

PULLING DOWN STRONGHOLDS: EVANGELISM, PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS AND THE AFRICAN PENTECOSTAL IMAGINATION

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Themes relating to overcoming, conquering, dominating, or defeating evil powers and breaking through debilitating conditions that afflict people, as seen in the ministries of Jesus Christ and of the apostles in Acts, are familiar to Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity. In fact, Pentecostals differ from other Christian traditions not simply because they believe in “speaking in tongues” but also because they emphasize the grace of the Holy Spirit in helping the believer overcome the debilitating influences of evil. Evangelism in the Pentecostal tradition, as the late founder of the Vineyard Ministries, John Wimber, usually put it, is about power encounters. The Bible is the primary source of Pentecostal theology and we may profitably begin from there. In that vein, two particular texts familiar to Pentecostal/Charismatic discourse stimulate my thinking as I reflect on the relationship between evangelism and power encounters in African Pentecostal discourse and practice.

The first has to do with Philip’s ministry in Samaria that followed the persecution of the apostles in Jerusalem:

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city (Acts 8:4-8).

The second text relates to how the same miracles of healing, exorcism and deliverance associated with the apostolic ministry accompanied the ministry of Paul.

God did extraordinary miracles through Paul so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and evil spirits left them (Acts 19:11-12).

In these two passages, we find that the preaching of the word of God and the ministry of “signs and wonders” were inseparable in the Acts of the Apostles and, as Pentecostals often like to point out, also in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Obstacles that prevent people from realizing abundance of life in Jesus Christ, including sin, spiritual and physical afflictions, and other such negative influences, are in Pentecostal hermeneutics cast as “strongholds”. Such strongholds must be pulled down by the authority of the risen Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit as a validation of the gospel and not as an appendix to Christian ministry. This is one way in which Pentecostal/charismatic Christians understand the words of Jesus, “You shall receive power when the Holy Ghost has come upon you” (Acts 1:8). I use the conjoined expression ‘Pentecostal/charismatic’ to refer to all Christians, churches and movements that believe in and value, affirm and consciously seek to work within the presence of the Holy Spirit as part of normal Christian experience. For such people and movements the power of the Holy Spirit includes his ability to grant Christians who have experienced him the authority that Christ promised they would have to witness in his name. That authority includes the power over evil spirits and demons.

Belief, experience and the Holy Spirit

The authority of the believer is itself founded on passages such as Mark 9:14-18, which some scholars have argued was not originally part of the original biblical corpus. Pentecostals will have none of that historical-critical approach to the text. The Bible for them is the authoritative word of God, and what it promises the believer must be appropriated for the expansion of God’s kingdom. Thus, Pentecostals preach, speak, teach, sing about and practice these interventionist theologies, as I call them, in ways and to degrees that one cannot find in other streams of Christianity. “I/we believe in the Holy Spirit” is an aspect of the Christian creed that every Christian and church may be willing to affirm. However, for us as Pentecostal/charismatic Christians, belief and experience are always expected to move in tandem if the power of God is to be seen in evangelism. Pentecostalism is about the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit, and it is the Spirit who enables healing and the casting out of evil spirits to take place in the context of evangelism.

Christians in Africa have found the categories of power, dominion and alleviation of suffering by the power of the Spirit relevant in the general struggle with fears and insecurities within a universe in which supernatural evil is considered hyperactive.¹ Thus, classical

¹ André Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani, eds, *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2001, p. 5.

Pentecostal spirituality, including its contemporary neo-Pentecostal or charismatic forms, is popular in Africa because its interpretation of and responses to evil are continuous with traditional religious ideas in which evil is believed to be mystically caused. In this worldview, belief and experience always belong together. For example, in her work *Translating the Devil*, which is based on ethnographic data concerning the Peki-Ewe of Ghana, Birgit Meyer notes how the inability of historic mission churches to take the experience of the Holy Spirit seriously, and to “ward off or cast out evil spirits” and offer people protection and healing in his power became causes of people drifting into Pentecostal/charismatic churches and movements.² Wherever Pentecostalism has emerged in Africa the ministries of exorcism, healing and deliverance have been its main means of evangelizing. In those ministries, people see the existential meaning of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Healing, exorcism and evangelism

This article examines the importance of the ministries of healing and exorcism in African Pentecostal evangelism. Evangelism in this context refers to the conscious attempt to proclaim Christ as Saviour. Its aim is to rely on the Holy Spirit to convict of sin and evoke responses that lead those so convicted to accept Christ as their Lord. In other words, the simple definition of evangelism from a Pentecostal perspective is to get people to be “born again”. This explains why personal conversion testimonies are important in Pentecostal evangelism. Unlike some of those who made presentations at the Bossey consultation on evangelism in June 2006, especially those from Western Europe, African Pentecostal/charismatic Christians still believe in mass evangelization methods in which people are invited through an “altar call” to give their lives to Christ. When evangelism takes place during mass evangelistic crusades it often includes praying for the sick and casting out demons in order to affirm the power and viability of the message. With the media explosion currently underway on the continent, some of these events are telecast as part of sponsored television programmes, and with dramatic effects on audiences. My reflections proceed from an African perspective where the eurocentric distinctions among evangelical, charismatic and Pentecostal streams of Christianity now appear blurred. The reason is that many non-Pentecostal churches also take a very evangelical or charismatic approach to Christianity in which signs and wonders accompany the proclamation of the gospel. In keeping with the socio-religious location of my knowledge and the immediate geographical context of my pastoral ministry, most of my examples are drawn specifically from Ghana.

In an important issue of the *International Review of Missions* in 1955, a Ghanaian mainline church leader, E.A. Asamoah, chastised the mission churches for being dismissive of the

² Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity Among the Ewe in Ghana*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. xviii.

effects of such things as witchcraft and belief in evil spirits on African societies. His main point is worth quoting here:

It is no exaggeration to say that the church's attitude towards African beliefs has generally been one of negation, a denial of the validity of those beliefs ... Anybody who knows the African Christian intimately will know that no amount of denial on the part of the church will expel belief in supernatural powers from the minds of the African people.³

Among others, Asamoah counselled that the church must recognize the reality of the African world of spirits, and take practical steps to show the African Christian that "real power is not in the hands of these spirits but in the hands of Jesus Christ".⁴ To some extent, the churches seem to have taken up the challenge to consider witchcraft as real and to respond to it in the supreme might of Christ. In the last three decades, charismatic renewal movements have emerged strongly within historic mission denominations, and this has changed the face of African Christianity in ways that make strict denominational categorizations tenuous if not contentious.

Pentecostalism and the African worldview

The African [Akan] universe, Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gyekye argues, "is a spiritual universe, one in which supernatural beings play significant roles in the thought and action of the people".⁵ Christian G. Baëta explains how such a view of the universe has been reached:

On a worldview which assumes the effective presence of numberless spirits, and regards all life as one, with no clear distinctions between the material and the non-material, the natural and supernatural, let alone the secular and the religious, or even between man and other created beings, this could hardly be otherwise.⁶

African traditions generally hold a strong belief in spirit possession. Spirits of deities possess people in order to make them priests but evil spirits can also hijack people's faculties to torment them. The Akan of Ghana for example make a distinction between *Akom*, possession leading to the priesthood and *adambo*, possession leading to insanity. Thus, I see the ministries of healing and exorcism, the particular concerns of my presentation, as important hallmarks of Pentecostal/charismatic evangelistic activity in Africa because, as I argue, its theology fits into African interpretations of mystical causality. More importantly, healing, deliverance and exorcism are continuous with the ministry of Jesus Christ. The emphases

³ E.A. Asamoah, "The Christian Church and African Heritage", *International Review of Missions*, 1955, p. 297.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

⁵ Kwame Gyekye, *African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*, revised edition, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1995, p. 69.

⁶ Christian G. Baëta, "Christianity and Healing", *Orita: Journal of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan*, Vol. 1, 1967, p. 19.

on healing and exorcism as tools of evangelism account in part for the rapid growth of Pentecostal Christianity in Africa and its impact on the older historic mission churches. This impact has been so profound that there is currently an ongoing 'Pentecostalisation' of African Christianity in which historic mission churches consciously incorporate pneumatic phenomena, particularly healing and exorcism, into their worship and spirituality.

My preliminary conclusions from a study based on Ghana show that Christians from diverse confessional backgrounds visit Roman Catholic grottos, Pentecostal/charismatic healing camps and centres, and prayer mountain sites in search of *ayaresa* (healing), *ogyee* (deliverance) and *tumi* (power) to overcome evil. This is all part of "spiritual warfare", the prodigious struggle to break through all the conditions that prevent the Christian from realizing a positive destiny in life. With such a strong belief in the power of spirits and the desire to seek deliverance within a religious context, it is not surprising that healing and exorcism are two of the most important phenomena that draw people into Pentecostal churches. The Church of Pentecost is the largest single Protestant denomination in Ghana. It has a very well defined agenda for evangelism that is carried out by the Witness Movement of the church. Annual reports by the Church of Pentecost to its highest decision making body, the general assembly, give a large amount of space to reportage concerning healings and exorcisms that have taken place in the church's various assemblies during the year.

The point has been made that this "power approach" to evangelism, which takes demon possession seriously, is one that coheres with African philosophical thought. This worldview differs from that of the typical historic mission church in which the Christian faith, as Kwame Bediako points out, reflects that which has been transmitted through the intellectual history of the West:

Coinciding as it did with significant advances in scientific discoveries, the Enlightenment acted to direct intellectual attention away from the realm of transcendence to the empirical world that could be seen and felt, away, that is, from the intangible to the tangible. By and large, Christian theology in the West made its peace with the Enlightenment. It responded by drawing a line between the secular world and the sacred sphere, as it were, and so established a frontier between the spiritual world on the one hand, and the material world on the other, creating in effect, a dichotomy between them. Many earnest Christians have been attempting by various means since then to bridge the two worlds.⁷

It is here, as Bediako further notes, that Africa has followed a different path culturally and intellectually from the Enlightenment heritage.⁸ Thus, African life operates within a worldview that is different from the one that takes its cue from western intellectual history. Among

⁷ Kwame Bediako, "Worship as Vital Participation: Some Personal Reflections on Ministry in the African Church", *Journal of African Christian Thought*, vol. 8 (2), December 2005, p. 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

the Akan of Ghana, evil is *mbusu* and most of the time it is supernaturally caused. When used in connection with life generally, *mbusu* is that which prevents people from living a holistic life style. In the Christology of one Ghanaian chorus, Jesus is presented as “the changer of evil destinies”. In that sense, in both traditional and indigenous Christian worldviews, evil is anything that destroys lives. Thus, the aim of the performance of traditional ritual, described by Meyer as “the pivot of Ewe religious life” is to achieve “health, fertility, protection and success in life”.⁹ In the process of conversion, the Ewe Christians, we are told, “measured the success of Christianity by its capacity to counteract evil at least as successfully as Ewe traditional religion”.¹⁰ To that end, Pentecostalism provides the ritual context within which the consequences of evil and spirit possession may be dealt with. Thus, in Ghana, the Pentecostal/charismatic phenomenon of *ayarewa ne ogyee* (healing and deliverance) is now not restricted to that tradition.

The need to struggle, fight and conquer supernatural evil is without exception a central sociological and theological issue for contemporary Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity in Africa. This creation of Christian ritual contexts and spaces for the resistance to evil by Pentecostals is not historically and theologically discontinuous with the activities of the older African Independent/Instituted Churches (AICs). Across the continent, these AICs are also known variously as “spiritual”, “Aladura”, “Zionist” or “prophet-healing” churches. The internalization of the gospel in vernacular form, and the inability of historic mission Christianity to respond to the African spiritual quest for deliverance from evil and survival, account for the rise of the AICs at the turn of the 20th century. The pastoral strategy of these older indigenous churches was to produce integrated syncretistic rites as effective African Christian alternatives to traditional rituals of coping, protection and prevention of evil. The Pentecostal/charismatic churches in Ghana have not departed significantly from the religious culture of fighting evil through religious ritual.

Spiritual warfare in African Pentecostal hermeneutics

Healing and exorcism take place in the context of what Pentecostals describe as spiritual warfare. This is based on St Paul’s submission, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12). Emmanuel Milingo, the former Roman Catholic Archbishop of Lusaka in Zambia, had a powerful ministry of healing and exorcism. He describes the nature of the struggles that the sick and possessed go through as they come face to face with the power of Christ as manifested through the Holy Spirit:

⁹ Meyer, *Translating the Devil...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 61, 68.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

Those who are epileptic fall into convulsions. Tumors become agonizingly painful and disturb the patients, many of whom scream with the pain. Those who have incurable wounds feel the burning fire on them. The possessed cry, shake, speak strange languages and twist themselves and roll on the ground. Those who are subject to phobias, anxieties and worries sometimes just weep, their tears coming down their cheeks without control. A miserable sight, but a sign of hope. The Holy Spirit has discerned the diseases, putting them in the open for us, and urges us to pray for the sick because they are really in pain and are subject to various kinds of tortures.¹¹

For a typical African Pentecostal/charismatic understanding of the phenomenon of evil powers and how to deal with them, consider the following discourse from that stable. Steve Mensah is the founder of the Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry (CEM), one of the new Pentecostal/charismatic churches based in Ghana. He is widely acknowledged as a leading exponent and practitioner of the "healing and deliverance" ministry. In a Sunday sermon, Pastor Mensah told his members, "When you are 'born again' you must be prepared for spiritual warfare". He said that God's command to humankind to subdue the earth meant that from the beginning, "We were given power and authority", and that just as "in the name of the state" a police officer in uniform would be deemed to possess the requisite authority to stop traffic, "each of you has the authority to raise your hand and stop the activities of demons." The Christian who is plagued by evils has therefore no need to panic. Mensah said, "When in trouble, simply take authority in the name of Jesus" over the problem. Making reference to Philippians 2:10 ("In the name of Jesus every knee shall bow"), Pastor Mensah asserted that "sickness knees", "marital problems knees", "financial difficulties knees", "business problems knees", and "demons knees" should all bow to the mightier power and authority located in the name of Jesus. His message concluded with an assurance to the congregation that, as believers, they each had power to resist the devil and chase him out of their affairs, which he listed as marriages, homes, finances, business endeavours, and the lives of their families and children. Obviously inspired by the message, the congregation spontaneously burst into the following chorus as they waved white handkerchiefs, which in Ghana are symbols of victory:

We conquer Satan
 We conquer demons
 We conquer principalities
 We conquer powers
 Shout Hallelujah!

Satan, demons, principalities and powers all have one thing in common, viz. they are considered the principal sources of evil in life and existence. The spirits of the ancestors and tra-

¹¹ Emmanuel Milingo, *The World in Between: Christian Healing and the Struggle for Spiritual Survival*, London, C. Hurst and Co., 1984, p. 29.

ditional deities have all survived in the African Christian imagination as demons that must be resisted, pure and simple. Pastor Mensah's reference to the name of Jesus during the message is thus very instructive. The icons and images of the Christ event, viz. his name, his authority, his blood and his cross, are constantly invoked in pronouncements of curses on traditional religions, evil and other enemies including the devil, witches, demons or the "principalities and powers" that make life difficult for people. In fact, the name and blood of Jesus in particular feature very frequently in indigenous Christian prayers and gospel music as powerful instruments for the conquest of evil and the changing of destinies. In the words of some Ghanaian Pentecostal/charismatic local choruses, *ɔzin no mbonsam suro* (devils/demons fear that name) and *bogya no tumi ne ayareɛa wo mu* (there is power and healing in the blood). According to the first chorus, the name of Jesus also "performs wonders ... heals diseases ... cures lepers and cripples, (and) destroys the powers of witches".

Shifting paradigms in evangelism

I studied in Ghana at Trinity Theological Seminary, which was established in 1942 and patterned after the western European system of theological education. In the last twenty years I have been amazed at how the lives of students and professors at the seminary, as well as the teaching curriculum, have changed in many ways. Over the years, courses have broadened to include African theology, evangelism and church growth, Pentecostal and charismatic theologies, and African and biblical charismaticism, which is offered at the graduate level. One of the seminary professors, who returned to Ghana in the early 1990s and had trained under James Cone in the USA, has made a dramatic shift from his theologies of inculturation and liberation, and is now a leading exponent of healing and deliverance in Ghana. The story of his dramatic shift from what his class mates at Trinity in the 1970s saw then as a growing liberal Presbyterian pastor to an avowed advocate and practitioner of exorcism is best told in his own words:

On my return from Union Theological Seminary, I was posted to the Presbyterian Church of Ghana congregation at Kaneshie in Accra. The church had a Bible study and prayer group which was made up of lay members who met to pray, read the Bible, heal the sick and cast out spirits. Some of the elders lodged a complaint with me about the activities of the group, which they considered "un-Presbyterian". I asked them to give me time to study things for myself and make a decision. I visited the group and discovered that they spent long hours in prayer. When the leaders laid hands on those needing prayer some of them were "slain in the Spirit", that is, they fell down. I did not understand what was going on but was sure of one thing: the activities were genuine and those who fell down during prayer were not faking their fall. I felt drawn towards the activities of the group, and today I am in it big time.

At the end of every academic year, Trinity Theological Seminary holds a family week for final year students. Students bring their spouses to the campus for a week during which

seminars are organized for the couples to prepare them for life as pastors and pastors' spouses. The professor in question used to be in charge of this programme. For the period that he was in charge, every evening of the family week was dedicated to teaching the students how to exorcise spirits. Such an exercise in exorcism on the campus of Trinity, a seminary set up and run for a number of years by white western Protestant theologians, would have been unthinkable even ten years ago. In the early years of the neo-Pentecostal movement in Ghana almost three decades ago, leaders of the movement openly chastised Trinity Theological Seminary for its critical approach to the Bible. One leader of a new charismatic church, who has since apologized for his vituperations against the seminary, described Trinity then as no more than a "cemetery" from where only "dry bones" could emerge. Two decades after these attacks Pentecostal and Charismatic pastors now apply in their numbers to study at Trinity. Several have done their projects under the tutelage of this author. They have not only come to appreciate the need for rigorous and critical academic training but Trinity itself has also responded positively to changing paradigms in Christianity by creating space for the ministries of healing, exorcism and deliverance in its activities.

As a Methodist minister of charismatic persuasion, I have had personal encounters with exorcism too. I began my pastoral ministry in a small town in the central region of the country. The Jesus of Nazareth Healing Church in the town held church services and prayer meetings at which God's intervention was sought on behalf of sick and troubled persons with great results. There were facilities for quarantining those whose conditions needed time to deal with. One day, one of these quarantined patients grew violent and strayed to my house. "I have had a vision," she said. "I saw angels who told me to come to your house because you can help me." I tried talking to the patient but for long periods of time she would become dissociated, speaking with a small shrill voice that in my interpretation indicated another personality at work in the woman. Occasionally during our encounter, I would call the woman's name, and whatever spirit was at work in her would repeatedly call the name telling her, "Pastor wants to speak to you." I would then speak to the woman until at points the spirit would tell me, "You are wasting my time," and then take over the woman's mental faculty and lead her into all kinds of disturbing gestures including contortions of her face. We did pray for her and exorcised the spirit, and the woman has been able to return to her home and business. The point is that when my students, many of whom come from evangelical, charismatic or Pentecostal backgrounds, hear about such personal stories, they are encouraged that this sort of ministry is as equally important as any other.

Exorcism and evangelism and the ministry of Christ

Healing, exorcism and deliverance are important for us first because they were critical to the ministry of Jesus Christ. He so integrated these ministries into his work that it is difficult to separate them from evangelism that is done in the way Jesus wanted it to be done. St Mark

for example begins his record of the sending out of the twelve disciples by referring specifically to the healing and exorcism component of that sending:

Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits ... (and) they drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them. (Mark 6:7,11)

In my writings, I often make a distinction between demonic possession and demonic oppression. In demonic oppression, as used in African Pentecostal discourse, evil powers simply make life miserable through all kinds of failures but without necessarily inhabiting the person. In demonic possession, an alien spirit actually takes control of a person's faculties, as we find in Mark 5. The story of the Gadarene demonic recorded in that chapter is a classic example of the relationship between exorcism and evangelism. We are told that the man had come under the influence of evil spirits that had sent him into a very pitiful state. "No one was strong enough to subdue him," we read. "Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones" (vv. 4-5). Following the man's encounter with Jesus, there was a total transformation that made a strong impression on those who saw the change. "When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind, and they were afraid." Subsequently, "the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him" (vv. 15, 20). The evidence of transformation was there for all to see and I believe it was sufficient to make the man's testimony and the message and person of Jesus credible.

Such ministries of supernatural intervention are as critical to the evangelisation efforts of African independent indigenous Pentecostal churches as they were for the apostles before and after Pentecost. These churches, which have taken over from the older historic mission churches as the representative face of African Christianity, constitute the growing edges of the shift in the centre of gravity of Christianity from the North to the South. In aspects of contemporary African Christianity, the meaning of exorcism is extended to include dealing with "territorial spirits" that trouble communities and spaces such as haunted homes. These ministries are so important that not only do many African churches consciously place the word "healing" in their names but also healing from sickness and deliverance from the demonic encumbrances of life is available, and advertised. In Ghana, all-day prayer services variously dubbed Jericho Hour, Hour of Restoration, Hour of Deliverance, Hour of Divine Interventions, Hour of Supernatural Visitation, Hour of Grace, or Hour of Supernatural Favour, are available for the possessed and physically and spiritually troubled to seek divine interventions for their troubles. The phenomenon of exorcism has in addition generated many prayer and healing camps and prophetic ministries to which people go for deliverance in times of need.

Conclusion

In my understanding and experience, there are three things that make the theology of divine intervention through exorcism an important part of Christian evangelism in Africa.

The first is that the biblical worldview of mystical causality within which African evangelism operates resonates very strongly with African worldviews on the causes of evil, including the belief in spirit possession. The traditional African, we have noted, lives in an intentional world in which things do not happen by chance. Even when the problems are naturally caused, evil spirits are able to quickly set in and exploit the situation to the disadvantage of the victim. The general belief is that events have causes. Therefore, when St Paul speaks about wrestling with “principalities and powers” or having an “agent of Satan” in his body, he speaks in categories and idioms that are not alien to African cosmological ideas.

The primary motivation of African Pentecostals as far as the ministry of healing and exorcism are concerned is to be biblical. Pentecostals thus speak of a different kind of apostolic succession that puts the emphasis not only on ecclesiastical authority and inheritance but also on the power of God that was evident then and now. The translation of the gospel into the vernacular has brought about a level of apprehension of the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ as a God of power and deliverance. If he took the Israelites through the Red Sea and brought down the walls of Jericho, then it makes sense to establish a Jericho Hour so that the walls of hostility and the strongholds in the lives of his people can be pulled down even today. Similarly, if those who believe in Jesus Christ must do “greater works” then it stands to reason that those who are possessed by the spirits of the traditional world — ancestors, deities, demons and other malevolent forces — must be cast out in order that “the captives” can be set free.

Any Christian or church that takes the ministries of healing and exorcism seriously also knows how to pray and “wait upon the Lord”. It is a very challenging ministry, and one that calls for transparency, commitment, prayer and fasting because dealing with evil spirits can be a dangerous venture for those who take it lightly. The story of the “sons of Sceva” in Acts 19 is an example of the fact that God’s grace in evangelism should not be taken for granted.

In contradistinction to what pertains in indigenous Christian ministries, Christoffer H. Grundmann concedes that, “The theologies that missionaries were exposed to while receiving their training did not equip them to take up the challenge of pneumatological reflection properly.”¹² The processes of healing and exorcism invite us to rethink traditional methods of evangelism and pneumatology. Within the context of evangelism, the ministry of exorcism in particular constitutes a response to the reality of evil, and is a non-negotiable element in

¹² Christoffer H. Grundmann, “Inviting the Spirit to Fight the Spirits? Pneumatological Challenges for Missions in Healing and Exorcism”, *International Review of Mission*, vol. 94, No. 372, January 2005, p. 53.

the religious consciousness of all Christians who are alive to the world of the Bible. In this way, Africa, through the ingenuity of the Pentecostals, has emerged as the new centre of theological creativity; Bediako calls it a “laboratory”, where “Christian answers to African questions are hammered out”.¹³ In the African healing and exorcism ministry, we come across an innovative Christianity that has much to teach us about what it means to be both African and Christian without undermining either of these twin identities.

¹³ Kwame Bediako, interviewed by Kim A. Lawton, “Faith without Borders: How the Developing World is Changing the Face of Christianity”, *Christianity Today*, 19 May, 1997, p. 44.