



Engaging the Evil Forces in the Spirit Realm: A Theology of Spiritual Warfare in African Neo-Pentecostal Spirituality

Mookgo Solomon Kgatle¹ 

¹ Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology, University of South Africa (UNISA).

ABSTRACT

Prayer is traditionally used as a way of communicating with God and giving petitions to Him. However, within African neo-Pentecostal spirituality, prayer is more than communication and petitions; it is a way of addressing the evil forces in the spiritual realm. This is informed by the link that African neo-Pentecostals make between life challenges and evil forces in the spirit realm. In other words, problems such as diseases, sicknesses, miscarriages, misfortune, curses, and others are seen as coming from the spirit realm and as being caused by evil spirits. Surprisingly, even problems of unemployment, visa application, poverty, and inequality are linked to the evil forces in the spirit realm by some African neo-Pentecostals. Previous studies have addressed this phenomenon within the context of African neo-Pentecostal spirituality. What is new in this article is the development of a theology of spiritual warfare within the African neo-Pentecostal spirituality. This article argued that not every situation emanates from the spirit realm. Some challenges have a human element of incompetencies, greed, corruption, and so forth. The study is a literature review on spiritual warfare. The study makes a new contribution to the Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare by paying attention to other life challenges that are not linked to evil forces. This changes how Pentecostal scholars and theologians study the concept of spiritual warfare, there is a need for considering other causative factors in life situations. It is recommended here that a Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare should holistically look at life rather than always perceiving all life challenges as emanating from the spirit realm.

Correspondence

Mookgo Solomon Kgatle

Email:

kgatls@unisa.ac.za

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INTRODUCTION

One of the important aspects of Christian spirituality is prayer which is traditionally defined as communication with God. In addition, prayer is defined as making petitions to God in the quest to receive from Him. The concept of prayer is approached differently within the African neo-Pentecostal spirituality, it is a way of engaging the evil spirit in the spirit realm. African neo-Pentecostals are in a constant spiritual battle during their prayer meetings as they believe that life challenges are caused by evil spirits in the spirit realm. Therefore, when facing miscarriages, misfortunes, and generational curses, spiritual warfare becomes a way of fighting such problems. In addition, some African neo-Pentecostals would even make a connection between evil spirits and problems such as unemployment, poverty, crime, and AIDS. The phenomenon of spiritual warfare within African neo-Pentecostal spirituality has been addressed by previous studies. This article attempts to develop a Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare from a biblical perspective. The article argues that it is not every challenge in Africa that emanates from the spirit realm, hence a need to look at other causative factors. This argument is explored here by first giving a proper background to the African neo-Pentecostal spirituality. The article attempts to discuss the link that exists between life challenges and the evil forces in the spirit realm

informed by the African religious worldview. There is also a discussion on how prayer then becomes a tool in the hands of African neo-Pentecostals to confront the evil spirits in the spirit realm. The article brings the biblical perspective on spiritual warfare in the development of the Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare. The aim is to demonstrate that not all life challenges emanate from the spirit realm, some challenges are human-made, hence a need to engage other realms such as economic, social, and political. The next section introduces an African neo-Pentecostal spirituality.

African neo-Pentecostal spirituality: a conceptual framework

By African neo-Pentecostal spirituality here, the article refers to the approach to spirituality from an African neo-Pentecostal perspective. This is because spirituality in African neo-Pentecostal churches is different from the spirituality from classical Pentecostalism and other mainline churches in the African context. However, to understand the African neo-Pentecostal spirituality, it is important to understand the conceptual framework of spirituality in broader terms. Spirituality is defined as humanity's exploration to find meaning in life and its orientation toward God through sacred texts. Miller summarises the definition of spirituality as follows:

Is a universal human characteristic and need; involves a search for the sacred or transcendent in life; contributes to People's sense of meaning, purpose, and values; involves living congruently with one's beliefs and values; contributes to a universal love of humanity; and is not the same as religion, though is often associated with religious beliefs and experiences.¹

In the Christian tradition, it relates to the human endeavor to relate to God through biblical knowledge. Therefore, both the Old and New Testaments are important in the understanding of spirituality in the Christian tradition. The biblical texts, the spiritual practices, and human activities in understanding life spiritually are important aspects of Christian spirituality.²

The African neo-Pentecostal spirituality goes beyond orientation towards God through biblical texts. It is a pursuit of a direct relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. An encounter with God through the Holy Spirit makes the broader Pentecostal spirituality a meaningful one.³ Moreover, according to Stinton, "Pentecostals generally teach that a true encounter with God introduces profound changes in the lives and circumstances of those who experience God's self in the power of the Spirit."⁴ This is the same reason why Pentecostals in their spiritual experiences seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. African neo-Pentecostals believe that God works in the world through the gift of the Holy Spirit which becomes the basis of their spirituality.⁵ Hence, even the biblical text is approached through the hermeneutics of experience because spirituality in this context is defined through Pentecostal experience.⁶ In other words, it is the Holy Spirit that helps the believer to obtain the revelation of God in the biblical text which is different from the traditional reading of the bible for scientific knowledge. Therefore, the Pentecostal experiences, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are important aspects of African neo-Pentecostal spirituality. One can say that of the three aspects the Holy Spirit remains central to the African neo-Pentecostal spirituality. Because African neo-Pentecostals believe that through the Holy Spirit, they can relate with God and understand the bible in a better way.⁷

However, an African neo-Pentecostal spirituality is not only about the relationship with God through the Holy Spirit but also the confrontation with the evil one in the spirit realm.⁸ In other words, African neo-Pentecostals do not only relate with the Holy Spirit but also confront the other spirits through the Holy Spirit. African neo-Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit has the power to confront evil spirits in the spirit realm.⁹ This dimension of the African neo-Pentecostal spirituality makes it unique in the sense that they are not ignorant of the spirit world. Therefore, an African neo-Pentecostal spirituality is not only about the awareness of God but also the awareness of the evil spirits that exist in the spirit realm. The reality of the presence of the Holy

¹ Lisa J. Miller ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 242.

² Brian J Zinnbauer and Kenneth I Pargament, "Religiousness and Spirituality," *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 54 (2005): 1–6.

³ Lee Roy Martin, "Longing for God: Psalm 63 and Pentecostal Spirituality," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 22, no. 1 (2013): 54–76.

⁴ Diane Stinton, *African Theology on the Way: Current Conversations* (London: Fortress Press, 2015), 46.

⁵ Mookgo S Kgatle and Allan H Anderson, "Introduction: The Abuse of the Spirit in Some New Prophetic Churches in South African Pentecostalism," in *The Use and Abuse of the Spirit in Pentecostalism* (Routledge, 2020), 1–23.

⁶ Marius Nel, "Pentecostal Talk about God: Attempting to Speak from Experience," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (2017).

⁷ Thabang R Mofokeng and Mookgo S Kgatle, "Towards a Decolonial Hermeneutic of Experience in African Pentecostal Christianity: A South African Perspective," *HTS: Theological Studies* 75, no. 4 (2019): 1–9.

⁸ Philomena N. Mwaura, "Spiritual Warfare and Healing in Kenyan Neo-Pentecostalism," in *Pentecostalism, Catholicism, and the Spirit in the World*, ed. Stan Chu Ilo, vol. 8 (Eugene Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), 81.

⁹ Mwaura, "Spiritual Warfare and Healing in Kenyan Neo-Pentecostalism," 81.

Spirit is as important as the reality of the existence of evil spirits in the spirit realm. But this position by African neo-Pentecostals should not be misunderstood as a belief in the evil spirits but rather an awareness of their existence. Therefore, the approach of the African Traditional religions in appeasing the evil spirits is different from the African neo-Pentecostal spirituality.

African neo-Pentecostal spirituality is practiced through sermons, meditation, songs, scripture reading, prophecy, dreams, visions, and worship.¹⁰ Hence, its practice is not limited to the formal settings of a church service but can be practiced in non-conventional ways. What is important in this article is that African neo-Pentecostal spirituality is practiced through prayer which is discussed here in the context of spiritual warfare. Hence, the same spirituality is practiced in night vigils, and night prayers in exercising spiritual warfare through prayer. African neo-Pentecostals also engage in fasting and prayer in the same gesture of doing spiritual warfare. Again, this makes an African neo-Pentecostal spirituality unique particularly in their approach of prayer and fasting. Nel adds that they are unique also “in their spirituality being embodied and combining emotion, will power and rational elements holistically.”¹¹ In the next section, the article explores the link that African neo-Pentecostals make between life challenges and evil spirits in the spirit realm.

The Link between Life Challenges with Evil Forces in the Spirit Realm

The African neo-Pentecostals link the life challenges and the evil forces in the spirit realm as informed by the African religious worldview.¹² The African religious worldview does not make a distinction between that which is secular and the sacred.¹³ Similarly, this worldview does not make a disconnection between the sufferings of the people in the world and the spirit realm. Hence, the majority of Africans will seek a spiritual answer for almost every problem they encounter in life. It is the same that there is a dependence on spiritual leaders in pursuit of answers when encountering problems in the spirit realm. In following this worldview, the African neo-Pentecostals also draw a connection between real-life situations and the evil forces in the spirit realm. This means that evil spirits are perceived as the cause of the evil things that happen in the world. The personal problems that an individual goes through are associated with the evil spirits that exist in the spirit realm.¹⁴ Similarly, a particular family or generation can perceive their problems as being caused by evil spirits.

It is for this reason that when African neo-Pentecostals face problems such as misfortune, miscarriage, curses, and other problems, they immediately think that the evil spirits have a hand as coming from the spirit realm. According to Onyinah, the devil and evil spirits are always blamed for these challenges.¹⁵ There is also a link between the same problems with the generations in the family, hence the preaching about generational curses. Nonetheless, it is not only spiritual problems that are linked with the spiritual problems that are perceived as coming from the spirit realm even other challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and so forth are also linked with the evil spirits in the spirit realm.¹⁶ The link between life challenges and evil forces is a rationale for violent and warfare prayers within the African neo-Pentecostal spirituality. This phenomenon is explored below.

Prayer as a Tool for Engaging the Evil Forces in the Spirit Realm

Prayer in African Pentecostal spirituality is not only about communicating with God but is used as a tool to confront the evil forces in the spirit realm. While the traditional African religions would appease the spirit world for peace in the world, African neo-Pentecostals are in confrontation with the same. Hence, the African neo-Pentecostal spirituality should never be seen as an extension of the African traditional religious worldview about

¹⁰ Jason Kelvin Phiri, “African Pentecostal Spirituality: A Study of the Emerging African Pentecostal Churches in Zambia” (University of Pretoria, 2010), 23; cf Anna M Droll, *Dreams and Visions in African Pentecostal Spirituality: The Sub-Saharan Horizon of the Pneumatological Imagination*, vol. 45 (Brill, 2023), 37.

¹¹ Marius Nel, “African Pentecostal Spirituality as a Mystical Tradition: How Regaining Its Roots Could Benefit Pentecostals,” *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 76, no. 4 (2020): 1-10.

¹² Allan Heaton Anderson, *Spirit-Filled World: Religious Dis/Continuity in African Pentecostalism* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018).

¹³ Chammah J Kaunda, “‘The Altars Are Holding the Nation in Captivity’: Zambian Pentecostalism, Nationality, and African Religio-Political Heritage,” *Religions* 9, no. 5 (2018): 145.

¹⁴ Collium Banda, “Unsafe Spaces? An Ecclesiological Evaluation and Response to Recent Controversial Practices in Some South African Neo-Pentecostal Churches,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 41, no. 1 (2020): 1–10.

¹⁵ Opoku Onyinah, “Deliverance as a Way of Confronting Witchcraft in Modern Africa: Ghana as a Case History,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 5, no. 1 (2002): 107–34; Cf Opoku Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana*, vol. 34 (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

¹⁶ Maria Frahm-Arp, “Can’t They See They Are Being Manipulated?!: Miracle-Prophets and Secular South African Radio,” in *Radio, Public Life and Citizen Deliberation in South Africa*, ed. Sarah Chiumbu and Gilbert Motsaathebe (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), 103–24.

evil spirits but rather as a spirituality that confronts the same.¹⁷ Prayer is a powerful tool that African neo-Pentecostals use daily to be in confrontation of the evil forces. Prayer is not only offered to God for the blessings but is also directed to the kingdom of darkness against the evil forces.¹⁸ It must be reiterated here that prayer is not only done religiously but is a means of dealing with the devil and evil spirits. Therefore, within African neo-Pentecostal spirituality, prayer is not an obligation to fulfill a liturgical order but a way of engaging evil forces. Prayer in the African neo-Pentecostal spirituality is not only a devotion but a means to confront the devil.

The prayer of confronting the evil forces is not an ordinary prayer but the prayer of deliverance which is very common in Africa.¹⁹ From a Ghanaian perspective, Onyinah says that the prayer of deliverance is also used to confront witchcraft as many African neo-Pentecostals believe in the existence of the same.²⁰ Nevertheless, it is not only in Ghana or West Africa. The ministry of deliverance from evil forces is also popular in Zimbabwe. Chitando points out that Prophet Walter Magaya's ministry is also a ministry of deliverance from evil forces including witchcraft.²¹ African neo-Pentecostals do not only focus on the salvation of the soul but also the deliverance from the evil spirits. This kind of prayer is popular as believers seek to be free from the influence of evil spirits in their lives. Therefore, when the African neo-Pentecostals engage in a prayer like this, they expect to receive deliverance from the same evil spirits. It is also believed that the same evil spirits cause sickness and diseases, hence the prayer of deliverance serves as a tool for healing as well. Therefore deliverance becomes the prayer that casts all the evil spirits out of the person so that they can receive their freedom.²² This is why the "all night prayer" meetings are so popular in Africa, it is for the primary purpose of devoting time to cast out demons during prayer and deliverance.²³

African neo-Pentecostals do not pray ordinary prayers but ones that are filled with the language of violence to demonstrate that they are dealing with evil spirits. African neo-Pentecostals use biblical texts like Matthew 11:12 "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force". From a text such as this, rhetorics such as "by force, by fire" will be used in the prayer of spiritual warfare to confront the evil spirits in the spirit realm. Other biblical texts that are directed at witchcraft include Exodus 22:18 "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live". Biblical texts such as these are used to illustrate that the evil spirits in the spirit realm should be confronted without apology. This kind of prayer is full of the "enemy rhetoric" where the evil spirits in the spirit realm are perceived as the enemy of the believer. The prayer of spiritual warfare is there to confront this enemy. It is common to hear African neo-Pentecostals say "The enemy must die by fire" during their prayers.²⁴ In addition, it is very common for the enemy to be sent "back to sender" which signifies returning any challenges to the originator, that is, the evil spirits in the spirit realm.²⁵ These are some of the rhetorics that are used during the prayer of spiritual warfare in night vigils and deliverance sessions.

However, the challenge with the spiritual warfare prayers and the various rhetorics used in the same is that they are sometimes pointed to the individuals rather than the evil spirits. In some healing and deliverance ministries in Africa, people are accused of witchcraft and as the ones that cause misfortune, miscarriage, and so forth.²⁶ Therefore, "die by fire", and "back to sender" rhetorics in African neo-Pentecostal spirituality at times are prayers directed at individuals not necessarily evil spirits.²⁷ This has brought conflict among family members, relatives, and even church members because one individual is accused of witchcraft or as a result of the witchcraft prophecies that individuals receive in healing and deliverance ministries. This calls for revisiting the Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare. We should be able to address research questions such as: Are all

¹⁷ Allan Anderson, *Moya: The Holy Spirit in an African Context* (University of South Africa Press, 1991).

¹⁸ Stezron Brandon-Lee Moses, "Hermeneutical Practices amongst African Neo-Pentecostal Churches in Southern Africa: A Critical Review" (North-West University South Africa, 2022).

¹⁹ Anderson, *Spirit-Filled World: Religious Dis/Continuity in African Pentecostalism*, 206.

²⁰ Onyinah, "Deliverance as a way of confronting witchcraft in modern Africa" 107

²¹ Ezra Chitando and Kudzai Biri, "Walter Magaya's Prophetic Healing and Deliverance (PHD) Ministries and Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe: A Preliminary Study with Particular Reference to Ecumenism," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 42, no. 2 (2016): 72–85.

²² J Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Of Faith and Visual Alertness: The Message of 'Mediatized' Religion in an African Pentecostal Context," *Material Religion* 1, no. 3 (2005): 336–56.

²³ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Conquering Satan, Demons, Principalities, and Powers: Ghanaian Traditional and Christian Perspectives on Religion, Evil, and Deliverance," in *Coping with Evil in Religion and Culture*, ed. Pieterella van Doorn-Harder (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 85–103; J Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "'Christ Is the Answer': What Is the Question? A Ghana Airways Prayer Vigil and Its Implications for Religion, Evil and Public Space," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 35, no. 1 (2005): 93–117.

²⁴ Daniel K. Olukoya, *Prayer Rain* (Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, 2009).

²⁵ Olukoya, *Prayer Rain*.

²⁶ Mookgo Solomon Kgatle, "Propagating the Fear of Witchcraft: Pentecostal Prophecies in the New Prophetic Churches in South Africa," *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 40, no. 2 (2020): 132–43.

²⁷ Kudzai Biri and Molly Manyonganise, "'Back to Sender': Re-Visiting the Belief in Witchcraft in Post-Colonial Zimbabwean Pentecostalism," *Religions* 13, no. 1 (2022): 49.

problems emanating from the spirit realm? In other words, are all problems caused by evil spirits? Should the spiritual warfare prayers particularly rhetorics such as “die by fire”, and “back to sender” be directed to individuals or the spirit realm? What then is the proper Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare? In the next two sections, this article attempts to answer these research questions.

Towards a Pentecostal Theology of Spiritual Warfare: A Biblical Perspective

This article calls for the development of the Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare to deal with some of the challenges raised in the preceding section. The Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare is expected to be based on a balanced exegesis of the biblical texts on spiritual warfare. This means that spiritual warfare practitioners cannot just pick up the biblical text they like but rather read it in context and with proper interpretation. For example a text such as Exodus 22:18 “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live” should be read together with Mark 12:31 “The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” Then African neo-Pentecostals can realise that even if one’s neighbor is a witch, Christ has commanded the believers to love their neighbors. This is just but one of the numerous examples that show that African neo-Pentecostal pastors are expected to immerse themselves in proper theological training to be able to conduct proper exegesis of biblical texts. This will assist in avoiding the proof-texting of the biblical texts on spiritual warfare that sometimes lead to the ill practices of the same prayer.

In addition, such a theology should not be a theology of retaliation which is found in the “back to sender” rhetoric among some African neo-Pentecostals. A “back to sender” rhetoric seems to be directed at the originator of the life challenges faced by the believer. In a way, a “back to sender” rhetoric seems to be a prayer that seeks revenge from anyone who caused the life challenge. The “back to sender” rhetoric is built on the idea that if one does not like something, it should be returned to the Lord. Most of the time, the “back to sender” rhetoric is directed at individuals who have been accused of witchcraft or as the ones that cause misfortune. However, as the biblical texts are looked at, there is evidence that God does not encourage revenge. Romans 12:19 states very well “Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord”. Allowing God to be the avenger is more beneficial than taking the responsibility of dealing with the enemy by oneself.

The Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare is expected not to target individuals in making for example witchcraft accusations but rather on the evil spirits. One of the challenges raised in the preceding section is that during the prayer of spiritual warfare and deliverance, there are confessions of witchcraft by some believers. In addition, there are also prophecies by some of the pastors in African neo-Pentecostal spirituality which are directed at people as witches. This causes problems within the African neo-Pentecostal churches, dividing families and society. Thus, in the development of the Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare, there should be a realisation that confessions of witchcraft should not lead to accusations of people as witches. There is a need to discern the spirit behind the person who is causing the trouble. In this case, there will be no need to confront the person but rather to confront the spirit behind the person. This is what Paul and Silas did when delivering a young damsel who was possessed with evil spirits, they confronted the spirits rather than confronting the person (Acts 16:16-40).

The Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare is expected to focus on God as the one who fights for the believer rather than focusing on the devil. In African neo-Pentecostal spirituality, the focus seems to be on the devil rather than focusing on God as the God of warfare. Psalm 24:8 states very well “Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.” In 2 Chronicles 20:17 God told Jehoshaphat that the battle belongs to Him. ¹⁷ You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you.” These are some of the biblical texts that demonstrate that a proper Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare is expected to put the focus on the God of warfare rather than on the evil spirits. In other words, the African neo-Pentecostals are expected to be God-conscious rather than evil spirits-conscious. When the believer is focused on the evil spirits, everything around them would be evil but if focused on God, the opposite is true, they will be able to see the goodness of the Lord.

Not all Life Challenges Emanate from the Spirit Realm

The spiritual warfare prayer seems to be focusing a lot on the spirit realm and blaming the devil for almost every challenge that a believer in African neo-Pentecostal spirituality is going through. The devil is blamed for one having a miscarriage at the hospital. The devil is blamed for the lack of jobs. The devil is blamed even for one's inability to obtain a visa from the embassy. There is a blame game within African neo-Pentecostal spirituality on the evil spirits in the spirit realm as the main source causing problems in the life of the believer. This is based on the African religious worldview of not making a distinction between the secular and the sacred as highlighted

in the introduction. Consequently, when the believers in the African neo-Pentecostal spirituality face various challenges in life, they connect it to the spirit realm. The question is: Are all problems emanating from the spirit realm? Are all problems caused by evil spirits? If the answer is yes, it might as well mean that the evil spirits in the spirit realm are in charge of every aspect of life which cannot be true. There is also a human element in the challenges that individuals face in life as not everything emanates from the spirit realm.

In developing a Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare, there is a need for the knowledge that not all problems emanate from the spirit realm. Some problems are caused by the incompetencies of people in different sectors of society. In other words, if a nation does not invest resources in training professionals in the health sector, health challenges will persist in such a nation. There will be no need to always blame the devil as such problems would be caused by the incompetencies in the sector. Similarly, when a nation does not invest resources in the country but spends its fiscus in sponsoring the lavish lifestyles of politicians, such a nation will encounter financial hardships. Therefore, some of the challenges facing the continent of Africa in the 21st century are a result of the greed of the politicians in African countries. In addition, some of the problems are the result of corruption that leads to unemployment, poverty, and other economic challenges. Therefore, African neo-Pentecostals cannot always look at the evil spirits in the spirit realm when facing life challenges, there is also a need to look at other causative factors. African neo-Pentecostals cannot continue to spiritualise all the problems they face in life but rather are expected to perceive life in a balanced way.

This calls for the African neo-Pentecostals to not only engage the evil spirits in the spirit realm but to also engage the political realm, the economic realm, the social realm, and other realms in society. The issues that are politically oriented or problems that can be linked with the politics of an African state, should be confronted with the same power of the Holy Spirit. This means that instead of praying against the political problem, a Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare is a call to confront the political realm. Similarly, the economic issues confronting the nations of Africa require a different approach instead of always looking for a spiritual solution. Fortunately, many African neo-Pentecostals have begun to take part in the issues of development in the confrontation of unemployment, poverty, and harsh economic conditions in Africa. However, this should not only be done at the church level but rather within the economic systems in society. This means that African neo-Pentecostals are expected to take part in the mainstream economy in their countries and not only focus on the church economy. Lastly, some of the issues are social and do not need spiritual warfare but rather to be addressed from a social point of view. This means that African neo-Pentecostals should become part of the society in bringing solutions to society. In this way, a Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare is not only targeting the spirit realm but also other realms such as economic, social, and political.

CONCLUSION

This article has highlighted the importance of prayer within the African neo-Pentecostal spirituality and how prayer is approached differently from other spiritualities. African neo-Pentecostals link life challenges and evil spirits in the spirit realm. Consequently, they perceive life challenges as being caused by the evil spirits that exist in the spirit realm. While prayer serves as a way of fighting battles in the spirit realm within African neo-Pentecostal spirituality, there is a need to revisit this aspect in the development of the Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare. Such a theology should be based on the biblical perspective on spiritual warfare rather than the quest to fight the devil. In addition, such a theology should not be a theology of retaliation which is found in the “back to sender” rhetoric among some African neo-Pentecostals. The Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare should not target individuals in making for example witchcraft accusations but rather the problem in society. In addition, in developing the Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare, there is a need for the knowledge that not all problems come from the spirit realm. Some of the challenges are human-made and are a result of incompetencies, greed, corruption, and so forth. This means that African neo-Pentecostals should not only pray but engage other realms such as political, social, and economic realms. This changes the way we have studied the concept of spiritual warfare in African neo-Pentecostal spirituality. There is a need to consider other causative factors in addressing the challenges faced by African neo-Pentecostals in the 21st century.

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ABOUT AUTHOR

Mookgo Solomon Kgatle is a Professor of Missiology at the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology, University of South Africa (UNISA). He has published several peer-reviewed articles in the Pentecostal tradition, particularly New Prophetic Churches in South Africa. He is an NRF rated scholar in the area of African Pentecostalism. He won the Vision Keeper Award at the University of South Africa (2020-2022).