient African traditions which have passed from generation to generation are sidelined and viewed as non-academic because they are non-peer reviewed and not previously documented. Yet even when one would conduct research where interviews are registered, these too would not have been previously documented, nor peer reviewed. It is from some of these sources where one would get information that would enable the kind of relationship being considered under this study to be determined.

The host of individuals who have been teaching and training on spiritual warfare seems to be connecting with the felt needs of sections of the church in the continent of Africa and, perhaps, Latin America as well. These would include C. Peter Wagner (Wagner, 2015a), George Otis Jr (Otis(Jr.), 1999), Charles Kraft (Kraft, 2002b), Cindy Jacobs (Jacobs, 1991), John Dawson (Dawson, 2001) and many others. C. Peter Wagner has been the most prolific writer on the subject among them and as such is more widely read and quoted than the rest. One would wonder however, why their teachings on spiritual warfare synchronize so deeply with ordinary African Christians. It is possible that their ideas are not only novel, but perhaps also touch on issues which are close to the spirituality of Africans as well.

Andrew Walls pointed out in an article *"Old Athens and New Jerusalem"* (Walls, 2016:146) that the new teachers in Antioch were more effective in reaching the Greeks because they used "borrowed symbols" including the word *"kurios"* which communicated to them the idea of Lordship better. Similarly, the teachers of strategic level spiritual warfare appear to have "borrowed symbols" from African traditional cultures. Most of these authors served as missionaries at one point or another in cultures that were deeply engaged with the spirit world. Wagner served in Latin America (Wagner, 2010), Kraft in Nigeria (Kraft, 1990) and George Otis Jr. conducted some of his research among First Nation peoples in America and in India as well (Otis (Jr.), 1997).

This may be a pointer to a case of missionary reverse-cultural influence or counter-cultural influence, where the host cultures influenced the missionaries to adopt the cultural views of their host. Subsequently these missionaries christianised these ideas, theologised them, repackaged them and exported them back as new ideas. The fact that the host cultures could see something in

these ideas that closely resembled what they were dealing with in their cultures, made them embrace the new teachings with much more ease and identity.

They thus developed a whole set of theologies around the spirit world and powers which have been propagated all over the world. To their credit, the group came out very strongly as a prayer mobilization team, but at the same time they had new dimensions of emphasis, that resonated quite closely with the communities that they were reaching. In *Spiritual Power and Missions: Raising the Issues*, Edward Rommen, et al (Rommen, et al, 1995), critiqued some of the practices and teachings that were being propagated. The following were some of the areas of concern to the authors:

- Going for deliverance classes to be set free
- Changing names due to fear of curses being transmitted through the names
- Making journeys to those “sacred” places inhabited by evil spirits to do spiritual mapping
- Conducting cleansing services both for individuals and institutions
- Sprinkling oil or holy water around their houses to ward off evil spirits
- Interviewing grandparents to discover the curses that might have been genealogically transmitted on them in order for one to be set free
- Talking of marine demons from the oceans occasionally harassing people living by the oceans
- Talking of spiritual husbands and spiritual wives attacking and interfering in marriages

On top of these, the following teachings were also being disseminated:

- Demons exist in hierarchical order controlled by Satan
- Spirits control geographically demarcated regions (territoriality).
- Necessity of conducting spiritual mapping in an area to effectively engage it in evangelism
- Perambulatory prayers (spiritual journeys and walks) necessary in order to engage identified spiritual “strongmen” in certain regions
- Generational curses need to be broken to set Christians totally free
- Genealogical transfer of spirits or curses from parents or ancestors
- Authority figure decisions made in past generations are still binding today on Christians

- Importance of doing a personal background check to find out in what one's ancestors were engaged, in order to experience freedom totally (Priest, Robert J.; Campbell, Thomas; Mullen, 1995; Lowe, 1998; Otis(Jr.), 2015)

One can easily begin to see that some of the teachings in the church following after the strategic level spiritual warfare in Africa looks very similar to what one would find in communal folklore, some of which had backgrounds from African Traditional Religion, while others were sourced from anecdotes of individuals who had interacted with demons through exorcism or witchcraft. Others seem to be attempts to replace some practices within African Traditional Religion with modified and christianised versions of the same.

Since the entire domain of the spirit world was deemed to be too wide, the study has been narrowed down mainly to the area of strategic level spiritual warfare. It is the aim of the study to show that the strategic level spiritual warfare domain as taught by these former missionaries in an attempt to contextualize the ministry in the areas touching on spiritual powers have perhaps gone full circle and are expressing continuity rather than discontinuity with Africa Traditional Religion. The research also points to the missiological impact of this in the African church.

2.3 Power Conflicts in Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: A Theoretical Framework

Ravitch and Riggan define a theory as “attempts to explain why things work the way that they do and that it usually does so, by way of identifying and examining relationships among things” (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017:43). They posit that there is a span of meanings which have been given to theories, ranging from mere hunches to “sets of propositions ... which have been subject to widespread empirical exploration.” (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017:47). Kivunja, however, sees a theory as

a generalized statement of abstractions or ideas that asserts, explains or predicts relationships or connections between or among phenomena, within the limits or critical bonding assumptions that the theory explicitly makes (Kivunja, 2018:45).

On the other hand, Kivunja explains theoretical framework as a summary of concepts and theories which one constructs within a previously tested and published structure by synthesising them to help one develop a theoretical background which also forms the basis for data analysis, interpretation and final meaning of the research (Kivunja, 2018:46). He further, refers to it as the

synthesis of the “thoughts of giants in the field of research” as one understands them and how one uses them to gain insights into the data collected (Kivunja, 2018:46).

2.3.1 Encounterology

The study now turns to the area of encounterology which will eventually lead to the aspects and examination of the nature of dialogue that exists between the key parameters of strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion, especially in the domain of mystical powers. It will then culminate with a methodological examination of the interface between African Traditional Religion and strategic level spiritual warfare. Religious communities which have encountered one another often influence the perception or the worldview of the other, however subtly it may be (Cornille, 2013:xiii).

John Wimber asserted that, “ Any system or force that must be overcome for the Gospel to be believed is a cause for power encounter.” (Wimber & Springer, 2009:16). Missionary Alan Richard Tippett was the first one who coined the phrase “power encounters” to refer to the clashing of the kingdom of God with the kingdom of Satan (Tippett, 1977). Wimber only defined the power encounter as a conflict between God and Satan, but left out the possibility that the scope of power encounters might be much wider than this and that these encounters might also engage the interactions between different faiths and not just the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan only.

In his article “*Faith to Faith: Missiology as Encounterology*”, JNJ Kritzinger offers what he refers to as a “missiological approach to ...inter-religious encounters...” (Kritzinger, 2008:764). Kritzinger engages in conversation with Piet Meiring (Meiring, 1996) by offering an alternative methodology for looking at the theology of interreligious relationship (Kritzinger, 2008:764). He views the distinction that some have tried to make between “religious studies” and “theology”, with the former meant for the university, while the latter is designated for the seminary, as quite unnecessary. In his view this kind of discussion forms a barrier to the possibility of dialogue that should exist between the “committed” and “the non-committed” (Kritzinger, 2008:765). In this, Kritzinger is referring to the church as the “committed” and is engaged with seminaries and the academy as the “non-committed”, dealing with the universities. The osmotic process between the two should freely continue to flow without artificial barriers for the purpose of free exchange of knowledge.

Kritzinger extends this discourse into the manner in which Christianity relates with other religions and highlights the necessity of questioning the “unreflexive” stance that Christianity has often taken in its relationship with other religions (Kritzinger, 2008:767). He finds the traditional way of classifying various religious relationships as “exclusivist, inclusivist and pluralist” as wanting because it is a hindrance to “any interreligious discourse.” (Kritzinger, 2008:767). Kritzinger posits that even traditional protestant Biblical expositions which he calls “*explicatio-applicatio*” cannot produce contextual theology or enhance interreligious relationship. He advocates for a more complex model rather than the simplistic (as he views it), traditional system, previously used (Kritzinger, 2008:767).

One wonders whether Kritzinger is misunderstanding the fact that although scriptural exegesis may be coming out of a Middle Eastern context, the application is actually supracultural and thus takes into account the context of the recipient that is engaging with the scripture. Perhaps he should have considered that for interreligious relations or encounters to take place one does not necessarily have to begin from a blank point of view in order to have meaningful dialogue. That misses the whole purpose of dialogue; for dialogue presumes that the partners engaging in a discourse do not have a similar starting point, but would desire to arrive at some point of understanding in spite of their presumed different starting points.

The evangelicals have tended to emphasize what David Bebbington referred to as the evangelical *quadrilateral* which were 1) conversionism- which brought out the necessity for change in life, 2) activism- engagement both in evangelism and mission, 3) biblicism- the centrality of the scriptures in evangelical beliefs and, 4) crucicentrism- the atoning sacrifice on the cross as paramount to evangelical beliefs (Bebbington, 2003:5-14). Evangelicals would put these as a priori in any dialogic encounters, which would either be stated openly or held as unstated positions and thus would play a critical role in the kind of dialogue that they would engage in.

It is crucial to note that the purpose of the dialogue need not necessarily be apologetics nor ellentics (Cotterell, 1981), but to enrich one another and procure mutual understanding. For some, the purpose of interreligious dialogue is for one to win an argument, prove that the other party is wrong or to win over the other party to one’s side. But this may not be the case and perhaps should not be the objective all the time. A better objective should be to engage with one another to the extent that a meaningful relationship of mutual understanding can develop. If this eventually leads to one shifting their position, it is not because they lost an argument, but because they have understood and have been won over by insights they have gained through the discourse.

This research leads towards gaining insight on how one entity may have been a beneficiary of the worldview of the other.

Matthew Michael considers it more as a wrestling match and sees the continuous wrestling going on between Christianity and “African traditions” (sic) with Christianity on a “quest to Christianize African traditions” while African traditions are attempting to “africanize Christianity” (Michael, 2013:223). He concludes that either way “African tradition becomes a formidable partner or opponent which African Christianity must adequately seek to understand, interpret and confront” (Michael, 2013:223). The fact that he does not leave the two in the wrestling ring is important, especially as he sees the possibility of them walking away from the ring hand in hand as partners who have gleaned some lessons from one another.

Kritzinger objects to a methodological approach that only engages outsiders with matters touching on one’s religious faith; he underscores the importance of having an insider giving his or her own understanding, identity and how the faith relates to his or her context (Kritzinger, 2008:767). It is, indeed, quite true that the one who tells the other person’s story, would usually adopt a particular perspective in the narrative that is often shrouded by their own worldview and outlook that sometimes misrepresent the context they are reporting on. He recommends that there is a lesson that one should learn from the Braxton study (Dubois et al., 2002) on ethnicity which points out that there is a construct in religious identity that can only be properly handled by an insider through a dialogical response (Kritzinger, 2008:768).

One wonders though whether Kritzinger may be overlooking the fact that sometimes an insider tends to paint a more positive picture of their faith and would perhaps gloss over areas that they might consider to be offensive to their dialogue partner. For this reason, it is important to have an external view which will point out the blind spots that often hinder individuals or communities from addressing their weaknesses. This is perhaps the reason why he borrows ideas from the Johari Window (Kritzinger, 2008:775) which he considers as useful in unveiling these blind spots. This was developed by J. Luft and H. Ingham in 1955 as presented in figure 4. They explained the concept in a paper published in 1961 (Luft & Ingham, 1961).

	KNOWN TO SELF	NOT KNOWN TO SELF
KNOWN TO OTHERS	Open Activity: What both you & others know about yourself	Blind Spot What others know about one which they themselves do not

NOT KNOWN TO OTHERS	Hidden Area What one knows about themselves but others do not	Unknown area What neither others nor one knows about themselves
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Figure 4: Johari Window of Human Relations Training News 1961 5(1), P.6

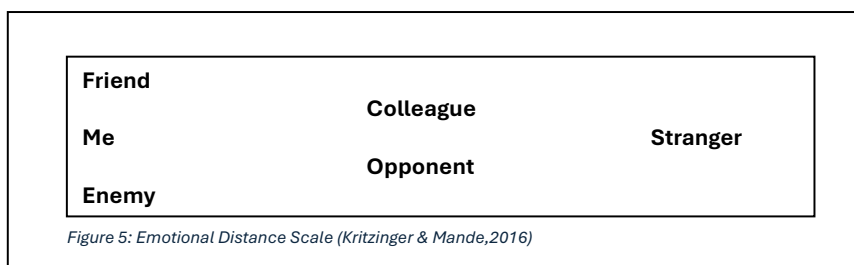
There are areas that are known to the individual and also to others, and these are viewed as the *open areas*, while areas that are known to the individual but hidden from others are referred to as *hidden areas*. On the other hand, there are areas that are known to others but hidden from the individual, that are referred to as the *blind spots* and finally, areas which are not known either by the individual nor by others and these are the *unknown areas*. When an outsider is drawn into the interreligious dialogue, they will help one to bring out the blind spots into the arena of the open activity and thus improve the dialogical engagement.

Subsequently, Kritzinger points out the necessity of developing an “interactive theological-practical method which would take into account religious studies, systematic theology and missiology” (Kritzinger, 2008:769). He recommends a “praxis approach that takes into account the various aspects which shape the religious encounter.” (Kritzinger, 2008:769). In his view, this would catapult the dialogue partners from the realm of “othering” to the realm of “one-anothering” (Kritzinger, 2008:769).

Kritzinger borrowed the concept of “neighbourology” from Koyama (Batumalai & Koyama, 1986). Koyama held the view that Christian witness needs to exegete both the word and the culture that they live in without the intention of conquering the other person. Koyama called this “neighbourology” (Batumalai & Koyama, 1986). It is this concept that Kritzinger renames as “encounterology” and considers this as the significant role of missiology in allowing for reflection in “factors shaping intentional encounters” between different religions (Kritzinger, 2008:770). Therefore, a missiological approach is that which allows “faith to faith encounters” between religions (Kritzinger, 2008:770). It enhances “encounterology”.

Unlike the limited perspective that was presented earlier on in this chapter from John Wimber on power encounter, Kritzinger redeems the word “encounter” and gives it a positive meaning that seems to build a bridge rather than a wall. In a sense he sees a membrane divide between culture and religions which would allow for osmotic encounters that can shape the dialoguing partners. In the encounter process, the emotional distance can be mapped out as illustrated in figure 5. This shows that one is closest emotionally to either a friend and/or the one considered as an enemy and which is then followed in closeness to one’s colleagues and opponents and finally the stranger.

Because of this even individuals or entities which might be viewed as enemies have the potential of becoming friends thus leading to encounterology (J. Kritzinger & Mande, 2016).



In Kritzinger's examination of the five ideological concepts of Lochhead (Lochhead, 2012) - hostility, isolation, competition, partnership and dialogue - he understands Lochhead to be engaged only at the theoretical- ideological level that does not reach deeper level of encounters. He therefore, proposes a seven step dimension which he refers to as "praxis cycle" and which should be interrelated in an interreligious dialogue (J. N. J. Kritzinger, 2008:771).

- 1) *Agency*: This expresses who an individual is in relation to the followers of the other faith and the power relations between them. One does not feel superior to the other, but they enter into dialogue as equal partners (J. N. J. Kritzinger, 2008:771).
- 2) *Context Analysis*: One then focuses on the historical and structural factors which shape and influence the society. Therefore, social-political, economic and cultural factors influencing the encounter need to be taken into account as different people would analyse these from their vantage point and thus perhaps reach different conclusions (J. N. J. Kritzinger, 2008:776).
- 3) *Ecclesial Analysis*: Religious communities tend to be inherently conservative when it comes to their scriptures, rituals and traditions and would be more inclined to preserve these artifacts which have survived over the years. Since religious communities tend to keep long memories, the historical analysis is not to bring out accusations and counteraccusations but to make attempts, where those who have initially been viewed as enemies, would shift to be opponents and perhaps colleagues at some point (J. N. J. Kritzinger, 2008:776). The point raised at this juncture is about the nature of the encounter that the potential partners in the dialogue have had towards one another. In this case, the question would be

how Christianity has related with African Traditional Religion in the past and what the attitudes between them have been like (J. N. J. Kritzinger, 2008:771).

- 4) *Theological Reflections*: In theological reflection one engages with how one community views the traditions of the other. The traditional categorization of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism may not be all that one looks at, for the idea is to deepen the understanding of what the other group's theology is like (J. N. J. Kritzinger, 2008:776). The issue raised therefore is how one's biblical interpretation is affected in the light of the engagement with the other group. Similarly, a consideration is also made on the unique Christian message that might arise from the context of the engagement and how the others would reflect on it as a result of the encounter they have had (J. N. J. Kritzinger, 2008:772). An encounter between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion brings out a lot of theological reflections as shall be observed in the next two chapters.
- 5) *Spirituality*: The way that the two entities experience their faith realities and how this enhances the depths of their religious encounters would reveal their spirituality. It includes typology which are terms that describe their spiritual experiences and worship (J. N. J. Kritzinger, 2008:782), and would also entail sharing each other's experience in songs, prayers and meditation (J. N. J. Kritzinger, 2008:783). Perhaps here, one would say that it is easier said than done, particularly when the tenets of the beliefs are quite diverse. Here one would examine how they practice their faith in worship and how that would affect their relationship with the dialogue partner (J. N. J. Kritzinger, 2008:772).
- 6) *Practical Projects*: These would entail engaging in concrete community service or projects together without one faith imposing their position or concepts on the other (J. N. J. Kritzinger, 2008:783). Attempts are made to enlist the kind of joint interreligious projects that could be shared in a "projects-encounter" dynamic without necessarily opposing one another (J. N. J. Kritzinger, 2008:772).
- 7) *Reflexivity*: This requires openness to scrutiny on whether there is progress that is being made in the dialogical relationship with the partner through encounterology. If the encounter is meant to be productive, one would ask the question on how the last six elements of the praxis cycle have been helpful in having a meaningful interfaith encounter (J. N. J. Kritzinger, 2008:772).

Kritzinger concludes this by stating that:

Along this way of faith, a missiology may emerge that will be encounterology: a critical and creative reflection on the encounters between the people of the way and the people of other ways - arising out of encounters and nurturing ever more aesthetic and transformative encounters - on our way into the fulness of the reign of God (J. N. J. Kritzing, 2008:784).

The study engages the two entities by examining both the content and the practice in the light of encounterology and sees a potential movement from enemies or opponents to one through which some worthwhile lessons can be learnt. While sections of the Christian church and people of other faiths may not be open to the possibility of learning from those that they differ with, the study analyses in chapter five why this is a valid possibility. The missionaries who have been the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare have probably been making sincere attempts to be contextually relevant to the cultures that they had engaged in. For this reason, the study also looks at contextualisation as a possible explanation to the nature of the relationship between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion in the area of power encounters.

2.3.2 Dialogical Imaginations

In the introduction to the book *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, edited by Catherine Cornille, the author highlights the fact that "... while classical apologetics is mainly oriented towards defeating the other, dialogue involves openness and receptivity to the witness of the other" (Cornille, 2013:xiii). She points out that religion requires a measure of humility without insisting on its own superiority and exclusivity in order to be hospitable to the others (Cornille, 2013:xiii). She also talks of the transmigration of one religion from one cultural context to another which would often force the religion to re-examine its own foundations and might even borrow from the other religion in what she calls "implicit dialogue" as one faith silently learns from the other without overt activities of engagements (Cornille, 2013:xiii). This raises the question of whether proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare may have experienced "implicit dialogue" in their interaction with African Traditional Religion. This would result in strategic level spiritual warfare being influenced by some ideas from ATR.

Leonard Swidler gives what he considers as the three primary models of dialogue: first, the dialogue of the head where one reaches out to learn from the other religious groups gaining insights into their ideologies and meaning of life; secondly, the dialogue of the hands entails joining with the other to make this world a better place to live in; and finally, the dialogue of the

heart, which entails a deep embrace of the inner spirit and aesthetics of the other (Swidler, 2013:6). As the two parameters under consideration interact, the study will be looking at whether this movement from the head to the hand and to the heart has taken place or is even possible.

In Vatican Council II, the Catholic Church came up with a statement giving the relationships with non-Catholic people of other faiths in which they stated that the

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men... The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men (Paul VI, 1965).

At least the statement above reinforces the idea of one faith learning from the other. Cornille underscores what she refers to as the conditions of inter-religious dialogue and highlights the fact that dialogue is used in many ways:

- Peaceful co-existence and friendly exchanges
- Active engagement with teaching and practices of the other
- Cooperation towards social change
- Common prayers and the participation in the rituals of the other

(Cornille, 2013:21)

She asserts that for this to take place, it requires “epistemological humility and hospitality towards the truth of the other.” (Cornille, 2013:21). Some sections of the Christian church would perhaps define Cornille’s position as a compromise and would tend to draw a line on how far one would go in the proposed direction of accepting the truth of the other (Kato, 1975). Amos Yong also uses this concept of hospitality as a necessary ingredient in the process of interreligious dialogue (Yong, 2018:24).

David Tracy seems to be more prophetic in *Dialogue with the Other: The Inter-religious Dialogue* as he considers inter-religious dialogue as a significant dimension that will give shape to Christian theology in the days to come (Tracy, 1990:xii). Tracy is of the persuasion that in the future one would not be able to engage in meaningful Christian theology without at the same time getting into “conversation with the other great ways” (Tracy, 1990:xii). One presumes that the other great ways that Tracy is referring to is the other religions. This perhaps sounds more like a hyperbole,

since there are many areas of study within Christianity that do not bring one into dialogical contacts with the others as Tracy asserts. However, the point he makes is worth noting that ignoring other faiths would prove to be fairly difficult in the future.

His view that the “Eurocentric character of Christian theology” must give way to a more global world perspective (Tracy, 1990:1) is critical in a time when many are re-examining the brand of Christianity exported from the traditional Christian centres from the North to the South and the modes of dissemination. As a result of this there is already a great demand for engagement at the “intellectual, moral and ... religious” (Tracy, 1990:4) levels to create a relationship that would enable dialogue to proceed, in spite of initial suspicion and mistrust. This will require re-examining and perhaps discarding some of the negative terminologies which have been used to make reference to indigenous religious traditions (Tracy, 1990:4). Tracy refers to this attitude as a “mystical- prophetic” hermeneutical approach (Tracy, 1990:6).

In this, Tracy seems to be in agreement with Cornille on the necessity of attitude change to be able to engage in meaningful dialogue with the other. This change, perhaps, may be viewed as a spectrum where various groups would indicate along the spectrum, their comfort points and discontentment areas. Along these, they may then draw lines which would then mark the extent to which they are willing to go in order to engage with others.

David Lochhead in *The Dialogical Imperative: A Christian Reflection on Interfaith Encounter*, draws our attention to the necessity of taking seriously the world of economic and religious diversity in which we live and at the same time recognising that theology has become more contextual and therefore, requires a deeper understanding of what mission looks like in an interfaith situation (Lochhead, 2012:1-2).

Lochhead draws from his academic background of both philosophy of religion and systematic theology to raise the main concerns of “philosophical clarity, theological fidelity, and practical consequences...” when dealing with the issue of dialogue (Lochhead, 2012:3). Having been influenced by Soren Kierkegaard and Ludwig Wittgenstein, whom he refers to as “philosophers of discontinuity”, he struggled with the concept of partnership as he did not see anything common among religions to draw them into interreligious dialogue (Lochhead, 2012:3). One therefore is faced with the possibility of adopting various attitudes when discussing interreligious dialogue as presented by Lochhead.

2.3.2.1 Attitude of Isolation

Lochhead points out that, as a result of being in a position of economic and political power, the Western missionary movement, riding on the wave of Western imperialism, encouraged more of the opposite of dialogue as they isolated the indigenous religions as backward and subsequently marginalised them. The founding President of Kenya, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta came out even more strongly when he stated that “When the Missionaries arrived, the Africans had the land and the Missionaries had the Bible. They taught us how to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them, they had the land and we had the Bible.”(Kenyatta, 1966:n.p.).

While Kenyatta’s concern was a reflection of how he thought religion was used to swindle the Africans of their property (this argument equates colonialism with Christianity, but also fails to recognize some of the benefits, like education that the missionaries brought), Lochhead’s concern is more of the ejection of important concepts of the supernatural in some African contexts, that would have formed an important stepping stone to introducing Christianity.

Although initially, isolation was geographical, the pluralistic world in which humanity now lives emphasizes more on the privatization of matters of faith and as a result widens the gap of isolationism (Lochhead, 2012:6). Power perceptions between the various communities also hinders trust that would lead to dialogue and, therefore, creates further isolation (Lochhead, 2012:7).

He highlights the narrowness of isolation as leading many minority religious groups to adopt the position of self-defence as they feel threatened with extinction and thus maintain the stance of isolation and would therefore, not embrace dialogue (Lochhead, 2012:7). This kind of position grants a community the impetus to draw its own social construct on what reality or unreality is without reference to any other construct from any other community. Reality is narrowed down to only the perception of this community. Even though they may be aware that other communities may hold viewpoints which differs from their own, most of them would view those divergent communities as “ignorant, deluded, misled or even superstitious.” (Lochhead, 2012:8).

Lochhead sees this in the missionary enterprise where the dominant European cultures overrode the non-western cultures with the example of Christianity defining them as “lost and not having the light.” (Lochhead, 2012:8). Lochhead may be having in mind Paul’s argument in Romans Chapter one that even those who are not Christians have the general revelation that should guide them to the special revelation. Similarly, secular humanism dismissed all religions as the least of the human activities, for reality was not found in the sanctuary, but in the marketplace (Lochhead,

2012:10). Liberation theology also failed to give much attention to religious diversity, but certainly made a significant impact by emphasizing more on the inequalities of economics and power (Lochhead, 2012:10). It mainly emphasized on the critical diversity which exists between the “rich and the poor, and the powerful and the powerless.” (Lochhead, 2012:10).

The idea of isolation may have worked in a certain era and context, but with the current globalization and increased interactions, there is a possibility that what Cornille called “implicit dialogue”, a case where one religion would be exposed and learn from the other without deliberate, organised or intentional dialogue, would be the reality (Cornille, 2013:xiii). This, perhaps, has been the traditional view when it comes to the case between Christianity and African Traditional Religion. The latter had absolutely no truth in them and its adherents were considered as totally “lost” as seen above.

2.3.2.2 Attitude of Hostility

Lochhead further addresses the fact that when one religion comes into close contact with the other, the closeness challenges both the worldview and the perception of reality of that community and the community feels threatened. This challenge is sometimes viewed as a challenge to God and is occasionally given political connotations that demonizes the other. This leads to hostility between the two groups (Lochhead, 2012:12). This perception is characterized by (1) a sense of threat to the other, (2) moral decadence in the other and (3) an opposition to the truth that the other group is perceived to hold (Lochhead, 2012:13).

This kind of hostility, according to Lochhead is akin to what led to the Holocaust, or even the Zionism movement that has continued to support political Israel in the face of atrocities and human rights abuses by the government of Israel (Lochhead, 2012:14,15,17). Perhaps, at the time of writing, Lochhead’s world had not experienced the violence and terrorism meted out by religious fundamentalism that has become so prevalent in the modern world, nor the genocide that took place in an African country or else he would have included them in his list.

There is a sense in which Christianity at large has extended the ideology of hostility to African Traditional Religion (Kato, 1975). Where attempts have been made to investigate the possibility of continuity, this has been branded as negative syncretism (Kato, 1975; Ng’ang’a, 2019). The ideology of hostility would therefore, outrightly dismiss the notion of a possibility of continuity between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion. This would miss out on the

possibility of gleaning some insights from the African context, that could improve on the relevance and impact of Christianity in the continent. Later chapters in this study continue to investigate this dynamic.

This certainly resonates with what David Tracy wrote about (Tracy, 1990:xii) on the necessity of what would happen in the future, as this kind of attitude is currently viewed as intolerance and politically incorrect (Magesa, 2007:199).

2.3.2.3 Attitude of Competition

The attitude of competition according to Lochhead has two characteristics. On the one hand, there is the acknowledgement that there are similarities between the religions, while at the same time also accepting the fact that the differences between them, brings a certain kind of stress. This is expressed in the belief that other communities also have a notion of truth, but the full truth can only be found in the community that one belongs to (Lochhead, 2012:18).

This is reflected in the attitude change that has taken place in the Roman Catholic Church. Before Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church could not enter into any meaningful dialogue with Protestants, as to

enter into dialogue would be to give the impression that matters of faith were negotiable. Dialogue was viewed as a form of relativism. Dialogue devalued the question of truth. One could not have dialogue between truth and error. (Lochhead, 2012:18-19).

But this has since changed. In a public lecture on 19th October 2020, at the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life (OCRPL) entitled “Interreligious Dialogue in the Catholic Church Since the Vatican Council II: An Evaluation”, Indunil Kodithuwakku, the Secretary of the Pontifical Council on Interreligious Dialogue, pointed out the turnaround in the Catholic Church. He clarifies from the teachings of both Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI that

The Church must enter into dialogue with the world in which it lives. It has something to say, a message to give, a communication to make ... God Himself took the initiative in the dialogue of salvation. ‘He has first loved us.’ We, therefore, must be the first to ask for a dialogue with men, without waiting to be summoned to it by others (Kodithuwakku, 2020:3).

This, in essence, has developed into a theology of partnership as elucidated here below in the reflections of Lochhead.

A more liberal approach of the theology of competition tends to become the theology of partnership that acknowledges that there may be some commonalities between the two traditions but the one that a particular individual belongs to has the full measure of the truth (Lochhead, 2012:19). This is the position that is often taken by the evangelicals thus adopting the position that the revelation that others have is not complete revelation, therefore, they need to be reached with the ultimate truth (Lochhead, 2012:21). Getting into this kind of partnership requires guarding against the racism and superiority complex that is sometimes propagated by the West with an assumption that their way is the best, according to Lochhead (Lochhead, 2012:22).

2.3.2.4 Attitude of Partnership

Lochhead sees the attitude of partnership as exemplified by different religious communities when they view the divergent traditions as different paths to the same goal. Some of them go to the extent of speaking of the unity of all religions. This has been the direction that the ecumenical movement has followed with lots of resistance from some of the religious communities (Lochhead, 2012:24). Some have even encouraged the idea of minimizing the religious aspect and have pointed out that what matters is being “nice” to people without emphasizing the religious differences (Lochhead, 2012:24).

John Hick, who is a proponent of the attitude of partnership, explains that many non-Christian communities engage in the worship of a Supreme Deity just like Christianity. He subsequently gives three positions that one can take on this matter: (1) Different religious groups worship different, distinct deities or gods; (2) one of the traditions worship the one true god, while the rest worship idols; (3) there is only one God, worshipped by all traditions although they may perceive the deity differently. Hick argues for the third position (Hick, 2010:181-193; Lochhead, 2012:25).

Hick’s position would require a compromise of truth as held by some of the more exclusive religious groups like Christianity and Islam (Lochhead, 2012:26) as this would corrode their identity. This is a typical position of the theology or ideology or attitude of partnership. This position would often revert to the attitude of isolation, hostility or competition when faced with some of the more exclusive traditions (Lochhead, 2012:26).

Lochhead acknowledges that the ideas on models of dialogue are not exhaustive and he has not captured them all (Lochhead, 2012:40). He does not cover the area of syncretism where one religion may assimilate another in its entirety or in part. Good examples would be the Luo-

Muslims and the interaction between them and African Traditional Religion in Kenya, where African Traditional Religion converges with Islam in certain cultural aspects (Oseje, 2018:134); or the Akurino African Instituted Churches in Kenya where Christianity seems to merge in some aspects with African Traditional Religion (Samuel, 2019:69) and Roberto de Nobili in India with Brahmins as he engaged Hindus and borrowed some cultural and religious aspects from them (Neill & Chadwick, 1964:156-159).

Lochhead points out that the weakness with the four attitudes or theologies discussed so far is that they have a “*priori*” approach (Lochhead, 2012:41). He acknowledges that indeed, Christianity often engages with an *a priori* position of belief in the scripture and some foundational faith tenets. Any deviation from these beliefs would not only be viewed as unorthodox, but divisive and even heretical (Lochhead, 2012:41-42). Therefore, this calls for a different attitude for engagement.

2.3.2.5 Attitude of Dialogue

Although the original usage of the word dialogue was mainly Platonic and intellectual (Plato, 1961), it acquired a new meaning in theological circles (Lochhead, 2012:46). Tracing the usage in Christian circles shows that the Catholic Church used that word in the 1960s before the World Council of Churches adopted it in the late 1960s and early 1970s to make reference to interfaith relationships. Although some may think of it only in terms of conversation, Lochhead sees it as having a wider meaning which would cover both interfaith relations and missions as well (Lochhead, 2012:46).

Martin Buber sees dialogue mainly from a one on one perspective in *Dialogue: I and Thou* (Buber, 2012), but Lochhead argues for the possibility of extrapolating it to cover even different faiths (Lochhead, 2012:49). Assessing the Platonic view of truth, indicates the fact that truth is seen as potentially innate to the individual until they engage in dialogue and then the knowledge of the truth is realised (Lochhead, 2012:51).

Soren Kierkegaard presents the majority Christian view in his book *Philosophical Fragments* written under pseudonym of Johannes Climacus (Kierkegaard, 1985). In his view truth can only be gained through revelation because it is external to the individual. Thus prayer, reflection, scripture and meditation play a critical role in this (Kierkegaard, 1985:47). As Lochhead remarks, “Truth is not a by-product of the encounter. It is the encounter” (Lochhead, 2012:51). Kierkegaard’s view might

sometimes be considered quite subjective as different individuals might come up with different revelations that they have acquired. However, Scripture, would hopefully balance this.

Lochhead, then presents four dimensions of dialogue which lead to this kind of encounter.

a) **Dialogue as Negotiation:**

Lochhead indicates that since churches within the ecumenical movements had to deal with doctrinal and faith positions that would be a challenge to their continued association, they emphasized the idea of negotiation among themselves and subsequently, dialogue was seen as negotiation (Lochhead, 2012:59). In entering into negotiation, the two or more entities would set their goal as coming into agreement in spite of the different viewpoints that the parties may be holding (Lochhead, 2012:59). The fear always is the possibility of compromise and as such negative syncretism is considered as the possible outcome of this (Lochhead, 2012:60). Lochhead emphasizes why this was feared:

North Atlantic theology in the twentieth century has been very sensitive to the danger of syncretism... The way the word was used left no doubt in anybody's mind that syncretism was *not* a good thing. One was left with the impression that there was a pure Gospel that was expressed in Hebrew thought forms. The history of the church in attempting to translate that Gospel into the thought forms of other cultures was on the whole a not very happy one (Lochhead, 2012:63).

In the mind of Lochhead, syncretism can only be a danger if the purpose of the dialogue is an endeavour to achieve agreement, but this should not be the definition that is given to dialogue. If the purpose of dialogue is set out as seeking understanding rather than agreement then dialogue can still take place (Lochhead, 2012:64).

b) **Dialogue as integration:**

Lochhead sees one entering into dialogue as putting on the perspective of the other and seeing both the other's faith and one's own faith from the new vantage point. As such a new perception is developed to the extent that one can even anticipate the kind of responses the other faith may give under certain conditions. In a process like this, Lochhead asserts, one can still remain a faithful member of their own tradition and be truly on the "way to becoming religiously bilingual" (Lochhead, 2012:69-70).

c) **Dialogue as activity:**

The word dialogue often presumes some kind of conversations and as such, there is usually, a desire for mutual understanding, according to Lochhead. He points out that even in conversations that externally may appear “antagonistic and adversarial”, some dialogue may, of necessity take place (Lochhead, 2012:76). Dialogue may be present in any conversation and becomes an activity that would be learnt by practice. This points to the need of improving listening skills so that one is able to glean some insights from the dialogue partner (Lochhead, 2012:76).

David Tracy had this to say on conversations

Conversation is a game with some hard rules; say only what you mean; say it as accurately as you can; listen to and respect what the other say, however different or other; be willing to correct or defend your opinions if challenged by the conversation partner; be willing to argue if necessary, to confront if demanded, to endure necessary conflict, to change your mind if the evidence suggests it (Tracy, 1990:19).

When such a conversation takes place then the partners shift from a monologue into dialogue (Lochhead, 2012:77). This leads to an unambiguous call to “trusting and loving relationships with the neighbour” (Lochhead, 2012:81).

d) **Dialogue as Relationship:**

Lochhead puts a case forward for a better understanding of missions, which he defines as "the calling of God into the world" (Lochhead, 2012:82). He describes mission as the cosmic dialogue where judgement and where anger are upheld as necessary but places them in a new context where there may be new ways of speaking negative words to others with wisdom. He sees “prophetic criticism not as a pretext for avoiding dialogical imperative.” (Lochhead, 2012:88). He concludes his emphasis by advocating for a theology of missions:

I am suggesting that the theological agenda in interfaith relations needs to focus on a theology of mission rather than on Christology. A theology of mission is nothing else than a theological understanding of the relationship of the church and the world. That relationship will take the form of a theology of isolation, a theology of hostility, a theology of competition, a theology of partnership and a theology of dialogue (Lochhead, 2012:94).

The dynamics between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion would well be covered in some of the areas that Lochhead surveys. Lochhead, however, does not cover the areas of assimilation where one religious group assimilates the other either fully or in part as they interact. The positions that the earlier missionaries took towards African Traditional Religion when they brought the message of Christianity to Africa was certainly either isolation or hostility. While some of the missionaries meant well and were seeking for genuine conversation and abandoning those things they considered wicked, some of them, however, may have been an obstacle to what they wanted to achieve, as Jacob Kimathi Samuel points that this may have led to the formation of African Independent (AICs):

The birth and the growth of the AICs ... is situated against this background of aggressive and even conflicting missionary efforts, the brutal invasion and confiscation of the African land by the inverted hospitality of the missionaries and the colonial government and the subsequent denigration of their religious traditions by these hegemonic cultures that sought to flatten the cultures that they confronted in Africa with little or no feelings as they sought to establish their own cultures (Samuel, 2019:65).

The AICs attempted to amalgamate some of their cultural practices with Christianity, where in some case it ended up with syncretism. In the face of Christianity not answering the power questions which the Africans were dealing with, the end result was hybridity or duality as the African Christians sought the answers back in their traditional religious settings. The resurgence of African Traditional Religion as discussed earlier on in this chapter is an indicator of this.

The influx of the strategic level spiritual warfare into the continent of Africa and its popularity in sections of the church seems to be a pointer that some kind of dialogue was taking place. From an external standpoint, no meeting or gathering with the proponents of either side ever took place in which they had official dialogue. But implicitly, the influence from one to the other seems to have been at play to the extent that one can recognize certain connections. Since it was not deliberate and intentional, then it must have taken place as a result of the encounter that the two entities had on each other. Encounterology therefore, leads to meaningful dialogue that may be represented by some kind of relationships.

Some however, may disagree with Lochhead's mission without Christology as Christian mission is deeply equated to Christ, that to sideline this it would not be seen as mission anymore (Stott, 2015; Qureshi, 2016).

2.3.2.6 The Spectrum of Dialogue

In presenting what he considered as a paradigm shift in evangelical engagements in interreligious dialogue, Arthur Glasser asks the question, “What constitutes a valid evangelical perspective on interreligious dialogue?” (Glasser, 1981:394). He points to the fact that many evangelicals would only take a defensive position that they would view as enabling them to witness, while others who have attempted to engage have only been keen on cooperation on a humanitarian basis (Glasser, 1981:394). On the other hand, there are those who have dismissed the idea of any engagement in interreligious dialogue as pointless since they do not see its missiological implications (Glasser, 1981:394).

Glasser then outlined a spectrum that represented the various categories in which the evangelicals would fall:

- a) *The Radical Displacement*: Here there is a total imposition of Christianity and the Western culture in a replacement version that totally displaces the local religion as “valueless” (Glasser, 1981:395). This echoes the sentiments of hostility that were examined earlier in Lochhead’s reflections.
- b) *Discontinuity*: Christianity is presented as “unique and superior” and as having no interface at all with the other religions in spite of attempts to relate to the host cultures (Glasser, 1981:395). This would again be similar to the attitude of isolation expressed earlier by Lochhead.
- c) *Unique yet Unequal*: Although each religion is recognized as distinct and capable of expressing compassion and honest beliefs and practices, yet Christianity is still viewed as superior (Glasser, 1981:395). This would compare to Lochhead’s attitude of competition.
- d) *Legitimate Borrowing*: Christianity should borrow freely from the other religions due to common human affinities, so as to make it truly indigenous (Glasser, 1981:395). One would view this as selective continuity, leaving a major question on who or what determines what is to be borrowed.
- e) *Fulfilment*: Other religions find their fulfilment in the Gospel, just like the Old Testament in the New Testament, and therefore they are all related (Glasser, 1981:395). One might view this as a form of pluralism that embraces all religions into one.

- f) *Relativistic Syncretism*: Christianity and all other religions are all a representation of the pursuit of truth, which is found partially in all other religions. Religious encounter and dialogue enables one to find the best in each religion which finally lead to the “ultimate truth” (Glasser, 1981:395). This gives similar expression as the attitude of partnership as expressed by Lochhead.

Glasser posits that there is difficulty in arguing for any of these positions if one understands the depth of each religious belief and convictions as postulated in its writings. He asserts that this is made even much more difficult due to the fact that religion is so deeply intertwined with the various cultures and it is therefore difficult to extricate it from the adherents as a separate entity (Glasser, 1981:395). As one attempts to focus on the Gospel, one is confronted by the plethora of responses to Christianity throughout the world and as such the question of the normative would always arise (Glasser, 1981:396).

Glasser presents the evangelical *sine qua non* as the fact that Christians would see the mandate of the church as witness and any dialogical approach that they would engage in would be to listen and learn, but more so to bear verbal witness to their listeners by sharing their faith as seen in 2 Cor.4:2. This would be done with the hope that the one listening would repent and put their faith in Christ (Glasser, 1981:396-397). Glasser highlights the fact that from his understanding of the usage of dialogical methods in the Bible, the method is always subservient to the “truth” as revealed in the Bible and thus ends up unmasking the false that would hinder people from having a proper relationship with God (Glasser, 1981:397).

Although each religion has its assumptions, questions and sources of the significant questions to life, Glasser insists that Christianity would hold on to the authority of the Bible and the person of Jesus Christ and if by any chance a brand of Christianity deviates from this, then it would be considered as “new Christianity” (Glasser, 1981:401). In spite of the several upheavals and conflicts that sometimes prevail within Christianity some of it necessary, it is still viewed as “one Christianity” and not several “Christianities” (Glasser, 1981:402). Evangelicals would therefore hesitate to have any meaningful interreligious dialogue if there are attempts to gag “the call to repentance and faith” in Jesus Christ (Glasser, 1981:402).

This is very similar to the *a priori* position John Stott also takes when it comes to the Gospel:

The Gospel is nonnegotiable revelation from God. We may certainly discuss its meaning and its interpretation, so long as our purpose is to grasp it more firmly ourselves and commend it more

acceptably to others. But we have no liberty to sit in judgement of it, or to tamper with its substance. (Stott, 2015:63).

Stott defines dialogue as presented at the National Evangelical Anglican Congress in 1967 as

... a conversation in which each party is serious in his approach both to the subject and to the other person, and desires to listen and learn, as well as to speak and instruct (Stott, 2015:65).

Stott sees Jesus engaging in dialogue with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman and the crowds (Stott, 2015:66). He also views Paul as using the dialogical method in Thessalonica, Athens and at Ephesus (Stott, 2015:66).

Peter Cotterell repudiates Karl Rahner's notion of "anonymous Christian" (Rahner, 1976), as he points out that:

Fundamental to Rahner's thinking is the concept of the anonymous Christian, the individual who has made no overt commitment to Christ, who may, indeed, be a member of a non-Christian religion and even opposed to Christianity. Rahner would see such an individual as one who stands under the saving grace and forgiveness of God, needing only to be told his position as an anonymous Christian, but not to be converted either from his religion or to the Christian faith (Cotterell, 1981:10).

In his footnote Cotterell explains that if this is the case then a member of the African Traditional Religion "who has never heard of Christ and has never encountered the Bible, is an anonymous Christian" as opposed to a Jew who knows the God of the Old Testament according to Rahner's argument (Cotterell, 1981:11).

As a Pentecostal, Tony Richie argues for a better engagement in interreligious dialogue by asserting that a friendly avenue, pursued under the influence of the power of the Holy Spirit is a better way towards building bridges in a religiously pluralistic setting (Richie, 2014:3). He highlights the fact that Pentecostalism might be appealing to many in Brazil because of the pressing "contextual commonalities" between Pentecostalism and indigenous religions (Richie, 2014:3)

Although he seems to affirm Julie Ma's position (Ma & Ma, 2010:176) that Pentecostalism's similarities with "*animism*" (Richie and Ma's word) are not only critical to explaining its success in the majority world, but should be an intentional mission strategy (Richie, 2014:3), Richie is also aware of the complexity of the encounters between Pentecostalism and other non-Christian religions (Richie, 2014:3). He highlights the possibility of syncretism, which he sees as the development of "irresponsible mixing of religious beliefs and practices" (Richie, 2014:3). He

warns that hard-line positions which have often been taken by some Pentecostal groups with confrontational type of evangelistic efforts and demonization of other religions have often led to deep misunderstanding that has sometimes brought about interreligious violence (Richie, 2014:3).

Richie puts a caveat on his presentation that he cannot bundle the entire spectrum of Pentecostalism into one as Pentecostals are quite diverse (Richie, 2014:14). He also does not see any conflict between evangelism and dialogue that would hinder them from interacting, but rather, they “function together as ecclesial mission.” (Richie, 2014:26). He asserts that interreligious dialogue and ecumenicalism should be viewed as part of the call to mission by Pentecostal theology (Richie, 2014:26). In his view Christian salvation remains unique to Christianity and cannot be altered, redefined nor subverted to placate non-Christian religions, even though dialogue should be encouraged. This, he insists, involves conversion to Christ (Richie, 2014:27).

Fellow Pentecostal scholar to Richie, Amos Yong, reflects on the more traditional model used when engaging with the “religious others” as evangelism and interreligious apologetics (Yong, 2018:12). He asserts that while Pentecostals are keen on missions and evangelism, they have not reflected the same kind of zeal in building a “theological understanding of mission practices.” (Yong, 2018:14). Yong sees mission as “mutual transformation” where the changes occur in both the missionary and his audiences (Yong, 2018:21). He further notes that “Hospitality is the matrix within which we meet and encounter others not on our terms but on the terms of the triune God, albeit in and through the spaces of others”(Yong, 2018:21).

Yong points out that in their encounter with the people of Lystra and Derbe as recorded in the book of Acts 14, Paul and his team used “natural theology” to engage their audience in dialogue, but at the same time also listened to them (Yong, 2018:22). According to Yong, Paul the apostle was engaged in dialogue and discussions with people of other faiths as per the records of the book of Acts in the Bible (Yong, 2018:23).

Yong posits that mission, therefore, requires a certain amount of vulnerability to the others, that would entail one opening up as hosts or being “guested” by others. This may mean that where necessary one adapts and adjusts their positions and views in order to occupy this new space of a guest (Yong, 2018:24). Yong highlights the fact that interfaith dialogue cannot just remain at a speculative level but must be moved to the point of realization in practice (Yong, 2018:27). This perhaps would reflect the sentiments of Clark Pinnock when he commented that, “We are being called to shine for the dynamic equilibrium of continuity and creativity that characterizes great

theology.” (Pinnock, 1998:43) . In Pinnock’s opinion, “... contextual theology will reflect the culture in which it is done.” It is not divorced from the culture (Pinnock, 1998:43).

2.4 Power Conflicts in Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: Contextualisation

2.4.1 Contextualisation Maps

Scott Moreau is the one who stated that "Since the coining of *contextualisation* as a missiological term in 1972, missiologists have developed several ‘maps’ of the ever-growing number and variety of contextual models" (Moreau, 2012:28). He asserted that the numbers of how best to contextualise the faith are “staggering” (Moreau, 2012:28).

Robert J. Schreiter defines a model as both a procedure that helps in engagement with theological reflections and also a principle that gives direction to that procedure (Schreiter, 2015:6). He draws a map in constructing local theologies that consist of three models as 1) Translation, 2) Adaptation and 3) Contextual (Schreiter, 2015). He explains that translation consists of two steps, with the first releasing the Christian message from the cultural attachment of the messenger, and the second step making the message relevant to the recipient culture (Schreiter, 2015:6). This is similar to what David Hesselgrave referred to as “decontextualizing” the message and then “recontextualizing” it, so as to be relevant to the audience (Hesselgrave, 1995:115). Schreiter’s second model is adaptation, where the culture is taken seriously and leadership consulted or the seed of the gospel is planted and allowed to germinate on its own (Schreiter, 2015:11-13). The danger of course is that without the guidance of those who already know what the Scripture teaches, the new theology might turn in a direction that was not intended, as it might compromise some of the key tenets of the Christian belief.

The third model according to Schreiter, is contextual models. In contextual models, the theology is developed with an emphasis on the recipient context while taking into account other influences as urbanization and the emerging youth cultures (Schreiter, 2015:14-17). These may alter any traditional culture and, if not taken into account, one might be attempting to contextualise in a culture that might not be in existence anymore. Hesselgrave anchored his model in the Biblical text, while Schreiter emphasised the context in which theologizing is taking place. They do not tackle the spiritual power dynamics in their contextualisation models; however some of the areas

they have raised seems to be similar to those which are covered by other authors referred to in this study.

It was Shoki Coe who introduced the phrase “contextualisation” in ecumenical circles (Coe, 1976), to convey a dynamic term which is open to change and future-oriented in the light of *Missio Dei*. Moreau sees contextualisation models as theoretical ideas that represent a wider or an elaborate category (Moreau, 2012:31). He points out that:

From an evangelical perspective then, contextualisation captures the tension of Christians having biblical revelation that is universally true and applicable while living in a world of societies that are widely diverse in their religious identities... Simply stated, contextualisation means that the message (or the resulting church) is defined by scripture but shaped by culture (Moreau, 2012:35).

Moreau argues for "three different perspectives" on contextualisation: the biblical context, the agents' context and the receptor context (Moreau, 2012:35-36). But he fails to bring out the fourth dimension, which is the world of mystical powers which is just as real to the African as the agents or the Biblical world. Perhaps Moreau sees this world as belonging to the context of the recipient.

The study, therefore, adopts Moreau's definition of contextualisation as

the process where-by Christians adapt the forms, content and praxis of the Christian faith so as to communicate it to the minds and hearts of people with other cultural backgrounds. The goal is to make the Christian faith as a whole - not only the message but also the means of living out of our faith in the local setting- understandable (Moreau, 2005:323).

2.4.2 Models of Contextualisation

Stephen Bevans developed a model approach to address ways in which people are engaging with contextual theologies. He understands this as taking place in small communities, in the wider church and even in the academy (Bevans, 2002:xv). In his initiative to engage with how contextual theologies are constructed, Bevans initially came up with five models which in a later edition he adjusted to six. These were translation, anthropological, praxis, synthetic, transcendental and counter cultural (Bevans, 2002:x).

In the first version of the book, he defined contextual theology as

a process that takes seriously 1) the spirit and the message of the Gospel, 2) the traditions of the Christian people, 3) the culture in which one is theologizing and 4) social changes within that culture (Bevans, 2002:3).

He adjusted this definition in the second edition.

Bevans explains that contextual theology is not an option, but an imperative. As such it should not be relegated to only communities from the '*Third World*' (his words) or missionaries working in such contexts (Bevans, 2002:3). He sees both a continuity with the traditional, but also a discontinuity as a result of the infusion of the new models (Bevans, 2002:3). Bevans uses the phrase "third world", which today is viewed as derogative. He however qualifies his usage by pointing out that some scholars from the majority world have used it, therefore he can also use it (Bevans, 2002:145). The fact that some scholars from the majority world have used the term, does not make its usage valid. It is a degrading terminology that should not be used, especially in scholarly circles.

He makes reference to the three critical "loci" in the reflection of contextual theology: scripture, tradition and human experience (Bevans, 2002:4). By human experience he is referring to "culture, history, contemporary thought forms and so on" (Bevans, 2002:4). Bevans however does not bring out nature which is so critical in the formulation of traditional African theology. He distinguishes between classical understanding of theology, which he views as mainly objective, and contextual theology which he considers as more subjective. He clarifies that "our world is not just there; we are involved in its construction" (Bevans, 2002:4). He asserts that one cannot speak only of one theology, but "a theology that makes sense of a certain place and in a certain time" (Bevans, 2002:4-5).

This is a rather pluralistic statement for Bevans to make in the current postmodern world. It would be considered rather relativistic and too fluid since each theologian would make a construct for themselves in their own context, that would just be as good as, but different from the construct of another theologian in a different context. To adopt such a relativistic attitude would give the impression that contextualisation removes theological parameters of truth and reality. As such one would not have a firm anchor as reality would be a moving target that varies from locality to locality and from individual to individual.

Bevans traces historical moments when many theologians shaped the direction of the theology of the church through contextualisation. These include many of the patristic and later philosophers like Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther (Bevans, 2002:9). He concludes this historical analysis by commenting that

even a cursory glance at the history of theology reveals that there has never been a genuine theology ...with no reference to or dependence on the events, the thought forms, or the culture of a particular place and time (Bevans, 2002:9).

The majority world has been challenging theologies which have tended to give a "complete" outlook on the relevance of issues (Bevans, 2002:9) and thus locking out any other possible view. Bevans therefore challenges a Western enlightenment mindset that attempts to explain away "beliefs such as witchcraft, miraculous healings and the existence of spirits – beliefs that are central to the religious life of many peoples in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America" (Bevans, 2002:10).

He argues that in the methodology of theology, culture and the world are just as much a source of theology just like scripture and tradition (p.16). Bevans seems to be overextending his emphasis by placing culture and the world in the same category as scripture as sources of theology, in spite of the fact that culture is dynamic unlike scripture which is static. Perhaps in the application and development of theology in a context, culture is extremely important in order to maintain relevance, but to rank it with scripture is to lose the foundation that any contextualisation should be based on.

Bevans does not see theology only as a "discursive event" in a university lecture hall or a seminary class but as that which transcends the western models and is sometimes put in poetry, hymns, sermons, ritual or even art (Bevans, 2002:17). Paul Hiebert also endorses the same thought pattern when he contrasts the Western style of communicating the Christian message, which is mainly through words and songs, with that of other cultures, which entails the usage of "dance, drums, drama, chants and primary rituals..." (Hiebert, 1991:147).

Bevans contrasts the classical theological position that postulates that theology can only be done by those with special skills, including hermeneutics, Christian tradition and the history of doctrines as opposed to a view that theology comes out of the prevailing experience of an individual. The later view would assign the theological task to those who are struggling with life issues and seeking daily answers: the ordinary people. The experts can still peruse through documents, but this would be in a supportive role to the end users- the people (Bevans, 2002:17-18).

Theologizing therefore must be done by the agents who themselves are experiencing the culture and the cultural change if it is to be meaningful in a certain context, Bevans explains (Bevans, 2002:18). The specialist's role is a midwifery role of assisting those within the context to give birth to a contextually relevant theology (Bevans, 2002:18). This informs his view that the process of

theology is a “constant dialogue” between those who are living within a context and the professional theologian who brings in the wider and deeper knowledge (Bevans, 2002:18).

As to the question whether a non-participant can actually do theology in a context that is not his/her own, he asserts that “a person who does not fully share one’s experience is not to be fully trusted to speak of God” in a context that is not his/her own because they do not know how the participants perceive reality (Bevans, 2002:19). Such a person can, in a limited way, highlight those issues that the participant was blinded to, by virtue of close proximity to the issues (Bevans, 2002:19). This perhaps refers to the blind spots that were earlier described by Kritzing in the process of encounterology. And when one is dealing with a context that is not their own, one requires humility and honesty due to the fact that they will always find themselves on the margins and can only earn a listening if truly detected by the hosts to be honest and sincere (Bevans, 2002:21).

Bevans presents a six-dimensional model of contextualisation that theologians can navigate around to make their message relevant to their audiences.

The first model he calls the *translation models (accommodation, adaptation)*, which deals with what he considers as the unchanging gospel. The translation model does not deal with a word for word translation of texts or language but emphasizes the meaning of doctrines with a special highlight on “functional or dynamic equivalence” (Bevans, 2002:39). Such a translation should be, such that when a contemporary listener or hearer interacts with the final product, it should produce the same response as the one that was elicited by those who originally heard it (Bevans, 2002:39).

The translation model presumes that the Gospel has a kernel centre that is essential and cannot be disposed and as such is “supracultural or supracontextual” (Bevans, 2002:40). The rest are dressings that can be changed or removed without affecting the core (Bevans, 2002:40). Thus, contextualizing would mean finding the unchangeable core and giving it new dressing that is relevant to the host culture in a way that they can engage with it. It sees culture’s role as subordinate to that of the gospel and where there is a conflict the gospel must be preserved and the conflicting culture discarded (Bevans, 2002:41). Lamin Sanneh also makes the same observations (Sanneh, 1997).

The second model that Bevans presents is the *anthropological models* which would include indigenization, inculturation and ethnography. In contrast to the translation model the substance

of culture takes key priority when dealing with the anthropological model (Bevans, 2002:54). What is deeply guarded against is that another party does not impose its own culture and values on the other, although the Gospel is taken seriously (Bevans, 2002:54). It emphasizes more on human relationships as well as using the science of anthropology to determine a suitable theological understanding in a particular culture (Bevans, 2002:55). The emphasis is on “cultural identity” without degrading scripture or church traditions (Bevans, 2002:55).

According to Bevans, other terms like indigenization, which emphasizes what originates from the indigenous people or ethnography, referring to the people’s cultural identity and continuity or inculturation which elucidates the significance of culture and theological construction are also used to refer to this model (Bevans, 2002:55). It therefore, looks up to human relations to see God’s revelation, to hear God and to draw various doctrines from (Bevans, 2002:56).

The attitude of the anthropological model is reactionary towards external cultures. It presumes that God cannot speak into the culture from outside the culture and comes out as a closed system. It becomes inward looking and might imagine that it is on the right pathway, even if it has actually veered off the track. It would prove to be extremely subjective from culture to culture as it is not open to receive insights from elsewhere. Although this model would strongly appeal to the African context due to the fact that it reflects continuity, yet it faces some challenges. As Bevans highlights, “that idealistic picture of culture that practitioners of the anthropological model paint does not exist” (Bevans, 2002:60). There are some aspects of culture that would be good while other aspects would need to be redeemed because they are not good at all.

Laurenti Magesa identifies areas that he thinks should be considered for inculturation in any community. These would include language and the “mood of worship”, liturgy, perception on ancestors and spirit possession, handling suffering and healing, church structures and governance, and church discipline and law (Magesa, 2007:30-44). When the process of inculturation entails wide consultation, including listening to outsiders as well, that should perhaps be much more enriching and would pre-empt potential pitfalls.

Thirdly, Bevans presents the *praxis models*, which includes liberation and situational aspects. This model has sometimes been associated with Liberation Theology as well as Practical Theology (Bevans, 2002:70). The praxis model reflects a theological study that issues out of “reflective action” and which highlights both the meaning and also determines the direction that social change should take (Bevans, 2002:70).

Bevans views praxis as having its roots in Marxism and a “term that denotes a method or model of thinking in general, and a method of theology in particular” (Bevans, 2002:71). In his analysis Bevans makes the distinction between “ortho-doxy” (right thinking) and “ortho-praxy” (right acting). Thus the praxis model assumes that theology is done both as relevant “expressions of Christian faith” and as “commitment to Christian action.” (Bevans, 2002:72). There should always be an ongoing dialogue between these two elements of the Christian faith. It is “reflected-upon action and acted-upon reflection” (Bevans, 2002:72).

Due to the fact that this kind of commitment occasionally challenges oppressive systems and structures, this model is sometimes called Liberation Theology as it attempts to introduce social change (Bevans, 2002:73). Praxis brings out experimental or experiential Christianity that people can easily identify with. In some quarters it may be viewed as too political. Paul F. Knitter in *No Other Name* made a contribution to this when he presented the idea of the “praxis of dialogue” with peoples of other faiths which would then serve as a “hermeneutical praxis” that would help surmount some of the theological constraints which hinders dialogue (Knitter, 1985:207). He further points out, rather categorically, that “without the praxis of dialogue, Christians cannot adequately carry out the task of understanding what God has revealed in Jesus Christ” (Knitter, 1985:207).

The fourth model that Bevans elucidates is *synthetic models* which covers dialogical and analogical areas as well. According to Bevans, this model is a synthesis of all the other models. It brings together both the aspects of scripture and tradition and takes into account the contextual sphere at the same time. It also aligns itself with reflexive and action oriented theological formulation (Bevans, 2002:89). On top of this, it also draws from other contexts and theological expressions to enrich both its method and content (Bevans, 2002:89-20). It attempts to mark a middle ground and produce what would cut across the spectrum. It is sometimes referred to as “dialectical model” or “dialogical model” or “conversational model” (Bevans, 2002:90).

Due to the open nature of this model, it lends itself to wholesome dialogue with other contexts and faiths, and subsequently, is an important model in examining the relationship between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion. There is, however, the possibility of the model being construed as a compromise or an amalgamation of faiths and cultures. Diane B. Stinton who taught at Daystar University in Nairobi at one point, engaged this model in her book *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology*. She borrows from the Twi culture in

Ghana, Kamba culture in Kenya, Zulu culture in South Africa to form a synthesis of how Christ is viewed across the continent of Africa (Stinton, 2011).

The fifth model that Bevans highlights is the *transcendental model* which he also refers to as *subjective model*. Here the emphasis has shifted from the external pursuit of truth, whether these be scripture, tradition or context, to one's own experience (Bevans, 2002:104). One examines their own "authenticity as a religious and a cultural subject" (Bevans, 2002:104) and develops theological understanding as they engage with their own context (Bevans, 2002:106). Interaction with the other context may produce positive or negative perceptions and these perceptions are then considered as the beginning of theological formulations (Bevans, 2002:106).

One of the challenges of this model is its subjective nature and as Bevan's puts it, "if subjective authenticity is the criterion for authentic theology, what or who provides the criterion of subjective authenticity?" (Bevans, 2002:108). Indeed, no one, since everyone's standard is just as good as another's. It would be difficult to maintain a reasonable dialogue in a situation like this since no one would be open to the viewpoint of the other. This would strain the engagement between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion.

The final model that Bevans captures in his presentation is the *countercultural model*. He views this model as prophetic and encounter based approach. This model finds support among some theologians who have been struggling with what they consider as a general anti-Christian attitude in some of the Western countries (Bevans, 2002:117). Although it takes the context and the historical situation seriously, it however approaches them with a measure of "suspicion" and affirms the necessity for cultures to be changed and altered in their encounter with the Gospel (Bevans, 2002:117). Among these scholars would be Leslie Newbigin (Newbigin, 1989), Os Guinness (Guinness, 2012) and Byang Kato (Kato, 1975).

This model adopts the position that the Gospel presents a radical worldview, which encompasses all, and yet is still other-worldly in its engagement with human experience (Bevans, 2002:118). In contradiction of Richard Niebuhr's view (Richard Niebuhr, 1951), to be countercultural is not the same as being anti-cultural (Bevans, 2002:118). This model is sometimes referred to as the prophetic model. It views the Gospel as the totality of Christ that must be upheld under all circumstances even in contexts which have adopted an "un-Christian" stance (Bevans, 2002:122).

The model calls for the church to be incarnated in the community so as to bring transformation (Bevans, 2002:122-123). Its rootedness in scripture and in Christian tradition makes it quite

appealing to many. However, the model has to be on the alert over the possibility of being anti-culture, sectarian, monocultural and highly exclusive (Bevans, 2002:125-126).

These models which Bevans has considered can be presented as in fig.6 (Bevans, 2002:32)

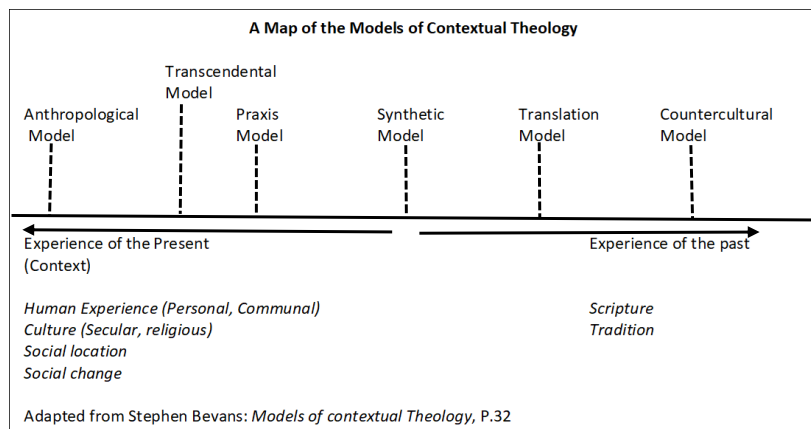


Figure 6: Map of Models of Contextual Theology

Bevans concludes that in doing theology "there needs to be a healthy pluralism" since not one model is better than the other, but the context may determine what may be relevant. From the emphasis and the weaknesses of the various models presented, it is possible for people to distance themselves or embrace a particular model depending on their commitment to scriptural and historical authenticity and also their engagement with the present culture and context (Bevans, 2002:139-140). Strategic level spiritual warfare would outwardly stand for scripture and history, but at the praxis level may be more into cultural and contextual identity that resonates with African Traditional Religion.

2.4.3 Critical Contextualisation

When one talks of contextualisation, often it is from the Bible through the Western mindset of those who translated or taught the Bible message and then transmitted it to the African context. This is actually a double contextualisation as the message is viewed through the prism of another culture before being communicated into a third culture. This is what David Hesselgrave referred to as decontextualisation before contextualisation can take place (Hesselgrave, 1995:115).

In *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* Paul Hiebert highlights the necessity of translating the message in cultural forms which do not distort the message and are culturally relevant to the audience. This requires that the message be contextualised in local forms (Hiebert, 1991:141). He explains that the Western mindset creates a wedge between the natural and the supernatural, in such a way that they do not interact. Contrary to this view, other cultures would not see this kind of compartmentalization and seamlessly navigate both in belief and engagement at the natural and supernatural levels (Hiebert, 1991:146-147).

In any society, there are well developed cultures which enable the society to function as it is supposed to. On top of this there are also religious beliefs and practices which they turn to in response to deeper questions touching on life and eternity (Hiebert, 1991:171). Paul Hiebert points out that cultures come into existence as a result of "implicit assumptions" (Hiebert, 1991:171), which society holds and these lead to "systems of beliefs and practices." (Hiebert, 1991:171). Hiebert further highlights the various cultural practices which are common in societies. These include material expressions, rituals like life-cycle, rites of passage, annual cycles, feasts and festivals and finally pilgrimages (Hiebert, 1991:171-183). He then raises the question of whether Christians should envisage continuity or discontinuity when dealing with issues of their cultural past (Hiebert, 1991:183).

Hiebert outlines three approaches which have been used before to respond to this question. The first approach that Christians have used according to Hiebert is denial of the old ways and rejection of contextualisation. He points out that missionaries who had gone into different cultures tended to judge their host cultures and often rejected wholesale the cultures of these communities (Hiebert, 1991:184). This is what Dewi Hughes referred to as "castrating cultures" in his book of the same title (Hughes, 2001). As a result of this, the host cultures were left with a cultural vacuum that was often filled by the culture of the missionaries. Thus, Christianity was considered as foreign among the local people because of this. It meant leaving one's culture and adopting a foreign one, thus resulting in discontinuity (Hiebert, 1991:184).

Those who did not follow this direction suppressed their traditional ways, which only went temporarily underground and would often resurface when faced with issues Christianity was not addressing or was unable to handle. This resulted in dualism among the Christians on top of taking away their decision-making ability (Hiebert, 1991:185). Hiebert introduces the word "Christopaganism" (Hiebert, 1991:185) to describe the phenomenon, a word which should be

rejected as derogatory in today's world in making reference to the cultures of other people as "paganism" without a clear definition of what one means.

The second way in which Christians respond to traditional ways as highlighted by Hiebert is to adopt "uncritical contextualisation" and accept the old. In this, he means the embrace of the traditional cultural ways even after one has become a Christian, without making any changes at all, where this may be necessary (Hiebert, 1991:185). He sees the weakness in this approach as leading to overlooking both corporate and personal sins in order to accommodate the new (Hiebert, 1991:185). But he also points to a second weakness as similar to that of rejection of contextualisation, in that one can end up with an amalgamation of religious beliefs and practices which he now refers to as "neo-paganism", again, using that rather derogatory word towards other cultures (Hiebert, 1991:185).

Hiebert introduces the third approach which he views as dealing with the old ways as one engages in "critical contextualisation" (Hiebert, 1994:186). When using this approach, the old beliefs and practices are duly examined rather than outrightly rejected or accepted. This requires that these traditional ways be studied in their proper contexts and then weighed in the light of Scripture before a decision is made (Hiebert, 1991:186). According to Hiebert, in order to be effective in this, an individual or a church needs to acknowledge the necessity of bringing all things under the light of the Scripture. This leads the congregation in gathering data from the culture and then analysing them to assess their correlation with what Scripture says (Hiebert, 1991:186). Subsequently, the church will then need to engage in Bible study on the subject matter under consideration (Hiebert, 1991:187).

A final step then would mean a corporate and communal decision which would fall into any of the five positions below:

- 1) *Retain* the many good beliefs and practices in the community which are not in conflict with Christian living (Hiebert, 1991:187).
- 2) *Reject* the cultural beliefs and practices which are viewed as evil and which are incompatible with being a Christian (Hiebert, 1991:187).
- 3) *Redeem* those beliefs and practices which are neutral and can be adopted for good usage (Hiebert, 1991:187).
- 4) *Replace* those cultural beliefs and practices which may not be found even within the Bible with borrowed, but wholesome practices (Hiebert, 1991:187).

5) *Recreate* new ways and practices which have never been in existence as the community maps its way forward in consensus (Hiebert, 1991:187)

This can be presented in a flow chart modified from Hiebert (Hiebert, 1991:188) as in fig. 7 below:

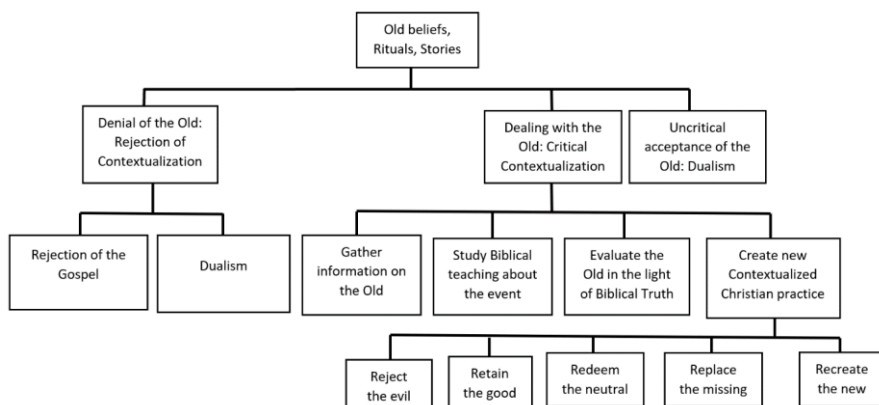


Figure 7: Critical contextualisation outline, (Hiebert, 1991:188)

An examination of strategic level spiritual warfare in the light of Hiebert’s model shows that in a number of areas the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare have engaged in critical contextualisation which has led to new models of prayer which have been popular in cultures where they been practised as shall be shown in the coming chapters. On the other hand, there are areas where they have exercised uncritical acceptance with the possibility that the outcome seems to lead to dualism.

This model is therefore helpful in accessing the question of continuity or discontinuity between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion. In the uncritical acceptance one sees continuity, while in the areas where there is critical contextualisation one would see carefully processed continuity and discontinuity at the same time, as will be shown in the chapters ahead.

2.5 Power Conflicts in Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion: Research Design and Methodology

2.5.1 Qualitative Research Design

The research design required that the researcher would navigate between two worlds: the world of the texts of the strategic level spiritual warfare teachings and the world of the African

Traditional Religion; the world of powers and principalities and the world of mystical powers. The question of whether an empirical method could have been possible was considered, as seen when Sammy Muindi used focus groups to study and develop empirical data to analyse charismatic prophetic experience (Muindi, 2017). The research took into account the fact that an empirical attempt to conduct the strategic level spiritual warfare in an area, carry out evangelism in the area to see the responsiveness of the people and observe the validity of community transformation would require perhaps much more time than the duration of this study (perhaps in terms of years). It was therefore much more practical to examine the accounts of a historical case that has been mentioned in the records of those who have indicated that there has been community transformation as a result of SLSW (Otis(Jr.), 1999).

In as far as African Traditional Religion is concerned, interviews with knowledgeable elders could have been considered to be more pragmatic, as they would have allowed the research to glean insights that would be invaluable as data. But the same information that one would have obtained from them is already documented among the various peoples: the Kikuyu (Kenyatta, 1991), the Luos (Achieng, 2001), the Kambas (Mbiti, 2015a) and Africa in general Turaki and Steyne (Turaki, 2006;Steyne, 1999) and is thus accessible. The research, therefore, used these documented and readily available data.

Kenneth Bordens and Bruce Abbot (Bordens & Abbott, 2018) point out the possible weakness of what they call “the method of authority” when reference is made to authority figures. They argue that the source may not be as authoritative as one would presume, and there is a likelihood that an individual might be biased both in their observation and conclusion (Bordens & Abbott, 2018:23). Such a view would cast doubts and suspicion on any information from experts that would render most research relativistic and perhaps, unacceptable. However, one still needs to reflect critically on the information that is obtained from any source and weigh its validity and authenticity.

Harold Turner asserted that the study of religion is “polymethodical” (Turner, 1981:1). He pointed out that phenomenology and history are critical to the study of religion (Turner, 1981:2). He decried the dismissive position that certain scholars from Africa have taken on research in Africa using what he viewed as “Western categories and methods” and pointed out that sometimes an outsider is able to see more objectively than an insider (Turner, 1981:3-4). He views this kind of attitude as imposing racial and cultural limitations on those who would want to study the religions of Africa from outside (Turner, 1981:2).

However, the reality is that the African scholars did not dismiss the methodology used but the undergirding presumptive attitude that had already designated African religions onto an evolutionary shelf that indicated that they were underdeveloped. Turner betrays this attitude by borrowing a phrase from John V. Taylor's *The Primal Vision* (J. V. Taylor, 1977) and using it in the title of his book. The imagery that the word "primal" conjures up is that of primitive, underdeveloped and those still at a lower evolutionary rank. To many it is a derogatory term. African scholars have tended to object to this kind of attitude.

Andrew Walls captures this tension well when he highlights the fact that there are some "evolutionary thoughts which crossed over from biology into other disciplines including religion" (Walls, 2017:134). This resulted in the demarcation of religion into two hemispheres: the higher religions which were considered to be well developed with philosophical ideas and some form of sacred literature and the lower religions which were viewed as underdeveloped (Walls, 2017:134). Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam fell into the first category while religions of the people of Africa and the Pacific fell into the second category (Walls, 2017:134).

As a result of this, the higher religions were being studied in the West, but the lower ones were considered "underdeveloped" and "animistic" and therefore were not given due consideration (Walls, 2017:134). This present research has carefully avoided any such underlying presumptions while developing a methodology that would study Africa Traditional Religion particularly in the area of mystical powers that has often been associated with fetishes, witchcraft and magic as seen in Kato (Kato, 1975:21-22) and Eboussi Boulaga (Boulaga, 1984), among others. This will be examined further in chapter four of the study.

Meanwhile, Denzin and Lincoln issues a rather sober warning when it comes to the study of other people or even anything. They point to the fact that one does not have undisputed authority and legal right on the subjects that one is studying due to the fact that some subjects "now challenge how they have been written about, and more than one ethnographer has been taken to court." (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:20). This calls for sensitivity to the groups one is studying and the nature of reports that are written about them.

In his thesis, Douglas Dziva examines the various research methods that have been applied in the study of the Shona religion. He observes that his research "... is part of an ongoing quest for an adequate methodology in the academic study particularly of Shona traditional religion, and of African Traditional Religion in general" (Dziva, 1997:3). According to Dziva, some of the studies

have mainly been biographical, thus capturing the lives of the various missionaries. Those which have been theoretical have based their sources mainly on the secondary materials which other writers have produced. He critiques some of these sources for calling African Traditional Religion as “animism” and refers to their biases as “a distortive mystification and falsification of their (Africans) realities.” (Dziva, 1997:10).

In Dziva’s view there is transmission of the beliefs of Africans from one generation to the next generation orally and through ritualistic practices (Dziva, 1997:11). He critiques Mbiti’s assertion that the Africans are incurably religious (Mbiti, 2015:2), and negates this by pointing out that there are many Africans who are either laid back or are opposed to some of the traditional positions and therefore cannot be considered as religious (Dziva, 1997:12). But Dziva may be looking at the contemporary African scene where there are some Africans who are influenced by Western thinking including atheism and as such do not pay allegiance to any religion at all. In a real traditional setting for one to say they do not adhere to the religion of the community is to “self-excommunicate” as Mbiti explains (Mbiti, 2015:3). These aspects, therefore, will be best captured by a qualitative research method which this study adopts.

2.5.2 Qualitative Research Methodology

Qualitative research has been viewed as an appropriate method when researching issues which touch on people’s beliefs, behaviours, opinions, emotions and relationships (Mack, 2005:1). Natasha Mack views it as culturally friendly and defines it as a method that “seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspective of the local population it involves.” (Mack, 2005:1).

In their definition of qualitative research methods, Creswell and Poth highlight the fact that it would address the “meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell & Poth, 2018:35). Thus the research questions, the means of collecting the data, the engagement with people and the final analysis of data is such that the “voices of the participants” and the researchers’ thoughts are seen in the resultant contribution to the world of knowledge (Creswell & Poth, 2018:35).

On the other hand, Layla Cassim distinguishes qualitative research method from a quantitative one, based on the data collected. She explains that data collected through qualitative research method cannot be numerically defined because they tend to capture “people’s thoughts, beliefs,

motivations, experiences and behaviours.” (Cassim, 2017:27). Here they converge on common grounds with Mack on the suitability of qualitative method in studying people-based issues. This study focuses on people’s cultural orientation, religions and beliefs and how they may or may not influence one another. Qualitative research method is therefore a most appropriate method to use. As pointed out by Cassim, the other advantage is that it brings a deeper understanding to the research question and gives one the reasons why people respond or believe in what they do (Cassim, 2017:28).

This does not in any way imply that it does not have some disadvantages. Among some of the setbacks of qualitative research method is the fact that it tends to be subjective since the data is personally obtained and is often influenced by one’s personal view. It is, perhaps, this reason that has made some think that it is not scientific enough and as such should not be considered as evidential. Denzin and Lincoln object to this argument, which they refer to as the “politics of evidence” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:37), and see them as “Neoliberal discourses” attempting to “scientize” research methods, including qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:32).

Creswell and Poth elucidate the potential subjectivity of research in the fact that individuals will often allow their “beliefs and philosophical assumptions” to inform certain methodological choices they make, including the theories that the research is based on (Creswell & Poth, 2018:47). But this should not be the case. The researchers, in a real sense should try to be as objective as possible and divorce themselves from choosing a methodology that will bring out the results that they desire. To move in that direction is to pre-determine the outcome of the research even before one has begun. The problem one is trying to address, the research questions one is asking and the data that one is collecting in a sense should determine the methodology that a researcher chooses.

Qualitative research method is appropriate for the kind of research this study is involved in and has been useful in this research in obtaining data that brings out new knowledge into the arena of spiritual warfare and its relationship to African Traditional Religion. The evidence obtained is just as critical and useful as any other evidence obtained through alternative methods, although this method is preferred.

2.5.3 Desktop Comparative Critical Analysis

In desk top research, one determines the kind of data that one is looking for with the knowledge that this captures a broader dimension than would normally be found in a literature review. One

looks at journal articles, documents and textbooks to develop their ideas. There is no field research in terms of interviews or contact with people. It may touch both peer reviewed articles and non-peer reviewed sources (Cassim, 2017:61-62).

This study critically examines materials that are available on strategic level spiritual warfare from both academic and popular writing and other peer reviewed sources as well. It also compares these with African traditional religious scholarly sources and relevant non peer-reviewed literature. In a sense even data that would come out of interviews as a source is not peer-reviewed, although this research is not engaged in interviews.

2.5.4 Historical Case Study: Kiambu

This study also examines a historical case study often quoted by the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare. In this the study uses hypothesis and theory testing. Some have referred to this as explanation building, theory elaboration or explanatory case studies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:612). Theory testing uses analytic induction which looks for phenomenon and develops an explanation for the phenomenon, based on cause-and-effect processes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:12). Layla Cassim defines a case study as “an in-depth explanation of a particular case or a unit” (Cassim, 2017:42). An individual makes an informed decision for the case he/she would want to research on and then follows it through. Cassim presents the limitation of case studies as the inability to extrapolate the generalization for other situations (Cassim, 2017:42).

Denzin and Lincoln define case study as a case-based inquiry that examines the philosophical “suppositions and principles” and the “resultant justification of methods and techniques associated with a specific approach to investigating the social world.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:600). A case therefore entails an “instance, incident, or unit of something and can be anything- a person, an organization, an event, a decision, an action, a location like a neighbourhood or a nation-state.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:600).

They emphasize that the researcher must always ask the question of what the case represents. This will prevent the researcher from pursuing an issue just because of interest but not driving to an ultimate goal of getting the necessary data from the case (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:601). They also see case study as useful in a mixed method approach as this creates the opportunity to look at the bigger picture (macro) and the specific case (micro) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:604).

Denzin and Lincoln highlight the four uses or designs of case study as “(1) description, (2) hypothesis generation or development, (3) hypothesis and theory testing, and (4) development of normative theory.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:607).

Those who emphasize the impact and effect of strategic level spiritual warfare point out a number of particular cases which are illustrative of the efficacy of SLSW in bringing about transformation in a community. They have recorded instances from communities in the USA, Latin America (Wagner, 2015b), in Uganda, Kenya and Fiji among others (Otis(Jr.), 1999). One of the communities that Otis mentions is a place called Kiambu and the events that took place in a particular church (Otis(Jr.), 1999), which is on the outskirts of the city of Nairobi. This researcher is familiar with the church and has taught a mission course in the Bible school run by the church. Also due to proximity and the ease of getting resources, this forms the single historical case study that this research is looking at.

Although the outcome of the examination of Kiambu as a case study may not necessarily be universally applicable to all the other cases mentioned where strategic spiritual warfare is reported to have been used, since the conditions and contexts may be different, yet this gives insights which may be used to test the causal-effect approach of the proponents of SLSW. Robert Stake indicates however, that case study research method is not to be used only where generalization is anticipated but even where there is no connection with any other case (Stake, 2008:140).

Stake contends that as a form of research “case study is defined by interest in individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry.” (Stake, 2008:140). He considers it both as the process and the product of the study (Stake, 2008:136). He postulates what a case study constitutes, as the nature, historical background, physical setting and prevailing context of the case (Stake, 2008:139). Case studies are beneficial because they enable an individual to gain propositional and experiential knowledge which leads to encounter with the information one has obtained (Stake, 2008:145).

In spite of the disadvantage of the challenge of generalization pointed out earlier on, this method is highly applicable to this study and therefore is used in dealing with the Kiambu case only and not the entire study.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the conceptual framework and the underlying concerns in the African context of the relationship between powers as discussed by strategic level spiritual warfare and the mystical powers within African Traditional Religion. The chapter captured the fact that African Traditional Religion is not traditional in as far as a dying practice, but that it is still dynamic and has even found its way back among the elites of our society. The chapter touched on the fact that there is a resurgence of African Traditional Religion in sections of the African continent and attempted to examine the relationship with Christianity, particularly strategic level spiritual warfare.

The chapter also highlighted the fact that among some former missionaries who were impacted either by their interaction with African Traditional Religion or similar cultures have been some of the most active proponents of the strategic level spiritual warfare, raising the question of whether they were not influenced by their host cultures. Peter Wagner explains how his encounter with religious objects from Latin America affected him and influenced his views. Both Charles Kraft and George Otis Jr. also assert that their worldviews were affected when they came in touch with African traditional religion and First Nation religious practices, respectively ((Kraft, 1990; Otis(Jr.), 1999; Wagner, 2010). In adopting some of the cultures from their hosts, they repackaged and Christianised these ideas. Subsequently, these have been exported back to their host cultures and that may be the reason why those who may have a background in African Traditional Religion identify closely with these teachings.

This therefore calls for a dialogue on how power engagement is viewed, understood and practised both in strategic level spiritual warfare domain and in mystic power settings in African Traditional Religion. This could either result into a dispute of powers leading either into a conflict or a partnership. The chapter has discussed the various modes of dialogue that could take place that spans a spectrum that moves from hostility as would be seen among sections of the evangelicals to partnership or encounterology as reflected by recent position taken by the Catholic Church. The strategic level proponents in their confessional beliefs would take the position of hostility, since many would adhere to the evangelical persuasions, but in their practice, they tend to capture views which resonate with African traditional cultures and therefore would be viewed as engaging in encounterology or even partnership.

The study also looked at the possibility of this being a case of contextualisation. It does appear like an over-contextualisation that did not engage in critical contextualisation, thus narrowing the gap

between the two power parameters, rather than drawing a line between them. The methodology used in this study is qualitative method with a desktop comparative critical analysis and a historical case study to illustrate the point.

Chapter three will examine the powers and principalities, and their foundation as found in strategic level spiritual warfare. It will also engage with the Judeo- Christian views of such powers. The chapter will also capture the way neo-Pentecostalism views such powers and principalities and the kind of response it has often given in response to matters of powers and principalities.

3 CHAPTER 3

POWERS AND PRINCIPALITIES IN STRATEGIC LEVEL SPIRITUAL WARFARE

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined both the theoretical framework and the methodology used and now this chapter turns to one of the key parameters of this study, which is the concept of powers and principalities in strategic level spiritual warfare. The study will look at the definition of both spiritual warfare and spiritual mapping. It will also trace the origin and sources of the teachings and examine the usage of the phrase powers and principalities as propagated by the group of teachers under examination.

The study will then voice the perceptions of other Christian communities as far as the powers are concerned before drawing a conclusion.

On examining the debate on spiritual warfare, Agrippa Khathide comments that it is mainly a Western concern. He, however, applauds it for having brought the rather “marginalized subject of demonology” to the discussion table in Christian circles. In spite of some reluctance in giving prominence to the subject area of the Spirit and its relevance to theology and missions, it certainly forms a major point of reflection in Christian circles today (Khathide, 2007:52). But the subject of demonology is not as sidelined as Kathinde suggests with several books, movies and cartoons dealing with the subject in circulation (Leahy, 1990; Boyd, 2001; Green, 1999; Pappalardo, 2015; Riddell & Riddell, 2007; Unger, 1995)

One would not totally agree with Khathide that this is a Western issue, for although some of the ideologies that are studied here were incubated in a Western setting, their origin and main practices seem to be in the non-Western context. Peter Wagner was attracted to what was happening in Latin America, while Charles Kraft’s missionary encounters in Nigeria points to this as well. They have found rich ground where they have sprouted and flourished to the extent questions have now arisen whether there is a return to African traditional religious adherence (Kraft, 1995; Lowe, 1998).

In Philip Jenkins' perception, the dominant characteristic of the "emerging world Christianity is traditionalist, orthodox, and supernatural." (Jenkins, 2011:9). This belief in the supernatural seems to draw the African heart to identify with a Christianity that acknowledges the sense of the otherness, the assumption that there are powers in existence that do influence the natural causes and events.

Sung Kyu Park, who has spent most of his teaching life in Kenya, explains that in anthropological approach to spirituality, when Christians struggle with contextual metaphysical questions, it is the religious experience rather than just historical matters that would concern them (Park, 2010:3). He asserts that "spirituality is not only informative, but it is transformative" as well (Park, 2010:3). Park's view is quite broad, because in essence what he might be saying is that while people may seek for answers to vicissitude of life elsewhere, at the bottom of it all, they are struggling with metaphysical questions in Africa.

Park highlights this with the example of the early "spiritual churches" (*Roho*), in Kenya. The orientation which they took in their formative days was to seek guidance from the Bible and be open to the Holy Spirit. But at the same time, they mixed Christian traditions with African ritualistic practices and beliefs (Park, 2010:6). Park further explains that these independent churches were marked by their adoption of a traditional African worldview that seriously took into account spiritual warfare and confrontation with spiritual powers (Park, 2010:7). These churches appreciated the Bible as they saw that the Bible was offering a similar worldview to theirs (Park, 2010:7). However, Park later adds that these independent churches, although Pentecostal and charismatic in orientation, are sometimes in conflict with the more recent (in the 1970s) charismatic churches which sometimes consider them as embracing "paganism" (Park's word) (Park, 2010:13).

Park sees the "Third Wave" as the neo-charismatics which include "Spirit-led independent and post-denominational churches" (Park, 2010:8). According to him, there were three different waves which had Pentecostalism as their characteristic. The first was the classical Pentecostalism which was followed by the Pentecostal manifestations in non-Pentecostal churches or mainline churches, which were referred to as "the Charismatics". The final and a rather fluid wave were "spirit-led" independent churches which have been referred to as "neo-Charismatics" or "neo-Pentecostals" (Park, 2010:8). He points to a number of such churches in Kenya, which would belong to the three categories, but whose origins were either American or European (Park, 2010:9).

Park maintains that the reason that the Charismatic Movement, in its various forms, is spreading rather rapidly in Africa and having a significant influence, is because it appeals to the prevalent African worldview unlike the mainline churches (Park, 2010:9). As a result of this it gives its adherents and followers a deeper spiritual fulfilment and satisfaction as well as offering solutions to other life problems which are facing them. He further declares that “Pentecostal and charismatic spirituality in Africa is a contextual spirituality” (Park, 2010:10).

In a list of nine characteristics of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, Park highlights two of them which resonate with the study at hand. First, there is a consciousness of evil that assents to the fact that Satan’s evil powers are real, in operation, and need to be taken into account and confronted (Park, 2010:10). Secondly, there is concern for the demonstration and impact of the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer (Park, 2010:10). These would resonate with the issues of spiritual warfare and power conflicts which are subjects under examination in this study.

Park sees this worldview in Africa stretching to cover even the socio-economic-political spheres with a supernatural spirituality (Park, 2010:13). He affirms that “charismatic churches emphasize ministries of healing and deliverance, taking seriously the power of witchcraft and spiritism.” (Park, 2010:15). In his opinion, the Charismatic Movement remains relevant in the African context because it “acknowledges and takes seriously the spiritual world and powers that seem real to Africans.” (Park, 2010:15). As such, he predicts a bright future for the Charismatic Movement in Africa as long as it maintains a “non-syncretistic” approach (Park, 2010:16). Although he does not give details of what this concern would look like, he seems to suggest that this might be an amalgamation of African Traditional Religion and charismatic aspects of spiritual warfare and deliverance (Park, 2010:16). Park states his conviction that the charismatic renewal will continue to appeal to Christians in Africa due to the fact that it resonates with the African traditional worldview, which is still quite prevalent in most parts of the continent of Africa today (Park, 2010:17).

On the other hand, while looking at the trends in the West and Western theology at large, Donald Bloesch explains that the surge of modernity did not allow the subject of the demonic to be a point of discussion until post-modernity eroded some of the effects of modernity (Bloesch, 2000:209). He further argues that even “contemporary academic theology has been slow to incorporate this theme in its enterprise.” (Bloesch, 2000:209). While acknowledging that the Reformation theology was open to engage with the demonic, especially Luther, Bloesch views the Enlightenment as relegating the “demonic to the categories of the relic of our mythological past.” (Bloesch,

2000:209). In essence, Bloesch is saying that the predominant Western theological disposition would not openly embrace the kind of worldview that one finds in Africa in matters of spiritual warfare. Subsequently, “this dismissal of the demonic has contributed to the vacuity of theology.” (Bloesch, 2000:211). This emptiness is easily filled within the African context by pre-existing concepts of the spirit world.

Bloesch however acknowledges that the awareness of the demonic is reemerging due to new cultural manifestations as is found in “shamanism and animism” (Bloesch, 2000:209). He views demons as beings with “overarching intelligence who masterminds a strategy of evil that affects the whole cosmos” (Bloesch, 2000:210). Bloesch dismisses demythology of demons, but advocates for contextual examination of the texts in the light of Jesus actions. (Bloesch, 2000:212).

Bloesch describes what he refers to as “primitive and animistic worldview” (terms that some may find derogatory in the modern day) and asserts that it was a world infiltrated by the spirits which affected the inhabitants in diversity of ways (Bloesch, 2000:212). He further posits that this view may have seeped through into the Jewish religious thought:

A case can be made that Judaism absorbed ideas of demonology from Assyrian, Babylonian, Iranian and Greco-Roman cultures as well as developing its own. What is important to recognize was that demonology was rethought in the apostolic church in the light of God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ. (Bloesch, 2000:213)

What Bloesch refers to as “animism” would be similar to the experience of those who are practitioners of African traditional religion as their world is saturated with spirits. But Bloesch also points to the possible continuity of beliefs from the near neighbours of Israel into early Judaism. One already sees at the beginning of the book of Genesis that satan was active and so they did not borrow the idea of satan from their neighbours and Bloesch does not indicate what the ideas are that were borrowed from the neighbours. But this already points to the possible osmotic exchange that can take place between two faiths and gives room for a possibility of influence from another religion in the area of spiritual warfare as well.

3.2 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare: Definition and Beliefs

In the introduction to the book *Breaking Spiritual Strongholds in Your City*, C. Peter Wagner compares the new model of prayer to the American smart bombs that bombarded Iraq during the reign of Saddam Hussein. He considers this a new tool of spiritual warfare that would deliver

multitudes from the clutches of Satan (Wagner, 2015:19). He views “spiritual mapping” as an invaluable tool in intercession that, when used in “warfare praying”, would bring about the revelation of God’s glory and the salvation of many (Wagner, 2015:12).

Subsequently, he advocates that although Christians must still share with individuals the good news of the Kingdom of God, there is a need to adopt a wider perspective that considers liberating cities, nations and communities. He perceives Christian responsibility as a “dominion mandate” to enforce the will of God and the Kingdom of God on earth (Wagner, 2015:13). Here, Wagner seems to be encouraging a Christendom attitude which is more medieval and Constantinian in outlook rather than the yeast and dough model that Jesus advocated. So convinced is he of the necessity of engaging in spiritual mapping to the extent that he asserts: “We ... are no longer discussing whether we should do spiritual mapping. We are now concentrating our energies on how to do it well.” (Wagner, 2015:18).

Wagner acknowledges the possibility of making mistakes in this pursuit, but explains that they have put maximum effort in order to remain biblically, theologically and pastorally sound in their teaching (Wagner, 2015:18). He, however, contends for a cause-and-effect relationship between the faithful prayers of God’s people and transformation in the community. This kind of prayer is the strategic level spiritual warfare, which, when effectively applied, will bring about some of the benefits that he describes as follows:

When God’s will is done on earth, we see lost people saved; sick people healed; poor people with sufficient essentials; an end to wars, fighting and bloodshed; oppressed people liberated; just governments; fair and equitable business practices; harmony among many races (Wagner, 2015:22-23).

Wagner claims that this is a “tool” that God would use to bring deliverance to “neighborhoods, cities and nations in a more specific and powerful way” resulting in the kind of utopian description that he has given above (Wagner, 2015:23). Thus, this is a kind of a panacea for the needs of the world.

Though he acknowledges the fact that those among them who are teaching strategic level spiritual warfare have received both criticism and appreciation, and have themselves made certain errors, yet from their viewpoint they are convinced that they are spiritually sound and biblically balanced (Wagner, 2015:24). In his opinion, this is bound to happen for “new innovations” like spiritual mapping and strategic level spiritual warfare, especially from late adopters who struggle with

accepting new ideas (Wagner, 2015:25). The mistakes that he acknowledges that they have made do not seem sufficient enough to dissuade him from pushing forward with this idea.

When the prophet Ezekiel is instructed to draft the map of Jerusalem on a clay tablet and lay a siege against it in Ezekiel 4:1-3, Wagner points out that this is an example of spiritual mapping (Wagner, 2015:25). He does not make the effort to offer the more acceptable meaning of this scripture that this is a prophetic enactment pointing to the imminent attack by the Babylonians on Jerusalem (Wagner, 2015:25). Instead, he gives it a spiritual overtone indicating that it was both spiritual mapping and spiritual warfare (Wagner, 2015:25).

Wagner even uses the archeological discovery of a map of the Sumerian city of Nippur drawn around the year 1500BC to extrapolate that this was spiritual mapping, complete with the engagement with the Sumerian god Enlil which he considers to be the “territorial spirit” over Sumer (Wagner, 2015:25). This partly shows the kind of sources that Wagner and his colleagues would use in support of their teaching as will be further shown in this chapter.

His compatriot, George Otis, Jr. is the one who coined the term “spiritual mapping” in 1990 to refer to what he termed “superimposing our understanding of forces and events in the spiritual domain onto places and circumstances in the material world.” (Otis(Jr.), 2015:35). Otis further clarifies that without using magic, spiritual mapping enables one to comprehend entities beneath the material world through “right relationship with God” (Otis(Jr.), 2015:36). Otis contends for the objectivity of this kind of position as he views it as verifiable through history, sociological examination and sacred writings (Otis(Jr.), 2015:36).

Otis highlights the challenge that Western theoreticians, who have not had much exposure, face in matters attending to spiritual warfare. They tend to be averse to issues touching on spiritual warfare due to the fact that this is a supernatural arena in which they have had little, if any, exposure at all. On the contrary those from the majority world whether missionaries, evangelists, pastors and intercessors often encounter the supernatural powers in the course of their ministries (Otis(Jr.), 2015:17). He points to a similar misconception of the term “territorial strongholds”, which he also views as a biblical concept that some have misunderstood (Otis(Jr.), 2015:37).

Otis cites the case of the prince of Persia, quoted in the book of Daniel (Dan. 10:13,20), as an illustration of the concept of territoriality; he views this as an affirmation of the existence of an evil spiritual being which is having dominion over a geographically delineated area (Persia) (Otis(Jr.), 2015:38). Subsequently he is convinced that, “These incorporeal beings are perceived to rule over

homes, villages, cities, valleys, provinces and nations where they exercise extraordinary power over the behaviour of local peoples” (Otis(Jr.), 2015:39).

Otis is convinced that certain areas or regions are more dominated by oppressive and idolatrous atmosphere than others due to these powerful beings (Otis(Jr.), 2015:40). Otis presents interesting insights into the sources of his teaching on the subject matter of spiritual mapping, territoriality and strategic level spiritual warfare:

I have visited shrines, temples, monasteries, libraries and universities. I have climbed sacred mountains, examined ancestral graveyards and paddled down the holy Ganges River at dawn. I have listened to stories of Tibetan Buddhist lamas, Native American traditional healers and the leading theorists of the New Age movement. I have compared notes with the missionaries and the frontline national pastors; I have interviewed anthropologists and prehistorians and I have picked the minds of experts on everything from shamanism and Japanese ancestor worship, to folk Islam, geomancy and religious pilgrimages... (Otis(Jr.), 2015:40).

From this rather rigorous engagement in research by Otis, it goes without saying that these were the sources of his teachings. It is therefore clear that there were extensive contacts with traditional religions and perhaps, borrowing from these traditional sources in order to formulate the teachings on spiritual mapping, territoriality and strategic level spiritual warfare. This therefore, points out to a possibility of continuity with traditional teachings. Although he does not mention some of the areas he visited, one can presume that some of these sources would be similar to the sources for African Traditional Religion. Perhaps this may also explain why adherents of these other faiths so easily identify with sections of these teachings by Otis and his colleagues.

Otis states that territoriality is the main reason certain spiritual and other difficult conditions would prevail in a locality, a city or a nation (Otis: Overview, 42). These are both defensive and offensive spiritual powers that would withstand any attempts to dislodge them and would also retaliate (Otis(Jr.), 2015:42). He further explains that “spiritual strongholds” are aspects of these territorialities which deflect light and convey darkness (Otis(Jr.), 2015:42). He negates the idea that these demonic strongholds can just be found anywhere, by explaining that they tend to coalesce where there are people. In his view, the connection with sacred places or objects like “mountains, rivers, trees, caves, stars and animals” are only possible because of the participation of people around these entities (Otis(Jr.), 2015:42). In other words, Otis is saying that, it is people, who host these powers in the spaces that they occupy.

This sounds as if Otis is contradicting himself, when on the one hand he has pointed out how he has conducted research in such areas with the objective of determining whatever the territorial powers may be in such places and documented them, and on the other hand he asserts that such connections are not there if there are no people. Perhaps what Otis might be saying is that people tend to assign such sites with some sacred or spiritual overtones and subsequently the demonic powers make it a rendezvous for the people because of their allegiance.

Otis concurs that the reason that such inanimate sites and objects have become contact points with such spiritual powers is that the communities around these areas have entered into a kind of a pact with these powers, which were initially transacted on the same spot by the forefathers and then subsequently renewed by succeeding generations (Otis(Jr.), 2015:43). Such inaugural pacts may have been initiated as a result of the traumas that the community went through at one point or another, but are then reenacted by other generations through sacrifice, veneration, pilgrimage and other forms of allegiance (Otis(Jr.), 2015:43).

In Otis' view, such spiritual engagement releases spiritual power to such an extent that the adherents of such entities can talk of heightened "manifestations of demonic signs and wonders", during the renewal of such pacts (Otis(Jr.), 2015:44). He also considers certain rites of passage among such communities as conduits where the pacts with the spiritual powers are renewed and as a result the community remains under the subjugation of such powers (Otis(Jr.), 2015:45). He refers to such interactions as "traditions". Otis is categorical that such traditions are what "sustains territorial dynasties". (Otis(Jr.), 2015:45). He probably would see certain African initiation rites, like rites of passage as possible "traditions" that would continue to perpetuate such allegiance.

Otis is of the opinion that the means of dissemination is "ideological exports" and "trauma-induced strongholds" (Otis(Jr.), 2015:47-48). He views ideological export as the propagation of such ideologies or spiritual influence, through broadcast from centres of entrenchment in various parts of the world. In modern day Otis would see the spread of some world beliefs as coming from specific centres into the rest of the world. Islam could be coming from Saudi Arabia, while New Age movement may have originated from India and materialism from European or American modern cities. These then become centres which slowly spread the influence throughout the rest of the world. Otis (Jr.) gives a list of what he considers as traumas: "1) Intimidating natural barriers; 2) Climactic and natural disasters; 3) Disease and pestilence; 4) Famine and environmental ruin; wars and raids". (Otis (Jr.), 1997:136) These would then make desperate communities seek for answers from such sources that expose them to the spirit world (Otis(Jr.), 2015:47-48).

On the same point, Peter Wagner highlights the aspect of the invisible world. He emphasizes the fact that evangelization may not be effective in certain parts of the world because the “god of this age” has blinded the minds of those who do not believe (2Cor.4:3-4). He therefore, advocates spiritual warfare in the task of evangelization as a necessity and an essential element. In his opinion, the evangelization process will be “accelerated” if the believers understand the distinction between the “visible and the invisible” world (Wagner, 2015b:52). He posits that the invisible world has often been ignored, although it is quite crucial and critical in Christian engagement (Wagner, 2015b:52).

While discussing how people have turned to the visible natural creation in order to “honour and glorify” the demonic principalities, Wagner highlights the situation in Japan, where according to him, the image of the sun on the Japanese flag is a symbol of an idol called *Amaterasu Omikami*, “the sun-goddess”, whom he claims is the “enshrined territorial spirit ruling over Japan.” (Wagner, 2015b:54). He has similar remarks about Hawaii and also the Grand Canyon in the United States of America, where he sees certain territorial spirits reigning (Wagner, 2015b:54-55).

Wagner views the building of the tower of Babel in Genesis chapter 11 as human engagement with the occult, as revealed through archaeology. He considers this as the traditional ziggurat whose purpose was not just for human glory, but an attempt to establish and practice the occult. (Wagner, 2015b:56). George Otis (Jr.), in *Twilight Labyrinth: Why Does Spiritual Darkness Linger Where it Does?*, comments that the tower of Babel was a centre of human self-glorification, a sense of humanism that attempted to defy the command of God and establish itself. He asserts that Babel meant “the house of gods” and Shinar means “strange powers”. In these expressions alone he sees an independence from the Creator, God. (Otis (Jr.), 1997:116-117). He concludes:

Whatever else may have taken place atop the Tower of Babel or many of its many clones, the cosmic mountain to which it led was the principal domain of Enlil, popularly known as “Lord of the Air.” (Otis (Jr.), 1997:117)

While commenting on the archaeological discoveries from Ur of the Chaldees, Werner Keller affirms the same position that Wagner takes. Werner explains that the discoveries are not only of the ziggurats, but that five temples standing in a semi-circle around the ziggurat were also found (Keller, 1956:40). Keller explains that some of these temples belonged to the moon-god, *Nannar* and the moon goddess, *Nin-Gal*, the wife of *Nannar* (Keller, 1956:40). Other artifacts for rituals and sacrifices were also discovered by the same archaeologists around the tower (Keller, 1956:40). But Merrill F. Unger is of the opinion that the Genesis tower of Babel, which seemed to be the first

such tower, did not indicate any attempts to worship and therefore could not be equated to the later developments which were more of “temple towers or ‘high places’ called ‘the hill of heaven’” which were more like shrines.(Unger, 1974:104)

David Atkinson is of the opinion that this is civilisation gone wrong. Technology without God as humanity wanted to attain their highest devoid of a relationship with the Creator. (Atkinson, 1990:175-180) While acknowledging that the ziggurats were there, Derek Kidner does not equate the tower of Babel to a ziggurat but sees it as a place for human exaltation or defiance of God (Kidner, 1967:109-111). As indicated above Wagner associates the tower of Babel to the ziggurats which were temples, when other commentators would see that as a later development. Even though the tower of Babel may not have been a centre for occult engagement, evidence above shows that such practices were present in the Ugaritic era.

Wagner highlights the fact that it is a great achievement when a “redemptive purpose” for a city, a nation or a community is identified through spiritual mapping. This, in his view is the greatest goal rather than just to “expose satanic strongholds or unmask occultic deception or pursue spiritual mapping or bind principalities and powers.” (Wagner, 2015b:57). In this, Wagner seems to be suggesting that it is the end result that matters rather than the methodology that is used and yet he strongly advocates for spiritual mapping and strategic level spiritual warfare, as has already been observed, as a panacea for community transformation.

Although culture was created by God and designed to bring glory to God, it, however, has been corrupted by Satan, according to Wagner. In his view, some may be studying anthropology to understand culture, but this is only at the surface level since it is dealing with what is visible or as he prefers to call it, “culture as it really is.” (Wagner, 2015b:58). Wagner is therefore asserting that external study of anthropology may be helpful but it does not cover the spiritual element that sometimes lurks behind what is being studied. This might give the impression that Wagner is dismissing the necessity for studying missionary anthropology, a field that he himself was quite familiar with, yet what suggests is the need to incorporate the spirit realm as well. The deeper observation, according to him, requires spiritual mapping that examines beyond the veneer of cultural dressing to the forces entrenched behind it. (Wagner, 2015b:58).

Wagner himself gives anecdotes of incidents when he felt attacked by the powers of darkness. At one point such an attack made him fall off a ladder, he claims. On another occasion, he speaks of his wife seeing an evil spirit in their bedroom, and they had to invite intercessors to pray for them. These intercessors discovered even more evil spirits in their homestead through spiritual mapping

(Wagner, 2015b:62). This kind of narrative would resonate with an adherent of African Traditional Religion where sometimes a home owner might invite a diviner to detect evil powers in the home. A Christian with the African traditional religious background would certainly identify with such anecdotes as they have sometimes observed the diviners doing a similar kind of thing (Kirwen, 1987:81).

But Wagner also mentions as a proof of territoriality, a process of office cleansing ceremony, where he invited Cindy Jacobs to break the power of a spirit that perhaps had a negative influence on him or his functions due to a statue which was outside his office (Wagner, 2015b:65). Again, the demarcation line with African Traditional Religion is extremely thin as a similar statement could be made by a practitioner of African Traditional Religion when dealing with mystical powers or spirits. Faced with a possibility of prosecution by the anti-corruption body in Kenya, the Governor of Samburu County, one of the counties in Kenya, Governor Moses Lenolkul, invited traditional elders to his office to cleanse it through traditional rituals to ward off the offending spirits or curses as reported by the *Star Newspaper* in Kenya (Reporters, n.d.).

John S. Mbiti narrates a similar kind of occurrence in Africa where a tree outside a building could not be uprooted because of the spirit which was inhabiting it. It was finally uprooted after a medium was invited to conduct a cleansing ceremony in which the spirit was appeased and requested to relocate (Mbiti, 2015:192). Jomo Kenyatta also explains how among the Gikuyu community, they would traditionally deal with ill-health by inviting *mondo-mogo* (medicine man) to mediate by offering the necessary appeasing sacrifice so that the power of the evil spirit would be rendered ineffective (Kenyatta, 1991:147). The similarities heighten the possibility of continuity with African Traditional Religion.

Archbishop David Gitari of the Anglican Church in Kenya mentions an incident that occurred when he was still a child. Villagers would normally go early in the morning to collect water from the spring which was at the nearby valley. Villagers would report hearing "eerie voices" conversing without seeing anyone. Once a woman who took on this task earlier than they usually would go was caned by some unseen forces, as voices complained that she had woken them up too early. Gitari's father who was a Christian would normally ring a bell at 6:00am and at 6:00pm for prayers in the chapel at his home. It said that the unseen spirits decided to vacate their "territory" as they complained that the Christian's bell was disturbing their peace (Gitari, 2014:5-6).

Wagner stresses the importance of acknowledging the invisible powers, since failure to do so can result in catastrophic consequences for a nation, a community or an individual. In his view, this was

the mistake that Haiti as a nation made when through their leader, they revived the voodoo festivals in 1991. The result of this, according to Wagner, is that they opened doorways to evil spirits and the consequences were poverty, calamities and destruction of the economy (Wagner, 2015b:66-67). Wagner attributes cause-and-effect to the action of restoring voodoo worship and sees it as the work of spirits that brought about the calamities in Haiti. He, however, does not give any evidence for his assertion.

He holds the same view about Japan when the nation re-introduced "*Daijosi*" ceremony, which Wagner thinks is steeped with occultism and engagement with the Japanese "sun-goddess, *Amaterasa omikami*". This ceremony is meant to be part of the enthronement process of the emperor, but is considered by Wagner as submitting to the "chief spiritual ruler of the nation". He sees this as having resulted in the negative effect on the Japanese stock-markets causing a decline. (Wagner, 2015b:68).

Although the two cases mentioned above are from outside the continent of Africa, yet the cause-and-effect motif that is illustrated here is quite similar to what one would encounter in the African context, albeit in communities where there are engagements with shrines and festivals. It is not uncommon for the elders of the clan to make a visitation to the shrines, either to appease the ancestors or make a libation to the divinities (Kirwen, 1987:87-88).

Cindy Jacobs takes a more anecdotal and biblical approach in her explanation of the necessity for strategic level spiritual warfare. She highlights the frequent cases of flooding that used to take place in the city of Rosario in Santa Fe province in Argentina (Jacobs, 2015:73-74). In her research, she discovered that the city was established by priests who were carrying the Queen of Heaven (her description of the statue of Mary). After drawing a distinction between Mary, the mother of Jesus and the statue, she then led the senior clergy who had gathered together in the city, in strategic level spiritual warfare by repenting, renouncing and proclaiming a handing-over of the city to Jesus. According to Jacobs, this led to the cessation of the floods and the subsequent release of the city from the clutches of the Queen of Heaven (Jacobs, 2015:75-76).

One can see that Jacobs has also followed the same pattern of course and effect, and does not allow room for other possible explanations especially as she also highlights an array of scriptures, which she views as indicators of either territorial spirits or engagement with them through spiritual mapping or strategic level spiritual warfare. Among these are the following:

- God talks of abhorring adherence to the queen of heaven (Jeremiah 7:16-19)

- The judgement of the Philistines for their idolatry which led to flooding (Jeremiah 47:2ff).
- Satan declared as the god of this world and is therefore holding many kingdoms captive (2 Cor.4:4)
- In her view, it is this kind of warfare that Paul described in Ephesians 6:12 (Jacobs, 2015:77).

She also sees the weapons of warfare mentioned in 2 Cor.10:4 as inclusive of strategic level spiritual warfare. She contends that those who “relegate the territorial powers”, referred to in Ephesians 6:12, to myths are missing the point since Paul sees them as forces that believers wrestle with frequently and one ought to do so with knowledge. (Jacobs, 2015:78).

Jacobs explains that the prohibition on food offered to idolatry was not just a dietary concern, but because behind the idols were demonic forces that Paul referred to in 1 Corinthians 10:19-22. This information, according to Jacobs, would assist one to pray knowledgably and effectively (Jacobs, 2015:78). Jacobs also highlights the point that the territorial spirit that was ruling Ephesus according to Acts 19 was Diana or Artemis the great which was worshipped in the form of an idol. Subsequently, there was rampant witchcraft in the city. In Jacobs’ opinion, there was no need for conducting spiritual mapping in the city as it was obvious that Diana had control over the city (Jacobs, 2015:79). Although Diana was an idol rather than a spirit, Jacobs equates it to a spirit. This is often the trend that Jacobs takes both in practical approach or in understanding biblical passages. The physical is equated to the spiritual.

In Ezekiel 13:18, the Bible says “Thus says the Lord God: Woe to the women who sew bands on all wrists, and make veils for the heads of people of every height, in the hunt for human lives! Will you hunt down lives among my people, and maintain your own lives?” Jacobs interprets this passage to be speaking about women who would curse other people and hold them destroy them, especially Christian leaders (Jacobs, 2015:85). John B. Taylor in his commentary agrees with the first part , that they were women who probably were witches and were wearing amulets used for magic purposes (Taylor, 1969:124). While the Bible affirms the reality of curses in other passages of scriptures, it also shows its ineffectiveness if the curses are undeserved (Num. 23:1-24:9; Prov.26:2).

Although spiritual mapping seems to be associated with research, Jacobs explains that Paul did not have to conduct any research while he was in Ephesus to determine what the territorial spirit ruling the city was, as it was quite obvious that Diana or Artemis was the one reigning in the spiritual realm (Jacobs, 2015:79). Jacobs however, emphasized the necessity for Christians today

conducting spiritual mapping to engage in research, due to the prevailing environment of doubt. This she sees as having been induced by the unbelief on matters touching on the realm of powers and principalities, especially by the Western worldview that some tend to hold on to. (Jacobs, 2015:79).

Jacobs defines a stronghold as a “fortified place that Satan builds to exalt himself against the knowledge and plans of God” (Jacobs, 2015:80). She affirms the resurgence of the worship of traditional gods which she sees as a revival and strategy of “the enemy to re-empower the demonic principalities over nations.” (Jacobs, 2015:80).

Although Jacobs acknowledges that prayers will not evict every demonic squatter from the territories which are under their influence, she suggests that strategic level spiritual warfare would certainly free several cities and nations and minimize the negative influence of these powers (Jacobs, 2015:80). Just like Wagner, Jacobs decries the fact that many mission agencies only engage with the culture at the surface level, but do not go deep enough to determine the powers behind the evil aspects of the cultures. Therefore, there is a necessity for equipping missionaries with tools for strategic level spiritual warfare so that they can handle the demonic strongholds that they may encounter in the mission field (Jacobs, 2015:80-81). She sees these strongholds as operating both at the individual and corporate level and should be handled at both levels (Jacobs, 2015:80).

Jacobs lists nine alleged strongholds which she acknowledges as non-exhaustive, but nevertheless one needs to put them into consideration while engaging in strategic level spiritual warfare:

- 1) *Personal strongholds*: These are considered to be areas in one’s life which the devil uses to entrench his influence in a person’s life. They may include “sins, thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behaviour patterns” (Jacobs, 2015:81). The remedy she offers to this is living according to God’s biblical standards of holiness. Jacobs sees such spiritual warfare as an opportunity to display the character of God rather than a “power trip” (Jacobs, 2015:81-82). If such strongholds are not handled in one’s life, they can become strong-“holes” and open doors through which the demonic can attack an individual (Jacobs, 2015:82).
- 2) *Strongholds of the Mind*: Jacobs quotes Ed Silvano (Silvano, 1998:147) as defining a stronghold as “a mindset impregnated with hopelessness that causes a believer to accept as unchangeable something that he or she knows is contrary to the will of God.” (Jacobs, 2015:82). Thus, according to Jacobs, fortresses entrenched in the mind must be overthrown or they will keep one in a state of helplessness (Jacobs, 2015:82).

- 3) *Ideological Strongholds*: According to Jacobs, these could either be worldviews that were introduced as philosophies which have influenced cultures and societies, mainly in a negative way. She considers Karl Marx, Charles Darwin and Adolf Hitler as individuals whose ideologies had “occultic powers behind” them that “essentially bewitched an entire nation.” (Jacobs, 2015:83). She sees these ideological grips as inspired by “invisible forces and powers of darkness” whose agenda is to set up institutions that would accomplish their designs (Jacobs, 2015:84). She asserts that intense “intelligent and sustained intercession” would be the antidote to such strongholds (Jacobs, 2015:84).
- 4) *Occultic Strongholds*: Jacobs defines occultic strongholds as overt expressions of “witchcraft, satanism and New Age religions which invite spirit guides to operate” (Jacobs, 2015:84). She considers them as “power boosters” to territorial spirits in a region (Jacobs, 2015:84). Thus, those who are under the influence of these powers are manipulated to hinder the work of God in an area, according to Jacobs (Jacobs, 2015:84). She sees such individuals as involved in pronouncing curses upon churches and upon church leaders. These curses are rendered ineffective when they are broken through strategic level spiritual warfare (Jacobs, 2015:85).
- 5) *Social Strongholds*: Jacobs explains that this is a state of affairs when a city or a community remains in poverty, social injustice, racism or even tribalism to the extent they do not serve the concerns and what God cares for (Jacobs, 2015:87). This can be counteracted through giving to the poor, care for the homeless and unity among the different communities or races (Jacobs, 2015:87).
- 6) *Strongholds of disagreement between city and church*: This, in Jacobs’s understanding is a state of affairs in which there is suspicion and tension between the city government and the church. The church can change this by getting involved in worthwhile city activities and becoming a blessing to the city (Jacobs, 2015:87).
- 7) *Seat of Satan*: This is a phrase that is used in the book of Revelation in the letter to the Church of Pergamos as recorded in Revelation 2:13. Jacobs explains that the

Seat of Satan is a geographic location that is highly oppressed and demonically controlled by a certain dark principality. It is from here that it engages in warfare with the city or the nation (Jacobs, 2015:88).

She, however, does not indicate whether this is in every city or one place internationally whose coordinates can be stated.

- 8) *Sectarian Strongholds*: Jacobs sees this as the stronghold that brings about division and pride among churches and denominations and as a result hinders them from working together for the cause of Christ (Jacobs, 2015:80-90).
- 9) *Strongholds of iniquities*: According to Jacobs this comes from “the sins of the fathers that produce iniquities or weaknesses towards certain types of sin in the succeeding generations” (Jacobs, 2015:90). This can be extended to denominations and churches where such strongholds may have gained a foothold in leaders and subsequent generations in the churches to the extent the membership often reflect similar kind of weakness (Jacobs, 2015:90-91).

A number of these issues that Jacobs refers to as strongholds some would consider them either as societal ills or outright sinful tendencies and characteristics, but Jacobs would rather see some demonic forces behind them. While there is a sense in which this can truly inspire prayers, there is another dimension where people would fail to address societal ills and blame the devil for all that is going on. While trying not to be sceptics as she had earlier on pointed out, social transformation can also be brought about through avenues of the rule of the law or negotiations among communities that can ease any conflicts. As is common among proponents of spiritual mapping and strategic level spiritual warfare, there are no standard classifications as each one produces their own list.

Kjell Sjöberg who is described as a “pioneer” in strategic level spiritual warfare (Sjöberg, 2015:95) brings a more pragmatic orientation and angle to the discussion in the area of both spiritual mapping and what he refers to as “prophetic prayer action” which would be the equivalent of strategic level spiritual warfare (Sjöberg, 2015:96). In a fairly technically organized manner and language, that includes information gathering for prayers by a “shadow cabinet” and others who are gifted in spying, Sjöberg asserts that they should not depend only on “getting information from the Holy Spirit” but also praying with understanding (Sjöberg, 2015:96-97). This includes preparation of research papers touching on both spiritual and historical backgrounds in areas where one is hoping to conduct the prayers (Sjöberg, 2015:97).

Sjöberg even points out a case where they conducted strategic level spiritual warfare in a city where there was a woman who was channelling the spirit of Jambres, (who opposed Moses in the Egyptian narratives more than 3000 years before, as is recorded in the book of Exodus 7-10 in the Bible). The Apostle Paul makes reference to “Jannes and Jambres” in 2 Timothy 3:8 and refers to them as the magicians who opposed Moses. Sjöberg further suggests that like that biblical case,

the territorial spirit of the area they were involved in could have been Jambres (Sjöberg, 2015:98-99).

Without clarifying how a magician who lived over 30 centuries before could have reincarnated in the modern-day city in Sweden in a woman, Sjöberg shifts from this narrative into another. He does not even elucidate whether in his mind it was the spirit of Jambres or a demonic spirit called Jambres or an impersonation of Jambres. This would certainly resonate with an African worldview of ancestors who are considered as the living dead and the fact that their spirits do visit with the living. He does not clarify whether it was the same spiritual entity that was operating in Jambres who was also active in the woman in the example he gives, in contemporary Swedish suburbia. The concept of the living dead and ancestors is widely accepted in the continent of Africa (O'Donovan, 1997:219). At the same time he does not explain how this would agree with the biblical understanding of the dead and the fact that they cannot come back to engage with the living.

On the same note, Richard Gehman acknowledges that the perception of many people in Africa is that the "majority of spirits in Africa are of deceased people," (Gehman, 2005:216). This came out of his work among the Kamba community in Kenya, although in his book he gives a biblical view that seems to contradict Sjöberg. In a lengthy discourse on ancestral spirits (Gehman, 2005:276-281), Gehman points to the biblical texts which prohibit contact with the dead or spiritism. Isaiah 8:19 says: "Now if people say to you, 'Consult the ghosts and the familiar spirits that chirp and mutter; should not a people consult their gods, the dead on behalf of the living...". He also mentions Lev.20:27; Deut.18:11 and the case of the "witch of Endor" in 1 Sam.28. In all these verses, he takes the position that the dead are not capable of coming back except a demonic impersonation. He gives an exception to the case of the "spirit of Samuel" as a special case (Gehman, 2005:280).

Sjöberg does not offer any explanation at all whether he advocates a belief in the world of ancestors or not. He draws a cause-and-effect relationship between the fact that they conducted strategic level spiritual warfare in a specific area and this was followed later on by a positive economic transformation in the area (Sjöberg, 2015:99). Perhaps, in his mind, it is important to engage in warfare prayers over geographically delineated areas as the kingdom of God has both a chronological and spatial dimension. He argues that the boundaries that God determined as recorded in the book of Acts 17:26-27 are important, spatial dimensions:

26 From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, 27 so that they would

search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. (Acts 17:26-27).

The fact that God is the one who set the boundaries for all nations or peoples is significant to Sjöberg concept as each boundary is considered a territory within which warfare is conducted. Sjöberg therefore, emphasizes what he calls “spiritual geography” to encourage conducting strategic level spiritual warfare over geographically marked territories (Sjöberg, 2015:100). “Territorial spirits” also seem to operate around geographically marked regions (Sjöberg, 2015:101)

In looking at geographical regions, Sjöberg talks about the special place that mountains have played in communities. He asserts that often they have been dedicated to the veneration of certain “gods” which he refers to as “territorial spirits” of the regions. He stipulates that similar reverence is often accorded to “sacred rivers, lakes, wells, forests, parks and cities”. (Sjöberg, 2015:101). In his experience, when strategic level spiritual warfare or prophetic prayer action has been conducted over such areas, the atmosphere has changed and he concludes that this is an indicator that these places were originally “dedicated to demons.” (Sjöberg, 2015:101-102). Sjöberg implies that prophetic prayer actions or spiritual warfare has contributed towards the eviction of these demonic squatters (Sjöberg, 2015:101-102).

Today in Kenya, there are many spots, forests, mountains and trees which are considered sacred to the communities which are living around them. Some of these entities are so revered that one is not supposed to tamper with them in any way at all as this would either offend the ancestors or one can incur a curse, as a result of some mystical powers around these places. Although some of these narratives helped in the conservation of the environment, others certainly were contact points with some mystical spiritual powers, as Kenyatta explains (Kenyatta, 1991:129).

Sjöberg further indicates that obelisks and totem poles which have been erected in various cities at point zero are not merely signposts, but rather phallic symbols which have connection with the “sun-god *Ra* of Egypt.” (Sjöberg, 2015:102). He introduces the concept of prophetic prayer action, where a group travels to a given area and engages in perambulatory prayers over that area. (Sjöberg, 2015:103).

According to Sjöberg, the sins of the community which are not confessed gives the demonic powers the legal standing to oppress the community. These sins, in his belief, act as invitation to principalities and powers and so need to be identified through research and dealt with through repentance and prayer (Sjöberg, 2015:104). He views this as the role of the intercessors through

strategic level spiritual warfare, where they engage with these entities on behalf of the community (Sjöberg, 2015:106).

Sjöberg proposes seven issues that one engaging in spiritual mapping needs to take into consideration so as to be effective in spiritual warfare: 1) the main “gods” of the nation; 2) the altars, high places, temples from where “fertility gods” are worshipped; 3) any dedication of political leaders to an alternative god; 4) any human bloodshed in the land; 5) determining not physical, but spiritual and moral foundation of the city or the nation; 6) how the messengers of God have been received in the city or the country; 7) how the seats of power have been built or established and whether there has been any engagement with the occultic. (Sjöberg, 2015:107-110).

This information is then used for making targeted prayers through strategic level spiritual warfare in a vicinity. Sjöberg advises that every attempt should be made to corroborate this information through the inner guidance by the Holy Spirit, through scripture and through history (Sjöberg, 2015:111). As was the case of Cindy Jacobs, we again see a separate list of classification produced by Sjöberg.

Such engagements can be conducted even at continental level, as Sjöberg gives a highlight of an occasion when they participated in a prayer expedition to Africa, allegedly to uproot “slavery mentality” among Africans. This according to him was necessitated by the fact that “Black leaders in Africa have treated their own people in the same way as the white slave-traders treated the slaves.” As such this attitude is a stronghold that needs to be dealt with through strategic level spiritual warfare. He however concludes that more work still needs to be done in engaging this stronghold in Africa (Sjöberg, 2015:113).

Although some leaders in Africa have taken advantage of their people and mistreated them as reflected in Michela Wrong’s *It’s our Turn to Eat* (Wrong & Williams, 2009) concerning Kenya, or Adriaan Basson and Pieter Du Toit’s reflection of the South Africa situation in *Enemy of the People* (Basson & Du Toit, 2017), one cannot presume that such activities do not take place outside Africa. Neither can one confidently attribute such demeanour to spiritual powers only, as opposed to human greed and cruelty. Carried to the ultimate end, this kind of political spirituality would lead one to blame poor leadership on spiritual forces rather than acknowledging and taking responsibility over irresponsible leadership. The prayers certainly are useful as the Bible recommends prayers for leaders who are in authority so that they may create a conducive environment for peaceful existence (1 Timothy 2:1-4), but the choice of leaders who are put into

office is also paramount. In Romans 13: 1-7, Paul advocates that such leaders should be considered as the servants of the Lord administering his justice for the good of all.

Harold Caballeros gauges spiritual mapping as a model of a “spiritual technology” that is developing and compares it to an x-ray or radar. In his view it helps the intercessor to see beyond the natural (Caballeros, 2015:120). He also considers it as “intelligence or espionage during war.” (Caballeros, 2015:121). Caballeros accords to strategic level spiritual warfare a strong missional thrust that conveys this as a tool to free those whom “Satan has blinded ... and holds them captive” (Caballeros, 2015:122).

He defines spiritual warfare as “... the conflict between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, or Satan’s kingdom. The two kingdoms are competing for the souls and the spirits of the people on earth” (Caballeros, 2015:123).

Caballeros views spiritual warfare as the mandate of the church that requires involvement in strategic level spiritual warfare so as to pierce every corner occupied by dark forces so that evangelistic efforts would be successful (Caballeros, 2015:125). He even lists some entities whom he views as agents of Satan, who perpetuate the darkness: “warlocks, witches, shamans, sorcerers, channelers, satanic priests and priestesses... leaders of cults and those belonging to satanic sects” (Caballeros, 2015:127).

Caballeros compares these individuals and their engagement with the diabolic world to those mentioned in scriptures concerning the King of Tyre and the Prince of Tyre in Ezekiel 28:2,12. He further associates such entities with the Prince of Persia and the Prince of Greece recorded in the book of Daniel 10:20. According to him, such would include individuals like Hitler who voluntarily invited these evil powers to influence them, their leadership and their governments with the kind of consequences which ensued (Caballeros, 2015:129).³

When Guatemala elected a Christian President in 1991, Caballeros posits a cause-and-effect to this outcome and attributes it to the strategic level spiritual warfare that the Christians conducted (Caballeros, 2015:131). Accordingly, spiritual mapping helps the Christians to identify the “strongman” or “the territorial spirit” in a region or the individuals in evil structures who are being used by Satan to impose his rule over the people. Subsequently, strategic level spiritual warfare can be conducted, which would bring about positive results in the targeted domain (Caballeros,

³ Perhaps his views are also similar to those of Richard Wurmbrand, when he wrote *Marx and Satan* and alluded to the fact that Karl Marx had diabolical influence over his life as well (Wurmbrand, 1986).

2015:131). Caballeros sees individuals who have made agreements or alliances with the powers of darkness, as being hosts in any locality that gives those demonic powers the right to remain and dwell in that locality until they are evicted through strategic level spiritual warfare (Caballeros, 2015:139).

In giving practical steps on how to conduct spiritual mapping and strategic level spiritual warfare, Bob Beckett makes reference to “*Taquitiz*” as the “ruling Spirit of the San Jacinto Mountain range”(Beckett, 2015:145). He also acknowledges that this has been mentioned in the *Lonesome Gods*, a fictional novel by Lous L’Amour (L’Amour, 2004:78-80). Beckett however does not treat it as fiction, but as an anthropological and spiritual reality. In a similar way, the book by Frank Peretti, *This Present Darkness*, (Peretti, 2003b) has had a great influence also in this subject area although it is also fictional.

For one to engage effectively in spiritual mapping that would eventually lead to effective strategic level spiritual warfare according to Beckett, one needs to comprehend the following: 1) the city’s or region’s history; 2) the city’s personality; 3) and the city’s cult centres (Beckett, 2015:153-154). Another list is again presented that is different from the previous ones, showing the subjectivity in producing these lists.

Similarly, Victor Lorenzo also gives a practical illustration from his life where he explains that his sources of information included personal revelation, angelic visits, research from the local libraries, interviews with local university professors and folklore. He asserts that using these in his local area, he was able to “identify four spiritual powers”. (Lorenzo, 2015:164-167). Like Caballeros, Lorenzo also asserts a cause-and-effect occurrence and concludes that after they engaged strategic level spiritual warfare in combatting spiritual powers in his city, those who were not Christians started responding to their messages of proclamation and the church attendance grew by 102 percent to the extent that the public image of the church in the area was greatly improved (Lorenzo, 2015:168).

Lorenzo defines spiritual mapping as a combination of:

research, divine revelation and confirmatory evidence in order to provide complete and exact data concerning the identity, strategies and methods employed by spiritual forces of darkness to influence the people and the churches of a given region (Lorenzo, 2015:168).

Lorenzo undertakes to anchor his argument on scriptures and highlights 2 Corinthians 2:11 which states that, “To keep Satan from getting the advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his wiles

and intentions.” in the Amplified Version which he prefers (Lorenzo, 2015:169). He fails to state that the Amplified Version is more of a paraphrase than an actual translation and tends to bring out human opinion than accurate translation. He acknowledges this as affirming the necessity of spiritual mapping. He also compares spiritual mapping to the incident where Moses sent spies to the promised land which he likens to going behind enemy lines to identify their strength before attacking as recorded in the book of Numbers chapter 13 (Lorenzo, 2015:169).

Mark McGregor and Bev Klopp acknowledge the fact that opinions differ when it comes to the matter of attempting to determine a proper name for the principality or the powers that may be dominating a city (McGregor & Klopp, 2015:205). Although they agree that the proper name may not be necessary for one to engage in strategic level spiritual warfare effectively, they interpret Mark 5:9 (where Jesus speaks with the demons inhabiting the madman of Gadara) as an example of an incident where there was the naming of powers. McGregor and Klopp also explain that Luke 8:30 is Luke’s version of the same story and is similar to what they together with their colleagues, do in naming the powers over the cities (McGregor & Klopp, 2015:205).

McGregor and Klopp then name what they and their colleagues have discerned as the spiritual powers dominating the city of Seattle, in the USA. According to them, these powers are: *Apollyon* which is also recorded in Revelation 9:11 and according to them is responsible for all destructions and “anti-Christ spirit of rebellion, idolatry and covetousness” (McGregor & Klopp, 2015:206); *Beelzebub* (Matthew 12:24); *Asmodeus* (Tobit 3:8), which is mentioned in the apocryphal book of Tobit; *Belial* (2 Corinthians 6:15); “the Great Spirit” which is a First Nation spirit encouraging shamanism and ancestral veneration, according to them. On top of these, there are others which they name as *Androgyny*, the *Dragon* and others linked to “Satan Worship”, pirating and drug trafficking (McGregor & Klopp, 2015:206).

These two authors do not explain how these entities which were mentioned in the Middle East region, thousands of years ago have found their way to Seattle USA and are controlling the city. They do not clarify whether these same entities are in every city in the world or just their city only or whether they have relocated to the USA. Neither do they explain the process that they went through to identify and name these spirit beings, except to mention rather subjectively that this came to their attention through discernment. The subjective nature of this discernment is such that one could come up with any historical name. But these, according to them, are powers which are controlling their region and need to be engaged through strategic level spiritual warfare before

any meaningful breakthrough in evangelism can be experienced in their city (McGregor & Klopp, 2015:207).

Cindy Jacobs highlights an incident when she sensed God telling her that the devil has been effective in his work of oppressing the nations because he has a "strategy". Similarly, Christians also need a strategy that would enable them to "possess the gates of the enemy" (Jacobs, 1991:32-33). She confesses that after concerted prayers of repentance for the nation, God would reveal to them the satanic strongholds which they were dealing with and which needed to be pulled down through strategic level spiritual warfare (Jacobs, 1991:34). She quotes Jeremiah 1:10 which talks of pulling down, destroying and building as affirming this position (Jacobs, 1991:34). Just like in the previous case of McGregor and Klopp, Jacob also emphasizes personal revelation as paramount in the process.

Jacobs sees those who are intercessors as "enforcers" of the will of God on earth (Jacobs, 1991:50). She explains further that prayer is a weapon that God has given to the church in order to enforce his purposes in the nations (Jacobs, 1991:52-53).

In the introductory remarks in his book *Informed Intercession: Transforming Your Community Through Spiritual Mapping and Strategic Prayer* (Otis (Jr.), 1999), George Otis Jr begins by giving narratives from different parts of the world where in his opinion, spiritual mapping was conducted and as a result there was both spiritual breakthrough and community transformation. Among the list he gives are Mizoram in India, Almolonga in Guatemala, Umuofai in Nigeria, Hemet in California, Cali in Colombia and Kiambu in Kenya. All these according to Otis (Jr.) were communities, areas and regions which were being controlled either by territorial spirits or evil influences, but when believers engaged in spiritual mapping and spiritual warfare, these communities were transformed (Otis (Jr.), 1999:16-50).

Otis (Jr.) continues to explain what he calls a "beachhead" position, which is formed in spiritual warfare and eventually brings transformation in the community (Otis (Jr.), 1999:59-66). He explains that where there is unity of believers and spiritual mapping is used, then church ministers would experience open doors and increased outcome in their evangelistic efforts (Otis (Jr.), 1999:67-68).

What Otis (Jr.) further describes is not too different from similar revival experiences and perhaps comparable to even what was observed during the East African Revival in Rwanda (Guillebaud, 2002:33-100; Osborn, 2000:9-52), in Kenya (Smoker, 1994:33-40), in Uganda (Coomes, 1990) and

even the records of some revival movements among the Zulu in South Africa (Koch, 1981), among others. However, these believers did not call their efforts "spiritual mapping" nor did they engage in technical approach to prayer called strategic level spiritual warfare. Although they had similar outcomes of community transformation, they just earnestly engaged in prayer. Which highlights the angle that intensive prayer, without the technicalities also seems to produce similar results.

Otis (Jr.) defines what spiritual transformation looks like almost in a utopian kind of language:

At this level the social, political and economic fabric of the entire community begins to metamorphose. As an increasing percentage of the population comes under the lordship of Christ, the sin-wrought citadels of corruption, poverty, violence, prejudice and oppression are transformed into ghost towns (Otis (Jr.), 1999:70).

He affirms that this can be attested to by the fact that even secular media reported the changes. He acknowledges however, that this does not mean perfection in the community, but rather a contrast between where they used to be and the change that has taken place (Otis (Jr.), 1999:70). According to Otis (Jr.), the reason that some communities stop short of community transformation in spite of experiencing spiritual breakthrough is either because they are contented with the spiritual encounters and are not desiring and praying for more or because through affluence, they have become complacent (Otis (Jr.), 1999:71).

Otis (Jr.) decries the fact that the majority of Christians from the West, having assented to the Enlightenment view of life, are unaware of the spiritual reality of the spirit world that lies beyond the natural. As a result of this, they tend to explain the status of the society by falling back to "sociology, economics and politics. (Otis (Jr.), 1999:80). By using spiritual mapping, according to Otis (Jr.), one's view of reality is enhanced and therefore, can see things as they actually are (Otis (Jr.), 1999:81). With such insights one can discern veiled realities which include incidences of past injustices, spiritual covenants and demonic realities that hinder the progress of the Gospel and are keeping people in bondage and as a result need to be engaged through strategic level spiritual warfare (Otis (Jr.), 1999:81).

3.3 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare: Origin and Sources

As one delves into the concepts presented through both spiritual mapping and strategic level spiritual warfare, some key areas of emphasis have come up. There has been a strong emphasis on territorial spirits or "spiritual geography", where spirit powers operate on geographically

delineated areas. This requires dealing with the spirits in that territory, before effectiveness in ministry can be experienced. Identifying and naming specific spirits through spiritual mapping has also been emphasized. Part of this requires perambulatory prayers, discernment or historical research.

From the presentation above, it appears that even spirits of dead people can still come back and hold people captive. This sounds close to what is observed in African Traditional Religion through ancestor veneration or honour. Some of the proponents have also affirmed their belief in the efficacy of curses and the necessity for breaking this. This is another language that would resonate with those in the African Traditional Religion. This leads to an enquiry into what the possible sources of these teachings might be. The study now examines some of the common sources that can be gleaned through the fabric of these teachings.

3.3.1 Cultural and Traditional Sources

The first possible source under examination are cultural and traditional sources. George Otis Jr. comes to the defence of spiritual mapping and related types of prayers by pointing out that those who oppose spiritual mapping and strategic level spiritual warfare and are referring to them as “the new magic” or “Christian animism” have not learnt that “the discipline is actually a close relative of both cultural geography and cultural anthropology.” (Otis, 1999:88).

In this, Otis (Jr.) finds support from Gregory Boyd (Boyd, 2014a). Boyd takes a panoramic view of the predispositions of several traditional communities from different parts of the world and he suggests that there is credible evidence that the warfare motif is as widespread as humanity. His examples come from the Shuar Indians in Ecuador who attribute “all sicknesses, misfortune and death” to the invasion by evil spirits which are opposed to them (Boyd, 2014:12). He also mentions the *Wamale* of Ceram, Indonesia who are actively engaged in battles with demons, which can even abduct their victims and feast on them (Boyd, 2014:14).

Boyd continues to illustrate his point by making reference to the *Kamwe* in Nigeria who see the evil spirits as originating from “various trees, rivers, stones or caves.” These spirits can easily be offended and mete out wrath on anyone who contravenes taboos or goes contrary to their expectations (Boyd, 2014:14). He asserts that this kind of worldview was present among the Babylonians, the Canaanites, the Egyptians and even the Greeks (Boyd, 2014:14). Furthermore, it

could be observed among the Yanomamo of South America and the Maidu tribe of northern California (Boyd, 2014:15). He concludes that:

Similar warfare stories serving a similar purpose can be found throughout the oral and written traditions of ancient and contemporary *primitive* peoples (*sic*): the Hottentots of South Africa; the Nahuatl of Mexico; the Apaches, Chiricahua, and the Papagoes of the American Southwest and the Vedic poets of early Hinduism... The fundamental and the universally shared intuition seems to be quite similar: the world is a spiritual battle zone... (Boyd, 2014:17).

Boyd perceives that this prevalent warfare view that is spread out quite across the world is an indictment against the western enlightenment view that does not accommodate engagement with the spirit world (Boyd, 2014:18). He further stipulates that belief in the Scriptures as the word of God should further translate into a warfare worldview that should not be overshadowed by “naturalistic ... presuppositions.” (Boyd, 2014:19). Boyd strongly asserts that an honest assessment of the various non- Christian worldviews that espouse the warfare motif should be viewed as precursors of the scriptural truths found in the Bible (Boyd, 2014:19).

But when Boyd points out that God’s good intention has been captured by hostile forces which are out to thwart his plan (Boyd, 2014:19), he puts lots of emphasis on the evil forces that leaves one with the notion that his view sounds rather dualistic: a system where two opposite and equal forces are fighting against each other. This kind of view does not highlight the fact that Satan is a creation of God and God does have absolute control over him as alluded to in the book of Colossians 1:16-17 as he does over all other creation. Boyd acknowledges that if taken seriously, the warfare worldview provides a more satisfying explanation to the problem of evil than just philosophical answers (Boyd, 2014:20).

In order to respond to the issue of the sovereignty of God and the presence of evil, Boyd has written a second volume on this subject area called *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Boyd, 2001).

From the above one can see that embedded deeply in the traditions and cultures of various communities, one can find a spiritual warfare motif as one of their beliefs. The proponents of both spiritual mapping and strategic level spiritual warfare, whether in their research or through revelations seems to borrow heavily from this source. Otis (Jr.) (Otis (Jr.), 1999), Caballeros (Caballeros, 2015), Jacobs (Jacobs, 2015), Wagner (Wagner, 2015c) and many others seem to make reference at one point or another to this traditional or cultural background information. When

African traditional religious sources are used, those who have transitioned from these backgrounds to the church would immediately identify with these teachings, for better or for worse.

3.3.2 Extra Biblical Sources

The second possible sources are the extra biblical sources that have been used by the proponents of strategic-level spiritual warfare. The Babylonian mythological poem *Enuma Elish* captures the conflicts that ensued between Tiamat and Marduk after Apsu was ambushed and destroyed by the gods he had initially intended to kill. Tiamat created demonic monsters that attempted to destroy all these other gods until Marduk came and blew his breath into her and destroyed her. He then used her body to carve into being other creations (Enuma, n.d.). This Babylonian creation myth shows that sections of the Ancient Near Eastern world, believed in cosmic conflicts among spiritual entities as well. .

D. Winton Thomas in his *Documents from Old Testament Times* also affirms this narrative (Thomas, 1961:9-10). This belief therefore is not just a creation of the African mindset, but was also present in other communities, although they may have been viewed as myths. This affirms that the conviction of spiritual beings which were at war with one another was also prevalent in other ancient societies.

Michael Coogan and Mark Smith in *Stories from Ancient Canaan* see the Ugaritic background as the sphere from which the Israelite religion emerged. They view the Canaanite religions as concepts and practices that the Hebraic community sometimes “shared, adopted, compromised with, and sometimes rejected.” (Coogan & Smith, 2012:14). They assert that the reason why the Israelites had a strong affinity to Baal worship was because the characteristics and partly the language used by the Israelites seemed to be borrowed from the Canaanites themselves (Coogan & Smith, 2012:15). This gives credence to the notion that one faith or religion can get into such a close dialogue with its neighbour to the extent that it leaves an indelible mark on the neighbour’s faith and practice.

When it comes to warfare and conflict, Coogan and Smith point out that Baal is engaged in a warfare with the Sea while the sister, Anat, is involved in warfare with the enemies of Baal. Coogan and Smith continue, “It may be more accurate to say that while Baal battles Sea on the cosmic plane, Anat battles human enemies on the earthly plane.” (Coogan & Smith, 2012:101). These

kinds of narratives are found in the Old Testament as well, where God is depicted as being in battle with the sea and the sea monsters:

12 By his power he stilled the Sea;
by his understanding he struck down Rahab.

13 By his wind the heavens were made fair;
his hand pierced the fleeing serpent.

(Job 26:12-13 NRSV)

Although the gods of the Canaanites and the Babylonians are quite different from the God of the Israelites, yet the resemblance of some of these passages tends to show, not only that warfare motif existed in ancient times, but also that cultures could influence one another even where there seemed to be outright hostilities as between the groups mentioned above.

The extra-biblical sources are not only external and sociologically or archeologically based, but they are also internal and more subjective as well. In this category, we find visions, dreams, special revelations and discernment in prayer used as sources of information. These are areas which are often mentioned in the writings of Wagner, Otis (Jr.), Jacobs and others. While one cannot block the possibility of God revealing certain spiritual entities at work in the life of an individual, as is seen in the case of Paul and the slave girl in Acts chapter 16, where Paul detected an evil spirit in her. Yet the subjectivity of this source still remains. It is possible for two individuals to differ on the revelation received or its interpretation, or even for one to be outrightly wrong in their perception. When such sources seem to identify and superimpose ancient demonic entities into modern day engagement, the onus is on the teachers to clarify how an ancient entity was transposed into a modern occurrence. This has been observed in the teachings of McGregor and Klopp.

3.3.3 Anecdotal Sources

George Otis (Jr.) narrates several instances when spiritual mapping and strategic level prayers were used in communities and afterwards there was transformation in these communities. In his writings, Otis (Jr.) is keen to associate cause-and-effect connection between the warfare and the answers received or the transformation experienced. Thus, Otis (Jr.) narrates an incident where a great transformation was experienced in Rio Rancho, Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1993 when the community was targeted by spiritual warfare after spiritual mapping revealed that there might have been a curse. When the intercessors cancelled the effect of this curse through prayers,

churches could be planted in the area which initially had been quite resistant to evangelical churches (Otis (Jr.), 1999:86).

Emmanuel Eni in his *Delivered from the Power of Darkness* (Emmanuel, 1988), tells of his experiences in the days he used to serve the devil as a satanist, as he claims. His encounters of living under water and conducting astral projections and many other such narratives have led into developing a theology around this area which is propagated by some of these proponents (Emmanuel, 1988). Similar narratives are also found in the writings of Rebecca Brown (Brown, 1992), Peter Wagner, Cindy Jacobs, John Dawson and Charles Kraft.

The presentation of the stories and anecdotes are testimonies, which are meant to relay the fact that these events are commonplace and are actually happening. Although one might explain the narratives from a different angle, the authors intend them to affirm the reality of spiritual mapping and efficacy of strategic level spiritual warfare. Some of these narratives are captured in different parts of this study and weighed against the light of the scriptures to sieve out what might actually conflict with the Biblical revelation.

3.3.4 Fictional Sources

From the days of Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* (Cary, 1877), to modern day scenarios, Christians have produced some fictional writings that have been widely circulated among those in the community of faith. Preceding these were the medieval presentations whether in creative arts or in dramatized versions such as the narratives of the *Harrowing of Hell*, depicting Christ descending into hell to redeem the saints who were in captivity (Burstein, 1928). Although fictional, some of them took on a life of their own. In this category one would place *The Screwtape Letters* of C. S. Lewis – first published in 1942 with half a million copies sold by 1999 - (Lewis, 2001) and *This Present Darkness* by Frank Peretti (Peretti, 2003b), which has been turned into a movie. They shaped the thinking of many believers in the area of spiritual warfare although they were fiction.

In Wagner's opinion, "the single-most influential event that has stimulated interest in strategic-level spiritual warfare among ... Christians was the publication of Frank Peretti's two novels, *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness*. While acknowledging the fictional content of *This Present Darkness*, Wagner considers it as a "documentary" to many when it comes to issues of strategic-level spiritual warfare. (Wagner, 2009:17). Harvey Cox also attributes it to the spread of teachings of spiritual warfare among the group he refers to as the "Third Wave". He even alludes to

it being called “the bible” of the Third Wave in some circles (Cox, 2009:281-282). Even Opoku Onyina, writing from the African perspective, points out that the “basis for much contemporary spiritual warfare with its excessive interest in demonic hierarchy, is Frank Peretti’s novel *This Present Darkness* rather than the word of God.” (Onyina, 2012:15).

The line between fiction and reality merged, and subsequently theology was developed out of the fiction of how the diabolical entities operate. Although these may make entertaining reading, it is important to point out that they are fiction and should not have been used to draw theological teachings unless the assertions they make fall into the category that would be viewed as reality.

3.3.5 Historical and Archaeological Sources

In comparing the predominant worldview of ancient Israel and its neighbours, Boyd highlights the fact that the Ancient Near Eastern world was replete with the belief in the spirit world such that Israel was not alone in this belief. It was to such an extent that they attributed cause-and-effect to certain vicissitudes of life that they would encounter as being caused by spirit beings. These included life challenges, sickness and diseases, calamities and tragedies (Boyd, 2014:14). Boyd quotes his own views of Otto Böcher’s German work on demonology arguing that the predominant view among the neighbours of Israel in the Ancient Near Eastern World was that evil was the direct work of demons (Boyd, 2014:74). Although one may argue that some evil, especially suffering may have either human or divine origin, Boyd argues throughout his book that the ultimate source is the devil and demons (Boyd, 2014b).

As seen earlier on, Wagner also makes references to the ancient city of Nippur in Sumer as one place where the city was oriented towards engagement with the spirit world in 1500BC. This, he explains was discovered through archaeology. Wagner uses this to argue for geographically delineated areas occupied by Spirits, thus drawing part of his teachings from this historical occurrence (Wagner, 2015a:25). In a similar manner, George Otis (Jr.) also draws historical references in of incidents among the First Nation in America (Otis (Jr.), 1997).

3.3.6 Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphic Sources

The apostles Peter and Jude point to make some remarks which have been interpreted by some of the proponents of spiritual warfare as pointing to power conflicts in the spiritual arena. In 1 Peter 3:19-20, Peter says:

¹⁹ in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water. (1 Pet. 3:19-20).

While Wayne Grudem acknowledges the ambiguity of who the “spirits in prison” were, as some view them as “unbelievers who have died”, others understand them to be “Old Testament believers who had died” and still others consider them as “fallen angels”, he concludes that they were the people who were alive in Noah’s time and Christ preached to them through Noah (Grudem, 1990:157-162). On the other hand, Tokunboh Adeyemo, et al, in *Africa Bible Commentary* asserts that:

“When death separated Christ’s spirit from his body, he was enabled to go to preach in the spirit world. This suggests that there is biblical support for African belief in continued existence after death, whether as the living dead or as spirits” (Adeyemo & others, 2010:1522).

He goes on to single out the spirits which were disobedient during Noah’s time and not all spirits. He, however, does not clarify either the purpose for this or whether he believes in posthumous conversion. This would question his interpretation of the text. In the text on Jude (Jude 6), he explains that these were angels who had disobeyed God by abandoning their positions and were thus imprisoned (Adeyemo & others, 2010:1540). Edmund Clowney agrees with the interpretation of Grudem that the best explanation is that these were human beings in the time of Noah who listened to the preaching of Christ through Noah, but are now in prison (Clowney, 1990:156-164).

A narrative that resembles this is found in the apocryphal book of *Jubilees* 5:6 and 10:5-13, where the Watchers, the angels, also bind in chains the spirits which were rebellious on the earth:

And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt, and all flesh had corrupted its orders, and all that were upon the earth had wrought all manner of evil 4 before His eyes. And He said that He would destroy man and all flesh upon the face of the earth, which He had created. 5 But Noah found grace before the eyes of the Lord. 6 And against the angels whom He had sent upon the earth, He was exceedingly wroth, and He gave commandment to root them out of all their dominion, and He bade us to bind them in the depths of the earth, and 7 behold they are bound in the midst of them, and are (kept) separate (Jubilee 5:3-7).

The records also show that these spirits also are in hierarchical order with the senior-most called “Mastêmâ”

5 And Thou knowest how Thy Watchers, the fathers of these spirits, acted in my day: and as for these spirits which are living, imprison them and hold them fast in the place of condemnation, and let them not bring destruction on the sons of thy servant, my God; for these are malignant, and created in order to destroy. 6 And let them not rule over the spirits of the living; for Thou alone canst exercise dominion over them. And let them not have power over the sons of the righteous from henceforth and for evermore.' 7 And the Lord our God bade us to bind all. 8 And the chief of the spirits, Mastema, came and said: 'Lord, Creator, let some of them remain before me, and let them harken to my voice, and do all that I shall say unto them; for if some of them are not left to me, I shall not be able to execute the power of my will on the sons of men; for these are for corruption and leading astray before my judgment, for great is the wickedness of the sons of men.' 9 And He said: Let the tenth part of them remain before him, and let nine parts descend into the place of condemnation.' 10 And one of us He commanded that we should teach Noah all their medicines; for He knew that they would not walk in uprightness, nor strive in righteousness. 10 And we did according to all His words: all the malignant evil ones we bound in the place of condemnation and a tenth part of them we left that they might be subject before Satan on the earth. 12 And we explained to Noah all the medicines of their diseases, together with their seductions, how he might heal them with herbs of the earth. 13 And Noah wrote down all things in a book as we instructed him concerning every kind of medicine. Thus the evil spirits were precluded from (hurting) the sons of Noah (Jubilees 10:5-13).

Similarly, Jude in verse 6 also indicates two incidences of power conflicts with the first one quite similar to the one narrated by Peter. This is also found in the apocryphal book of *1 Enoch* in 6-16 (Laurence, 1888). But Jude also highlights the spiritual conflict between Satan and Michael the angel over the body of Moses which is finally resolved when Michael rebukes Satan. This seems to be drawn from the apocryphal book of the *Assumption of Moses* (Charles, 1897). The book of Enoch also names the leaders of these malevolent spirits:

And these are the names of their leaders: Samlazaz, their leader, Araklba, Rameel, Kokablel, Tamllel, Ramlel, Danel, Ezeqeel, Baraqijal, Asael, Armaros, Batarel, Ananel, Zaqiel, Samsapeel, Satarel, Turel, Jomjael, Sariel. These are their chiefs of tens (1 Enoch 6: 6-9) (Laurence, 1888).

But Enoch also names the benevolent angels as “Michael, Uriel, Raphael, and Gabriel” (1 Enoch 9:1) (Laurence, 1888).

In the apocryphal book of Tobit, the challenges of the marriage of Sarah the daughter of Raguel is recorded in detail as stemming from the envious demonic spirit Asmodeus who strangles husbands on the night of their wedding. Victory is finally obtained through prayer, when Tobit is given a prescriptive spell by the angel Raphael that exorcises the demon Asmodeus permanently, the marriage is never interfered with again (Tobit 3:7-9, 16-17; 6:15-17; 8:2-4) (Biblia 000, 1999).

The apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon (5:17-20) uses similar language that Paul uses in Ephesians chapter six indicating a warfare motif as well:

¹⁷ The Lord will take his zeal as his whole armour,
and will arm all creation to repel his enemies;
¹⁸ he will put on righteousness as a breastplate,
and wear impartial justice as a helmet;
¹⁹ he will take holiness as an invincible shield,
²⁰ and sharpen stern wrath for a sword,
and creation will join with him to fight against his frenzied foes.

Mark MacGregor and Bev Klopp in “Mapping and Discerning Seattle, Washington” names one of the controlling demons of the area as Asmodeus. MacGregor and Klopp point out the influence of the demons, with Asmodeus specifically responsible for “religious seduction, greed and sexual perversion” (McGregor & Klopp, 2015:206). However, they do not explain how this same demon which has been recorded to have been active in Jewish context over two thousand years ago, was currently engaged in negatively impacting Seattle, Washington in this generation. That silence puts into question their revelation.

They also make reference to Beelzebul which was mentioned by the Jewish leaders when they referred to Jesus ability to exorcise demons as stemming from Beelzebul (Mark 3:22; Mat.12:24,27). (McGregor & Klopp, 2015:206). The *Testament of Solomon*, which is a pseudepigraphic book, that did not find its way either into the Christian nor the Jewish canon of scriptures also makes reference to Beelzebul. It describes an alleged conversations between King Solomon and various demons and a final engagement with Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons. Although the narrative talks about King Solomon, it also has information on the Gospels indicating that it may be a more recent document than the books of Kings and Chronicles that speak about King Solomon. This affirms why it did not find its way into the canon of scriptures (Charles, 1913)

In this narrative, the demons describe in great extent what normally they would do and their impact upon humanity as each of them introduces themselves before Solomon (Testament of

Solomon 8-12) (Charles, 1913). They explain that they are engaged in seducing humanity, attacking them, derailing them from the purposes of God and even killing them (Charles, 1913).

Sometimes these views have been superimposed with Christian concepts in order to teach on the subject of spiritual warfare as indicated above. Arnold Clinton also makes linguistic reference to this narrative when dealing with the subject of spiritual warfare:

In Jewish folk belief, the term is found twice in the Testament of Solomon, where it is used of the demonic spirits associated with the planets (T Sol. 8:2) and with thirty-six demonic rulers of the heavenly sphere (T Sol. 18:3) (Arnold, 2009:697.).

These therefore are some of the Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphic sources which are often referred to when some of these teachers are speaking on matters touching on the spirit world.

3.3.7 Missionary Counter-Cultural Influence Sources

Anthony J. Tomasino in *Judaism Before Jesus: The Events and Ideas That Shaped the New Testament World*, traces Jewish religion in various eras and explains the possible influence by the Persian religion, Zoroastrianism, on aspects of the Jewish religion, especially in the post-exilic era. While Tomasino is of the opinion that it is in the same period that sections of the Book of Daniel were written, especially those that talk about the angelic principalities over nations (Tomasino, 2003:76-91), many, however, would argue that the book of Daniel was written much earlier as the suggestion by Tomasino would turn the book into history and not prophecy (Baldwin, 1978; Lennox, 2015; Walvoord, 1989).

While upholding the integrity of scriptures, Tomasino suggests that while the Jewish community rejected adoption of the Persian religion, their interaction with this religion may have taught something about their own religion. In his opinion "God used the Persians to reveal new aspects of his nature to his chosen people (Tomasino, 2003:74). Although he is sensitive to the fact that some people might be uncomfortable with the idea that the Jews could have borrowed "ideas from their foreign neighbours" (Tomasino, 2003:75), he still goes ahead and suggests that

... some Jewish thinkers were inspired by the exile experience and by their contact with Zoroastrianism to reconsider the nature of evil...The devil's new role had to be linked to ideas found in the accepted Scriptures (Tomasino, 2003:87).

W. O. E. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson are much more cautious in *Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development* acknowledges the fact that the idea that the Jewish religion was influenced in any way at all by Persian religion is a controversial point with people on both ends of

the divide. He points out that a comparison of Zoroastrianism with Judaism shows “the existence of some remarkable parallels; not that these necessarily denote the influence of either on the other...” (Oesterley & Robinson, 1930:273). They however, contend that elements of Jewish demonology which appear in scripture either as “theriomorphic (in animal form) or anthropomorphic (in human form)” seems to be similar to the Jewish neighbours of the time. (Oesterley & Robinson, 1930:62-75).

This kind of reverse cultural influence through encounters with other worldviews, seems to have been a key contributor in the pilgrimage of the missionaries who have written a lot on strategic level spiritual warfare. Wagner narrates his journey and points out the role that his experience in Latin America played in contributing to his engagement with matters of spiritual warfare. He explains that for him and his wife, “Argentina has been the front line in a highly significant experiment helping us to learn more about the spiritual dimensions of world evangelization.” (Wagner, 2009a:13). He also explains his journey in *Wrestling with Alligators, Prophets, and Theologians: Lessons from a Lifetime in the Church- A Memoir* (Wagner, 2010).

Charles Kraft underscores his pilgrimage in this area when he says:

“I went to Nigeria in 1957 with no charismatic or Pentecostal influence in my life but found that I had no ability to deal with the demonic or even to discuss it intelligently. This ignorance stayed with me after I left the mission field and began my career as a trainer of missionaries.” (Kraft, 2000)

Kraft reports how this frustration led him to go through a paradigm shift that culminated in him beginning to teach on matters on spiritual warfare in *Christianity With Power: Your Worldview and your Experience of the Supernatural* (Kraft, 1990). Similarly, Otis also highlights his own experiences among the First nation in America and also in India as he conducted his research as recorded in *The Twilight Labyrinth: Why Does Spiritual Darkness Linger where it Does?* (Otis (Jr.), 1997). From these one can therefore conclude that without the experiences that these missionaries had in the mission field, their worldviews would not have been altered and they would not have been open to engage in matters spiritual warfare as this was not part of their theological training or church backgrounds. They experienced reverse cultural influence.

3.3.8 Biblical Sources

Charles Kraft sets out what he considered to be assumptions held by the Lord Jesus Christ on matters touching spiritual warfare. From Matt. 4:11; 25:31, Kraft suggests that Jesus took for

granted the “existence of the spirit world”. As such he assumed that angels, demons and satan are real (Kraft, 1990:109). But Kraft also explains that Jesus believed in the existence of both the kingdom of God and the Kingdom of satan, not in a dualistic and equal sense, but in the sense that they are at war (Matt. 12:22,29) and the kingdom of satan has already been vanquished (Col.2:15; 1 John 3:8) (Kraft, 1990:109).

In *Warfare Prayer: What the Bible Says About Spiritual Warfare* (Wagner, 2009a), C. Peter Wagner takes a polemic approach where he not only presents what he considers as the biblical basis of the strategic level spiritual warfare, but he also gives a question and answer section and responds to some of the objections which have been raised. In explaining what the various levels of spiritual warfare entails, he acknowledges that he may not have exhausted the nomenclature (Wagner, 2009:14).

In support of what he calls the “ground-level spiritual warfare” Wagner quotes the commissioning of the disciples in Matt. 10:1 “Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.” He explains that this level deals with deliverance of people who are demonised (Wagner, 2009:14). He further quotes the experience of Philip in Samaria as belonging to this level as seen in Acts 8:7: “for unclean spirits, crying with loud shrieks, came out of many who were possessed...” (Wagner, 2009:14). He elucidates the role of this in evangelism in sections of the world and asserts “effective evangelism is all but inconceivable without an accompanying ministry of deliverance” (Wagner, 2009:15).

Secondly, Wagner highlights the second level, which he refers to as “occult-level spiritual warfare”. He identifies this as what one would encounter when confronting “shamans, New Age channelers, occult practitioners, witches...” among others. His biblical anchor for this understand is the case of the diviner girl in Philippi recounted in Acts 16:16-24 (Wagner, 2009:15). One would argue that this belongs to the first category he mentioned as finally the apostle had to cast out demons from the possessed girl. Without further biblical support, Wagner also gives examples from across the Atlantic as he explains that this was the case when the USA president Ronald Reagan used to consult astrologers and that “the number of registered witches in Germany exceeds the number of registered Christian clergy” (Wagner, 2009:16). He does not include the case of Elymas Bar-Jesus and the proconsul narrated in Acts 13:4-12, making the distinction rather unclear.

Ephesians 6:12, is one of the texts which he references for his third category, strategic-level spiritual warfare. Here the apostle Paul writes

“For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12).

Wagner acknowledges that this may not be a direct reference to his third category, but he sees an implication or an inference (Wagner, 2009:16). He also points to the conflict between Michael and the dragon as recorded in Revelation 12. Although the incident is of a celestial nature, Wagner turns it into scriptural textual support for territorial spirits, although human beings are not involved in the warfare (Wagner, 2009:16).

Wagner emphasizes that his interest in spiritual warfare is not just for the sake of academic engagement, but that which results in massive evangelism. He gives the example of the ministry of Carlos Annacondia and several anecdotes from Argentina that points out to situation where there was significant church growth when believers engaged in what he considers as strategic-level spiritual warfare (Wagner, 2009:18-32). Similarly he narrates a “real-life experiment” that set out the relationship between the two parameters of spiritual warfare and evangelism (Wagner, 2009:27). When spiritual warfare was conducted in the city of Resistencia where churches were stifled in growth for years (some of them for 70 years), the result was that “the growth graphs of the churches (in the city) took a decided turn upward...” from the time that strategic level spiritual warfare had been conducted (Wagner, 2009:29-32).

Wagner posits their discovery that “all the evangelistic technology in the world will have only a minimal effect unless the spiritual battle is won.” (Wagner, 2009:36). This spiritual battle is obtained by conducting strategic spiritual warfare in a designated area. In Wagner’s view, even before Jesus could commence his public ministry, he conducted strategic-level spiritual warfare by taking the battle to the wilderness “which was known as the territory of satan” according to Matthew 4:1-11. Jesus won the battle and satan was vanquished and this was later enforced on the cross (Wagner, 2009:51).

Wagner interprets the passage in Luke 11:14-23 talking about the “strongman” as presenting a multiple level of demonic activities, where there is ground-level as an evil spirit is evicted by Jesus (Luke 11:14). But it does not stop there as Jesus mentions satan’s kingdom and Beelzebub who was considered as the prince of demons but ranking under satan. In Wagner’s view this touches on strategic-level spiritual warfare (Wagner, 2009:58). One could argue that the idea of Beelzebub was not Jesus idea, but that of the Jewish leaders and the fact that it is recorded in the Bible does not mean the Jews were right as in this case they were quite wrong as Jesus did not use the power of

Beelzebub to cast out demons. He, however, mentions that some demons may be stronger than others thus affirming a possible hierarchical order.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 is a clearer passage on spiritual warfare according to Wagner:

“³Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; ⁴for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments ⁵and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.”

He understands strongholds as those areas where the diabolical are deeply embedded. These may be at the reasoning level or thought level, but they may also be at the cosmic level, according to Wagner. While the regular understanding of the “high thing” or “raised up” has been viewed as exalted or proud, Wagner sees it as “cosmic” (Wagner, 2009:62-63). Collin Kruse interprets it to be a military language both in the “strongholds” and the “high thing” raised up. He understands this to refer both to the imagery of the military stronghold and the watchtower or a rampart that would be raised up at the military base. He interprets them to “stand for the intellectual arguments, the reasonings erected by human beings against the gospel” (Kruse, 1991:174). This seems to differ with the interpretation given by Wagner and looking at the context may be more accurate.

After narrating the records in the book of Daniel where Daniel encountered an angelic being who reported to having been confronted by the Prince of Persia in Daniel 10:1-21, Wagner concludes that

“This story leaves us little doubt that territorial spirits greatly influence human life in all its sociopolitical aspects. It also shows us clearly that the only weapon Daniel had to combat these rulers of darkness was warfare prayer.” (Wagner, 2009:64-65).

John Lennox in his commentary on the book of Daniel, *Against the Flow: The Inspiration of Daniel in an Age of Relativism*, accents to the great conflict as recorded by Daniel, but sees the angelic hosts as associated to the people rather than to territories, making them ethnographic spirits rather than territorial spirits (Lennox, 2015:322).

Similarly, John Walvoord in *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* asserts that the conflict is not territorial but celestial. It is a conflict that is going on between the holy angels and the fallen angels over the peoples, but not over geography. He acknowledges however that “behind the political and social conditions of the world there is angelic influence- good on the part of the holy angels,

evil on the part of the angels under satanic control” (Walvoord, 1989:247). This would point to the fact that regardless of where the people of God may be located geographically, God’s assigned angels are fighting their battles.

Cindy Jacobs explains that the prohibition on food offered to idolatry was not just a dietary concern, but because behind the idols were demonic forces that Paul referred to in 1 Corinthians 10:19-22. This information, according to Jacobs, would assist one to pray knowledgably and effectively (Jacobs, 2015:78). Jacobs also highlights the point that the territorial spirit that was ruling Ephesus according to Acts 19 was Diana or Artemis the great which was worshipped in the form of an idol. Subsequently, there was rampant witchcraft in the city. In Jacobs’ opinion, there was no need for conducting spiritual mapping in the city as it was obvious that Diana had control over the city (Jacobs, 2015:79). Although Diana was an idol rather than a spirit, Jacobs equates it to a spirit. This is often the trend that Jacobs takes both in practical approach or in understanding biblical passages. The physical is equated to the spiritual.

In Ezekiel 13:18, the Bible says “Thus says the Lord God: Woe to the women who sew bands on all wrists, and make veils for the heads of people of every height, in the hunt for human lives! Will you hunt down lives among my people, and maintain your own lives?” Jacobs interprets this passage to be speaking about women who would curse other people and hold them destroy them, especially Christian leaders (Jacobs, 2015:85). John B. Taylor in his commentary agrees with the first part , that they were women who probably were witches and were wearing amulets used for magic purposes (Taylor, 1969:124). While the Bible affirms the reality of curses in other passages of scriptures, it also shows its ineffectiveness if the curses are undeserved (Num. 23:1-24:9; Prov.26:2).

According to Clinton E. Arnold in his commentary on the book of Ephesians, Paul encourages the Ephesian Christians to maintain a union with the Lord Jesus Christ, for therein lies the source of their power which is “not mediated through incantations, formulas, or shamanistic or magical rituals.” (Arnold , 2011:690). In this, Paul would seem to alienate all other sources of power, not because they are not in existence, but because they are not the legitimate ones for the believers. For the Christian believer, sufficient power is guaranteed through a relationship with God (Arnold, 2011:690).

He also concurs that the believers are facing an enemy who has a plan and a strategy (Arnold 2011:692). It is only by depending on the power of God that they will be able to defeat the schemes of their enemy (Eph.4:14). Arnold further explains that the term that Paul has used for “scheme” in the Bible verse stated above, can also be interpreted as “strategy” (Arnold ,

2011:692). It was apparently used in the days of Paul for handling something that was well organized and planned or methodologically arranged and executed. The negative side of it, according to Arnold, would be the word “cunning”(Arnold , 2011:693).

In Arnold’s perception, what Paul presents in the book of Ephesians is an intelligent adversary who is opposed to the believers and who carefully lays out strategic plans which are geared towards thwarting the purposes of God, defeating the believers and nullifying God’s plan for salvation. He sees this as being accomplished “through temptation, difficult physical trials, or overt manifestations, or through any of a limitless array of intelligently designed plots.” (Arnold , 2011:693).

Arnold highlights the possibility that Paul, alludes to a mythical Milesian individual who would wrestle using the mystical powers of amulets tied to the ankle in which the six magical names referred to as the “Ephesian Letters”, would be inscribed. When the amulet was removed from the wrestler, he lost the power to win the wrestling match. Paul therefore admonishes the believers instead to put on the “complete armour of God” and not turn to mystical magical powers. This would enable them to overcome the evil rulers and powers. The warfare is therefore spiritual and directed to the devil and his cohorts rather than “against flesh and blood” (Arnold , 2011:694-695).

Charles Hodge acknowledges the spiritual nature of the world in which humanity lives and as such contends that Paul was aware of the supernatural nature of the world we live in. Since there are supernatural spirit powers which are engaged in conflict with the believer, it is critical that the believer becomes a recipient of the armour of God to withstand these powers (Hodge, 1991:194-195). He suggests that Paul seems to have changed the metaphor from a battle into a hand combat or wrestling and infers that the term was used in a “more general sense” (Hodge, 1991:196). He, however, asserts that:

If satan is really the prince of the power of darkness, ruler and god of this world; if he is the author of physical and moral evil; the great enemy of God, of Christ and of his people, full of cunning and malice; if he is constantly seeking whom he may destroy, seducing men into sin, blinding their minds and suggesting evil and sceptical thoughts; if all this is true, then to be ignorant of it, or to deny it, or to enter on this conflict as though it was merely a struggle between the good and bad principles in our own hearts, is to rush blindfold into destruction (Hodge, 1991:196).

While Hodge raises the issues with an “if”, the African context and other commentators seems to suggest that the “if” should be removed as they conceptualize this as a reality that should be affirmed and not doubted. In the view of F. F. Bruce, the word used for wrestling is equivalent to

fighting and due to the spiritual nature of the warfare, the fight cannot be on the “human plane” but “in the spiritual realm”. It is only through the resources that God provides that the Christian can gain “mastery’ over the forces of evil (Bruce, 1983:127).

In Arnold’s view there is an array of ranking order in the language that Paul uses in Ephesians in making reference to the evil spirits which are the opposing powers, as he had previously used the same language in earlier references (Eph. 1:21; 2:22; 3:10) (Arnold , 2011:696). When Paul uses the word “world powers”, Arnold argues for the likelihood of Paul borrowing a word often used in making reference to evil spirits from the “Graeco-Roman and Jewish folk belief and astrology.” (Arnold , 2011:696). He asserts that the word appears seven times in traditional folk beliefs in Greek papyri as a form of magical incantations (Arnold , 2011:696).

He further explains that the term as used in Jewish folk religion as found in the *Testament of Solomon* (8:1-3; 18:3), makes reference to demonic spirits associated with the planets and having an influence on the earth (Arnold , 2011:696). Arnold avers to the point that Paul possibly used this kind of terminology with an influence from the understanding of Jewish demonology. But he also posits that the Gentile audience that Paul was writing to would grasp the fact that his reference could also be touching on the spirit powers that were animating “Artemis, Cybele, Isis, Serapis and the fifty other gods and goddesses worshipped in Ephesus” (Arnold , 2011:697). His view is that Paul is issuing “a serious warning about the dangers of the syncretistic impulse many believers faced of dividing their loyalties between Christ and their traditional deities.” Paul discourages any manner of engagement with these deities (Arnold , 2011:698).

But F.F. Bruce discourages the attempt to get into fine details of the distinction between powers, rulers and authority or principality (Eph. 1:21) and explains that the reference is merely to assert that, what spiritual rulers might be in existence, they are subject to Christ, as Christ is the one who created them (Col.1:16) (Bruce, 1983:42).

Francis Foulkes points to the fact that the New Testament affirms the existence of a personal devil and “powers and principalities” (Matt. 4:1-11; Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-9 among other verses). In his opinion, the increase of knowledge at the natural level has not been matched by an equal increase of spiritual knowledge, making some aversive to the ideas of the demonic being real (Foulkes, 1989:178-179). Foulkes cautions about a knowledge base that “demythologizes” the Bible and dismisses the ideas of the spirit world. He sees this as attempting to be wiser than Jesus and the apostles (Foulkes, 1989:179). He advises that it is not always the case that Paul uses the term for “powers” to make reference to structures of leadership as in this case he seems to be making

specific reference to spiritual enemies (Foulkes, 1989:179). Paul changes the metaphor from that of a soldier in the battlefield to a wrestler to convey the “personal nature of the fight” (Foulkes, 1989:180).

In a similar manner, Gregory Boyd affirms the same worldview on spiritual warfare from observations from different parts of the world as significant, in that they may have been heralding the biblical worldview. He asserts that they are “intuitive confirmations of the truth revealed in scripture.” (Boyd, 2014:19). Although he agrees with Wagner and his authors on the fact that scripture does emphasize the aspect of spiritual battle, he disagrees with them on the view that spiritual warfare and demonic exorcism is a panacea for all the problems of the world from a biblical perspective (Boyd, 2014:13). He however, acknowledges the evil which is resident in the human heart and in the society at large and sees these as consequence of human fallenness (Boyd, 2014:13).

Boyd clarifies that both the New Testament and the Old Testament testify to the fact that the world as it is today, is a fallen world which is under the dominion of Satan (Boyd, 2014:54-55). He further asserts that the entirety of the ministry of Jesus of “healings, teachings, exorcisms, death and resurrection” can only be best understood in the light of cosmic warfare (Boyd, 2014:55). Thus, verses that speaks of Satan being the prince of the power of the air (Eph.2:2) or the “god of this world” (2 Cor.4:4) are affirming this worldview. Boyd highlights the fact that references to Christ destroying the works of the devil in the Bible as indicated in (1 Jn.3:8; Col.1:13; Heb.2:14 and Col.2:13-15), all portray the warfare motif (Boyd, 2014:55).

Hendrikus Berkhof in *Christ and the Powers* (Berkhof, 1962) argues that Paul did not emphasize the personal and angelic nature of the powers, but put them together with other non-living creatures in Romans 8:37-39. He posits that the Apostle Paul understands them as structural elements (Berkhof, 1962). Friedrich Schleiermacher In *Christian Faith* (Schleiermacher, 2016) proposes that even Jesus and the disciples did not believe in the demonic as a doctrine drawn from the Old Testament due to the meagre references to the devil in the Old Testament. They maintained the idea of Satan and evil spirits as a product of their cultural environment or social engagements. It is therefore a cosmological concept rather than Christian theology (Schleiermacher, 2016).

Boyd rebuts the views of theologians Schleiermacher and Berkhof who tended to see principalities and power as referring to “social institutions” or to the psyche of the corporate social groups as Wink also asserts (Boyd, 2014:59). Boyd also negates the Bultmannian ideology of “demythologizing” the New Testament in order to relegate the ideas of demons and angels to the

world of myths (Boyd, 2014:59). He however, insists that any view that either trivializes the spiritual world as recorded in the Bible or engages in revisioning the narratives of “powers” so as to deny their existence must be rejected in preference to the spiritual warfare worldview (Boyd, 2014:60).

Without getting into the various theodicies dealing with the problem of evil and the sovereignty of God in this research, it is worth noting that Boyd finds the warfare concept as a more appropriate explanation as to why evil exists in the world, more than some of the classical-philosophical arguments which have previously been used (Boyd, 2014:61). He responds to the objection that some would raise that this diminishes the sovereignty of God and gives too much power to his created agents as only tenable if the greatness of God were equated to the control of God. But where God is viewed as supreme and great even when human and demonic beings act contrary to God’s will many times and deliberately oppose his will, the warfare motif offers a better explanation as it also points out that God will ultimately triumph (Boyd, 2014:61).

Gerald Bray questions reality of a “pre-existing being called Satan” who tempted Adam and Eve and argues that God, who is sovereign, had planned it that way. He argues for a predestination that is not the same as determinism, but that upholds both the human nature and the nature of God in their freedom (Bray, 1993:89-91).

Boyd affirms the shift that has taken place among Western Christians on the issue of spiritual warfare by declaring that it is the single subject that has received more attention since the 1980s than any other subject (Boyd, 2014:64). This is seen by the proliferation of books, movies and conferences on spiritual warfare or the spirit world. In his view, this has been due to the openness created by postmodernity, the encounters a number of Western Christians and non-Christians have had with the spirit world and the changing attitude of the Western Christians to non-Western theologies which have all along espoused these worldviews (Boyd, 2014:64). Boyd believes the pendulum has swung to the other side as he declares that:

...owing to the new postmodern atmosphere we are living in, as well as the explosive growth of Christianity in the Third World and the development and popularity of liberation theologies, Western theologians have (finally) begun paying more attention to the perspectives of their Third and Second World sisters and brothers. Western theology is, in a word, becoming globalized. (Boyd, 2014:64).

In the opinion of Boyd, the adoption of Platonic and Aristotelian, Hellenistic models that considered God as “altogether unmoved, impassible, immutable, nontemporal and purely actual”

that was espoused by the church, compromised the necessary emphasis that should have been given to the warfare motif (Boyd, 2014:67). Gerald Bray considers Aristotelianism with its emphasis on “a rational order which could be analysed by human beings as not being accommodative to the transcendent and the spirit world (Bray, 1993:42-43). This certainly challenges the view and the teachings that Christians have held all along that God is immutable.

Bray is of the opinion that there should be a separation between the relationship of God with his people and his nature or character. Immutability therefore, touches on his nature and character and not his relationship with his people:

The biblical statements which suggest that God changes his mind do not refer to God as he is himself or even to the character that he has revealed to us, but rather to the relationship which he has with his human creatures. In his relationship, God has perfect freedom, but nothing he does should be interpreted as being inconsistent with his nature. (Bray, 1993:101).

With the shift taking place in the Western world in as far as these philosophical ideologies are concerned, Boyd sees this as a precursor to a fresh wave of the warfare worldview (Boyd, 2014:67). David Burnett also affirms this shift when he talks of the “Pagan Revival” in his book *Dawning of the Pagan Moon* (Burnett, 1991:65-80). In the introductory remarks to his book *The Rise of Paganism: The Reemergence of an Old Ideology*, Jonathan Skinner remarks:

Cataclysmic changes are occurring in our society and at a rate that is astounding. The religious and spiritual outlook of our generation is undergoing seismic shifts that would have been undreamt of a few decades ago. People are spiritually hungry, but instead of looking in the direction of Christianity...they are delving in areas almost unknown... Citizens of Western world are revisiting paganism and in phenomenal numbers. (Skinner, 2006:9).

This kind of resurgence and shift is also reflected in the interest in spiritual warfare that this study is investigating.

Boyd does not see a fascination with evil spirits among the Israelites as was present among their middle Eastern neighbours in the Old Testament. They do not even seem to be “obsessed” in developing strategies and methodologies to counteract or ward off the attacks of evil spirits whether through exorcism or appeasing them (Boyd, 2014:80). Although the Old Testament speaks of the presence of “an evil spirit from the Lord” on certain occasions, it is always in a judgmental way against the individuals so mentioned: Abimelech and the lords of Shechem (Judges 9:22-25); the torment of Saul (1 Sam.16:14,22; 18:10-11; 19:9-10); a lying spirit sent to Ahab (1 Kings 22:21-23) (Boyd, 2014:80).

From Luke's description of the encounters of Paul in the city of Ephesus in Acts nineteen, it seems that it was a city that was deeply steeped in the occult. There was the worship of Artemis the great with a temple dedicated to her. Fetishes and idols made in her honour formed the basis of the economy of the city. There was imperial cult as well in the city with even temples dedicated to Emperor worship (Budha, 2022:2). The infamous magic books (the Ephesian letters) were in circulation for incantation and exorcism. Perhaps this may be the reason Paul provided an alternative power Source, the handkerchiefs and aprons taken from his body which were performing miracles. Private exorcist had flourishing business as well. Witchcraft paraphernalia were in abundance costing a fortune. In atmosphere like these talks of spiritual powers were quite relevant to the believers living in such a context. Paul was offering an alternative to the life they were used to. The Lord had provided them with victory.

3.4 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and Powers Motif

3.4.1 The Concept of Powers

One growing up in the African context slowly becomes aware of the existence of spiritual power. Either through the fear of witchcraft, curses or the spirit world. Jomo Kenyatta in Facing Mount Kenya explains how the Kikuyu community in Kenya, would engage in fighting evil spirits which were believed to cause illnesses. Under the tutelage of the elders, every individual in the entire village would get out on the designated night armed with clubs and other blunt weapons awaiting the signal. A horn would then be blown, and the villagers would dash forward screaming and beating their weapons together as they chased the unseen "retreat" malicious spirits all the way to the river, where they would be disposed together with the weapons (Kenyatta, 1991:142-144).

John M. Cinnamon highlights the possibility of a link between mystical spiritual power and political power in *Spirits, Power and the political Imagination in Late Colonial Gabon* (Cinnamon, 2012). He explains about the convergence of religious and political imaginations through a ritual specialist who is called upon to lead an anti-fetish movement armed with two powerful spirits:

Mademoiselle who is a "Euro-African spirit" who is associated with the French and seen as a white person with flowing hair and beautifully attired in a gown. Some associated her with the Virgin Mary while others viewed her as *Mami Wata*- a water spirit that occasionally landed on dry ground, as they assumed (Cinnamon, 2012:187-188). She was able to handle power objects like harmful "fetishes" which were often used to shape the history of the people (Cinnamon, 2012:187).

Alongside her is another spirit called *Mimbane* who is also used to counteract evil influences in Gabon (Cinnamon, 2012:187). On the eve of independence in Gabon, such “spiritual” powers were used to shape the political movements which were coming up in the country, as Cinnamon points out. These entities “embodied mysterious European powers” which were put to use by some Africans against others (Cinnamon, 2012:188). In his opinion they reflected “how the marginalized, handle power and mediate between the visible and invisible powers.” (Cinnamon, 2012:187).

In the view of some, this “anti-fetish movement” was seen to have brought lasting positive impact while others thought that the “impact was negative because he disarmed the natives of their power at the time they needed to compete for political power in the new state of Gabon” (Cinnamon, 2012:188).

In this case Cinnamon links political power with spiritual powers as seen in the nascent democracy of Gabon. This has been reflected in a number of African countries especially during election time when aspiring politicians rush to the traditional community elders for blessings on them, believing that this will confer special powers on them that will enable them to trounce their opponents. Others visit witchdoctors to get powers that will enable them to be relevant in their political space (Beja & Gacharu, 2021).

Cinnamon highlights the fact that both the religious and the political elites were totally undivided in their common embrace of the worldview of “the invisible dimensions of power” (Cinnamon, 2012:189). He asserts that there has been an underestimation of the concept of “spiritual and invisible domain of power” with the exception of Independent and Pentecostal African Churches (Cinnamon, 2012:191).

Some may dismiss the concepts that Cinnamon is pointing out here, but these worldviews continue to play significant role in sections of African politics, soccer games and even the power plays sometimes experienced in marriages. For now, the decision is not whether these powers are negative or positive, as Cinnamon points out:

A fundamental ambiguity is widely noted in Equatorial Africa between protective and harmful forces, between healers and sorcerers, between protective and harmful medicine... this ambiguity lies at the centre of conceptualizations of power and political culture, including state politics (Cinnamon, 2012:192).

This study highlights some aspects of these powers as seen in their continuity or discontinuity in comparison to certain aspects seen in the spiritual warfare motif that has been propagated in sections of the church.

In his definition of power, R. H. Codrington equated power with *mana* which he explained as

... power or influence, not physical and in a way supernatural, but it shews itself in physical force, or in any kind of power or excellence which a man possesses. This *mana* is not fixed in anything and can be conveyed in almost anything; but spirits, whether disembodied souls or supernatural beings, have it and can impart it ... (Codrington, 1891:119).

He observes that *mana* is the extraordinary power that is at work in bringing about events that seem to prevail in nature and beyond what can be explained (Codrington, 1891:119). It appears that Codrington is talking about some supernatural power that engages both at the natural and the supernatural realm.

John S. Mbiti highlights the fact that for the African, the whole universe is brimming with an awareness of the presence of mystical powers to the extent most calamities that would befall the community including locust invasion and famine is explained in terms of these powers (Mbiti, 2015a:194). More will be said about these powers from an African perspective in the next chapter.

3.4.2 Powers and Principalities: Jewish Folk Religious Views

Oesterley and Robinson highlight an incident when the early missionary, Jerome of Prague, embarked on cutting down the sacred trees among the native Lithuanians. The women in the community made an appeal to the Prince of Lithuania to forbid him as he was destroying the dwelling place of their god who supplied them with sunshine and rain (Oesterley & Robinson, 1930:7). Although one might view this as part of taboo teachings which were meant to assist the community in environmental preservation, it is surprising how that similar belief also exists among the Kikuyu community in Kenya where the *mugumo* (fig) tree is considered sacred and should not be cut down (Karangi, 2008:117). Oesterley and Robinson assert that this was due to a belief in the presence of a spirit inhabiting the tree (Oesterley & Robinson, 1930:8).

Oesterley and Robinson defines “ancestor– worship” as the maintenance of “social contact with a dead ancestor.” Thus, the relation that existed with the dead relative, whether as head of the family or otherwise, is continued with the ancestor who is now in the spirit realm (Oesterley & Robinson, 1930:16). Although they have used the word “worship” perhaps veneration or honour

might have been a better word, for some would say they worship only God but respect or honour the ancestors. The issue is that they remain in touch with the spirit of the dead ancestor. African traditional religious elders who visit a traditional shrine or offer libation to dead ancestors are doing exactly the same and is basically to prevent offending the departed or invoking their favour or intervention of a situation. This emphasises continuity.

Oesterley and Robinson further noted that often the services of magicians were required in order to engage with the ancestors as seen in the case of Saul and the witch of Endor in 1 Samuel 28 and also in the life of Manasseh in 2 Kings 21:6 (Oesterley & Robinson, 1930:78-81). They explain that the practice of consulting the spirits of the dead was believed to be real rather than a deception (Oesterley & Robinson, 1930:81). Using linguistic arguments, Oesterley and Robinson, also construe what normally has been translated as the “scapegoat” in the book of Leviticus 16:7-28 as “Azazel”, who was a god of the flocks, but had been downgraded to a demon according to them. (Oesterley & Robinson, 1930:66).

When it comes to the issues of duality, Oesterley and Robinson explain that religious beliefs tend to persist for a fairly prolonged period of time even when an individual has embraced a new set of beliefs. Individuals tend to cling on to previously held views and persuasions even when they have absorbed a new view and sometimes these continue to co-exist for a prolonged period of time in the worldview of a person (Oesterley & Robinson, 1930:17). This might perhaps be one of the explanations as to why sometimes the church in Africa experiences hybridity in some cases. The worldview from African Traditional Religion does not immediately disappear when one becomes a Christian. It is a discipleship process that takes time, particularly for those who may have been deeply steeped in the practice.

It is noteworthy that when it comes to the world of the spirits, Oesterley and Robinson see these powers as active behind some of the Hebrew scriptures. Thus, the “terror that comes by night” as recorded in Psalm 91:5-6, they call the “night-terror” and identify it as “*Lilith*, the night-hag”, a demon (Oesterley & Robinson, 1930:72). Similarly, they infer that the “pestilence that goes about in the dark” in the same passage, is none other than the equivalent of the Babylonian pest-demon, *Namtar*, who brings about drought or damage to the land (Oesterley & Robinson, 1930:73). One would however, take note of the fact that some of the meanings they attribute to Babylonian demons, require textual emendation as they themselves concede (Oesterley & Robinson, 1930:74). This revisionist attitude would bring their interpretation into question.

From their arguments, it seems that they not only see the spirit world as reflected in the Jewish life, but also as partially borrowed from the Hebrew neighbours. In this they are pointing to a continuity of the belief in the powers that was transmitted from the Ancient Near Eastern neighbours to the Jewish people (Oesterley & Robinson, 1930:73).

Similarly, the authors on spiritual warfare seems to have borrowed some ideas from other traditions and created a continuity platform through which some of the teachings have been coated with a veneer of scriptural support giving an indication that they are Christians. This is a high possibility that this research engages with over the next few chapters. One of the reasons why some Christians in Africa would identify with these teachings is because of the mystical power dynamic. It is important to examine how “powers and principalities” are viewed by various streams of Christianity.

3.4.3 Powers and Principalities: Main-stream Christian views

In Acts 8:9-13 the people of Samaria turned to the Lord in their large numbers at the preaching of Philip when they saw the works of God among them. Even Simon the magician himself also turned to the Lord and was baptised. Was this a case of genuine conversion or was it a situation where he was seeing a power that was greater than the one he had, and wanted to have possession of such a power as well? His request to Peter shows that it might have been the latter.

David Burnett is of the opinion that “the church in Europe should apologize to this present generation for preferring to hold to its long established traditions rather than making Christianity relevant to this age” (Burnett, 1991:252). He argues this way because he thinks the church has been inflexible to adapting to different context and as such might be rendered irrelevant as has been observed in Europe. Although contextualization is important and paramount, one has to be always cautious so that the boundaries are not exceeded, thus diluting the message of the Gospel.

Burnett comments that the conversion of many Druids to Christianity in Ireland at the preaching of St. Patrick, was accelerated by the fact that they considered St. Patrick to be a worker of greater miracles than their religion and not necessarily that they appreciated and “welcomed the new religion.” (Burnett, 1991:26). Thus, it was a substitution of the old for the new, not out of conviction but out of fascination. High images of stone crosses replaced the stone images of animals. His conclusion is worth noting on the role that the Christian scriptures played in bringing a

total change. "Perhaps it was the emphasis on the study of the Christian Scriptures that stopped this syncretic tendency perverting the basic Christian message" (Burnett, 1991:25).

A similar emphasis on the scripture is necessary within the African context otherwise there may be a belief in spiritual power that is viewing Christianity just like another form of "Juju". Usage of scripture will make all the difference.

Burnett insists that by and large the Christianity of the European peoples have tended to shy away from the subject of spiritual power in recent times. He is convinced that the Bible does not take a similar position. The result is that sometimes a young Christian believer, converted from the traditional religious background, may have a better awareness of spiritual power or forces than a "secularized Western missionary." He attributes his knowledge and experience to African Christians who helped him to grasp both the knowledge and the experience of confronting evil spirits (Burnett, 1991: 258).

Stephen F. Noll, on the other hand, expounds on the fact that in the writings of Luke in the book of Acts, he shows some "examples of syncretism by those who try to mix the Spirit with the spirits..." (Noll, 1998:117). Although the signs and wonders that the apostles were performing looked similar to those which were orchestrated by practitioners of magic, according to Noll, Luke emphasized the difference of the origin of the power that was in operation (Noll, 1998:117). The origin of the apostolic power was the living God, while the witchdoctors were using the power of the evil spirits as seen in the case of the diviner in Acts 16 (Noll, 1998:117).

Noll refutes the position that is taken by many modern-day theologians who accept "natural evil ... moral evil... and metaphysical evil" but categorically deny the existence of an evil personality called the devil or even demons (Noll, 1998:119). He demonstrates that it is impossible to accept the personality of Jesus Christ and at the same time reject the personality of evil, for their personalities seems to emerge simultaneously in the New Testament (Noll, 1998:119).

While agreeing with the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare, Noll explains that the idea of national angels can be traced through the Old Testament as is recorded in Deut.32:8-9, where the Bible talks of the "'sons of God' (*Bānē hā'Ēlōhīm*)". In Noll's view these are part of the "council of heaven" (Noll, 1998:125). He also sees a case of borrowed terminology when God is referred to as "'God Most High' (*Ēl 'Elyōn*)" as this was the same phrase "*El*" that the Canaanites used for the head of the pantheon (the network of Canaanite gods) (Noll, 1998:125-126).

But in the judgement Psalm 82 and the conclusion of the judgement of Babylon in Isaiah 24:21-23, Noll argues for the concept of continuation of angelic rulers of the nations as sons of God and as those that are judged and sent to the pit (Noll, 1998:126-128). In Noll's opinion, the Prince of Persia of Daniel chapter 10 is a significant insight into the spiritual battle with powers which are in charge of nations as they oppose the plans of God. They seem to have been given partial authority to the extent they can even engage in spiritual warfare against the Lord's messengers (Daniel 10:12-14, 20-21) (Noll, 1998:129-131).

Noll conducts a fairly extensive study of Paul's usage of "principalities and authorities" or "powers". He explains what he considers as Paul's unique reflection on "principalities and powers" as a "worldwide web of human affairs grounded in a spiritual hierarchy" (Noll, 1998:138). He further states that Paul in his writing, does not seem to identify "principalities" with demons. Noll explains that the reason why this is so is because demons operate on the earth while principalities operate in heaven (Noll, 1998:141). In attempting to create this demarcation between demons and principalities, Noll fails to explain how the church which is on earth would still have the responsibility of declaring the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities which are in heaven as recorded in Ephesians 3:10. The spatial division, as propagated by Noll, sounds artificial.

In the opinion of John Stott, Paul is reminding the Christians of the important realities that they have to face with significant opposition in their pilgrimage. Although he "supplies with no biography of the devil, and no account of the origin of the forces of darkness ... he assumes their existence as common ground ..." and introduces the Christians to the devil (Stott, 1979:261). Stott traces the historical background of the interpretation of "powers and principalities" as structures of political, economic and social forces (Stott, 1979:267-271) as being first fronted by Gordon Rupp in *Principalities and Powers* (Rupp, 1952) and it was followed by Hendrik Berkhof in *Christ and the Powers* (Berkhof, 1962). This was followed by G. B. Caird on the same argument on structuralism in *Principalities and Powers: A study in Pauline Theology* (Caird, 1957). Views of some recent structuralists are covered later in this chapter.

In response to the structural views above, Stott emphasizes the importance of proper exegesis of scripture that does not impute falsehood on Paul (Stott, 1979:271). In his understanding, Paul is referring to demonic forces rather than human structures (Stott, 1979:272-273). He argues that since Jesus did not shy away from talking of demons and angels in a context where the Sadducees did not believe in that spirit world, it is unwise to change a theological understanding simply to move with the trends (Stott, 1979:273).

Similarly Merrill Unger affirms that demons are spirits which are “immaterial” and “incorporeal”, although he clarifies that this does not mean that they lack what makes up a personality like the “will, feelings and intellect” (Unger, 1995:24). He further states that he does not view them just as structures, but as living entities. As such, they show intelligence and can speak and act and can therefore engage in a deliberate warfare against humanity (Unger, 1995:24).

3.4.4 Powers and Principalities: Neo-Pentecostal views

In his book, *The Twilight Labyrinth: Why does Spiritual Darkness Linger Where it Does?*, George Otis Jr. (Otis Jr.), (1997) delves into reported and observed manifestations of what he considers as power revelations from the demonic angle. From interacting with fire-eating and levitating Buddhist monks in the Himalayas, he journeys to the magic markets of Bolivia, where shamans and sorcerers buy their paraphernalia. His research further took him to Haiti, where some girls get married to the snake-like head of the pantheon, *Djamballah- Wedo* and anyone who interferes with the nuptials, incurs the destructive wrath of the spirit. He also narrates the encounters among the Navajo, where owls speak messages of curses which do result in death unless measures are taken to avert this (Otis, 1997:17-45).

In narrating all these encounters Otis’ intention is to shift the worldview of those who might be doubting the existence of the paranormal that is caused by the powers of the evil spirits. He not only shows their existence, but also points out that this power can actually cause harm and even death. He uses these case studies and many other cases that he narrates throughout the entire book to bring out the teachings on territorial spirits which is prevalent in the subject matter under consideration. His rather deep engagement researching into witchcraft, occult and spiritism makes one wonder whether he may not be achieving quite the opposite, promoting these ideologies.

When he borrows ideas from the “field” and uses these to develop the theology of spiritual mapping and strategic level spiritual warfare, then one could say that there is a continuity from one to the other. The ideas of spiritual mapping are shaped by the concepts gained and adopted from the interaction with the non-Christian groups that he has consulted. One would wonder whether there is a difference between demons teaching and a theology developed from contact with the spirits and demons. Could this be what Paul referred to as “doctrines of demons” in 1 Timothy 4:1?

Otis concludes by presenting the fact that some of these incidences or evil powers were neutralized when there was a turning to the Lord Jesus Christ, as in the case of the Navajo owls, which fled when they were addressed in the name of Jesus. This resulted in the Navajo revival, according to Otis (Otis, 1997:36). We again see a cause-and-effect in the conclusion of Otis.

It was missionary- anthropologist, Allan R. Tippett, who introduced the term “power encounter” in his book *The Deep Sea Canoe: The Story of Third World Missionaries in the South Pacific* (Tippett, 1977), capturing his work among the Melanesian people in South Pacific between 1941-1961. He used the term in the context of conversion where one has his old “gods” and is faced with the decision of accepting a new allegiance to a new God. In that case, a “power encounter” takes place where the individual comes to the conclusion that his former benefactor is much weaker than the new sovereignty and thus surrenders their life to the new faith. Such conversion was necessitated by a “power encounter” experience, according to Tippett (Tippett, 1977:45-48). He was part of the faculty at Fuller Seminary Mission School where he worked both with Charles Kraft and C. Peter Wagner.

Similar kind of occurrences are described about St. Patrick in Ireland in A.D. 432 (Burnett, 1991:26-27) and the monk Columba in Scotland in A.D. 562 (Burnett, 1991:29) where they both confronted native religions with god’s power that made people turn to Christianity. They, however did not use the term “power encounters”. Power, as used in this research, may include conversion, but goes beyond this to the spirit world and the entities which occupy this domain.

John Wimber popularized the notion of power encounter with his book *Power Evangelism* where he described its effects as, “Any system or force that must be overcome for the gospel to be believed is a cause for a power encounter.” (Wimber & Springer, 2009:17). Although missionary Tippett had looked at this more from the perspective of the Kingdom of God versus the Kingdom of Satan, Wimber spread it further to include other areas of deliverance, healing and other spiritual miraculous encounters. These were power manifestations declaring the reality of God (Wimber & Springer, 2009:17-27). Wimber’s concept is helpful when ministering deliverance or healing where evil forces are confronted, but again, the power concepts under study covers this but also include, the level of community exorcism and not just individual.

Charles Kraft, who defines himself as a “Third Wave” or as some would describe them a Neo-Pentecostal (Kraft, 2002:1) considers himself among those who assent to and practice the Charismatic Pentecostal gifts of the Holy Spirit but are mainly from Evangelical circles. He narrates his pilgrimage in the journey of spiritual warfare and explains that when he went out as a

missionary to Nigeria, he considered himself inadequate and ill-prepared to address the power issues touching on spiritual conflict with the demonic that he found there. He acknowledges the influence that John Wimber had on him while he was teaching a course at Fuller Theological Seminary, where a number of these strategic level spiritual warfare practitioners were actually based (Kraft, 2002:2).

Kraft acknowledges that although the journey towards the commonality of belief in spiritual conflict among the three entities, the Pentecostals, the Charismatics and the Third Wave has not always led them to embrace the idea, it appears more recently, that the dividing walls have definitely been lowered. This, he attributes to the fact that some have had to “mute their distinctives” or embrace their original “areas of ignorance” (Kraft, 2002:4). He attributes part of this metamorphosis to the two fictional books written by the Pentecostal, Frank Peretti: *This Present Darkness* (Peretti, 2003b) and *Piercing the Darkness* (Peretti, 2003a) which found wide acceptance across the board. Although these were fictional novels, they seemed to have shaped the theology of many in the area of spiritual warfare (Kraft, 2002:5).

Without quoting his sources, although he registers quite an extensive bibliography, Kraft asserts that the dissonance that existed between the Evangelical missionary-planted churches and what the Christians in Africa were reading in the Bible led to the split of churches from the Evangelical stream, with South Africa alone reporting more than 5,000 such new churches. Kraft does not give the duration it took to plant these churches nor the dates, he however adds that some hundreds more, also went the same direction in East and West Africa in 80s and the 90s (Kraft, 2002:5-6). Some of these congregations may only have 20-30 people while others are mega-churches. On the other hand, Kraft elucidates both the historical and the literary development around the subject of spiritual warfare. This covers both the Pentecostal movement, the Charismatic movement and the Third Wave developments (Kraft, 2002:8-11).

Kraft acknowledges Walter Wink's trilogy as crucial academic works of the decade of the 1980s, where Wink highlights the issue of institutional evil in Western Society. Kraft however points out Wink's theological background as “liberal” (Kraft, 2002:12). Although commending Wink's work as truly original, Kraft contends with the fact that Wink “seeks to deal with the demonic without admitting the personal nature of evil spiritual beings” (Kraft, 2002:12). While Wink's work will be examined further in this study, his exhaustive linguistic study on “powers” has been influential among some of the proponents of spiritual warfare (E. E. Acolatse, 2018:79-91; Otis (Jr.), 1997:56,59).

It is important to note the role that Fuller Theological Seminary played in the development of the spiritual conflict dimension in the worldwide church. According to Kraft, they increased the courses on related subject areas that they were offering at the seminary and these included, "Power Encounter, Deep-Level Healing and Cosmic-Level Healing" (Kraft, 2002:13). Their students came from all over the world and were widely representative in terms of their charismatic or non-charismatic persuasions. Added to this, they organized conferences and published books in the 1990s (Kraft, 2002:13). One of the compendium out of the 1988 conference was *Wrestling with Dark Angels: Toward a Deeper Understanding of Supernatural Forces in Spiritual Warfare*. (Wagner & Pennoyer, 2001). These became significant means that were used in the dissemination of the strategic level spiritual warfare teachings ((Kraft, 1990; Kraft et al., 1994; Otis(Jr.), 1999, 2014, 2020; Otis (Jr.), 1997; Wagner, 2001, 2011a, 2015a, 1992, 1994, 1996a).

In defining the scope of what spiritual warfare entails, Kraft observes the way the various sections of the Christian church have approached the subject. In his view, the traditional Evangelicals only assented to the fact that there was a devil who tempted Christians and the responsibility was duly on the part of Christians not to become victims (Kraft, 2002:14). This would be the kind of view that one would find in Harold Lindsell's book *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* (Lindsell, 1973), among others. In Kraft's view, the liberals tend to deny the existence of evil spiritual beings (demons) and where they are acknowledged, as seen in the writings of Walter Wink, they tend to accent to structural evil rather than real malevolent living beings (Kraft, 2002:14). On the contrary, Kraft points out that the Pentecostals and the Charismatics have tended to believe in matters touching on the demonic since their inception. They however, emphasize a lot on exorcism as the way of engaging in spiritual warfare rather than the three-tiers model that Wagner and his colleagues are propagating (Kraft, 2002:14).

Kraft explains that the Third Wave emphasized more on physical and inner healing and also taught and practiced deliverance, which he refers to as the "ground-level spiritual warfare" (Kraft, 2002:14). But beyond the emphasis on "righteousness, repentance, intercession, unity in prayer, forgiveness and the like" that the Evangelicals were strong on, the Third Wave added the "cosmic-level spiritual warfare" as a means of bringing about community transformation and repelling forces that would be opposed to the proclamation of the Word of God in a domain (Kraft, 2002:15). He lists the key "thinkers" in this subject area as "Wagner, Otis, Dawson, Jacobs, and Silviso" (Kraft, 2002:15) and of course, he would be included in that list as well.

Kraft delves into a technical presentation as he distinguishes between the “Ground-Level Spiritual Warfare” and the “Cosmic- Level Spiritual Warfare”. He views the ground-level as those spirits that touch on human beings in their daily lives and cosmic level as those which are engaged on a higher plane. He identifies the various spirits, both those which are benevolent and those which are malevolent, operating either on the side of God and his people or diabolical and are opposed to the plans of God and the people of God. He refers to the positive ones as “angels and archangels” while on the opposite side he acknowledges the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenlies and identifies them as “principalities, powers and authorities” (Kraft, 2002:15).

Kraft highlights the different spirits which are in existence both at the cosmic level and at the ground level. He defines the Cosmic-Level spirits as those which are operating in the air according to Eph.2:2 and are outside human beings. The Ground-Level spirits are those which are operating within human beings. The Cosmic-Level spirits include the following: “territorial spirits, religious or institutional spirits, vice spirits, nature, household and object spirits and ancestral spirits.” (Kraft, 2002:15-17). These, according to Kraft, are assigned different responsibilities by Satan to carry out his will. On the other hand, Ground-Level spirits include the following: “family spirits, occult spirits and ordinary spirits” which work in the lives of individuals at the bidding of Satan (Kraft, 2002:15-17). This taxonomy sounds rather artificial and subjective, and one would struggle in finding the scriptural basis for this as anyone might come up with their own version of this.

In highlighting the methods, Kraft agrees that there have been many different strategies which have been used on each of these levels. For the Ground-Level, he lists the truth, deliverance and inner-healing models which have been practiced by Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Charismatics and the Third Wave respectively (Kraft, 2002:17-22). In the Cosmic-Level arena, he outlines the process as: dealing with sinful issues in the community, “breaking satanic power gained through” covenants or dedications, encouraging unity among the church leaders, fostering targeted intercession, conducting spiritual mapping, repenting on behalf of both past and present generations and engaging in perambulatory prayers (Kraft, 2002:17-22).

Kraft states the main purpose of all this and refocuses on the mission agenda that:

With all the emphasis on technique, it needs to be underlined that those involved in cosmic-level warfare are primarily concerned about evangelism. The stated aim of these techniques is to break the power of the evil one over people and territory for the specific purpose of winning the lost and enabling people to grow in Christ. (Kraft, 2002:22).

Kraft acknowledges that the teachings he has presented have raised some objections in some circles. He however rebuts some of the criticism that may have been directed towards the version of spiritual conflict that they are teaching as coming from people who are only “theoreticians and not practitioners” (Kraft, 2002:22). In his perspective, such people are struggling with a worldview issue which would be corrected should they have the necessary experience with engagement in strategic level spiritual warfare (Kraft, 2002:22).

From the prevailing mindset of many of his colleagues who are proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare, Peter Wagner affirms the two-tier concept of engaging with the demonic or spirit power but adds a third one. He sees the basic level as that where evil spirits or demons are cast out of people and he calls it “Ground-Level spiritual warfare” (Wagner, 1996:22). This is the kind of ministry that is sometimes referred to as deliverance ministry and has been “common in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles” (Wagner, 1996:22). It is also the kind of ministry that Jesus and the disciples were mainly involved in (Wagner, 1996:22).

Wagner sees the second level as involving “satanism, witchcraft, Freemasonry, Eastern religions, New Age, shamanism, astrology, and many other forms of structured occultism”. (Wagner, 1996:22). He calls this “occult-level spiritual warfare” and postulates, without giving the details, that there is a noticeable difference in demonic spirits encountered when one is ministering at this level as opposed to the ground-level (Wagner, 1996:22).

The final tier that Wagner presents is what he calls the “strategic-level spiritual warfare”. Wagner explains that any engagement at this level, will bring one into “confrontation with high-ranking principalities and powers such as Paul writes about in Ephesians 6:12.” (Wagner, 1996:22). He equates these powers to “territorial spirits” which tend to control “cities, nations, neighborhoods, people groups, religious allegiance, industries, or any other form of human society” (Wagner, 1996:22).

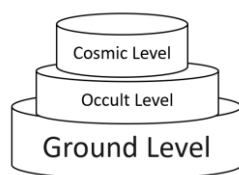


Figure 8: Tiers of Spiritual Powers

Chuck Lowe raises the concerns that the model of strategic level spiritual warfare is a costly venture as participants have to use finances and a substantial amount of time as they have to

travel to those marked zones where the spiritual mapping would need to take place (Lowe, 1998:12-13). He mentions some of the exercises as consisting of expensive trips which culminate in “perambulatory prayers” which include “prayer walks, prayer marches, prayer expeditions and prayer journeys” (Lowe, 1998:19).

Lowe defines strategic spiritual warfare as consisting of two dimensions with the first being “strategic- level spirits” which he describes as a “postulated kind of demons” and the second being engagement with these same spirits through “warfare prayer” (Lowe, 1998:16). Just like Wagner and his fellow authors, he explains the three levels of spiritual warfare, but points out the lack of scriptural support that would affirm their existence (Lowe, 1998:16). Lowe does not understand the concept of territorial spirit as being regionally or geographically delineated, but rather like a tutelary deities which people honour in certain regions, but not limited either to the people nor to the locality. These then serve as agents of Satan as they become a front for demonic forces. (Lowe, 1998:42).

In Lowe’s opinion, this taxonomy had better be abandoned since there is no clear historical and scriptural evidence supporting it. The cases which are quoted, Lowe argues, merges the differences and in the end, it is just demon spirits with the functional distinctions which have been quoted by the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare. In the opinion of Lowe, it is chasing something that is not there (Lowe, 1998:17-18). He also sees ambiguity in the usage of the term “territorial” as this does not communicate whether they are “residential” or “custodial”. From the knowledge that Satan is not omnipresent, his effectiveness would therefore require of demonic- beings to carry out his biddings (Lowe, 1998:17-18).

3.4.5 Powers and Principalities: Alternative/ Dissenting Views

The positions taken above by the Neo-Pentecostals on “powers and principalities” have drawn some dissenting views which see the matter in a different light and argue for alternative understanding. Already we have engaged with some of these arguments as raised by Chuck Lowe above.

Robert Priest, Thomas Campbell and Bradford A. Mullen, assert that there is a reciprocal impact in the mission field with both the Christian missionary and the non-Christians when they encounter one another; as a result they end up influencing each other (Priest et al , 1995:10). The outcome of such an encounter is that some of those missionaries outrightly dismiss their experiences as

superstitious beliefs (Priest et al , 1995:10). On the other hand, some of them question their own cultural orientation as they recognize the host cultural worldview as much closer to the Biblical worldview than their own. This would often lead to a “paradigm shift” when the missionary would then embrace either the whole or some of the positions held by the host culture (Priest et al , 1995:10).

In the opinion of Priest et al., the current teachings on strategic level spiritual warfare and other related subjects are a product of a paradigm shift on the part of the missionaries leading them to develop new doctrinal understanding of the demonic world which seems to have been borrowed from non- Christian religious traditions, including African Traditional Religion (Priest et al, 1995:10). Priest et al., are therefore arguing that there is continuity in what is being disseminated by proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare with such religions as African Traditional Religion (Priest et al., 1995:10-11).

Priest et al. raise the concern that this is a version of constructionism that appeals to experiences and re-interprets the scriptures in the light of such experiences. They observe that this is beyond an emphasis on restoration of the supernatural occurrences in the Bible (Priest et al., 1995:11). Priest et al, further explains that

Many of these authors are overly impressed with the extent of continuity they find between the biblical view of spirits and the views of spirit found in folk religions around the world and are insufficiently attuned to the degree of discontinuity between the two (Priest et al., 1995:11).

Priest et al. are thus acknowledging in this statement that there is continuity between the Biblical context and the context of the folk religions but also clarifies that there are some pronounced discontinuities or disparities that are significant enough to require a distinction. Because of this they object to the teachings on spiritual mapping and strategic level spiritual warfare and equates them with “animistic and magical notions of spirit power which is at odds with biblical teachings ...” (Priest et al., 1995:12). According to Priest et al., “In avoiding the Scylla of syncretism with rationalistic naturalism, many fall into the Charybdis of syncretism with mysticism, animism and magic.” (Priest et al., 1995:12).

Priest et al. explain that their motivation to write on the subject was to show that what some of the missionaries are teaching are to do more with “animistic and magical” assumptions which are contrary or entirely outside the purview of the Bible (Priest et al., 1995:12). In order to show this, Priest et al. take a polemical view by listing certain areas which they consider as examples of how

these missiologists have deviated into “erroneous assumptions and practices” (Priest et al., 1995:12) and anticipate that their work would be “corrective” of the errors (Priest et al., 1995:12).

In making reference to magic, Priest et al. expound on the two concepts of magic as “homeopathic” and “contagious”. *Homeopathic* highlights the principle of similarity where a similar object is efficacious in affecting whatever or whoever it is similar to, while *contagious* refers to the principle of contact that sees the possibility of transference of effect from an object that one comes in contact with (Priest et al., 1995:13). These two modes of magic are what Priest et al call “sympathetic magic” (Priest et al., 1995:13). Priest et al. do not explain where concepts like spells and curses belong in their categorization of magic. Perhaps these could be called *pronouncement* magic.

Priest et al. consider the origin of “animism” as a generic term that touched on the belief in “spirit beings” and as such was inclusive of all religious entities, even Christianity. They however clarify the evolution of the term to the extent that it is now viewed more as a representation of “tribal and folk religion”. (Priest et al., 1995:13). They pinpoint the usage among missiologists which highlights the engagement with “powers of spirits” and how to influence these powers (Priest et al., 1995:13). This is slightly different from the way that Edward Burnett Tylor, who originated the term, used it. Tylor saw it more as the existence of mystical spiritual powers that could either harm or be helpful to human beings (Tylor, 1871).

Priest et al. raise concern over areas which they consider new to missiology, and which are being taught by proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare. These include 1) concern that demons can be transmitted by contact with physical objects (Priest et al., 1995:14-16); 2) concerns that demons can be transmitted through the curses of others (Priest et al., 1995:16-17); 3) concerns that demons can be transmitted genealogically (Priest et al., 1995:18-19); 4) concerns that demons do influence geographically delineated regions as what has been referred to as “territorial spirits” (Priest et al., 1995:19-21).

In considering the epistemological basis for these teachings, Priest et al. are of the opinion that the foundations are weak. This is because in their opinion, the sources that have been used by the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare are borrowed from the tribal religions or even occultic backgrounds, but certainly lacking in biblical basis (Priest et al., 1995:27). Because of this Priest et al. highlight seven sources of information which are often used by the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare which they critique.

This is due to the fact that some of the information are acquired through: 1) interviewing demons (Priest et al., 1995:26-31); 2) interviewing practitioners of other religions (Priest et al., 1995:31-36); 3) use of traditional and folk stories (Priest et al., 1995:36-41); 4) making appeal to what seems to work (pragmatism) (Priest et al., 1995:41-50); 5) inner discernment of spirit beings present by an individual (Priest et al., 1995:50-53); 6) personal revelations from God (Priest et al., 1995:53-55); 7) selective and re-interpretation of Scriptures (Priest et al., 1995:55-76). Priest et al. view the above issues strongly enough as to cast aspersion on these teachings and see them more as agreeing with traditional religions rather than the Biblical content (Priest et al., 1995:76-77).

The tone of the writings of Priest et al. sounds rather strong, including making reference to some of the methods used by proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare as “Geiger Counter” in reference to discernment of the evil spirits (Priest et al., 1995:50-51). This borders on ridicule rather than handling the real issues. One would, however, see that in attempting to keep off what they may have considered as misleading doctrine, they also downplayed the charismatic Gifts of the Spirit which are recorded in scripture. Their argument sounds fairly cerebral and would not give an opportunity for supernatural happenings in the lives of individuals at all. On the other hand, for one coming from the African context where they would engage with the spirit world occasionally, their position would not offer any solution on how to handle the mystical powers, when there was a necessity to do so.

Charles Kraft responds to the issues raised and is concerned that the authors are coming from a position of lack of experience in this field of the spirit world. Although they all share common evangelical and non-charismatic heritage and are truly committed to Christ, the validity of Scriptures and concern for world evangelization, they have had certain experiences which have influenced their view of Scriptures (Kraft, 1995:91). He starts off his discussion by offering an apology for what he refers to as an accusation of “corrupting the missiological community” (Kraft, 1995:90). He apologizes for: 1) the times when they have not been too keen to check the details of their illustrations thoroughly; 2) when they have tended to overemphasize the role of feelings in the discernment of demons and; 3) when their enthusiasm over the new discoveries they were making seemed to have made them overstate the factual realities (Kraft, 1995:90).

In Kraft’s opinion, the greatest problem to Christianity is “dual allegiance”, that emanates from believers committing themselves to Christianity, but at the same time turning to “shamans and diviners” to meet their need for spiritual power encounters (Kraft, 1995:92). According to Kraft, this is because the Christianity that most of these people have received is aligned to the Western

propagated Christian worldview, which is deficient to meet with the spiritual power needs of the people. This therefore, cannot sufficiently take the place of the spiritual power sources that they were used to and subsequently, they revert back to these familiar traditional sources when need arises (Kraft, 1995:92).

Missionaries should repent to those in “missionized areas” which received this kind of ineffective brand of Christianity, where necessary, according to Kraft:

...if the Christianity of missionized areas, not to mention that of Euroamerica, is to be properly Biblical, issues of spiritual power need to be on the front burner of missiological investigation. We evangelicals have ignored them for far too long. (Kraft, 1995:92).

Kraft considers the subject area of the spirit world as a virgin territory, that evangelicals had not ventured into and missiologist had not given much attention to (Kraft, 1995:92). He reasons that some of the arguments which have opposed the teachings on spiritual warfare are inspired by fear of heretical teachings, possible change of mission strategies, accepting that those from traditional cultures might have had better insights into the spirit world and finally fear of different insights into scriptural interpretations (Kraft, 1995:93).

In Kraft’s opinion, this kind of fear led many western missionaries to introduce schooling and medicine as “instruments of Christianizing the non-Christian world” to the exclusion of God’s power. This resulted in a Christianity that was devoid of the power of God and could not confront or engage the spirit world (Kraft, 1995:93). The end result is that the non-western church had believers who would revert back to their traditional ways whenever they needed either healing or to address matters touching on the spirit world. The brand of Christianity that they received from the west had no solutions for them in this area (Kraft, 1995:93). Kraft acknowledges that for him and the others who follow along his teachings, there was a paradigm shift that totally altered their worldview and as such they are much closer to the Biblical world than they used to be (Kraft, 1995:94-95).

Kraft expresses the feeling that their critics, Priest, Campbell and Mullen, assert that they are “Biblicists”, but their arguments seem to draw a wedge between belief and practice. They have the knowledge and claim to believe, but they lack the experience of the supernatural which would have altered their worldview. Although some of what they are teaching looks like new doctrine to their critics, yet he asserts that the Holy Spirit is meant to guide and lead the believers into new truth (John16:13). Kraft reemphasizes the fact that the three have attempted to argue more from

the Western missiological perspective that does not take the matters of the demonic nor of Satan as seriously as the New Testament does (Kraft, 1995:95-96).

Kraft highlights what he considers as the difference between God-given authority and animism. In his view those who are engaged in magic and animistic practices are operating under the deception of a spirit thinking that they can control the spirit world for their benefits. On the contrary, it is the spirit world that is controlling them (Kraft, 1995:97). Thus, animistic priests would use the “formulas and the rituals” with the expectation that if they used the right procedure, then they would obtain the anticipated outcome (Kraft, 1995:97).

On the other hand, God-given authority, according to Kraft, is not just formulas, but rather issues out of the relationship that one has with God. Although God has promised all authority to the believer (Mt 10:1; Lk 9:1), Jesus remains the role-model and the usage of such authority is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is not humanly but divinely controlled. To miss this is to fall into the error of the seven sons of Sceva who merely used a formula without the authority and thus were unable to exorcise the evil spirits which were tormenting an individual, according to Kraft (Acts 19:11-16) (Kraft, 1995:96-97).

In the definition that Priest et al. have given to animism (Priest et al., 1995:13-14), Kraft sees a gap in which they fail to acknowledge that those that they refer to as animist have not only learnt the principles and practices of the spirit world, but are manipulating it through the spirit powers (Kraft, 1995:98). Kraft reasserts that this failure results from a Western worldview that does not pay attention to the spirit world (Kraft, 1995:98). He further clarifies that neither he as a person, nor his colleagues who have been teaching about strategic spiritual warfare use the magical “principles of continuity/contagion and the principle of similarity/imitation” as alleged by Priest et al. (Kraft, 1995:99). He rather sees personal beings and entities like demons or angels behind the objects and activities, rather than ethereal powers operating on their own initiatives (Kraft, 1995:99).

Kraft makes a distinction in the perception of animism, that objects in themselves have inherent powers that could manifest or even harm, and what he considers as a more biblical worldview, that such objects are only conduits or channels of the powers of the spirit beings behind them (Kraft, 1995:99). This he defines as the difference between “power conveyed by cultural forms ... and power that is thought to be contained in cultural forms.” (Kraft, 1995:99). This can even be seen in the case of Jesus Christ who used spittle and mud to convey God’s healing power or the disciples who used anointing oil to bring about healing (John 9:6,7; Mark 6:13), Kraft reckons (Kraft, 1995:99-100). The power was not resident in the objects, it was conveyed through the material

objects used. When objects are considered to have inherent powers of their own, then that is animism (Kraft, 1995:99-100).

This view must also be questioned, for most people who believe in using objects to transmit some kinds of power do not necessarily believe that the objects themselves have power. They actually believe in mystical powers of the spirit world that would bring about the efficacy of using the objects. Both Priest and his colleagues together with Kraft as well, fail to point out this perspective. The African magician who uses cowrie shells, does so in order to receive communication from a spirit and not because the cowrie shell has power inherent in itself (Kirwen, 1987: 87-88).

Although Kraft acknowledges the fact that the so called "gods" are not a match or a threat to Almighty God, he however points out that, "satanic power operates in the world through demonic beings who assume the identities granted them by humans (1 Cor. 10:20)." (Kraft, 1995:101). Thus, by embarking on this "experimentation", their intention is not to lead their readers into animism but to assist the community of faith to grasp an area that often has been ignored (Kraft, 1995:101). What Kraft does not point out is that for an African believer who has been operating at this level and has converted to Christianity, to be taken back to experiment in this area is to lead them into a potential area of negative syncretism from which perhaps they would have wanted to disassociate. By missing out on the mystical power dynamics, Kraft and his colleagues might be crossing the line unknowingly, although the emphasis that they bring in, is much needed.

This is shown by the comment that he makes:

I/we also believe in experimenting with the insights of others, such as animists, those in scripture who did not obey God, and even (though carefully) demons, in our quest to discover more of what the Holy Spirit wants to teach us in this area. (Kraft, 1995:103).

For a better understanding of the subject matter, Kraft also seeks for a consensus on hermeneutics so that his colleagues would have a common ground with those who were opposed to their teachings. Six issues are of concern to him: 1) The role of experience in scriptural interpretation; 2) the role of experience that does not have prior biblical equivalence; 3) interpreting experience in the light of scripture; 4) whether past scriptural records of experience have any relevance today; 5) the challenge of the Western worldview in grasping the realm of the spirit world; 6) and finally, the role of extra-biblical sources in giving insights into the spirit world (Kraft, 1995:105). These he feels should be considered when analysing their teachings, although he does not highlight the role that Church history and historical theology plays in such interpretation

Kraft highlights the fact that the usage of such terms as “animism” and “magic” in reference to satanic engagement with certain principles should not make one assume that “those principles, put into creation by God Himself, cannot be used (with some difference to be sure) under the power of God for the purposes for which he originally intended them” (Kraft, 1995:105-106).

With this statement Kraft is therefore acknowledging that missiologists can borrow from other cultures what may appear to be animistic or what might look like magic, if it will help in understanding the spirit world. He fails to point out that such borrowed satanic principles may be corrupted and deceptive, which instead of helping, will actually be misleading people. One can therefore, perceive that Kraft is arguing for continuity with tribal and traditional spirit-world conceptions, where it helps one engage in what he rates as effective spiritual warfare. In this case the end justifies the means.

When Kraft argues for experience as a valid ingredient of scriptural interpretation and at the same time allows for the span of experience from one community to the other to stand over against the scripture, then the door is wide open for relativism because one person’s experience is just as valid as the experience of the other person (Kraft, 1995:106). There is a need for a firm standard and the scriptures would take this paramount position and then the cultural or personal experience should be taken through the cross-cultural chart that was developed in Chapter Two of this study, so that the outcome is more balanced. Otherwise, the end result might turn out either to be pluralistic or even encourage hybridity of faith in the process even though the outcome might appear to be positive.

Chuck Lowe acknowledges the role that Frank Peretti’s fictional books have played in bringing about a great awareness of the new spiritual warfare. He recognizes the positive elements that this has brought about, in that more people are engaged in prayers and have become aware of the domain of the spirit (Lowe, 1998:10). Lowe asserts that although Christians had generally talked about the demonic and spiritual warfare, this seems to be the first time that spiritual warfare has been analysed and laid out as a mission strategy by Wagner and his compatriots (Lowe, 1998:11). In his view, proponents have done this with one objective, “to disarm the spiritual powers of wickedness that impede the spread of the gospel.” (Lowe, 1998:11).

He however cautions that should the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare “be wrong, then the negative consequences are numerous and serious.” (Lowe, 1998:12-13). Lowe, thinks that among the negative outcomes would be one’s self-perception due to failure and also the amount

of time and resources that would be wasted in being derailed from the missionary course (Lowe, 1998:12-13).

Lowe analyses the categorization of spirits and demons by Wagner and his colleagues into the three categories of ground-level (possessing people), occult-level (engaging witches and shamans) and strategic-level which are viewed as “the most powerful of the spirits” (Lowe, 1998:17) and which are mainly concerned with regions or geographically delineated territories. He avers that the distinction seems to be more of rank than function. Examining the data used for these distinctions from the early Church Fathers, secondary sources quoted, historical records and the biblical passages (Acts 8: 9-24; 13:6-12; 16:16-18), Lowe concludes that there is “ambiguity” that does not allow for this division as it seems the dividing line between these categories merges in most of the cases cited. He concludes that this classification is artificial and does not have biblical support. (Lowe, 1998:17-18).

Lowe asserts that Wagner might be agreeing with him that the biblical evidence for the idea of strategic-level spirits is quite scanty. He concludes by raising some pertinent issues:

If there is not a single definite strategic-level spirit in Scripture, why are so many examples cited from the Bible? Since the differentiation of the spirits into three classes is unproductive and inconsistent, it is best abandoned (Lowe, 1998:18).

Similarly, Lowe raises issues with the usage of the terminology “territorial spirit” in reference to the delineated region under the domain of strategic-level spirit. Pundits in this area have often quoted the “Prince of Persia” in the book of Daniel 10:13,20 as a proof text of this demarcation. Lowe sees the other teachings in this subject area like spiritual mapping and perambulatory prayers as all pointing to this geographical emphasis (Lowe, 1998:19). Although the emphasis seems to be a geographical region, Lowe argues that the usage seems to span to other areas including geo-political entities, cultural and ethnic social networks, topographical features and even ecological settings (Lowe, 1998:19).

He concludes that there is an “ambiguity” in the usage of the term “territorial spirit” and would prefer an alternative phrase although he does not offer a suggestion. He also highlights the concern of whether the spirits are “custodial or residential”. (Lowe, 1998:20). The concern he raises here is whether the spirits control an area or whether they just live in the area. This, according to Lowe, is also an “ambiguity” (Lowe, 1998:20).

While appreciating the shift that has slowly taken place with Western missionaries giving a prominent emphasis on the power of the Gospel and engagement in spiritual warfare, Paul Hiebert at the same time expresses concerns that most of these missionaries have been inspired by the encounters they have had with the world of witchcraft, spiritism and other experiences they have had in the mission field (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.). By so doing, Hiebert feels that they are bringing in the external views into scripture rather than the opposite, where scripture guides their interpretation of the culture (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.).

Hiebert highlights how worldviews have influenced the perception of many Christians when it comes to matters touching on spiritual warfare. He explains about the modern or naturalistic worldview which has drawn a chasm between the arena that is spiritual and heavenly as opposed to the earthly. The heavenly sphere is where God, angels, spirits, Satan and demons exist and they have no bearing on matters which are taking place on the earth. Hiebert views this as a "Cartesian dualism" that creates a middle ground which he refers to as the "excluded-middle". (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.).

In his opinion, this would result in the Christian view that demythologizes the Bible and denies the existence of entities like demons, or, where they are accepted, battles of such a kind take place only in the heavenly and have no relevance to issues of health, addictions and fears which are experienced on earth. Such earthly concerns are taken care of by science (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.). In his opinion, this would not assist people who come from cultures where they are struggling with fears about powers of witchcraft or demons (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.).

The second worldview that Hiebert describes is the tribal worldview that accepts spirits, gods, divinities, ancestors and demons as part and parcel of daily living. These entities are not only in existence, but they reward those who would appease them and exert vengeance on those who offend them. They cause calamities, illness and even death. They tend to be based around tribal, clan, communities or families and therefore are quite "territorial". Hiebert substantiates that:

Territory plays an important role in tribal views of spiritual warfare. Gods, spirits and ancestors reside in specific places or objects, and protect the people who reside on their lands. When a community is defeated, the people are expected to change their allegiance to the stronger god and serve him. Conversions to new gods often follow dramatic "power encounters." (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.).

The above would be the same worldview that would be found in most African communities that encompass the African traditional religious mindset. Hiebert asserts that a number of Christians

use this tribal worldview to explain about spiritual warfare and as such are not using the Bible as their foundation of doctrine, but worldviews of other non-Christian communities (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.). Hiebert affirms Chuck Lowe's view that when spiritual warfare is presented as such, it borrows from the other cultures and not from the Bible (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.).

The third worldview that Hiebert presents is what he refers to as the "Indo-European" view that propagates "cosmic dualism". (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.). In this view there are two almost equal and opposite forces which are battling with one another, one good and the other evil, God and Satan. This is partly seen in other religious groups like Zoroastrians and Hindus and also some mythologies according to Hiebert (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.). Peace, stability and well-being is only obtained when one entity overcomes the other in spiritual battle. The human beings are victims who are caught up in this vicious conflict (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.).

Again, Hiebert expresses concern that a number of Christians have adopted this world view where Satan seems to be equal in power to God and the battle is for the control of the universe. He clarifies that this does not represent the entire Biblical data (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.).

Many current Christian interpretations of spiritual warfare are based on an Indo-European worldview that sees it as a cosmic battle between God and his angels, and Satan and his demons for the control of people and lands. The battle is fought in the heavens, but it ranges over sky and earth. The central question is one of power--can God defeat Satan? Because the outcome is in doubt, intense prayer is necessary to enable God and his angels to gain victory over the demonic powers (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.).

The final view that Hiebert analyses is what he calls the "Biblical worldview of spiritual warfare". In the Old Testament, the battle seems to be exemplified between the people of God, Israel, and the nations around them. In some of these battles, the children of Israel would lose and their neighbours would consider that their God was a weaker God, while the truth was that Israel lost battles because of their sins (Judg. 4:1-2; 6:1; 10:7; 1 Sam. 28:17-19; 1 Kings 16:2-3; 2 Kings 17:7-23) (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.).

Hiebert highlights the New Testament emphasis as pointing more to a spiritual battle which presents God as the creator of everything and as the one who is in charge of all things. Satan comes out as a rebellious angel who is opposed to God's ways. But the battle is not for supremacy, but rather, for the establishment of the Kingdom of God (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.). Even the power Satan uses in his rebellion is a God-given power. Hiebert underscores the fact that in this view,

human beings are not “passive victims”, but rather “co-conspirators” with Satan in his rebellion against God (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.).

In commenting on the book of Luke 11:14-26, where Jesus was accused of using the power of Baal-Zebub to cast out demons Craig Keener explains that there were other exorcists in the time of Jesus, but they tended to use formulas or “magical incantations”, including naming a higher demon hierarchically that would then expel the junior demon. However, Jesus was not like that as he cursed out the evil spirits with a word as he had power over them and they recognized his authority. (Keener, 1993) Some of the models used by proponents of spiritual warfare almost look like incantations and using formulas to cast out demons. Hiebert adds that

The exorcists of Jesus’ day used techniques such as shoving a smelly root up the possessed person’s nose to drive the spirit away, or by invoking a higher spirit through magical incantations ... Jesus, in contrast, simply drove the demons out on the basis of his own authority (Mk. 1:21-27; 9:14-32). He was not simply some mighty sorcerer who learned to manipulate the spirits through more powerful magic. He is the sovereign God of the universe exerting his will and authority over Satan and his helpers. (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.)

Hiebert opposes the idea of thinking of territorial spirits based in a geographically delineated region, which are to be exorcized. Such thinking, in his opinion introduces “animistic” worldviews into Christianity. He also argues against seeking to know the demons being cursed out as this is reminiscent of “animistic” practices which Christians must avoid. (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.). When practitioners of spiritual warfare engage exactly in the same practices that the magicians and the shamans are also involved in, they confuse the Christians whose backgrounds are from pre-existing religions. Care must therefore be exercised so that such believers are not drawn back to where they came from.

In his concluding remarks, Hiebert elucidates the significance of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross was not a defeat, but the greatest victory over Satan. The Bible points out in Hebrews 2:14, that Jesus took on humanity “so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil”. Through it the final blow was delivered to the kingdom of darkness and victory obtained for the believers. The Christians are now enforcers of what Christ achieved on the cross (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.). The victory of Christ on the cross is recorded in Colossians 2:15, that “He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.” This kind of view does not agree well with

the Indo-European or tribal worldviews and yet as Hiebert states, "If our understanding of spiritual warfare does not see the cross as the final triumph, it is wrong." (Hiebert, 2000, n.p.).

3.4.6 Powers and Principalities: Structural Views

The other categorize powers and principalities as structural forces. In the introduction to his book, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*, Walter Wink indicates that when one talks about powers, this is making reference to systems, institutions and structures "that weave society into an intricate fabric of power and relationships." (Wink, 1984:5). Wink takes an extensive etymological approach to the understanding of "powers and principalities". He explains that "The language of power in the New Testament is imprecise, liquid, interchangeable, and unsystematic." According to him, it ranges from power of Satan, human authorities, rulers and the more structural principles of power and even jurisdiction (Wink, 1984:54).

Wink conducted an extensive study on both New Testament Greek and classical Greek on the usage of words related to powers and principalities. According to Wink the following words are relevant:

- *Archon* - an incumbent in an office. (Wink, 1984:13).
- *Arche* - the office itself or an incumbent or the structural power (government, Kingdom, realm, dominion) (Wink, 1984:13).
- *Exousia* - the legitimations and sanctions by which Power is maintained and generally tends to be abstract (Wink, 1984:15).
- *Dynamis* - overlaps with the *exousia* in the area of sanctions; but mainly refers to the power or force by which rule is maintained. (Wink, 1984:17).

Wink interprets Colossians 1:16 to mean that the powers cut across "both the heavenly and earthly, divine and human, spiritual and political, invisible and structural." (Wink, 1984:17). He further points out that the context of the usage of the terms "principalities and powers" was within the ambit of "political, religious, and economic structures and functionaries with which people had to deal" (Wink, 1984:19). He agrees with Wesley Carr (Carr, 1981) that all these powers could be good or evil and that evidence for demonic forces as talked about today can only be found much later in the second century history of the church and not even in the writings of Paul (Wink, 1984:12).

Wink sees the world that humanity is living in as having satanic evil powers already entrenched in the institutions that people find themselves in (Wink, 1993:31). In his opinion, the idea of Satan is a later addition to the Israelite religion and cannot be reconciled with the Christian concept of a diabolical Satan who is opposed to God (Wink, 1993:31). He prefers a middle-ground position where Satan is not viewed as an enemy, for in doing so Christians introduce “paranoid” behaviour that “demonizes” the opponents (Wink, 1993:33). At the same time Wink explains that for one to deny the existence of Satan is to operate on a level where choices by conscience become diminished (Wink, 1993:33).

In positioning himself for this middle-ground, Winks views the devil not as a “personality”, but rather as a “... function in the divine process, a dialectical movement in God’s purpose which becomes evil only when humanity breaks off the dialectic by refusing creative choice.” (Wink, 1984:33). Wink’s perception of Satan seems rather alien to the Biblical presentation where the devil is viewed as a personality who talks, who feels and who deceives. He is not just an opposing idea that is made real by human beings, but existed before human beings even existed (Genesis 3 and Job 1 & 2).

Frank Peretti’s novels *This Present Darkness* (Peretti, 2003b) and *Piercing the Darkness* (Peretti, 2003a) gives a presentation of the demonic powers as personal beings in charge of institutions and even cities, but Winks’ worldview seems to suggest that the powers are not literal demons but psychic inner forces. Reading Wink’s writings, one begins to think of New Age energies and amorphous forces, that is quite different from the Biblical demonic entity.

Esther Acolatse highlights the fact that in the writing of Wink one is bound to detect the “structural approach” to the understanding of “powers”, which embraces a postmodern worldview (Acolatse, 2018:80). One is initially in agreement that Wink acknowledges the spiritual dimension and even uses “scriptural words to describe the spiritual world”, but then shifts and abandons the scriptural meanings to come up with what Acolatse calls a “quasi-psychodynamic” concept (Acolatse, 2018:80).

When Lesslie Newbigin writes about powers and principalities, he pronounces a disconnect among some scholars in “the last 150 years”, who have tended to argue that such beliefs in Satan should not be entertained in the public discourse as they are outdated. Such scholars do not see that these may be touching the realm of reality (Newbigin, 1989:200). He argues that such views belong to “reductionist materialism” which hinders proper engagement with writings of Paul on powers and principalities and also other New Testament writers (Newbigin, 1989:200).

In Newbigin's assessment, words like "power, authority, rule, dominion or lordship" sometimes are used in reference to human rulers like "magistrates, priests, elders, a governor like Pilate" or even a leader like Herod (Newbigin, 1989:200-201). This is illustrated by the example of powers in Romans 13 which are human rulers who even collect taxes as opposed to what is recorded in Ephesians 6:12 where they appear to be different entities. Newbigin sees these powers not merely as the human individuals who held certain offices but also as something that was "embedded" into their offices and functions, that would outlast them (Newbigin, 1989:201). Newbigin therefore postulates that the language used,

... refers to something behind these individuals, to the offices, the powers, the authority which is represented from time to time by this or that individual. It is these powers, authorities, rulers, dominions which have been confronted in Christ's death with the supreme power and authority of God. (Newbigin, 1989:201).

Newbigin further states with examples that these would be the same powers which were behind individuals like Pilate, Herod and Caiaphas, covertly operating through these leaders and yet not part of them (Newbigin, 1989:202). Similarly, these powers can also be part of institutional powers which shape the day-by-day events either in a positive or a negative way. This "something", that is real and active, yet cannot be located in a physical manner, can transcend a leader and continue on with the next office holder, is the "power" that Newbigin is referring to (Newbigin, 1989:203).

In the opinion of Newbigin, Christianity would go astray if it ended up by just developing "systematic demonology" when discussions are held about the powers and principalities (Newbigin, 1989:207). He views them as

Structural elements in the world... from the basic structures of the physical world to the social and political structures of the nations, to the customs and traditions by which human beings are normally guided, to what sociologists call the "plausibility structures" by which all human thinking is guided... (Newbigin, 208).

Although one would have thought that Newbigin is contradicting Wink in his assessment on powers, in the end they seem to be talking about the same structural view of powers as entities behind the thrones and structures.

Andreas Heuser gives an example of how even within the Pentecostal movement, this idea can be escalated to capture the political structural sphere, particularly when one of their own is in power. He illustrates this through the leadership of John Atta Mills, who was a Pentecostal president in Ghana and immediately he got into power he introduced the concept of "prayer camps" which

basically “refers to a secluded social space in Pentecostal religious praxis that aims at detecting and controlling so-called demonic forces.” (Heuser, 2014:11) President Mills went as far as to insist that policymaking would be enshrined in “Pentecostal ritual”, but had to make a quick retreat from this position when the country faced serious debt issues (Heuser, 2014:11).

In the election that followed, according to Heuser, it was the opposition that was propagating the “prayer camps” that would be used to conquer territories (Heuser, 2014:12). All this goes to show how the ideas of spiritual warfare have been used even in politics in the continent of Africa and how they can take on the structural form.

In a similar fashion, the new President of Kenya, William Ruto, who claims Pentecostal association and insists that he was “prayed into victory”, invited preachers to the state house and urged them to engage in perambulatory prayers around the compound “speaking in tongues” and anointing the compound. One leading Pentecostal Bishop responding to these requests by the president and announced in the same meeting that,

You've heard the president inviting us to walk all over this place to purify it. When we (the clergy) walk around State House, we'll declare this ground purified. Any evil altar that may have been raised here will be paralysed in the name of Jesus Christ... We'll pray for this place until all the hiding evil forces are driven out.(Okoth, n.d.)

In his engagement with ideas disseminated by the reformed tradition authors of the 20th century, Hendrikus Berkhof and Karl Barth, long before him, P. J. Buys asserts that in Paul's language on “powers” in the book of Ephesians, one may see a description of “real social, economic, psychological and political structures that affected their everyday lives.” (Buys, 2019:3). Buys negates the argument that does not recognize the devil as a personal being but only sees him as “collective symbolization of evil” and the guilt or burden of human sinfulness. Even when it comes to evil spirits, these are also seen as the heart or inner principles of an institution or a nation, but Buys see them as personalities (Buys, 2019:3).

Buys rejects these positions although he acknowledges that these evil powers can and have in the course of history influenced human affairs:

Throughout history, overtly evil socio-political systems such as the idolatry of the Roman Caesars, the anti-Semitism of Hitler's Nazism, the evil of human slavery, the atheism of the Communists, the dehumanisation of Apartheid, the wickedness of the ethnic cleansing in parts of Africa, racism and terrorism of all forms, and the greed of capitalism have all demonstrated the extent to which the

evil powers can influence world systems and seek to thwart the blessings of humanity (Buys, 2019:3).

Charles Kraft makes an observation that the liberal attitude was influenced by their theological system in that even when they do assent to the existence of some kind of evil beings, they “tend to go along with behavioural scientists in seeing their presence in cultural structures.” He posits that the explanations by Walter Wink is a “sophisticated attempt”, that does not recognize the demonic as evil spiritual beings, but rather relegates them to some kind of structures (Kraft, 2002:14).

Along the same lines, Michael Green negates the structural position by stressing that power does not operate in a vacuum but through personality and such personality must be having some sort of intelligence that can plan and utilize the power in the way it deems fit (Green, 1999:18). He sees the power wielding personality that produces “a poisonous miasma” as Satan of whom he says that this evil entity cannot be dismissed from human history as he has an “indelible place in Christian theology.” (Green, 1999:20).

In the view of Green therefore, evil entities and personalities like Satan cannot be reduced to mere structures as Wink has argued. This includes evil spirits as well. Green sees Satan encouraging doubt in his existence (Green, 1999:17) or as C. S. Lewis commented in the preface of his book, *The Screwtape Letters* that the devils would “hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.” (Lewis, 2001:ix). From the reading of Wink’s work, one is led to fathom a mixed view, as he sometimes comes out asserting the non-existence of Satan as Christians know him and on the other hand talking of Satan and the powers or existing more in structures and institutions rather than creatures and beings who are active today.

Stephen Noll also comments on Wink’s views. Wink’s view on powers and principalities is the postmodern view that assumes that they are not personalities and entities but rather principalities as moral principles. In his response to Wink’s assertions, Noll, explains that Wink is one of those who have taken a pre-modern and a postmodern interpretation of the Bible and thus leans towards a structural view of the demonic (Noll, 1998:123). In a review of Stephen F. Noll’s book under discussion, Clinton E. Arnold disagrees with the way Noll interprets “principalities” as “regime” arguing that this was not the common understanding among the Jews of the day as reflected in some of the Jewish Scriptures then (1 Enoch 6:7-6; 61:10; 2 Enoch 20:1; Testament of Levi 3:6; Testament of Solomon 3:6; 20:15; 3 Baruch 20:3 and Testament of Abraham 13:10). In his opinion all these spoke of “principalities” as angelic beings and not as regimes. He thinks this is too close to the view espoused by Walter Wink (Arnold, n.d.). While some may endorse the structural

view, it does not seem to receive wide acceptance from the view point of a number of scholars and from the perspectives of the Jewish texts of the time.

3.4.7 Powers and Principalities: Existential views

The other view that has also been held by some scholars is the existential view. After describing several aspects of the New Testament, including the activities of both angels and demons on earth, Rudolf Bultmann concludes that "all of this is mythical talk whose origin can be traced to the contemporary mythology of Jewish apocalypticism and the Gnostic myths of redemption." (Bultmann, 1985:2). He points out that if contemporary Christianity has to be engaged in the proclamation of the truth of the New Testament, then there is a necessity to respond to this "mythical world picture" by demythologizing the Christian message (Bultmann, 1985:3). It appears that by the world picture he means worldview or the way the world is perceived.

In Bultmann's opinion, it is not possible to take the Scriptures back to this mythological worldview, now that modern day believers have encountered scientific worldview and developments. Bultmann concludes that any attempts to satisfy this demand would be "*sacrificium intellectus*", a sacrifice of the intellect (Bultmann, 1985:3). He envisions the world of miracles, exorcism, wonders, expectation of the return of Christ as relegated to the past mythological world or some kind of mental disorder (Bultmann, 1985:4). He then makes his memorable and well quoted statement:

We cannot use electric lights and radios and, in the event of illness, avail ourselves of modern medical and clinical means and at the same time believe in the spirit and the wonder world of the New Testament. (Bultmann, 1985:4).

In a similar way, Friedrich Schleiermacher in *Christian Faith*, claims that both the beliefs and the propagation of the idea of the diabolical by Jesus Christ and his disciples was not stemming from the Old Testament scriptures but from the prevailing cultural context of their time. As such he argues that the belief in the existence of Satan should not form part of the modern-day Christian doctrine as it is based on "ignorance". (Schleiermacher, 2016:1.45.2). Schleiermacher asserts that this ideology must have originated from the Jewish concept of a servant of God being "expelled from the presence of God" and thus was purely Jewish or perhaps from some oriental theories which were in circulation at the time, leading to dualistic concepts among the Jews (Schleiermacher, 2016: 1.45.2).

According to Schleiermacher, the question of the existence of the devil will not alter the truth or the way of redemption and as such should not form an agenda for theological discourse as it belongs more to “cosmology” than to “dogmatics” (Schleiermacher, 2016:1.45.2). He is of the opinion that one cannot authoritatively defend the existence of Satan nor dismiss the possibility of his reality and as such, he prefers an agnostic position when it comes to this matter. (Schleiermacher, 2016:1.45.2).

Eta Linnemann, who was a student of Rudolf Bultmann and served as a lecturer in Germany, spent a fair portion of her life writing and defending the historical-critical method to which Bultmann had introduced her. Through reflection and life transforming experiences she turned around and renounced her convictions, which previously she had dearly espoused and fought for. She redefined herself as a “*Bultmannian turned evangelical*” (sub-title of her book) (Linnemann, 1993:20).

Instead of seeing the historical-critical method either as beneficial or benign, she saw it as a malignant concept that needed excision and subsequently, she disassociated from it, to the extent that she threw away books that she herself had written on the subject and encouraged anyone having them to do the same (Linnemann, 1993:20). It is interesting to note that Linnemann attributes some of the philosophies which influenced these ideologies as having their origin in the demonic as per the remarks by some of the key personalities engaged (Linnemann, 1993:29).

Linnemann points to what she considers as a mindset in studying theology at the university where the historical-critical method, which in her mind is more of intuition than scientific data, is taken for granted as the key methodology that is used, or at least in institutions in Germany where she studied and taught (Linnemann, 1993:83-103). In her opinion, there is no fundamental difference between what Bultmann uses and advocates and what the other proponents of historical-critical methods advocates and as such categorizes them all as contradicting the Scriptures (Linnemann, 1993:124-125).

While Linnemann may have objected to those who used historical criticism to undermine scripture, especially those who denied the existence of the supernatural, since they could not be proven historically, others like Edgar Krentz, saw value in the use of historical-critical method in studying the Bible and asserts that it has mainly been accepted in biblical research. Krentz explains that:

It is difficult to overestimate the significance the nineteenth century has for biblical interpretation. It made historical criticism *the* (sic) approved method of interpretation. The result was a revolution of viewpoint in evaluating the Bible. The scriptures were, so to speak, secularized. The biblical

books became historical documents to be studied and questioned like any other ancient sources. The Bible was no longer the criterion for the writing of history; rather history had become the criterion for understanding the Bible... The Bible stood before criticism as defendant before judge. (Krentz, 1975:30).

Although Linnemann sometimes uses very strong wordings, It perhaps the secularized ideas that dismissed the existence of the supernatural that she objects to. One would however find what she elucidates quite relevant to the Christian of African origin who is engaged with the spirit world occasionally and who would not want that world to be dismissed as a mere myth or non-existent at the mercy of scholarly criticism. A Christianity like that would not answer some of the life questions which beleaguer one who is exposed to this mystical power world. It would either mean rejecting that brand of Christianity in total, or living in hybridity, where metaphysical issues are turned over to the shamans and the witchdoctors or ancestors for answers. This belief in the spirit world is also prevalent among the Muslims as illustrated by Paul Hiebert in his article on folk Islam (P. Hiebert, 2000)

P. J. Buys observes that some theological and philosophical scholars, among them Rudolf Bultmann, developed a scriptural interpretation which demythologized and understood the Bible from an existential perspective. Issues to do with the spirit world were therefore seen as myths (Buys, 2019:3). The kind of theology that they developed, according to Buys, was tailor-made for a "European enlightenment" context, that disassociated from the worldview of the first century inhabitants. Buys viewed this method as merely human way of looking at the Bible and as such Bultmann dismissed the supernatural (Buys, 2019:3). In Buys opinion, this "kind of theologising, marginalised the devil more and more to the periphery in Christian thinking..." (Buys, 2019:3).

Buys indicates that a similar thing may be happening in a number of mainline churches in South Africa as theologians engage more in "liberal theology" and dismiss the existence of Satan and demons (Buys, 2019:3). Buys asserts that such theologians who "ridicule the whole idea" of the existence of the devil as a personality, treat the devil more or less as a joke (Buys, 2019:3). In Buys' opinion, they tend to see the devil as a personification of evil rather than a living being or an entity (Buys, 2019:3).

Esther Acolatse, originally from Africa but based in the West, in *Powers, Principalities, and the Spirit: Biblical Realism in Africa and the West (2018)*, expresses her concerns about the deficiency in pastoral ministry when ministers and churches engage with their congregants only at the "noetic" level (Acolatse, 2018:7). This she blames for denying the church members a deeper

experiential encounter with the promises of scripture and the realization of the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives (Acolatse, 2018:7). She observes that this portends the danger of dualism as is seen sometimes among the Christians from the South (Africa and Latin America) or into adoption of a “lackadaisical monism” that is prevalent among Christians in the North (Acolatse, 2018:8). The latter is sometimes revealed when “New Testament concepts of power” are relegated to the periphery as “primitive” mythological understanding (Acolatse, 2018:9).

In making reference to Bultmann's existentialist framework that leans towards historical-criticism of the Bible in interpreting scriptures, Acolatse points out that, the insistence of using this methodology shifts scriptural understanding from the regular user, who is the church, to “the purveyors in the various academic guilds that sprang up in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.” (Acolatse, 2018:10). She objects to worldviews which questions Scripture to the point of making it “otiose as a basis of revelation”, thus succumbing to cultural norms rather than transforming the culture (Acolatse, 2018:10-11).

Acolatse underscores the necessity for restoring the belief in the “powers as personal spirit beings” so as not to disfigure the Christian faith. This is a position that in her view, sections of the church, especially from the West, have abandoned (Acolatse, 2018:11). Acolatse proposes a dialogical journey that would bring together the academia and the ecclesia, from both the global South (mainly Africa) and the West (mainly North Atlantic). Such an encounter should lead to an “intercultural hermeneutical” engagement “so that the different ways of knowledge and knowing may be brought into conversation” (Acolatse, 2018:12). In essence she is proposing an encounterology that would hopefully clear the misunderstanding on the scope of spiritual warfare.

3.4.8 Powers and Principalities: African views

While Acolatse writes as one who is creating a dialogue between Africa and the West, Others have written from a purely African context. Yusufu Turaki highlights the bewilderment of a traditional African person who would hear the language of power used or mentioned in Christianity such as: “the power of the blood of Christ; the power of Christ; the power of the Holy Spirit; the power of God; the power of prayer in the name of Jesus” (Turaki, 2000:4). Coming from a background where one is acquainted with efficacy of “mystical and mysterious powers” as is common among Africans with traditional cultural background, they would find themselves at a loss on how to respond to all these power terms. They would also be wondering why their own power concepts are labelled as

demonic and yet they have encountered the reality of their efficacy. As Turaki points out, “a mere reference to a Bible verse may not be enough to dissuade and convince him to do and believe otherwise.” (Turaki, 2000:4).

Turaki further elucidates that, this is because the power concepts of a traditional African person are deeply embedded in the spirit world. These entities not only govern and influence the spiritual world, but also the daily social engagements and occurrences. The domain of the spirit is inhabited by both non-human spirits and spirits of the dead. Turaki sees the non-human spirits as structured in orientation with a kind of hierarchy in their operation (Turaki, 2000:5). This echoes the hierarchical concepts that are also found among the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare and thus offers a possible line of continuity.

As was seen in the teachings of the proponents of strategic-level spiritual warfare in that the demons can inhabit certain territories including objects and localities, Turaki discloses that the same applies for African Traditional Religion,

... spirits are believed to dwell or inhabit certain trees, rocks or mountains, caves, rivers, lakes, forests, animals, human beings, the skies, the ground and other sites, carved or moulded objects, charms, amulets (Turaki, 2000:6).

As has been demonstrated by the proponents of the strategic level spiritual warfare, Turaki also assents to the existence of “hierarchical order” in the traditional viewpoint with the Supreme Being at the apex, while the other gods or divinities are in lower ontological spheres although still higher than human beings (Turaki, 2000:11). The power or the influence of the Being is also demonstrated in a descending order along that line (Turaki, 2000:11). The respect, honour and reverence that they receive are also aligned to their position of “authority, power, influence, territoriality and legitimacy. Thus, in traditional religious worldview, spirit beings are graded.” (Turaki, 2000:11). It is this grading that is also found among the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare.

Peter G. Riddell and Beverly Smith Riddell asserts that the African context is teeming with spirits as this is an integral part of human life (Riddell & Riddell, 2007:22). They further explain that when the African experiences attacks by spirits, they would either appease them, evict them or accommodate them as a response (Riddell & Riddell, 2007:38-39).

More of this is covered in chapter four of this study.

3.4.9 Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare: Engaging in Conflict

For effective spiritual warfare most of the proponents of strategic spiritual warfare propose a model that they think would be effective in procuring the expected results. They therefore give detailed process on how to conduct both the spiritual mapping and the spiritual warfare. Cindy Jacobs gives a detailed model of how to conduct spiritual mapping and ultimate spiritual warfare (Jacobs, 1991); Ed Silviso also gives another version of this (Silviso, 1998); George Otis Jr. has another model (Otis(Jr.), 1999); Ed Murphy has written a whole handbook on this (Murphy, 1992); John Dawson introduced the idea of spiritual mapping and has outlined possible ways of conducting spiritual mapping and warfare over the city (Dawson, 2001) and Peter Wagner has also given some guidelines on how to take communities and cities (Wagner, 2011b). This process can be captured as presented in figure 9.

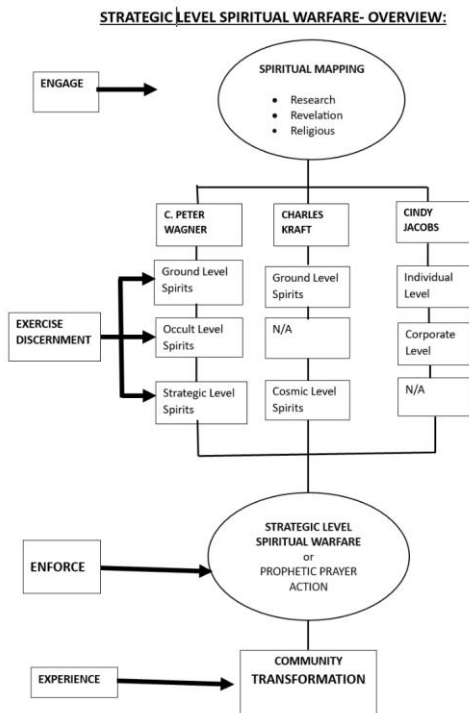


Figure 9: Strategic Level Spiritual Overview

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the meaning and definitions which are given to strategic level spiritual warfare. The views of several practitioners have been captured in this chapter who assent to different taxonomy in arranging the various levels. This chapter has also included the role played by spiritual mapping as a precursor and important part of strategic level spiritual warfare.

The chapter also examined the various sources, origin and background of the teachings on strategic level spiritual warfare and noted a variety of sources which included cultural and traditional, extra-biblical sources, anecdotes and fictions, historical, archeological and apocryphal source, traditional Jewish background, influence on missionaries through encounters with people of other traditions and Biblical sources. On top of this there were the intuitive elements that came as revelation to the practitioners.

The chapter also examined the concept of powers and principalities as used by a number of proponents and opponents of the teachings on strategic spiritual warfare. The concepts of power and power encounter were examined and the usage in Jewish folk religions, mainstream Christianity and by Neo- Pentecostals. Others with dissenting opinions were also considered including some evangelicals, those with structural and existential views. Finally, the African concept was briefly examined as it is this, which forms the main thrust of chapter four.

4 CHAPTER 4

MYSTICAL POWERS IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

4.1 Introduction:

The previous chapter covered the various views which are espoused by proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare and alternative views by others who dissent from their position. The study covered their tenets of faith in as far as powers are concerned and the world of principalities and powers as various categories would view it. The application of these, in terms of practical prayers and their views on certain scriptural texts which they considered as supportive of their positions were also examined. The previous chapter further considered the world of the spirit and how different spirits are believed to occupy different tiers and domains and therefore require different kinds of spiritual warfare in order to dislodge them.

Further argument pointed out that when proper spiritual mapping is conducted, thus helping to identify the territorial spirit, then proper spiritual strategy would be applied that would then liberate an area or institution and make it more accommodative to the ministry of the Gospel. Various types of prayers can then be applied with a positive outcome being observed.

In order to examine the dialogue between the teachings on strategic level spiritual warfare and its worldview and African Traditional Religion with an emphasis on mystical powers, the study now examines mystical powers in African Traditional Religion and its worldview. The study examines how Africa is understood, and delves into the various beliefs in African Traditional Religion that midwives the concept of mystical powers. The study further examines a spectrum of views of different sections of the Christian faith in as far as their conception of African Traditional Religion and mystical powers is concerned.

4.2 Understanding the Meaning of “Africa”

When referring to African Traditional Religion, the first issue that needs to be cleared is what the Africa means. Africa has been examined from different perspectives and given different meanings. “Africa” has often been viewed as a continent or the geographical mass that is divided into two hemispheres by the equator. But Willem Fourie in *“Four Concepts of Africa”* differs. In his

opinion, the word “Africa” often has some ethical nuances that do not make it neutral as seen in the fact that white South Africans, of whom he is one, preferred to call themselves “Afrikaans” which was the German origin of the English word “African” (Fourie, 2015:1). Yet the English version of the word “African” was reserved for the black South Africans (Fourie, 2015:1).

In spite of Kwame Nkrumah’s view that “Africa” cannot be limited to merely a geographical definition due to its complexity in race, culture and language (Nkrumah et al., 1963:132), Fourie argues that territorial description should be one of the concepts which should be used to define Africa (Fourie, 2015:2). Fourie makes a historical reference to the Third Punic War in 146BC which brought about the destruction of Carthage (White & others, 1899) and led to the formation of “*Africa Vetus*” (Old Africa), which is modern day North Africa (Fourie, 2015:2). Carthage had been in existence since 813 BC when it was established by the Phoenicians (Fourie, 2015:2). A hundred years afterwards, the Romans established their second colony in the region which they named “*Africa Nova*” (New Africa), which was finally combined with the first colony by Caesar Augustus (Fourie, 2015:2).

Herodotus writing in *Histories*, in 425 BC, seems to have made reference to the same region, but identifying the various entities separately as Egypt, Libya and Ethiopia as he talked about the oracles, the source of the Nile and the people who inhabit this region as being black (Herodotus, 1920: 1:46:2-3; 2:22:2-4). To this Fourie adds that even the Greeks had earlier made reference to Mauretania and Moors (sections of modern-day Tunisia and Algeria), Numidia and Berbers which formed the other part of Algeria and Tunisia (Fourie, 2015:2).

Fourie gives the five possible etymological origins of the word as 1) the Greek for a “place without cold” (*aphrike*); 2) reference to the descendants of a mythological hero god called *Afer*; 3) those who lived in caves as implied by the Berber word *ifri*; 4) derivative of the Phoenician word *afar* referring to dust; and finally, 5) a more recent reference to an ethnic community that the Romans encountered called the *Afri*. These were the first known “Africans” according to Fourie (Fourie, 2015:2). Aloysius Lugira affirms the same etymology as he refers to Africa as “the land of the *Afri*”. (Lugira, 2009:12). Fourie however, argues that most of the maps that were produced on the continent of Africa were steeped with misrepresentation as seen in the ones by Antonio Francanzano de Montalbodo (1508), Sebastian Münster (1540) and Leo Africanus (1556). (Fourie, 2015:2-3).

Although the view of Africa as a geographical place designated as a continent became entrenched slowly over a period of time, Fourie contends that this was mainly as a result of colonization thus

making the term Africa have a colonial nuance. As such the term Africa is not neutral in the opinion of Fourie and was mainly used by outsiders. Neither does it capture the social, cultural and linguistic mosaic of the continent (Fourie, 2015:3-4). Although initially “Africa” referred only to that part of the continent which was colonized by the Romans, through taking the part to represent the whole (metonymy), the word acquired a continental wide meaning (Lugira, 2009:12).

Fourie states the second view of Africa and highlights the political and economic “commodification” of Africa, especially during the imperial colonial era. Fourie narrates the balkanization and exploitation of African resources and people as a commodity for the benefits of external entities (Fourie, 2015:4). His historical narratives are corroborated by other authors like Thomas Pakenham in *The Scramble for Africa* (Pakenham, 2015) and Adam Hochschild in *King Leopold’s Ghost* (Hochschild, 2019), who all indicate how African ivory, gum, gold, spices and people were taken off to benefit other nations outside the continent. In *The West and China in Africa: Civilization Without Justice*, Alemayehu Mekonnen points to the fact that this disagreeable situation is still going on today (Mekonnen, 2015).

Fourie argues that it is the concept of Africa that was held then by external actors that made this demarcation and subjugation of Africa possible and at the same time difficult for the inhabitants to resist (Fourie, 2015:4). Although the foreign players sometimes entered into treaties with the local leaders, Fourie remarks that a number of these treaties were extremely biased as they basically took all the resources, including the land from the locals. There was no benefit that they were getting out of it (Fourie, 2015:5). The view of Africa as a commodity was therefore not neutral and was exploitative to the continent and its people (Fourie, 2015:5). When this kind of view is sustained even in modern days, then Africa is seen as a utility for the benefit of others and does not stand on an equal setting with the other continents (Fourie, 2015:5).

Beginning with the depiction of Africa as uncivilized and needing to be developed morally and materially as indicated in the documents of the Berlin Conference in 1885, Fourie points out that the third concept of Africa is Africa as a condition (Fourie, 2015:6). Apart from highlighting the issues captured in the Berlin Conference (Berlin, 1885), Fourie also draws from the writings of the anthropologist Edward Tylor (Tylor, 1924) who classified the world into degrees of development and created a five-stage criteria for identity.. Using these criteria, which were heavily steeped with racial overtones, Africa was suffering from the condition of not being civilized, underdeveloped and barbaric. The people could only be referred to as “savage tribes.” (Fourie, 2015:6).

Fourie summarizes this position and says that, “this condition was quite simply the absence of European civilisation and therefore primitive.” (Fourie, 2015:6). Similarly, he also quotes from the French anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl who fortified the basic claim that Africans are inferior to the Europeans in his book *How Natives Think* (Lévy-Bruhl, 1926). This inferiority included an a priori mental setting that rendered the natives incapable of thinking or reasoning like the Europeans (Fourie, 2015:6).

But Fourie critiques the unethical position of a mindset that idealizes the undefined European standards as the standards for everyone else, such that every community which has not attained to these undefined standards has a condition that can only be remedied by introducing them to the European standards (Fourie, 2015:6). Subsequently, this concept of Africa is also not neutral and has negative connotations as it attempts to impose certain foreign standards on Africa and Africans. These standards need to be interrogated through critical reflection rather than uncritically consumed. While Fourie’s ideas may help one in comprehensively acquiring the socio-economic concepts of Africa, it misses the spiritual concepts which touches on mystical powers, a belief that is so prevalent in the African psyche.

Both Leopold Senghor in *Prose and Poetry* (Senghor, 1976) and Ngũgĩ wa Thion’go (wa Thiong o, 1986) in *Decolonising the Mind* are of the opinion that when such attitudes are repeatedly communicated to the Africans, they begin accepting such definitions of themselves and therefore need to exercise mental liberation that would free them from such bondage. While Senghor is of the opinion that this is a mandate of post-colonial leaders, wa Thion’go, being a literature expert sees language as playing a critical role in that liberation. Similar sentiments had also been expressed by the then Guinian President, Ahmed Sékou Touré. He said that, “We prefer poverty in dignity to opulence in slavery.” These sentiments, which he expressed when the French head of state, Charles de Gaulle visited Guinea in 1958, incurred a lot of criticism, according to Robin Hallett et al. in *Africa Since 1875* (Hallett et al., 1974).

The fourth concept of Africa that Fourie looks at is Africa as an ideal. In this view, he posits that although the term “Africa” or “African”, had previously been used mainly as a degrading concept to “objectify” the people, it can also be used in a “subjective” manner to highlight “the socio-cultural, economic and political resources in Africa as a representative ideal”. (Fourie, 2015:7). Quoting Leopold Senghor, Fourie points to the reclamation of the African ideal that questions some of the previous concepts but highlights the cultural emancipation from shackling ideologies (Fourie, 2015:8).

While arguing for Africa in which proper “*negritude*” (ways of African life and values of the black community worldwide) and “*ubuntu*” (a collective sense of being human in the individual created as a result of belonging to the African community) is practiced, Fourie is careful not to give the impression that Africa would then close itself to any external influence. Instead, he quotes Mwalimu Julius Nyerere who comments that Africa must include those originally from the continent and those who have made their home in the continent (Fourie, 2015:8). Fourie explains that this will reclaim Africa as an ideal concept with all its socio-cultural and economic resources (Fourie, 2015:8).

Fourie is right in acknowledging that these may not be the only concepts of Africa. Some who have engaged in a campaign for a change of narrative about the continent of Africa, have seen what they consider as perhaps, a conspiracy of silence that does not highlight progressive and advanced concepts about the continent. Ali Mazrui in *The Africans: Triple Heritage* (Mazrui, 1986) points out the three major thrusts which shaped the continent of Africa and names them as indigenous background, Eurocentric move which he identifies with colonialism, and the third as Islam. It is interesting to note that Mazrui does not see Christianity as a major move and where he mentions it, he bands it together with colonialism. Here, one would say that Mazrui’s views were influenced by his Islamic background, and he did not come out as objectively as he should have.

Luc Croegaert gives a more balanced historical view in *The African Continent: An Insight into its Earliest History* (Croegaert, 1999). He narrates the history of what he considers as African kingdoms listed in the Bible and the Christian Kingdom of Nubia, long before the Muslims came to Africa. (Croegaert, 1999:56-59). Others have emphasized the more positive contribution of Africa in the light of Christianity as seen in the two volumes of Thomas C. Oden: *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity* (Oden, 2007) and *Early Libyan Christianity: Uncovering a North African Tradition* (Oden, 2011). Oden dismisses the “prejudice” that some of the early African thinkers like Athanasius of Egypt, Augustine of Numidia and Cyprian were not Africans. He then highlights the various roles that they played in the propagation of the Gospel (Oden, 2007:62-77).

In a similar manner, Andrew Walls in three of his volumes, gives substantial space to the role that Africa has played in the formulation and progress of world Christianity: a space that he strongly suggests has been underrated as seen in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Walls, 2002a:79-139), *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Walls, 2002:85-173) and in *Crossing Cultural Frontiers: Studies in the History of World Christianity*

(Walls, 2017:79-154). Walls writes about the spread of Christianity in early Africa, including the lives of some key Africans who made contribution to the cause of Christianity like Anthony of Egypt and Takla Haymanot and the spread of Christianity in Ethiopia. He also highlights the West African axis with individuals like Samuel Ajey Crowther making significant impact (Walls, 2017:79-154).

Similarly, Yaw Perbi and Sam Ngũgĩ highlight the role that Africa has played in missiological circles (Perbi & Ngũgĩ, 2022). In their book *Africa to the Rest*, Perbi and Ngugi traces contribution of Africa to the rest of the world from the writing of the Septuagint 5 ; the beginning of monasticism by Anthony of Egypt; that Africa first evangelized Europe and that George Liele, a freed slave, was actually the “father of protestant missions”, a decade before William Carey sailed to India (Perbi & Ngũgĩ, 2022:5-9).

Although this study emphasizes more of the indigenous viewpoint of Africa, especially in the area of its religious make up, yet at the same time it draws from the wealth of the various concepts discussed above as well. Africa therefore is viewed both as the mass of land and the socio-cultural mixture of its people and their beliefs. While there may be questions as to what then portends what authentically African is and can be referred to as “traditionally African”, the above discussions points to us both the complexity and the breadth of what Africa is. It seen by all the modern terms used to make reference to Africa: Sub-Sahara Africa, Northern Africa, Francophone Africa, Lusophone Africa or Anglophone Africa.

When considering what is traditionally African, especially in terms of religion, we therefore look to the pre-existing manner of religious beliefs and engagement of the people of Africa before they passed through the hands of foreign introduced beliefs. It is this that the study now examines.

4.3 Understanding African Traditional Religion

4.3.1 African Traditional Religion: Definition

For one to effectively discern whether there is any dialogue between African Traditional Religion and strategic level spiritual warfare, it is paramount that one is acquainted with the various aspects of African Traditional Religion. What qualifies as African Traditional Religion, and its definition has been a point of discussions in many circles.

Philip M. Steyne, a South African charismatic pastor and missionary, underscores the importance of this kind of understanding. He narrates that he came to encounter a different Africa from the one in which he grew. It was an African continent in which mystic powers would demand “human sacrifice” and operate with a highly influential power that is deeply ingrained in the “African cosmology” (Steyne, 1999:13). He once viewed the mystic and ritualistic engagement with sacrifices, libation, divination and sometimes murders as issues that could be abandoned by the practitioners once they experienced good Western education (Steyne, 1999:13). His Western-oriented education gave him a mindset that initially dismissed the realm of the spirit and the people’s conviction of spiritual power as “superstitious” (Steyne, 1999:14).

Steyne acknowledges that he distanced himself from the “deliverance ministries” that some seemed to embark on as he thought that counselling and medicine would suffice in setting people free. He treated issues to do with spiritual power encounters with lots of suspicion (Steyne, 1999:15). As he struggled with effective ways and means of ministering to the people, Steyne went through a paradigm shift in his thinking that enabled him to see what he called the “gods of power” at work among the people in the spirit realm. He viewed it as a “metaphysical culture” that could not be altered by acculturation to “Western social culture” otherwise people would cling to dualism, combining Christianity and traditional religions at the same time (Steyne, 1999:15).

It is this kind of experience that led him to study more about traditional religions and to write and teach on the subject. The journey of Steyne into the arena where his mindset created room for mystical power elements to be existing and in operation, is a journey that some of the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare like C. Peter Wagner and Charles Kraft went through. While Steyne studied and wrote about this world as he understood it to be, the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare seem to have borrowed from this world and developed a technic for spiritual warfare. Steyne on the other hand gives a Christian response that he considers balanced from his theological viewpoint.

Despite the term “*animism*” being questioned and rejected by many, Steyne acknowledges these dissenting voices who view the term as derogatory and insufficient to describe traditional religions but still opts to stick with the term. He argues that the term brings to light the spirit realm that other alternative terms like “primal religion or folk religion or traditional religion or natural religion” cannot capture (Steyne, 1999:16). Steyne views animism as undergirding “all religions, including Christianity” because in these kinds of practices, people are trying to determine their

own destiny, save themselves and control their surroundings (Steyne, 1999:16-17). Albeit he clarifies that is only in cases where people try to outdo God and come up with their own revelations and is not applicable to the entire Christian spectrum ((Steyne, 1999:17).

Steyne gives the root meaning of the word “animism” as the Latin word “*anima*” meaning “breath” or “breath of life” (Steyne, 1999:36). As a result of this the “animist” sees every sector of life as animated by a spiritual dimension (Steyne, 1999:37). Events, calamities and occurrences which take place in the “animists” ‘ space are explained in the light of the mystical powers in the spirit world (Steyne, 1999:38).

Steyne asserts that every person has a religion and that even in the West, where some claim to be irreligious, it is just because of the “narrow” scope of the definition that they give to religion. (Steyne, 1999:22). Steyne defines religion as “a complex system of belief and practice... which is intimately bound up with and integrated into the sociocultural structures of any given group of people.” (Steyne, 1999:23). He also clarifies what he considers to be the difference between a system of philosophy and ethics as opposed to religion, in that religion encourages a relationship with “a power” beyond humanity, while philosophy does not (Steyne, 1999:22). Thus, the definition of religion touches both the “phenomenological and the humanistic” aspects of people’s lives (Steyne, 1999:23).

He further explains that religion may also be an expression of the search by humanity for a supernatural contact beyond one’s self (Steyne, 1999:24). Religion therefore touches on “feelings, behaviour and beliefs” (Steyne, 1999:25). Through religion, people engage in a system of beliefs and practices that enables them to go through the daily vicissitudes of life. At the same time, it offers one an encounter with the sense of the otherness that helps the powerless have an attitude of control on matters beyond their abilities (Steyne, 1999:25-26). Religion also offers cohesive values to a practising community (Steyne, 1999:26).

Steyne adds the psycho-social definition that sees religion as a “system of symbols”. These symbols may be in written form like the Bible or the Koran or even in more oral forms of folklore and myths (Steyne, 1999:27). The beliefs of the community would usually find expression through certain kinds of rituals and adoration as expressed by the adherents (Steyne, 1999:27). Steyne summarizes his definition of religion from the animist point of view as:

... a system of beliefs, feelings and behaviour which issues into rites, rituals, and liturgies. By these he manipulates familiar spirits to provide success, happiness, and security in all life. (Steyne, 1999:28).

He contrasts this definition of religion with what he considers to be a Bible-believing Christian's definition and states it as:

... an ultimate concern with a seeking and self-revealing God, which morally and ethically qualifies all other concerns, which motivates God-centered patterns of life, worship, and mission, and answers the question of the meaning of life (Steyne, 1999:28).

The major difference seems to be that one relies a lot on human effort, while the other seems to attribute a lot to the providence of God. One also notes that in these two definitions, Steyne does not include the moral and ethical aspect in the case of traditional religion and does not acknowledge that the rituals are actually part of the worship process. He similarly does not clarify that just like African Traditional Religion, Christianity also has its own rituals and liturgies which the believers follow. The end result for the traditionalist, according to Steyne's definition, seems to be happiness, while for the Christian, it is a transformed life and acts of mission.

Eugene Nida and William Smalley also assent to the fact that morality or ethics is not a major concern of the "animist" (Nida & Smalley, 1959:54). Their one pursuit is to control the mystical spirit power. Such a person is not even "concerned about seeking the will of his god, but in compelling, entreating, or coercing his god to do his will" (Nida & Smalley, 1959:54). They do not consider that for the traditionalist, morality and ethics may be wrapped up in taboos and norms which safeguard their conduct and which if one breaks, one can easily incur a curse or a calamity.

Nida and Smalley define religion as that which "constitutes a set of beliefs about the unexpected, unpredictable and mysterious – the uncharted region of human experience." (Nida & Smalley, 1959:4). They further explain that this would normally find expression through active participation and involvement of the individual or community (Nida & Smalley, 1959:4). According to Nida and Smalley, religion, and the spirit world in particular, permeates every aspect of the life of the "animist" from "conception to death" and every other daily aspect of living (Nida & Smalley, 1959:55).

From a technical point of view, Nida and Smalley are of the opinion that any belief that involves spirits, whether of the dead or of other non-human categories, is animism. Nida and Smalley however highlight the fact that when the word "animist" or "animistic" is used, this often has the connotation of "primitive religions" with its accompanying characteristics. (Nida & Smalley, 1959:5). Some would find this to be derogatory as .

Nida and Smalley use the evolutionary taxonomy of religions and see animism or paganism as belonging to the lower cadre of religions, while others like Islam, Christianity or Hinduism belong to the “higher religions” in spite of the fact that most of them also believe in spirits. Subsequently they quote a common saying in Southeast Asia which alleges that, “Scratch a Muslim Javanese and you find a Hindu. Scratch the Hindu and you find a pagan.” (Nida & Smalley, 1959:6). In this statement, they are contending that there is a subterranean element in each religion that is the core of the belief of the practitioners and this determines their behaviour more than the surface religious identity (Nida & Smalley, 1959:6).

Nida and Smalley differ with those who question the existence of a religion among the “animists” simply due to lack of a known structured set of doctrines (Nida & Smalley, 1959:55). This is due to the fact that the “animists’ beliefs are so deeply rooted in them, that they act on the beliefs without question. Similarly, religious thoughts occupy most of their lives, perhaps even more than the Christian and his/her faith (Nida & Smalley, 1959:55).

On the other hand, William Oscar Oesterley and Theodore Robinson align themselves with Edward Tylor’s (Tylor, 1924) original definition of animism as “belief, held by man (woman) in a more or less primitive stage of culture that ‘every object which has activity enough to affect him in any way was animated by a life and will like his own’” (Oesterley & Robinson, 1930:4). Oesterley and Robinson, however, make a distinction between objects which have inherent life and activity in themselves and not because of external forces acting on them, which they called “*animatism*” as opposed to those which have some external force or power acting on them, which they referred to as “*animism*”. (Oesterley & Robinson, 1930:5). If belief in external forces and the spirit world was used to define a religion, then African Traditional Religion would be defined from this perspective as “animistic”, although many would object to the use of the term in reference to ATR.

Oesterley and Robinson see *animism* as a more advanced stage of belief than *animatism* since it invokes the supernatural. But here, Oesterley and Robinson show the very negative aspects of their arguments by asserting that people who tend to believe in such matters do not have the “mental capacity for framing them” because it is “yet absent”. (Oesterley & Robinson, 1930:5). This is one of the reasons why the usage of the term animism has been widely rejected in recent days as some use it to downgrade sections of the human race.

Edward Tylor quotes Don Felix de Azara who commented that the natives he found in Latin America did not have any religion at all. They were conceptualizing an organized religion like Christianity or Buddhism, and since they did not see that, they concluded that they did not have

any religion. (Tylor, 1924:419). But Tylor recommends that such views should not be trusted at all (Tylor, 1924:423). Tylor constantly makes reference to those beliefs of “lower races” (Tylor, 1924:420); or those who seemingly have “reached a higher point of view” (Tylor, 1924:420); or referring to the indigenous people that missionaries were dealing with as “savages” (Tylor, 1924:420); or those who had “lower phases of religious belief” (Tylor, 1924:420).

It is these negative views of others that formed his development of the term “*animism*”. Tylor introduces animism as a “doctrine of spiritual beings” as opposed to naturalistic material world (Tylor, 1924:425). He further pointed out that as some held the view that spirit or soul was indwelling the body and causing life; similarly others contended that other activities of the world were also animated by spirits (Tylor, 1924, vol.II:185).

He further explained that

Animism characterized tribes very low in the scale of humanity. And thence ascends, deeply modified in its transmission, but from first to last presenting an unbroken continuity, into the midst of high modern culture (sic) (Tylor, 1924:426).

With these kinds of remarks and sentiments, Tylor betrays a demeaning attitude and views of those who were involved in traditional religions, that was probably borrowed from anthropological evolution that was prevalent in his days as he also talks about “naturalists who support a theory of development of species” (Tylor, 1924:420). These views would consider any engagement with ATR, perhaps as uncivilized and uncultured. This would not necessarily be because of Christianity, but due to the fact that the “tribes” which were involved in this were still “very low in the scale of humanity”, according to Tylor. Whether one is a Hindu or a Buddhist or a Christian or an adherent of ATR does not diminish their humanity. It affects their relationship with God, but they are fully human.

So, although Steyne may prefer the term “*animism*”, yet because of these negative foundational perceptions, it would be better to keep away from using the word “animism” in reference to some people and their religion. Andrew Walls refers to the label “animism” as misleading. In walls opinion, the same evolutionary principle that at some points attributed sections of the human race to be underdeveloped were transferred to the study of religion as well and so religions of such people were considered at a lower stage of the evolutionary ladder. (Walls, 2017:134). Don Richardson in *Eternity in Their Hearts* (Richardson, 1981), highlights the fact that even in what may appear to be a context steeped in ignorance of the true God, God sometimes would find a way of communicating with people about his truth through natural revelation.

Similarly, John Mbiti expresses disaffection with some of these terminologies as he finds them “inadequate, derogatory and prejudicial”. (Mbiti, 2015:7). He points out that “Animism is not an adequate description of these religions and it is better for that term to be abandoned once and for all.” (Mbiti, 2015:7). At the same time Mbiti also rejects the term “primitive religions” as having certain negative connotations. Even using “ancestral worship” does not properly capture the essence of African Traditional Religion as what others conceptualize as “worship” is really a “token of fellowship, hospitality and respect” to the living dead who are ever present with the community (Mbiti, 2015:8). Byang H. Kato differs in his view, as he is of the opinion that this would lead to universalism (Kato, 1975:13-14).

While rejecting the usage of “animism”, care needs to be taken that due to the stigma attached to the word, the process of sanitizing it does not lead to complete embrace of, what otherwise would have been censored due to Christian convictions. In Wilbur O’Donovan’s view,

“Traditional beliefs and practices about ancestral spirits are not from God. They are part of a subtle plan by Satan to deceive people and to bring them under God’s judgement for breaking his commandments.” (O’Donovan, 1997:223).

He is probably referring to Leviticus 19:31 that prohibited the children of Isarel from Consulting the dead, “Do not turn to mediums or wizards; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God”. Similar directives are also recorded in Isaiah 8:19. Perhaps in reaction to this Aloysius M. Lugira introduces a new term which he calls “*Africism*”. According to Lugira, *Africism* is

the system of African religious beliefs, ritual practices, and thought concerning the Supreme Being, suprahuman beings, human beings, and the universe. *Africism* is the *autochthonous* religion and philosophy of Africa (Lugira, 2009:11).

In essence, Lugira is explaining that it is better to call the pre-existing religion of Africans as “*Africism*” rather than “*animism*”. He points out that belief in the spirit world is “*autochthonous*” because it has always been in Africa from the beginning of time and therefore part and parcel of what African religion is (Lugira, 2009:11). Lugira argues that other terms which have been used by others like “*animism*” were used by foreigners who did not have proper conception of the religion of Africa. He borrows the Swahili word “*kujichagulia*” from Maulana Karenga (Karenga, 1998), to emphasize the necessity for “self-determination” even in the terminologies used to define African concepts (Lugira, 2009:11). Others may use terms which may not necessarily capture the right meaning or even be seen as derogatory as the case may be with animism. While “*Africism*”, may not connect easily with the people of Africa, it certainly is great effort in attempting to come up

with a terminology that would be viewed as uniquely and authentically African to rename African Traditional Religion.

On the other hand, Bolaji E. Idowu talks of a world that is struggling to believe that Africa has a religion (Idowu, ix). He underscores African Traditional Religion as that which has been handed down to modern-day Africans by their forefathers who practiced this religion (Idowu, 1973:x). Lamin Sanneh sees religion as constituted by two dimensions: "Thoughts, intentions and actions constitute the personal dimension of religion, while institutions, structures, and organizations constitute the social and public dimensions." (Sanneh, 2003:5). He explains that in the interpretation of scripture into vernacular, the missionary may have learnt from his audience the name of God and then used that to tell him that he had brought him something new (Sanneh, 1997:161). In this assessment, Sanneh does not capture the spirit realm and the mystical power aspects on which Steyne puts a lot of emphasis and that is a major focus of this study

Questions have been raised whether it is the duration that a particular religion has been in existence in Africa or its origins or even practices that would make it be qualified to be called African Traditional Religion. Thomas C. Oden protests the exclusion of Christianity and the other Abrahamic originated faiths (Islam and Judaism) from being considered as African Traditional Religion. He asserts that the "Africaneity of Christianity" should not be put into question since it existed in the continent long before it got to Europe or America (Oden, 2011:292-293). In his view African Traditional Religions also had written documentations which have been ignored over the years as people chose to consider ATR as mainly oral (Oden, 2011:292). While the number of years is important, but what one would consider as authentically Africa Traditional Religion is not only originating from the continent, but also that which is deeply embedded in the culture and the psyche of the people.

Steyne underscores the importance of religion by projecting it as the "cement that holds together all the facets of human society" (Steyne, 1999:29). In Steyne's view, religion brings together the sacred element and the human roles of "manipulative and supplicative" by use of sacred sites and designated paraphernalia of worship (Steyne, 1999:30). He recommends that Christians should respect the religions of others, including the traditional religions, as a negative attitude of disrespect would lead a Christian convert from these religions to show a similar kind of disrespect to Christianity even after he has converted (Steyne, 1999:30). Steyne himself served as a missionary and pastor and strongly propagated evangelism and conversion to Christianity (*Lessons from a Life of Ministry- Dr. Phil Steyne*, 2021; Steyne, 1999:212-218).

In a similar manner, Richard Gehman, who himself studied the beliefs of the traditional Kamba people in Kenya, emphasizes the necessity of studying African Traditional Religion because it represents a large part of the population of the world and still shapes the worldview and actions of large number of people in the continent (Gehman, 2005:11). Gehman poses a critical question when he asks,

Why do Christians resort to the traditional religion in times of need? Is this merely a sinful relapse brought on by the devil, or can we learn some felt needs which the church has not yet satisfied with its present approach to ministry and teaching? Where does the scripture speak to the problems facing African Christians? (Gehman, 2005:13).

In examining the issue of continuity or discontinuity, Steyne advocates for the retention and safeguarding of those elements in the traditional religion which are transferable to Christianity as they would play a major role in creating a balance in a community or in the life of an individual (Steyne, 1999:30). However, in his view every sector has to be “invaded” by the Gospel in order to avert dualism (Steyne, 1999:30).

Steyne has certainly maintained an aspect of respect in studying African traditional religion and even gone to the extent of pointing out that there might even be some lessons to learn from this. While the danger of hybridity remains, yet insights into people’s religious beliefs can offer opportunities of engaging them with the Gospel. Dismissing them outrightly would sometimes lock the door and hinder a dialogue that could lead into Christian influence and impact.

4.3.2 African Traditional Religion: Historical Development

Although African Traditional Religion does not have a founder, but the process of its recognition has, particularly in academic circles has been slow. Andrew Walls speaks of evolutionary thoughts which crossed over from biology into other disciplines including religion and points out that religious circles were divided into two categories: the higher religions, which were considered to be developed and had philosophies and developed systems, as opposed to the lower religions which were under-developed, had no philosophy or literature. Among the higher religions were Hinduism Buddhism, Zoroastrianism Judaism, Christianity and Islam. On the other hand religious manifestations in Africa, in the Pacific islands and among the forest and mountain people in Asia

and the Americas belonged to the second category which was viewed as of lower evolutionary ranking (Walls, 2017:134).

Oden suggests that African Traditional Religion also had some texts:

“In the Maghreb, African Traditional Religions were commonly conveyed by both oral and written means. But the written records, epigraphy, papyrus and stone artifacts that have survived are vast.” (Oden, 2011:292)

This would point to the fact that even African Traditional Religion had some written texts and should not be dismissed as not having scriptures, although Oden does not give indicate what some of these ancient records are.

When Ibadan University was set up in 1947 in Nigeria, students and potential students demanded that a department of religious studies be created. To lead this department Geoffrey Parrinder who had earlier on written a book entitled *West African Religion* (Parrinder, 1949), was asked to set up the department's first syllabus and he included three subject areas: Old Testament, New Testament and African Traditional Religion. He was the one who first coined the phrase "African Traditional Religion" in reference to the kind of religious systems he had observed among the Africans (Walls, 2017:139).

Walls quotes Parrinder as saying

My understanding of African Traditional Religion (a term that I may claim to have invented and that others have used) was partly shaped by study of the historical and literary religions. It seemed important to consider African religion in the manner of the study of World Religions and there were many parallels for example with the gods and customs of ancient Egypt or Greece or with modern Hinduism. There are problems with this approach but also advantages in that African religion is not taken as isolated from the rest of the World or scorned as mere fetishism or superstition but as having its own traditions and history even where unwritten, and with its social and personal characteristics (Walls, 2017:139).

It does appear then, that the study of African Traditional Religion as an academic discipline started from West Africa and then spread throughout the whole world. In Walls' view this was an excellent idea as it augured well with the thoughts on African "identity" and "decolonization" sentiments that were sweeping across the continent then (Walls, 2017:140).

According to Walls, Parrinder also pointed out the sense of the "transcendent" in African religion by highlighting what he considered to be a "four-dimensional sphere consisting of God, divinities,

ancestors and manifestations of power" (Walls, 2017:141). Walls asserts that, "African Christians are now studying the pre-Christian religion of Africa not simply denouncing it but seeing god there" (Walls, 2017:141). In this, he is arguing for continuity rather than discontinuity. Walls points to the fact that while the Hindu and Buddhist scriptures were being studied in the West by academicians, the religions of Africa and other societies thought of as "primitive" or "undeveloped" and sometimes labelled as "animism" were not given due consideration (Walls, 2017:134).

At some point it was considered that the stages of religious development begun with "animism, the belief in spirits, animatism, polydaemonism" which then led to polytheism. Subsequently this was followed by henotheism which eventually led to ethical monotheism from where the religious groups like Israel drew their faith (Walls, 2017:134). When it comes to the African and other religious entities from the Pacific region and the First Nations in America, they initially appeared in scholarly circles mainly as a portion of the history of humanity (Walls, 2017:135).

Although it appears that Steyne also affirms this classification of religions by making reference to "world religions" and "tribal religions", in the end he adds a significant insight. He points out that the tribal religions are those that hold to the belief that there are spirits that inhabit the world and human beings can engage with them in order to alter the course of life. These spirits would also include the spirits of the dead (Steyne, 1999:44). In Steyne's view, this kind of religion permeates every aspect of the life of the adherents (Steyne, 1999:44).

But Steyne also contends that all the so-called higher religions have also reflected "animistic" characteristics in some of their practices. As such, ancestral veneration was replaced by making supplications to and through the saints in sections of the Christian fraternity (Steyne, 1999:47).

On the other hand, "world religions" would normally be distinguished by having a founder, sacred writings, structures of worship and some organized statements of faith or systems of belief. At the same time they would also have specialists like pastors, Imams or gurus who would teach and entrench these same beliefs (Steyne, 1999:44). But Steyne observes that the classification of religions into high religion and low religion may not be applicable to "animistic" practices. The reason he gives is that all religions, with the exception of biblical Christianity (which is not very highly practiced in its pure form) have levels of "animistic influence" (Steyne, 1999:45).

As such Steyne is of the opinion that all religions may have a measure of syncretism and it is only the degree that varies (Steyne, 1999:45). In his discussion of the varying degrees of syncretism,

Steyne highlights the ways in which human beings attempt to control their environment (Steyne, 1999:45). He postulates that even the so-called higher religions have some animistic characteristics in some of their practices. He is of the opinion that in a kind of replacement theology, ancestral veneration was substituted by making supplications through the saints in sections of the Christian church. The saints play the same kind of intermediary role that was played by the ancestors in this section of Christianity. (Steyne, 1999:47). It is important to note that the Pentecostals do not subscribe to this view.

Quoting Dudley Woodberry, Steyne also traces similar “animistic” practices in Islam (Steyne, 1999:49-50), in Buddhism and in Hinduism (Steyne, 1999:51-54). He considers folk Buddhism to be in constant contact with the spirit world (Steyne, 1999:52). The Hindu member likewise is engaged with temple rituals which are meant to appease the gods (Steyne, 1999:53). This can be attested to by the former Hindu practitioner, Rabi Maharaj, in his book *The Death of a Guru* in which he states how he was viciously attacked by spirits when he disobeyed them (Maharaj et al., 1977).

The percentage of “purity” of each religion that makes the whole, determines the level of syncretism in the faith. This is perhaps why Steyne inferred that there may be no pure religion (Steyne, 1999:47), but one would perhaps add, only religion in context. This can be captured in the chart below.

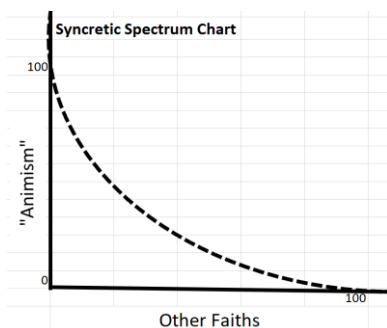


Figure 10: Syncretic Spectrum Chart- Adapted from Steyne (Steyne, 1999:46-48).

Kwesi Dickson, in *Theology in Africa*, affirms that religions were classified in two classes with those that did not have what was considered as organized belief systems being relegated to the periphery as lower religion; African Traditional Religion belonged to this category (Dickson, 1984:31). African Traditional Religion also belonged to the category which was considered as “primitive or “nature” religion and thus did not warrant research or studies (Dickson, 1984:31).

Clifford Geertz explicates that religion is part of culture which he sees as consisting of symbols and forms which humanity uses to communicate in order to make life meaningful (Geertz, 1973:89). He negates the reality of the novelty of religion in helping one to engage with what he calls the “cosmic order” (Geertz, 1973:90). He further defines religion as

(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivation in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (Geertz, 1973:90).

In this definition Geertz misses the significant element of the spirit world or the sense of the other that is so pertinent to religious belief and practice. When religion is reduced to a cultural practice alone, it does not do justice to the definition of religion. Neither does it capture the reverence that practitioners would normally express as they acknowledge a Supreme Being that Rudolf Otto referred to as “creature-consciousness” (Otto, 1926:10).

Otto further emphasized that religion entails a deep sense of awe reflected by the devotee which Otto again referred to as “*mysterium tremendum*”. In this he was alluding to the hidden source of dread (trembling) that would overtake one when in the presence of the Supreme Being (Otto, 1926:12-24). Geertz does not capture this aspect of religion in his definition, which perhaps has taken a more anthropological perspective that leaves out the supernatural dimension of religion.

From the various discussions on the nature of African Traditional Religion, one can conclude that Africans do have a religion that is referred to as African Traditional Religion and that in any community in Africa, it is pre-existent to any other foreign religion. In some parts of Africa ATR had its written form whether on stone artifacts or papyrus. One can also affirm that ATR has a sense of the otherness that acknowledges a supreme being but is also in contact with the spirit world. While its study may have had a slow beginning, its reality is evident by the way it has survived and even permeated the other faiths which have come into contact with it leading to syncretism. In Christianity this has led to dualism or hybridity within the church.

John Mbiti is of the opinion that one should consider the religions of Africa as existing in plural form since they encompass the multitude of religious practices encountered in the diverse African communities. As such he prefers talking of “African traditional religions” (Mbiti, 2015:1). However, this study views a common thread as running through African Traditional Religion and therefore uses the singular format. John Mbiti also highlights this idea when he points out that although different communities have different names of God and how they engage with him in the

continent of Africa, his attributes remains fairly the same (Mbiti, 2015a:31-32). In Turaki's view four characteristics or functions of African Traditional Religion are critical in its engagement. These entail the personal, sociocultural, phenomenal and the supernatural (Turaki, 2006:18). He is also of the opinion that African Traditional Religion is not a "cognitive oriented system, with esoteric doctrines and strict rules or regulations", but more of an existential and experimental religion." (Turaki, 2006:19).

Turaki highlights one possible cause of hybridity as the fact that a "traditional religious system" does not easily give way to new religious concepts, unless the new addresses the social-psychological "needs as the older religion" (Turaki, 2006:19). In Africa this would be true of the introduction of any "new belief whether Christianity, Islam or modernism." (Turaki, 2006:19). An expectation that handing over a set of doctrines or regulation to someone would remove their innate convictions, would perhaps result just in a veneer of the new on top of the inner convictions of the old which would remain intact. Turaki explains that this can be overcome by clear understanding both of the old and new religion and how they relate (Turaki, 2006:19-20).

In his assessment of Henry Callaway's book, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu* (Callaway, 1884), Andrew Walls points out that Callaway did not seek to replace Zulu tradition with Christianity but made attempts to graft Christianity on to Zulu tradition religion, thus, changing only what was clearly incompatible with Christian belief (Walls, 2017:132). This would be similar to what has been referred to in missions circles as the "Insider Movement" where a person converts to Christianity but retains their socio-cultural background (Talman & Travis, 2015). But this also points to selective continuity that is similar to what some of the practitioners of spiritual warfare are doing when they borrow from pre-existing religions.

This perhaps, would be close to what Mbiti refers to as "religious concubinage" when African Traditional Religion encounters other religious entities like Christianity and Islam. Mbiti asserts that the outcome is "acculturation." (Mbiti, 2015:260). In "religious concubinage", Mbiti seems to be referring to a sort of universalism where there seems to be a merger or an acceptance of the other faiths without critical evaluation with such statements as, "All religions are the same." Mbiti is critical of this attitude as he explains that it may be caused by "religious laziness" that does not want to make a serious commitment (Mbiti, 2015:260).

In acculturation, Mbiti seems to be making reference to a kind of syncretism which he considers as "partial giving and partial receiving, partial withholding and partial rejection" when Christianity engages with African Traditional Religion (Mbiti, 2015:20). In the encounterology between

Christianity and African Traditional Religion, Mbiti is of the view that the impact has been shallow upon the Africans due to the fact that it has not touched the whole person (Mbiti, 2015:259). Mbiti quotes F.B. Welbourn and B.A. Ogot in *Religion and Myth: A Place to Feel at Home: A Study of Two Independent Churches in Western Kenya (1968)* (Melbourn & Ogot, 1968) who wrote in 1968 that the church had failed to make an impact in Africa due to the fact that it propagated mainly a Western brand of Christianity that was not at home in the continent of Africa (Mbiti, 2015:234). Writing in 1968, one could have made a statement like that, which cannot stand today since Christianity has left a significant impact in Africa.

In Mbiti's opinion, this kind of Christianity did not take the necessary steps "to incorporate ancestors and witches, song and dance, into the Christian scheme." (Mbiti, 2015:234). It is the considered opinion of Mbiti that Christianity in Africa was superficial and seems to be lacking answers to real issues which are facing Africans (Mbiti, 2015:235). Mbiti asserts that this kind of Christianity does not convert the "cultural substratum" (Mbiti, 2015:235). This model of Christianity has not penetrated deep enough into the African religious psyche (Mbiti, 2015:235). Of course, what Mbiti might be referring to is sections of the Western church as the ideas this study is grappling with would show that there is another side to the Western Church which might have swung the pendulum to the other extreme in its identity with elements in African Traditional Religion.

Mbiti seems to belong to the category of those who use the often-quoted phrase that Christianity in Africa is one mile long and one inch deep. While those who often use this phrase make reference to discipleship matters including depth in the word of God, Mbiti seems to offer an alternative explanation why this may be the case. In his opinion it is because the church has not incorporated issues of "ancestors and witches" in its schema. This would not strengthen the church but weaken it, if its doctrines were merged with teachings of African Traditional Religion which are contrary to the Word of God. Even where there are suggestions for continuity, it should always be under the tutelage of the Christian scriptures.

This idea of a merger of religious beliefs is also reflected by Andrew Walls when he makes reference to Edwin W. Smith's book, *The African Ideas of God: A Symposium* (E. W. Smith, 1951). Walls points out that Smith was among the earliest Christian anthropologists to "link up pre-Christian religion with that of African Christianity" (Walls, 2017:136). Contrary to the then popular view that the Africans who became Christians would adopt Western lifestyles, Smith highlighted the fact that African Christianity was likely to be more vibrant and energized than the one in the

West (Walls, 2017:136). The belief in a supreme God was shown to be quite widespread across the continent even before the advent of Christianity (E. W. Smith, 1951).

In essence what Walls was affirming as the outcome of Smith's "prophecy" was that a version of Christianity that would identify with the felt needs of Africa, would actually spread widely, rather than decline as some had assumed. This may explain the rapid growth of Pentecostalism in Africa (Cox, 2009) and the spread of spiritual warfare teachings as well. It is important therefore to look at some of the pertinent beliefs of African Traditional Religion to see whether such a continuity is possible.

4.3.3 African Traditional Religion: Beliefs, Identity and Philosophy

Mystical powers in the African context form part and parcel of African Traditional Religion and therefore it is important to examine these beliefs. African Traditional Religion has gone through a process of acknowledgement leading into the current development in its study across the world. This has shown that it has its philosophies, beliefs and even identity. Naar M'fundisi-Holloway explains that African Traditional Religion was in existence even before the Europeans and Arabs affected and suppressed their expression in the continent. These expressions were intrinsically connected to the spirit world (M'fundisi-Holloway, 2018:87). But M'fundisi-Holloway, raises certain questions which are pertinent to this study in the dialogue between Pentecostalism and Africa Traditional Religion:

Has there been a level of negotiation in their interface for compromise and incorporation, or has this collision been mainly antagonistic? Did they make hybrids of ATR that incorporated aspects of Pentecostalism? Did they dominate or resist these religions? (M'fundisi-Holloway, 2018:87).

To answer these questions one needs to comprehend the span and the scope of African Traditional Religion. African Traditional Religion can be viewed as that which is original and authentic to the African people and the continent of Africa. In explaining the meaning of African Traditional Religion, M'fundisi-Holloway refers to it as community-based religious exercises which are ingrained within the African culture and could touch on ancestral veneration and the use of certain paraphernalia in the act of worship (M'fundisi-Holloway, 2018:88).

Scholars like Aloysius Lugira have thought that new terminologies might give a better understanding. He argues for a "geo-ontological approach" to the naming of African religion which

in his view will bring out the sense of belonging anchored in the geographical placement. As such the word “*Africism*” captures both the origin and the identity when used in reference to the religion of Africa. He elucidates that “*Africism* reflects a geographical belongingness to Africa because this is where the religious and thought system of concern here, originates.” (Lugira, 2009:12).

But it is not only the geographical delineation and the people’s commitment that define African Traditional Religion. It also has a set of beliefs which are a marker of its identity. Yusufu Turaki sets out the foundational beliefs which are the bedrock of African traditional religious systems as: “(1) the belief in impersonal (mystical) power(s); (2) the belief in spirit beings; (3) the belief in divinities/gods and (4) the belief in the Supreme Being.” (Turaki, 2000:1). In *Foundations of African Traditional Religion and Worldview*, he adds a fifth one which is a “belief in hierarchy of spiritual beings and powers” (Turaki, 2006:23). Turaki sees these as the basis upon which “the theological, philosophical, moral and ethical” beliefs are based (Turaki, 2000:1). The theological approach that Christians adopt must therefore go beyond biblical proof-texting to addressing these deep foundational tenets. It is upon these foundations that the mystical and mysterious power beliefs are grounded (Turaki, 2000:4). These beliefs then form part and parcel of everyday living in the traditional African setting where these results into practices that guide some actions or demands some kind of responses, like appeasing the spirits.

Turaki asserts that the belief in a universal God and Creator among Africans has been well established (Turaki, 2006:28). At the top of the hierarchy is the Creator, named differently in different communities, according to Turaki (Turaki, 2000:5). Then “the deities, object-embodied spirits, ancestors’ spirits and other miscellaneous spirits that are non-human, comprising both good or harmless spirits and evil spirits.” (Turaki, 2000:5). Humanity is therefore engaged in this arena with a plethora of spiritual beings as they continue to interact in both the natural and the supernatural realm.

Due to this fact, it is the mandate of the “theologian” to relate these beliefs with the day-by-day experiences of the African, who in their mind are aware that they are interacting with these mystical spiritual powers. Turaki is of the opinion that a Bible verse alone would not suffice, but a theological system that is deeply Christian, and at the same time takes into account these foundational African beliefs (Turaki, 2000:4). In a similar manner, John Mbiti also indicates the existence of a hierarchical order in African traditional belief system involving God, the creator at the apex; then divinities and spirits which are more powerful than human beings; followed by the

living-dead or ancestors or those who were once fully human and at the tail end are human beings (Mbiti, 2015:202-203).

Richard J. Gehman, who conducted his research among the Kamba community of Kenya, echoes the same thoughts in the preface to his book *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective*. He states that African Traditional Religious beliefs can be categorized into three sections which include "Supreme Being, the spirit world ... and mystical powers" (Gehman, 2005:xi). Gehman stresses the necessity for Christians to think "Christianly" so as to have their minds constantly influenced by the biblical worldview. According to him, this should be the gauge and the standard that is used to determine what truth or error is (Gehman, 2005:xii). Although Gehman makes the statement that, in sub-Saharan Africa, Christianity has been embraced in slightly over one hundred years to the extent that African Traditional Religion is no longer the predominant faith (Gehman, 2005:3), he also acknowledges the fact that both Christianity and Western thought or modernity have left the deep seated African traditional worldview intact. According to him, it appears that Africans are capable of holding both Christianity and Western worldview simultaneously with African traditional religious beliefs (Gehman, 2005:5-6).

Gehman would perhaps be surprised today to discover that there is a resurgence or a kind of a return to African Traditional Religion even within Kenya itself, where it seems most of his research was conducted. Perhaps it just went underground and gave the impression that it was getting obliterated, when in actual fact it was just dormant (Ng'ang'a, 2019). He however acknowledges the widespread revival of African Traditional Religion which he views as a cultural practice (Gehman, 2005:11). In Gehman's words, a belief in mystical powers is a "daily" experience for many in the continent of Africa (Gehman, 2005:85).

Gehman, following Codrington, calls this mystical power as "impersonal supernatural power that pervades the universe" and equates it to "*mana*" (Gehman, 2005:85). Such powers determine the success or failures that one would encounter in their lives and in their endeavours (Gehman, 2005:85). He notes that this belief entails determinism that holds that nothing happens by chance as all are engineered by the life-force or this mystical power (Gehman, 2005:86).

Gehman narrates a highly publicized court case in Kenya that exemplified the battle between modern day common law against African traditional belief in a Luo burial saga in Kenya (the researcher comes from this community). The court ruled in favour of African traditional belief. The judges agreed with the Luo community clan leaders that the spirit of the deceased would haunt those who were left behind if he was not buried in his ancestral land (Gehman, 2005:8-10). This

shows how entrenched the belief in the spirit world is to the extent a modern-day court would determine a ruling based on this belief.

Gehman affirms the African traditional religious belief in a hierarchy of powers with God at the apex, then divinities, and spirits including ancestral spirits. At the bottom of the rank are animals and plants (Gehman, 2005:87). In Gehman's opinion, the purpose of African religion is utility based and as such one is engrossed in obtaining greater mystical power that would assure one of "health, wealth and status in life" (Gehman, 2005:87). This mystical power is both good and evil and can be used to achieve positive and negative outcomes in one's life or in the lives of others (Gehman, 2005:87).

In a similar manner, Philip Steyne defines the structure of the belief of the traditionalist as consisting of a belief in: 1) impersonal mystical power which is called "*mana*" or life force; 2) spirit beings which inhabit places, objects or people, including the dead; 3) the existence of many gods which share power or maintain a hierarchical order; 4) a Supreme Being, which exists above all the other deities (Steyne, 1999:34-35). He draws the conclusion that the "animist" is "simultaneously pantheistic, polytheistic and deistic" (Steyne, 1999:35).

Sections of the continental authors would disagree with Steyne on the issue of polytheism and pantheism. People like Yusufu Turaki, would assert that in Africa there is monotheism and what is referred to as "deities" are actually "divinities" which act as intermediaries between the individual and the Supreme Being (Turaki, 2006:26). Others who would argue in a similar manner are John S. Mbiti in *African Religions and Philosophy* (Mbiti, 2015a) and Bolaji E. Idowu in *African Traditional Religion* (Idowu, 1975).

Debate continues to rage with some rejecting the term "polytheism" with reference to the worship of many gods in the African context, for some of these are seen as "divinities" who are intermediaries rather than gods (Mbiti, 2015:7). One might argue that it is a question of semantics whether divinities is not an alternative word for gods. Turaki points to the conviction of some, that what Africans do is veneration of the divinities and ancestors rather than worshipping them (Turaki, 2000:7). He further explains that divinities were responsible for various areas of the community life ranging from rain, harvest, health and fertility, among many others. Due to their diversity even within the same community, Turaki highlights the possible windows for dialogue with others and says:

The plurality of the divinities with their varying powers, influence, hierarchy, territoriality, even within one ethnic group or community, says a lot about the African religions, worship, beliefs and practices. This leaves an open door for religious accommodation, tolerance, assimilation and adaptation within the traditional religious thought.”(Turaki, 2000:8).

In Turaki’s opinion, the advent of Christianity may have introduced “henotheism” to the African believers. He explains that this is “the worship of one god without denying the existence of other gods” (Turaki, 2006:27). He further clarifies that this would portend no sense of conflict to the theological system of such a believer as one’s life would accommodate and easily adjust to such an arrangement (Turaki, 2006:27). Due to the existence of plural “divinities”, Turaki sees the grounds for the belief in both “hierarchy and territoriality” (Turaki, 2006:27) as seen taught among those who emphasize on strategic level spiritual warfare.

Turaki points to the close link that exists between the spirit beings and the “mystical or impersonal powers and forces” which are in operation and more or less are engaged in attempts to influence human life on a day-by-day basis. These same mystical powers supernaturally endue individuals in the area of magic, witchcraft and sorcery among many other areas (Turaki, 2000:6). It is this belief in the mystical powers, combined with individuals who hunger to operate in this realm and to control human affairs, that has produced the many “specialists such as medicine-men, rainmakers, mediums, diviners, sorcerers, magicians and witches. Superstitions, totems, taboos and rituals grew out of such beliefs.” (Turaki, 2000:6).

Turaki however, sees the belief in the impersonal mystical powers and the belief in the spirit beings as much stronger than the belief in divinities which is not as widespread. Similarly, the belief in a Supreme being is acknowledged, but not frequently engaged with, for such a being is seen more as transcendent rather than an immanent one with whom one can have a vibrant relationship. “The Supreme Being seems to be far remote or less functional in the traditional African everyday life.” (Turaki, 2000:10).

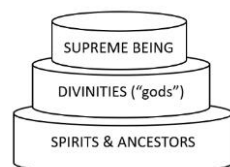


Figure 11: ATR hierarchical beliefs in the spirit world

The necessity to distinguish what is cultural and what is “animistic” (what is empowered by mystical powers) and the criteria one uses is quite important. This would be such that the entire contextualised religion is not thrown away as “animistic”. Perhaps a possible criterion for acceptance or rejection should be the question whether contact has been made with what would be deemed as evil spirits or negative mystical powers. Cultural expressions should therefore not be viewed in a negative way, particularly those which can be redeemed to worship and honour the true God.

In examining the beliefs of *Africism*, Lugira expounds on the belief of a Supreme Being, who was at the apex of a pyramidal hierarchy of the faith (Lugira, 2009:12). This Supreme Being has been recognized through transmitted “folklore from generation to generation” and through the oral education by sages who speak wise words through a “depository of African mythology, legends, proverbs, riddles, tales, songs, names, artfulness, ritualistic performances, and so on.” (Lugira, 2009:12). In essence Lugira is explaining that this is how *Africism* is documented.

Lugira acknowledged that due to the diversity in the continent, the Supreme Being is given different names (Lugira, 2009:12). Both Kwame Bediako in *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of Non-Western Religion* (Bediako, 1995) and Lamin Sanneh in *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Sanneh, 1997) also affirm this position. Even though there may be multiplicity of names used in reference to the Supreme Being, Lugira points to the unity that is in existence and concludes that in the African concept of God, there is monotheism. “Because monotheism is the recognition of the existence of one God, so, *Africism* is a monotheistic religion.” (Lugira, 2009:12).

In addition, Lugira observes another category of entities that form the belief systems of Africism: these are “Suprahuman beings”. The deities, secondary gods and sometimes ancestors make up this group. These categories should not be confused with the Supreme Being as these form intermediaries between human beings and the Supreme Being (Lugira, 2009:12). When the deities are recognized together in a community as is the case in some communities then one can speak of *pantheon*- deities which operate in a group (Lugira, 2009:12).

This is not necessarily *polytheism* where there are many gods, as, in this case, the one Supreme Being is unchallenged at the apex of reverence and therefore *monotheism* is maintained (Lugira, 2009:12). Lugira explains that this kind of belief is better referred to as *henotheism* where there is a belief in the existence of “secondary deities and lesser spirits” without diluting the monotheism and the belief in the one Supreme Being (Lugira, 2009:12).

Placides Tempels hierarchical list of beings and their order deviates a bit from that which other African scholars would give. For Tempels, at the top of the hierarchy is the Creator, followed by ancient ancestors and then recent ancestors and then living humanity at the bottom of the list in a descending order (Tempels, 1959:41-42). But Tempels does not mention divinities and spirits, whether benevolent or malevolent as other African writers would indicate (Mbiti, 2015; Bediako, 1995; Turaki, 2006). He further asserts that “the true Chief ... is as God himself” (Tempels, 1959:42). It is difficult to come across an African culture where a living Chief is considered as God. Just as the diviners might be considered as representatives of God, a Chief might also be considered as such, but not “as God himself” as Tempels asserts.

On Tempel’s hierarchical order, he places the “white man” on a higher level than the African on the grounds that the African’s perception of the white man due to their technological advancement were superior to Africans (Tempels, 1959:44). This rather racial argument is unfortunate for a document that was written for white colonialists and coming from the pen of a priest.

While spirits do not appear in his ontological hierarchical order, Tempels explains that one can be possessed by a deceased ancestor or spirit (Tempels, 1959:57). He, therefore, acknowledges the operation of spirits as ancestral spirits, rather than autonomous spirits. He also denies the existence of the supernatural among Africans. The only reference he makes of spirits is “tutelary spirits of hunting”, which do not appear in his hierarchy of spiritual entities. He explains that, “These are spirits akin to the wind, which have no material existence, have never been man, bear no human names and are not born into the human race” (Tempels, 1959:104). He even acknowledges that one may offer sacrifices and other offerings to such a spirit to appease them (Tempels, 1959:104).

In Lugira’s opinion, *Africism* also consist of a belief in oneness among human beings with an expression of compassion and kindness for others. He calls this *Ubuntu* (Lugira, 2009:13). This can be expressed in the words of John Mbiti who described the sense of community between fellow human beings with the phrase, “I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.” (Mbiti, 2015:106). Therefore, the community “rites, practices, customs and ceremonies” are all part of the religious exercise and community identity (Lugira, 2009:13). Apart from this, *Africism* also holds a clear belief in God as the Creator of the universe, according to Lugira (Lugira, 2009:13).

Matthew Mwalw’a also advances that African belief in a Supreme being has always been there (Mwalw’a, 2017:24). He further states that this belief was beneficial to the spread of the Gospel as

it offered a rich ground where the gospel could easily germinate. The need was therefore only the clarity of the message as to the characteristics of who God actually was (Mwalw'a, 2017:27).

In Mbiti's view "the spiritual world of African peoples is very densely populated with spiritual beings, spirits and the living-dead." (Mbiti, 2015:73). In spite of the significant space that the spiritual world occupies in the African context, Mbiti is of the opinion that this space has not been subjected to sufficient studies (Mbiti, 2015:73). Perhaps Mbiti would have preferred studies in subject matters like witchcraft and the rest from an African perspective. He does not acknowledge similar studies based on biblical understand of such subjects. He expresses concern in what he refers to as "detrribalisation", which he explains as the erosion of traditional African community identities as a result of the intrusion of new cultural dynamics (Mbiti, 2015:215).

Mbiti considers the African identity as going through a process with a shift from culture based "Negritude" (Mbiti, 2015:263) to "Africanity" (Mbiti, 2015:264-265) or "African personality" (Mbiti, 2015:265). This identity has also often taken a political ideological angle with the rallying call for unification of Africa in what has been referred to as "Pan-Africanism" (Mbiti, 2015:265). Kwame Nkrumah emphasised this unity among Africans (Nkrumah et al., 1963).

Mbiti, however, insists that at the very core of African identity is religion. He therefore, asserts that "to be, is to be religious in a religious universe" (Mbiti, 2015:258). For ingrained in the "myths, customs, traditions, beliefs, morals, actions and social relationships" is the religious base of the African (Mbiti, 2015:258). Although African Traditional Religion may have encountered opposing worldviews, whether Christianity, Islam or modernity, it may have only gone underground, but has not been obliterated (Mbiti, 2015:258). Thus it still plays a major role in the formation of both individual and community identities (Mbiti, 2015:258). According to Mbiti, even the modern changes that are experienced by Africans are viewed through the African religious worldview by individuals who are in search of religious fulfilment (Mbiti, 2015:258-259).

Mbiti describes those who do not take seriously the belief in mystical powers in Africa as ignorant, propagating falsehood and exhibiting extreme prejudice and derogatory mannerism (Mbiti, 2015:191). In his opinion, every African who has been raised in the traditional setting would be acquainted with the belief in mystical powers as portrayed through "magic, divination, witchcraft and mysterious phenomena" (Mbiti, 2015:191). He narrates about a European, a Mr. Neal, whose worldview was so integrated to the African worldview that he even consulted African medicine men both for treatment and to ward off evil attacks by mystical powers (Mbiti, 2015:192). This

European, is an example of one whose encounterology with the host culture altered his worldview to the extent he became acculturated to the concept of mystical powers and their realities.

In Mbiti's consideration, the belief in mystical powers has pervaded the whole African landscape to the extent he pronounces that "there is no African society which does not hold belief in mystical power of one type or another." (Mbiti, 2015:194). These mystical powers can be transmitted through the words of authority figures, whether parents or traditional healers and such words would be quite efficacious in procuring either a curse or a blessing. Such words can also avert community disasters (Mbiti, 2015:194). Sometimes people would try to manipulate these mystical powers through objects like "charms, amulets, powder, rags, feathers, figures" or even through "incantation" or lacerating their bodies (Mbiti, 2015:195).

While some would see the objects themselves as having inherent mystical powers, others acknowledge that these paraphernalia are just conduits of the powers which originally came from God or spirits or ancestral spirits. In Mbiti's view "at this point, religion and magic merge..." (Mbiti, 2015:196). As such these mystical powers *are* spiritual powers, according to Mbiti (Mbiti, 2015:196). In the distribution of these powers, the elders would tend to access more of these powers either because of age or through accumulated objects (Mbiti, 2015:196).

Earlier on, in the study there was an indication that the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare emphasize on transmission of demonic spirits through objects and artifacts among other means of demonic influence. From the African context, this would not be too different from what Mbiti is talking about. In an unpublished paper delivered to African leaders in Addis Ababa on 16th November 2023, Rubin Pohor, coming from West Africa, expressed his view that a proper conception of "African traditional religious system (is) the basis of understanding Christian spiritual warfare within an African context." (Pohor, 2023:n.p.). The authors of strategic level spiritual warfare, therefore, seems to "merge religion and magic" at this point.

Although Mbiti opines that these mystical powers are neutral in as far as ethics is concerned, he also acknowledges that they can be used to procure good or evil (Mbiti, 2015:202). In the hands of sorcerers, witchdoctors and magicians, these powers can do harm and would be referred to either as "black magic" or "evil magic" or "sorcery" (Mbiti, 2015:197). Due to the fear of witchcraft, Elijah Baloyi explains that evangelical Pentecostals "capitalise on this to capture the attention of the people" (Baloyi, 2018:316). In his view:

“The traditional denial and demonization of witchcraft by most western theologies did not make witchcraft disappear, but opened the door for Pentecostal evangelicals to use it as an invitation to people to come to their churches.” (Baloyi, 2018:316).

The way Baloyi has expressed his statement, one is left thinking that some evangelical Pentecostal churches are actually practising witchcraft, which would be contrary to the Biblical understanding of most Pentecostal churches. What perhaps, he means, is that some Pentecostals use the subject of witchcraft either in their announcements or in their preaching in the African context, where they offer deliverance from the effect and fear of witchcraft.

Baloyi is not the only one who sees witchcraft as “positive evangelical pentecostal tool” (Baloyi, 2018) for some Pentecostal churches and movements, others have also raised the same issue. In *Pentecostalism and Witchcraft: Spiritual warfare in Africa and Melanesia*, edited by Knut Rio, Michelle Maccarthy, Ruy Blanes (Rio et al., 2017), the various authors take a panoramic look across Africa and Melanesia and asserts that there seems to be a symbiotic relationship between Pentecostalism and witchcraft where at some points they are opponents and occasionally affirming the other. Sasha Newell argues that Pentecostals are not only involved in combating witchcraft, “but they are in themselves a new form of witchcraft discourse” (Newell, 2007b:462).

These new “baptism” on Pentecostals as acquiring a new identity similar to those practising witchcraft, needs to be debunked based on three reasons. First, Pentecostalism, especially in Africa spans a wide spectrum and may not be similar in practice and belief and therefore it is important to always qualify such a statement but pointing out that this is only relevant to some Pentecostals. Secondly, many Pentecostals would outrightly oppose witchcraft as demonic and occultic and would not want to be associated with such claims. Thirdly, most Pentecostals would view witchcraft as contrary to scripture and therefore would reject witchcraft. For purposes of this study as has been observed, there may be some characteristics among the practitioners of strategic level spiritual warfare that would look similar to those observed among practitioners of witchcraft.

The issue of identity among Africans, through African Traditional Religion, is also highlighted by Kwame Bediako through the example of the former Ghanaian Catholic Priest, Father Osofo Okomfo Damuah. Through a group called “Afrikania” that he initiated, Damuah had a great influence both in Ghana and in sections of Africa. In addition to leaning heavily towards the national politics, the group also had a religious angle that influenced the government of Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings in his leadership in Ghana. It “affirmed *Africanness*” and attempted to

restore what was considered as African, to the extent visiting dignitaries in Ghana would be met at the airport “with libation” (Bediako, 1995:20). Libation for Damuah, was the “climax of worship, in which we pray to God, and through our ancestors” (Bediako, 1995:31).

This was an attempt to show both Muslim and Christian dignitaries who visited, that Ghana’s main religious identity was African Traditional Religion. Damuah penned down some of his thoughts in a poem as quoted by Bediako:

We have to think Afrocentrically
We have to decide Afrocentrically
We have to act Afrocentrically
We must let our light shine now
(Bediako, 1995:21)

These ideologies were promoted through *Afrikania* by Damuah, to give Africans authentic African religion and promote alternative Sunday services and even engagement in schools (Bediako, 1995:31). While Bediako does not totally agree with the views of Damuah, he concludes that “the synthesis in *Afrikania* ... seems to be so vital for the definition of African cultural identity” which would pose a great challenge to Christianity when Africans go through identity crisis when they become Christians (Bediako, 1995:36). When Africans consider themselves to have deities which are tribal or local that define who they are, then we may be dealing with a similar matter that has been raised by the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare where there are territorial deities and spirits which operate only in that locality. While on the one hand affirming such deities, thus expressing continuity, on the other hand they would want to neutralize such spirits through spiritual warfare, thus expressing discontinuity. We therefore see both continuity and discontinuity at the same time.

Leonard Nyirongo adds that one’s identity in the African context is also deeply intertwined with certain initiation rites and roles which can make one be ostracized from the community if they have not experienced these (Nyirongo, 2018:220). Some of these initiations are religious-like rituals, while others are secret societies (Nyirongo, 2018:220).

Apart from the belief in spirit beings, practitioners of African Traditional Religion also believe in *holism*, according to Turaki (Turaki, 2006:32). This is a system of belief that emphasizes interdependence in the various functions of an organism. In reference to African Traditional Religion this means that in real life the physical and the spiritual merge (Turaki, 2006:32). It is a state in which the sacred and the secular, humanity and the spirit, all coalesce together to form

the whole (Turaki, 2006:32). This therefore enhances harmony and balance in the life of the individual and the community (Turaki, 2006:33).

The other area of belief is *spiritualism*. Here one is constantly aware that although there is a material and spiritual world, the spiritual world permeates the physical world with supernatural encounters (Turaki, 2006:33). The mystical powers, spirit beings and divinities, together with the ancestors, are not remotely stationed from the individual and as such invade day by day life either with favour or discipline (Turaki, 2006:34). Faced therefore, with either health or metaphysical challenges, the traditional African will engage in a process of introspection to determine whether there might have been a commission or omission of an important obligation or taboo that might have brought about the undesired outcomes (Turaki, 2006:34).

The African traditionalist also believes in a world of *dynamism* where power is at play (Turaki, 2006:34; Steyne, 1999:59). Steyne points out that in the worldview of the African traditionalist, it is the supernatural power or mystical spiritual powers that determines the day-by-day occurrence and not merely “cognitive reflections” (Steyne, 1999:58). As such the quest for power dominates the life of the traditionalist, as to not have power is to lack the control and manipulation of the elements that one should exercise (Steyne, 1999:60).

The African traditionalist also believes in *kinship*. One exists as a community and does not operate alone. Many of the activities which take place in the community gives one their identity. This identity is religiously drawn from important life transitions which include birth, naming systems, rites of passage, marriage and even death (Steyne, 1999:61). Kinship determines one’s relationship with the ancestors and the life after death. For one to be ostracized from the community is not only a great shame, but a loss of identity and relationship with divinities. This has sometimes been used by community elders to bring control in the community by invoking various taboos and potential consequences to deviant views and behaviour (Turaki, 2006:36-39).

Turaki highlights *fatalism* as another area of belief. He explains that “destiny is the belief that the position, place, status of individuals or groups have been determined by some external spiritual power or supernatural power” (Turaki, 2006:39-40). This same fatalistic attitude can be viewed by others as a kind of determinism. Turaki extrapolates its consequence to the extent that it has been used in Africa to propagate ethnic animosity or marginalization of certain communities whose destinies have been circumvented by the gods (Turaki, 2006:40-44). Perhaps this may be expressed in the often-quoted Swahili expression, “*Ni shauri ya Mungu*” meaning, God has determined it.

Apart from beliefs and identity, Turaki also highlights the philosophical concepts in African Traditional Religion as follows:

- 1) The law of harmony advocates for a peaceful and harmonious co-existence with oneself and both the natural and spirit world environment. It is a result of an “organic and holistic life” which should be a window to be exploited by Christian theology to create a theology that will be relevant and effective in Africa (Turaki, 2000:18). Here Turaki advocates for continuity.
- 2) The law of the spirit propagates that the traditional African world view is conscious of the existence and presence of “impersonal powers and forces, spirit beings, many divinities and gods”. One is therefore brought to the awareness that the world is a “spiritual” world and not necessarily material. Due to this fact, the supernatural and the miraculous do take place in the world today (Turaki, 2000:20).
- 3) The law of power indicates that there is mystical impersonal power which is at work in the world and one can tap into this power to manipulate and control the environment against evil forces but also for one’s benefit to create that state of harmony (Turaki, 2000:22). Christianity that is open to the manifestation of the power of God will therefore go a long way in influencing a person of African traditional background (Turaki, 2000:23). This may be part of the reason that strategic level spiritual warfare and issues touching on spiritual power conflicts seem to be quite appealing in the continent.
- 4) The law of kinship emphasizes the fact that humanity live in a community that consists both of the environment, relationships both with the living and the dead and the spirit world as well. Thus, the whole world and the existence in a society is a kinship matter due to the fact that the world is a community (Turaki, 2000:23).

Turaki also mentions these laws in his book, *Foundations of African Traditional Religion and Worldview*, and underscores the fact that they form the bedrock for the formulation of ethics in the traditional African context (Turaki, 2006:44-49). From the above reflections one can notice that although African Traditional Religion does not necessarily have what could be referred to as systematic theology in the Christian sense or a set of dogmas and doctrines which are documented, yet there are beliefs which reinforce what is held closely and some of which have consequences for those who would deviate. Some of these beliefs in divinities and mystical powers resemble those that are being propagated by proponents of strategic level spiritual

warfare with its hierarchical orders. If strategic level spiritual warfare has found a home in the continent of Africa, it is because what they proclaim seem to synchronise with ATR.

4.3.4 African Traditional Religion: The Practice

The beliefs, philosophy and identity, which are held by adherents of African Traditional Religion finds expression in different kinds of practices. Yusufu Turaki highlights four major practices which are foundational to African Traditional Religion. These are: 1) establishing contacts with the mystical and spiritual powers or forces; 2) involvement in expected “religious and social rites, rituals and ceremonies” which include sacrifices and libations; 3) engagement in communicating with the world of the spirit and making contact with spirit beings and 4) consulting with the traditional specialist whenever necessary (Turaki, 2000:12).

Turaki outlines two different methods which are used in order to establish connection with the mystical powers in the African context as one of the practices. The first is by “exercising control” over this mystical spiritual world and powers through the inhabiting powers, and the second is by bringing balance and harmony over the cosmic and spiritual dimension (Turaki, 2000:12). Turaki explains that such control is usually procured by means of: “1) incantations and power of words; 2) the power of symbolism; (3) the power of magic; 4) the power of charms; 5) the power of fetishes or “juju” and 6) the power of witchcraft and sorcery” (Turaki, 2000:13).

In addition, there are also ceremonial rituals which are practiced either individually or communally, and with different frequency, whether regularly or annually, as part of the contact with the spirit world (Turaki, 2000:16).

Steyne also affirms and outlines other ways in which this power can be acquired. These may include “sacrifices, offerings, taboos, charms, fetishes, ceremonies, even witchcraft and sorcery” (Steyne, 1999:60). To this list one can add, reading the intestines of a goat, reading the palms, divination and visits to shrines (Kirwen, 1987).

When contact is made through ancestors and divinities, some have said that it is really not worship but expression of respect to these entities (Kirwen, 1987:4-5). Michael Kirwen further explains that when the community faces “trouble, famine, war, pestilence, or lack of rain, sacrifices of animals are made to the unseen spirits” in order to appease or to engage them as

intercessors for the sake of the people (Kirwen, 1987:6-7). As long as the spirit of the dead are remembered, then they remain among the community and are considered helpful to the community. However, when they are forgotten they become “*Jachien*”- unknown spirits, which may also be considered as evil among the Luo community of Kenya (Kirwen, 1987:7). There are however, other created spirits called *Abasambwa* which are potentially dangerous and have to be avoided. They tend to inhabit rocky areas, rivers and forests and engagement with them is not encouraged (Kirwen, 1987:6).

Kirwen, who conducted his research by visiting a traditional diviner who seemed to speak what he considered as truth questioned the meaning of revelation and sees it more as “collective wisdom of a people passed down from generation to generation and shared either orally or through written work.” As such he excuses these contacts with the traditional diviner in practice if what they say may be helpful to the community or the individual when they contact the spirits. (Kirwen, 1987:24). Turaki however is more cautious and issues a concern that regardless of how these practices are perceived in the traditional religion, they do not meet the “Biblical standards” (Turaki, 2000:14). Turaki further clarifies that

These powers are obtained, not from God, but from his usurpers, the Devil and his demons. Even those obtained from the divinities, fall short of the Biblical standards too. Divinities cannot be acceptable substitutes of God Himself. In the Bible and Christian theology, only God can exercise power and control over his entire universe. (Turaki, 2000:14).

Therefore, in as far as contact with the spirit world or with any other entities apart from God himself or his emissary, Turaki advocates for total discontinuity in order to avoid diabolical deception and intrusion (Turaki, 2000:14).

While there is a variety of ways and means in which African Traditional Religion is practised, it is important that the Christian is clear on the parameters that should not be crossed. The ultimate guideline is the Bible, but beyond this one needs to consider whether there are elements of the occultic in the matters that they are engaging in. In matters of the spirits, one has to constantly be reminded that behind the event, activity, item or ritual, there might be malevolent spirit beings that one is exposing themselves to. This is why concerns have been raised on practitioners of strategic level spiritual warfare who interview demons, participate in ritualistic activities like George Otis Jr..

4.4 African Traditional Religion and Mystical Powers

4.4.1 Definition of Mystical Powers in African Traditional Religion

The beliefs and practices which are mentioned above would normally put one into contact with mystical powers that the practitioner can use to control a situation in the African context. Yusufu Turaki emphasizes the fact that foundational to African Traditional Religion and expressions, in “feelings, practices and behaviour”, one would find that the belief in mystical powers is paramount (Turaki, 2006:24). He also acknowledges that this mystical power is also called *mana*, as indicated earlier in this study (Turaki, 2006:24). Although the source of this mystical power is uncertain, it is often attributed to “higher powers” (Turaki, 2006:24). The powers are also not distributed equally as some objects or places may have greater potency and impact than others. Similarly, special experts like magicians and diviners would know the right objects to use that would be efficacious in transmitting these mystical powers (Turaki, 2006:24).

Such objects may include “medicine, magic, charms, and amulets.” (Turaki, 2006:24). One getting in touch with them can also be affected whether for good or for evil as they can transmit their power to the individuals or can be contagious. Peter Wagner, George Otis Jr., Richard Gehman and Norman Miller (Gehman, 2005; Miller, 2012; Otis (Jr.), 1997; Wagner, 2015c), all make references to some artifacts, objects or even trees that seemed to contain such powers, which were only handled through warfare prayer or through the individuals involved appeasing those mystical powers. Gehman explains that Isaiah 47:9,12 is referring to charms and other items of sorcery which the Lord prohibited ((Gehman, 2005:167). Such objects used either in a protective manner or in an offensive manner, become conduits where evil spirits can attack an individual as they create a doorway for the evil one to use. This would be a more accurate view.

Turaki further states that there is a close association between the spirit beings, spirits, the living-dead or ancestral spirits and the mystical powers (Turaki, 2006:25). John Mbiti on the other hand, decries the deficiency in the study of the spirit world and considers it as one of the weakest links in African religious studies (Mbiti, 2015:73). His concern is that this does not reflect the state of engagement among Africans as “the spiritual world of African peoples is very densely populated with spiritual beings, spirits and the living-dead” (Mbiti, 2015:73). He explains that these spirits play the critical role of intermediaries who would receive and transmit the “sacrifices and prayers to God” and return with a response from God (Mbiti, 2015:78).

Turaki highlights the fact that the habitations of these spirits are in “certain trees, rocks or mountains, caves, rivers, lakes, forests, burial grounds, animals, human beings, the skies, the ground and other sites, carved or moulded objects, charms, amulets” among others (Turaki, 2006:25). Similarly, Mbiti observes that the abode of these spirits are “woods, bushes, forests, rivers, mountains or just around villages”, which are close to where people live (Mbiti, 2015:78). Turaki also discerns a hierarchical order in the roles the spirits play, based on their powers. This order puts the Supreme Being, the Creator at the top, followed by deities or divinities and at the bottom are the embodied or disembodied spirits, including ancestral spirits (Turaki, 2006:25).

Philip Steyne emphasizes the point that the traditionalist is normally consumed by a desire to engage with these mystical powers, in order to control their surroundings. These powers can be acquired by one for use to fulfil their own purposes (Steyne, 1999:36). Personal progress and peaceful existence require that one engages with the mystical powers. It is then, that one can prosper by receiving rain, good harvest, employment, physical healing, getting children and warding off bad omen triggered by witchcraft or sorcery (Steyne, 1999:38). Turaki affirms the characteristic of spiritual warfare that exists in this domain, as the spirits attempt to use their mystical powers to influence the direction of the life of human beings, sometimes instigated by individuals who attempt to “master and control” this realm (Turaki, 2006:25).

In order to attain these powers, one may sometimes require the services of specialists who can tap into these spiritual powers for the good of the individual (Steyne, 1999:38). These powers may also be attained by fulfilling certain obligations or visiting designated shrines or even through ancestral veneration (Steyne, 1999:38). These specialists include “medicine men, rainmakers, mediums, diviners, sorcerers, magicians, witches and all others who have the ability to manipulate spirit beings so that they can serve humans” (Turaki, 2006:26).

Paul Hiebert defines “*mana*” as invisible force which pervades the universe and is found to a greater or lesser degree in “gods, man, animals and natural objects such as rivers, mountains, stones and trees.” (Hiebert, 1976:386). The idea of “vital force”, which is equivalent of the “life force” or “*mana*” was popularized by Placide Tempels, who was a Catholic missionary priest who wrote in 1959 in Central African region. Tempels, explains that when faced with death or pain or suffering, a person from the Western world will naturally lean in their behaviour or thought patterns to default position determined by Christianity. This is based both on the perception of the individual on what the visible and invisible world entails (Tempels, 1959:14). In his view, there are “psychological agents” which are primers that determine people’s behaviour when faced with

“mysteries of life and death, survival and destruction, together with the fear arising from all these mysteries ...” (Tempels, 1959:14).

In Tempels’ opinion, the two main worldviews which have shaped people’s entire cultures are Christianity and magic (Tempels, 1959:14). This could not be the case unless there was a “concatenation of ideas”, which makes sense and upon which one bases their philosophy of life (Tempels, 1959:14). He posits that the more “primitive” (sic) one is, the more likely someone is to retain a worldview that encompasses “animism, fetichism (sic), dynamism and magic” and as such will retain a belief in a Supreme Being and such other entities (Tempels, 1959:15). Tempels does not explain what he means by the word “primitive” and perhaps he is making an allusion to those who have not been influenced by Western education. This, however, fails to explain how an accomplished and fairly enlightened and educated individual or how an urbane politician would not only make reference to this worldview, but also retain a witchdoctor to procure success (Bongmba, 1995). It is more than education or so-called civilization. It is a belief system.

Tempels dismisses those who argue that traditional people, who hold to the belief in mystical powers, do not have logical belief systems. Such people, according to Tempels are taking an “a priori” position that is devoid of reflections and which avoids reality of what traditional people believe and experience (Tempels, 1959:16). In his opinion, the key issue is not building “churches in native architecture” nor “introducing African melodies into the liturgy” nor using borrowed vestments from Bantu communities, but rather the “adaptation of (the) spirit to the spirit of the (Bantus)” (Tempels, 1959:18). As such the African has a “theodicy” and an “ontology” of life which undergirds one’s whole mental life and behaviour, according to Tempels (Tempels, 1959:19). Any worldview that would bring a permanent change must engage with this dimension or it will remain peripheral and superficial (Tempels, 1959:19).

Tempels argues that the core of the African existence is the “vital force”. This is what one prays for and lives for. Attempts would usually be made by Africans to ward off negative elements like evil spirits which might drain or diminish the vital force, according to Tempels (Tempels, 1959: 20-31). Every success, happiness and strength is attributed to the abundance of the vital force while “every illness, wound or disappointment, all suffering, depression, or fatigue, every injustice and every failure” would all be considered the result of the diminished vital force (Tempels, 1959:32).

In Tempels ontological analysis on the difference between the West and African concept of “being” is that the Western perception is “static” while the African perception is “dynamic” (Tempels, 1959:34). Subsequently, the West can separate “force” and “being”, but the African

cannot because “force is the nature of being, force is being and being is force” (Tempels, 1959:35). When Tempels insists that the African is always engaged with natural and created forces or entities even when magic is practiced (Tempels, 1959:40), he ignores the whole arena of the spirit world. As such those who practice magic or who invoke and appeal to the spirits either to promote their benefactors or attack their enemies would not fit into Tempels ontology. He takes a deterministic posture when he argues that it is the Europeans who think spirits can intervene and bring a change in the life of Africans as such change is not possible since forces lock up everything in place (Tempels, 1959:41). In essence what he is saying is that the African fate is sealed and cannot be altered. This sounds fairly fatalistic as matters are determined at the beginning and cannot change at all. One would wonder why a missionary, like Tempels, would attempt to do his ministry, if nothing would change in spite of their labours.

It has been observed in this study that practitioners of strategic level spiritual warfare would sometimes engage in perambulatory prayers that would take them to mountains or areas where perceived spirits dwell, in order to nullify their powers so that effective evangelism can take place. This is exactly what adherents of ATR would do when they would want to appease the spirits and invoke some mystical powers. In this we see the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare exercising both continuity and discontinuity at the same time. On the one hand they believe in the presence of these spirits either in the sites they are visiting or the artifacts that they hold or the rituals that they observe and yet on the other hand they make attempts to break their hold onto the community through spiritual warfare. Their concept of “powers and principalities” is quite close to the ATR concept of “mystical powers”.

Although Tempels was a Catholic Priest, his treatise is devoid of a Biblical worldview in as far as his conception of the Bantu philosophy is concerned. He does not engage with Scripture to bring out how Christians ought to respond to the issues of the vital force that he is presenting. This makes his treatise poorer and perhaps alien to the African Christian, who may be grappling with the issues of mystical powers. Since he does not endorse the spirit world with real entities called demons or evil spirits, except the ancestral one as a word, his view of spiritual warfare remains mainly at the magical level of enhancing or diminishing one’s vital force.

Tempels has not given a strong Biblical support to his concept of the Bantu Philosophy and especially the vital force. He still argues that there are several “parallels” of continuity between the Catholic spirituality and African worldview and as such Christianity remains the hope for “civilizing” the Africans (Tempels, 1959:121). Tempels writing, which was targeting the colonialists

(Tempels, 1959:113), has a number of racial overtones which may have been acceptable in his days, but would not be accepted today.

Philip Steyne objects to the ideas of “life force” and comments that God is the ultimate source of life and his power is only available to those who have a relationship with him. There is no other source of valid and acceptable power, as all other sources usurp the authority of God (Steyne, 1999:196-197). Similar sentiment renouncing the “life force” of Tempels is also expressed by Richard Gehman, who points out that reference to any other source of power, whether it be efficacious or not, other than the power of God leads to idolatry and divination. He asserts that the Bible does not condone that kind of engagement (Gehman, 2005:155-173). While scripture would affirm mystical powers emanating from demonic sources (the extraordinary strength of the Gerasene demoniac in Luke 8:26-29; the insight of the demon possessed slave girl in Acts 16:16-19), the veracity of Tempel’s life force remains questionable.

4.4.2 Manifestation and Influence of Mystical Powers in African Traditional Religion

4.4.2.1 Mystical Powers and the Individuals

The mystical powers were not just involved at cosmic or ethereal levels in their influence on people. Their engagement comes to the surface as seen through the examination of the lives of the Desert Fathers who were extensively engaged in spiritual warfare. Amma Syncletica, speaks about the engagement with these mystical powers at an individual level in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* and asserts that:

Many are the wiles of the devil. If he is not able to disturb the soul by means of poverty, he suggests riches as an attraction. If he has not won the victory by insults and disgrace, he suggests praise and glory. Overcome by health, he makes the body ill. Not having been able to seduce it through pleasures, he tries to overthrow it by involuntary sufferings. (Ward, 1975:132).

The powers were not just involved at community levels, but individuals also had their own personal experiences.

The phenomenological nature of engagement with individuals is analysed by James M. Nelson and Jonah Koetke , mainly from their readings of the Desert Father’s encounterology. They attempted

to distinguish between the externality and the internality of this phenomenon. They pointed out that the demonic operates by either inserting thoughts or feelings in an individual so as to influence their action. Sometimes, there can be some physical attacks as well, but all these are viewed as external and not internal to the Christian (Nelson & Koetke, 2018:526). This concept of externality allowed the Christian to engage in spiritual warfare without a sense of internal compromise that would impede their spiritual journey (Nelson & Koetke, 2018:526). These mystical powers are therefore, also involved with individuals.

4.4.2.2 Mystical Powers and the Community

Not only are the mystical powers operational in the lives of individuals, but some communities do also experience their manifestation. According to Gehman, this mystical power is used in the community to enhance farming, hunting, conception and general well-being of the individual, the family and the community (Gehman, 2005:87-88). Those who use magic for whatever purpose, tap into this source through proper rituals and use of the right paraphernalia (Gehman, 2005:88). Sir James Frazer (1854-1941), wrote *The Golden Bough* (Frazer, 1912) that made him one of the leading anthropologist of his days. He was based at Cambridge as a fellow most of his life. He examined what he considered as the steps that humanity took in their journey of belief and concluded that it is a process that begins with magic, then religion and finally ends in science. These views may currently seem faulty as such a progression is not there, since people can bypass some of the processes he stipulated.

Gehman highlights some of the distinction that Frazer made between magic and religion:

Magic is the manipulation of impersonal powers (mystical powers) through ritual and ceremony; whereas religion is the belief in unseen spirits, deities and gods and the attempt to pray to them for aid. Religion prays to the gods, while magic commands the impersonal forces of nature. Religion says, 'Thy will be done'. Magic says, 'my will be done.' Religion shows an attitude of submission to the supernatural beings; whereas magic seeks to control and use the powers of nature for man's purpose (Gehman, 2005:88).

In Gehman's opinion, this attempt to create a distinction between magic and religion, although narrated by other anthropologists as well, is artificial and not actually a true reflection of the actual practice. This is rejected on the grounds that it is based on the traditional evolutionary view of magic and religion where one was supposed to develop into the other. Gehman also considers it impractical because just like the priests who prays to a personal god, the magicians also invoke

spirits to come to their aid (Gehman, 2005:89). There are no “impersonal powers” that can perform supernatural acts. The power behind the magician’s impersonal powers are spirits.

This is also affirmed by Jomo Kenyatta who sees magic and religion as inseparable sometimes, when he wrote about the traditional religion of the Gikuyu community (Kenyatta, 1991:149). In Kenyatta’s view, magic can sometimes be performed by a father or a leader of a group or community on behalf of the group (Kenyatta, 1991:150). Kenyatta explains how the Gikuyu community maintains a close connection with the world of the spirit and as such they daily anticipate supernatural occurrences in their lives (Kenyatta, 1991:127).

Kenyatta explained that the Supreme Being and Creator inhabits the sky, but occasionally visits mountains and other sacred sites (Kenyatta, 1991:127). As such the Gikuyu often turns to the Mountain of Brightness (snow- peaked Mount Kenya) in their prayers as they consider it a kind of a shrine of *Ngaĩ* (Creator God) (Kenyatta, 1991:127). Sometimes such rendezvous are sacred trees like the *mûgûmo* tree (fig tree), which is not made by human hands (Kenyatta, 1991:129). Such rituals are conducted by community elders (Kenyatta, 1991:133).

Within a community, there different specialists who are equipped to assist the community maintain well-being by use of mystical powers. The medicine man or woman is endowed with mystical powers that can be used to ward of spirits which are bringing sickness and disease in the community. They can also ward off negative mystical powers sent by witches. There also the rainmakers who under the influence of mystical powers come to the aid of the community during drought and makes rain. The diviner, like a prophet is also among the community who can use mystical powers to read the entrails of a goat and warn the community of a coming raid by a neighbouring community or inform them of the right season to hunt. (Gehman, 2005:101-105).

But the life of the community is also encased with performing the right acts, lest anyone incur the wrath of the spirits. Acting out of order would be viewed as taboo which would not augur well with the individual or their offsprings. Right ceremonies have to be conducted during birth; the naming process has to be done the proper way; the rites of passage have to be handle at the appropriate time with the rightful elders conducting the process; the marriage ceremonies are also conducted the right way with the necessary dowries given; even in the death, the dead person has to be buried facing the right direction or his spirit will disturb the living. Among the Bukusu and Kabras community in Kenya, an elder is buried seated down as that is a sign of respect (Inyanji & Ontomwa, 2014). So, from birth to death the entire community life is undergirded by fear of the mystical powers.

In making reference to the Akamba community, where he belongs, Matthew K. Mwalw'a asserts that one cannot talk about the worldview of the Akamba community without considering mystical powers. He further states that the community

believe in mystical powers, use them, thrive in them and have come to earn themselves a name among the vast general society in Kenya, especially as the custodians in particular, of the most dreaded witchcraft (Mwalw'a, 2017:43).

One can therefore understand how appealing the teaching that a community or locality or city can conduct spiritual mapping and be able to determine the opposing forces against them and neutralize them through strategic level spiritual warfare. George Otis Jr. explains that community transformation does not occur spontaneously. In his opinion, it is always "the product of a cause and effect process." (Otis(Jr.), 1999:55). Otis expresses his view that spiritual strongholds in a community entrench their presence in the community through pacts made by the community or their authority figures. These pacts are renewed by future generations through ceremonies and festivals. Thus a community again and again renews a commitment to these mystical powers by their rituals (Otis(Jr.), 2015:44). These community and individual engagements with powers sometimes leads into power conflicts.

4.4.2.3 Mystical Powers and Power Conflicts

The nature of the mystical powers and how they relate to power conflicts has been a subject of discussions. John V. Taylor who was an Anglican clergyman and also served as the Bishop of Winchester reflected on the subject as well. He had earlier on served for ten years in the 1950s as the Warden of Mukono Theological College, which later became Uganda Christian University, in Uganda. He was also the General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in the 1960s. In *The Primal Vision: Christian Presence amid African Religion*, John V. Taylor captures the conflict in the Christian journey, when he points out that in many of the "tribes" the word used to signify Christian worship simply translated is "to read" and as such believers are viewed as the "literate" ones. This already is an indicator that Christianity was associated with Western education. This places Christianity more on the rational scale that ignores the deep feelings of individuals and as such often plays down the supernatural and the world of the spirit (Taylor, 1963:12-13). This is the case up to today among the Kikuyu community.

On December 13-15, 1988, Fuller Seminary School of World Missions convened what they called “Power Evangelism Symposium”. It brought together 40 scholars from diverse background to examine the subject of “power encounters”.

“Of the 40 participants, 7 represented classic Pentecostal and charismatic institutions, 4 represented Wimber’s Vineyard movement, and 29 came from what would be regarded as traditional evangelical institutions.” (Wagner, 13).

These scholars, majority of whom would identify with the group that this research is concerned about, expressed disaffection with what they considered as the general disengagement of sections of Western Christianity with issues touching on power and the supernatural. Some confessed that although they had been missionaries, they were inadequately prepared to handle issues of power in the mission field. They attribute this lack of preparation to distancing of sections of the evangelical church in the West from the miraculous. Timothy M. Warner, a professor of missions at Trinity Evangelical Dinity School in Deerfield, Illinois was part of this group that gathered, and he presented the following:

I went to West Africa to minister in an animistic context with almost no functional knowledge of satan and the demonic world, or of how Christian theology related to what I was encountering there. In reality, I was a victim of deception—the deception that as a Christian I had nothing to worry about from satan and demons and that most of the African beliefs in such things were just superstition. (Warner, 2012:101-102).

In the same tone, Taylor laments the fact that Christianity has been set up as a Western religion and when presented in a film format, it is a white man born of white parents and often those who proclaim the Gospel are attired with western garments. According to Taylor, even the architecture and the music are unfamiliar to the African and thus cause him to distance himself from this rather cerebral religion which cannot be expressed in African ritual and African ways (Taylor, 1963:13).

In Taylors’ view therefore, the conflict is that of acceptance of Christianity and its strangeness to the African context. But he also raises the issue of the supernatural and the spirit world, when Christianity is only presented in terms of educational terms. It then remains at a cognitive level and is not able to address deeper issues that would require the supernatural and engagement with spiritual warfare. In Taylor’s tone, this is a disadvantage to Christianity. What Taylor missed was the fact this this would not destroy Christianity and instead sub-Sahara Africa would turn out to be the hub of Christianity just a few decades after he wrote.

Perhaps this is why Esther Acolatse, originally from Ghana, comes out strongly in calling for identification of the devil by name as a supernatural being who is also responsible for some of the evil disasters which have been observed in the continent of Africa. She further states that this is what one would find while reading the New Testament “When the New Testament speaks of evil, it means that it is real and supernatural (that is to say personalized) evil” (Acolatse, 2018:92). She therefore, sees the conflict with the demonic, not only in individual lives, but also in “structural evil ... so prevalent in the form of despotic governments and untold poverty” (Acolatse, 2018:92). She also affirms that the common deliverance sessions that pastors conduct on individuals struggling with personal demons, are part of the conflict with these mystical powers (Acolatse, 2018:92).

P.J. Buys highlights the fact that in many Christian circles in the continent of Africa, majority of people would generally accept the existence and reality of evil spirits (Buys, 2019:4). He remarks that a visit to an African instituted church would leave the newcomer with amazement as to the emphasis that is given to the devil and to his demons (Buys, 2019:4). For the African, a Saviour who is able to give victory over the evil powers is the desired one, according to Buys (Buys, 2019:4).

Both Acolatse and Buys are emphasising the fact that there is a power conflict that humanity in general and Christians specifically, are engaged in both at individual levels, community level and even national levels. It with evil spirits and evil forces which should be named as such and taken as real personalities which are operational in the world. The mystical powers are not just some scientific or natural forces which are active today. They have a source that originates from the spirit world. This is why the issue that Taylor raises is pertinent that the Christianity that we espouse and propagate, be the kind that has answers to those who are open to the spirit world.

From the above we can conclude that while sections of the evangelical church in the West had sidelined issues to deal with mystical powers, thus was alive in the African context and also among others who recognised this as a biblical truth and engaged with it. But issues of power conflict are real and therefore need not only to be discussed, but also to be engaged with whenever it is necessary to so. This is quite critical in the African context where the world view embraces the mystical powers and the spirit world.

4.4.2.4 Mystical Powers and Christianity

Having looked at some comments by John V. Taylor, he does not stop there. He raises some rather critical questions when he asks:

Christ has been presented as the answer to the questions a white man would ask, the solutions to the needs that western man would feel, the saviour of the world of the European world-view, the object of adoration and prayer of historic Christendom. But if Christ were to appear as the answer to the questions that Africans are asking, what would he look like? If he came into the world of African cosmology, to redeem man (sic) as Africans understand him would he be recognisable to the rest of the Church Universal? And if Africa offered him the praises and petitions of her total uninhibited humanity, would they be acceptable? (Taylor, 1963:16).

If Christianity was to engage Africa, then it would be a Christianity that is answering the mystical power questions that Africans are dealing with. One could even argue that given the observations that have been made in chapter three and the need for encountering spiritual powers and openness to the spirit world, a Christianity that would be impactful in Africa would need to be that which acknowledges the whole of the New Testament as a reality that is relevant today and not a myth and this would have a lot in common with the African worldview. Brian Stiller points to the fact that Pentecostalism thrived in Africa because it “encountered spiritualities ... that engaged in deliverance from the demonic” and healing as well. (Stiller, 2018:24). This worldview of powers would be analogous to the New Testament worldview of the spirit world. As Esther Acolatse argues, that from recorded account in Ephesians chapter six, it appears that the Christian believers of those days “believed in a world teeming with personal spiritual forces” (Acolatse, 2018:164). It appears that the idea of spirit powers was a given idea for the Christians of that generation. A look at the city of Ephesus in Acts chapter nineteen, reveals to us a scenario that is pretty close to what an African would identify with. There is witchcraft, demon possession, the worship of divinities and occultic guilds. In this context, the Christians would thoroughly be aware both of personal demonic activities and also of communal powers which were revered in the entire society.

In Acolatse’s view, spiritual warfare was taken so seriously in the patristic era of the church that exorcism would be conducted during baptism of new believers. She narrates the catechism used by Chrysostom as emphasizing on this exercise (Acolatse, 2018:167). While the early Christians took the matter of the spirit world seriously, it was not de-emphasised by the church in a certain era and subsequently handed down a Christianity that did not acknowledge the spiritual warfare

dynamic of the Christian faith. On the other hand, John Wimber and Kevin Springer, in an appendix to their book *Power Evangelism*, take a panoramic historical view that captures the patristic era (100-600 AD), the medieval era (700-1500) and the reformation and modern era (1500-1900). They show that while sections of the church were averse to issues touching on spiritual warfare, there were sporadic individuals within the various strands of the church who were involved in ministry of deliverance (Wimber & Springer, 2009:157-174).

Wimber and Springer's view tones down the blanket statement by Acolatse on the church and shows that there may have been some missionaries who came to Africa and were totally unaware of the mystical powers within the continent and may have even dismissed the African worldview of the spirit world, but one needs to acknowledge that not all missionaries were like that. If one was only dealing with the former position, then a faith like that in the continent would miss to make an impact as it would not answer the power question that people would be dealing with. The wider church in Africa is now a lot more sensitive to the matters of spiritual warfare and in some cases a balance is necessary. Therefore, the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare have brought a much-needed emphasis apart from some of the excesses which have been raised.

4.5 African Traditional Religion: Responses to Mystical Powers

4.5.1 African Responses to Mystical Powers

Different categories of people have held different views on what these mystical powers and the spirit world could be. Speaking of the early Christians in Egypt who lived in pre-Arab Egypt era, Andrew Walls makes reference to their engagement in power conflicts by highlighting the fact that their worldview can be detected from the literature from the Coptic language that is still surviving (Walls, 2017:83). Walls indicates that it was a worldview that was ever conscious of the seen and unseen forces which were a constant threat to their well-being and subsequently they developed some "magical formulae" that were a source of power and also offered protection to the people (Walls, 2017:83). Walls extrapolates that the early magical literature was perhaps the pre-cursor "to the Sahidic translation of the New Testament", an early Coptic translation of the New Testament (Walls, 2017:83). This is a sure indicator that these early Christians in Egypt discovered a source of spiritual power in Christianity, regardless of the methods they were using (Walls, 2017:83). Some of them adopted the monastic kind of lifestyle as way of engaging in spiritual warfare with the desert evil spirits.

As an illustration, Walls draws from the life of Antony of Egypt and highlights his skilfulness in dealing with spiritual powers. In Walls' opinion, Anthony was truly an African who operated under the African worldview of the spirit world (Walls, 2017:83). Although Anthony was aware as an African that the universe was saturated with mystical powers, some which were evil and dangerous, yet as a Christian he recognized that the ultimate power behind these evil forces was Satan himself, who in his opinion made his abode in "deserts, tombs and graveyards" (Walls, 2017:83).

Antony himself faced both physical and spiritual attacks, where sometimes even the demonic forces would take on the form of a male or a female personality to engage him in warfare, according to Walls (Walls, 2017:83-85). He was finally assured of Christ's victory over the powers of evil. It seems Antony conducted what the proponents of spiritual warfare might identify as spiritual mapping and strategic level spiritual warfare as he moved from the desert, to caves and graveyards which he considered as the haunts of demons and engaged in spiritual combat with them (Walls, 2017:83-85). The remarkable results that were experienced afterwards of healings and restoration of broken relationships, to which Walls alludes, have been produced by spiritual warfare (Walls, 2017:83-85). Bishop Athanasius in *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus* narrates these incidences in details (Athanasius, n.d.).

According to James F. Jeffers in *Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era*, the Greco-Roman community believed that humanity was surrounded by powers that were sometimes represented by images of the gods and needed to be appeased or opposed, while on the other hand the Christians in the same era saw demons behind these same idols (1 Cor.10:20-21) (Jeffers, 1999:90-100). While some of these ideas by Antony may not have been totally new to that period, monasticism, that resulted from Antony's engagement in the desert should not be seen as an escape and a retreat from the world, but rather as a spiritual warfare and conflict in the desert and the spheres of the demonic. When one examines the narrative from an African perspective, one can see the spiritual warfare motif running through it. (Walls, 2017:83-85).

The other African that Walls mentions is Takla Haymanot (ca. 1215- 1313) from Ethiopia, who was also used in a similar manner as Antony to engage in spiritual warfare with "territorial spirits" and experienced numerous "power encounters" that brought about great deliverance to the community (Walls, 2017:85-86). He used some radical methods, including cutting down the sacred trees, to disempower the evil forces (Walls, 2017:85-86). Walls concludes by drawing attention to the long-standing history of engagement in spiritual warfare over the years:

In its witness to Christ, the African church ... has known what Paul calls the principalities and powers and confronted them in the guise of both malign spiritual entities and malign political structures (Walls, 2017:90).

Not only would these Patristic era Africans be an example of the African response to the mystical and spirit powers, but even in modern day Africa many churches have deliverance service; some conduct all night prayer meetings where there is intense engagement in spiritual warfare, while others fully identify with the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare and conduct spiritual mapping as the case study represented in this study in chapter five indicate.

It would be important to make an observation of the perspectives of those from African Independent (Instituted) Churches (AICs). When a Luo Roman Catholic mystic named Maria claimed that she had received a revelation to form an African version of the Roman Catholic Church, there were doubts whether it would make she would make any impact at all. But in 1960-1962, over 90,000 people left the Catholic church and began following Maria under the new religion Legion Maria. An African Pope, Simeon Ondeto, was appointed and they named their headquarters, which was in sections of Kenya, Jerusalem. The movement spread to all the East African countries. Their faith combined Luo cultural beliefs and Catholicism (D. B. Barrett, 1973:246).

One of their strongest emphases is spiritual warfare and deliverance ministries. Most of their priests and ministers would carry a wooden cross and a wooden sword. It is not uncommon to find a priest running around with the drawn sword chasing an invisible demon. While many would categorize them as syncretic community, yet the fact that they draw many people who are seeking healing and deliverance attests to the fact that these are areas on need in the continent among Christians.

Similar sentiments are expressed by Aurelien Mokoko Gampiot in his analysis of Kimbanguism, another AICs in the Democratic Republic of Congo which followed the "Prophet" Simon Kibangu:

The African audiences who read these texts (of the Bible) were often more preoccupied with identifying familiar notions than exotic ones in the Bible, which led them to appropriate the scriptures through the prism of their preexisting worldviews, shaped by their own traditions (Gampiot, 2017:34).

Subsequently the version of Kimbanguism that was in operation was exhibiting some syncretic characteristics like the honour for ancestors, although they rejected witchcraft and at the same time considered themselves Christians. On the other hand Harvey Cox explains that the African

indigenous churches are “thoroughly pentecostal in the most important meaning of the term” since they believe in and practice some of the early gifts of the spirit including “discernment of the spirits and healing” (Cox, 2009:248). This may show that the Pentecostal movement in Africa cuts across a spectrum, where in some spaces, the encounterology with African traditional religion is more evident.

Odhiambo W. Okite observes that some of these independent churches acquire mainly the traditional African religious worldview that tends towards explaining all phenomena as being caused by spiritual powers. These powers could either be evil or benevolent and most of the prayers are made either to plead for God’s intervention over these powers or to directly combat them. (Okite, 1973:122). The response to mystical powers therefore has been diverse from Africa Christians as it seems to fall into a spectrum that would span embrace and rejection as gained from the observations above.

4.5.2 Neo- Pentecostal Responses to Mystical Powers

Apart from the response from African believers, It is important to note that the classical Pentecostals have always had a theology of spiritual warfare since its inception. David Barrett highlights the Pentecostal developments and the statistics of this movement across the world. He talks of the three waves of Classical Pentecostals, Charismatics and the neo-Pentecostals who totals 27.7% of the Christians in the world today (Barrett, 2001:383). Among the trademarks of the classical Pentecostals that he lists are “discernment of spirits ... power encounters, exorcism ... deliverance” (D. B. Barrett, 2001:395).

The neo-Pentecostals however went further in their emphasis on spiritual warfare and their engagement with the matters of mystical powers and the spirit world. Cindy Jacobs acknowledges that there are some areas which might have heightened demonic activities due to the presence of spiritual powers. Sometimes it may be a “stronghold” like witchcraft which the community has espoused. It may even be a current or past sin that the community has not confessed (Jacobs, 1991:220). Jacobs further recommends engagement in prayers in these areas so that they can be freed:

Bind the spirit of witchcraft from operating in and through them and claim them for the Kingdom of God. Remember that we are fighting against principalities and powers and not against the people who own these establishments (Jacobs, 1991:220).

Jacobs raises some pertinent questions touching on how to respond to territorial spirits:

Are we supposed to take an offensive stance against the enemy? Should we not just wait for him to come to us? Does the New Testament have anything to say about warring against principalities and powers? What are territorial spirits anyway? Did Jesus ever war against high-level spiritual wickedness? Do we have much biblical fabric to make a case for the growing movement worldwide of spiritual warfare and tearing down evil strongholds of the enemy? If so, who should participate, and how do we go about doing it in a safe, balanced manner? (Jacobs, 1991:223).

Although Jacobs asserts that God has called her to be a leader in the area of strategic level spiritual warfare (Jacobs, 1991:224), she also acknowledges that she is still a learner in responding to the questions she has raised above. She further indicates the sensitivity of the subject of spiritual warfare in the wider church (Jacobs, 1991:224). Jacobs explains that this high-level spiritual warfare (strategic-level spiritual warfare), involves engaging in heavenly battlefields in order to liberate nations and cities. She quotes 2 Cor. 10:3-4 as indicating this: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds." (Jacobs, 1991:225).

In Jacobs' view, these powers and principalities are given only a casual mention in the Bible so that Christians would not become "fascinated with high-level wicked spirits" (Jacobs, 1991:225).

Jacobs also acknowledges that there may be differences in how the subject is taught and as such, the end justifies the means as there should be more concentration on the result rather than on the process (Jacobs, 1991:226). She explains that these territorial spirits have jurisdiction over geographical enclaves where they control the people who are living in those regions. These spirits gain illegal authority to operate in these domains due to the "moral decay and addictions", Jacobs states, and as such "brainwash" the inhabitants of the region to reject the Kingdom of God (Jacobs, 1991:226).

Satan also uses the strategy of assigning "ruling spirits to influence governmental leaders" who then institute regulations that would prohibit the spread of the word of God, according to Jacobs (Jacobs, 1991:226-227). In order to give scriptural evidence for the high-level territorial spirits, Jacobs invokes the law of double reference in interpretation where a visible entity is addressed, but the reference also captures a background being as well (Jacobs, 1991:227). Both Jacobs (Jacobs, 1991:227) and John Dawson (Dawson, 2001:129), perceive the references to the King of Tyre in Ezekiel 28:11-19 and to the King of Babylon in Isaiah 14:3-27 as also giving insight to the spirit being that was operating behind the two thrones. Other references that Jacobs gives

includes the Prince of Persia in Daniel 10 and the spirits in Ephesus behind the worship of Diana in Acts 19 (Jacobs, 1991:227-228).

Jacobs is of the opinion that the Septuagint (LXX) translation of Deuteronomy 32:8 also affirms the existence of territorial spirits. It reads that “When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of men, He set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the angels of God” (Jacobs, 1991:229). While Jacobs has maintained the LXX translation, other versions like the New American Standard Bible (NASB) would translate the last phrase as “sons of Israel” thus give a different meaning from what Jacobs explained:

When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance,
When He separated the sons of mankind,
He set the boundaries of the peoples
According to the number of the sons of Israel. (Deut.32:8 NASB)

Although the NASB reflects a proper reading of the original translation, the point that Jacobs is making is that there are God has demarcated the boundaries of the world and there are assigned territorial spirits in each of these regions. This is the debatable point and other views on the same will present alternative aspects in this discussion in the following pages.

Dawson extends this influence of these spirits beyond the geographical, to the “peoples and subcultures.” (Dawson, 2001:135). Through experiential narratives, which he attributes to discernment through the Holy Spirit, Dawson gives incidences when he has been able to engage with these spirits in Uganda, Brazil and the USA (Dawson, 2001:149-157). But he also acknowledges that while these spiritual powers may be easily noticed “in animistic tribes in Africa” (Dawson, 2001:156), they are in political systems like apartheid (Dawson, 2001:150); in cartoons and comic books (Dawson, 2001:157); and in the resurgence of traditional European occultic practices (Dawson, 2001:157). Dawson is therefore, not just talking about the territorial spirits only, but includes them in governance, entertainment and cultural resurgence as well.

Although on the one hand Jacobs affirms the existence of the territorial spirits, both through her experience and also through scripture, yet in her opinion these are evil spirits that need to be bound and cast out. They are not to be appeased or venerated in any way at all as the African traditional worldview would sometimes hold. However, the idea of territoriality that she propagates, synchronizes with that of African Traditional Religion, with spirit beings operating around mountains or lakes or in a community. In this response one would see the continuity and discontinuity at the same time. One would argue that in embracing the worldview of spirits being

in charge of cities and community, they would be holding a common view as adherents of African Traditional Religion, but in taking the position that they should be cast out, they are expressing discontinuity.

Some Neo-Pentecostal groups have crossed the boundaries and even been considered by government agencies as engaging in spheres that were abusing their members. Mookgo S. Kgatle remarks that:

The unusual practices such as eating of grass, eating of snakes, drinking of petrol and spraying of Doom on the congregants within some Neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa caused the Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL) Rights Commission¹ to start a debate on the commercialisation of religion and abuse of people's belief systems. (Kgatle, 2017:1).

It seems these are being done in the guise of freeing people from some form of oppression or the other. These excesses should not be construed as the norm among Neo-Pentecostals but rather as aberrations among the group.

M'fundisi and Holloway considers Pentecostalism as a "force" that led to rapid growth of the church in Africa due to "its emphasis on the world of the spirit" and cultural connection with the African worldview, thus enabling the locals to identify easily with it (M'fundisi-Holloway, 2018:94). Frank Hinkelmann also affirms this rapid growth among Pentecostals and gives statistics at the time of writing (2024) that the classical Pentecostals would number 78 million, the Charismatics, 192 million and the Neo-Charismatics 318 million. He concludes that in Africa and Latin America, "the Pentecostal movement has developed into a mass phenomenon with strong growth." (Hinkelmann, 2024:436). Harvey Cox also makes similar observation about this spread of Pentecostalism(Cox, 2009) The liberty in the Spirit that is often experienced in its services has led to a "plethora of indigenous Christian movements that loosely may be termed Pentecostal" (M'fundisi-Holloway, 2018:94). There has been a noticeable embrace among the African communities in the majority world when it comes to matters Pentecostal (M'fundisi-Holloway, 2018:94).

M'fundisi and Holloway argue that African Traditional Religion is not necessarily the nemesis to Pentecostalism as many have thought but rather served as compatriot by laying a fertile ground in which the belief in the supernatural could germinate. It is their considered opinion that Pentecostalism and African Traditional Religion interface in African Independent churches (AICs). They regret that AICs did not receive the kind of support that they ought to have received due to the misunderstanding from the Western theological camp (M'fundisi-Holloway, 2018:94). In their

opinion, Pentecostalism has helped to bridge the identity gap with Christianity that had been in existence. On the other hand the early African prophets like William Wade Harris and others were quite clear about Christians not engaging in “fetishes, witchcraft and veneration of spirits.” (M’fundisi-Holloway, 2018:95). In this case they were emphasising discontinuity with practices from African Traditional Religion which they considered as having occultic dimensions.

Yet at the same time these prophets were involved in preaching the Gospel and healing the sick with such great power, that the traditional priests were astounded (M’fundisi-Holloway, 2018:95). They also eschew traditional practices which contravene their understanding of the Bible and as such renounce any contact with the ancestors as they see these as basically demonic forces which needs to be exorcised and not entertained or appeased (M’fundisi-Holloway, 2018:95). M’fundisi and Holloway however express the concerns that had been raised in some circles that in the process of contextualisation and indigenization of the Gospel, some negative syncretic elements crept in which contaminated the pure Christian faith (M’fundisi-Holloway, 2018:95). Some of them, both in their dressing styles and the paraphernalia that they carried as they preached, resembled the traditional priests. Watson Omulokoli speaks of Harris dressing in long attires with a sash across the chest and carrying a guard (rattle), which was what the traditional diviner used to do (Omulokoli, 2002:10-11).

Matthew Michael is also of the opinion that Christianity and African tradition could either be friends or enemies although Christianity would often try to christianize the African tradition, while the African tradition would try to africanize Christianity (Michael, 2013:223).

With the rapid growth that the Pentecostal movement has been experiencing in the continent of Africa, it certainly is a pointer to the fact that the church that is open to the mystical power dynamics within the continent of Africa will resonate with the people and will draw the people. Failure to address these issues will leave the people susceptible to hybridity as they would seek for spiritual encounters in the traditional religious circles.

4.5.3 Structural Responses to Mystical Powers

Walter Wink offers a structural view that also gives a response to the mystical spirit world. In his explanation of the origin of the demonic, Wink quickly adopts a structural view as he points out that the idea oppression is as a result of either a person who has capitulated to “oppressive

structures of power” or one who may have faced challenges with “systems” resulting in “personal developmental malfunctions.” (Wink, 1993:41). He explains further that people may be in bondage to “inner demons” which may be a result of “external demons of brute institutional power” (Wink, 1993:41).

While acknowledging the need for people to experience freedom and liberty from oppressive powers, Wink sees these powers in terms of socio-political and economic powers in which people’s lives are “embedded” (Wink, 1993:42)

Walter Wink therefore, presents a unique re-interpretation of Satan. Although he uses the same word Satan, he postulates that the “evil” Satan that is often represented by “Satanic Christianity” (a Christianity that talks of Satan as a personality who is evil), operates under a fragmented Christianity that does not allow both the view of Satan as evil and also as a Servant (Wink, 1993:36). He further states that if such a model of Satan was developed, then the current “dualism” that is seen in Christianity would be avoided (Wink, 1993:36).

Using some passages of scripture as the case of Job (Job 1:6-12) or when David numbered Israel (2 Sam.24:1; 1 Chron.21:1), Wink asserts that Satan acted in these passages as the messenger of God and therefore was a servant and an ally of God rather than an enemy. While on the one hand Wink objects to Satan as a personality that is real, on the other hand he advocates for domesticating him as a servant of God. One would affirm that Satan cannot operate on his own since he is under the control of God, but one also needs to take cognisance of his rebellion as well.

Wink also asserts that even the medieval monks who claimed to have encountered Satan were basically repressing their unbelief and questions and thus ending up with a sense of hallucination, that did not allow them to work on the vague issues that they were dealing with (Wink, 1993:37). With this remark, Wink questions the experiences of the Desert Fathers who had been referenced earlier in this chapter. A similar kind of view is extended to witchcraft or mystical powers which Wink asserts were basically witch-hunts, instigated by Christians who were suffering from a “split psyche” and repressed sense of “voyeurism” and as a result meted out their fantasies and repressed desires on innocent women whom they dubbed as witches (Wink, 1993:38).

He explains further that

To women who were denied access to power, especially to ordination to the priesthood, or who were not willing to suppress their sexuality, or who were rebellious against male authority, or who hated God for a particular evil suffered ostensibly at God’s hands, or

were angry at the church, or frustrated at the inability to use their talents except at “women’s” work or greedy to the point of selling their souls to the devil in return for success, or who wanted revenge over a rival or a love portion for a lover, witchcraft and Satan worship represented an attractive gesture of defiance to a patriarchal God and to male dominated society (Wink, 1993:38).

In Wink’s opinion, the rest of what is called witchcraft are basically, secret mystery fertility cults which are a reaction against modern Christianity (Wink, 1993:38). Wink’s explanation does not offer a satisfactory answer to why a person in the African context who has no grudge against the church and is not influenced by the medieval witch-hunt opinions, would still practice and believe in witchcraft.

In as far as Satanism is concerned, Wink explains that this is the outcome of hatred of a God who deserves to be hated anyway, as he has been used as an instrument of “moralistic Christians” to police, “censure and stifle aspects’ of peoples own authentic creativity” (Wink, 1993:38). Even where he acknowledges the worship of Satanism, Wink only underscores the fact that these too are “primordial elemental force”, thus relegating these to some past primitive era. (Wink, 1993:39).

Wink’s views do not capture the proper biblical perspective of Satan who is represented, not just as an attitude or a viewpoint, but as an entity and a personality. Wink also seems to be misrepresenting God by reducing certain benevolent attributes of God to emphasize that God should also be presented as a malevolent God. Neither does Wink capture the mystical views of power as one would encounter in the African context. He mainly refers to the ideas of witchcraft as captured in *Malleus Maleficarum* (Latin for “Hammer of Witches”) written by Austrian priest Heinrich Kraemer and German priest Jakob Sprenger (1486) (Kramer, 2022), which became a main text for detecting, interrogating and executing alleged witches. But this too does not capture the African view of witchcraft, nor the biblical view.

Wink considers that society is shy in highlighting the issues touching on demons and as such is treated more like “the drunk uncle of the twentieth century: we keep them out of sight.” (Wink, 1993:41). While acknowledging the need for people to experience freedom and liberty from oppressive powers, Wink sees these powers in terms of socio-political and economic powers in which people’s lives are “embedded” (Wink, 1993:42). Wink clarifies this view when he says

For the outer demonic is not just shorthand for dehumanizing institutions and social systems. It represents the *actual inner spirit of these suprahuman entities* (sic). The social demonic is

the spirit that is exuded by a corporate structure that has turned its back on its divine vocation as a creature of God and has made its own goals the highest good. The demonic is not then merely the consequences that follow in the wake of self-idolizing institutions; it is also the spirit that insinuates itself into those whose compliance the institution requires in order to further its absolutizing schemes (Wink, 1993:43).

It is clear that Wink does not come out clearly to identify demons as spirit beings which are in existence independently and which do affect human beings. He sees them either as the structures themselves or the "spirit exuded by structures". (Wink, 1993:42). Although the African worldview may see spirits in structures, locations and objects, yet the African view is that these are real beings and personalities. Here Wink would differ with the African concept of the spirit world. Wink also seems to avoid the direct biblical world view of demons as spirit beings which are actively involved in taking control of people's lives and which do need to be expelled as necessary.

Wink classifies the manifestation of demons into three domains: "outer personal possession, collective possession and the inner personal demonic." (Wink, 1993:43). Wink explains the "outer personal possession", to mean the projection of the external political and social conditions on one's self, thus turning one into a victim. One can then sometimes carry the burden of the whole community or nation as a result of this (Wink, 1993:44-50).

He compares the "collective possession" to what might be considered as mass hysteria or communal euphoria. He gives the example of Hitler's Germany as a society that suffered from this collective demonization (Wink, 1993:51). Wink gives the third category as "inner personal demonic" which he states as not being equivalent to the Biblical narratives of exorcism. Instead these are the parts of our being which ought to be embraced as they are often signs of societal triggers which are "suppressed" and are finally coming out on the surface (Wink, 1993:52-53).

In handling the demonic, Wink offers varied responses for the classes of the demonic as he had categorized. For those who are struggling with the "inner demonic", Wink asserts that exorcism, shaped after the "traditional Christian pietism" is not helpful at all, as it takes the angle of suppressing rather than embracing the inner demons (Wink, 1993:56). He explains that this then results in demonizing various individuals and their emotions and expressions (Wink, 1993:56). Wink narrates an incident in his own life that encouraged him through mentorship, to reconcile with the demonic ogre in his dream rather than trying to exorcise it. This he reflects, was much more therapeutic than casting out what initially he considered as the demonic (Wink, 1993:56-57).

This certainly would flow along very well with the African traditional belief of handling the demonic in which they are not cast out but rather appeased and embraced. Here the structural approach of handling what Wink calls the inner demons would be a similar way that a *juju-man* would also handle the issues of spirits in the African context.

Although Wink acknowledges that exorcism might be useful on very rare occasions when dealing with “outer personal demons”, he clarifies that this may only be applicable to individuals who have dabbled with the occultic. In their case, they have invited the demonic powers, but are unable to “uninvite” them (Wink, 1993:58). He describes the New Testament exorcism as “the act of deliverance of a person or institution or society from its bondage to evil and its restoration to the wholeness intrinsic to its creation”. (Wink, 1993:59). However, he still defines the demonic as the “psychic or spiritual power” that individuals, organizations or their associations would release. He does not identify them as personal spirit beings as seen both in the Bible or through the eyes of African traditional adherents. For Wink, they are still encased in structural frames.

Wink finally draws anecdotes from engagement or defiance of societal corporate evil as exorcising the collective demons. When systems of evil are confronted and addressed, deliverance of society is enhanced and justice and equity is restored (Wink, 1993:64-66). Perhaps one would view this more as the prophetic ministry of confronting evil in society and among the leaders who influence people. Wink would, perhaps, view such action as exorcising demons from society. Don Richardson in *Peace Child* (Richardson, 1974), describes his experience of addressing tribal hostilities and finally bringing peace among communities by using salvific narratives among the communities to restore relationships. Wink would see this as exorcising systemic demons.

Another person who also uses the structural approach is Leslie Newbigin. He highlights what he considers as good creations of God which can usurp the status, which is not their's and, in the process, become demonic. These, he explains, are not just flesh and blood, but “norms, roles and structures” which have “absolutized” and become diabolical (Newbigin, 1989:206). Although Newbigin differs in some ways with Wink, he still sees the demonic largely in structural forms. He would thus see some of the traditions in African Traditional Religion as part and parcel of these structures which have developed into the demonic and are holding people in bondage (Newbigin, 1989:208).

Due to the fact that they deny the reality and existence of evil spirits, structuralists suppress both continuity and discontinuity and as such would not provide a helpful response to a person who is experiencing power encounters in the African context. It is detached and aloof. Spirits are not just

structures and neither do the structures make the spirits or demons. These are spiritual entities which are in existence even today.

4.5.4 Existential Responses to Mystical Powers

Another response that is worth noting is that of the existentialists. Rudolf Bultman is a true representation of this category. For Bultman, the New Testament presentation of a demonic world that is influencing humanity needs to be interpreted as myth in order to allow for an existential worldview (Bultmann, 1985:15). Bultmann's view springs from the fact that the scientific cosmology, enlightenment thinking and industrial development have decimated this mythological world picture. Since the issue of concern is not necessarily the New Testament, but the supernatural world in which spirits and demons are active, that same world is the same that the traditional African offers, it therefore stands that it too, would be obsolete in the economy of the existentialist.

The position that Bultmann has taken would perhaps, be an indicator of what he would tell an African who believes in the world of spirits, ancestors and mystical powers. That African "world picture" would also be declared obsolete alongside the New Testament "world picture". He asserts that his understanding of "myth" is not in cosmological sense, but in an anthropological sense that emphasizes on existence, thus existentialism (Bultmann, 1985:9-10).

Bultman explains what he means by the word myth

Myth is the report of an occurrence or an event in which supernatural, superhuman forces or persons are at work (which explains why it is often defined simply as the history of the gods)... it refers certain phenomena and events to supernatural, 'divine' powers whether they are thoughts ... or represented as personal spirits or gods. (Bultmann, 1985:95).

In Bultmann's opinion, if this is the world that the Biblical writers offer and which contemporary Christians proclaim and expect people to believe in, then the New Testament needs to be demythologized to make it more believable (Bultmann, 1985:3). Bultmann's view springs from the fact that the scientific cosmology, enlightenment thinking and industrial development have decimated this mythological world picture. As such:

Also finished by knowledge of the forces and the laws of nature is faith in spirits and demons. For us the stars are physical bodies whose motion are regulated by cosmic laws; they are not demonic spirits who can enslave men and women to serve them... Likewise,

illnesses and their cures have natural causes and do not depend on the work of demons and on exorcising them (Bultmann, 1985:4).

David Congdon has faulted those who have critiqued Rudolf Bultmann's usage of the term "myth" in reference to the New Testament and the demonic as misreading Bultmann. He re-narrativizes Bultmann by pointing out that Bultmann's understanding of the term "myth" was used more in a revelatory sense in contrast to the scientific perspective. In Congdon's view, the word was concerned with the question of "existence and execution", while science does not engage that question (Congdon, 2017:7). He explains that what Bultmann saw and asserted to be looking like myth, was actually the fact that God justifies the ungodly. This justification by faith which forms the basis of the new revelation is what forms the "content of biblical mythology" (Congdon, 2017:10).

Even though Congdon has defended Bultmann's usage of the word "myth" yet the meaning that Bultmann himself gave to the word indicated that his interpretation of the New Testament was clouded by the view that the "world picture" that the New Testament presented was loaded in "mythological talk", that was probably borrowed from "Jewish apocalypticism or Gnostic myth of redemption" (Bultmann, 1985:2). His list of those entities which he views as belonging to this "world picture" include the fact that the world is "the theatre for the working of supernatural powers, God and his angels, Satan and his demons." (Bultmann, 1985:1). He observes that the "world picture" indicates that "demons" can possess people and he categorizes this as part of the myths (Bultmann, 1985:1).

In spite of Congdon's effort to redeem Bultmann, it would be argued that his view of the mystical powers and the spirit world has misrepresented the Biblical data and suppressed the African traditional worldview. The Bible presents a world where spirits or demons are actively involved in all sorts of vices and where believers are engaged in power encounters with them. The believers are victorious because of the power that the Lord Jesus has given to them. But in the African setting as has been observed earlier on in this chapter, the spirit world is considered as present. These are not myths and to attempt to mythologize them is to re-write the Bible and to subdue the African's worldview of the spirit world. This is the true "world picture" of the traditional African.

A different existentialist response is the agnostic view, expressed by Friedrich Schleiermacher that claims that the demonic is a cultural idea that does not matter. In responding to John Calvin's

assertion on the existence of Satan, Friedrich Schleiermacher in *Christian Faith* rebuts Calvin's quotation of scripture as not referring to the devil and even allowing for that possibility. Schleiermacher insisted that the idea came from the cultural context of the day and was not even propagated by Jesus and his disciples. (Schleiermacher, 2016:1.45.2). The existence or lack of existence of the devil was immaterial for the Christian according to Schleiermacher, and therefore there was nothing to affirm or deny (Schleiermacher, 2016:1.45.2).

Such an agnostic position that Schleiermacher takes basically indicates a refusal to make a decision, in spite of the rather numerous records available. To the African who believes in the existence of demons and spirits, Schleiermacher, would probably tell them that it is not important, or it does not matter. The African traditionalist would struggle with such a position as they would insist that these are entities that they interact with on regular basis and did not require theorizing. Similarly, because of his existential views, Schleiermacher would also probably struggle with the concept of mystical powers as held by followers of African traditional religion.

Another agnostic who also takes a structuralist position when it comes to issues of the spirit world and mystical power is Sasha Newell. Newell argues that Pentecostals are part and parcel of witchcraft because they emphasize the same things that witchdoctors do: deliverance from illness and misfortune, healing and gaining prosperity (Newell, 2007:462). In her opinion, Pentecostals have postured themselves as capable of destroying any form of witchcraft and enable their adherents to experience health and wealth by invoking the power of the Holy Spirit (Newell, 2007:462). Newell expresses the idea that Pentecostals are on a path of conflict with witchdoctors as each group claims a higher level of potency both in their worldview as well as in their practice (Newell, 2007:462).

Newell then turns to politics and views witchcraft as a reaction against "modernity" and the impoverishing economic systems, but one can obviously detect that she is speaking from the structural viewpoint of power (Newell, 2007:462-463). As such she does not bring out the fact that there are living spiritual entities which are called spirits which are active participants in world events. Thus, she negates the Pentecostal emphasis on evil spirits. To view witchcraft as only issuing from the "strains" between the individual and the community expectations is an attempt to trivialize the deeper sense of entrenchment of both the African traditionalist worldview and the aspects of the mystical powers (Newell, 2007:463).

In the presentation that she makes, Newell does not make any distinction between the various tribes of Pentecostals: Classical Pentecostals, Charismatics, Third-wave or neo-Pentecostals. In

putting them all together, she fails to acknowledge that not all Pentecostals are the same. Newell considers Pentecostals to be dangerous and one can understand this as she confesses that she is arguing from the position of an agnostic (Newell, 2007:468).

Newell presents the ambivalent view of the Pentecostal churches on the one hand as sources of greed, competition and even witchcraft and yet on the other hand she considers them as occupying a place of respect due to their healing gifts, which she does not deny (Newell, 2007:469). She argues, that Pentecostals must also be practicing witchcraft since they are able to combat witchcraft. In her economy, she reflects the attitude of the Pharisees in Matt.12:24, that Jesus could only cast out the demons by the power of Beelzebul, by insisting that only witchcraft can combat witchcraft (Newell, 2007:469).

She does not show an engaging understanding of the Biblical worldview and therefore fails to acknowledge the double sources of spiritual power: God and Satan. Newell profiles Africans racially by distinguishing between the North American Pentecostals and African Pentecostals. In her considered opinion, the North American Pentecostals rely on the Holy Spirit, while their counterparts in Africa draw the source of their power from witchcraft (Newell, 2007:470). Without giving sufficient reason for her argument, it points to implicit bias against African Pentecostalism that is difficult to explain and that truly weakens the writer's viewpoint. The fact that African worldview, including among the Pentecostals in Africa is much more open to the spirit world does not mean they are witches.

To view the African mystical spirit world and the biblical world of demons as myths is an attempt to bury evidence that is quite obvious. It will damage the believers' faith in the Bible as they are left without the supernatural spirit world. And so, it does matter and cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. To accuse Pentecostals of using witchcraft may not be far-fetched as the African Pentecostal scholar and founder of the Church of Pentecost in Ghana, Opoku Onyinah, talked of some Pentecostals going to the extent where they practice "witchdemonology" (Onyiah, 2002). What they do in the name of deliverance is pretty close to witchcraft. This needs to be avoided so as not to get into complete continuity where everything that happens in African Traditional Religion is adopted into Pentecostal procedures.

4.5.5 Mainstream Christian Response to Mystical Powers

Apart from the responses captured so far, the study now examines the response that would be found among mainstream Christians. Mainstream Christians takes a more positive view of the reality of the mystical powers. This can be seen in the comments by Kevin G. Smith. Smith affirms that the “cosmology” of the Gentile believers who received the letter to the Ephesians was similar to that of the African believers (Smith, 2018:70). In his view, the book of Ephesians affirms the Neo-Pentecostal view of evil powers but offers an alternative dimension of spiritual warfare (Smith, 2018:7). He draws a balance between what he considers to be “cerebral Christianity” and an over-fascination with warfare motif as seen among sections of the Pentecostal and Charismatic practitioners. Somewhere in the middle, there should be a proper balance (Smith, 2018:7).

Smith argues that the Western-oriented Christianity, that was predominant among the historically traditional churches did not sit well in the “African soil” due to the fact that it was opposed to the supernatural, was rationalistic and did not accommodate the concept of evil spirits in its domain (Smith, 2018:72). He quotes E.A. Asamoah as saying:

It is no exaggeration to say that the church’s attitude towards African beliefs has generally been one of negation, a denial of the validity of those beliefs ... Anybody who knows African Christianity intimately will know that no amount of denial on the part of the church will expel belief in the supernatural powers from the minds of the African people (E.A Asamoah, *The Christian Church and African Heritage*, 1955:297) (Smith, 2018:72).

In Smith’s opinion, the belief in the spirit world is “ubiquitous” among Africans and as such some people perceive that malevolent spirits engage in various destructive activities upon the people (Smith, 2018:72). He further explains that the “cerebral Christianity” that denies the reality of the demonic, avoids the supernatural realm, ignores experiential encounters and which tends to be more privatized, does not match the traditional African beliefs in dealing with the demonic arena. As a matter of fact, the traditional African view fares much better. Smith asserts that not only does the African traditional worldview accommodate the spirit world, but it also offers a way of appeasing the spiritual powers, which does not require warfare (Smith, 2018:72).

Smith expresses concern that unless the brand of Christianity that is propagated by sections of the church, offers a solution to the negative influence of the spirit world upon the African people, Christianity will not thrive in the continent of Africa. He posits that this may be the reason why Pentecostalism seems to have made significant inroads into the continent (Smith, 2018:72). One can argue that Smith is right since the mainline churches were losing members in Africa to the

Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals who were addressing matters of spiritual warfare and casting out demons. The end result is that a number of these churches like Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist are now addressing these issues (Richard Quebedaux, 162-166). Pentecostal African scholar, Opoku Onyinah advocates direct confrontation with the African Spirit world. Onyinah attributes a resurgence of teachings on Satan, demons, and other powers of evil to a post-classical Pentecostal awareness that introduced ministries which were involved in exorcisms and dealing with strongholds (Onyinah, 2012:5). He observes that later, Charles Kraft and Peter Wagner were the key proponents of the spiritual warfare motif. He states the position of these two scholars as advocating for both a “ground-level spiritual warfare” and a “strategic-level spiritual warfare” (Onyinah, 2012:10-11).

Those who are active at the ground-level, are engaged with “family spirits”, “occult spirits” and finally “ordinary demons” (Onyinah, 2012:10). While those who are operating at the strategic-level are engaged with territorial spirits, institutional spirits, functional spirits, spirits controlling objects and finally ancestral spirits (Onyinah, 2012:11). He points to the fact that these advocates of strategic-level spiritual warfare, like C. Peter Wagner, also emphasize a hierarchy of spirits where the strategic-level spirits supervise the ground-level spirits (Onyinah, 2012:11). Onyinah highlights the approach that is taken by these individuals in exercising spiritual warfare as 1) identifying the spirits; 2) dealing with the root cause of the problem, which usually is the sin in the city; 3) and finally, exercising spiritual “warfare against the territorial spirits.” (Onyinah, 2012:12).

Onyinah appreciates the contribution that the teachers of strategic level spiritual warfare have made towards evangelism and missions as a means of spurring many Christians to be involved in strategically planning and praying for the evangelism of their cities (Onyinah, 2012:12-13). He also acknowledges that the emphasis on reaching out to the “10/40 Window” (that region of the world that lies between 10 degrees and 40 degrees north of the equator), increased attention and mission work among communities in this region who are not-yet Christians (Onyinah, 2012:13).

He affirms that there has been very focused prayers targeting specific issues in communities, including concerns for poverty in Africa (Onyinah, 2012:12). These, he points out, are helpful for the African Christians in responding to various life challenges in the continent (Onyinah, 2012:13).

But apart from the positive contributions that Onyinah highlights, he also sees some adverse effects. Onyinah is of the opinion that there is too much emphasis on the demonic which may be sourced more from Frank Peretti’s *This Present Darkness* novel than from the Bible. He argues that although it appears that there are some evil spirit powers under Satan who might be controlling

sections of the world, there is no indication that believers are supposed to engage with them in spiritual warfare, nor attempt to dislodge them from those position of hierarchy (Onyinah, 2012:15).

He finds fault with the techniques used, as well as the emphasis on tools like spiritual mapping, strategic-level spiritual warfare, ground-level spiritual warfare which seems to be more of rituals that reduce the necessary focus on God (Onyinah, 2012:16). Apart from this, it is the considered opinion of Onyinah that this diminishes the sovereignty of God, that would indicate that Satan and his spirits operate by “divine permission” (Onyinah, 2012:16).

Onyinah also stipulates that these teachings “reinforce the primitive animistic belief systems” that “keep communities in servile fearfulness.” (Onyinah, 2012:18). This hinders individuals and communities from trusting the Lord as they spend most of their time casting out demons (Onyinah, 2012:18). Sometimes this goes to the extent that there is only blame for Satan or demons rather than addressing actual matters of sinfulness. Onyinah is of the opinion that Biblical support for this teaching is rather scanty and extrapolated as it is mainly based on anecdotes (Onyinah, 2012:19).

In looking at involvement with spiritual powers, Onyinah presents the belief in a state where one may possess some kind of spiritual “supernatural powers, which may be used for good or for evil” (Onyinah, 2012:72). Sometimes these powers may be inherited or even transferred from a dying person. He however, lists this among the negative strongholds that Christians need to resist (Onyinah, 2012:72).

Onyinah also introduces a new term, “witchdemonology” which he describes as “the belief and the practice of deliverance ministries in Africa, which is a synthesis of the practices and beliefs of African witchcraft and Western Christian demonology and exorcism” (Onyinah, 2012:73). Onyinah highlights the fact that some of the narratives in Africa are basically traditional myths like that of a water spirit called *Maami Wata*, which is said to be half-human and half -fish and is mainly common in West Africa (Onyinah, 2012:74). Onyinah expresses concerns that some preachers have taken these narratives as truths and are teaching them in their deliverance sessions (Onyinah, 2012:74).

Being a leader of one of the largest Pentecostal denominations in the world, Onyinah’s position is worth noting as he affirms Biblical truth but also cautions against excesses and dangers that both the African Christian practitioners and the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare can fall

into. While acknowledging the reality of the spirit world and the existence of demons, yet not embracing an unhealthy continuity that would lead to negative syncretism.

The balance is also emphasised by a critique of what can be viewed as an “infatuation” with the spirit world by Wilbur O’Donovan. O’Donovan explains that the African is infatuated with the unseen world of the spirit as they are constantly aware that sometimes the things which are visible are affected by the things which are not visible (O’Donovan, 1997:177). O’Donovan acknowledges the existence of the spirit world when he says, “From ... Scripture, it is clear that there is a world of spirit beings. It is also clear that these spirit beings were created by Christ and that they exist for a purpose. They are all subject to Him without exception.” (O’Donovan, 1997:178). O’Donovan quotes Colossians 1:16 as a proof of this statement. He is of the opinion that anyone who denies the existence of the Spirit world is living in deception. (O’Donovan, 1997:178).

According to O’Donovan, these spirit beings are powerful beings which can influence and affect matters in the visible realm. Although he confirms the African belief in the spirit world, he also points out the fact that many of the African traditional beliefs in the spirit world are contrary to biblical teachings (O’Donovan, 1997:178). In his biblical understanding, evil spirits were part of the large number of angels which were created by God (Psalms 148:2) but became the minority that rebelled with Satan against the plans and purposes of God together with the devil. O’Donovan explains that just like the devil, they will all be sentenced to hell (Matt.25:41). They are also called demons and should not be identified as some kind of unknown deities or ancestors (O’Donovan, 1997:178-179).

From the narratives of angelic appearances in the Bible, one can note that the angels would sometimes engage with human beings in conversations as emissaries of God and at the same time would change their appearance as the need required (O’Donovan, 1997:179). Since the angels have this ability, one would presume that the fallen angels, demons or evil spirits, would also have the ability to transform themselves to whatever would suit their purposes as the Bible points that Satan’s angels camouflage as angels of light (2 Cor.11: 14). As such they can deceive people and through this keep them in bondage (O’Donovan, 1997:179).

O’Donovan compares and contrasts the Biblical view of angels with the African worldview of divinities. While acknowledging that angels can sometimes act as intermediaries between God and humanity, just like divinities in the African context are sometimes viewed as intermediaries, the similarity ends there (O’Donovan, 1997:180-181). Angels are also sent by God and are never

ordered or directed by human beings. They also do not accept any kind of libation or reverence at all, as this they reserve for God alone. On the contrary human beings can direct or request divinities and also offer sacrifices to appease them in the African traditional religious context. O'Donovan is of the opinion that what is considered as divinities are basically demonic deceptions which are orchestrated by Satan to hold people in bondage (O'Donovan, 1997:181).

O'Donovan seems to be in agreement with proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare when he states that the current world system is under the dominion of Satan who has been described variously as the "ruler of this world" (John 12:31) or the "god of this world" (2 Cor.4:4) (O'Donovan, 1997:191). He further stipulates that both from scripture and from mission history, there seems to be some evidence that this evil system that the devil has established "may be used by Satan to influence the leadership of both political nations and tribal groups" (O'Donovan, 1997:191). He draws his position from the mention of the 'Prince of Persia' in Daniel 10:13,20. But he is also of the opinion that this is what Paul might have been making reference to when he talked of powers, principalities and authorities (Ephesian 6:12 and Colossians 2:15). (O'Donovan, 1997:191).

While acknowledging the narrative of Elijah and Moses appearing at the Mountain of Transfiguration as an indicator that there is life after death, O'Donovan affirms the African traditional belief by declaring that "the African view that physical death is a door into the spirit world is quite accurate according to the Word of God." (O'Donovan, 1997:219). On the other hand, O'Donovan rejects certain practices like divination, witchcraft and ancestral veneration on the ground that they are prohibited in the Bible. He quotes Luke 16:19-31; Deut. 18:10-11 and 1 Sam.28"8-19. (O'Donovan, 1997:220-221).

O'Donovan's view is that there are only two kinds of dead people. Those who died and had a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and those who did not have a salvific relationship with Christ. In his considered opinion, those who had a relationship with Christ would enter into the presence of God, while those who did not have that kind of relationship would be limited to a place of suffering. As such no dead ancestor can come back to engage with those who are still left behind. In O'Donovan's view, such sightings or experiences are demonic deceptions who impersonate the dead person (O'Donovan, 1997:222-225).

So the response of Mainstream Christians accepts the reality of the spirit world in the Bible and in Africa. Some are up front in seeking to engage with it in specific spiritual warfare, but O'Donovan

insists that this should not be a dualist approach as though it were a warfare between equals but should recognise that the whole spirit world is actually subject to Christ.

4.6 Conclusion

The development in the study of African Traditional Religion (ATR) has moved from a point where it was never considered at all due to the classifications of the higher and lower religions. It belonged to the lower religions which were said to have no written scriptures, or dogmas. This chapter has shown that ATR has beliefs and philosophies under which it operates. It has also affirmed that there was a strong sense of identity with Africans to the extent some scholars have proposed a new nomenclature: "Africism". This chapter has examined the debates of whether it should be considered as "animism" and highlighted the fact that there is a stigma attached to the word "animism" due to its origin and evolutionary perception. The chapter has recommended that it be looked at as pre-existing religion.

This chapter has also shown that imbedded deeply in the belief system of adherents of African Traditional Religion, is the belief in mystical powers which are influenced by deities, spirits and demons. These powers according to the practitioners can be used either for good or evil depending on whether there are benevolent or malevolent spirits behind them. These powers can be encountered or warded off by either appeasing them or using stronger power, including witchcraft to fight them. The belief system also acknowledges the world of the living dead who continue to engage with the living as ancestors. These too have to be acknowledged and venerated so that they may treat the living well according to ATR.

The chapter has also pointed out the divergent views on this African reality as not the only reality. While adherents of ATR have affirmed the reality of the spirit world and the mystical powers therein, that can influence day by day events, there have been others who have posed divergent views. Although affirming the spirit world, the structuralist have insisted that these are basically institutional and systemic structures which develop into demons and have declined to affirm their reality as living spiritual beings which are in operation. Close to them are the existentialists who have outrightly dismissed the spirit world either as myths or as totally irrelevant to the activities of the day by day living. These have taken the position of discontinuity to the extent even the New Testament records are re-interpreted to dismiss the spirit world.

On the other hand, the neo-Pentecostals have not only affirmed the existence of the spirit realm but have also adopted both the language and some practices which are quite similar to what one would find in African Traditional Religion. In this they have reflected continuity and seemed to have borrowed symbols from ATR. On the other hand, they firmly come out to practice spiritual warfare which is meant to cast out the spirits or demonic powers, and in the process, they endorse discontinuity.

The mainstream scholars have tended to express a more scripturally based response with an emphasis on proper interpretation of scripture, thus trying to bring a balance. They have affirmed the reality of the spirit world as recorded in scripture but have cautioned against some of the excesses that could lead to unhealthy continuity or irrational discontinuity that ignores the Biblical evidence. The study concludes this chapter that it is possible to hold both continuity and discontinuity in a balanced way that is not unhealthy to the church and the Christians.

The study will then analyse the interface between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion, thus looking at both the similarities and the differences in the following chapter. It will also examine whether there is continuity or discontinuity between the two parameters and assesses the process of the encounterology through contextual framework. The study further examines a historical case study in Kiambu, Kenya, which has often been used by the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare as an authentic case of community transformation through the use of strategic level spiritual warfare.

5 CHAPTER 5

STRATEGIC LEVEL SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN DIALOGUE WITH AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

5.1 Introduction:

Chapter three of the study focused on the nature of strategic level spiritual warfare and the various arguments and proof points which are presented by the proponents affirming its efficacy. The chapter also examined the Biblical texts which are used by these proponents to highlight incidences when Biblical characters advocated or used strategic level spiritual warfare. The chapter also delved into the various divergent views on the meaning, validity or efficacy of strategic level spiritual warfare. But at the same time, the spectrum of views of what “powers and principalities” are, were also presented.

Chapter four delved into the development of African Traditional Religion (ATR) as a study. It examined the beliefs, identity and practices of ATR. The study also reflected on the mystical powers and the spirit world within the context of ATR and how various sections of the Christian faith responded to mystical powers. While there were objections to the reality of the spirit world from some circles, the study highlighted the fact that it is a New Testament reality and also an ATR reality, in which case the two seems to have some common ground here. Some of the previous nomenclature including “animism” have been questioned due to their derogatory origin, while “pre-existing” religion has been recommended. “*Africism*” has also been offered as an alternative terminology, although it will take a while before it can connect with the people. Pre-existing religion is more preferable as it makes reference to what was/is before the introduction of Christianity or Islam.

Chapter five now examines the nature of the dialogue or engagement that is in existence between the Third Wave strategic level spiritual warfare notion and practices and mystical powers in African Traditional Religion. When the Third Wave ideas of powers and mystical African Traditional religious powers experience encounterology between them, is there embrace or conflict, continuity or discontinuity? The chapter also highlights a frequently quoted case by proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare in Kiambu in Kenya, where there is a narrative that community transformation took place in the same area when spiritual mapping and strategic level spiritual warfare was exercised.

5.2 The Nature of the Dialogue: Encounter Between Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion

When strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion experience encounterology, it is important to examine the processes that they go through. In *Warfare Praying*, C. Peter Wagner asserts that those who are engaged in prophetic praying do not just pray for the salvation of souls only but are also involved in "wrestling with principalities and powers as Paul described in Ephesians 6." (Wagner, 2009:11). Wagner refers to his missionary visits to Argentina as precipitating what he called "a laboratory for relating strategic-level spiritual warfare to evangelism" (Wagner, 2009:13). He further acknowledges the significant role that Argentina played in helping him and his wife to learn about the "spiritual dimensions of world evangelization." (Wagner, 2009:13).

Wagner points out what he considers as the three levels of spiritual warfare and these are 1) Ground-level, which deals with ministry of deliverance from demons; 2) Occult-level, where shamans, witchdoctors, witches and warlocks operate and ; 3) Strategic-level spiritual warfare, where there are conflicts against territorial spirits (Wagner, 2009: 16-17). Although there seems to be some scriptural and practical missiological evidence for the first he has described and one would perhaps concede some encounters with the second, Wagner seems to be hard pressed in giving biblical evidence on the third category, except to turn to the fictional books of Frank Peretti (Wagner, 2009:17) or anecdotes gathered from the mission field. This, again, points out the influence of the mission field in the formation of his views and teachings rather than properly interpreted scripture.

He asserts what might appear to be his mission statement in the area of spiritual warfare: "My interest in warfare prayer is directly proportional to its effectiveness in enhancing evangelism" (Wagner, 2009: 18). In looking at the subject, Wagner attributes the growth of churches, conversions of non-Christians and the planting of churches into new cities and territories as a result of spiritual warfare, and particularly strategic-level spiritual warfare. His conclusions are drawn from the reports of the ministries of Carlos Annaconda and Ed Silvano in Argentina (Wagner, 2009: 20-29).

Reading through the reports he has cited, these do not sound too different from what has been previously observed in other revival times, apart from the magnitude of the miraculous

experienced. There certainly has been a connection between prayer and large numbers of people turning to the Lord in a community in revival times: the East African revival, the Hebrides revival, the Indonesian revival and the Zulu revival among others (Coomes, 1990; Edwards, 2004; Koch, 1981). These prayers may not have emphasized the aspects of spiritual warfare but expressed just as much a burden for the unconverted. They seemed to have obtained the same, if not sometimes greater, results without engaging in strategic level spiritual warfare. The emphasis that Wagner gives is to engage Satan and demons in Spiritual warfare.

On the contrary, the African Pentecostal leader and scholar, Opoku Onyinah, assesses the contemporary trends of spiritual warfare and notes that it makes Satan the centrepiece of its teaching and as such Satan seems to be highly exalted. In his view as affirmed by other scholars, according to him, there seems to be too much borrowing from the notions propagated by the novels of Frank Peretti. He however, affirms the presence of territorial spirits and the hierarchical demonic order as being biblical (Onyinah, 2012:15).

On the other hand, Onyinah opposes the idea that the people of God are meant to be going around casting these spirits from their domains (Onyinah, 2012:15). While assenting to the fact that Christians can expel demons from individuals and prohibit them from affecting their own lives, they however, do not have the mandate to evict these principalities from cities and localities. He is categorical that "it is not possible" and there is no biblical precedent for such an action (Onyinah, 2012:16). Neither does he see any systematic biblical "strategy" for identifying spirits in localities or conducting spiritual mapping and eventually casting out the demons. In Onyinah's view, these "seem to reduce spiritual warfare to mere magical techniques rather than confidence in God himself" (Onyinah, 2012:16).

According to Onyinah, those who emphasize such teachings do not recognize that God is supreme and as such is in control of both Satan and any demonic spirit. They also fail to grasp the fact that misfortunes are not outside the purview of God and that God can still use them to accomplish his will (Onyinah, 2012:17). In engaging with African Traditional Religion, Onyinah specifies that such emphasis, "reinforce the primitive (sic) animistic belief systems" which in the end destroys people's abilities to develop and, subsequently, maintains a blanket of fear over the people (Onyinah, 2012:18). He also does not see any biblical support to the teachings, apart from "exaggerated" anecdotes (Onyinah, 2012:19).

In assessing the teachings of Wagner, Robert J. Priest is of the opinion that there can be reverse impact upon missionaries by people of non-Christian background to whom they are ministering,

leading to a paradigm shift in the beliefs and practices of the missionaries. This kind of shift would affect their worldview of the spirit world (Priest, et al., 1995:11). His criticism is that, although some Western missionaries are propagating these kinds of views as Wagner and his compatriots do, the views themselves are not originally from the West; they are acquired from non-Christian religions from around the world, with which the missionaries interacted closely (Priest, et al, 1995:11).

“Borrowing” from non-Christian religions

Priest gives a list of subject areas in which proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare seem to be borrowing or using similar expressions as the adherents of some pre-Christian religions. The first, according to Priest is the concept that contact with items or objects which have been used in occultic practices can become conduits of transmission of demonic influence on an individual. Such objects can be trees, “ceremonial daggers”, hills and even artifacts bought in shops or given as gifts. Such mediums of transmission could also be events, buildings and animals (Priest et al., 1995:14-15). This influence is due to demons attaching themselves to the object and affecting anyone who makes contact with the object (Priest et al, 1995:15).

Priest does not make any connection between these engagements and passages of scripture, either in the Old Testament or the New Testament. In certain cities, the children of Israel were prohibited from collecting any artifacts as was in the case of Jericho, as this would bring a curse among the people (Joshua 6:18). Failure to adhere to this directive was severely punished. Although the passage does not talk about any demon, a curse was attached to any item that would be brought into the camp of the Israelites. One would also notice that during the missionary engagement of Paul in Ephesus, people burned their books, presumably the magical Ephesian letters, which John Stott considers as “written charms, amulets and talismans” (Stott, 1979:307). There was a necessity to renounce and destroy them as Paul viewed any sacrifices made to images as being made to demons (1 Cor.10:20).

This might give credence to the view that demons can take advantage of a community and use the objects of their veneration as a front for their operation. As such the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare might rightfully object to Priest’s accusations on the ground of a lack of experience on the part of Priest as Charles Kraft asserts (Kraft, 1995:95). In their view, which they would consider to be similar to Paul’s view, lurking behind objects used in occultic practices are demons. This should pose a warning therefore that the objects may not be as innocent as Priest might be asserting. They might be having a Trojan horse kind of effect.

The second issue that Priest raises is that one can be negatively impacted by demons when they are cursed. He observes that, “just as objects can be the medium of demonic transmission, so also words can be the medium of transmission.” (Priest et al., 1995:16). Quoting several proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare, (Charles Kraft, Ed Murphy, Timothy Warner, Cindy Jacobs and C. Peter Wagner), Priest highlights their teaching that words can bear demonic or occultic powers that can affect individuals, including church ministers. These powers can only be broken through strategic level spiritual warfare that would counteract and nullify the impact of the curses (Priest et al., 1995:16). Again, Priest does not elaborate on Biblical passages that seem to point to the efficacious nature of some curses (Prov.26:2).

The proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare also miss the important role that the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross played to the extent the Bible records that he has become a curse for everyone (Gal.3:13). Although the reference here is to the curses which were based on the law, yet one can see it as applicable to any pre-Christian curse.

Priest highlights the third issue as the teaching that one can be affected by demons transmitted genealogically. This teaching would emphasize that a child can be affected by demons transmitted to them either at conception or along the journey of growth as a result of either engagement of an ancestor with the demonic or as a result of a curse on some forefathers (Priest et al., 1995:18). He quotes both Timothy Warner and Charles Kraft as insisting that there could be “generational” or “bloodline” transmission of spirits to the next generation through their predecessors (Priest et al, 1995:18).

This has often led to the common notion in a number of churches in Africa which emphasizes, unbiblically, that one cannot be totally set free from some of their sins unless they dig up information on their background on the kind of sins their ancestors used to commit. This belittles the power and the efficacy in the blood of Jesus that is meant to set free from all iniquities. According to Priest, Ed Murphy went to the extent of advocating that adopted children should be taken through sessions of deliverance as they are “vulnerable to demonic influence” (Priest et al, 1995:19). This might result in traumatic experience on the child unless there were certain signs of demonization in their lives.

The teaching that there are “territorial spirits” which control geographically delineated areas is another emphasis that Priest views as one that is bordering on syncretism. The power and the influence of such spiritual powers can only be experienced when one is in those specific regions (Priest et al., 1995:19). At the same time such powers would hinder the evangelization of certain

regions, including people accepting to receive gospel tracts, unless strategic level spiritual warfare was conducted so as to render these spirits powerless (Priest et al., 1995:19).

According to Priest, this idea was first mooted by Timothy Warner (Warner, 1990), who underscored the idea that demons would operate in geopolitical units as assigned by Satan (Priest et al., 1995:20). Kraft, Wagner, Caballeros and Otis all propagate this teaching, according to Priest (Priest et al., 1995:20-21). Priest is of the opinion that this might be a misreading of Ephesians 6:12 in reference to powers and principalities as these powers appear to be attacks directed to individual Christians as Paul is emphasizing and not regions (Priest et al., 1995:70). However, other passages have also been used including the "Prince of Persia" of Daniel 10:13-21. These will be discussed later in this chapter.

Apart from the concern with biblical interpretation, Priest also expresses suspicion on the sources of information that is used by some of these authors. This includes interviewing demons, contacting practitioners of other religions, use of testimonies and stories, arguing from the point of view that it works, sensing from within, extrabiblical personal revelations and finally an appeal to scripture (Priest et al., 1995:26-64). In his opinion, some of these sources are questionable as they might be susceptible to deception and one being misled. Where scripture is used there is a need for proper interpretation that takes into account the context of the text as well (Priest et al., 1995:57-64).

It does appear that some of the ideas which are propagated by proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare are borrowed from the communities that the missionaries interacted with, but at the same time some of their opponents have not appreciated some of the scriptural implications of the texts which are being used. Some of the sources used by the advocates of strategic level spiritual warfare are not only questionable but outrightly objectionable as they border on occultic engagement, like interviewing demons or practitioners of these traditional faiths.

5.3 The Nature of the Dialogue: Continuity or Discontinuity?

In writing about the beginnings of the East African Revival, Mark A. Noll and Carolyn Nystrom highlight the reaction of some of the missionaries to the brand of Christianity that was developing which incorporated some aspects of strategic level spiritual warfare. They indicate that one missionary, Mabel Ensor, who did not want anything to do with what was going on during the East African Revival, reacted quite strongly to what she considered as continuity with African

Traditional Religion. In her opinion those who were espousing the new move, although Anglicans, were in real sense “backsliders, polygamists, worshippers of witches and evil spirits who cover the whole façade with a wash of baptism and a Christian name.”(Noll & Nystrom, 2011:100). Ensor finally left the Anglican church due to this discontent (Noll & Nystrom, 2011: 100). This may indicate how people may strongly object to some teachings going on in the church to the extent they are willing to leave the church.

Issues to do with the spirit world can easily be misunderstood if not carefully handled. Speaking of the influence of William Wade Harris from Liberia, who lived in a time when his community, the Grebo, were seen to be under the patronage of evil spirits which could only be warded off by one carrying some fetishes with them all the time, Noll and Nystrom suggests that this context may have contributed to the formation of beliefs that Harris harboured (Noll & Nystrom, 2011: 68). He therefore had a blended faith that seemed to incorporate aspects of African Traditional Religion and an “emphasis on material objects of power, legalistic moral standards, the ruling name of Jesus and a gospel of prosperity” (Noll & Nystrom, 2011: 78). This raised questions on its connection or lack of connection to Western Christianity, and some viewed it as continuity with African Traditional Religion. Wade Harris, however was extremely influential to the extent that the West African region experienced revival as a result of his ministry. (Omulokoli, 2002)

Continuity and Discontinuity

Richard Gehman highlights the fact that there are close to a dozen different views on what the shape of encounterology between Christianity and African Traditional Religion should look like. This should also cover the nature of the dialogue between strategic level spiritual warfare and mystical powers in African Traditional Religion. He does not mention what these twelve views are (Gehman, 2005:396). In his opinion, one’s view of scripture would often determine the attitude that they adopt towards the other religions (Gehman, 2005:396). Gehman summarizes his views into three categories.

The first view that he presents is continuity. His definition of continuity is the “belief that all religions contain divine revelation and are a means of salvation, though Christianity may be recognized as the ‘final’ and the ‘superior’ one”(Gehman, 2005:396). He is however, of the opinion that these discussions came onto the scene in the 19th century and were not part of the Christian engagement earlier on (Gehman, 2005:396). Although he acknowledges that the early church also struggled with the same issues including the Patristic Era, he still expresses the idea that their challenges were different from the ones facing the Christians today (Gehman, 2005:397).

According to Gehman, such positions are not “faithful to scripture” and those who have taken this position have given the culture, the higher position of determining the meaning of Scripture (Gehman, 2005:398). The second position according to Gehman is discontinuity where there is a “near total disconnect ... between African Traditional Religion and Christianity.” As such salvation is available only through Jesus Christ but not in African Traditional Religion (Gehman, 2005:398). This blocks any possible dialogue and at the same time African Traditional Religion is completely demonized and is not seen to have contributed anything at all that might be useful to Christianity. It is viewed as a hindrance to appreciating the openness to the supernatural world that might be created by African traditional Religion.

The third position that Gehman highlights, and which is his preference, is a Continuity/Discontinuity perspective. In his view this would present more of the way historic Christianity has operated. He appeals for a more “dialectical” approach in dealing with the issue of the dialogue between African Traditional Religion and Christianity (Gehman, 2005: 399). He points to the fact that Africans have a longing for the divine just like the people of God in the Bible.

There are also several similarities between the Hebrew worship in the Old Testament and African traditional worship, according to Gehman. These include sacrifices and rituals, libation, belief in the life after death, ritual purification and many others. Gehman also posits that African Traditional Religion acts as a bridge that points men and women to the true Gospel because it prepares people’s hearts with the belief in a “Supreme being, spirits and life after death” (Gehman, 2005: 400). Because of these reasons Gehman sees some continuity.

Gehman explains that although there is continuity, there are also some strong points for discontinuity. According to him, salvation is available only through Jesus Christ and not through African Traditional Religion. In fact, he argues that several practices and engagements in African Traditional Religion draw away from the Gospel rather than adding to it. They end up becoming a distraction from the Gospel. According to him this is because the majority of practices in African Traditional Religion are anthropocentric rather than theocentric (Gehman, 2005:400). The testimony of many individuals who have converted from African Traditional Religion to Christianity emphasize discontinuity (Gehman, 2005:401). In essence what Gehman is saying is that there is both continuity and discontinuity and it only depends on what is being discussed.

In trying to set a clear direction in this encounterology, Watson Omulokoli encourages that the universal nature of Christianity should be allowed to show through any cultural encasing of both the missionary and the host culture:

“The man in Australasia, in the Americas, in Europe, and in Africa should be comfortably Christian without surrendering his own cultural distinctives to any other culture but that of Jesus Christ. By the same token, the central core of Christianity as manifested in any given locality should be such that it is readily identifiable by others from outside it as truly Christian.” (Omulokoli, 1986:31).

His concerns are that in the process of some attempting to renounce what they consider as unhealthy influence of Western Christianity, they would end up with an “African Christianity which is so overlaid with our own cultural matter that it fails to meet the test of true Christianity when it is subjected to close scrutiny.” (Omulokoli, 1986:31). The caution that Omulokoli is giving is important as no one wants to end up with what is African and not Christian as if there is a novelty in being African that outweighs the Christian identity. That is an important focus to maintain in the cause of the dialogue.

Constructive dialogue: Pentecostalism and ATR

Allan H. Anderson attributes the popularity of Pentecostalism in Africa to the fact that Pentecostals subconsciously “tap” into their innate traditional religious beliefs while setting forth a biblical basis as the rationale. In the same process, Anderson asserts that Pentecostals on the one hand embrace continuity and on the other hand confront those same traditional beliefs through discontinuity (Anderson, 2018:3). He is therefore of the opinion that it is not a case of either/ or but rather both continuity and discontinuity as Pentecostals give new meaning to their concepts and experiences (Anderson, 2018:4).

In making reference to the work of anthropologist Joel Robbins, Anderson underscores the two paradoxes in Pentecostalism. This is reflected in the fact that Pentecostals operate within the ambit of the worldview of the spirit-world that is found in African traditional religions and as such accept concepts and phenomenology which are referred to in this space. On the other hand, Pentecostals are also engaged in exorcism, which seems to confront this world. Anderson acknowledges that some of these experiences would be similar to what one would encounter on a visit to a traditional religious expert and practitioner like a witchdoctor (Anderson, 2018: 5). This paradox thus reflects both continuity and discontinuity at the same time.

Walter J. Hollenweger seems to extend this concept not just to Africa but also to the foundations of modern classical Pentecostalism. He asserts that Pentecostalism owes its origin to Africa, because the founder, J. B. Seymour was a son of Africa, descendant of slaves in America (Hollenweger, 2015: 18-24). He further states that his views that Pentecostal theology and heritage was influenced by African worldview through Seymour was initially ridiculed, but is now

being vindicated (Hollenweger, 2015:48). In his view, this should be liberating to the people of Africa since

Blackness as an experience and a God-given reality can also find liberation in Pentecostal history. In a world where blackness has often been portrayed as, at worst a curse, or at best something second class, black Pentecostals can rejoice in the fact that God chose to use a black man to kindle the pentecostal fire (Hollenweger, 2015:47).

Anderson reiterates the viewpoint of Harvey Cox (Cox, 2009), that any religion which addresses freedom from bondage to certain aspects of “pre-existing religion” and also engages with the current context will experience growth (Anderson, 2018:6). Commenting on Korean Pentecostalism, Anderson affirms the obviously observable shamanic traces which one can sometimes detect (Anderson, 2018:6). Samuel Hio-Kee Ooi, speaking on strategic level spiritual warfare in the Chinese context also makes reference to the shamanic effects (Ooi, 2006:145-146). Anderson also posits that African Pentecostalism likewise borrows certain concepts from “pre-existing religion”, thus connecting with the past and therefore pointing to continuity (Anderson, 2018:6).

Pentecostal practitioners however, object to this observation by Anderson on the grounds that they stress the fact that they “confront” these elements rather than adopting them and therefore should be viewed as emphasizing discontinuity (Anderson, 2018:6).

It is apparent that Anderson’s description of continuity is fairly wide. The fact that Pentecostals believe that there are spirit powers and mystical powers operating behind witchdoctors does not in any way imply or indicate that they have embraced continuity as part of their own practices. For this to be defined as continuity, Pentecostals needed to import those same powers and accommodate them as part of their practices in the same manner that the witchdoctors are also doing. They would actually be promoting the same kind of beliefs and practices of African Traditional Religion. This is the accusation that has been levelled against the advocates of strategic level spiritual warfare.

On the other hand, Anderson’s assertion that Pentecostals also exhibit discontinuity by believing that God’s power and ability can actually liberate from these mystical powers, (Anderson, 2018:6) might be closer to the mainline Pentecostal position. Anderson proposes that African Pentecostals have an uncanny ability to operate both as “insiders” and “outsiders”, when it comes to African Traditional Religion. They live in tension on the two areas and oscillate between the two positions (Anderson, 2018: 6). He observes that in certain academic circles, some are in “danger” of creating

a “dichotomy between continuity and discontinuity” which may not be necessary (Anderson, 2018:11).

In Anderson’s view, the belief in the negative impact of “ancestors, witchcraft, evil spirits, witch familiars and demonic forces” is a reflection that people are holding onto continuity from their traditional backgrounds (Anderson, 2018: 8). By responding to this spirit worldview through the power of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostals presumably offer a way out of these challenges, but by doing so, they continue to reinforce the same worldview (Anderson, 2018: 8). It is therefore a tension between discontinuity and continuity at the same time (Anderson, 2018:13). Anderson underscores the fact that most Western Christians misunderstand this emphasis on the spirit world by “African religiosity” (Anderson, 2018:10). For effective engagement with the African context, it is of paramount importance that theological reflections on the continent have to draw from the “human experiences” within the African context (Anderson, 2018:12).

Anderson emphasizes the fact that often, a Western oriented model of Christianity that emphasizes more on rationalism and materialism at the expense of a clear understanding of the spirit world remains disconnected with the reality of the needs of people in the continent of Africa. As such it cannot benefit from the continuity which is exercised by African Pentecostal Christians in embracing the worldview, that there is a spirit-world and at the same time confronting the powers thereof through discontinuity (Anderson, 2018:14). In Anderson’s opinion, African spirituality “interacts with a world that includes spirits, ancestors and witchcraft” (Anderson, 2018:15). In this, he affirms what a number of African authors have said (Turaki, 2006; Bediako, 2014; Mbiti, 2015). The biblical veracity of some of these assertions, however, remains questionable, especially on engagement with ancestors.

While observing the historical context in which Christianity was planted in the continent of Africa, Anderson dismisses those who have asserted that the rapid growth of Christianity in the continent of Africa can be attributed to the diverse needs among the people of Africa that make them susceptible to spiritual crutches. He terms this as a “reductionist approach” to the issues in the continent (Anderson, 2018:26). He observes that the rapid growth of Christianity was experienced not before, but after most colonial powers had left the continent. As such he posits that “Christianity is fully an African religion today” that has seen “not only a remarkable demographic growth in Christian Africa, but also a change in the character and orientation of these Christians” (Anderson, 2018:26).

This is corroborated by Olufunke Adeboye who makes the observation that not all Pentecostalism originated from Asuza Street in the USA as there was spontaneous outbreak of Pentecostalism across the continent of Africa that had diverse origins. (Adeboye, 2018:26). He acknowledges that there has been a tremendous shift of Christianity from the Western world such that its “epicentre” is now in Africa, Latin America and Asia.(Adeboye, 2018:25). Adeboye explains that Christianity in Africa has had three strands: the Ethiopian axis, the African Independent Churches and Pentecostalism (Adeboye, 2018:26-27). This view is rather limiting as it misses out the great missionary movement of the eighteenth century that brought about the establishment of the mainline churches in Africa. Nevertheless, Pentecostalism has received wide acceptance in the continent.

In Anderson’s opinion, the significant growth of the Pentecostal movement in the continent of Africa should largely be seen as emanating from the biblical message that was proclaimed by the Pentecostals and that gave people the hope and means of tackling the “fearful spiritual forces” that they were encountering regularly in their lives (Anderson, 2018: 30). In his examination of African Pentecostalism, Anderson indicates that two religions with different contexts are engaging with each other: Pentecostalism and African pre-existing religions. The nature of the engagement is not conflict, but dialogue. The best example of this dialogue, according to Anderson, is African Pentecostalism (Anderson, 2018:65). Adeboye on the other hand while agreeing on the spread of Pentecostalism across Africa asserts that it became popular because it endorses both the spirit world and witchcraft, while at the same time proclaiming that God is superior to these powers. They also teach on spiritual warfare and engage in deliverance ministry. (Adeboye, 2018:27).

Anderson defines “Pentecostal churches” in Africa as those churches which share some common traits with the worldwide Pentecostal Movement and at the same time “emphasise the working of the spirit in the church, particularly with ecstatic phenomena like prophecy and speaking in tongues, healing, and exorcism” (Anderson, 2018: 44). They not only proclaimed salvation of the souls, but also “deliverance from all kinds of oppressive forces and structures” and thus brought redemption to the people. This includes praying for healing and deliverance from demonic activities (Anderson, 2018: 40). He sees the Pentecostals as falling into three categories: the classical Pentecostals, which are associated with American origin; the new Pentecostal churches, often referred to as “Charismatics” and the African Independent (Instituted) Churches (Anderson, 2018:42-44). Anderson seems to put the neo-Pentecostals or Third Wave in the same category as Charismatics.

In a similar manner Adeboye also classifies the Pentecostals into Classical and neo-Pentecostals. He identifies some of the major churches in Africa as:

Classical Pentecostals can be subdivided into indigenous and foreign. Examples of indigenous churches are the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) in Ghana and Nigeria, the Church of Pentecost (COP) in Ghana, and the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC) in Nigeria. Examples of foreign Pentecostals include AG, The Apostolic Church (TAC), and the Foursquare Gospel Church, with branches across sub-Saharan Africa.(Adeboye, 2018:28).

Christ is the Answer Ministry (CITAM) in Kenya, which has an formational connection with Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) would belong to this category as well. Adeboye explains that the second category of Pentecostal churches would consist of interdenominational fellowships like International Fellowship of Evangelicals (IFES) student groups on campuses, renewal groups in mainline denominational churches and charismatic churches (Adeboye, 2018:30) . He presents a list of some of the examples of prominent neo-Pentecostal churches in Africa as:

the Church of God Missions International, founded by the late Benson Idahosa of Nigeria but now headed by his wife, Margaret Idahosa; Winners' Chapel, founded by David Oyedepo; Christ Embassy International, led by Chris Oyakhilome; and Daystar Christian Centre, founded by Sam Adeyemi; Family of God Church, led by Andrew Wutawunashe; Jabula New Life Covenant Church, led by Tudor Bismark, both from Harare, Zimbabwe; Abundant Life Faith Centre in Kampala, Uganda, led by Handel Leslie; and the Redeemed Gospel Church in Huruma, Kenya, founded by Arthur Kitonga. Ghanaian examples include the International Central Gospel Church, founded by Mensah Otabil, and Lighthouse Chapel International, led by Dag Heward-Mills. South African examples include the multiracial Rhema Bible Church in Johannesburg, founded by Ray McCauley, and the Grace Bible Church led by Mosa Sono.(Adeboye, 2018:30).

While Adeboye has shown that majority of these neo-Pentecostal churches originated wholly from the continent of Africa, he also sees a lot of cross-germination of ideas and teachings with sections of the Western church through literature, exchange of preachers and teachers, conferencing, videos and other media avenues leading to borrowing of ideas across the board. (30). Not only would this be an avenue of for dissemination of teachings like strategic level spiritual warfare, but it could also explain the proliferation of prosperity teachings which is prevalent in some of these churches. Femi Adeleye in his book *Preachers of a Different Gospel: A Pilgrims Reflection on Contemporary Trends in Christianity* (Adeleye, 2020), that has been translated into a few African

languages, explains the spread of prosperity teaching in Africa, especially among neo-Pentecostal churches and offers worthwhile critic on some of the excesses.

In his research on Pentecostalism in South Africa, Anderson discovered that most of the Pentecostal churches oppose the practice of libation to ancestors, prohibit consulting traditional healers and diviners and do not use artifacts or symbols like holy water, in their worship. In this position, they clearly show discontinuity (Anderson, 2018:60). But Anderson reasons that the fact that African Pentecostal Christians still believe in the influence of witchcraft, the presence of ancestors and the spirit world shows that there is continuity (Anderson, 2018:65).

It is not only Anderson who sees continuity in some of the beliefs in African traditional Religion. Aloysius Muzzanganda Lugira explains the fact that in most traditional African religious setting, the belief in a Supreme Being is taken for granted. This Supreme being is also considered as the Creator of all that exists and having unmatched power (Lugira, 2009a:36). He also asserts that most of the attributes of this Supreme being are similar to the Biblical attributes of God. These include being the creator; the one who controls all things; the one who provides for the needs of all and the one who possesses everything that there is. Although some sections of Traditional African Religion also believe in divinities, thus appearing to be polytheistic, Lugira highlights the fact that these are considered more like angels as they are answerable to the one Supreme God, thus affirming monotheism (Lugira, 2009a:39-40). In Anderson's view, the concept of God in the Southern Africa pre-Christian religions was quite similar to the Hebrew version of God (*Elohim*) and as such the missionaries only needed to introduce how Christ now revealed this remote God, but not necessarily to change the concept of God (Anderson, 2018:66), which would be continuity.

Anderson asserts that Pentecostalism should be seen as in a dialogue with African Traditional Religion in which they are impacting one another (Anderson, 2018:65). He identified the three areas which he considers to be of greatest concern to Pentecostal Christians as the

world of the ancestors...the fearful world of witchcraft with curses, evil spirits, nature spirits, and familiar spirits ... the third aspect is the realm of misfortune, bad luck, illnesses for which people seek remedies and relief in divination, healing and exorcism (Anderson, 2018:65).

Anderson also acknowledges that the belief in the spirit-world and mystical powers plays a significant role in "pre-Christian African religions". Mystical powers can be manipulated either for good or evil ends (Anderson, 2018:66). In his opinion, some of these beliefs defy "Western categorization" as God alone is occasionally viewed as insufficient and therefore has to be supplemented with ancestors and spirits (Anderson, 2018:67). This therefore requires the

participation of the traditional diviners who are capable of manipulating the mystical powers to effect a positive turn-around in life's vicissitudes (Anderson, 2018:67).

In terms of the churches' response to the spirit world and mystical powers, Anderson sees a spectrum with discontinuity and continuity on the extreme ends and a combination of several other elements in the middle (Anderson, 2018:68). These include those who dismiss the spirit world as non-existent and totally ignore or disassociate from any engagement with the idea of evil spirits being real. This would be referred to as discontinuity. In Anderson's view the second category is "accommodation", in which the spirit world is not only accepted but "integrated" in the church as rituals or functions which are regularly acknowledged (Anderson, 2018:68-69). This is a case of continuity and is on the other extreme end of the spectrum (Anderson, 2018:69).

Anderson observes that Pentecostal groups approach the spirit world from a point of "confrontation" where there is a recognition of the existence of demons, which need to be confronted through spiritual warfare. In Anderson's view, "old ideas are accepted but invested with biblical meanings", which are then confronted (Anderson, 2018:69). This would indicate that these groups operate with dimensions of both continuity and discontinuity, according to Anderson (Anderson, 2018:69). This is presented as the subset model shown in the figure below:

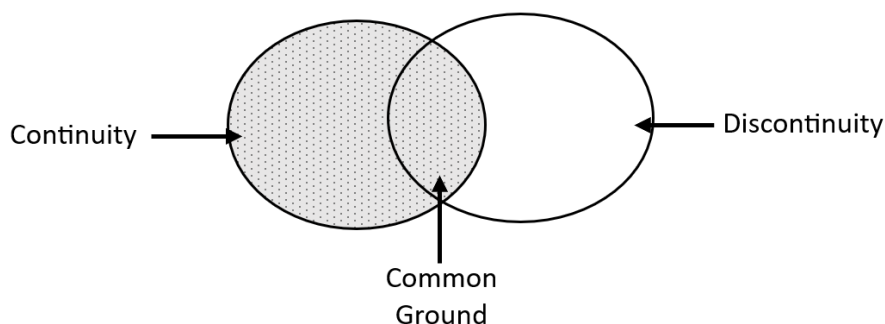


Figure 12: Continuity - Discontinuity Subset Model

5.3.1 The Nature of the Dialogue: Existentialists View- No Dialogue:

In the different dialogical spectrum, some have not only taken the view that locks out dialogue but locks out even the thought that there might be a spirit world. In his existential philosophies borrowed from his colleague Martin Heidegger at the University of Marburg Rudolf Bultmann developed his "demythologization programme." In a discussion on "objective knowledge" and subjective knowledge, there was a view that the former could be scientifically verified while the

latter was innate and depended on the person (the subject) and their inner feelings. (Erickson, 1993:895-896). As such Bultmann asserts that myth cannot be explained in cosmological terms but in ...existential terms". It is existential interpretation. (Bultmann, 1985:9,99).

Bultmann's views are therefore, influenced by his existential convictions and his hermeneutical method of historical criticism of interpreting the New Testament. His views of history and the existence of human beings are based upon this. He affirms Martin Heidegger's concept (Heidegger, 2001) that "understanding is an existential" matter (Bultmann, 1985:82). Edgar Krenz affirms that Bultmann's concept for understanding the New Testament was "an existential" one. (Krenz, 1975:31). He further argues that Bultmann produced an "existential canon" which made the interpreter the determinant of the truth of scripture as such "History is in danger of being interiorized and psychologized" (Krenz, 1975:31). These same sentiments are expressed both by Millard Erickson and by Esther Acolatse (E. E. Acolatse, 2018:898; Erickson, 1993:52-66).

Bultmann defines the New Testament as presenting a "mythical world picture" (Bultmann, 1985:1). In his opinion, these mythological concepts have originated from the "mythology of Jewish apocalypticism and out of Gnostic myth of redemption" (Bultmann, 1985:2). As such, one should not be expected to believe this mythical proclamation, but rather, the New Testament should be "demythologized" as it lacks scientific foundation that would corroborate its accounts. (Bultmann, 1985:3).

Bultmann subsequently dismisses the spirit world with the notion that scientific thinking has "finished" the spirit world. Demons and exorcising demons are therefore totally unnecessary since they are non-existent (Bultmann, 1985:4). Therefore,

the mythology of the New Testament, also, is not to be questioned with respect to the content of its objectifying representations but with respect to the understanding of existence that expresses itself in them (Bultmann, 10).

C. Stephen Evans and R. Zachary Manis dismisses Bultmann's allegation as a "wild exaggeration" since many "sophisticated" individuals, including scientists, doctors and philosophers still believe in the spirit world and the miraculous realms. They do not consider these as myths at all (Evans & Manis, 2010:140). They dispute the claim that certain scientific knowledge renders the belief in religion or God irrelevant to the modern person (Evans & Manis, 2010:140).

As such, human beings bring into their interpretation an a priori knowledge of God that is generated by their existence (Bultmann, 1985:87). This is what is often used in interpreting the

Bible such that working this out is therefore a function of “philosophical existentialist analysis of human existence” (Bultmann, 1985:87). Bultmann insists that the purpose of interpretation is to draw a concept of existentialism for bringing understanding into human existence (Bultmann, 1985:88).

While Bultmann acknowledges that a number of scholars, including Barth, have disagreed with his model of interpreting the scriptures (Nielsen, 1970), he is adamant in his convictions that he is on the right track (Bultmann, 1985:88). He extends this even to matters like the resurrection when he writes and explains that, “the resurrection of Jesus is not a historical fact that could be established as such by means of science of history” (Bultmann, 1985:89). To insist in having faith in such matters, according to Bultmann is “*sacrificium intellectus*”- committing intellectual sacrifice or suicide (Bultmann, 1985:90).

According to him, talks about “transcendent powers, about demons and gods as powers on which we know ourselves to be dependent, of which we do not dispose, whose favour we need and whose wrath we fear”, are purely myths (Bultmann, 1985:98). Subsequently, demythologizing is offering criticism to the mythical image that has been created and is the “existentialist’s interpretation” to human existence (Bultmann, 1985:99). When applied to the Bible, it is critiquing the “mythological world picture of the Bible” that has been rendered irrelevant by objective scientific thinking (Bultmann, 1985:99). He considers these myths as “scandals” that need to be removed so that people may experience genuine freedom and existence (Bultmann, 1985:102).

In *Subverting Global Myths*, Vinoth Ramachandra (Ramachandra, 2008) argues that meaningful liberation and freedom to human beings is not only to set them free from “political tyranny, exploitation, economic scarcity or cultural conformity ... but also from those definitions of the ‘human’” where important aspects of their being human, are “explicitly denied or publicly excluded from acknowledgement” (Ramachandra, 2008:171). When science is used for this exercise, Ramachandra sees it as idolization of science (Ramachandra, 2008:172). To abandon deliberately the idea of demonic spirit beings as existing today, is to abandon the multitude of Africans who interact with the spirit world and perhaps some who are held in bondage by these powers, to the mercy of these malevolent beings. That is dehumanizing them. Bultmann’s view are thus dehumanizing people.

Eta Linnemann underscores the fact that historical critical methodology of studying theology has been a major influence of theological reflection in the West (Linnemann, 1993:83). Having been a student of Bultmann herself (Linnemann, 1993:17), Linnemann writes as an insider-outsider and

highlights what she considers as the weaknesses of that method. In her opinion it is unfortunate that theological research is conducted as if “there is no God” and the standards used which are considered scientific deliberately exclude honest handling of the word of God (Linnemann, 1993:84). As such “scientific principles has come to have the status of an idol” (Linnemann, 1993:84). In her opinion, this methodology used by Bultmann, should be discarded from academic cycles because it begs the question and should be treated as myth itself (Linnemann, 1993:18-20).

Fred. H. Klooster in *Quests for the Historical Jesus* asserts that “myth, symbol, and saga have been invented to take the place of history in relation to the kerygma. Authentic Christianity, however insists upon the historical basis of the Christian faith” (Klooster, 1977:11). Those who are arguing for the Bible to be looked at from a mythological perspective are therefore re-writing the scriptures.

Charles Kraft narrates his dilemma as a missionary in Nigeria who had originally been trained in a theological domain that ignored or downplayed the existence of the spirit world. He explains that they “were totally unprepared to deal with the one area that the Nigerians considered most important – relationship with the spirit world.” (Kraft, 1990:3-4). He acknowledges that they had basically produced a “western secularized” model of Christianity that did not address pertinent issues that the Africa Christians were struggling with (Kraft, 1990:5). As such, many of the African Christians resorted to a dualistic system where they adhered to Christian practice, but consulted “traditional religious practitioners” when they were in need of power interventions (Kraft, 1990:4).

The proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare consider the spirit world not as a myth, but as a world that is occupied by hostile demonic forces which need to be tamed through spiritual warfare for people to experience true freedom and fulfilled existence (Wagner & Pennoyer, 2001; Otis(Jr.), 2015; Jacobs, 2015). Therefore, they would differ with existentialists in this matter and would find their position wanting. To uphold this position also would require that one would need to rewrite the Bible or give new meanings to some scriptures to reduce the evidently personal view that is given to spirits and demons as real entities.

Neither does the position provide an answer to an adherent of African Traditional Religion who interacts with the spirit world on a day-by-day basis (Turaki, 2006; Steyne, 1999; Acolatse, 2018). The existentialist considers the scientific world as the only real world and in the process relegates all others to the periphery as myths. The Existentialist’s position does not provide a possible solution to the dialogue between strategic level spiritual warfare and mystic powers in African

Traditional Religion as it denies the very subject of spiritual power upon which the dialogue is based.

Kraft points to the fact that Enlightenment thinking has contributed towards some of the views currently held in modern western society. Subsequently, “both non-Christian and Christians now find it extremely difficult to believe in angels, Satan, demons and even God” (Kraft, 1990:25-26). Obviously, one would then understand why the views of Bultmann, and other existentialists would be rejected by both proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare like Kraft and similarly by adherents of African Traditional Religion. It does not encourage any dialogue between the two as it denies the existence of the spirit world.

5.3.2 The Nature of the Dialogue: Structuralists View- Inadequate Dialogue:

Apart from the existentialists, the “structuralists” also present a version of what they consider as the spirit world and the mystical powers. Walter Wink specifies the premise that he has used in his books when it comes to the matters touching on power. He asserts that the New Testament presents the issue of powers and principalities as a “generic category referring to the determining forces of physical, psychic and social existence” (Wink, 1993:4). He views these powers as having a dual existence as they are intrinsic, but have external dimensions (Wink, 1993:4). In Wink’s opinion, these powers can only effectively engage in any way at all, if they are “incarnated or institutionalized or systemic” (Wink, 1993:4).

Wink states that what the ancients called ‘spirit’ or ‘angels’ or ‘demons’ were actual entities, only they were not hovering in the air. They were incarnate in “cellulose, or cement, or skin and bones or empire or its mercenary armies” (Wink, 1993:5). This assertion by Wink seems to be exactly the opposite of what the apostle Paul wrote about in Ephesians 6:12 saying “For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (NRSV).

Paul says that they are not “flesh and blood”, in other words not physical, but Wink is insisting that if they are not physical, they cannot be effective. He seems to be dismissing the belief in Satan as he considers it as a non-issue (Wink, 1993:10). Wink thinks of Satan as that “actual inner or collective voice of condemnation that any sensitive person hears tirelessly repeating accusations of guilt or inferiority” (Wink, 1993:12). These assertion by Wink does not agree with the New Testament view of Satan as a personality that exists apart from the feelings or thoughts of

individuals as Peter wrote in his letter “Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8). He is presented as a personality who schemes, moves around and an adversary to the believers.

Leslie Newbigin, highlights the pluralistic suggestion of the day that “aggressive claim on the part of one of the world’s religions to have truth for all” is viewed as treasonable in modern days (Newbigin, 1989:156). This view continues to assert that the church must take the difficult position of recognizing that God is at work in the other religions of the world and desist from claiming to be the custodian of the truth (Newbigin, 1989:156). Newbigin disagrees with this view. In his opinion, Christianity has always struggled from its foundation to maintain its uniqueness amidst the pluralism of the day to the extent it did not give way to the “seductive power of syncretism” (Newbigin, 1989:156-157).

According to Newbigin, the Gospel brings transformation to individuals, societies, nations and cultures. Any attitude that restricts it to the individualistic is mainly the outcome of “post-Enlightenment” culture (Newbigin, 1989:199). Newbigin points to the fact that the New Testament teachings on “principalities, powers, dominions, thrones, authorities, rulers, angels” alongside “hostile spiritual powers” has been widely ignored by the wider church (Newbigin, 1989:200). He explains that the scientific mindset driven by “reductionist materialism” has made some people relegate the New Testament spiritual dimension to fairytales which has prevented many from coming to terms with the realities of the spirit world (Newbigin, 1989:200).

While acknowledging that this kind of language in the New Testament refers to “human rulers and authorities” like “magistrates, priests, elders, governors” and those who “bear the sword and collect taxes”, Newbigin also sees the spiritual dimension that he thinks has been often ignored (Newbigin, 1989:200-201). He understands these to be “something behind these individuals, to the office, the powers, the authority which is represented from time to time by this or that individual” (Newbigin, 1989:201).

Newbigin views these powers as attached to the human agencies “in which they are embodied.” He does not consider these powers as autonomous beings which are separate from the individuals or human beings behind whose powers they are operating (Newbigin, 1989:202). He believes these are “structural elements in human life ... both of the natural world and of the world of human society” (Newbigin, 1989:205). These beings could be benevolent or malevolent, good or bad, angelic or diabolical, according to Newbigin (Newbigin, 1989:205).

Newbigin summarizes his position when he declares that:

The principalities and powers are real. They are invisible and we cannot locate them in space. They do not exist as disembodied entities floating above this world or lurking within it. They meet us as embodied in visible and tangible realities – people, nations, institutions (Newbigin, 1989:207).

Newbigin, therefore approaches the powers from a structural point of view. While the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare would identify with the notion of powers behind the throne, they would however, differ with Newbigin because they would see real personal beings and demons in existence and these would need to be exorcised (Wagner & Pennoyer, 2001; Otis(Jr.), 2015; Jacobs, 2015). Some of them, like Charles Kraft (Kraft, 1990), may have held views which were similar or close to those of Newbigin, but their exposure to the African spiritual world realities made them reject their previous theological positions. In their view these are living entities which, although originally created by God, rebelled against God and became the opposing evil beings that they are today.

African traditionalists would also identify with the idea that certain spatial domains are occupied by spirits or deities which may need to be appeased lest calamity or bad omen should befall the community, household families or even individuals. These spirit beings could sometimes occupy mountains, rivers, trees, homesteads and even shrines. These spirit beings can sometimes be identified even with their names and are not necessarily structures which are not real “autonomous” personal entities. This view, which is mainly discontinuous, seems to offer partial continuity, only to fail, due to the denial of the reality of the spirit beings as real entities. As such the possible continuity, becomes discontinuity.

Structuralists therefore, would not offer a suitable ground for dialogue between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion. The platform that they offer would not address the deep issues of mystical powers emanating from spirit beings as real beings.

5.3.3 The Nature of the Dialogue: “Emergentist” View - Composite Dialogue:

While the structuralists’ view diminishes the demonic and spirit world to structures and systems, the “emergentists”, offer what they consider as an empirical approach to understanding the spirit world. In the *Spirit of Creation*, Amos Yong is not only seeking for dialogue between Pentecostalism and science, but also offers a space where a Pentecostal worldview can provide answers to various cosmological questions (Yong, 2011:173). He acknowledges a spirit-world that

is “densely populated” and affirms the existence of demons and angels although he expresses doubts that the scientific world can conceptualize such beliefs (Yong, 2011:173-174). In Yong’s opinion, certain Pentecostal groups, especially from the Global South, believe in “intermediaries” and even ancestral spirits as their worldview allows for this (Yong, 2011:176). This would be similar to what one would find in African Traditional Religion. It is however, significant to note that Yong gives assent to the more or less biblical view, that more often than not, the majority of Pentecostals would define such beliefs as demonic impersonation which need to be exorcised, not embraced (Yong, 2011:177).

In Yong’s reflection, there are two streams of spiritual warfare: the North American tributary and the Global South’s branch. In the North American strand, Yong is of the view that the emphasis is on sinful traits which are often localized in line with the perception held concerning the Prince of Persia in Daniel chapter ten (Yong, 2011:178). There is a necessity therefore to engage such “principalities and powers” through spiritual warfare (Yong, 2011:178). In contrast, the spiritual warfare concept of the Global South is more concerned with evil spiritual powers which inhibit evangelization and therefore, spiritual warfare is meant to remove these deterrents so that people can respond to the message of the gospel (Yong, 2011:178).

In his North American view, one might say that Yong may be presenting a rather generalized view that would perhaps capture the view of authors like Neil Anderson (N. T. Anderson, 2006) who emphasize more of the deliverance aspects as one deals with the inner sins. The perspective of spiritual warfare as a means to world evangelization may not be a Global South view alone, for some of the ardent proponents of spiritual warfare considered in this research like Peter Wagner (Wagner, 1996b) and George Otis (Jr) (Otis(Jr.), 1999) and whose view emphasizes the necessity for evangelization, are actually from North America.

Yong has not captured the mystical power beliefs which are predominant in the Global South, especially in Africa where such beliefs more or less control the lives of people (Yong, 2011:178). In such cases, ill-health, bad omen, curses and taboos are all explained as a consequence of the mystical powers which are at work, and are often promoted by the spirit powers.

Yong highlights the potential errors into which the modern generation is likely to fall, and which could also be quite misleading. These are materialism, rationalism, theological irresponsibility and “uncritical premodern” consumptions (Yong, 2011:179). A clarification of what Yong meant by “premodern” would be helpful, whether it is referring to the era before the Enlightenment period and thus historical, to the traditional native beliefs like African Traditional Religion or the more

recent philosophical concept of modernity. Whatever the case may be, it may not be applicable to many sections of the continent of Africa where there seems to be a resurgence of African Traditional Religion among individuals whom one might consider fairly modern by any standard (Ng'ang'a, 2019; Oseje, 2018).

According to Yong, Philip Wiebe, a Pentecostal philosopher (Wiebe, 2004), whose approach seems to be mainly polemical in introducing phenomenological experiences as an option for consideration in offering an alternative explanation for the spirit world and other metaphysical experiences, is engaged in the "theory of transcendence" (Yong, 2011:180-182). Yong asserts that in the cosmological study of spirits, the Pentecostal worldview should also be brought into consideration as a viable empirical explanation of the phenomenological occurrences (Yong, 2011:182-183). He is of the opinion that this will enhance the dialogue between science and theology (Yong, 2011:183).

Yong argues that the scientific world rejects parapsychology because the scientific world believes it is a prejudiced non-scientific outlook that does not depend on empirical evidence (Yong, 2011:185). If the Pentecostals followed in the footsteps of parapsychology, there would be more openness to conduct scientific enquiry into Pentecostal phenomenology, including the world of principalities and powers (Yong, 2011:186) or even mystical powers as found in African Traditional Religion, one would presume.

Although he uses recorded research into psychic (Psi) experiments to show the viability of a Pentecostal worldview, Yong also acknowledges the long-standing aversion of Pentecostals towards psychic involvement and manifestations (Yong, 2011:186). Yong highlights the various theories which have been used to explain extrasensory perception (ESP) as 1) electromagnetic wave or radiation; 2) energy fields (quantum effects); 3) a sixth sense theory; 4) memory models; 5) instrumental response theory; 6) non-cybernetic theory; 7) those who have engaged in fraudulent behaviour in what otherwise had a viable explanation. (Yong, 2011:187-194).

It seems Yong merges the world of physics, neuroscience and psychology to provide a possible explanation of the psychic phenomena. He posits that:

physics provides the ontological context of psi events; neuroscience describes how the hardware of such events function; and psychology reveals how conscious minds enable the interface of brains and the worlds they inhabit. (Yong, 2011:196).

Yong is of the opinion that if science could confirm the Psi and ESP effects, then this would give room for scientific considerations of the charismatic gifts of the Spirit such as word of wisdom or word of knowledge and even healing as recorded in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 (Yong, 2011:197). It would also point to the existence of spiritual entities as argued for by the Pentecostal cosmology (Yong, 2011:197). Yong is of the opinion that if Pentecostals dismiss “parapsychological phenomena” as fraud, then they expose themselves to being treated in a similar manner when Pentecostal phenomena are under consideration (Yong, 2011:198).

In Yong’s assessment, Walter Wink, in his power trilogy, has contributed certain aspects which are valuable to Pentecostals. The fact that Wink emphasizes the discernment aspect that encourages Pentecostals to consider the socio-political powers in their engagement with the demonic gives room for Pentecostal Christians to perceive of possible demonic powers that might be influencing thrones and rulers. At the same time can go beyond personal exorcism when dealing with issues of powers and principalities. This is gainful for Pentecostal cosmology and is a more rounded view of scripture that seem to have both powers and principalities as forces that might influence rulers, but also demonic exorcism as a reality (Yong, 2011:206). Yong envisions a scenario where Pentecostals are confronting the “entire range of evil powers, from those functioning at the individual level to those structuring institutional, social, international and other corporate relationships” (Yong, 2011:206).

Yong, however, points out the weakness of Wink’s argument in that Wink denies the personal aspects of the demonic. Yong therefore, does not come out purely as a structuralist, although he appreciates some of the structural aspects (Yong, 2011:207). He draws his “spirit-filled emergentist” cosmological framework from some of these reflections on Wink’s work and subsequently highlights their contribution (Yong, 2011:207).

First of all, he argues for the reality that “personal spirit-beings constituted initially by physical bodies, but irreducible to them and capable of surviving the death of such bodies at least for a period of time.” (Yong, 2011:207). But secondly, Yong also acknowledges the survival of “corporate spirit-beings” beyond the initial corporations which domesticated them (Yong, 2011:207).

Yong does not highlight whether these spirit-beings were self-existent as created entities before occupying the spaces they may be currently inhabiting. For the African traditional mindset, this sounds very much like the world of the living dead which John Mbiti (Mbiti, 2015a) and Philip Steyne (Steyne, 1999) speak about. Yong explains that, “There is no separate fall of angels in the

creation narrative, at least not one that occurred prior to the emergence of *ha'adam*" (Yong, 2011:211).

Yong argues for an emergent Spirit in human beings that culminates in a similar emergent attitude and spiritual dimension in the cosmos either for good or evil, "benevolent or malevolent." (Yong, 2011:213). Tentatively, Yong holds the view that the Genesis creation account does not present a scenario of the creation of spiritual disembodied beings, like angels and as such they are "emergent spirits" from the creative work of God (Yong, 2011:213).

This tentative view that Yong holds does not only seem emergent, but also divergent from the traditional view of a priori creation of spirit beings called angels, before the human creation, with Satan being one of them. Secondly, references or allusion to other passages outside Genesis in the Bible would point to God as the creator of all, including angels or spirit beings (Job 38:4-7; Col. 1:16). Thirdly, the approach sounds fairly evolutionary in that God created certain entities, while the rest evolved or emerged from the created order.

Although Yong has described his proposal as "speculative theology" (Yong, 2011:208), he does acknowledge the manifestations of the spirits. However, he confers these manifestations to emergent spirits in the personal, ecclesial, institutional, social, national, terrestrial and celestial realms, which are geographically delineated (Yong, 2011:216). To the institutional domain, Yong assigns "1) principalities, powers, thrones, authorities and rulers; 2) the Prince of Persia and of Greece or ...Michael, the prince of the people of God; 3) the divine council or assembly of gods" (Yong, 2011:214-215). Terrestrial spirits would therefore be the equivalent to territorial spirits which is propagated by proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare (Yong, 2011:215).

One would consider Yong as perhaps merging Wink's structural views of origin of spirits with the views of proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare including discussing "higher-level" and "lower-level realities" (Yong, 2011:216). The difference is that Yong acknowledges the personal nature of the spirit beings, unlike Wink who only sees them as structural (Wink, 1984). However, the main thrust of Yong's argument is that the spirits are emergent rather than separately created. The bible however points to the fact that God created all things, including fallen angels, evil spirits. The Levites led the children of Israel to confess the sovereignty of God by declaring that,

... Ezra said: 'You are the Lord, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. To all of them you give life, and the host of heaven worships you.' (Neh. 7:6).

There is no option that any entity like a spirit emerged by itself, as God is presented as the creator of All. In response to similar kind of arguments. Commentators like David Gooding also asserts that it is important to note that God is the Creator and the ultimate source of everything. (Gooding, 1989:30). At the same time Clinton E. Arnold raises some pertinent questions:

What exactly did Paul think? Did he conceive of the powers as spirits having their independent existence, or did he regard them as mere projections of the abstract notions of personal, corporate and political evil? (Arnold, 2009:89).

While Arnold argues for idolatry emanating from demons rather than demons emerging from idolatry (Arnold, 2009:69), he however, maintains a silence when it comes to the origin of powers and demons. He considers the subject as a non-issue that Paul does not engage with at all (Arnold, 2009:91). However, his point is noted that what the emergentist are proposing may be contrary to Pauline arguments in the New Testament. In his letter to the Colossians 1:16, Paul points out that "... for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him." Paul declares that Jesus Christ was the agent that God used in the creation of the entire universe. He lists the entities that God created, and this includes the authorities and powers that he also refers to in Ephesian 6:12. Commenting on this N.T. Wright affirms that Jesus Christ was the source of creation of God, both of the material and the spiritual world. "They are his handiwork" (N. T. Wright, 1991: 70-73).

On the other hand, Philip Wiebe introduces the theory of "abduction" as opposed to induction or deduction, while using philosophical phenomenological arguments. He argues that this creates room for advancing explanations coming out of observation of phenomena that do not have a better understanding of possible causal effect (Wiebe, 2004:113-120). He therefore gives narratives of recorded phenomenological occurrences both from modern day and historically, that could only be explained if one allowed for the concept of the existence of spirits (Wiebe, 2004:7-58). Wiebe's "abductive reasoning" would counter some of the ideas of those who dismiss the spirit world as it would appear to present the best possible explanations to spirit encounters like exorcism.

On the same point, Gregory Boyd considers the belief that Satan developed and emerged, other than being a created being, as the "Jungian understanding of the development of self as a process of objectifying and then integrating the evil within oneself" (Boyd, 2014:145). He is referring to Carl Jung's theory of the self (Jung, 2014). One, perhaps, could be led to suggest that the attempts

to integrate psychoanalysis with science could have led Yong to adopt some of the psychological views in his emergentist theory.

In addressing the issue of the demonic, Yong explains that they are divergent entities which oppose God's plan for salvation (Yong, 2011:217). As for their disclosure, Yong argues that:

... just as the human spirit emerges from the socially and environmentally embedded brain and body, and just as angelic spirits emerge as supervenient upon the concreteness and complexity of our interpersonal, social, and cosmic relations, so also, I suggest do demonic spirits emerge from and supervene upon the human experience of alienation that disintegrates personal lives and destroys human relationships in general and well-being as a whole (Yong, 2011:217).

Yong understands the human spirit to be coming out of social engagements of the brain with the environment. Before this interaction, it appears the spirit does not exist. This seems contrary to several scriptural verses which points out to the fact that God created the human spirit or gave it to man (Gen.2:7; Eccl.12:7; 1 Thess.5:23). Even angelic beings, according to Yong emerge from the social relations and are not created beings and similarly, demons also emerge from negative human experiences.

This statement might make one think that the reality of demonic existence rather than just belief in the existence of demons, emerged from human beings and, without the various human dynamics, demons would not have emerged or been in existence. This would indicate that they are not autonomous self-existent beings or created entities that operate independently of the presence of other created beings, but rather a creation of human interactions. Here Yong certainly diverges from mainstream Christian thinking about demons that sees them as fallen angels that were created by God (Green, 1999:34). Writing from a Reformed perspective, Frederick S Leahy points out that the angels are "finite" because they are created beings. He considers demons to be fallen angels (Leahy, 1990:12-14).

Job 38:3-4 sees the sons of God or the angels as singing when the foundation of the world was created (Andersen, 1974:274), but Gen.2:1 points out that God created the earth and the heavens and all the hosts of them or their inhabitants, both visible and invisible. Commenting on John 1:1-3, R.V.G. Tasker underscores the fact that Christ is "the agent of creation" whose life is "imparted to all living" beings.(Oropeza, 1997:35,59; Tasker, 1999:42).

When it comes to the manifestations of the demonic, Yong alludes to various descriptions of destructive chaos in the Old Testament, including the Genesis 1:2 creation narrative alongside

other “deceased souls” among others in the early church (Yong, 2011:218). Without further explanation of what the “deceased souls” entail, the phrase would resonate with the African traditional worldview of the living dead as John Mbiti explains (Mbiti, 1969). In a similar reference to Walter Wink’s structural concepts, Yong also attributes some of these demonic manifestations to social, historical, political and economic woes which have beleaguered humanity (Yong, 2011:219). He also observes their manifestations in geographically delineated regions and in calamities and disasters like “volcanic eruptions, tsunamis and earthquakes” (Yong, 2011:219).

Yong is of the opinion that the demonic forces “lack their own being or onticity” due to the fact that they are emergent from good things and can only manifest through the “moral behaviour” of their host creatures (Yong, 2011:219). Yong concedes to the ambiguity when it comes to the personal existence of demons due to the fact that “they cannot exist as authentically personal entities” as they oppose, deface and destroy the “integrity of personhood” (Yong, 2011:220). Again, this raises the question whether Yong assents to the existence of demons apart from their relationship with their hosts or the chaotic activities that they engage in. It seems that Yong is asserting that demons do not have their own existence without the entities they are inhabiting.

This is certainly a diverging view for one who has been born in a Pentecostal home, experienced what Pentecostals refer to as the baptism of the Spirit, including speaking in tongues, is a licensed Pentecostal minister and considered a Pentecostal scholar. He is associated with Assemblies of God, which is a main Pentecostal denomination both in America and in Africa. (Baker Academics, n.d.). Most Pentecostals would view this as deviating from the true Biblical position that Pentecostals or Third wave practitioners would accept (Pearlman, 1937:81).

As such Yong confesses that he does not believe in “the devil and his demons in the same way we might believe in (and trust) a personal -or better supra personal- God” (Yong, 2011:220). He does not explain whether “belief in the devil” is a reference to putting faith in Satan which no Christian should do or whether he is making reference to the belief in the existence of a malevolent being and personality called the devil. Certainly, one would not relegate Yong to a similar category as the demythologizers who dismiss the existence of Satan. However, Yong seems to be leaning more towards the structural angle in his arguments as he acknowledges the existence of Satan in a parasitic manner that can only be explained and experienced in relation to its host entity. By extrapolation therefore, without the host, the demons are non-existent, according to Yong (Yong, 2011:220).

This causes Esther E. Acolatse to express some concern over what she calls turning the powers into “sociopolitical structures” with psychological interpretation (Acolatse, 2018:61). She is categorical that “these powers would be unrecognizable to the early Christians, because they bear no resemblance to the characterization of their identity and function as described in scripture” (Acolatse, 2018:6). What Acolatse is highlighting is that the position that has been taken by some of the structuralists and by Yong as well, is a reconstruction of the Biblical data that might be alien to the biblical authors themselves.

Yong acknowledges that the opposition from the demonic can be overcome through “prayer, fasting, charisms, spiritual warfare, in its various guises” which also includes exorcism (Yong, 2011:223). When dealing with exorcism, Yong points to the fact that this can be done at the personal, social and political levels which also includes engaging “territorial spirits” (Yong, 2011:223). When it comes to the eternal end, Yong advocates for annihilationism when he talks of those who “reject the immeasurable love of God ... suffering the disintegration of their personhood and their spiritual identities” (Yong, 2011:224). He, however, acknowledges that these are speculations based on his emergentist theory.

While the views presented by Yong sound interesting, there are sections of these that proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare would identify with closely. These include acknowledgement of territorial spirits and various spirit levels, but Yong’s views seem to be an amalgamation of Wink and proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare. His confession of “speculative theology” comes through when he talks about demons emerging out of good.

Due to the fact that Yong attempted to bring in psychoanalytical views in the discussion, there is a very close resemblance of some of the ideas with those of Henry Corbin with his archetypal ideas, Jungian personality identities that also seems to have some connection with alchemist and Iranian Shiite Muslims beliefs (Henry, 1986; Voss, 2007). Commenting on the suggestions that Daniel’s dream of the “Prince of Persia” was possible a result of the psychological condition that he was in and that this was a “coping mechanism” Esther Acolatse asserts that it was more than this as it also reflected the historical, sociological era that they were in (E. Acolatse, 2014:108). So, one cannot just reduce these concepts to mental pictures or personality types since they have Biblical setting as well.

On the other hand, African traditionalists who believe that spirit beings can be either good or bad would identify with the notion that they just take the character of the people who are manipulating them. They would disagree with the thoughts that the spirits are not real or personal

entities and therefore would not lean towards the structural perspective. Yong's view therefore, offers composite dialogue that seems to amalgamate structuralism, scientific emergentist, mainline Christianity, neo-Pentecostalism and even archetypal psychological thinking of imagined realities, that makes the spirit world to be.

5.3.4 The Nature of the Dialogue: Accommodationists' View:

John S. Mbiti and Paul Hiebert: Definition

John S. Mbiti assents to the fact that in the encounterology between African Traditional Religion and Christianity or Islam there has only been minimal "penetration of converting the whole man of Africa" (Mbiti, 2015:259). He points out that in search of accommodation, acculturation is a process that has been used thus producing almost "half-caste cultures" (Mbiti, 2015:26). Mbiti explains that the process involves "partial giving and partial receiving, partial withholding and partial rejection" (Mbiti, 2015:260).

In the end, accommodation resembles "unofficial baptizing" of contextual African practices and beliefs into the brand of Christianity. This would mainly be determined by the Africans themselves (Mbiti, 2015:260). The question that has been raised is how far one should go in accommodation without total assimilation. Perhaps some form of criteria would be necessary that would keep one within certain boundaries so Christianity is not taken up completely by the traditional context until one cannot tell the difference between them.

Paul Hiebert traces the process as new ideas are introduced to the host culture, followed by evaluation which eventually leads to accommodation (Hiebert, 1976:422). Accommodation is therefore one culture creating room to host the other culture and in the process acquiring some of the traits of the host. In this case strategic level spiritual warfare hosting some ideas from African Traditional Religion. In this case vice versa seems to be quite difficult to achieve.

Kwesi Dickson's view – continuity

Kwesi Dickson points to the similarities between African worldview and the Hebrew worldview as "concepts of time, human destiny, sacrifice, the relation between deity and the land, and death and the hereafter" are common to both (Dickson, 1979:99). In discussing continuity of the Old Testament and African tradition, Dickson notes that this occurs at three levels: "theological,

religio-cultural and interpretative” (Dickson, 1979:99). He highlights the fact that the Old Testament extended an invitation to the nations and was not “exclusivist” in its approach to the other peoples. The exception was to warn the Israelites not to engage and adopt the religious practices of the other nations, however Israel was to be a witness to the other nations (Deut.14:1; 14:3-20) (Dickson, 1979:99).

In the narrative of Melchizedek (Gen.14:17-24), Dickson acknowledges the affirmation that God seems to have received worship from a pagan priest, and he subsequently blesses Abraham. Malachi the prophet also seems to have predicted the worship of Yahweh among other people of non-Jewish origin (Mal.1:11). As Dickson explains, “if God is involved in the history of human beings (Mal.1:2f.), whom he created, then God is involved in human religion” as well (Dickson, 1979:101). The nature of this involvement however, would need to be defined as Dickson does not elaborate it, nor the fact that Malachi’s prediction finds fulfilment in Christ and Melchizedek was a typology of Christ as the author of the book of Hebrews explains .

Dickson highlights some of the borrowed artifacts from the Jewish neighbours as kingship, architecture (including using Phoenician architects to build Solomon’s Temple), agriculture and wisdom, which “borrows from the *Teaching of Amenemope* of Egypt.” (Dickson, 1979:101). It is Dickson’s opinion that this shows a continuity, not only with the other nations, but also with the religious thought patterns of Africa (Dickson, 1979:101-102). Perhaps one would observe that there is inclusivity of God’s creation, but exclusivity of faith and this Dickson does not distinguish. The relationship that God has with his people throughout the history of the Bible and Christian era is that he has created the entire world and therefore cares for the whole world. However when it comes to commitment to him, he has never tolerated competition with any other deity. He remains exclusive and would want his people to treat him as such.

While acknowledging the possibility of contact and influence of some ancient cultures upon the African cultural landscape, Dickson cautions against ignoring the possibility of home grown and independent cultural developments free from influence from elsewhere (Dickson, 1979:102). He however, acknowledges a number of similarities between the Israelite cultural make-up and the African scenario. Dickson highlights the resemblance between the “Levirite marriage, the relationship between sin and sickness, and the power of the curse among the Israelites and in the African context” (Dickson, 1979:102). In Dickson’s view, the acknowledgement of the divine in nature: sun, wind and rain and the possibility of spirits inhabiting rivers and mountains, as well as the use of charms and magic are all indicative of what Africans would deeply identify with. The

fact that they were prohibited in Deuteronomy 18:9f, simply mean that there were some categories of people who were practising them (Dickson, 1979:102-103). This shows continuity between the African traditional and cultural setting with the Hebrew religion as Dickson would assert (Dickson, 1979:102-103).

Dickson lists several instances and incidences in the Old Testament that would resonate with an African traditionalist:

- The oak at Shechem (Josh.24:26)- implying sacred trees
- The wells at Beersheba (Gen.21:25f) which were probably used as sacred waters (Amos 5:5)
- The "Serpent stone" where Adonijah made sacrifices (1 Kings 1:9)
- Yahweh being associated with a sacred mountain (Exod. 19:12f) (Dickson, 1979:103).

Dickson concludes that, "Scattered throughout the Old Testament, there is abundant evidence of beliefs and practices of a kind that would be readily understood in Africa." (Dickson, 1979:103).

Therefore, "... in the theology of nature there is continuity, but at the same time discontinuity between the Old Testament and African life and thought." (Dickson, 1979:103). Dickson is concerned that in the task of interpretation there seems to be a deliberate discontinuity with the works of Christ in the New Testament, thus rendering the African Christian susceptible to a belief that does not incorporate healing and other miraculous forms even though these are so much needed in the continent today (Dickson, 1979:106). Perhaps here Dickson may be making reference to non-Charismatic and non-Pentecostal Christians who did not teach and practice prayers for the sick. The same comment would not apply to this category of Christians.

Dickson is of the opinion that there is no Christian who does not theologize since life can only be best explained through theology which is not necessarily making doctrinal faith statements (Dickson, 1984:13). He considers it a prejudiced view that condemns the lifestyle and worldview of others as a result of taking a high moral ground. (Dickson, 1984:17).

In assessing Dickson's views, Acolatse points out that he is

... making more than observation in his detailed comparison of African religions and Israelite religion. In fact, he is making the claim here, as well as elsewhere, about the continuity he sees between biblical and African worldviews (Acolatse, 2018:36).

Acolatse highlights the fact that there are other aspects of African Traditional religion that would be problematic to equate with the Religion of Israel, like deities and ancestors.

In conclusion in his observations of the Old Testament, Dickson affirms the similarities which he sees in the scriptures, which he also views as analogous to several beliefs and practices in African Traditional Religion. As a result of this Dickson sees a continuity between the Old Testament and ATR. Not only does he support the continuity, but he points out that it is positive as one becomes a stepping stone to helping the African understand the faith of the Israelites. The challenge as has been pointed out is to know how the continuity should be applied without Christianity losing its identity. This is a point that Dickson does not explain. The danger of amalgamating the Religion of Israel or Christianity with African Traditional Religion is real when one embarks on the path of continuity without clear boundaries and yet there are areas they cannot mix.

Kwame Bediako's view: Fulfilling African Religiosity

Following the same line of argument but a little more cautious than Dickson is Kwame Bediako. Bediako explains the position taken by traditional missionaries who were of the view that the incursion of Christianity into Africa would directly translate into the "elimination" of African Traditional Religion as the new would totally replace the old (Bediako, 1995:191). However, Bediako is categorical that it is impossible to explain the exponential expansion of Christianity in the continent of Africa without taking into account the "primal religious background." (Bediako, 1995:192). Bediako does not explain further that it is the openness to the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, especially among Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals that may have escalated this growth. The worldview of the Pentecostals in as far as the spirit world is concerned resonated with that of the adherents of pre-existing religions.

Bediako is of the view that the phenomenal growth of Christianity in areas which were formerly the epicentre of African Traditional Religion can only be explained in the kind of encounterology that takes place between Christianity and African Traditional Religion. This has resulted in new religious movements, some of which are pseudo-Christian, which have emerged all over the continent. In Bediako's opinion, this surpasses any experience that Islam has had in its engagement with Africa (Bediako, 1995:192).

One can highlight sections where there is syncretic Islam as has been observed by Oseje among the Luo community in Kenya (Oseje, 2018). The growth of Islam among the Luo community has fairly dwindled (Oseje, 2018). According to Bediako, the fact that Africa can now be considered as the heartland of Christianity according to demographics can only be expressed by the word

“surprise” and this could not have taken place without the “sub-stratum” of African Traditional Religion lying beneath the response to Christianity that has been observed (Bediako, 1995:192).

Subsequently, Bediako asserts that

Had the modern missionary movement from the West been more alive to the dynamic potential of this dual force of Christianity in its historical development, modern missionaries would have realized that their achievement was more significant than anything in Christianity’s previous history of expansion, with the possible exception of the apostolic precedent itself (Bediako, 1995:205-206).

In the forward to Geoffrey Parrinder’s book, *West African Religion*, Edwin Smith agrees with Bediako and makes the suggestion that converts from African Traditional Religion to Christianity would still hold to some of the tenets that they had from their background. Smith, however recommends that enquiries should be made as to what the appealing factor in Christianity would be that led them to conversion (Parrinder, 1949:xii). While setting a disclaimer that not everything from the native beliefs would be beneficial, Smith is categorical in pronouncing that “Christianity may be thus enriched from pagan (sic) sources” (Parrinder, 1949:xii). Without explanation as to the nature of this enrichment one would be left thinking that Smith is advocating for a merger of Christianity and “pagan (sic) sources”. Had he pointed out that the response to Christianity may have been rapid in context where people were already open to a Supreme and to the supernatural, one would understand.

Bediako proposes that African people should not be treated like any other polytheistic group as they are very clear in their mind who *God* is and cannot confuse him with *gods* (Bediako, 1995:212). This distinction is made clear linguistically to the extent that terminologies used in reference to God in the native languages are not the same terminologies used in reference to *gods* (Bediako, 1995:213). While the latter can easily be dispensed with, the former together with ancestors cannot be easily done away with, according to Bediako (Bediako, 1995:213). Similar views are also expressed by Lamin Sanneh when he discusses “translatability” of the Gospel (Sanneh, 1997).

Bediako explains that there has been continuity through the translations of scripture and as such the concept of God that one had in their traditional ways has been transmitted to the “African Christian consciousness” using African names for God. Subsequently, “the God of the Africans has turned out, after all, to be the God of Israel whom the Christians worship” (Bediako, 1995:213). This in Bediako’s view is what Paul talks about when he posits that God is not just the God of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also (Romans 3:29). This recognition of God is just as “revelatory” in

the process of “the transmission of the Gospel” as the Gospel itself, according to Bediako (Bediako, 1995:214).

While one would agree with Bediako that in the translation of scriptures in the African languages, the name of God has been retained among most communities, one would, however, be left with the question whether the borrowed name is equivalent to borrowed essence and attributes of the African “God”. It is perhaps proper to say that while the usage of the name of God has reflected continuity in the translations, the being or essence or attributes of God show distinct discontinuity. Otherwise, one would end up with a kind of universalism. So, Bediako’s statements would need a clarifying disclaimer that would retain the nature of the Biblical God intact.

Bediako concludes that majority of African Christian scholars have come to the same conclusion with “all arguing for an essentially theistic and unitary character of African pre-Christian religion.” (Bediako, 1995:215). He faults Byang Kato for dissenting from this view and argues that Kato used a misconception in his argument:

Kato, however, drew his conclusions on the basis of his belief that the entirety of the African heritage in religion and the Christian faith constituted two quite distinct and discontinuous entities with little or no common ground between them (Bediako, 1995:216).

Bediako addresses the subject area of ancestors beginning with a perspective on Christ. He acknowledges that unlike the traditional African religious scenario where power is redistributed and shared between God, divinities and ancestors, this is not the case with the Gospel. The fact that Christ became human, died and was raised up from the dead and is now seated in the heavenlies and now occupies the realm of the spirit, he can now “rightly be designated, in African terms, as Ancestor, indeed Supreme Ancestor” (Bediako, 1995:217). In Bediako’s opinion this helps to similarly understand how Africans also relate to their ancestors when they acknowledge the Ancestral Christology (Bediako, 1995:217).

Bediako expresses his opinion that the theology of ancestors is necessary due to the fact that it is capturing the “continuity of God in African experience” (Bediako, 1995:225). After narrating the various concepts of ancestral theology among some West African communities, Bediako explains the necessity of such a theology:

The real task of a theology of ancestors is not about the fate of the departed who were not Christians, or who were not sacramentally linked with the church; a theology of ancestors is not made necessary because many Christians have ancestors who were not Christians ...a theology of ancestors is about the interpretation of the past in a way which shows that the present experience

and knowledge of the grace of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ have been truly anticipated and prefigured in the quests and the responses to the Transcendent in former times as these have been reflected in the lives of African people (Bediako, 2014:224-225).

One would notice that Bediako comes from the point of view that ancestors, as acknowledged in the traditional African setting, are real. That those who have died before continue to engage with the living through Christ in whatever capacity. This concept does not take into account both the Old Testament and the New Testament views of the dead. Whereas in the Old Testament, contact with the dead was absolutely prohibited (Deut.18:10-13), with some passages pointing out the fact that the dead cannot come back to engage in activities with the living (Eccl. 9:5-6), the New Testament on the other hand points to those who have died as being in the presence of God or constrained in a place that they cannot come back from (1Thess.4:13-18). Such a theology of ancestors opens doors to possibility of demonic deception, where evil spirits masquerade as ancestors to maintain contact with the living. These are, perhaps, some areas where continuity should be discouraged.

In response to this Philip Steyne, a Charismatic writer, explains that the Bible strongly opposes necromancy in spite of the fact that some African “theologians include it in their ethnotheologies”. He emphasizes that a community that engages in this may actually be going through Judgment as pronounced upon the Egyptians in Isaiah 19:3:

... the spirit of the Egyptians within them will be emptied out,
and I will confound their plans;
they will consult the idols and the spirits of the dead
and the ghosts and the familiar spirits;

In assessing the theological reflections of Bola Idowu, Kwame Bediako underscores the fact that for Idowu, there was discomfort in engagement with the European missionary enterprise as he strongly felt that they had missed an opportunity to build on what was already present in the African context (Bediako, 1992:269). This can be observed in the comments of Idowu when he wrote

It was a serious mistake that the church took no account of the indigenous beliefs and customs of Africa when she began her work of evangelisation. It is now obvious that by a misguided purpose, a completely new God who had had nothing to do with the past of Africa was introduced to her peoples. Thus, there was no proper foundation laid for the Gospel message in the hearts of the people and no bridge built between the old and the

new; the church has in consequence been speaking to Africans in strange tongues because there was no adequate communication (Bola Idowu, quoted by Bediako) (Bediako, 1992:269).

According to Bediako, this led to ambivalence in the spiritual life of African Christians to such an extent that one could engage in church activities and immediately thereafter visit a “diviner without feeling that he is betraying any principle” (Bediako, 1992:269). We can surmise that Idowu was advocating for continuity between African Traditional Religion and Christianity where the former would act as a “foundation” for the latter. Bediako dismisses the observation that the God of the pre-Christian Africans was different from the one that the Christians were proclaiming and points to the faith in one universal Creator of all, the Supreme Being as the same (Bediako, 1992:270).

As Bediako sees it, the main concern is a Christianity borrowed from the West that does not take seriously the previous African beliefs as a launching pad to propagate the Gospel in Africa (Bediako, 1992:270). One certainly needs to be cautious that in the process of advocating for continuity, one does not end up with universalism. According to Bediako, the proper direction that should have been taken was indigenization of Christianity into the African context, which would finally make it bear much fruit in the continent (Bediako, 1992:272). This process, according to Bediako touches on the areas of structure, leadership, contextual relevance, theological reflection and liturgy (Bediako, 1992:274-276).

For avoidance of doubt, Bediako further affirms that the essence of the identity of the church as truly African is not necessarily its disconnection from its missionary past, but rather its identity with the Lord Jesus Christ to the extent that Jesus is real and domesticated within the context (Bediako, 1992:276). Such identity is shaped by “An African Christian consciousness which claims as its due right a direct and primary access to the source of Christian revelation and faith” (Bediako, 1992:276). This would culminate in Jesus Christ being viewed as a “God’s Messiah” to Africans rather as an “imported divinity from a European pantheon” as some may view the doctrine of the Trinity. (Bediako, 1992:276-277). There is a presumption that the African Christians have grown in their understanding of the Gospel to the extent that they “can hear God in Jesus Christ addressing himself to them in their native situation and particular circumstances” (Bediako, 1992:277).

Bediako noted that Idowu’s theological engagement was rather limited as he did not venture into the more traditional theological areas like Christology, the Holy Spirit and the like (Bediako,

1992:290). Idowu seemed to have committed himself in pursuit of the African understanding of God and the relevance to the African church (Bediako, 1992:290).

When analysing Mbiti's writings, Bediako highlights the fact that "African pre-Christian heritage" was actually a preparation for the Gospel which should be considered as a way of life rather than a religion (Bediako, 1992:329). The fact that Mbiti drew his understanding of the Christian faith from the underlying conception of African Traditional Religion, showed the role that African Traditional Religion played as a precursor to his Christian conceptions (Bediako, 1992:331). As such

the encounter between the Christian faith and African religious tradition is the meeting point of African man in his religiosity and Jesus Christ, whose presence in the world is ...a geographical presence... (Bediako, 1992:331).

Bediako understands Mbiti to be emphasizing continuity as indicated by his assertion that

God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the same God who for a thousand years has been known and worshipped in various ways within the religious life of African peoples and who therefore was not a stranger in Africa prior to the coming of missionaries (Bediako, 1992:331).

According to Bediako, Mbiti has the final word when he pronounces that Christianity can benefit from the grounds already laid by African Traditional Religion to such an extent that the "Gospel has come to fulfil and complete African religiosity" (Bediako, 1992:334) and therefore, "missionaries did not bring God to Africa, God brought them." (Bediako, 1992:345). Mbiti's statement leaves one with the feeling that it was completely unnecessary for the missionaries to come to Africa as the general revelation that they had was salvific enough to lead them to eternity. The Bible however, emphasizes the necessity for every creature to be reached with the special revelation of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mk 16:15,16).

Sections of Bediako's arguments on continuity are rather unsettling to the Christian faith, especially his affirmation of the theology of ancestors and the universality of God. As indicated above, his views on ancestors need to be brought in line with the Biblical view. While the nomenclature of God in the various language groups was a helpful bridge to the Gospel in translation and helping the people to connect with God, it is important to make the qualities of the Christian God biblical and distinct to help communities grasp his essence. But having said that the phenomenal growth of the Christian faith in Africa is a true testament that African Traditional Religion acted a fertile ground that enabled the Gospel to rapidly germinate due to its openness to the supernatural and the spirit world.

Mika Vahakangas: Inclusive and Syncretic

While Bediako emphasized on the African traditional perspective as a necessary process in the dialogue procedure, Mika Vähäkangas insists that inclusivity and syncretism need to be part of the conversation. Vähäkangas asserts that “academic theology” has to be broad-based in today’s pluralistic world and not only Christian, but inclusive of other religions as well (Vähäkangas, 2020:54). In his opinion, an initial step in engagement with other faiths in a pluralistic society is to acknowledge that all religions are syncretic in nature, including Christianity. This is regardless of whether they are Western based or from the Majority World (Vähäkangas, 2020:54). Vähäkangas considers the one theologizing, to bring in diverse identities which are either hidden or manifested when engaging in contextual theological reflection (Vähäkangas, 2020:65). As such a Christian theologian from Africa is “an African and a Christian at the same time” (Vähäkangas, 2020:66).

This would mean that the demands of the two identities have to be met by the theologizing process (Vähäkangas, 2020:66). Vähäkangas attributes the widespread effect of Christianity in the continent of Africa to creative indigenous models which have often conflicted with Western ways, but have formed bridges through which the Gospel has spread. In some cases, there have been conflicts between these same indigenous ways and Western missionaries leading to the formation of African Instituted churches (Vähäkangas, 2020:67). Subsequently, “Christian theology is inevitably syncretic” as reflected in the “incarnation” of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to Vähäkangas (Vähäkangas, 2020:119). In his conception, Jesus mingled heaven and earth at the same time.

Vähäkangas alludes to the fact that when it comes to Christian theological reflection, Christianity is of syncretic nature. He sees incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ as an example of syncretism where the divine took on the human, thus resulting into the dual personality of the Lord Jesus Christ as the God-man (Vähäkangas, 2020:143). He defines syncretism as “the combination of incompatible religious elements” (Vähäkangas, 2020:143). As a result of this some have completely rejected culture and traditions so as to retain the purity of the Gospel, which is not possible, while others have eliminated sections of culture and retained others in order to be relevant (Vähäkangas, 2020:143).

Vähäkangas also defines syncretism as “amalgamations of different religious-cultural elements ... resulting from religion’s historical metamorphoses and the borrowing and reworking of religious ideas.” (Vähäkangas, 2020:119). He asserts that majority of religious people would find this

thought unpalatable as it tends to corrupt the idea of the purity of their faith systems (Vähäkangas, 2020:119-120). Vähäkangas dismisses the traditional definition of syncretism which was considered as “illegitimate mingling of different religious systems” on the grounds that it was “pejorative” and based on the subjective description of outsiders (Vähäkangas, 2020:120). He states therefore, that

The fact that every religion builds upon the others and is, in that sense, not pure and unique is also a logical necessity: no religion can ever begin from a tabula rasa. Even if one were to believe like Christians or Muslims that God’s word came directly from God. Either as a person or as a dictation, one builds on previous religions. In the case of Christianity on Judaism... and in the case of Islam on Judaism, Christianity and the old Arabian religions. There is always a religious tradition through which the purported new revelation is interpreted... what one should rather debate about is how the syncretic process happens: is it a matter of bricolage, hybridity, amalgamation or something else? (Vähäkangas, 2020:120).

Vähäkangas is of the opinion that theologians should accept that there was never any pure faith or Christianity to protect and that this would liberate the reflection process to accommodate diversities of “imagination”. As such, much of the discussion should be based on unravelling the nature of the syncretism rather than seeking to defend the unadulterated nature of their faith (Vähäkangas, 2020:121). In other words, for Vähäkangas, syncretism is a given, for Christianity.

Tracing the history of the church, Vähäkangas is of the view that dissent was deliberately subdued and diversity of opinion was labelled as heretical and that fashionable views which were considered syncretic were thus resisted or punished under the “hegemony” of the wider church (Vähäkangas, 2020:122-123). The publishing of the Bible as a document that was in the hands of individuals brought about the pluralism of interpretation of the Word that resulted in greater diversity, especially through translations into local dialects (Vähäkangas, 2020:122).

Vähäkangas emphasizes the pluralist agenda by pointing out that nothing can be referred to as the normal anymore since no particular religion can claim the place of “hegemony” anymore (Vähäkangas, 2020:127). This would therefore mean that one’s choice is just as good as the other and anyone engaging with a religious idea has to make a decision and deciding not to decide, Vähäkangas considers a decision in itself. It is what Vähäkangas calls “the heretical imperative” (Vähäkangas, 2020:127). In Vähäkangas’ opinion, Protestant revivalists need to take advantage of this, rather than “lament”, as this presents their audience with the privilege to make personal decision about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Vähäkangas underscores the dearth of spiritual leadership that is respected across the board and suggests that this has led to indefinite boundaries of what Christianity's faithful teaching or aberrational groups are. Subsequently, certain heretical groups have emerged which have resulted in catastrophic events leading to mass killings or death (Vähäkangas, 2020:128). In Vähäkangas' view, Christian identity has been eroded to the extent "there is no official entity called 'Christianity' which can accept or turn down the churches' application to belong to Christianity" (Vähäkangas, 2020:128). He attributes this to the splintering that has taken place within Christianity (Vähäkangas, 2020:128).

In Vähäkangas' opinion, it would be very difficult to find fault with what the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare are advocating as there are no standards for measuring what Christianity is today. Any version of Christianity is just as good as the other. This view of Vähäkangas undermines the authority of the Bible as a solid unchanging measure of what biblical Christianity ought to look like. This seems to be a direct licensing of pluralism that would make it very difficult even for Christians to have firm convictions.

Vähäkangas raises the concern of how one should view the Kimbanguists of Democratic Republic of Congo who "openly teach that their founder, Simon Kimbangu was the incarnation of the Holy Spirit", the Jesus-imandars of Dhaka, Bangladesh "who claim to be Muslims even though they believe in Jesus" or the Christ-bhaktas of Chennai, India who are Hindus who believe in Jesus (Vähäkangas, 2020:129-130). Some of these groups do not accept to be considered as Christian as such. Vähäkangas raises the question "How much of Christianity can one appropriate without becoming Christian?" (Vähäkangas, 2020:131). One could raise the opposite question as well on how much of the other religions, including African Traditional Religion, can one adopt without losing their Christian identity?

Vähäkangas is of the opinion that "it seems impossible to draw clear boundaries for Christianity without subscribing to a very rigid set of criteria." (Vähäkangas, 2020:131). Vähäkangas rejects the notion that it might be possible to draw such a criterion as he sees the history, the culture and individual choices as interfering with such parameters. He therefore leaves a wide-open door for relativism and pluralism within the Christian setting. He declares that it is "futile" to attempt to set boundaries on what can be considered Christian. As such Christianity in his opinion is a "floating signifier because it gets different meanings depending on the context and the one that uses the signifier" (Vähäkangas, 2020:131). In this important section of his discourse, Vähäkangas does not

engage with the Bible at all which raises the issue where his ultimate reference point on such important matters lies.

His primary deduction is worth noting when he asserts that

... one simply needs to acknowledge that the multifaceted nature of Christianity and its splintered state of authority result in the impossibility of clearly defining its borders. Therefore, the borders of Christianity must be seen as porous, with a wide grey zone where it depends on the position of the observer and her preferred criteria whether a certain group should be counted as Christian or not (Vähäkangas, 2020:131-132).

He sees this complexity compounded by the fact that majority of people pay dual allegiance to different religious entities resulting in “mixed religiosity” (Vähäkangas, 2020:132). He objects to categorizing and classifying people’s faith into “exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism or relativism or any such neat classification” (Vähäkangas, 2020:136). His reason is that this does not reflect what the state of true life is (Vähäkangas, 2020:136).

Vähäkangas gives an example of an African Charismatic preacher who condemns engagement with African Traditional Religion and yet on the other hand holds to the African traditional worldview which espouses the efficacy of witchcraft. Without acknowledging the biblical nomenclature, Vähäkangas is of the opinion that the African preacher simply renames benevolent spirits as angels and calls the malevolent ones as demons (Vähäkangas, 2020:136).

He accedes to the fact that ancestral veneration is most of the time rejected although according to him, “their veracity and efficacy is not disputed” (Vähäkangas, 2020:136). In praying for the sick, Vähäkangas asserts that this is as a result of the substitution of the traditional healer with the preacher (Vähäkangas, 2020:136). Thus, Vähäkangas sees the African preacher moving through renaming, retention, rejection and replacement in dealing with African traditional religious beliefs.

In Vähäkangas opinion, what may appear the “syncretic nature of Christianity” need not to be feared at all as history has shown that certain theologians who initially were considered even heretical like Thomas Aquinas, have moved into mainstream Christianity (Vähäkangas, 2020:137). He is of the view that Christians should not barricade themselves in, against ideas that they might considered threatening, but rather, that Christianity should be considered more like a road with several meandering pathways which all end up in the same road (Vähäkangas, 2020:138-139).

Positions one holds should always be viewed as dynamic and developing rather than rigid and unbending, according to Vähäkangas. As such the “doctrines are no longer fortresses to be

defended but, rather, maps or road signs of the past that support the Christians of today in their deliberations on issues of faith and morals.” (Vähäkangas, 2020:140). He advocates for a position of indecision and temporary agnosticism in some matters of faith since one has not had the “Archimedean” moment (Vähäkangas, 2020:140).

Vähäkangas advocates for mediation or dialogue due to the fact that the presence of deity in the world requires such a mediation. Such dialogue should take into account the “syncretistic nature of Christianity” (Vähäkangas, 2020:144-145).

A Critique of a Syncretic Approach

Although Vähäkangas has not approved of terms like “pluralism and relativism”, but in essence that is what he actually recommends. Every individual and every community can come up with their own version of Christianity, which should be acceptable across the board. The views proposed by Vähäkangas would appear to be outside orthodox Christianity to the extent one would not be able to recognize what the original ought to look like. While one would argue for a contextual brand of Christianity that is culturally engaging, one needs to distinguish cultural elements from the tenets of the Christian faith which, when compromised, the identity of Christianity as Christianity is also altered. When there is complete amalgamation of other religious faiths into Christianity in an indiscriminate manner, the outcome is a religion that does not meet the standards of what Biblical Christianity ought to look like. Cultural sensitivity should not necessarily translate into total assimilation of other faiths into Christianity.

While Vähäkangas raises a critical issue when he discusses the “syncretic nature of Christianity”, yet Christianity should be seen as a seedling being planted into different cultural context and the seed would germinate and flourish. As such it is not a potted plant that comes with its soil and flowerpot. This supra-cultural nature of the Gospel is paramount in seeing it taking root in each culture. This should not be viewed as negative syncretism, but as riding on cultural tendons and ligaments in order to thrive.

While acknowledging that there are four levels of syncretism that individuals, groups or religious organizations could get into (Steyne, 1999:46), Philip Steyne also warns of the “counter religious system” that is opposed to Biblical Christianity. It is incompatible with Christianity and is promoted by the “powers of darkness” with an intention of undermining the manifestation of the glory of God (Steyne, 1999:202).

Peter Schineller raises the question on whether syncretism is incompatible with inculturation and whether it is always wrong? He makes the observation that although the word has traditionally been used in a “pejorative” manner, there are theologians who have started giving it a more positive outlook as they approach it as an essential part in “the process of inculturation” and thus view it from an anthropological rather than a theological angle (Schineller, 1992:50). Vähäkangas is one of those positive theologians. On the opposite side, Byang Kato in an unpublished lecture in Ibadan University, Nigeria in 1974 defined syncretism as “importing pagan elements into Christianity” (Kato, 1974:5). Kato does not entertain any measure of syncretism into Christianity. In a similar manner Wilbur O’Donovan observes that some African Christians turn to syncretism when they seek help from those who “use fetishes, magic, charms, fetishes, and even sorcery...”. In his view such people forfeit the assistance they would have obtained from God as God does not condone such practices (O’Donovan, 1997:256).

Schineller and Magesa- Inculturation

While consenting to the caution raised that there is a possibility of “borrowing of another religion without critically passing them through the screen of Christianity”, thus resulting in the dilution of authentic Christianity (Schineller, 1992:50), Schineller is still of the view that syncretism should also be treated in a positive way. He considers it as a “necessary, ongoing process of the development of Christian life, practice, and doctrine.” (Schineller, 1992:50). He asserts that even the Israelites borrowed some of “the mythologies” from their neighbours, the Persian, Babylonian, Phoenician, and Egyptians” (Schineller, 1992:52).. According to Schineller, these included the creation stories and the flood narratives (Schineller, 1992:52).

While David Atkinson assents to the similarities between the Genesis Creation narratives as told in Babylonian Ancient Near Eastern documents, he highlights the differences in the stories which are quite prominent. There is only one God who is the Creator as opposed to the polytheistic context of the Babylonians. He concludes that the theological message in Genesis exalts the sovereignty of God and therefore is quite different from that of the Babylonian myths (Atkinson, 1990:15-16)

Schineller emphasizes the fact that in the process of inculturation, church leaders often would not settle on how to treat a new idea due to the fact that the evaluation of the new idea may not be achieved in the short-term. As such there may be lots of criticism of the new ideas. What he proposes is the necessity of “openness and tolerance” (Schineller, 1992:52). Although he favours

the view that see some positive aspects in syncretism, Schineller thinks that the term has outlived its usefulness due to the fact that it has derogative connotations (Schineller, 1992:52).

Schineller raises the concern on how to provide parameters which would determine what adequate or inadequate inculturation is. He posits that it is even unclear on who, in terms of an institution or in terms of an individual should make this determination (Schineller, 1992:52). He presents three criteria which he considers as critical in determining the adequacy or inadequacy of inculturation: 1) Is it faithful to the Christian message? 2) Does it build up the contextual cultural situation? 3) Have the local church leadership made an input into it? Schineller is of the opinion that when this is done proper inculturation will take place and thus avoid negative aspects that could derail the work of God (Schineller, 1992:52-53). Schineller's criteria sounds quite well balanced and merges with the final criteria that is presented in this study as a road map towards a balanced dialogue.

Using the word "inculturation", which is more commonly used among Catholics, Laurenti Magesa points out that a process of necessity takes place when a missionary enters a host culture with a new message. This process is either deliberate or unconscious but eventually results in a new form of belief and practice where new ideas are borrowed from the host culture to form a new culture that finds easier accommodation among the locals (Magesa, 2007:18).

In his research on inculturation, covering the East African Countries, Laurenti Magesa engages with his respondents on their view of ancestors and the world of the spirit. Some of them acknowledged that not only did they believe in the existence of the ancestors, but they also revered them and even prayed through the ancestors (Magesa, 2007:34). Some respected any future predictions that the ancestors had given and treated them as prophesies. Some were of the conviction that failure to obey the admonitions of the ancestors can invoke a curse (Magesa, 2007:35). Through naming them when children are born, there is a kind of rebirth of the ancestors into the next generation (Magesa, 2007:35).

Magesa posits the view that "there is a lot that the church can learn and borrow theologically from African religion." This, he suggests, is a recognition by the (Catholic) church that African Traditional Religion is so intertwined with the life of Africans to the extent that it cannot be easily dismissed (Magesa, 2007:48). As such Magesa suggests that

African theology is looking at the times and ways of worship in African traditions, the importance attached to sacrifice and offerings and how this can be compared to the Eucharist, the importance

attached to community life as opposed to individualism, and the importance of rites of passage (Magesa, 2007:48).

Magesa is of the view that dialogue between Christianity and African Traditional Religion has often been hampered by attitudes of pride and prejudice (Magesa, 2007:48). The accommodationist view would be like a continuum or pendulum, and it could swing to either extreme. There are no parameters that determine which side would be weightier. This is represented in the figure below:

The Continuum model:

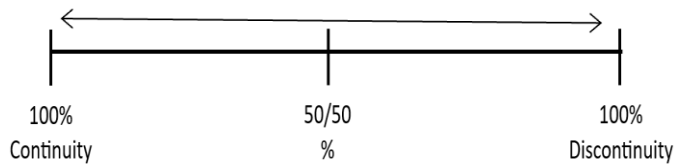


Figure 13: The Continuum Model

At one point one would be borrowing heavily from African Traditional Religion in both practice and belief and in other circumstances one would disassociate, thus experiencing discontinuity. There are no determining factors as one has to make their own judgement since the Bible is reinterpreted. On the other hand, some would see it more as peeling off the offending part of African traditional religious layer that is incompatible with Christianity and leaving the acceptable portion resting on the foundation of the Biblical truth as illustrated in the spectrum model in the two figures below:

The Spectrum Model:

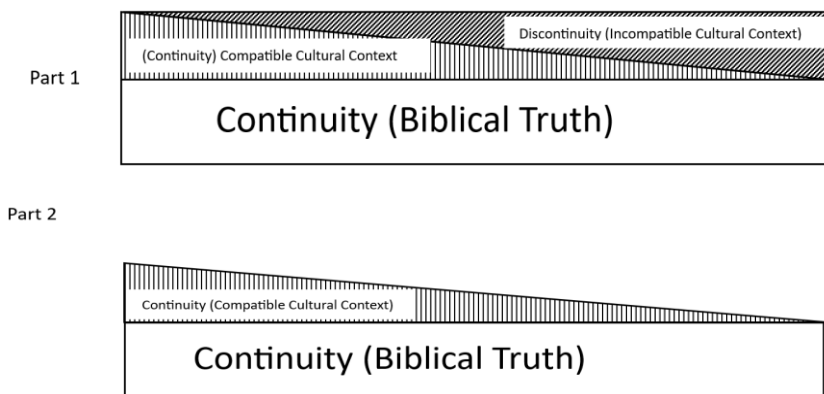


Figure 14: The Spectrum Model

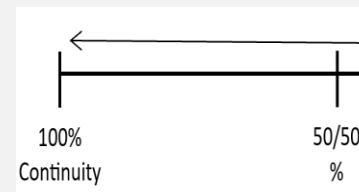
When one views culture as an addendum that could be laid off to remain with what is more acceptable, then one would need a standard that would help one to come up with a criteria for discrimination. The recommended criteria is the Bible. Paul Hiebert traces this as process, when new ideas are introduced to the host culture, followed by evaluation which eventually leads to accommodation (Hiebert, 1976:422). His perspectives are examined later in the concluding remarks of this study.

5.3.5 The Nature of the Dialogue: Realists View:

How one should perceive and understand the reality of the spirit world and how to engage with it continues to be a point of discussion that is sometimes influenced by one's cultural orientation and religious experience. A sense of humility is certainly required of one, like the apostle Paul, to accept that unlike God, human beings only have limited knowledge (1 Cor. 13:12). Caleb Kim, who has spent most of his later academic years in Kenya defines realism as "the philosophical doctrine that says that the world and objects exist externally and independently from the person perceiving it" (Kim, 2019:36).

Charles Kraft has pointed out that there are four aspects to realism that need to be considered. The first is naïve realism. This occurs when one takes the "dogmatic attitude" that their own version of reality is the only reality available and consequently dismisses all other realities. Such persons would sometimes go to the extent of equating their reality with the reality of God (Kraft, 1990:13). In his opinion, some Western Christians tend to take this position often, especially when they engage with Christians from other cultures which are different from theirs and when discussing subjects like experiences in the spirit world (Kraft, 1990:13).

Kim refers to it as dogmatic realism and also explains that it is often held by people who have mono-cultural backgrounds. Such a person "assumes that his perception accurately presents the whole picture of whatever he views" (Kim, 2019:36). They are therefore unwilling to "negotiate or compromise" their positions (Kim, 2019:36). This would be the case when a person has been unexposed to the realm of the spirit world. As such, no dialogue can take place with such a person as there is nothing to dialogue about since the only position they know and defend is their position. Such persons could be helped when they realize that the views of others are also just as important to consider, although they might not agree with them on the subject matter (Kim, 2019:37).



The second version of reality is idealistic or intuitive reality. According to Kraft, this is the case when people presume that reality is merely a “mental construct” produced by people in their minds. Some would go to the extent of saying that any reality that exists has been created by people. This leads to relativism where “values, morals and religious or philosophical ideas are merely the product of human thought” (Kraft, 1990:14). Kim refers to this as absolute relativism. In this case, one would assert that each culture is complete and absolute in itself and in its context and therefore should not be evaluated externally by other standards, according to Kim (Kim, 2019:38). At the extreme point of this type of relativism, the person becomes the creator of the reality as one’s reality stands in opposition to all other realities (Kim, 2019:38).

This could make reality a kind of a moving target that just depends on who is assessing it. If extended to the spirit world, the existence of the spirits may be real or not real depending on who the assessor is. Kraft observes that the third category are those who adopt an agnostic position that states that one cannot determine whether there is a reality beyond what they can perceive. As such they suggest that it is not possible to know (Kraft, 1990:14). An individual therefore can dismiss data presented to them with a claim that it is not possible for one to know what the reality is.

Critical Realism

In Kraft’s view, the “most accurate attempt” to ascertain reality is the fourth category, the critical realism approach. It acknowledges the existence of two realities. One reality is our perception of reality, while the other is the reality as God knows and sees it to be. The closer an individual moves towards God’s reality, the more their perceived reality is anchored in truth (Kraft, 1990:14-17). Similarly, Kim refers to this as mediated reality. In his observation, this requires a recognition of two perspectives of reality which are “the reality that exists outside human perception and realities as a result of people’s perception of them” (Kim, 2019:39).

On the one hand there is “objective reality” of concrete substance or events and “subjective realities” which are the perception of people of these events (Kim,39). According to Kim, critical realism takes cognizance of the fact that there is a measure of subjectivity in how reality is viewed and as such there should be some mediation (mediated reality) that may allow one to entertain some of the viewpoints of the others (Kim, 2019:39). This encourages dialogue.

This would enable dialogue to take place where strategic level spiritual warfare encounters mystical powers in African Traditional Religion. The views of the following writers reflect critical realism.

Philip Steyne: Shared common ground

According to Philip Steyne, the perception of reality that one has can either lead to liberty or to enslaving phobia that does not allow one to engage with the views of others. Steyne observes that, while holding on to a spirit world concept that is human centred and that is oblivious to moral ethics, the “animist” is highly controlled by fear of whether they can control the spirits or not. This is because they feel they cannot fully trust the spirits (Steyne, 1999:165). In Steyne’s view, this leads to enslaving phobia of “gods of fellowman, of the environment, of failure and of inadequacy of rituals (which) all serve to make and keep man a slave of the system.” (Steyne, 1999:166). Neither can it relieve one from guilt or provide adequate peace. It just helps individuals to maintain the status quo because of fear of retribution (Steyne, 1999:166-167).

In a prophecy directed to Babylon, the prophet Isaiah highlights the vanity of a lifestyle which is involved with mystical powers. They cannot prevent the feared calamity from taking place and neither can they save (Isaiah 47:9-15). While acknowledging the shift of the epicentre of Christianity from the West to the majority world, Steyne observes that theologians from the Southern hemisphere tend to engage with emerging issues that may have been neglected by traditional Western theological reflections (Steyne, 1999:169-170).

Steyne has in mind emerging issues such as “the value of native spiritual forms, the spirit world, ancestor spirits, non-linear concepts of time, reincarnation and the equality of world religions” (Steyne, 1999:170). While viewing these values as “ethnotheologies”, Steyne considers the issues they raise of great importance to a Christian who may be living in a context straddled by some of these beliefs and who might be struggling on how to respond biblically to these important matters. If they are not properly addressed, they tend to lead to negative syncretism (Steyne, 1999:170).

According to Steyne, a number of people in the Global South tend to hold their traditional religions in tandem with Christianity, perhaps due to the fact that the version of Christianity that they have is not thoroughly biblical and as such does not answer the felt needs (Steyne, 1999:170). This in essence would create a doorway for hybridity of faith in the lives of these individuals (Steyne, 1999:170).

The view that God gave to the children of Israel in the Old Testament expressed total discontinuity, according to Steyne. The prohibitions that God expressed against any manner of entertainment of the practices and beliefs of the religious neighbours of the children of Israel was a pointer to the fact that God did not expect them to continue with such beliefs and practices (Steyne, 1999:172-173). Steyne observes, (Steyne, 1999:172-173), that this has been expressed in passages like Deut. 12:2-4 which states that:

2 You must demolish completely all the places where the nations whom you are about to dispossess served their gods, on the mountain heights, on the hills, and under every leafy tree. 3 Break down their altars, smash their pillars, burn their sacred poles with fire, and hew down the idols of their gods, and thus blot out their name from their places. 4 You shall not worship the Lord your God in such ways.

Similar views are also expressed in Deut. 18:9-14:

9 When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you must not learn to imitate the abhorrent practices of those nations. 10 No one shall be found among you who makes a son or daughter pass through fire, or who practises divination, or is a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, 11 or one who casts spells, or who consults ghosts or spirits, or who seeks oracles from the dead. 12 For whoever does these things is abhorrent to the Lord; it is because of such abhorrent practices that the Lord your God is driving them out before you. 13 You must remain completely loyal to the Lord your God. 14 Although these nations that you are about to dispossess do give heed to soothsayers and diviners, as for you, the Lord your God does not permit you to do so.

These practices are self-centred and utilitarian in their approach, since they are geared towards the survival of the individual and are geared towards obtaining “security, success and happiness” outside the divine redemption plan, according to Steyne (Steyne, 1999:173). Steyne emphasizes the uniqueness of God’s dealing with the children of Israel in the Old Testament economy. This engagement set their relationship apart and separate from all the other religions of the world. The relationship with God does not depend on any attempt to manipulate God as is often done when appeasing the spirits or mystical powers to display grace and mercy. He also sets a standard of holiness and integrity of lifestyle that he requires of all his people, unlike the other “gods” as expressed in Leviticus 18. (Steyne, 1999:175).

Steyne censures the practices of traditional religions, which exalts the creature rather than the Creator, and views them as contrary to the plans of God (Steyne, 1999:178). He postulates that:

Any departure from God as the sole focus of life, or any spiritual deception will receive its just reward. Graven images of any creature or references to heavenly bodies are not to be the focus of worship. Turning to these creaturely objects, should God's people ever do so, will bring His judgement upon them. Animism – with its focus on the heavens, nature, and multiple deities- brings God's punishment upon peoples, for it departs from ways and statutes of God (Steyne, 1999:178).

Philip Steyne poses some questions which are touching on the issues that engage advocates of strategic level spiritual warfare:

What is involved in bringing converts out of 'the Kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear son'? Is there a biblical model to follow to accomplish such a formidable task? Does it involve an actual encounter with the powers? Will the implementation of this model lessen the tendency of the church toward syncretism? Will it allow for a greater measure of contextualisation? Would it develop a truly biblical ethnotheology? (Steyne, 1999:203).

Steyne is of the opinion that, while transformation and change does not occur in a vacuum, it is imperative that any change agent should take into consideration the old ideas and practices which could serve as an entry point into the community (Steyne, 1999:204). He, therefore, stresses the importance of taking the religious beliefs of other faiths seriously and clearly understanding their perspectives as Christianity is introduced to them. In his opinion, unless there is a rebirth where the old is replaced by the new or reinterpreted in the light of the new in the individuals and among the community, the possibility of the individuals reverting to what was familiar is highly likely (Steyne, 1999:204).

In Steyne's assessment, it is necessary that such an introduction of Christianity among a community must use forms and language that is familiar to the people it is addressing and must be contextualised in a way that can be understood by the people (Steyne, 1999:204). Steyne observes that majority of Western missionaries make attempts to bring a person of "animistic" persuasion to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ by first secularizing them as the process to their conversion to Christianity. In Steyne's view, this destroys the underlying sense of the sacred in the people's belief system further causing disregard for God (Steyne, 1999:204).

Similarly, Steyne highlights the fact that the follower of African Traditional Religion (animist) shares some common ground with the biblical worldview. They share the spiritual perspective on life although the "transcendence" and "immanence" of God will need to be emphasized (Steyne, 1999:207). However, the concepts of divinities and spirits could be relevant when presenting the

ministry of the angelic beings (Stejne, 1999:207). Stejne is also of the opinion that ancestors could be identified with the cloud of witnesses that we find in Hebrews 11, although the Bible does not encourage contact with the dead. Care needs to be taken with this suggestion so as not to open a doorway for engagement with ancestral spirits. Similarly, the idea of evil spirits is also common in the Bible (Stejne, 1999:207). While acknowledging the existence of Satan, Stejne is of the opinion that Christ's triumph over Satan should be emphasized (Stejne, 1999:207).

The God of the Bible is presented as the God of power who works miraculous and supernatural deeds. Stejne stresses the point that this synchronizes with what is in the heart of the traditionalist as their worldview is quite open to the supernatural (Stejne, 1999:208-209). From the thoughts of Stejne, one can make the observation that without necessarily engaging in a mixture of religions, the common worldviews offer grounds for engagement in dialogue that does not necessarily borrow the faith of the Africans, but which rides on the worldview to drive the biblical truths home.

Esther E. Acolatse: Critical contextualisation

In Esther E. Acolatse view, caution needs to be exercised and proper critical contextualization be done in the dialogue process. Acolatse raises the concern that has been in existence between the "African religiocultural reality" and that of the "biblical worldview". She expresses the possible error of those whom she refers to as "adoptionist" in seeing some similarities and then equating the two (Acolatse, 2018:24). She highlights that careful attention should be given in equal measures to the areas which reflect continuity and those which speak of discontinuity (Acolatse, 2018:25). Yet even where there may be similarities of certain cultural aspects, this does not necessarily translate into similarity of faith (Acolatse, 2018:25).

While acknowledging that the other danger that can come out of "situational theology" when one talks of African theology as possible relativism, Acolatse advocates the necessity of sticking to the tools of theologizing: scripture, experience and tradition (Acolatse, 2018:26). Acolatse makes reference to Kwesi Dickson's hesitancy to embrace the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) as completely inspired word of God as opposed to containing the word of God. Dickson seems to lean more towards experience (Acolatse, 2018:28-29). She views scripture and tradition as taming the subjective nature of experience (Acolatse, 2018:29).

While acknowledging that some have set aside African Traditional Religion from the "taxonomy of religion", Acolatse emphasizes the fact that it is difficult to ignore African Traditional Religion in

any encounter with any religion, including Christianity. This becomes much more essential when there is a recognition of the spirit world that African Christians engage with frequently (Acolatse, 2018:32). Neither should one make reference to the religion of Africa as “nature religions” for they are really not engaged in worshipping nature, but ultimate powers behind the visible nature (Acolatse, 2018:35).

In Acolatse’s view the presence and participation of spiritual beings in the affairs of human beings is represented in the Gospels, including certain “ailments and diseases” being attributed to the demonic as the cause. Subsequently, both the disciples and the Lord Jesus Christ considered exorcism as part of their mandate (Acolatse, 2018:69). In her assessment, “the earliest Christians believed in a personal evil that inhabited and controlled individuals – and also sometimes controlled social entities, such as political structures.” (Acolatse, 2018:70). In her examination of the lives of a number of patristic fathers (Acolatse, 2018:70-76), Acolatse concludes that it seems that their “ascents” - attempts to get closer to God - “is the magnet to demonic attack and subsequent engagement in spiritual warfare” (Acolatse, 2018:76). She views this lifestyle as a “normal Christian life and experience” which unfortunately has been obscured by lack of devotions (Acolatse, 2018:76-77).

Acolatse raises the question of whether one is right in believing in the biblical world that seems to be “teeming with demons and other spirits” in the face of scientific cosmos that views some of these as “primitive and prescientific” (Acolatse, 2018:78). In her opinion, it is much easier to assent to the idea of “demythologizing” the scripture to align it with the rational scientific mindset (Acolatse, 2018:78), but in the process we negate the very “Hebrew worldview” upon which the Bible was written (Acolatse, 2018:66). Acolatse affirms that many who still live in cultures which are open to the ideas of the spirit world are in close proximity to the biblical world and as such do “not just believe but ... believe with the apostles and fathers of the faith” (Acolatse, 2018:78). Her concern is therefore, that the modern Christian faith should be identical to the biblical and patristic faith in as far as belief in the spirit world is concerned.

From Acolatse’s view, one can observe that there are areas where there should be complete discontinuity. These are the dark areas considered as the umbra. There are other areas of worldview where there should be continuity, and these are considered as the anteumbra. There are other areas where issues of concern should be taken through a rigorous process of critical contextualisation before concluding whether they belong to umbra or anteumbra. These belong to the penumbra zone. It is the mandate of the Christians therefore to engage in critical

contextualisation that would give the way forward using biblical criteria. This can be represented by the eclipse model as shown in the figure below:

The Eclipse Model

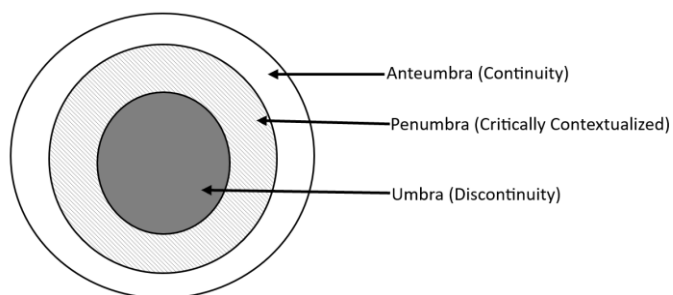


Figure 15: The Eclipse Model

5.3.6 The Nature of the Dialogue: Biblicists' View:

The danger of presenting one group as Biblicists is to give the impression that the others do not use the Bible, which is not accurate. The only reason they are classified as such in this study is that they draw nearly all their arguments from the Bible or examine the biblical texts and contexts which are being used by strategic level spiritual warfare or to counteract or critique certain positions previously preneted in the study.

Chuck Lowe: a biblical critique of SLSW

Chuck Lowe examines strategic level spiritual warfare (SLSW) from a biblical dimension. He views strategic level spiritual warfare as a new model of spiritual warfare that the majority of Christians were unfamiliar with, as it introduced systems and procedures on how to engage in warfare (Lowe, 1998:11). While traditionally the view held was that Christians were in a battle where they were being opposed by Satan, this is changing with time, due to the new emphasis that SLSW has given to spiritual warfare. It has brought about analytical means of detecting the spiritual enemies and methodological operations on how to deal with them (Lowe, 1998:11). When these strategies are followed closely, then the powers of darkness will be disarmed and dislodged from their localities so that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ would make some advance (Lowe, 1998:11).

Lowe acknowledges the advantages that SLSW has brought on board in mission circles. He is of the opinion that for "the first time in memory, mission strategists are affirming the existence and

malevolence of demons.” (Lowe, 1998:12). Their emphasis on prayer has restored a much-needed vibrancy in many churches and conferences with large numbers engaging in prayers. Lowe considers that there might be a number of “negative consequences” that might warrant a closer examination of the teachings of SLSW in the light of scriptures (Lowe, 1998:12-13). Apart from a scriptural basis, there is a concern that some of the tested and tried traditional missionary methods of language learning and cross-cultural engagement might be sidelined and considered as unnecessary anymore as there is an “easier” model of achieving faster and better results (Lowe, 1998:13).

Lowe points to the fact that SLSW has both a theoretical and a practical dimension that delves into the idea that there are “new demons” operating at different dimensions and also strategic ways of handling them (Lowe, 1998:16). He poses the question whether the categorization of the demonic into three spheres as propagated by C. Peter Wagner is the reality in the spirit world. They have presented the ideas that ground-level spirits possess human beings and are dealt with through exorcism; magicians, shamans and others are empowered by occult-level spirits; and strategic-level spirits or cosmic level spirits or territorial spirits control specific domains or regions and prohibits people from positively responding to the preaching of the word of God. It is these concepts and their application that Lowe puts to the Biblical test (Lowe, 1998:17).

Some of the Desert Fathers (Russell, 1980), who were engaged in similar kinds of practice in the patristic era, have been presented as historical examples. Allusion has also been made to the phenomenal growth of the church in the Global South, and this has been attributed to SLWS as an explanation. (Lowe, 1998:17). However, due to the levels of “ambiguity which are raised with nomenclature, practice and scriptural references” used, Lowe is of the opinion that SLSW be subjected to closer scriptural vetting (Lowe, 1998:17). This is important due to the fact that even though some of the proponents have conceded that, there is no biblical evidence that demons do exist at the level referred to as strategic-level, there are many verses from the Bible that are still being fronted as the basis for the teachings (Lowe, 1998:18).

Lowe questions the notion that strategic-level spirits are in control of geographically delimited nations, regions or cities and that they can be discerned and named through spiritual mapping (Lowe, 1998:19). The usage of the terminology however, sometimes is seen to span geographical, geopolitical and topographical domains (Lowe, 1998:19). Lowe also expresses doubts on the efficacy of “perambulatory prayers” that could not be achieved by praying at home (Lowe, 1998:19). He asserts that matters touching on hierarchy, taxonomies, territoriality and residences

are better set aside in the discussions on spiritual warfare, since the important issue to understand is that demons have dominion over the world and try to control its affairs (Lowe, 1998:22).

As such

For historical continuity and for clarity, then, it is advisable to return to the traditional label, 'tutelary spirits', or to the simpler, 'guardian spirit' or 'ruling spirits'. Where it is necessary to distinguish different kinds of jurisdictions, more precise labels are necessary, such as 'geographical', 'geopolitical', 'ethnic', 'topographical', 'ecological', 'domestic', 'ancestral', 'cultic', 'occupational', or 'functional' spirits (Lowe, 1998:22-23).

According to Lowe, some of the claims of the achievements of SLSW which are used by proponents as anecdotes are also overrated. He points to the claims that SLSW

...helped to bring down the Berlin Wall, open Albania to the gospel, depose Manuel Noriega, lower crime rate in Los Angeles during the 1984 Olympics, revive the economy of Argentina and break the power of demons over Japan (Lowe, 1998:24).

While affirming that indeed Christians should engage in spiritual warfare, Lowe at the same time also raises concern about the scriptural proof texts which the proponents of SLSW are using to anchor their teachings in the Bible, on top of the taxonomy already discussed (Lowe, 1998:25).

Lowe agrees with Wagner that Christians have been given power and authority over demonic forces by the Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in Luke 10:19: "See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you." He however, contests the suggestion that this verse speaks of strategic level demons as a nomenclature. Neither should it be adopted as a methodology as the proponents of SLSW are doing (Lowe, 1998:26). He does not see any "special class" of demons which are distinct from the ordinary evil spirits which normally would possess some human beings and would require exorcism (Lowe, 1998:26).

Lowe questions whether attempting to espouse the animistic worldview so as to gain insights into the spirit world is an idea that is supported by the Bible. He also raises concerns on the use of extra-biblical sources, intertestamental literature and supposed empirical data to attempt to prove the veracity of SLSW (Lowe, 1998:27).

In Lowe's view, the passage in Deuteronomy 32:8-9 has some ambiguities depending on the manuscript or version one is referring to and therefore should be interpreted cautiously. This states that:

8 When the Most High apportioned the nations,
when he divided humankind,
he fixed the boundaries of the peoples
according to the number of the gods; (Italics researcher's)
9 the Lord's own portion was his people,
Jacob his allotted share. (NRSV).

According to Lowe, the "gods" in verse eight, is read as "sons of God" in the Dead Sea Scrolls of Qumran; as the "angels of God" in the Septuagint; and as the "sons of Israel" in the NIV version. Taking the Septuagint translation Lowe acknowledges that at least this may be an indicator that God has assigned some guardian spirits over the peoples which are ruling angels and not demons (Lowe, 1998:30). One also cannot tell whether they operate at "geographical, geopolitical or ethnic" dimensions, according to Lowe (Lowe, 1998:31).

While asserting that the Masoretic Text(MT) indicates it as the "sons of Israel", J.A. Thompson in his commentary, points out that the passage could be indicating that Israel was allocated its geographical boundaries by God as other nations were also assigned. He highlights the fact that it might indicate the election of Israel as a nation. Yet at the same time he is also in agreement with Lowe that "there may be an idea of a supervising heavenly being, a kind of a guardian angel, in view" (Thompson, 1974:299). Again, the perception of demons is muted.

Lowe proposes Psalm 82:1-2 as another possible text that has been used in engagements on issues of territorial spirits:

1 God has taken his place in the divine council;
in the midst of the gods he holds judgement:
2 'How long will you judge unjustly
and show partiality to the wicked?

Lowe raises the question on whether the "gods" in verse one are "human judges" or "pagan deities" or "angelic powers" upholding the rulers of the nation and acting as "ruling spirits". In which case, since they are being indicted for favouring the wicked, then they would be demonic spirits rather than holy angels (Lowe, 1998:31). Their fate is then presented in verse six and seven as similar to human beings unless the two sections are referring to different entities (Psalm 82:6-7):

6 I say, 'You are gods,
children of the Most High, all of you;
7 nevertheless, you shall die like mortals,

and fall like any prince.’

While acknowledging that the language may be indicative of deities or other supernatural beings, Tokunboh Adeyemo, in *Africa Bible Commentary*, envisages these as rulers who eventually will die as that is the interpretation that Jesus gave it when he was in a confrontation with the Jewish rulers in John 10:34-35 (Adeyemo et al. 2010:689). Derek Kidner in his commentary thinks the “principalities and powers” are the most likely in this reference rather than polytheism or rulers who are representatives of God (Kidner, 1975:296-297). One can therefore say that the evidence is inconclusive as to whether these verses can serve as a reference for strategic level spiritual beings or not.

Lowe views Isaiah 24:21-22 as ambiguous in a similar way:

21 On that day the Lord will punish
the host of heaven in heaven,
and on earth the kings of the earth.

22 They will be gathered together
like prisoners in a pit;
they will be shut up in a prison,
and after many days they will be punished.

While some versions would say the “hosts of heaven” (NRSV) in verse 21, others would talk of the “powers in the heavens above” (NIV), which Lowe equates to demonic spirits working through rulers and superintending over the nations (Lowe, 1998:31). He concedes that this may be more of an inference, rather than a clear statement making reference to demonic spirits (Lowe, 1998:32). As such Lowe indicates that this passage alone may not be used to argue for the activities of strategic level spiritual warfare. Alec Motyer argues that the verses are basically an indication that a time will come when God will hand out judgement to the celestial powers alongside the terrestrial rulers. Motyer does not see any connection between the two domains of the spirit world and earthly rulers (Motyer, 1999:189).

The passage in Ezekiel 28:12-19 has been variously used throughout the history of the church to indicate that it may be referring either directly to Satan or to the powers behind the throne of the kingdom of Tyre:

12 Mortal, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord God:
You were the signet of perfection,
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
13 You were in Eden, the garden of God;

every precious stone was your covering,
carnelian, chrysolite, and moonstone,
beryl, onyx, and jasper,
sapphire, turquoise, and emerald;
and worked in gold were your settings
and your engravings.

On the day that you were created
they were prepared.

14 With an anointed cherub as guardian I placed you;
you were on the holy mountain of God;
you walked among the stones of fire.

15 You were blameless in your ways
from the day that you were created,
until iniquity was found in you.

16 In the abundance of your trade
you were filled with violence, and you sinned;
so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God,
and the guardian cherub drove you out
from among the stones of fire.

Lowe assents to the fact that the “Cherub” referred to in this passage is probably a demonic spirit that was working behind the throne of the King of Tyre. He prefers the reference of the “king” to be a human king rather than the deity, “*Melkart*”, that patronized the city of Tyre (Lowe, 1998:32). He however, concludes that the text still remains ambiguous and could have other meanings as well (Lowe, 1998:32).

On the other hand the only supernatural power that Christopher J. H. Wright acknowledges as being behind the throne of the King of Tyre is “*Yahweh*” himself who is sovereign. He does not see any demonic power behind the throne, but highlights the fact that Ezekiel has used figurative language borrowed from the creation account in Genesis to indicate the great fall of the King of Tyre (Wright, 2001:243-244). This would dismiss the assertion of the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare that the passage is referring to a territorial spirit ruling over Tyre. John B. Taylor is of a similar view as Wright (Taylor, 1969:196-197).

Tokunboh Adeyemo however, asserts that the traditional view that the passage cannot be making a reference only to king Ethbaal II of Tyre and that the language used is more than what would

have been said about the fall of Adam, is plausible. In his view God could not have paid such a glowing tribute to a pagan king. Subsequently, Adeyemo says that this person is traditionally viewed as Satan (Adeyemo et al. 2010:964-965). He equates the person to the “morning star” of Isaiah 14:12 as the power behind the King of Babylon and the “serpent” of Revelation 12:9 (Adeyemo et al. 2010:965). In Adeyemo’s opinion therefore, there is a demonic spirit that is involved as the power behind the throne when one considers the terminologies or language used (Adeyemo et al. 2010:965). Therefore, the SLSW proponents are in order in discussing about the spirit powers behind the throne according to Adeyemo’s view of this passage. While the context of these verses was pronouncement of judgements of a natural King of Tyre, the language certainly sounds more like the creation narratives in Genesis, which therefore would make one think that although we are talking about an earthly king, figuratively, this seems to be indicative of the power behind the throne.

The encounter that Daniel had with an angelic being as recorded in Daniel 10:13,20-21, is another centre of focus for discussing territorial spirits:

13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me for twenty-one days. So, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia ...
20 Then he said, ‘Do you know why I have come to you? Now I must return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I am through with him, the prince of Greece will come. 21 But I am to tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth. There is no one with me who contends against these princes except Michael, your prince (Daniel 10:13,20-21).

Lowe acknowledges that both from later Judaism and at the conception of Christianity, these “princes” have been understood to be making reference to angelic beings with those who attend to Israel being benevolent angels and those who are opposing being malevolent demonic spirits (Lowe, 1998:33). He objects to the idea that this also extrapolates to a “hierarchy of demons ruling over territories”. The concept of the geographical delimitation of spirits is also difficult to argue from this passage since it appears they are either ethnic or based on time epochs or imperial in nature, with no clear geographical boundaries, since the Greek kingdom had not yet become the superpower that it later on became. In his view this is “an assumption built on an analogy and leading to an inference” (Lowe, 1998:33-34).

He concludes that,

Daniel ... is concerned with the fate of Israel, oppressed by world powers. His point is merely that any empire which attacks Israel is opposing God and serving Satan. In that respect these powers are demonic. More than this he does not say. Nor can we (Lowe, 1998:34).

Lowe argues that the proponents of SLSW are in danger of confusing “phenomenology (the way things are experienced)” for “ontology (the way things are)” (Lowe, 1998:35). This is so, when they reason that the Canaanite gods were actually demonic and therefore, the territorial spirits which were ruling over these communities. He explains that the fact there was worship of other gods did not mean that there were demons in the area (Lowe, 1998:35). This position that Lowe takes seems to be contrary to Paul’s advice in 1 Corinthians 10:20-21:

20 No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons (1 Cor. 10:20-21).

Paul seemed to be suggesting that there were demonic forces behind the idols that were being worshipped. Based on the Daniel text, Tokunboh Adeyemo asserts that, “Satan appoints special emissaries to influence governments against the people of God” (Adeyemo et al. 2010:1007). He however warns against Christians praying to angels as such ideas cannot be drawn from this passage (Adeyemo et al. 2010:1007). John C. Lennox flows along with Adeyemo’s thoughts that there is a spiritual war raging in another world that has implications in the present world and as such “the idea of cosmic conflict is not some peripheral notion, generated by the overheated imagination of Christian extremists” (Lennox, 2015:321).

Lowe, similarly, examines other verses in the New Testament: the legion of Mark 5:9-10 and Luke 8: 31; Artemis of Acts 19; “where Satan dwells” in Revelation 2:13. He concludes with the hypothesis that:

the concept of tutelary demons affirms simply that Satan lies behind any sort of opposition to the people of God. In Old Testament times, when the people of God constituted the nation of Israel, Satan worked through military conflict initiated by other, rival nations. Now that the locus of divine activity has shifted to the universal church, Satan works through a variety of other channels, both internal (such as heresy) and external (such as political oppression and religious competition) (Lowe, 1998:42)

Lowe therefore dismisses the concept of delimitation of the demonic to a geographically demarcated region as “futile and unnecessary” . According to him the Bible does not give any

special emphasis to the “taxonomy of the demonic world” as seen among proponents of SLSW (Lowe, 1998:43).

In this conclusion, Lowe might be minimizing the supernatural activities of the demonic world in the present world. To the African who is constantly aware of the spirit world, one cannot reduce these activities only to doctrinal error and external structural opposition, whether these be political or religious. In an attempt to bring a scriptural balance, the pendulum has been swung too far to the other side creating another imbalance. A recognition that demonic spirits are active in this world and are attempting to enforce the will of Satan is a principle that is presented in the Bible, including Paul himself, who asserts that Satan opposed him or sometimes hindered him (1 Thessalonians 2:18).

In engaging with dialogue with “animists”, Lowe acknowledges that the majority of animists believe in territorial spirits, while some believe in “topographical, ancestral or ecological” spirits (Lowe, 1998:108). While affirming the reflections of Paul Hiebert on the idea of the “excluded middle”, Lowe affirms that “animism” can inform the Christian on certain neglected dynamics of their faith, including the spirit world, but he opposes the idea of the Christian borrowing from this world to fill the gaps in their own theology (Lowe, 109). He fears the danger of what he calls “animistic Christianity” (Lowe, 1998:110).

He posits that Christians are toying with animism when they have shifted their success from prayer to God to a “formula of prayer”. Likewise, Christians would be on the borderline with “magic”, when they depend on naming spirits in order to be effective and in a similar manner when truth is banished at the expense of power, then the group has totally given themselves over to animism” (Lowe, 1998:111). This would lead to a false religious system that is attempting to address the negative elements of rationalism, but is ending up with “animism” rather than Biblical Christianity (Lowe, 1998:111).

Leonard T. Nyirongo and Byang Kato: the barrier model

Leonard T. Nyirongo offers a dissenting view from that of a number of African scholars. In his opinion, there is a “denial” of the core tenets of the Christian faith leading into deception. His concern is that some of the subject areas where these scholars have given emphasis are touching on fundamental aspects of the Gospel (Nyirongo, 2018:14). In the opinion of Nyirongo, the “proposition that the African religious beliefs should be regarded as a foundation for faith in

Christ”, is a denial of the Gospel (Nyirongo, 2018:15). He objects to the view that African Traditional Religion should be considered as an alternative way to God (Nyirongo, 2018:15). As such, Nyirongo looks at the subject both from a patristic history and a biblical viewpoint. He sees a complete discontinuity of engagement between Christianity and pre-existing religions in Africa (Nyirongo, 2018:15).

Nyirongo lists African scholars that he considers having deviated from what he holds as the biblical position. These include Laurenti Magesa, E. Bolaji Idowu, S. H. Azeanya, Desmond Tutu, John Mbiti, Lucas William Vincent and a conference resolution that was produced by All Africa Conference of Churches in Ibadan in Nigeria in 1963. He considers their views as advocating pluralism, universalism, relativism, a blind sympathy with African traditional past and fostering global rebellion against the true Gospel. He is more concerned with the “spirit governing” these beliefs than any truth claim they might communicate (Nyirongo, 2018:15-22). Nyirongo says, “to Mbiti, the Gospel is more or less a *continuation* of African religion” (Nyirongo, 2018:22). Thus, he views Mbiti as an advocate of continuity, which he rejects *in toto*.

Nyirongo objects to the idea that African religion might be considered as “pagan” when viewed externally but at the core of it there are important elements that would be relevant “as a foundation of the Christian faith” (Nyirongo, 2018:23). Nyirongo equates the sympathy that is expressed by a number of African Christian scholars towards African Traditional Religion as emanating from their theological training which affirmed similar views to those expressed during the patristic and medieval era when the Gospel was amalgamated with “Greek pagan thought” (Nyirongo, 2018:24). This view inspired a number of African Christian scholars to attempt to merge Christianity with African Traditional Religion, according to Nyirongo (Nyirongo, 2018:24).

In his examination of the various patristic and medieval personalities, Nyirongo aligns their convictions with the position that they took in the dialogue that existed between “pagan” philosophies and the Christian Scripture. It is his conviction that these early Christian views have shaped the opinions of modern day African Christian scholars in their engagement with African Traditional Religion (Nyirongo, 2018:24). It is also important to note that the majority of these Early Church Fathers like Tertullian and Augustine, who were engaged in these dialogues were actually Africans. (Oden, 2007:66-69).

In calibrating the various positions that some key patristic figures held, he assigns Clement of Alexandria and Origen, his student, the same position. Both of them were of the opinion that it was God who spoke through the Greek philosophers just as he spoke through the Old Testament

in a manner that would lead one to faith in Christ (Nyirongo, 2018:24). Tertullian, however rejected this view as unacceptable and could not even entertain the possibility of a merger with “heathen philosophy”. Nyirongo quotes that popular saying by Tertullian, “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” (Nyirongo, 2018:24-25). Nyirongo however, agrees that even Tertullian used both Greek logic and reasoning in his arguments (Nyirongo, 2018:25).

Nyirongo faulted Tertullian for failure to “see that though pagan Greek contained sayings similar to Bible teaching, it did not qualify as God’s holy revelation in the Bible. This also applies to the sayings in Hinduism or Islam” (Nyirongo, 2018:26). In Nyirongo’s assessment of Tertullian, similarity is not the same as equivalence. He assigned a similar position to Augustine as that of Clement since he “also believed that one could enter faith with the help of natural insight” (Nyirongo, 2018:26). Nyirongo calls this “a stepping stone for Christian faith” (Nyirongo, 2018:26). Nyirongo rejects the views of Eriugena, Anselm and Abelard that natural reason can be used as a tool for deeper scriptural understanding (Nyirongo, 2018:27-28).

According to Nyirongo, Thomas Aquinas created a distinction between faith and reason or “theology and philosophy” but went a step further by seeing them as both harmonious and supplementary to one another (Nyirongo, 2018:29). Nyirongo is categorical that “this view is totally unacceptable because by natural reason, man cannot understand faith” (Nyirongo, 2018:30). Nyirongo would perhaps find Steve Wilkens’ *Good Ideas from Questionable Christians and Outright Pagans: An Introduction to Key Thinkers and Philosophies* (Wilkins, 2003) and *Philosophers Who Believe: The Spiritual Journeys of 11 Leading Thinkers* (Clark, 1997) edited by Kelly James Clark quite disturbing as they point to individuals who have come to faith through natural reasoning. While the just shall live by faith (Rom.1:17) is a true Biblical statement, yet some people have often been led to that faith through reasoning, especially Christian apologetics.

Nyirongo expresses his dissent from some of the African theologians by equating the attempt to find relevance in African Traditional Religion for the Gospel with the conflicts that Jesus had with the Pharisees in the Gospel as they insisted on upholding the traditions of the ancestors (Nyirongo, 2018:31). Nyirongo views these positions held by some African scholars as the brainchild of Satan in attempting to inhibit people from obeying the word of the Lord (Nyirongo, 2018:33). Using the same patristic data that Nyirongo used on the perceptions of the early church fathers, Kwame Bediako reaches a different conclusion (Bediako, 1992).

Bediako acknowledges that one cannot necessarily seek for answers from the past, but one can examine any correlation from the way that the Patristic Christian theologians engaged both with

the Hellenistic Greek cultures and the Barbarian pagan cultures around them and draw relevant lessons for today from them (Bediako, 1992:427). We can infer from Bediako's comment that this can inform the dialogue between African Traditional Religion and spiritual warfare as well. (Bediako, 1992:427).

Bediako affirms the view of E. W. Fashole-Luke (Fashole-Luke, 1976), that for Christianity to find deep roots in the continent and not be treated as a "resident alien" it must be "coupled with cultural continuity". It is only then that it can be domesticated and become part and parcel of the lives of the local community (Bediako, 1992:427-428). What I understand Bediako to be saying is that Christianity is a seedling that germinates in the soil where it is planted and it is not necessary to consider it as a potted plant that requires the soil of its origin for it to thrive.

On the other hand, Byang Kato is of the opinion that those who propagate the idea of African theology as a discipline are advocating for "universalism". This, according to him, is due to the new approach it is using in attempting to integrate African Traditional Religion with Christianity. As such some people do not only see such traditional religion as respectable, but also as a means of divine revelation just as it happened among the Jews with other contemporary religions of their days (Kato, 1975:14). He attributes the apparent hybridity that is sometimes observed when many revert to their traditional ways as caused by the foreignness of the brand of Christianity that has often been propagated in Africa (Kato, 1975:25). Kato insists that while every effort should be made to propagate an "indigenous theology" in Africa, this should not lead to compromising the biblical standards upon which Christianity rests (Kato, 1975:16).

At the same time Kato also saw syncretism and pluralism as challenges that are a threat to Christianity. He views them as the same challenges that Christians in the first two centuries were engaged with and which required the ministry of Christian apologists (Kato, 1975:172-173). In Kato's opinion, these are the same challenges which are arising in the continent of Africa in what he calls "Christo-paganism" and as such is reducing the authority of the Bible as a special revelation from God (Kato, 1975:173). Kato refers to these as the theological pitfalls which are facing Africa today and requires spiritual discernment for one to navigate their way around these deviations (Kato, 1975:173).

Kato rejects what he calls the "veneration of African traditional religions" as he points to the fact that this is neither patriotism nor Christian (Kato, 1975:177) and that this will not maintain the uniqueness of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. According to Kato cultural practices that do not contradict the Bible should be "baptized into Christianity" (Kato, 1975:178). Kato defines

syncretism as “combining the elements of many religions into one” (Kato, 1975:134). The incompatible ones should be renounced even if the action would undermine ecumenism (Kato, 1975:178).

Kato negates the position of Mbiti, when it comes to the dead. In his opinion there is no scriptural backing for the notion that one can and should even attempt to communicate with the dead, whether considered as ancestors or not. On the contrary, there are sufficient scriptures prohibiting communion with the dead (Kato, 1975:180). Kato does not encourage much engagement with studying African Traditional Religion as the “New Testament writers and the early church evangelists did not consider it worthwhile to spend too much of their energy in the study of non-Christian religions” (Kato, 1975:183). Kato considers inductive Bible study as paramount and the essence of what one should spend time reflecting on (Kato, 1975:183).

Kato critiques those theologians who are encouraging the development of “African Theology” as attempting to dilute Christianity by synthesizing it with African Traditional Religion (Kato, 1975:55). As such he considers these advocates of African theology as heralding the death of Christianity in Africa through “syncretism and universalism”. In his view this is an overenthusiasm that should be tamed as it hinders one from discerning the true spiritual dynamics of the Christian faith (Kato, 1975:55).

In Kato’s view, Mbiti is arguing from a “neo-orthodox” position as he uses words but assigns them new meanings. This is due to the fact that Mbiti is engaging in an exercise of “Africanizing” Christianity, which Kato discerns as posing a “threat to faith” (Kato, 1975:57). He however, acknowledges that, “African problems of polygamy, family structure, spirit world, liturgy, to mention a few, need to be tackled by ‘evangelical’ African theologians and Biblical answers presented.” (Kato, 1975:182). Kato seems to contradict himself when he does not consider this as African theology although it actually is. When the message of Christianity is contextualized to address African issues like polygamy and the spirit world from African perspective and one is using the Bible to develop such views, they are theologizing as Africans. The product of that process is a theology that engages with African realities.

Kato does not delve deeply into the spirit world but mentions the example of a woman who was possessed by an evil spirit, who in her trance-like state predicted the coming of the missionaries (Kato, 1975:36). He does not explain how a woman under the control of Satan, which one would view as evil, could “prophesy” about Christianity, which is considered good. Again, tension occurs in the arguments of Kato.

Bediako points out on this discrepancy by Kato that

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Kato's generally negative estimation of African pre-Christian religious tradition was not only the result of observation and previous participation, but also a necessary corollary of the kind of theological presuppositions with which he operated (Bediako, 1992:389).

In Bediako's view Kato argued for distinct discontinuity that had no connection at all. It entailed a total replacement of the old with the new (Bediako, 1992:389). Kato therefore, comes out as a dissenting voice disallowing any manner of continuity between African Traditional Religion and Christianity, according to Bediako (Bediako, 1992:391). As such Kato's view seems to correlate with that of the early missionaries who saw Africa as having no religion, and thus "tabula rasa" for the introduction of a new faith (Bediako, 1992:391). While one should argue for the purity of the Bible, when properly interpreted, there is a necessity to assent to the fact that African Traditional Religion, did make the recipients more susceptible to the supernatural world and thus more open to the message of Christianity.

The Biblicist model draws a very clear line and inserts a non-permeable barrier that does not allow any osmotic engagement between continuity and discontinuity. It could be represented with figure 16 below.

The Barrier Model:

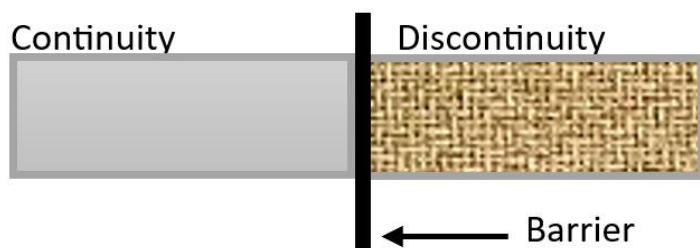


Figure 16: The Barrier Model

Assessing the Views:

The views presented by the various schools of thought have raised five issues which would form part of what would be considered as acceptable dialogue. These are hermeneutical, theological, practical, contextual and identity.

While majority of the scholars would point out to one Bible verse or the other, their views differed on how these verses should be interpreted. While some views which are engaged in re-writing the Bible rather than interpreting the Bible like the existentialists and sections of the structuralists could be considered as not positively contributing to the dialogue, the others may need to be considered and set aside on the grounds of the integrity of their interpretations. While the emergentists may be too close to the structuralists' positions and the accommodationists may be embracing too closely, the realist and the Biblicists seems to be more on a biblically acceptable positions.

When it comes to the systems of beliefs of the various groups again concern would be raised on categories which either have rejected the biblical position or have embraced ATR to the extent there is a merger with Christianity. Instead of being helpful to the dialogue such theological positions whether on the ancestors or on powers as structures, would derail the dialogue from concentrating on directions of possible conversations. The biblicists' position of blocking any manner of continuity also fails to acknowledge the conducive culture that ATR set that prepared the ground for the germination of Christianity. Here the realists seem to be more appreciative.

Clear distinction should be made in the practice of spiritual warfare to the extent that it does not bring confusion as to whether it is Christian or African tradition in action. Such issues as perambulatory prayers, visits to shrines, naming the demonic powers of geographically delineated regions and the like, need to be re-examined in the light of whether they would encourage hybridity or not. Those that would encourage hybridity should be discarded as they would not be helpful to the Christians.

In the process of contextualisation the biblicists have expressed their view that African Traditional Religion should neither be considered as having laid a foundation to Christianity nor as offering an alternative way for relating with God. As such they reject continuity on the ground that it would encourage syncretism and universalism and disfigure the Christian identity. While caution need to be exercised in the process of the dialogue, one is at the same time struck by the similarities of the New Testament worldview and the African Traditionalists worldview. The belief in the Supreme Being, although the attributes of the Living God have to be clearly defined; the acceptance of the spirit world and the supernatural as a given; the belief in the life after death; the sacrificial system which could be a pointer to the once-and-for-all great sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, all would set grounds for openness and not resistance to the Christian faith.

While there should be an openness to the supernatural and the spirit world, there should be at the same time a distancing from engagement with the spiritual entities in African traditional religion as this would lead to occultism. The openness should therefore point to the alternative direction where the presence of the Holy Spirit of God, the angelic beings and God himself is in operation. Therefore there is a cautious continuity of worldview, but discontinuity of the practices which are either opposed to Biblical truth or involved with spirit entities from African Traditional Religion.

5.4 Engaging in the Dialogue: “Metasystemic” Thinking

After presenting four different views and responses on the relationship between psychology and Christianity, Eric L. Johnson and Stanton L. Jones propose a possibility of dialogue between the two fields (Johnson & Jones, 2000). Although these reflections are tackling different fields from the area of focus of this study, they are quite helpful in processing the nature of the dialogue that might exist between strategic level spiritual warfare and mystical powers in African Traditional Religion. They suggest that it is possible for one to be operating from a stand-point of one's “community of scholarship” or possible background and as such engage in implicit bias that hinders one from gaining insights from others (Johnson & Jones, 2000:248-249).

Johnson and Jones however, explain that there are certain views which should be retired and not be carried forward to the table of conversation as, “they did so poorly at capturing the truth of faithfully representing God’s landscape as the creator had structured it, that their portrayal was of no use to future truth seekers” (Johnson & Jones, 2000:249).

Perhaps Bultmann and other existentialists who have also been in conversation in this study might be considered to belong to this category that should be retired, as their denial or demythologizing of the existence of the demonic is quite unhelpful both to the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare and to the adherents of pre-existing religions like African Traditional Religion. In rejecting or downplaying a realm that is so well represented in the Bible and that seems to be quite real to the African traditional religious faithful, those who hold to the existentialist view and Bultmann’s demythologization render themselves otiose to the discussions on spiritual warfare.

Johnson and Jones are of the view that “an attitude of fairness and openness to truth” would be most useful as each area can gain some helpful insights from the other (Johnson & Jones, 2000:250). They are of the opinion that faithfulness to scripture should play a critical role in the assessment of the various views and positions (Johnson & Jones, 2000:250). At the same time one ought to be observant to note whether the presenter is actually forcing scriptures to fit into their

scheme rather than engaging with the entire panorama of the scriptural truth (Johnson & Jones, 2000:251). Proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare have been accused of imposition rather than expositions of scriptures (Rommen et al. 1995; Lowe, 1998).

In examining the various models of thinking Johnson and Jones explain that “presystemic” thinking is the kind of thinking that one would find in a child who is unable to relate the connection between various variables (Johnson & Jones, 2000: 251-252). They also posit that this is the kind of thinking that is used in most fields, including psychology and theology. In this model of thinking one organizes their thoughts into logical manner and is able to relate and arrange the various variables into some kind of systems (Johnson & Jones, 2000:252).

While this model of thinking is useful, Johnson and Jones highlight the fact that in a situation where a variable does not meet all the conditions or in a context where it appears like there are many systems at the same time, then what one may need is a “metasystem” thinking which will take into account the whole wider picture (Johnson & Jones, 2000:252). Such metasystemic thinking would enable one to gain insights into the views of other systems more than if one was operating on a mono-systemic plane.

Johnson and Jones compare the complexity of such an observation to that which is encountered when light is viewed both as a particle and as a wave, as physicists would explain. In both cases one would be dealing with multiple systems. They assent to the fact that “... systemic thinkers stuck in their own system are genuinely unable to grasp the truth in another system, insofar as those truths contradict *their own* (sic) system of thought” (Johnson & Jones, 2000:253).

Johnson and Jones advocate for metasystemic thinking as a viable Christian way of thinking, that frees the Christian to appreciate the “the truth whenever it is found” (Johnson & Jones, 2000:254). They indicate that this does not necessarily lead to relativism that would water down Christian convictions (Johnson & Jones, 2000:253). In their opinion, metasystemic thinking, “... transcends the limits of a single logical system. Metasystemic thought synthesizes the truth of multiple systems that are apparently contradictory (at the level of systemic thought)” (Johnson & Jones, 2000:254).

This introduces a new set of relationships which do not sound absurd or irrational. This creates an enabling mindset according to Johnson and Jones, that is likely to get one as close as possible to God’s view of the truth (Johnson & Jones, 2000:254).

In discussing the issue of strategic level spiritual warfare and its dialogue with mystical powers in African Traditional Religion, it is important that a metasystemic approach of thinking be adopted. This would then presume that there may be some shade of God's truth in each of the systems and variables under observation. This would also redefine the scope of what continuity or discontinuity actually are. Johnson and Jones acknowledge the often-quoted statement that "all truth is God's truth" (Johnson & Jones, 2000:254) and as such it is important to embrace God's truth whenever it is found without succumbing to "relativism or unreflective, logical inconsistencies" (Johnson & Jones, 2000:254).

Johnson and Jones contrast between systemic thinkers who do not embrace any thought that does not fit into their system even if there is sufficient evidence pointing to that truth, as opposed to metasystemic thinkers who are keen to glean insights which will improve their own understanding of the truth from other systems (Johnson & Jones, 2000:255). One of the dangers that one needs to be cautious about when taking this approach, according Johnson and Jones, is the possibility of adopting relativistic ideas (Johnson & Jones, 2000:256).

In order to counter this, it is important for the Christian thinker to set out certain "qualifications" or parameters, which will assist one to steer clear of relativism and still arrive at definite truth (Johnson & Jones, 2000:256). From the outset one needs to acknowledge that "in Christ, God and his revelation of himself in the Old and New Testaments is the ultimate truth" (Johnson & Jones, 2000:256). They are of the opinion that it is not necessary to "destroy the uniqueness of Christianity" in order to embrace God's truth in other spheres (Johnson & Jones, 2000:256).

According to Johnson and Jones, Christianity "embodies" the span of "complexities" which provide meaningful response to all of life's challenges (Johnson & Jones, 2000:256). As such they are of the opinion that "metasystemic thinking ceases to be legitimate for Christians when it embraces elements of thought that contradict core Christian belief" (Johnson & Jones, 2000:257).

The second qualifier that they set up for one to avoid is openly contradictory ideas as the "law of noncontradiction still holds in metasystemic thinking" (Johnson & Jones, 2000:257). But in the process of reflection, one might discover that what appeared to be contradictory on the surface, strike a common agreement at the base (Johnson & Jones, 2000:257). It is also important to exercise discernment on generalizations which overlook the particular version of the truth and ends up misleading one (Johnson & Jones, 2000:258).

In engaging with the dialogue between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion, it is important that “metasystemic” thinking be adopted in coming up with an acceptable contextual model.

5.5 Engaging in the Dialogue: Contextual Analysis

An examination of the various contextual analyses presents a mixture of both continuity and discontinuity that one needs to weave a way through:

5.5.1 Ideologies of Dialogue: David Lochhead:

David Lochhead discusses the issue of dialogue and poses the question whether it is important at all to discuss such matters. He suggests that some are used to a “religion of niceness” and therefore would not want to offend by exchanging views with people of other faiths. In the minds of such people, “we worship the same God, so it does not matter” (Lochhead, 2012:24). Such are the individuals like John Hick and Paul Knitter who contend that there is one God, perceived differently, in different contexts, but worshipped by all creation (Knitter, 1985; Knitter & Hick, 1988;(Lochhead, 2012:25). Christianity and Islam would object to this inclusive position that Hick advocates as they tend to be quite exclusive (Lochhead, 2012:26).

In a situation like that, a theology of partnership is necessary that would take into account the various ideologies and lead towards some kind of dialogue. The exclusivist position would be viewed as the ideology of isolation, since it does not engage with any other group (Lochhead, 2012:26). This ideology of isolation can sometimes turn into the ideology of hostility. This is often brought about by concerns of criticisms or when one’s faith is being questioned (Lochhead, 2012:26). This can then lead to the ideology of competition where each group is trying to outdo one another so that they would remain relevant and not to be considered weak (Lochhead, 2012:26).

Lochhead acknowledges that the ideas on models of dialogue are not exhaustive and he has not captured them all (Lochhead, 2012:40). He does not cover the area of syncretism where one religion may assimilate another in its entirety or in part and continue to engage in their mode of worship. A good example would be the Sufi Moslems or folk Moslems who have brought together Islam and mysticism or folk religion together (Oseje, 2018). Some independent African Churches

have also incorporated parts of African Traditional Religion and linked it with Christianity (Samuel, 2019). The early missionary to India, Roberto de Nobili, was another example who inculcated Brahminical lifestyle and thinking into Christianity (Neill & Chadwick, 1964).

Lochhead asserts that

The theological agenda for Christians who are concerned with our relation with other religious traditions needs to focus on a theology of dialogue, not on a new doctrine of God or a new doctrine of Christ, or a new doctrine of salvation. Dialogue – genuine dialogue ought not to require any prior conversion on either side, other than a conversion to, and a commitment to the relationship of the dialogue itself (Lochhead, 2012:93).

This kind of dialogue takes different dimension in that it can be viewed as negotiation, integration, activity or relationship. It is not a “monologue” but an engagement that does not preclude taking a position or even anger (Lochhead, 2012:59-88).

The relationship between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion seems to exist at two levels. There are objections to certain practices which are viewed as demonic and need to be exorcised, but when it comes to the practice, some of the models used are very similar to those used by practitioners of African Traditional Religion. There is an acknowledgement, for example of spirits inhabiting a region, but at the same time a rejection of attempts to declare them as “pagan” practices. This is an area where there is both continuity and discontinuity at the same time. While Lochheads processes might be useful at the general dialogue level, when it comes to missional engagement, one would be forced to withhold in fear of causing the relationship to hostility.

5.5.2 Models of Contextual Theology: Stephen Bevans:

Stephen Bevans produced what he considered different models on how people develop contextual or local theologies. In his view these models should be used in small communities, in churches and even in the academy (Bevans, 2002:xv). These are translation, anthropological, praxis, synthetic, transcendental and counter cultural (Bevans, 2002:x). These are reflected in the figure below:

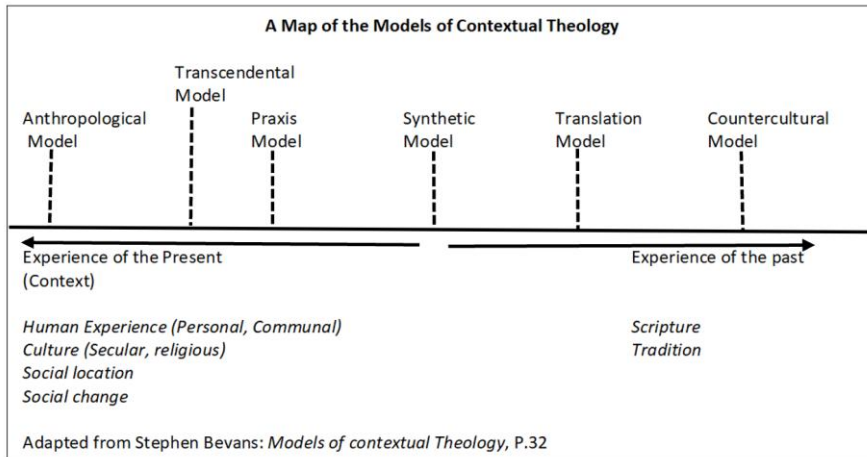


Figure 17: Models of contextual Theology (Bevans, 2002:32)

In Bevans view, this is an imperative in contextualization rather than an option and for it to be effective one has to draw in scripture, tradition and human experience (Bevans, 2002:4). While one may agree that seeking for a theology that engages with the context is an imperative, to draw that theology from tradition, would require a way of limiting negative traditional background from influencing that theology.

Those engaging with African Traditional Religion might struggle with the occultic nature of some of the traditional practices and at the same time may discover that human experience is quite subjective. To assert that there cannot be one local theology, but theologies as Bevans says (Bevans, 2002:4-5), would throw the door wide open for pluralism. Those who seem to have borrowed teachings from certain traditions, repackaged and then broadcast them as spiritual warfare are basically affirming those traditional practices. That is why it is quite important that scripture, which is more of a standard way of looking at things, should be given a high premium even when certain models are adopted. Perhaps an amalgamation of several of these models might come close to offering stability to one's theologizing.

Bevans' models therefore limit the dialogue between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion. The individual becomes the judge of the truth out of their traditional background and out of their, rather subjective experiences.

5.5.3 The Process of Encounterology: J. N. J. Kritzinger:

J. N. J. Kritzinger highlights the fact that proper dialogical engagement needs “reflexivity” that takes into account one’s theological stand, engagements one has had with the religion under discussion, whether one is predisposed to certain prejudices and the general attitude one reflects towards the other faith (Kritzinger, 2008:766). In entitling his paper “*Faith to Faith*” Kritzinger hoped to give the impression of “face to face” from which he developed his concept of “encounterology” (Kritzinger, 2008:770).

While affirming Kosuke Koyama’s concept of “neighbourology” (Koyama, 1987), Kritzinger renamed it “encounterology” and developed what he called the “cycle of praxis” (Kritzinger, 2008:770).

The seven dimensions of the “cycle of praxis”, according to Kritzinger are:

- 1) *Agency*: Identity of the partners in dialogue is necessary
- 2) *Context Analysis*: The cultural context in which the encounter takes place can determine the direction of the encounterology
- 3) *“Ecclesial” Analysis*: Examining the relationships between the dialoguing partners over the years and draw lessons from this
- 4) *Theological reflection*: Developing a clear understanding of one’s biblical interpretive framework and how the conversation partner might understand it
- 5) *Spirituality*: Determining the nature of one’s spirituality and how it impacts on the relationship with the dialogue partner
- 6) *Practical Projects*: Engaging in projects or activities which present opportunities for witness and service to the dialogue partner
- 7) *Reflexivity*: One conducts a reflection on how they have engaged the dialogue partner with the previous six parameters (Kritzinger, 2008:771-772).

The Cycle of Praxis is shown in the figure below:

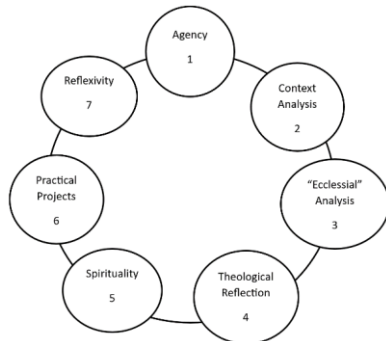


Figure 18: Cycle of Praxis (J. N. J. Kritzinger, 2008: 771-772)

Kritzinger considers these seven dimensions as critical if one is to engage in effective encounterology. In engaging with a dialogue partner, one has consciously to examine their own prejudices against the faith of the one that they are in dialogue with (Kritzinger, 2008:772). While the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare may engage with some of the stages that Kritzinger has prescribed like agency, context analysis, "ecclesial" analysis, theological reflection and reflexivity, it is a challenge to engage at spiritual level and the project level with African Traditional Religion for these would be the main bone of contention. Kritzinger's "cycle of praxis" would not be a complete cycle.

In Kritzinger's opinion, the interreligious encounter will be reflected in three attitudes which are important:

- *Shoulder to Shoulder*: This is the state when Christians collaborate with people of other faiths in projects that would enhance community welfare and transformation.
- *Face to Face*: There should also be face to face engagement with sustained conversation and witness to the people of the other faith, allowing them to also respond and engage with the Christian.
- *Back-to-Back*: This is a posture in which there is a distinction of one's identity so that what is said behind someone's back can be said in front of them (Kritzinger, 2008:785).

The encounterology of Kritzinger would be useful as a dialogical model that does not engage the spirit world. When it comes to contact of the spirit world it would not carry through as it would convert to power encounter that would lead into a conflict.

5.5.4 The Criteria: Paul Hiebert:

The question of how Christians should navigate their way around the thorny issues of African traditional religious beliefs and practices has been considered and discussed in this study. Various suggestions have been offered on how different groups have proposed responses when faced with this encounterology. Of more specific interest is the engagement between strategic level spiritual warfare and mystical powers in Africa Traditional Religion and whether there is continuity or discontinuity, conflict or embrace between them.

The proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare are passionate about evangelism. They feel that evangelistic efforts could be accelerated if more Christians could discern spiritual powers which are hindering evangelism through spiritual mapping, then they could engage in strategic level spiritual warfare which would liberate the targeted regions from the spiritual squatters, which are demonic powers. The Christian faith community must however engage openly with these SLSW teachings and raise questions as to their origin, validity, efficacy and even whether there might be some dangers to avoid. This requires some kind of criteria for evaluation.

While various useful processes of dialogue and models of contextualization have been examined, with both their strengths and weaknesses pointed out, an alternative model that offers means and ways of eliminating what is offensive and sieving through what is useful is necessary. Paul Hiebert proposed the “critical contextualisation” method which was used in engaging with cultural anthropological contextualisation (Hiebert, 1991:183-190). This current study has adopted Hiebert’s method. This has been modified, charted and proposed as a new process leading to some criteria of measurement that would take into account the traditional setting, but upholds the integrity of Scripture.

When addressing any issues touching on traditional beliefs: ancestral veneration, shrines occupied by spirits, diviners and other related matters, one would first of all identify the issue and then engage with it through a process of critical contextualisation. To reject completely either the existence of the belief or the practice encourages the adherents of African Traditional Religion to continue with the practice secretly, leading to hybridity and dualism in their Christian lives. This is what the existentialists and some of the structuralists are doing and thus leading to nominalism in Christianity. This is a kind of discontinuity at the surface that is not healthy as it engenders continuity in a subterranean manner.

The other possibility is to assimilate uncritically the traditional belief or teaching. This also leads to dualism and unhealthy syncretism that reinforces the traditional belief and hinders people from coming out of any negative practice or belief that may be hindering them from experiencing true freedom in Christianity and salvation as Christ promised (John 8:32). This is what sections of the accommodationists are reinforcing.

It is commendable that proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare have embraced a worldview that is open to the supernatural and the spirit world and which is similar to both the biblical worldview and the worldview of African Traditional Religion. In this they show a much-needed continuity which has sometimes been dismissed in certain Christian circles as irrelevant or outdated. However, when they acquire not just the worldview, but the systems of belief, including the names of the gods or some of the practices like conducting spiritual mapping to identify evil spirits in a region, or interviewing witchdoctors and shamans, then they are entering into a level that is unhealthy. At this point it has moved into accommodation and the end result could be a merger or negative syncretism.

It is here that the third possibility of conducting critical contextualisation that is biblically based becomes very useful. After identifying the issue of concern, there is proper Bible study to determine what the Bible says about the matter. The subject matter is therefore evaluated in the light of what the Bible is saying, resulting in new conclusions and perhaps new positions. One may discover that at the end of the process, some contents are evil, either morally or because of occultic contacts or because they violate biblical principles. One needs to reject such. The good elements coming out of the study should always be retained when they are aligned to the truth of the Word of God. The neutral ones, which could go either way, therefore need to be redeemed for good purposes. There may also be a need to replace some elements which are missing in the culture by borrowing or even totally recreating new ones.

The recreated critical contextualisation criteria map is presented in figure 19 below:

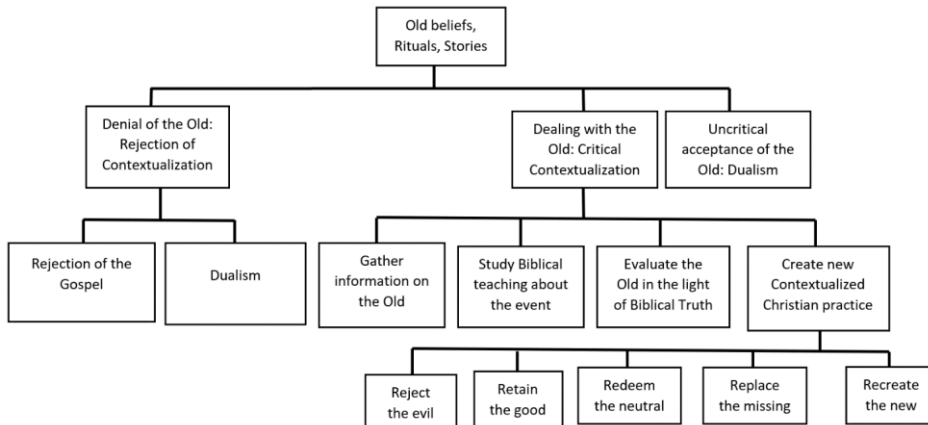


Figure 19: The Critical Contextualisation Criteria Map, adapted from Hiebert (Paul G Hiebert, 1994: 182-190)

When this process is followed, the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare appear to be engaged both in discontinuity and continuity at the same time. Through exorcism of spirits and perambulatory prayers, they disengage from the issues which are in the traditional background; while in their belief systems, in following, acknowledging and even naming the various spirits as per the beliefs of African Traditional Religion, they show continuity. The process of critical contextualisation will help so that unhealthy belief systems and practices are not espoused and assimilated into the Christian faith.

5.6 Engaging in the Dialogue: Kiambu (Kenya) Historical Case Study:

A practical example is useful in affirming or repudiating the claims of the proponents of strategic level spiritual by examining an area they often narrate. The choice of Kiambu for case study is due to the fact that it is frequently presented as a model of an area where implementing spiritual mapping and strategic level spiritual warfare produced positive and life transformative change that was observed and recorded. Its proximity to Nairobi (25 kilometres away) and the fact that the researcher has had the opportunity of teaching a mission course in the Bible school run by the church mentioned in these narratives was an added advantage. Since the method used is a historical case study, where the study relies on documented records, these were readily available as and when needed.

Kiambu is one of the 47 counties of the Republic of Kenya, lying on the outskirts of the city of Nairobi. The county measures a total area of 2,543.5 square kilometres (Kiambu County Government, 2018:1). The population of Kiambu county was projected as 2,090,592 by 2022 by the county government (Kiambu County Government, 2018:6) and for Kiambu township as 129,086 by 2022 (Kiambu County Government, 2018:7).



Figure 20: Map of Kiambu County (Kiambu County Government, 2018:1)

Kiambu is a flourishing agricultural area with tea, coffee and pyrethrum as the main cash crops and contributes quite a lot to the economy of Kenya (Kiambu County Government, 2018:20-21).

In this locality proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare indicate that there was community transformation as a result of a Kenyan Pastor, Thomas Muthee, who exercised spiritual mapping and strategic level spiritual warfare in the area. George Otis Jr. indicates that Kiambu had been a graveyard for ministries when Pastor Muthee embarked on his ministry in the 1980s. He records that, “there was profligate alcohol abuse, untamed violence and grinding poverty” (Otis, 1999:48).

The new ministry launched its operations in what was then known as “Kiambu Prayer Cave.” (Otis, 1999:48).

In *Twilight Labyrinth: Why Does Spiritual Darkness Linger Where It Does?*, Otis Jr., continues with the narrative on Kiambu as he highlights that Pastor Muthee and his wife determined to engage the dominating spirit in Kiambu through prayer and community research (Otis Jr., 1997:295-296). Again, he paints the picture of Kiambu in 1988 as having “high incidence of murder, rape and other forms of violence. Alcoholism was also prevalent and the whole area was also depressed economically.” He points to the fact that even government workers did not want to go out in the town and other evangelical churches which attempted to start congregations in the town failed (Otis Jr., 1997:296).

According to Otis, the prayers and research of Pastor Muthee and his wife revealed that the town was under the control of a witch called Mama Jane. Apparently, she had a divination business, that was basically witchcraft and was attracting some respectful and senior people in government and as such was greatly feared (Otis Jr., 1997:296). Otis further highlights, that the researchers found their target due to inexplicable fatal auto accidents that used to take place right in front of her business building. They reached the conclusion (implied), that she was taking blood sacrifices since there was no blood on the road from the people who had died near her house in those accidents (Otis Jr., 1997:296-297).

Otis points out that at that point the Muthees embarked on intense prayers with the purpose of breaking “the power of witchcraft over the town- a power that was preventing people from getting saved.” (Otis Jr., 1997:297). After a while they sensed a lightening of the burden and the load they had been carrying for the town and so concluded that they were going to have the breakthrough they had been praying for (Otis Jr., 1997:297). Otis reports that the Muthees soon started their congregation and saw conversions and miraculous healings contrary to what had been the case before (Otis Jr., 1997:297).

This so infuriated Mama Jane, the alleged witch according to Otis, that she made several attempts to bewitch the worshippers at night by using occultic paraphernalia. When the congregants engaged in intense prayers, people in the town decided to evict the woman from the neighbourhood. Otis Jr. records that since the response by the community was riot-like, the police responded to quell the riot and found a live snake in Mama Jane’s room, again implying that it was part of the occultic items she was using (Otis Jr., 1997:297).

Five years after this, Otis Jr. reports that “the atmosphere has changed... they enjoy the lowest crime rates in the country. Rape and murder are virtually unheard of... the economy has also started to grow.” (Otis Jr., 1997:298). Many people had been converted as a result and in seven years the church that the Muthees planted had grown to over 4,000 members (Otis Jr., 1997:298). Otis Jr. attributes these to a cause-and-effect nature of the research on spiritual mapping and the strategic level spiritual warfare that was conducted (Otis Jr., 1997:298). The same story has also been narrated in a documentary by the Sentinel Group on transformation (Otis Jr., 2014).

This incident has been promoted by the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare as an example where there was community transformation when spiritual mapping and strategic level spiritual warfare was conducted through research (spiritual mapping) and intercessions (spiritual warfare). However, one needs to acknowledge certain realities about Kiambu County. Kiambu county has had a series of community transformations brought about by spiritual renewals over a period of time. Previously these had been called revivals. The most enduring one was the East African revival which originally started in Gahini, Rwanda in 1927 and then spread to all the East African countries (Guillebaud, 2002:55-56).

David B. Barrett, the Anglican Church researcher who started off his statistical church research ministry in Nairobi, wrote in 1973 about some of these previous revivals in Kenya, some of which were taking place in Kiambu County. He records that in 1949, more than 15,000 people gathered together in an area in Kiambu called Kabete for the revival meetings, better known as *Tukutendereza* (‘We praise thee Jesus’ in Luganda) gatherings. The following year, 1950, a similar meeting took place again in Kiambu county at a place called Kikuyu. Again, the attendance was estimated to be 15,000 people who gathered for a whole week of convention. A similar convention was held in Kikuyu again in 1970, and this time drew 30,000 people who stayed under trees and cooked with firewood for a whole week (Barrett, 1973:113).

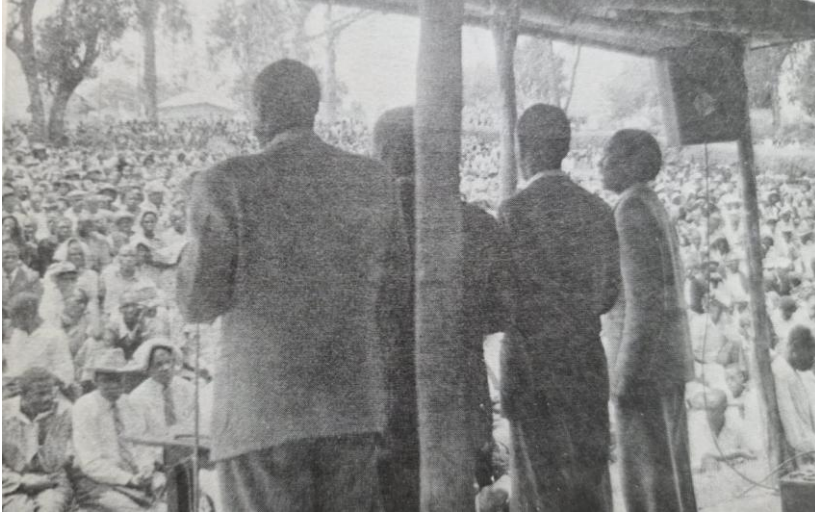


Figure 21: Revival Gathering in Kabete, Kiambu, 1950 (Barrett, 1973:114)



Figure 22: Revival Gathering in Kikuyu, Kiambu, 1970 (Barrett, 1973:110)

Barrett further explains about the structures of this revival movement:

There are no officials, no executives, no salaried workers; no headquarters, no offices; no bureaucracy, no paperwork, no minutes; no budgets, no membership lists, and no annual subscription fees. Unlike the churches to which virtually all its followers belong, the fellowship is informal, unstructured, spontaneous, and group-led (Barrett, 1973:113).

This, however, was not the only occasion when Kiambu county had received a societal transformation through revival. In narratives of the ministry of Bishop Henry Mulandi, Susan Nzuki records the events which took place in Banana Hill, Kiambu County. A young Christian school girl by the name of Margaret Wangari was used by God to heal a cripple at Banana Hill. As more and more people turned up, so did the magnitude of the miracles to the extent thousands were flocking in Banana Hill every day in 1974 and 1975 (Nzuki, 2014:69). The events were of such a magnitude that even secular national newspapers reported these happenings (Nzuki, 2014:69). For years, thereafter, Banana Hill became the epicentre of revival not only in Kiambu County but throughout the whole country. Banana Hill is only 11 kilometres from Kiambu town that we were making reference to. Preceding this revival was an intense prayer gathering by young people in a conference in Nakuru, Kenya. Those who came from this camp meeting were thrust out into missions both within and outside Kenya (Nzuki, 2014:57-65).

Looking through the extra information on Kiambu, those whom God used in the earlier incidences before the time of Pastor Muthee do not claim any special engagement nor knowledge in spiritual mapping and spiritual warfare. Yet the records of their ministries and impact superseded those of Pastor Muthee. The common denominator in the narratives is that there was intense prayer and God seemed to have responded to these prayers to bring about defeat of witches, community transformation and national revival including authenticated miracles. This therefore indicates that what God in his sovereign mercy responded to was prayer. Perhaps the technicalities of spiritual mapping may not have made much difference, provided people prayed.

Again, from the earlier narratives one would note that the effect and impact of revival wanes after some time and occasionally people go back to their earlier state in which they were before the revival. This may take a couple of years, or many years as is the case of the East African revival. Although police crime records at the time when Pastor Thomas Muthee was planting his church in Kiambu were not kept, more recently police records are available for each county. The *Police Crime Report* for 2016 placed Kiambu county at the top of the whole country with the highest crimes committed amounting to 6,006 and contributing to 8% of all the crimes committed in the year (Police Service, 2016:4). A similar report placed Kiambu second to the city of Nairobi in 2021 with 5,725 crimes committed (Police Service, 2021:7). In the years in between, Kiambu alternates between the first and second place in crime rates throughout that entire period for the whole country.

While acknowledging that God certainly used Pastor Muthee in the late 1980s to the extent that crime rate subsided, one must also assent to the data presented by the police that Kiambu as a county has been leading in the crime rate in Kenya. If the strategic level spiritual warfare prayers were dealing with powers and principalities over Kiambu or the spirits that were controlling people in Kiambu, were they actually evicted from the vicinity and then they returned or were they just rendered temporarily harmless for that period of time and then later resumed the damage they had been doing in the county? One needs to be cautious with such words as cause and effect related to spiritual warfare. Perhaps it is much safer just to pray like the earlier revivalists used to do and this would have significant community impact, without the warfare technology presented to people by proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare.

5.7 Conclusion:

In examining the nature of the dialogue that exists between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion, this study has shown a diversity of positions which are held by different scholars. At the centre of these positions is whether there is continuity or discontinuity. These positions included the existentialists, structuralists, scientific emergentists, accommodationists, biblicists and realists. Some of the groups dismissed entirely the world of the spirit while others took the continuity position. Some took the position of discontinuity.

The study argues for a more discerning position of both continuity and discontinuity, where the subject area is processed through critical contextualisation and the outcome would determine whether it is rejected, in which case there is discontinuity, or retained thus acknowledging continuity. Issues which touch on evil, immorality, occultism or those which contradict the Bible would belong to the category to be rejected. While openness to the supernatural could go either way, this is redeemed for good purpose as it would allow people to be open to the supernatural Biblical Creator God.

The study has also shown through a historical case study, that without engaging in strategic level spiritual warfare, there have been in Kenya great evangelistic outcomes that perhaps even exceeded the often-narrated case of Kiambu. This points to the fact that the important issue therefore, is prayer and not necessarily spiritual mapping and technical prayers.

The next, concluding, chapter will examine the missiological implications and recommend some areas for further research.

6 CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN STRATEGIC LEVEL SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND SOME RECOMMENDATIONS:

6.1 Introduction: Summary of the Study

This study was concerned with making a contribution in the subject area of the dialogue between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion with an emphasis on the concept of power and examining its missiological implications. Chapter two highlights the possible nature of the dialogue and examined some models and frameworks that would address this dialogue. It points out that in the encounterology between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion, critical contextualisation is paramount so as to be biblically clear on what is acceptable and what should be discarded.

The study highlights the position of the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare as emphasizing the diverse levels of spirits which operate in the world today from individuals and witches to cosmic levels. These need to be handled in different ways in prayer for the purpose of experiencing breakthrough in world evangelization. These vary from deliverance, spiritual mapping, that may include perambulatory prayers, and finally culminate in strategic level spiritual warfare to handle the cosmic levels spirits which sometimes control institutions, cities and nations.

The study has shown that there is no sufficient biblical basis for this classification of spirits called “strategic level spirits”. The ideas seem to be borrowed from Jewish pseudepigrapha, experiential anecdotes and perhaps other cultures. The study has shown that there are other viable alternative explanations to some of the biblical proof texts used by the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare. The objections raised by those who opposed the teachings on strategic level spiritual warfare were also examined and analysed.

Various sections of the Christian church hold divergent views of what spiritual warfare is, including differing perceptions on what “principalities and powers” actually mean. The study adopted the

view that principalities and powers are actually demonic living spirits rather than systems and structures which are not created beings. While pointing out the weaknesses and the strengths in the various arguments, the study highlights what was considered a more balanced biblical view.

A thorough observation on the systems of belief in African Traditional Religion was also examined. This included an examination of what mystical powers in African Traditional Religion mean in comparison to “powers and principalities” in the Bible. This was also compared to “mana” and “vital force” as understood in various cultures. The study underscores the fact that while the concept may not be biblical, care needs to be taken as the belief in these mystical powers opens doorways for engagement with the demonic spirits which may lead to occultic entanglement.

Finally, the study examines whether there is continuity or discontinuity between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion and whether the dialogue entails or embraces power conflicts. The study shows that there are some areas where there is and should be continuity, while there are other areas where there is discontinuity. This is expressed by the fact that there is both continuity and discontinuity at the same time and one needs to adopt a relevant dialogical posture depending on the subject area one is dealing with. An engagement in critical contextualisation through the tool that the study provides would guide one into determining when to express continuity and when to distance through discontinuity.

The historical case study highlights the fact that similar results have previously been procured during revival time through prayers only and therefore could not be directly attributed to a cause and effect relationship with strategic level spiritual warfare or spiritual mapping.

This final chapter now highlights the missiological implications of these findings and proposes some relevant recommendations.

6.2 Insights into the Dialogue Between Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and African Traditional Religion

6.2.1 Some Positive Contributions of the Dialogue

The first positive contribution is that the issues touching on demons and spiritual warfare have not been major subjects of theological discourse for many years, but one would have to acknowledge that C. Peter Wagner and his colleagues have brought this matter into contemporary Christian conversation. It is quite telling that one of the key protagonists has actually been Frank Peretti

(Peretti, 2003a, 2003b; Howard, 1994), through his fictional novels which some mistakenly have taken as biblical truth. While a number of theologians have propagated the existentialist views of dismissing the spirit world as seen in this study (Bultmann, 1985), the conversation that has been introduced by the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare has been helpful in enabling the church to recover a significant focus that the early church seemed to consider of such critical importance to the extent of having official exorcists (Twelftree, 2007).

Those who have approached this subject from the structuralist viewpoint like Walter Wink (Wink, 1993) and Lesslie Newbigin (Newbigin, 1989), have also watered down the reality of the demonic world by reducing them to structural influences in society and in governance. The proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare have helped the church to regain this necessary insight into the activities of demons as real personalities.

Some Christians from African traditional religious backgrounds have found it easy to identify with some of the concepts propagated by those disseminating strategic level spiritual warfare. This is because of the osmotic relationship that seems to exist in some of these concepts when they are in dialogue with African Traditional Religion. From different parts of the world, some have cautioned against involvement with the teachings (Priest, Robert J.; Campbell, Thomas; Mullen, 1995), while others have singled out the excesses and even referred to them as “nonsense” or “witchdemonology” which should be completely stopped and not propagated among Christian circles (Quayesi-Amakye, 2015). While acknowledging that in some sectors there could be areas where the proponents have crossed the boundaries of what might be acceptable within mainline Christian traditional beliefs and practices, yet one must conclude that it is these similarities with the position held by some adherents of African traditional religious beliefs that makes SLSW quite popular in the African continent.

Secondly, this study has shown that the preparation for those going out as missionaries should include engagement with how they themselves as missionaries might be influenced by the host culture in which they are living. There is counter-contextualisation that the missionaries go through that reshapes their worldviews both theologically and in terms of their ministry involvement. The experiences of C. Peter Wagner in Latin America (Wagner, 2010); George Otis Jr. among first nation people in America, as well as in India (Otis Jr., 1997); Charles Kraft in Nigeria (Kraft, 1990), all go to show that the views of the missionaries themselves were shaped by their mission-field experience.

Out of these experiences and with some uncertain scriptural references, they developed part of their theology on strategic level spiritual warfare that they were propagating. This affirms that there is a missionary counter-influence of which all who go out as missionaries need to be aware. While one might say that this was good and necessary for the missionaries, yet due to uncritical consumption, they may have incorporated other elements into their teachings which they should not have, as has been seen in this study (Priest, Robert J.; Campbell, Thomas; Mullen, 1995; Acolatse, 2018).

Thirdly, the Pentecostal churches have experienced exponential growth in the Global South as attested to by a number of writers (Cox, 2009; Hollenweger, 2015; Markin, 2019; Synan, 2012). This growth could be attributed to the fact that the Pentecostal message and experience resonates quite closely with the predominant southern worldview. This seems to be quite close to the New Testament worldview where spirits and demons were being expelled as recorded in the Gospels. Churches which are open to the understanding of the spirit world are therefore likely to experience growth, especially in Africa. Scriptural balance is therefore necessary to avoid negative syncretism.

The fourth area is that the teachings on strategic level spiritual warfare have contributed to an awakening for evangelism and mission by raising concerns on why there are areas which are difficult to evangelize and some communities which are fairly locked up in as far as acceptance of the Christian message is concerned. Although some of the anecdotes they used and the explanations they gave have been questioned, yet it still remains that their desire and concerns for all to receive the Word of God was quite clear. It may not necessarily be those spirits, and probably not localized ruling powers in certain regions, which were holding people back from receiving the message of the Gospel; but the emphasis has made the church more aware of its mission mandate.

Fifthly, one would say that it has contributed towards prayer. While Christians have always been praying as advocated in the Bible, there was a heightened volume of prayers that were mobilized for cities, people groups and nations as a result of the teachings by C. Peter Wagner and his compatriots in the spiritual warfare circles. The prayer network initiatives that they started mobilized Christians to pray throughout the whole world. There were prayer conferences, retreats, perambulatory prayers, prayer and fasting and many other models of prayer that many Christians applied themselves to as they were motivated to pray through the teachings that they received (Otis(Jr.), 1999). This was good for both the individual Christians and the church.

The sixth is that through the controversial issues that it has raised, it has made the wider church to examine the subject of contextualization and define where there is continuity and discontinuity so as to avoid syncretism. This study has developed a tool that hopefully will be helpful in the process of critical contextualization in response to these teachings.

The seventh issue is that perhaps through these prayers, communities and regions of the world may have experienced revival or renewal which could have led to community transformation. All these should be acknowledged as positive elements of the teachings on strategic level spiritual warfare.

6.2.2 Some Negative Aspects of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Motif

While many positive developments came out of the emphasis on strategic level spiritual warfare, some issues also raised cautionary concerns. The first is the whole question of the source of Christian doctrine [which](#) was covered in the study as it appeared that the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare had expanded the dimension of where Christian theology could be developed from.

In some cases, the study showed that some of the trends in naming evil spirits and spiritual strongholds in cities were borrowed from Jewish apocrypha or pseudepigraphic literature. While these may be informative readings, it would be unwise to draw doctrinal truths from such and project them as biblical truth since they are not part of the canon of the Christian Scripture. The fictional works of Frank Peretti (Peretti,) which became extremely popular in sections of the Christian church were also used almost like scriptural references. While they made entertaining reading, doctrine should not have been drawn out of them as projected in some of Wagner's writings (Wagner, 1996a).

Other sources which were referenced were interviews of people of other faiths and attempts to experience what they felt while engaging in their non-Christian worship as narrated by George Otis Jr (Otis (Jr.), 1997). In some cases this went to the extent of gaining information from demons which were being cast out without the consideration that demons may be lying (Jacobs, 1991). This could be what the apostle Paul referred to as the "doctrine of demons" (1 Tim.4:1). The danger of being misled is highly probable when the sources used are not only unreliable, but have the potential to mislead.

The second is what appears to be borrowing ideas from other sources. In some cases, ideas which are from a pre-Christian religious context are borrowed and adopted into Christianity. In the African context ancestral honour, or veneration as some would prefer, is easily equated to the saints interceding, to the extent that Jesus is also identified as an ancestor (Bediako, 1995; Reed & Mtukwa, 2010). This could bring confusion among believers as the biblical concept of death indicates that the dead cannot come back and interact with their families after death (Eccl.9:5-6; Job 7:10; Isaiah 8:19). This could make someone susceptible to demonic impersonation that could negatively influence the individual, leading to involvement with the occult. It is important therefore, that in the pursuit of contextualisation, there should be a boundary that would safeguard one's faith.

The third is the possibility of derailing the church from its missions mandate. Wagner and his compatriots have promoted strategic level spiritual warfare as a means of discerning the spiritual rulers in an area through spiritual mapping and then casting them out or forbidding them to operate in that area. As a result of this evangelism and mission work could easily be reduced to a formula which when applied in the right way, different communities would be reached with the gospel. This would then sideline traditional missionary strategies which require missionary training, language learning and cross-cultural orientation (Lowe, 1998; Priest, Robert J.; Campbell, Thomas; Mullen, 1995). Other methods that would need long term investment in community transformation like schools and hospitals would be viewed as too gruelling as an "easier" formula is at hand. When sustained and followed through, this would distract the church from its missionary mandate.

The fourth is the possibility of creating a system that gives Satan the same power as God. The overemphasis that is given to Satan and his activities is likely to create a duotheism or dualistic system where two opposite and equal deities oppose each other (Otis Jr., 1997). Occasionally Satan has the upper hand in the conflict and God is having difficulty reigning in the activities of Satan. This does not capture the biblical view where Satan is presented as subject to God's authority. When sections of the church adopt this view, they get involved in "spiritual warfare" all the time, and it seems they talk more with or to Satan in their prayers more than they talk with God.

The fifth is the possibility of creating fear and despondency among Christians by unhealthy emphasis of the demonic. Esther Acolatse speaks of Ghanaian pastors and see them as practicing pastoral counselling that is an offshoot of African Traditional Religion.

The dominant worldview that underpins Ghanaian pastoralia (sic) assumes that spiritual (and not physical) reality is ultimate and that the universe is filled with malevolent spirits. Following from these assumptions, the purpose of religion becomes spiritual warfare, a struggle to fight off these dangerous spirits. (E. Acolatse, 2014:72).

It is therefore important to strike a balance and not to see evil spirits everywhere. This leads the believers into bondage and fear rather than setting them free.

The study also has pointed to caution that needs to be exercised by African Christian scholars in their endeavour to show the relevance of African Traditional Religion that they do not go the extent that Christianity loses its identity in African Traditional Religion. The realists were helpful in this study in that they showed that while acknowledging the existing worldview, one does not need to embrace it. By exercising critical contextualization, one would be able to avoid causing hybridity in the church.

Due to these potential pitfalls, it is important therefore that caution be exercised when teaching or practicing spiritual warfare, particular in African context where some people would see a number of similarities with the African Traditional Religion which they may have come from.

6.3 Missiological Implications

6.3.1 Neo-Pentecostal Churches

The study acknowledges that the views that the Neo-Pentecostals have espoused resonate fairly well with those of the practitioners of African Traditional Religion (A. H. Anderson, 2018). The belief in the spirit-world that is occupied by demonic forces which can intimidate or even attack believers is common to both Neo-Pentecostals and African traditional religious followers. The way that these powers are handled may differ or be similar in some cases. When ancestral spirits are invoked or when similar methods of exorcism or appeasing the demonic are used, as is found in African Traditional Religion, then critical contextualisation is needed so that elements which are detrimental to the Christian faith are not borrowed into Christianity.

Openness to the supernatural realm is, and engagement with the spiritual powers through prayer may be, one of the contributions to meeting felt needs in the Church in Africa. The wider church may therefore need to engage more with the challenges which the congregants are facing on how to handle hostile spiritual powers which are arrayed against them. This may be a missiological

entry point to communities which are held captive in fear by these powers, for them to see that there is a higher power through God and the Lord Jesus Christ that can overcome these forces.

The question of assigning these spirits to different levels, as has been done by strategic level spiritual warfare proponents, may both be necessary as spirit powers are evicted due to the accomplished work of Christ on the cross (Col.2:14-15), and not necessarily due to the nomenclature that they are given. Since there seems to be confusion encroaching into the church because of these designations, it might be wiser to advocate spiritual warfare without necessarily emphasizing the various levels and terminologies which go with them.

6.3.2 Mainline Churches

While holding to positions that give the Bible a high view, a number of mainline churches, especially in the West, have continued to experience decline (Sookhdeo, 2017). While one may attribute this to many reasons, one obvious one seems to be disengagement from acknowledging the supernatural (E. E. Acolatse, 2018; A. F. Walls, 2017). People are not able to encounter the reality of God in the church and as such have become disillusioned with a faith that does not meet their felt needs.

Lessons drawn from this study would encourage the mainline churches to create avenues where there is ministry through prayer to individuals where they can encounter the reality of God through supernatural intervention. This may also include exorcism of evil spirits from individuals who might be in bondage.

6.3.3 Evangelism and Missionary Work

6.3.3.1 Prayer and Revival

There is strong evidence from the study that a lot of prayers have been mobilized across the world as a result of the emphasis on spiritual warfare. Through the prayer networks that he initiated and some that came out of the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Manila in 1989, Wagner has mobilized prayers through seminars, conferences, newsletters and literature. His influence has been enormous in the Global South (Wagner, 1992, 1996a, 2011b). Similarly, Jacobs (Jacobs, 1991), Dawson (Dawson, 2001) and Otis Jr. (Otis(Jr.), 1999) have contributed in a great way to prayer mobilization. While they attribute some of the transformation successes which they have

seen or experienced to spiritual warfare, similarly results have previously been observed in revival times when God intervened in a community as a result of prayers (Osborn, 2000).

What this points out in the areas of evangelism and missionary work is the necessity to mobilize informed prayers which are targeting certain communities or cities and that this would probably produces positive responses to the message of the gospel either in the present or in the future. The role of prayers therefore, in initiating revival and bringing about community transformation, should be emphasized in both missionary training and work. Further engagement on the efficacy of prayer in evangelism is beyond the scope of this study, but an area which would be worth researching.

6.3.3.2 The Supernatural World and the Spirit World

The proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare believe in a spiritual realm where there are both benevolent and malevolent beings whose activities occasionally invade the natural realm. As John Milton poetically put it “Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth; unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep” (Milton, 1968:IV, 135). This worldview which is open to the supernatural is important as it reflects a similar worldview as the Bible and also that which is found in the African traditional context. As Esther Acolatse so ably argues, there is a necessity for being open to this worldview in the context of ministry in Africa, as failure to address the issues touching on the spirit world in the church, encourages people to seek for help from the witchdoctors and spirit mediums (E. E. Acolatse, 2018). This finally leads them into the occult.

The emphasis that the proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare have given has assisted in the recovery of the African worldview of the spirit world for the church. This may be the reason why the Pentecostal movement may be thriving within the African context since it espouses the supernatural worldview and promises divine intervention on matters facing individual Christians (Cox, 2009). The emphasis that the Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals have given to the manifestations of the Gifts of the Spirit is critical for a rapidly growing church in Africa. While sections of Christian writers like Benjamin Warfield (Warfield, 1918). and John F. MacArthur (MacArthur & MacArthur, 1993) are of the opinion that the Gifts of the Spirit have ceased from operating in the church in modern days, both experiential and biblical evidence shows otherwise as seen in Wimber (Wimber & Springer, 2009) and 1 Cor. 12 and 14.

God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit operate in this spiritual domain. But in this spiritual domain there are also angels, Satan and demons. Sometimes others have used scientific arguments to dismiss the existence of this spiritual world as they hold to a naturalistic worldview. Among such groups we would find existentialists like Bultmann (Bultmann, 1985). Perhaps these kinds of arguments led the Pentecostal scholar, Amos Yong, to develop an “emergentist” scientific model that is comparable to psychoanalysis, as reported by Acolatse as well; hopefully that would bring the manifestations of the Holy Spirit into the scientific discourse. Historical evidence has also shown that both in the early church (Twelftree, 2007) and the Patristic Era (A. F. Walls, 2017), the believers were open to the world of the spirit and were engaged in exorcism among other supernatural occurrences.

While the wider church may have downplayed or even lost this emphasis along the way, the Pentecostals, the charismatics and the Neo-Pentecostals have restored it to the church. The cross-pollination with African traditional beliefs and practices that seems to have taken place among those who propagate strategic level spiritual warfare seems to affirm that certain elements resonate with African Christians. That may be the reason why the concepts are spreading rather widely in the continent of Africa.

6.3.3.3 Continuity and Discontinuity in Balance

The discourse on continuity and discontinuity has brought out the differences of views among some of the African theologians. While John S Mbiti (Mbiti, 1990), E. Bolaji Idowu (Idowu, 1975) and Kwesi Dickson (Dickson, 1979, 1984) argue for complete continuity, Lamin Sanneh (Sanneh, 1997) in what he called “translatability” affirmed partial foundation continuity, which is similar to the position taken by Kwame Bediako (Bediako, 1992, 1995). In their view, African Traditional Religion has laid grounds for Christianity to thrive. While acknowledging that the belief in a Supreme Being is helpful in introducing Christianity, yet there is a need to identify the Creator God with his unique and divine attributes even where people acknowledge a Sovereign God. In the end a shift from theocentric to Christocentric faith is paramount so that people can engage with Christ.

Esther Acolatse (E. E. Acolatse, 2018) and Philip Steyne (Steyne, 1999) are for selective continuity, depending on specific items within African traditional belief. Leonard Nyirongo (Nyirongo, 2018) and Byang Kato (Kato, 1975) totally reject any possibility of continuity. This gives four different positions among the African theologians.

The dimensions that Anderson (A. H. Anderson, 2018) adds to this discursus highlights the fact that it is possible to hold both continuity and discontinuity in tension. In this case one would believe that there are spirit beings which are operational, and which would cause harm to individuals which reflects continuity, and yet at the same time someone might be involved in rejecting and casting them out, which is discontinuity. In this case both continuity and discontinuity are held in tension at the same time. This is common among African Instituted Churches (A. H. Anderson, 2018). The proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare seem to span this spectrum of belief as some of them directly borrow African traditional concepts, while at the same time they also invoke the spiritual warfare motif.

When critical contextualisation (P. G. Hiebert, 1994) is conducted with the Bible as the basis used in checking on the truth as opposed to culture, one would end up with the selective continuity / discontinuity dimension as there are some things that the biblical position will prohibit from taking place and others that it would allow. This would prevent negative elements of the culture from infiltrating Christianity and at the same time, the positive helpful ones would continue. The conflict is not experienced but resolved as a result of this.

6.4 The Biblical Mandate in the Warfare Dialogue

The various views presented all claim to base their positions on the Bible, leading to an understanding that biblical interpretation is quite determinant of the theological position that one would hold. A few, like Idowu, do not make reference to the Bible very much in [their](#) arguments and come out more as a defenders of African Traditional Religion rather than a Christian minister (Idowu, 1975). The same would apply for Knitter who seems to advocate pluralism rather than the uniqueness of the Biblical faith (Knitter, 1985).

It is therefore important to interrogate what the Bible says about the spirit-world, the life after death, the ancestors, communication with the dead, Satan and demons, witchcraft, the cross of Jesus Christ and its relationship to Satan, spiritual warfare and the supernatural. For a Christian, it is paramount that one's views be aligned with the biblical text. Randolph Richards and Brandon O'Brien argue that a lot of times individuals misread the Bible because of their "cultural blinders" (Richards & O'Brien, 2012). This means that one reads into the Bible what their cultural worldview imprints upon their mind, rather than what the biblical text and context mean.

The Bible presents Satan as being active in human affairs since the beginning of the world (Gen.3). As one reflects on the origin of Satan and demonic forces, one is confronted by the assertion recorded in Colossians 1:16 “for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him.” This implies that there is nothing that is self-existent, but God created everything including “invisible” things, “whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers.” This would include angels and Satan as well.

The Bible presents Satan as having a kingdom (Matt. 12:24-26) which holds people captive from which they have to [be](#) rescued by the Lord Jesus Christ (Col.1:13). In this kingdom he is engaged in opposing the plans of God and is referred to as the “adversary” (1 Pet.5:8-9). This means he stands in opposition against the plans of God. He is referred to by other names which have negative connotations: slanderer or accuser of believers (Rev.12:10), the father of lies (Jn 8:44), a murderer (Jn 8: 44), the dragon (Rev 12:3), the power of darkness (Col 1:13), the serpent of old (Rev 12:9), the Prince of this world (Jn 12:31), the Prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2), the wicked one (Mt 13:19), the evil one (Eph 6:16) and the god of this world (2 Cor 4.4). These titles also indicate some of the activities that Satan is engaged in.

The Bible also presents Satan as an enemy who has been rendered powerless through the death of Jesus Christ and as such does not have final dominion over the people of God. Col.2:13 indicates that Satan was disarmed by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. The Bible declares that those who have Christ Jesus in them have a greater one residing in them than the one who is in the world- Satan (1 John.4:4). In Luke 10:17-19 ~~t.~~ The seventy disciples that Jesus had sent out returned with the testimony that even the demons were subject to them in the name of Jesus. In his response to them, Jesus indicated that he had given them authority “over serpents and scorpions” figuratively speaking of the demons as such. The Christian believers are therefore engaged in spiritual warfare from the position that they have been given victory, based on the accomplished work of Christ.

The Bible also indicates that the enemies that the Christians are fighting are not flesh and blood, but principalities:

For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12).

Structuralists like Walter Wink (Wink, 1984, 1993, 2017) and Leslie Newbigin (Newbigin, 1989), would view these as governance and structural powers which may be behind the thrones and may be hindering the progress of the Christian faith. While Wink has done a commendable work in the etymology of powers and authority (Wink, 1984), his position of not recognizing the powers and principalities as living created and independent malevolent beings weakens his arguments. The “forces of evil” that Paul invites the believers to engage with in spiritual warfare are demonic beings as he earlier pointed out in the Ephesian chapter (Eph.6:11). An examination of the context of Ephesus where there was not only idolatry, but witchcraft as well (Acts 19:11-20) is helpful giving a hint what Paul might have had in mind.

These powers are also not presented as different divinities and gods whose characteristics can be either evil or good, as some African theologians have asserted (Idowu, 1973; Mbiti, 2015). Neither are they the spirits of the ancestors as indicated by other African scholars (Bediako, 2014). The Bible seems categorically to prohibit any contact with the dead as this was considered a reflection of some of the Ancient Near Eastern religious traditions which were viewed as deceptive and contrary to the direction to which God was leading them (Deut.18:9-13; Lev. 20:27; Job 7:7-10). Those, therefore, whether as individuals or through mediums, who attempt to engage with the dead are likely to come under the influence of demonic deception.

These activities sometimes come out fear of a possible retaliation by the spirits of the ancestors if they are not properly acknowledged and accommodated. But proper faith in Christ should dispel such fears so that people would consult with the Word of God rather than with the spirit mediums (Isa. 8:19-20). In the dialogue with strategic level spiritual warfare, it is imperative that proper critical contextualisation is exercised so that elements that would be viewed as bordering on occultic practices are not amalgamated into the Christian faith.

6.5 Recommendations for Further Reflections

Several points came out of this study that require further research and investigation. The study has pointed out that one of the causes of hybridity could be the disaffection with a powerless Christianity that does not meet with mystical power needs. This can lead people to turn back to their African Traditional Religion. So more thorough research could be done on the causes and cures of hybridity or dualism in the Church in Africa. Other factors may also be contributing to nominalism.

The second area that could be a part of future research is to investigate the reason why there is a resurgence of African Traditional Religion in the continent of Africa today, appealing to the educated and even some clergy. While some had thought that both education and Christianity would eliminate African Traditional Religion, this does not seem to be the case. Through cultural practices like visits to the shrines, eldership, marriages, naming babies and even funerals, what was once considered to be waning has made an incursion that is even a challenge to Christianity in some areas. Research would be worthwhile trying to find out the reason.

Both Acolatse (E. Acolatse, 2014) and Yong (Yong, 2011) raise the issue of psychic powers and how their practice may validate the demonic sphere or the world of the spirit. This is an area that would require further studies to see whether there is any connection between the spirit world and the psychic world. This could be another area where research can be conducted.

The reason why the proponents of strategic spiritual warfare went out to engage in spiritual warfare is because they believed that such prayers would dismantle the strongholds of the enemies and people would get access to the Gospel. This study has shown that it may not have been the spiritual mapping and the strategic spiritual warfare that produced the results but that this may just have been the result of concerted prayers. Further study on the efficacy of prayers for the purpose of evangelism would be worthwhile especially by looking at what many of the evangelistic teams have done and the results they were able to obtain.

6.6 Conclusion

In examining the dialogue between strategic level spiritual warfare and African Traditional Religion, the study has discussed points where there is conflict and other areas where there is embrace. There are several cases where there are benefits to the mission cause, but other areas where the emphasis on strategic level spiritual warfare would pose a danger to the church. The recommendation that has come out is for proper critical contextualisation, which is biblically based, to be conducted, and this would determine what to reject, redeem or retain. This would guide in where there should be continuity and where there should be discontinuity.

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ADDENDUM A:

Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization: A Working Group Report

The Intercession Working Group (IWG) of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization met at Fairmile Court in London July 10-14, 1993. We discussed for one full day the subject of spiritual warfare. It had been noted at our IWG Prayer Leaders' Retreat at The Cove in North Carolina, USA, the previous November, that spiritual warfare was a subject of some concern in the evangelical world. The IWG asked its members to write papers reflecting on this emphasis in each of their regions and these papers formed the basis of our discussion.

We affirmed again statement 12 on "Spiritual Conflict" in The Lausanne Covenant:

"We believe that we are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers of evil who are seeking to overthrow the church and frustrate its task of evangelization.

"We know our need to equip ourselves with God's armour and to fight this battle with the spiritual weapons of truth and prayer. For we detect the activity of our enemy, not only in false ideologies outside the church, but also inside it in false gospels which twist Scripture and put man in the place of God.

We need both watchfulness and discernment to safeguard the biblical gospel. We acknowledge that we ourselves are not immune to worldliness of thought and actions, that is, to surrender to secularism..."

We agreed that evangelization is to bring people from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:17). This involves an inescapable element of spiritual warfare.

We asked ourselves why there had been almost an explosion of interest in this subject in the last 10 years. We noted that the Western church and the missionary movement from the West had seen the remarkable expansion of the church in other areas of the world without special emphasis being given to the subject of spiritual warfare.

Our members from Africa and Asia reminded us that in their context, the powers of darkness are very real and spiritual warfare is where they live all the time. Their families are still only one or two generations removed from a spiritist, animist or occult heritage.

This led to a discussion of the effects of one generation on another. We noted that in the context of idolatry, the Bible speaks of the sins of the fathers being visited upon their descendants to the third and fourth generation.

Likewise, the blessing of God's love is shown to successive generations of those who love him and keep his laws. We wondered if the time we have had the gospel in the West has made us less conscious of the powers of darkness in recent centuries.

We noted, also that the influence of the enlightenment in our education, which traces everything to natural causes, has further dulled our consciousness of the powers of darkness.

In recent times, however, several things have changed:

Change in Initiatives: The initiative in evangelization is passing to churches in the developing world, and as people from the same background evangelize their own people, dealing with the powers of darkness has become a natural way of thinking and working. This is especially true of the rapidly growing Pentecostal churches. This has begun to influence all missiological thinking.

Increased Interest in Eastern Religions: The spiritual bankruptcy of the West has opened up great interest in Eastern religions and drug cultures and brought a resurgence of the occult in the West.

Influx of Non-Christian Worldview: The massive migrations of peoples from the Third World to the West has brought a torrent of non-Christian worldviews and practices into our midst. Increasing mobility has also exposed developing countries to new fringe groups, cults and freemasonry.

Sensationalisation of the Occult: The secular media has sensationalized and spread interest in these occult ideas and practices. This was marked by the screening of the film "The Exorcist." In the Christian world the books by Frank Perretti and the spate of "How to..." books on power evangelism and spiritual warfare have reflected a similar trend.

Lausanne's Involvement in the Process: We in Lausanne have been part of the process, especially in the track on spiritual warfare at Lausanne II in Manila and in the continuing life of that track under the aegis of the AD2000 and Beyond movement.

We recognize that this emphasis will be with us for the foreseeable future. Our concerns are:

- To help our Lausanne constituency to stay firmly within the balanced biblical teaching on prayer.
- To provide clarity, reassurance and encouragement to those whom the emphasis is causing confusion and anxiety.

- To harness what is biblical, Christ-exalting and culturally relevant in the new emphasis to the work of evangelization so that it yield lasting fruit.

We noted the following dangers and their antidotes:

Reverting to Pagan Worldviews: There is a danger that we revert to think and operate on pagan worldviews or on an undiscerning application of Old Testament analogies that were, in fact, superseded in Jesus Christ. The antidote to this is the rigorous study of the whole of Scripture, always interpreting the Old Testament in the light of the New.

A Preoccupation with the Demonic: This can lead to avoiding personal responsibility for our actions. This is countered by equal emphasis on “the world” and “the flesh” and the strong ethical teachings of the Bible.

A Preoccupation with the Powers of Darkness: This can exalt Satan and diminish Jesus in the focus of his people. This is cured by encouraging a Christ-centered and not an experience-centered spirituality or methodology.

The Tendency to Shift the Emphasis to “Power” and Away From “Truth”: This tendency forgets that error, ignorance and deception can only be countered by biblical truth clearly and consistently taught. This is equally, if not more important, than tackling bondage and possession by “power encounters.”

It is also the truth that sets us free, so the Word and the Spirit need to be kept in balance.

Emphasis on Technique and Methodology: We observed the tendency to emphasize technique and methodology in the practice of spiritual warfare and fear that when this is dominant it can become a substitute for the pursuit of holiness and even of evangelism itself. To combat this there is no substitute for a continuous, strong, balanced and Spirit-guided teaching ministry in each church.

Growing Disillusionment: We had reports of growing disillusionment with the results of spiritual warfare in unrealized expectations, unmet predictions and the sense of being marginalized if the language and practice of spiritual warfare is not adopted and just general discomfort with too much triumphalist talk. The antidote to all of this is a return to the whole teaching of Jesus on prayer, especially what he says about praying in secret that avoids ostentation.

Encountering the Powers of Darkness by the Peoples Themselves: While recognizing that someone initially has to go to a people to introduce the gospel, we felt it was necessary always for

the encounter with the powers of darkness to be undertaken by Christian people within the culture and in a way that is sensitive in applying biblical truth to their context.

Caution Regarding Territorial Spirits Concept: We are cautious about the way in which the concept of territorial spirits is being used and look to our biblical scholars to shed more light on this recent development.

Warfare Language Can Lead to Adversarial Attitudes: We heard with concern of situations where warfare language was pushing Christians into adversarial attitudes with people and where people of other faiths were interpreting this as the language of violence and political involvement.

We saw that the language of peace, penitence and reconciliation must be as prominent in our speech and practice as any talk of warfare.

We are concerned that the subject and practice of spiritual warfare is proving divisive to evangelical Christians and pray that these thoughts of ours will help to combat this tendency. It is our deep prayer that the force for evangelization should not be fragmented and that our love should be strong enough to overcome these incipient divisions among us.

In his cross and resurrection, Jesus triumphed over all the powers of darkness; believers share in that triumph. We would like to see evidence of this in our unity in prayer.

<https://lausanne.org/content/statement/statement-on-spiritual-warfare-1993> : (Accessed on 24th September, 2024)