

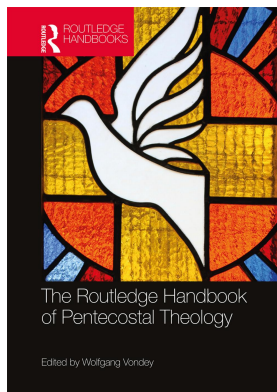
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SPIRITUAL WARFARE

The cosmic conflict between good and evil

Opoku Onyinah

The term “spiritual warfare” does not occur in the Bible; however, the idea is found throughout its pages. Right from creation, there appears a being called “Satan” or “the devil” who is opposed to God and allied with lesser spiritual beings referred to as “evil spirits” or “demons.” The Scriptures indicate that human beings are entangled in a cosmic conflict between good and evil by suffering various forms of spiritual and physical attacks, ranging from sickness and misfortune to demonic possession and death. Pentecostals have differed in their understanding of this seeming clash between God and Satan but have begun to develop more detailed accounts of spiritual warfare in recent years. The goal of this chapter is to present the Pentecostal perspective on spiritual warfare to bring some clarity to the subject by critically examining contemporary teachings and practices among Pentecostals and reconstructing a theology of spiritual warfare from a Pentecostal perspective. I suggest that many issues that are considered demonic are issues that fall more properly within the domain of the flesh. After a brief historical background of the modern spiritual warfare movement, I review the contemporary practices of Pentecostals in order to detail and critique the various elements of spiritual warfare theology. I conclude with a positive account of spiritual warfare from the New Testament perspective with the aid of Pentecostal scholarship.

A brief history of spiritual warfare

Dealing with the demonic and engaging in deliverance arose to prominence with the Pentecostal revival at the beginning of the twentieth century (Hunt 1998, 216). The primary emphasis in the early years was on speaking in tongues as an initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and as a weapon for evangelism; healing and deliverance were to accompany the baptism (see Chapter 23). Satan was considered an obstacle to divine healing, but the orientation at the time was primarily on evangelization, and spiritual warfare was not a major focus of classical Pentecostal theology.

A particular challenge to the emergence of a theology of spiritual warfare was the idea of demon possession. Pentecostals generally do not believe that a Christian can be possessed by demons (Kay 1999, 337; Carter 2000; Warrington 2004). Thus, from early on, Pentecostals opposed those who made demonic deliverance a theological speciality. However,

popular ministries sprang up on the perimeter of the movement, and the more conservative Pentecostal churches were unable to stop them. These ministries brought deliverance to the fore, although it was not yet central to a theology of spiritual warfare. An example is the Latter Rain movement, which was very sympathetic to deliverance. Although its core teaching was on divine healing (see Chapter 24), it encouraged independent deliverance ministries and churches (Riss 1982, 32–45). The movement produced many influential ministers (Hejzlar, 2009), but spiritual warfare was only in its embryonic form, and its rise to prominence came only with the Charismatic movement.

The initial rise of the Charismatic renewal in the second half of the twentieth century highlighted the existence of Pentecostal phenomena such as speaking in tongues, healing, and prophesying outside of classical Pentecostal churches. The second part of the renewal during the 1980s and early 1990s added an increasing awareness of the devil, and teachings on spiritual warfare flourished concerning the powers of Satan, demons, generational (or ancestral) curses, and how to overcome these powers through deliverance, the breaking of strongholds, and exorcisms (Koch 1981; Prince 1990; Wimber 1992; Larson 1999). The central theological trajectory deduced from these teachings is that a person could be a Christian, baptized in the Holy Spirit and speak with tongues, yet still have demons and be afflicted by spiritual curses. The power of the Holy Spirit was necessary to reveal the problem and deal with it. Casting out a demon or renouncing a curse could be a lengthy process, and it was only “the violent” who could lay hold of it by force (Prince 1990; Larson 1999). This new teaching often contradicted classical Pentecostal theology.

The contemporary spiritual warfare movement

From the 1990s onwards, the focus of demonology intensified to a full-blown theology of spiritual warfare. The new teaching emphasizes that demons not only inhabit people but geographic regions, and that these strongholds can be pulled down through intense battles in prayer. Contemporary spiritual warfare teaching distinguishes between two levels of warfare: ground-level warfare and cosmic-level warfare. A third teaching central to the newly emerging theology is the so-called witchdemonology.

Ground-level warfare

Ground-level warfare deals with evil spirits that inhabit people. These spirits are classified into three kinds: (1) family or ancestral spirits, which gain power through successive generations up to the present; (2) occult spirits, which are the demons of non-Christian religions including Freemasonry and the New Age. The advocates claim that these gain their power through invitation; and (3) ordinary demons, which are considered to be attached to vices such as anger, fear, lust, gambling, drunkenness, or pornography. Those who have one or more of those spirits are demonized. Based upon the Greek term *daimonizomai*, which means “to have a demon,” the term “demonised” is typically preferred to the concept of “demon possession.” Deliverance ministries aim to expose the demon and cast it out in the name and by the power of Jesus (Kraft 1989, 1993).

Strategic-level warfare

Strategic-level warfare is considered to consist of, at least, five categories of spirits: (1) territorial spirits over cities, regions, and nations (derived from Daniel 10:13, 20–21). Territorial spirits

are defined as high-ranking members of the hierarchy of evil spirits who are dispatched by Satan to control nations, regions, cities, tribes, people groups, neighbourhoods, and other social networks (Wagner 2012). (2) Institutional spirits, which are assigned to non-Christian religions, governments, churches, and educational institutions (Boyd 2012). (3) Spirits that supervise and promote special functions and vices such as prostitution, homosexuality, music, pornography, media, and war. (4) Spirits assigned to objects, buildings, tools, instruments, as well as non-material entities like rituals that are assigned to such objects during dedications. (5) Ancestral spirits that rule over specific families, and which can assume the identity of the ancestors themselves (Onyinah 2012b).

Strategic-level spirits are believed to be in charge of ground-level spirits and assign them to people and supervise their work. In order to break the powers of these spirits, one must engage in strategic-level warfare. At the heart of this warfare is often a threefold strategy developed by Peter Wagner: discerning the territorial spirits, dealing with the corporate sin of a city, and engaging in aggressive warfare against the territorial spirits (Wagner 1991, 1993, 1996). Some suggest that “spiritual mapping” is necessary for discerning the territorial spirits assigned to a city (Otis 1991). This technique is used to discern and identify the spirits over the territory as a step towards developing strategies to combat and defeat them. John Dawson has popularized the expression “identification repentance” to explain the need for repenting and then confessing territorial sins as a means of effecting reconciliation, thus breaking Satan’s grip (Dawson 1989; Wagner 1996, 249–50). In the third part of strategic-level warfare—engaging in an aggressive struggle against the territorial spirits—advocates typically engage in “casting down strongholds,” “binding the strongman,” “evicting the ruler of the city,” “storming the gates of hell,” and “taking dominion in Jesus’ name” (Jacobs 1994; Onyinah 2012b). This teaching has gained massive popularity among Christians worldwide.

Witchdemonology

Global Pentecostal theology encountered particular concerns in West African Christianity with what can appropriately be dubbed “witchdemonology.” Witchcraft in Western thinking includes the practice of magic, the use of spells, and the invocation of spirits. “Witchcraft” in many African cultures is the belief that some people possess supernatural powers, which may be used for good or evil (Rio, MacCarthy, and Blanes 2018). “Demonology” is the Christian doctrine that there are evil spirits in league with Satan who can also take possession of people and force them to become agents of destruction. Witchdemonology is the synthesis of the practices and beliefs of African witchcraft and Western Christian teachings of demonology and exorcism. Witchdemonology accepts the reality of witchcraft, demons and deities, the belief in territorial spirits and mapping them, the belief in ancestral curses, and the identification of demonic realities and curses. Special prayer sessions called “deliverance meetings” are held, either in groups or in private sessions, to set people free from evil powers that hinder their progress in life (Onyinah 2004). This tendency has opened the door for a high level of prophetic or “super-charismatic” ministry (Anim 2003, 122). Ministers under this umbrella diagnose people’s problem through words of knowledge or prophecy. Ministering to people in this way is the charismatic substitute for the old shrine practices in African traditional religions. Although some people appear to have been helped and encouraged from such ministrations, in most cases, the tendency has created divisions among family members and instilled more fear of witchcraft and demonic activity (Onyinah 2009).

A critique of spiritual warfare teaching

The Charismatic theology of modern spiritual warfare has produced some positive results. For example, it has encouraged many Christians to strategize, plan, and pray effectively before evangelism with the result that the gospel is proclaimed in difficult areas (Dawson 1989). In addition, spiritual warfare theology has led to a renewed focus on the unevangelized nations located between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator. The new spiritual warfare teachings have stirred many to identify various problems in life as spiritual attacks and to pray about them. Thus, intercession has intensified, and vices are considered sins that have demonic attachments, so that some Christians have been more earnest about avoiding such practices. Finally, contemporary spiritual warfare teachings have challenged Christians to reinvigorate their faith and to practise it more vibrantly. However, despite these positive trends, there are some theological concerns to which Pentecostals should pay attention, particularly the overt attention paid to the devil, the sovereignty of God, the cause of misfortunes, and the place of suffering.

Attention on the devil

A serious problem with charismatic spiritual warfare teachings is that they give too much attention to Satan and the demonic hierarchy. Pentecostals acknowledge that according to Scripture, Satan rules over a demonic chain of command that tries to control territories on earth (Guelich 1991). This is also the picture which is seen in Daniel 10:13, 20–21. But the Bible does not reveal that believers have the power to dispel these evil spirits from their geographic domains. Many Pentecostals believe that Christians have the authority to cast out evil spirits (Mark 16:17; Luke 10; 17–19; Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:18) and that they can resist the devil from taking control over their lives (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8–9). However, Pentecostals do not see an example of God’s people pulling down the evil spirits over cities and nations (Harris 1999).

For Pentecostals, demonic powers are reduced to secondary causes in the accomplishment of God’s supreme purpose. There is no detailed description of Satan’s activities; neither are there detailed confessions of demoniacs as seen in modern deliverance services in the Bible. The scriptures do not provide any detailed rituals or techniques for identifying problems or performing exorcisms (Warrington 2015, 15). Some modern expressions and techniques (such as spiritual mapping, ground-level warfare, cosmic-level warfare, and evicting the ruler of the city) and some practices during exorcisms (such as the emphasis on prayer language, the role of repetitive and intensive prayer, the need for fasting, and the demand for confession) seem to reduce spiritual warfare to mere magical techniques rather than placing confidence in God (Onyinah 2012a, 255–62).

Satan’s limitations

Pentecostals emphasize the absolute sovereignty of God who reigns supreme over all spiritual powers (e.g. Deut. 6:4; Neh. 9:6; Job 38:7; Ps. 89:5–8; Eph. 4:4–6), and Satan is simply one of those spirits (Job 1:6–7). All spirits, whether good or evil, operate under God’s sovereignty, and God uses them to carry out his divine plan (John 13:27) and to become envoys of God (Onyinah 2012b, 18). Pentecostals emphasize that Satan’s objective is to oppose God. This emphasis is based on the understanding that in the Old Testament, Satan and his kingdom

executed their plans by hindering the work of God and inciting or accusing the people of God of evil as they tried to carry it out (1 Chr. 21:1; Job 1–2; Zech. 3:1–2). Similarly, the main work of Satan and demons in the New Testament is to oppose Christ and his church (Matt. 4:1–12; 1 Thess. 2:18). Nevertheless, God has seriously constrained Satan’s power. Even when the Bible reveals that the devil has attacked righteous people, it is often read that he first sought permission from God (Job 1:12; Matt. 4:1; Luke 22:31; 2 Cor. 12:7–12), and that he could only operate within God’s limits (Onyinah 2012a, 256). Moreover, the scriptures also indicate that believers are empowered to defend themselves from such forces (Warrington 2008, 294).

The cause of misfortunes

Pentecostal theology attributes misfortune to different causes including God, neutral or natural causes, and the devil (Thomas 1998). Misfortunes, which may originate from God, are about issues of discipline or punishment (1 Sam. 2:6). The plagues on the Egyptians (Ex. 7–11), the afflictions on the Philistines (1 Sam. 5:6–12), the striking of the seventy people of Beth-shemesh (1 Sam 6:19–20), the death of Uzzah (1 Sam. 6:7), the sickness and death of David’s child (2 Sam. 12:13–18), the paralysed man who was healed (John 5:18), the blindnesses of Zechariah, Saul, and Elymas (Luke 1:18–20; Acts 9:8–9; Acts 14:4–12), the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11), and the death of Herod (Acts 12:21–23) are examples of misfortune caused by God (Thomas 1998, 244–78). Examples of misfortunes, which are considered to derive from neutral or natural causes, are Isaac’s blindness (Gen. 27:1), Elisha’s sickness and his subsequent death (2 Kings 13:14), the death of the widow’s son (1 Kings 17:17–18), the death of some people in Galilee cited by Jesus (Luke 13:1–5), and the illnesses of Paul’s co-workers including Epaphroditus, Timothy, and Trophimus (Phil. 2:27; 1 Tim. 5:23; 2 Tim. 4:20). Finally, the cataclysms that Job experienced (Job 1:1–2:10) or Paul’s thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7) are examples of misfortunes that can originate from Satan (Thomas 1998, 192–78).

The place of suffering in life

Original sin and the Fall of humankind occupy a central position in Pentecostal teachings. The biblical teaching of the Fall tells us that suffering and death are now part of life (Gen. 3:1–24; Rom. 5:12–14; 8:18–25). The entire human race fell as a result of Adam’s disobedience, so that the whole creation has been “subjected to futility” (Rom. 8:20). Yet creation has a hope of being “set free from its bondage to decay” (Rom. 8:21) through the death and resurrection of Christ, and believers now “live between the times” of “the already” but “not yet” (Eph. 4:30; cf. Rom. 5:9; Gal. 5:5). The outcome of this eschatological tension is that Christians are still exposed to physical afflictions, including sufferings and misfortunes (see Chapter 25). Thus, suffering does not necessarily mean that the devil has attacked; neither does it mean that the person has sinned. They can simply be the result of life in a fallen world (Warrington 2005, 2008, 265–308). When demons are associated with every vice, people are absolved from taking responsibility for their wrongdoings, their sins, and their inadequacies. They blame everything on the devil and ancestral or generational curses (Meyer 2001; Asamoah-Gyadu 2004). The sad reality is that contemporary spiritual warfare teachers admit that there is little biblical evidence for their teachings (Wagner 1992, 19 and 63), yet they brand as sceptics anyone who challenges them.

A biblical Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare

Although there has not been a systematic Pentecostal theology on spiritual warfare, in recent years, there has been an increased eagerness by some Pentecostals to develop a theology of healing, exorcism, suffering, and spiritual warfare that is derived primarily from biblical teaching and is analytical and critical of excesses. A Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare, therefore, is derived primarily from biblical teaching with particular attention to the New Testament. It lays emphasis on the New Testament because it is there that Satan and demons are clearly presented over against Christ, his mission, and kingdom. Against this biblical and Christological backdrop, this final section develops a Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare that responds to the concerns raised above by placing the focus on Christ, his kingdom and his ministry, the victory of the believer, the nature of satanic opposition, and the teachings of the apostles on evil.

Christ and the kingdom

Christ and his kingdom (see Chapter 25) have a major place in the Pentecostal understanding of spiritual warfare. Pentecostals generally believe in the existence of the devil and evil spirits whose aim is to oppose Christ and his mission in the church and to resist the work of evangelism (Lea 1998). Jesus' announcement that the kingdom of God is at hand takes its special significance from the Old Testament prophetic expectation that God's rule was coming, and his people would be liberated (Mark 1:15; Luke 4:18–19; cf. Isa. 9:6–11, 61:1–3). Pentecostals believe that liberation means freedom from demonic domination because of the reality of the kingdom. In the Beelzebub controversy, for example, Jesus clearly links his expulsion of demons with the kingdom of God that is breaking through the satanic kingdom (Matt. 12:28). The implication of the parable of the strong man is that the binding and plundering of the strong man, Satan, occurs simultaneously with the coming of the Messiah to inaugurate the kingdom of God (Matt. 12:29). Thus, for Pentecostals, the exorcism of demons by Jesus was a visible sign of the kingdom of God overpowering the satanic kingdom (Warrington 2015, 162–63).

Pentecostals believe that the devastation of the devil was climaxed in the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul's letters reveal the conquering of all the principalities and powers in the heavenly realm (e.g. Col. 2:15; Eph. 1:20–22). For Pentecostals, believers have been rescued from the kingdom of darkness, which is dominated by evil forces, and have been transferred into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13). By virtue of the work of Christ on the cross, evil rulers no longer have control over believers (Col. 1:16) and "Satan and his forces are not to be feared" (Petts 2006, 120). Yet Pentecostals are very much aware that the New Testament also teaches that the devil and evil powers are active in the world and will remain so until the final consummation (Fee 1994, 769–70). Jesus shows in the parable of the sower that the devil is the evil one who snatches away the word of God from people's hearts (Matt. 13:19). In the parable of the weeds, he is portrayed as the enemy who seeks to destroy God's people by planting evil among them (Matt. 13:25, 38–39). In John's Gospel, the Pharisees' desire to kill Jesus is rooted explicitly in the desire of their master, the devil (John 8:42–45). Satan enters Judas and prompts him to betray Jesus (John 13:27; Luke 22:3). The entire New Testament reveals that evil powers are in rebellion against Christ; they attack the church and operate most effectively through unredeemed humanity (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 6:10–20; 1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12:7–12).

Therefore, Pentecostals can urge believers to resist the devil (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9) and to put on the whole armour of Christ (Eph. 6:10–13), so that they can stand up against the devil's

schemes (Onyinah 2012a, 263–65). This imagery is often misunderstood by people as a call to engage in spiritual warfare. However, Paul speaks of power struggles and not active warfare. The difference becomes clearer if it is taken into consideration that Paul had already told the Ephesians, and often stressed in his writing, that evil powers have already been defeated through the death and resurrection of Christ (Eph. 1:21; 3:10; Col. 1:16; 2:16; Phil. 2:6–11). He had also assured the Ephesians that God had placed them in Christ who is above all powers and authorities (Eph. 1:3–14). Consequently, Paul’s call to Christians to put on the whole armour of God correlates with what Robert Guelich (1991, 60) contends to be “the summons to prayer and supplication for oneself, the saint, and for Paul, would be specifically a prayer that God would protect them from the adversary.” A comparison of this call to prayer with Jesus’ admonition in the Lord’s Prayer, “And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one” (Matt. 6:13) brings the sovereignty of God over the believer’s life into sharper focus. The inference is that the evil one can tempt or attack the believer, but only with the permission of God and within God’s circumscribed limitations. Thus, Pentecostals can affirm that Christians are not to fight with the devil; their armour for protection against the enemy is based on what God has done in Christ. Christians are, therefore, to stand strong by applying the word of God and praying in the Spirit (Fee 1994, 727–32). Therefore, the warfare concept needs to be considered as the primarily mystical conflict between God and satanic powers, in which the human being is both passively and actively involved.

Satan’s method is the mind

Pentecostals recognize the role that the human mind plays in this apparent transcendental conflict between God and Satan. It is inferred from some scriptural passages that the human mind is the actual battleground: some biblical examples of people who were involved in this conflict are Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:1–12), Job (Job 1:6–22), David (1 Chron. 21:1–2), Joshua the High Priest (Zech. 3:1–4), and the incarnate Jesus (Matt. 4:1–11). The battle comes to a climax in Revelation, where the devil exercises all his power against Christ and his kingdom (Rev. 12:7–10; 20:1–10) but will end up defeated. In all this, Satan is always pictured as a defeated foe whose final doom is not yet fully realized and, therefore, seeks to continue to capture the human mind (Onyinah 2012b, 24–25).

Based upon this insight, many Pentecostals believe that Satan’s work is to oppose God, and to achieve this end, he seeks to influence Christians to think and live contrary to the word of God (Job 1–2; 1 Chron. 21:1; Zech. 3:1–2; Luke 22:31–34; see Onyinah 2012a, 267). Believers are therefore to renew their minds with the word of God (Rom. 12:2). The warfare for the mind is presented quite persuasively in 2 Corinthians 10:3–5 in terms of strongholds that the devil builds to oppose the will of God: arguments, proud obstacles, and every thought. In other words, there are false philosophies, beliefs, teachings, and practices, based on prejudices and preconceptions, which plant arrogance and rebellion against the gospel (2 Cor. 10:5; Eph. 2:1–4). Paul terms this as the fight of faith against false doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3–7, 18–19; 6:12). Whereas the devil uses these lies to deceive people about faith in Christ to turn them against God, Paul directs leaders to reject false doctrine, to maintain the simple and true gospel, and to guard what has been entrusted to them (Onyinah 2012a, 239–81). Paul portrays Satan as the “adversary” who tempts, misleads, torments, traps, hinders, and deceives (1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 11:14; 12:7; 1 Thess. 2:18; 3:5; 1 Tim. 5:15). Other New Testament writers teach that the devil seeks to devour believers and thwart the will of God at every turn (James 4:7–10; 1 Pet. 5:8–9; 1 John 5:18). The consistent emphasis is that the devil’s main weapon is to enslave people through false teaching (Matt. 7:15; Acts

20:29–31; 2 Cor. 11:1–5; 1 Tim. 4:1–5). In Revelation 12:10, he is labelled as “the accuser of our comrades,” that is, the one who continuously brings charges to God against believers. Pentecostals therefore stress the importance of knowing the word of God individually, so that Christians are not taken unawares by the devil’s devices (Warrington 2008, 188).

Christ is the victory of believers

A Pentecostal reading of the New Testament teaching, therefore, lays emphasis on the fact that Christ has won the victory for believers (Petts 2006:115–20). In Colossians, it is specifically by addressing sin that Christ’s atoning work brings about the defeat of Satan and the powers; the disarmament and public spectacle of the “rulers and authorities” (Col. 2:15) follow the cancellation of the written code against sinners (Menziez and Menziez 2000, 163). Believers have risen with Christ in his resurrection (Col. 2:12). This frees the believers from all curses. In Revelation 12:7–12, the believers overcame the accuser of “our comrades” by the “blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimonies.” This does not imply that there are some “magical” powers in the meaning of the blood of Jesus. Rather, it is the victory which is linked with the redemptive work of Jesus (see Chapter 20), which Christians must apply for deliverance from the powers of the evil one (Gal. 1:4; Heb. 2:14–18; 1 John 3:8).

Pentecostals often urge Christians to have dominion over sin by not yielding to the cravings of the flesh (Fee 1994, 441–43). Paul especially recognizes that although the compelling influence of the flesh has been broken by the work of Christ, the inner compulsion continually seeks to reassert its claim on believers. He provides several lists of categories of sins, but in all of these he does not contrast “the flesh” with “the demonic” but rather with the “new man” or “the Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:9–10; Eph. 4:17–24; Col. 3: 5–9). For example, in Galatians 5:19–23, he offers one list of “the works of the flesh” and another list of “the fruit of the Spirit” to illustrate this tension. Fee organizes the fifteen items in “the works of the flesh” into four categories (Fee 1994, 441). Significantly, eight of the items, falling within the same class, describe actions that lead to the breakdown of social relations and societal issues, which is manifested in psychological reaction in some people in the West, suicidal tendencies in oriental people, and witchcraft accusation in some African societies. Some believers may consider most of the items on this list as demonic and others as the outcome of generational or ancestral curses. However, the reason Paul fails to pinpoint these behaviours as demonic is very important: Christians are warned against “the works of the flesh” not because they are demonic, but because they are concrete expressions of “works” carried out by people who live in keeping with the human nature and that of the world instead of Christ’s kingdom. Such vices, according to Paul, may become the foothold of Satan and also bring the wrath of God (Rom. 1:18; Eph. 4:20; Col. 3:6). Thus, Paul’s consistent warning to believers not to yield to the flesh means that every Christian faces the recurring choice of either giving in to the compelling influence of the flesh or to live continually in obedience to the Spirit (Onyinah 2012a, 266).

The implication of this contrast for Pentecostal theology is that most of the issues which are interpreted as acts of demons, witches, or curses may be considered in the first instance works of the flesh. Consequently, overcoming them may not require deliverance but rather walking in the Spirit and living obediently to Christ. Pentecostals strongly affirm the ministry of the Holy Spirit for victorious living and maintain that the gifts of the Spirit are operative for the full development of the church (Menziez and Menziez 2000, 206–7). For Pentecostals, the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the speaking with tongues enable Christians to pray and be enabled to face all challenges in life (Larbi 2001, 277). Thus, while the existentially felt needs of protection by some Christians are relevant because of the eschatological

tension of the work of Christ pictured in the New Testament, Pentecostals are reminded of their position in Christ, their empowerment by the Holy Spirit, and the assurance that insofar as they are under the sovereign control of God, no power will be able to overcome them.

Although Pentecostals are aware that the Holy Spirit is the believers' comforter and shield (see Chapter 19), they do not deny the possibility of physical attacks by the devil. Clearly, the Bible teaches that the devil instigates persecution, which results in suffering and, in some cases, the death of believers (1 Pet. 5:8–9; Rev. 2:9, 13). It is also apparent from the Bible that the devil's attacks may result in physical infirmity (Luke 13:11–16; Matt. 12:22–23; Mark 9:17–26). Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was featured as a torment by "a messenger of Satan" (2 Cor. 12:7), but that Paul prayed to God three times and was not "delivered" means the issue was not between Paul and the devil but rather between Paul and God and thus not a spiritual warfare. The good news here is that Pentecostals embrace the healing that is described in these passages but also affirm that in some cases in which there is no cure (2 Cor 12:9; Onyinah 2006; see Petts 2006, 172–217), God's grace is sufficient.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined contemporary spiritual warfare practices and responded to the challenges raised by placing it within the biblical context. It was shown that although Pentecostals traditionally asserted the reality of evil spirits and prayed to cast out demons, they did not practise this under the label of "spiritual warfare." In reformulating a Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare, it was shown that the coming of Jesus Christ on earth has liberated people from demonic oppression. The defeat of the demonic realm was demonstrated in Jesus' ministry of exorcism and climaxed in his death and resurrection. Believers have been rescued from the kingdom of darkness and have been transferred into the kingdom of Christ. Yet the devil and his cohort are active and work through schemes. Christians are not to be afraid of them but rather to resist them through the application of the word of God and praying in the Spirit.

The warfare concept can be understood as the apparent conflict between God and satanic powers, in which the human being is actively involved through the mind. To oppose God, Satan seeks to influence Christians to think and live contrary to the word of God through the infiltration of false philosophies and doctrines. The ground upon which the devil works is sin, yet the believer is equipped through the baptism of the Spirit to live a victorious life.

It can be concluded that many issues which are considered demonic are issues that fall within the domain of the flesh. Christians are warned against the works of the flesh not because they are demonic, but because they are the evidence of the compelling influence of the old nature in contrast to the work of God. Despite the victory won by Christ, the final redemption has not yet been fully realized. Therefore, Christians are still exposed to the reality of sin, physical afflictions, and suffering. In each of these, believers can triumph in the victory of Christ as they look forward to the resolution of the conflict at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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