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Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and Mission in Africa

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THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH throughout the ages has found itself involved in a spiritual struggle against sin, evil and injustice, both at an individual level and with respect to the structures and forces in human society. These evil forces are identified as Satan and his demons who are portrayed as the causative agents of all kinds of evils.¹ The New Testament portrays Christ as victorious over Satan and his evil forces in an epochal battle in which he bound the strongman Satan and took over his possessions.² Now as the

exalted Lord at God's right hand Christ reigns as cosmic Lord until all his enemies, including death itself, are defeated and the kingdom will be handed over to God.³ Nevertheless, the climax of Christ's victory over the powers of darkness at his first coming did not as yet constitute their total annihilation and disempowerment: Until the final resolution of the problem of evil, at Christ's second coming, the church exists in between these two episodes in the eschatological warfare as described in Holy Scripture. On the one hand we enjoy the benefits and advantage of Christ's defeat of the enemy at the cross (Rom. 8:37), yet on the other hand the church as the body of Christ is involved with him in wrestling against Satan and his destructive forces on earth (Eph. 6:10ff).

The church thus finds itself involved in a spiritual battle. The church is on the defence in resisting evil in the human soul, the community of faith and in the world at large as the

1 J.Verkuyl, *De Boodschap der Bevrijding* in *Onze Tijd* (Kampen: Kok, 1970) 50.

2 All the synoptics include the parable of the burglary of a strong man's house, making the point that Jesus is the one tying up the strong man, Satan, ransacking his possessions. D.Powlison, *Power Encounters, Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 130; M.R.Taylor, *Do demons rule your town?* (London: Grace Publications, 1993), 49ff; D.Wenham, *Paul, Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. Wenham 1995), 42.

3 T.Longman & D.Reid, *God is a Warrior: Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 136-137.

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salt of the earth opposing sin, evil and decay. The church is also part of Christ's offence against the powers of darkness by proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God in word and deed, empowered by the Spirit of the conquering Messiah. In fact, every act of faith and obedience to God, every act of love and kindness is a foretaste to all of creation of the liberation that is yet to come (Rom.8:19-23) and a reminder to Satan and his demons that their end is near. As God's workmanship (Eph.2:10) and his family members we share with Christ in his victory, but also in his suffering, knowing that the present sufferings are not worth comparing with the future glory that will be revealed in us at the consummation (Rom 8:12-18). Consequently, the church by her very existence, in word and in deed, testifies to the manifold wisdom of God to all the spiritual powers in the heavenly realms (Eph.3:10).

Notwithstanding Berkhof's and Barth's theology of the powers as impersonal forces, the church throughout history has always understood these powers as personal spirit beings.⁴ The church throughout the ages has been involved in fighting sin, evil and injustice and so doing battle against the influence of the demonic forces under Satan's command which are at work in human society and blind and mislead the minds of people (Eph. 2:1-2). While the Bible does not deny

human responsibility for promoting false beliefs and ideologies which in turn may inspire oppressive systems, dehumanizing structures and violence, Scripture affirms that behind the human agents, there are evil spirit beings who inspire them. In the midst of opposition and persecution at the hands of political and religious forces the apostle Paul recognizes that the struggle is not against the human agent but rather against evil spiritual powers that inspired and influenced them.⁵ In Ephesians 6:10-18 the apostle Paul points out that behind the visible sins, evils and oppressive structures in society demonic spirits dominate the structures of a sinful world.⁶ Our fellow human beings are not our enemies, even if they are misled, misguided and blinded by Satan, they are to be the object of our love and concern since they are in need of liberation. This is why Christ calls us to love our enemies. However, love for our human enemies does not include condoning the sin and evil they commit and promote, neither on an individual or societal level. It is part and parcel of the life and ministry of the Christian church to resist the devil and his evil schemes by standing firm in faith, righteousness, humility and godliness (Eph.6:10ff; 1 Peter 5:18). This ministry involves unmasking sin for what it really is (Eph.5:8ff) and a refusal to conform to the evil structures of the

4 M.Barth, *The Broken Wall: a Study of the Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Collins, 1960) and H.Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, translated from the Dutch original by John H. Yoder (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald, 1962).

5 F.F.Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the free Spirit* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1977), 422 and J.Stott, *God's new society: The message of Ephesians*, (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1979), 272.

6 Longman & Reid, *God is a Warrior*, 141-142 and Verkuyll, *De Boodschap*, 50.

world (Rom.12:1ff), choosing to be led by the Spirit of love rather than yielding to sin (Gal. 5:16ff).

The weapons in this war are not worldly but spiritual, yet not necessarily otherworldly; instead they are part and parcel of 'down to earth' Christian living: The weapons of this warfare are the proclamation and the putting into practice of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God in everyday acts of goodness and righteousness, even in the face of temptation and adversity (Eph.6: 17-20; 1 Peter 2:11ff; 3:8ff). It involves repaying evil with good, insults with blessing and hatred with love, even loving our enemies (Matt.5:43-47). Spiritual warfare in Paul's mind also involved demolishing any arguments and ideologies that set themselves up against the knowledge of God in the light of Christ and the salvation he provides (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

Spiritual warfare in church history has often taken different forms. At times the emphasis was on exorcism and the sanctification of the individual soul.⁷ After the example of Christ who, demonstrating the power of the coming kingdom of God, cast out demons from individuals during his life and ministry on earth, so the apostolic church involved themselves with the casting out of demons from those afflicted by them.⁸ At other times the emphasis on

spiritual warfare was in polemics and apologetics.⁹

Unfortunately the church also at times became captive to the powers and conformed to the sinful patterns of this world instead of resisting them. For example, in the third and fourth century AD, part of the church bought into the dualism and excessive speculations concerning the nomenclature of angels and demons in Manicheism, Gnosticism and other peripheral movements which had more in common with Zoroastrianism than with biblical teaching on these matters.¹⁰ Spiritual warfare in this context became almost totally an otherworldly affair, with its focus on angelic beings, demons, secret names and knowledge, with little or no bearing on day to day realities people faced in the world.¹¹ Mysticism of any kind often constitutes a denial or refuge from the realities on the ground and it is probably not accidental that these movements flourished in a politically turbulent era.

The church in Europe during the Medieval period, unfortunately, participated in violent crusades against Muslims and those perceived as heretics.

7 J.Stevenson, *Creeds, Councils and Controversies; Documents illustrating the history of the Church, AD 337-461*, revised by W.H.C. Frend (London: SPCK, 1987), 200 and J.B.Lightfoot & J.R.Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers*, revised by Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 417.

8 E.Arnold, *The Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 40.

9 F.X.Gokey, *The Terminology for the Devil and Evil Spirits in the Apostolic Fathers* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1961), 71 and Stevenson, *Creeds*, 63.

10 R.P.H.Greenfield, *Traditions of Belief in Late Byzantine Demonology* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1988), 234, 312 and P.Hiebert, 'Spiritual Warfare and Worldview' in *Evangelical Review of Theology*, (24 No. 3, July, 2000), 248.

11 See *The Gnostic Works: Hypostasis of the Archons* (II,4); *On the Origin of the World* (II,5 and XIII,2); *The Testimony of Truth*. J.M.Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library* (New York: HarperCollins, 1988), 160-189.

Having become captive to the political ideologies of the day, the church collaborated with the evil powers, rather than resisting them in the light of scriptural teaching on spiritual warfare.¹² After the Reformation the spiritual warfare emphasis within mainline evangelicalism has been predominantly on keeping one's soul holy by resisting sin and worldly temptations. Later in the 20th century, especially within ecumenical circles linked to the World Council of Churches, the emphasis has been on unmasking and resisting the oppressive political and socio-economic powers in society.¹³ The turbulent 20th century also saw the birth and expansive growth of the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal movements with a strong emphasis on supernatural experiences in the believer's life and Christian ministry. The resulting revival of mysticism within Evangelicalism in combination with the influence of dispensationalist eschatology led to a gradual shift in spiritual warfare, from primarily resisting sin and temptation, to the 'binding' of demonic influence and the exorcism of sin-promoting demons from individuals.¹⁴

In the context of Christian mission, charismatic evangelical missiologists, C. Peter Wagner, Charles H. Kraft,

George Otis Jr. and others concluded by the late 1980s that if demons are able to hold individuals in bondage, they must also be able to hold people groups and territories in spiritual bondage which explains why church growth and evangelism is more successful in the one region as opposed to another.¹⁵ The obvious solution from their perspective would be to exorcise such territorial demons.¹⁶ This form of spiritual warfare has been labelled strategic level spiritual warfare (SLSW) and involves practices such as spiritual mapping, identificational repentance and warfare prayer against territorial demons.¹⁷

Spiritual mapping is the term used

15 B.A. Mostert, 'An urban mission strategy for reaching entire cities with the gospel. A critical evaluation of the prayer evangelism strategy of Ed Silvano': Thesis submitted as part of the requirements of a DDiv (Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 2001), 48 and E. Van der Meer, 'Mission and Spiritual mapping in Africa': Mini dissertation submitted as part of the requirements of a MTh in Missiology (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2001), 2 and C.P. Wagner, 'Territorial Spirits' in C. Peter Wagner and F.D. Pennoyer (Eds) *Wrestling with Dark Angels: Towards a Deeper Understanding of the Supernatural Forces in Spiritual Warfare* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1990), 70.

16 C.E. Arnold, 'What About Territorial Spirits?' *Discipleship Journal* (81: May/June 47, 1991) and C.P. Wagner, *Warfare Prayer: How to seek God's power and protection in the battle to build His kingdom* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1992), 84.

17 Charles Harris, *Encountering Territorial Spirits*, downloaded on 2001-4-29 from website: <http://www.discernment-ministries.com/Articles/NovDec99.htm>, 1999 and C. Lowe, *Territorial Spirits and World Evangelization* (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK.: Christian Focus, 1998) 11, 16.

12 E. Van der Meer, 'Reflections on Spiritual Mapping' in *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, (20 (1), 2001), 54.

13 Barth, *Broken Wall*, 81 and Berkhof, *Christ*, 41 and Verkuyl, *De Kern*, 268.

14 Brian M. Chapman, *Seeing the Unseen: A look at Spiritual Mapping and Territorial spirits*, downloaded on 2000-4-28 from website: <http://www.missionreview.com/index.asp?id=4281>, 2001 and der Meer, 'Reflections', 58-63.

for the kind of 'spiritual' research based on a territory's religious environment, culture, folklore, history, as well as socio-economic and political factors. This kind of research, combined with direct charismatic inspiration, enables the prayer warriors to 'map' the strategies of Satan and his territorial demons over given locations by discerning their names and what past or present sins and evils they use to keep people in bondage.¹⁸ The next step is to identify with the sins, atrocities or other evils committed in the territory and repent of these on behalf of the past and present perpetrators in order to cancel the perceived legal rights the territorial demons may have gained through these so-called demonic entrances, to influence and blind people to the gospel.¹⁹ The last step is aggressive warfare prayer, also called militant intercession, in order to bind the territorial demons, also called demonic strongmen, which is supposedly more effective when they are addressed by their proper name.²⁰

Aggressive warfare prayer may temporarily loosen the hold of territorial spirits over the people in a territory who may then come to Christ more freely.²¹

The successful marketing of SLSW within the context of missions as a new and more effective strategy in the form of best-selling novels,²² popular 'how-to' books and videos²³ has raised concern within the global missiological community, especially among conservative Evangelical missiologists. Initially the proponents of SLSW found a useful vehicle for the promotion of their ideas within the AD2000 and Beyond movement, a movement linked to the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, one of the major ecumenical vehicles of Evangelicals world-wide.²⁴ Chief SLSW proponent C. Peter Wagner coordinated the so-called Prayer-Track of the AD2000 and Beyond movement which gave him and others a strategic platform to influence

18 Arnold, 'What About', 47 and A.Scott Moreau, *Gaining Perspective on Territorial Spirits*, downloaded on 2000-3-21 from website: <http://www.gospelcom.net/lcwe/dufe/Papers/terspir.htm> and K.Sjöberg, 'Spiritual Mapping for Prophetic Prayer Actions' in C.P.Wagner (ed) *Breaking Strongholds in your City* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1993), 108.

19 C.Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1991), 235-238; 243.

20 Lowe, *Territorial*, 23-24 and Mostert, 'Urban mission', 188 and M.R.Taylor, *Do demons rule your town?* (London: Grace Publications, 1993), 49 and C.P.Wagner, 'Territorial Spirits and World Missions', *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (25: no.3, July, 1989), 282 and Wagner, 'Spiritual', 3-27.

21 Taylor, *Do demons*, 91 and Wagner, 'Spiritual', 15-16.

22 See the best-selling novels by Frank Peretti, *This Present Darkness* (1986), and *Piercing the Darkness* (1989).

23 The writings by the chief proponent of SLSW, missiologist C. Peter Wagner are all written in this style. This is also the case in the writings by other prominent SLSW writers, Cindy Jacobs, George Otis and most others.

24 AD2000. Mobilizing Global Prayer for Evangelism, downloaded on 2000-7-11 from website: <http://www.ad2000.org/gcove95/prayer.html> and G.Van Rheenen, 'Modern and Postmodern Syncretism in Theology and Missions' in C. Douglas McConnell (ed), *The Holy Spirit and Mission Dynamics* (Evangelical Missiological Society Series, Pasadena, CA: Carey, 1997), 169.

millions of Christian intercessors worldwide with the new spiritual warfare theology.²⁵ However, a few years later the Intercession Working Group (IWG) of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE) met in London to discuss the subject of spiritual warfare and issued several warnings. The working group warned against the current pre-occupation in Evangelicalism with the demonic and the powers of darkness, the danger of reverting to pagan worldviews, the promotion of mechanistic spiritual warfare 'technologies' as well as the danger of being insensitive in dealing with other cultures (IWG 1993). The working group pointed out that from a biblical perspective the issue in spiritual warfare is not so much the issue of power, but rather the issue of truth versus falsehood. In spite of these warnings SLSW gained more and more momentum in the western world and was exported to all continents around the globe, gaining popularity in South America²⁶ and increasingly in Africa in the context of AD 2000 related prayer movements.²⁷

25 D.Greenlee, 'Territorial Spirits Reconsidered', *Missiology: An International Review* XXII (no.4, October, 1997), 507.

26 H.Caballeros, 'Defeating the Enemy with the Help of Spiritual Mapping' in Wagner, *Breaking*, 123 and Lowe, *Territorial*, 114 and E.Silvoso, 'Prayer Power in Argentina' in Wagner, *Engaging*, 109-115 and C.P.Wagner, *Lighting the World* (Ventura: Regal, 1992), 136-137.

27 NUPSA 2000. Network for United Prayer in South Africa, downloaded on 2000-5-8 from website: [Http://www.nupsa.org.za](http://www.nupsa.org.za) and A.S. Gaines, 'The Apology That Shook a Continent' in *Charisma Magazine* (March 2000), 77-88

Examples of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare in Africa

The new spiritual warfare theology is fast spreading throughout Africa, especially within evangelical churches with a (neo-) Pentecostal dispensation. The following examples demonstrate how widespread the movement is.

In East Africa we meet Pastor Thomas Meethu of the Kenya Prayer Cave. In 1988, he and his wife, Margaret, felt called by God to move to Kiambu, 'a notorious, violence-ridden suburb of Nairobi' and a 'ministry graveyard' for churches for years. They began six months of fervent prayer and research and discovered that the demonic principality over Kiambu was 'Witchcraft', and that its chief human channel was a spiritual healer called 'Momma Jane'. After months of prayer, Muthee held a crusade that 'brought about 200 people to Christ'. Their church in the basement of a grocery store was dubbed 'The Prayer Cave,' as members set up round-the-clock intercession. Mama Jane counterattacked, he says, but eventually 'the demonic influence—the 'principality' over Kiambu—was believed to be broken', and the traditional healer left town. According to Muthee, the atmosphere in Kiambu changed dramatically: bars closed, the crime rate dropped, people began to move to the area, and the economy took an upturn. The church now has 5,000 members, he says, and

and B.Trinidad, *Spiritual Mapping and Warfare Praying as Catalysts for Church Growth*, downloaded on 2000-3-12 from website: [Http://cma-world.com/spirwar.htm](http://cma-world.com/spirwar.htm).

400 members meet to pray daily at 6 am.²⁸

In West Africa, recently a group of African intercessors, and representatives from the United States and the Caribbean, gathered at Ouidah, Benin on the invitation of President Mathieu Kérékou to witness his national apology for his ancestors' role in the capturing and selling of other Africans into slavery. They also sought to break the curses which were proclaimed by the slaves, and allegedly, at least partly, contributed to the unnatural poverty of Ghana and other African nations.²⁹ The intercessors believe that the evils of slavery still have a spiritual effect on the descendants of the slaves in the Caribbean and Americas, as well as in the continent of Africa. Prayer, identificational repentance and proclaiming release in the spiritual realm, are the weapons by which the intercessors for Africa seek to undo the effects of the slave trade.³⁰ Also in West Africa, a missionary in Mali, using SLSW techniques, concluded that there are at least 5 demonic strongholds to be engaged in SLSW: pride, mammon, Islam, disunity, and a territorial spirit

with as symbol three crocodiles.³¹

In Southern Africa a group of SLSW intercessors spent tens of thousands of South African Rands in 1999 on a prayer journey through Africa, from the southernmost tip of Africa to the Middle East. They sought to create a spiritual corridor, a spiritual highway through Africa. Believing that the spiritual foundations in Africa are witchcraft and idolatry, they sought to deal with these foundations of sin in the continent. A main component of the prayer team were Bushmen Christians, who were going to deal with the sins of their ancestors at the various Bushmen shrines on the continent.³² In 2000, NUPSA,³³ an AD 2000 and Beyond movement, related spiritual warfare organization in South Africa and called for a 40 day fast from 01 November to 10 December 2000. Their aim was to address Africa's problems with SLSW: 'We as a continent will have to engage in serious intercession, fasting and spiritual warfare.' The major issues in the continent can be properly addressed only if, 'through united, aggressive, focused, believing intercession, fasting and spiritual warfare', we confront the principalities and powers that are affecting the

28 Christian Science Monitor: Targeting cities with 'spiritual mapping,' originally published on 1999-9-23. Downloaded on 2000-8-18 from website: <http://www.csmonitor.com/durable/1999/09/23/p15s1.htm> and G.Otis, *Transformations, A Video Documentary* (Sentinel Group, 1999) available through YWAM via website: <http://www.ywam.org> and C.P.Wagner, *Praying with Power; How to pray effectively and hear clearly from God*. (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1997), 86.

29 Gaines, 'The Apology', 77-80.

30 Nwankpa in Gaines, 'The Apology', 84.

31 Trinidad, *Spiritual*.

32 NUPSA 2000a. Highway Through Africa, downloaded on 2000-5-8 from website: <http://www.nupsa.org.za/highway.htm>.

33 NUPSA stands for Network for United Prayer in South Africa and is linked to the AD 2000 and beyond movement and is currently led by Bennie Mostert who wrote his doctoral thesis in 1997 (University of Pretoria) about the prayer evangelism strategy of South American evangelist Edgar Silvosio who makes extensive use of SLSW.

entire continent.³⁴ The NUPSA webpage gave recommendations for the 40 day fast, including suggestions for intercession, identificational repentance and other practices closely related to SLSW.

In politically turbulent Zimbabwe many prefer not to blame the economic and political malaise on the political leaders and the socio-economic dynamics, but rather on a variety of territorial spirits named after the liberation war heroes Nehanda, Chaminuka and Kaguvi, including a crocodile spirit over Harare.³⁵ Instead of addressing the issues and confronting the evils in the country, many charismatic evangelicals prefer to participate in all night (national) prayer meetings attempting to bind these alleged territorial spirits in prayer.³⁶

Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and The African Religious Context

Few people in Africa will question that the African context is influenced by what is happening globally, and there is a need to pay attention to the dynamics specific to the African context when

it comes to evaluating spiritual mapping and SLSW. For example, when it comes to evaluating spiritual mapping and SLSW in relation to African traditional religions and beliefs, it is evident that there are several similarities. As in spiritual mapping and SLSW thought, in traditional religion in sub-Saharan Africa there is a quest for supernatural power to overcome evil forces and spirits which endanger life on earth and may hinder the achievement of health and prosperity.³⁷ In this respect spiritual mapping and SLSW may be received uncritically by some people living within the African context as it caters to what many Africans perceive as their greatest need, namely the need for power to overcome supernatural obstacles.³⁸

Traditionally, the people of Africa recognize the existence of evil spiritual forces: malevolent spirits abound and are ready to harm people, especially when manipulated by witches and sorcerers.³⁹ African evangelical Christians, generally, identify these powers as the demons and evil spirits mentioned in Holy Scripture.⁴⁰ Some Christian traditions imported into Africa have insufficiently dealt with the issue

34 NUPSA 2000b. 'Transformation', downloaded on 2000-8-19 from website: <http://www.nupsa.org.za/transform.htm>.

35 R.Chiundiza, 'High Level Powers in Zimbabwe' in Wagner, *Engaging*, 123-124 and Zimchurch, *Crocodile again*, posted on 27-4-2001 in email conference of the Zimbabwe Church: zimchurch@egroups. Free subscription via website: <http://www.egroups.co.uk/group/zimchurch>.

36 P.Dube, *Leadership*, a seminar organized by Africa Enterprise in Harare, Zimbabwe (24 February, 2000) and der Meer, *Mission*, 58.

37 H.L.Pretorius et al. *Reflecting on Mission in the African Context* (Bloemfontein: Pro Christo, 1987), 122-123; 127.

38 D.J.Bosch, *Het Evangelie in Afrikaans Gewaad* (Kampen: Kok, 1974), 84 and F.M.Lufuluabo, 'Bantoe opvatting en Christendom' in M.Hebga et al, *Afrika en Christendom* (Hilversum: Brand, 1967), 53.

39 O.Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa* (Achimota, Ghana: ACP, 1983), 62 and J.S.Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 99.

40 Imasogie, *Guidelines*, 80.

of malevolent spirits and demons and consequently many African Christians continue to live in fear of these spirits and of the sorcerers and witches who manipulate these powers.⁴¹ It is important that the Christian church in Africa addresses the problem of supernatural evil in a biblical, contextual and pastorally sensitive manner.⁴²

Mainline evangelicalism, generally, has acknowledged the existence of malevolent spirits, identifying them as demons, and has stressed Christ's victory over the demons and that all those on Christ's side have nothing to fear from these evil forces.⁴³ Simple trust in Christ and obedience to God is enough to protect Christians from the attacks of the devil and his demons.⁴⁴ To deliver unbelievers from the power of the devil and his demons is first and foremost helping them to get to know Christ and become his disciples. This must be accompanied by prayer for deliverance and protection. The new spiritual warfare, in contrast, puts more emphasis on the believer having to conquer and disarm the powers through SLSW prayer-warfare.⁴⁵ In a world teeming with demons it is human vigilance that strikes the deciding blow in battle.⁴⁶

41 Imasogie, *Guidelines*, 52 and Mbiti in Bosch, *Het Evangelie*, 77.

42 Imasogie, *Guidelines*, 80-81 and M. ma Mpolo, 'Witchcraft, Drams and Pastoral Counseling' in M. ma Mpolo & W. Kalu (eds), *Counseling & Pastoral Theology* (Ibadan: WCC/Daystar Press, 1985), 124.

43 Pretorius, *Reflecting*, 127.

44 Verkuyl, *De Kern*, 273.

45 Mostert, 'urban mission', 175.

46 D.Powlison, *Power Encounters, Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 59.

In Indo-European mythology, as well as in many African Traditional Religions, prayer is a means to control and manipulate the gods or spirit-beings.⁴⁷ Much of prayer in African traditional worship is petitionary in nature with as main objective to get as much out of the supreme being as possible. There does not seem to be any concern about the deity's will or plan, which is the opposite of the Christian perspective on prayer as communion with God.⁴⁸ Spiritual mapping and SLSW in Africa may well result in a syncretism of revived Indo-European mythology, African traditional beliefs and Christianity which in its dualism undermines the sovereignty of God. Also, when prayer, as submission to and communicating with God, is re-defined as a spiritual power-tool and when Christian discipleship becomes a quest for spiritual power, then we have virtually reduced God to an impersonal source of power that can be manipulated at will, as long as we use the right techniques. The practices and beliefs of spiritual mapping and SLSW may therefore re-enforce a magical mindset, which makes the human being the agent who has to wield power against the spiritual enemies, rather than emphasizing faith in Christ and in the sovereignty of God.⁴⁹ Such a magical mindset, which is common in African

47 P.Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 209

48 J.Muthengi, 'The work and worship of the Christian Church' in S. Ngewa, M. Shaw & T. Tinou, *Issues in African Traditional Theology* (Nairobi: East Africa Educational Publishers, 1998), 254-255

49 Pretorius, *Reflecting*, 128-129

traditional religions, is predominantly focused on personal benefit, or that of one's community, rather than on pleasing the Creator.⁵⁰

Biblically speaking, and from the perspective of the history of the Christian church, the central issue in prayer and discipleship is not a matter of power, but rather submission to God and from that state of mind resisting the devil's schemes and unmasking them for the intimidation, temptation, sin, deception and delusion they really represent.⁵¹ Consequently, we have to conclude that the spiritual mapping and SLSW worldview, is not a biblically and/or church-historically sound answer to the fear of a malevolent spirit world experienced by so many African people. At the same time, Evangelicals cannot agree with the quasi-scientific modernist alternative of demythologizing the demonic powers⁵² nor can we allow the post-modern myth-making and a New-Age style re-enchantment of the world to dictate a super-naturalism to us that is neither biblical, nor useful. Instead, it is crucial for us to re-appreciate the biblical teaching about the powers, the demonic realm, from the biblical perspective of Christ's victory on the cross.

Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and Contextualization in Africa

The practices and beliefs found in SLSW are a danger to the proper contextualization of Christianity in Africa by labelling features of African culture as demonic. Such an approach to African culture and religion hinders the process of genuine inculturation and indigenization of the Christian gospel.⁵³ African culture and African traditional religion can easily be misunderstood and misrepresented as having happened regularly in past missionary reflection on African culture and religion.⁵⁴ From a biblical perspective, any human culture will have some demonically inspired sinful and oppressive structures, beliefs and practices which need to be identified and carefully addressed, but this should be done by indigenous believers who will have a more thorough understanding of their culture and context than 'spiritual warriors' coming from other contexts (IWG 1993). It is essential that we do not label things as demonic just because some expert in spiritual warfare labels them as such from the perspective of his or her beliefs and worldview.

Another danger that presents itself in SLSW is the danger of overly focus-

50 F.Moyo, Interviews at Harare Theological College (3-12 September and 10 November, 2000). Mr. F. Moyo is a colleague of the writer of this study and a research assistant at Harare Theological College and also lectures in (Christian) ethics, African Traditional Religions & Christianity, and apologetics. He is also the director of Lovemore House in Harare, a Christian NGO which runs a home for abandoned street children.

51 Hiebert, *Anthropological*, 209-213.

52 Imasogie, *Guidelines*, 46-53.

53 Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike, 'Is Mutuality Possible? An African Response', *Missiology—An International Review* (XXIX: No. 1, January, 2001), 46-47.

54 B.Bujo, *African theology*, (Kampala: St.Paul, 1992), 45 and A.Shorter, 'New Attitudes to African Culture and African Religions' in Shorter et al, *Toward African Christian Maturity* (Kampala: St. Paul, 1987), 27.

ing on traditional cultural elements as demonic and overlooking the demonic in the contemporary socio-economic and political realm. It is unfortunate that many Christians, including African Christians, tend to suspect the demonic predominantly in traditional culture and religion, and often fail to recognize that Satan and his demons are very active in the socio-economic and political aspects of life.⁵⁵ The church as salt and light in society must critically examine anything within our context from a biblically informed point of view, and avoid being conformed to the world by being renewed in our minds (Rom. 12:1-3).

Islam together with ATR and Christianity is a major religious force in the African continent. Most Evangelicals in Africa, regard Islam as a major threat to Christianity, both for historical reasons and because of its rapid progress. Generally, the evangelical church tends to attribute the spread to Satan's work in the world without giving much thought to why many Africans choose Islam rather than Christianity.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, spiritual mapping may re-enforce this negative perception of Islam with its labelling of Islam as demonic.⁵⁷ We are told to Conduct Strategic Spiritual Warfare against the demonic prince of Persia and the spirit of Babylon who are perceived as ancient territorial principalities who have resisted the Kingdom of God in Iran and Iraq for centuries.

These powers together with other demonic spirits are perceived as ruling the Muslim world⁵⁸ and allegedly must be bound through the use of SLSW before we can snatch the treasures of darkness under Islam's domination from Satan's clutches.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, such an emphasis on aggressive spiritual warfare and the use of militaristic terms may remind Muslims more of the crusades of the Middle Ages, than of the love of Christ and may actually prevent them from ever considering the gospel of Christ. Our approach to Islam must occur in an atmosphere of respect and Christian love, which is a more accurate reflection of what the gospel of Christ entails.⁶⁰ We must put aside the crusader mentality and pursue a compassionate rather than an antagonistic mode of ministry.⁶¹

55 Dube, *Leadership*; Moyo, Interviews.

56 O'Donovan, *Biblical Christianity in African Perspective* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992), 329.

57 Trinidad, 'Spiritual' and 'Spiritual Warfare: A Biblical Perspective', *Christian Research Journal* (Summer 1992), 38.

58 FridayFax, *Queen of Heaven*, email newsletter 10 (October 1998). For subscriptions: <http://www.cmd.org.nz> and J.Hopson, *Confronting the Queen of Heaven-A Missions Trip Report*, downloaded on 2000-03-12 from website: <http://www.do-you-love-me.org/wsomers/contq.html>.

59 Don Newman, '10 Keys to Unlocking Muslim Strongholds', *Mission Frontiers* 1992-06-01, downloaded on 2001-4-28 from website: <http://www.missionreview.com/index.asp?id=2477>.

60 Pretorius, *Reflecting*, 146.

61 'IWG Spiritual Warfare', a paper drafted by the Intercession working Group of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization at Fairmile, London (July 10-14 1993), downloaded on 2000-3-21 from website: <http://www.gospelcom.net/lcwe/statements/spwar.html> and Lausanne Committee on World Evangelisation, 'Deliver Us from Evil' Consultation Statement on Spiritual Warfare issued at the Lausanne DUFE Consultation in Nairobi 2000-10-11, downloaded on 2001-4-28 from website: <http://www.missionreview.com/index.asp?id=3033>.

Evangelical Responses

In 2000 the LCWE, in conjunction with the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA), organized a special consultation on spiritual warfare in Nairobi, Kenya, from 16 to 22 August 20, with as title 'Deliver Us From Evil', in order to attempt to come to grips with the many complex issues related to spiritual warfare.⁶² The consultation warned against some of the excesses common in SLSW and affirmed the findings of the 1993 report by the IWG and the earlier Manila Manifesto of 1989, recognizing that Satan and his demons, or evil spirits, are ontological realities rather than impersonal influences or structures, who should be overcome by the truth of the gospel applied in evangelism, social action, Christian living, by promoting righteousness and by exposing and resisting what is evil.⁶³

The increasing popularity of SLSW as a quick fix for obstacles faced in mission and evangelism activities in Africa means that Evangelicals and the church at large in Africa cannot afford

to ignore the new spiritual warfare trend within Evangelicalism. As is the case with other theologies originating from the West, the new spiritual warfare theology, SLSW, needs to be critically reviewed and evaluated from both a biblical perspective as well as in the light of the African context. The LCWE consultation in Nairobi has been a good start, but with SLSW theology being spread predominantly among the laity via its populist literature and lay missions such as Youth with a Mission (YWAM), what might be discussed and resolved in the African theological community may not touch base with what is happening and being promoted at grassroots levels by the proponents of SLSW. The consequences for contextualization of Christianity in Africa are manifold and may result in a superficial and an otherworldly approach to the dynamics and issues that play a role in the African context.⁶⁴ Instead we should rather approach the problem of the demonic holistically in the light of the ministry of Christ and the church and with sensitivity to the context in which we seek to participate in God's liberating Mission.

62 Lausanne Committee on World Evangelisation, 'Deliver Us from Evil' Consultation Statement on Spiritual Warfare issued at the Lausanne DUFE Consultation in Nairobi 2000-10-11.

63 LCWE 2000. Lausanne Committee on World Evangelisation, 'Deliver Us from Evil' Consultation Statement on Spiritual Warfare issued at the Lausanne DUFE Consultation in Nairobi 2000-10-11.

64 In the context of Malawi anno 2008, horrible witch hunts have resulted in the torture and extra judicial killings of many suspected witches and Satanists as traditional beliefs mixed with Christian spiritual warfare elements have produced a dangerous demonology not unlike late medieval demonology in 15th and 16th century Europe.