

Journeying Toward Transformation

by

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Volume 1

2 journeying toward transformation

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Preface

The people of God have been given a wonderful commission, to represent Christ on the earth and to make his presence real in every location. Transformation-type language seems to be appropriate language to use to describe the Great Commission to 'disciple all nations'. When there is some evidence that a measure of transformation has taken place we should expect the following elements:

- a God-awareness in the community
- people coming to know Jesus at a personal level
- a positive societal shift regarding such issues as crime and social breakdown
- a flow of justice within and from the community

Those elements are, of course, part of the Hebraic vision of *shalom*, and although I do not believe that we will ever see a total manifestation of *shalom* prior to the return of Jesus, I remain optimistic that we are to pray and work toward some clear evidence of the presence of God's kingdom manifesting within society in the here and now. The challenge is to see on earth tangible manifestations of heaven's values and society.

Since 1998 I have been involved in pursuing this type of vision. What I write here cannot be the final perspective on this, but I submit these chapters as part of the ongoing contribution that many are making to this vision. I have been so enriched during these these past years as I have experienced fellowship with people all over the world who are pulling for the same thing.

When I began to respond to this vision I had a simple message: let the church be united and let there be unified prayer to turn things round. Those elements are still very central to what I believe, although I might well express them a little differently now. On every spiritual journey there are understandings the Lord adds on the way. In those early days I would never

have understood the language of 'healing the land', but that was one of the first conviction that has become core to my beliefs and aims. Soon after that followed the concept of the church occupying what had been cleared through prayer. Other concepts have followed or older ones have been nuanced.

In the following chapters I will try to unfold what I consider needs to be in place if we are to have a realistic hope of a city or region being transformed. In part the chapters are reworks of the two books: *Gaining Ground* and *Impacting the City*, along with material that has developed since those books were published.¹

The work before us is enormous, but surely not to the scale that the early church faced. Twelve core disciples, 120 in an Upper Room, and something like 12% of the entire Roman Empire as committed disciples within 300 years. This works out to be a growth rate of some 40% per decade every decade. They actually believed that the commission from heaven and the breath of the Spirit, constituted them as the body of Christ. They had the conviction that through the resurrection their Lord filled 'everything in every way' (Ephes. 1:23) and that they, as the body of Christ, were to grow to the fullness of the stature of this Christ (Ephes. 4:13).

If we could recapture some of their enthusiasm, some of their infectious faith, and perhaps their sense of adventure I wonder what might take place. In my context, the continent of Europe, I am asking what would take place if we made that all-out response to the call from heaven for Jesus to have his church back. I am painfully aware that it might mean the end of some forms of church, but the possibility of participating in the life of God pulsating through the body of Christ would be a reward beyond anything we deserve.

I trust that the material I present will stimulate your imagination and cause you to go back again to Scripture for a biblical vision for your situation to be strengthened. What I write I submit as a contribution - use what is useful and be bold enough both to use whatever tools are helpful at any given time, and to put down ones that don't work. What is written is not some program for success - there is absolutely no substitute for success. Above all follow the Lord of the harvest.

¹ *Gaining Ground* (Tonbridge: Sovereign World, 2004) and originally published in 2001 as *Sowing seeds for revival*; *Impacting the City* (Tonbridge: Sovereign World, 2004).

Chapter 1

A Time for Fulfillments

If we are not prepared for the hard work of ploughing any hope we had of reaping will prove to have been false, for as Proverbs 20:4 says, 'A sluggard does not plough in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing.' We all wish to harvest but if we are not prepared to work hard at the level of preparation (ploughing and sowing) we will find ourselves being very disappointed. Just before I began to travel with prayer teams in June 1998, a church leader asked me how long I envisaged travelling in that capacity. I replied that I anticipated I would need to do so for at least four to six years even to begin to scratch the surface. The look on his face told me he was hoping I would say 'a few months' so that we might all be able to rest back and experience the presence of revival in the nation by then. He was hoping that all our hard work would be over, as people in significant numbers would be responding to salvation. Revival - the answer to all our problems! What a wonderful thought, but I also suspect a major myth!

There seems to me to be only two legitimate 'finishing lines' that are given to the church in Scripture - the return of Jesus and the taking of the gospel to the ends of the earth. Indeed it is likely that these two finishing lines will prove to be one and the same. Certainly Scripture does not lead us to expect that with just a little more effort revival will come, thus ending all our problems! Hard work, difficulties and setbacks will be with us till he returns. Thank God Scripture is considerably more realistic than we are. And thank God that the Scriptures are there to fill us with the faith we need to believe God for the turning of cities and also nations.

We find ourselves alive at a time of significant shift in Western culture. This mega-shift is affecting every expression of that culture, including church.

Death is around us; the end of an era is visible. For those with hope, though, this can also herald the beginning of a new era for death can once again yield to new life. New expressions of church are bursting through the dust of death that currently covers our culture. New life expresses itself in ways that are both continuous and discontinuous with what has gone on previously. So in our current setting the church that is coming to birth will manifest some of what has gone before – it will be recognisable – but it will also appear with many new aspects. The future of church will almost certainly be more diverse than ever, and yet the possibility of a deeper level of unity will be more within our grasp than before.

I advocate that we do not yield to the quick-fix mentality of ‘revival as the answer for all problems’, and that we also embrace this wider framework that the Western church is now at the end (and beginning) of an era. Those factors indicate that our task of effectively reaching our generation has to be a considered one. Thus far what I have written could well be interpreted as if I am pessimistic about our potential for success. However, given the chapter title as ‘a time for fulfilments’, I hope it will become clear that far from being pessimistic I am in fact optimistic and (I trust) realistic. Provided we engage with whatever hard work proves necessary to fulfil our task we can genuinely anticipate an experience of revival that will not disappoint. The very word ‘revival’ creates a diversity of images and I think it is only fair that I first expand on how I understand the concept in our culture.

Revival: what do we mean?

The word ‘revival’ is a hard one to give definition to. At one level it is not a biblical concept, for if the word is to have any meaning at all it is only applicable to a church that has gone asleep (or died). Only such a church needs reviving. Surely God never intended the church to sleep, and ‘revival’ language can be dangerous for two reasons: it can suggest that a revival dynamic is abnormal and that such abnormality solves all ills.

Yet the word is applicable in the sense that the church, as we experience it, continually needs reviving. And provided we understand that God desires the church to rise again to the challenge of incarnating the life of Jesus within our culture it is not an inappropriate term. So long as we do not fall into the trap of the ‘revival-cures-all-ills’ trap it seems appropriate to me to use the term ‘revival’ as a statement of our hope.

A revival is coming – and in measure is already here in many places – but I am agnostic as to how it will be expressed. It certainly cannot be where the church dominates and everyone has to submit – that is the domain of empires and the manifestation of an anti-Christ spirit. I am sure there will be some great inbreakings of the Spirit, for that typifies the unpredictable wind of God (John 3:8), but, in all honesty, my overall hope is that we see the church rise from her sleep and grow increasingly into the fulfilment of her call. Sudden increases might well be more exciting, but an experience of steady growth might well prove to be healthier than a sudden explosion of the life of God. Statistically it has been suggested that the early church grew at some 40% per decade virtually every decade for some 300 years – definite steady growth, and dare I suggest it – truly revival growth. I also consider that steady growth will more likely deal with our wrongly placed desire for God to do for us what he has already challenged us to do. He asks that we work out what he has worked in us; that we grapple with the suffering of creation and so come through to a place of humble stewardship. Hence steady and consistent growth should indeed prove to be healthier.

If God, and he most surely will, comes to accelerate things dramatically so well and good, but if not then we need to know what it is we are to get on with, and to set in place. Perhaps there has never been a greater opportunity to demonstrate the manifold wisdom of God, not only to the heavenly powers, but also to those around us. God does have a ‘meta-narrative’ that he is telling, for he is the beginning and the end; and that story must be told and re-told in every generation through a myriad of cameos.

For that story to be told we will need to, as part of the body of Christ, connect with our community. As a connection is made with the community, the church becomes a redemptive body and enables the setting (people and geography) to begin to connect with the amazing redemptive story that runs from creation to consummation. If the church can embrace that God has called her to be a body of destiny then seeds of destiny can be sowed into the wider community. The story to be told then is not our story but his. The challenge facing any church leadership is to flow in such a way that any sub-vision that they are proposing is not centralised in a controlling fashion, but is ready to give way to the wonderful transformation message of the Gospel. Too often leaders have developed a vision that is centred in on the growth of the church and its activities – the end result being one of stifling the bigger vision of the church being redemptive in and through all of creation. Any vision

developed at a church level can only be temporary. It continually has to die in order that Jesus becomes centre stage in God's meta-narrative that is directed by the Spirit.

Revival then, for me, both speaks of the awakening of the church to fulfil her creation mandate, and also speaks of great inbreakings of the Spirit, so that through the church the presence of the future is manifest for any society to view.

Fulfilments

Into the context I have outlined above I want to speak of hope, of a season of fulfilments that is here before us in the Western church. Yet before writing about fulfilments let me also underline that the pathway to any fulfilment will always include a death experience. There is no successful fulfilment without death. The path from promise to fulfilment must travel by way of the cross.

However, enough realism for now! In Easter of 1991 I was in South Africa and over a period of days a vision began to take shape. I wrote down, under a number of headings, the things I believed were going to take place. I will give the headlines below and then put a little more substance to the headlines as I explain how I currently understand the various aspects.

(Just before giving the headlines it is worth noting at this stage that I used to think 'UK' whereas now I think 'Europe', so the scope of the vision is the European church. What I suggest though is applicable globally.)

- **A new type of church was to rise**

In my notes I wrote down 'Apostolic church'. This type of church would have great authority over a region. It would be as if that region had opened up spiritually and even if one travelled some 50 miles from that place the atmosphere elsewhere might still be closed. The contrast was very marked. Within the context of apostolic church I saw that there would be a great release of signs and wonders.

- **Different ages released**

A great youth movement was coming. These young people would be sold out and ready to go at the Lord's command. A number of these young people would not live the majority of their lives in the UK, but would relocate to other European cities thus helping to form the end of a bridge, with the result that

many cities became inter-connected.

Corresponding to this youth movement there would also be a movement among those aged approximately 55 and above. Some of those would have been on the edge of church but would find themselves catapulted into the heart of God's action plan; others simply stepped into something new so that their latter years proved to be more fruitful than all their former ones put together. A number of these people took early retirement with not a few living out the remainder of their lives in nations other than the nation of their birth.

- **Business and transformation**

I saw business people finding one another, and in particular finding one another internationally. Through their relationships they began to spark each other to such an extent that the day came when they would travel to nations that were under bondage through debt and poverty. They would gain entrance to those in power and let them know that they had come from God, but they did not come to simply hand out finances but to help with the reshaping of the nation. Poverty was broken of certain nations in a short period of time, and there was a level of unprecedented fruitfulness for the gospel.

- **An arts revival**

Finally, the arts were impacted. Something more than 'Christian drama' broke loose. The largest auditoriums in Europe were taken, and there was a revival of the arts in the streets. The latter opened up the wells of creativity; the former brought the colour of God to the public arena.

Some comments on the vision

In 1991 I had only one framework for the concept of 'apostolic church'. I thought that such a church would be where a local church - similar to 'my' one! - would grow to unprecedented levels and make a major impact on the spiritual atmosphere, as well as impressing everyone around!! Giving that my church would be one of them that was wonderful as I was in it!

However, I have become convinced that a big church is not what is going to do the job. Or, perhaps more accurately, a big 'local' church is not going to do it. However, if we could actually see and live from the revelation that there is a much larger church across our locality than our local church, then there is real hope that larger church will fulfil this vision. In other words I

now see church in the city or across the region as that body that the Lord is raising up, or 'reviving', to a level of apostolic authority. Leadership for this new expression of the body will inevitably be different to what has led what we have called 'local church'. Indeed some of the basic relational units might be smaller than anticipated, but the true bond of unity will be greater than before so that the church in the locality will truly begin to rise with an apostolic mantle.

Even many successful local churches are going to find themselves entering major transition. Unless there is an embracing of new relationships, in response to John 17, it will not be possible to rise up to participate in this new apostolic dimension. Inevitably there will have to be major redefinitions given to the words 'apostle' and 'apostolic'. Those who were apostolic in one era of church life might not automatically be apostolic in the next phase of development. The apostolic ministry is foundational, and in every move of God there will be apostles raised up to lay foundations for the expression of church coming out of that particular move.

There is a generation that is rising that will bring us into a level of fulfilment that has eluded us thus far. Youth and those who are not youth (I can't refer to those over 55 as elderly) are together that rising generation. All who are prepared to rise as part of what the Lord is doing will be the rising generation, regardless of age, for God is not the God of age. If what is rising is not marked by a certain age, it will however be marked by certain characteristics of the Spirit. Although, the rising generation is not primarily to do with age it also needs to be stated that if we do not see the youth touched in what is coming we will have fallen drastically short of a revival movement that is in the heart of God. So although it will not simply be youth that rise, it is necessary that a major part of what is coming be expressed through the younger generation.

The impacting of the business and arts arenas will be vital if we are to see a transformation that goes beyond our churches and touches our cities and nations. I cannot speak into these areas with any great expertise, but these spheres of activity will be addressed at some level in the context of this book. The saints are getting ready for their release and empowerment and we are gladly having to plan for the church to be placed in the context where God always desired: the world. A church truly gathered under one heavenly head is one that is placed in and through all of creation.

I trust by now that you will begin to see where I am aiming. I believe we need our faith to be stirred for new expressions while keeping our feet firmly planted on *terra firma*. We need to be people of prayer and of hard work. We need to love the church, but refuse to be held captive by concepts from a former era.

So, from my perspective revival is necessary to bring the church back to a level that God intended. This is an ongoing issue and in as much as the church is already being re-aligned with the purposes of God this reviving is already present among us in measure. We are now coming into a season of fulfilments, and that much of what was prophesied into the nations, churches and individuals at the end of the 80s and beginning of the 90s is coming to a time of fulfilment. Whenever prophecies are given they have to be received and waited on for their fulfilment and I believe now is the time for fulfilments to increasingly take place.

If this is so we can also expect many changes. When we move into fulfilments our experience will be different to what they were in the days of promise. One of the main aspects that we can expect is that prophetic intercession will begin to make room for apostolic declarations. I do not mean by this that there will be no more prophetic intercession, but that we will increasingly come to a time when what has been travailed over will be established. As this begins to happen the church will stand in a new place and declare what God has established.

Before, however, touching on these apostolic declarations there is the need for a brief explanation of what I mean by the term 'prophetic intercession'. I am using this term to cover every aspect of intercession (including prayer but not simply referring to prayer exclusively) that seeks to address the gap between what is and what should be. Historical sin has caused great divisions, like fissures in the ground. A good example of historical sin is that of the 'bloodguilt' that has been on the nation of Germany (and I certainly don't want to give the impression here that there is no bloodguilt on the UK for the wars that devastated Europe, in fact I believe that Germany is currently cleaner than England is over these issues). Over years many have stood in the gap on this issue and many actions have been implemented (prophetic intercession) with the result that today the bloodguilt has been removed from the nation. Historic guilt has been removed. God does forgive sin; repentance does turn a nation to God.

Prophetic intercession has created a platform for increasing apostolic declarations, where the effects of the sin can be proclaimed as over. Or, using other words, apostolic declarations are where declarations made through the church becomes effective (Matt. 18:18). This is not a technique but a level where the Lord wishes to take the church in order that the prophetic intercession of recent years will indeed bear much fruit.

What has been happening across Europe is that prophetic intercession, led in the main by faceless people, has begun to break through. Old strongholds are weakening, and this is making room for something new to rise up - an apostolic type church across cities, regions and even nations that will begin to make declarations. In so doing a new order in the heavens will open over cities and even over whole nations. Such an apostolic church will only be birthed out of intercession and manifest in a true spirit of unity.

The United Kingdom and Europe

If the UK church is to break through it is vital that we embrace our European identity. In spite of our isolation we have a history that binds us together. We are of the same stock and we are being called to play our part in the reforming of a continent. By using the word 'reforming' I am making a deliberate choice. We are being called to re-form, to put together shapes that are calling for God to fill them. (In Genesis 1, we read that this was how God first responded to a creation that was without form and empty - he made shapes or forms that he then later filled.) The Lord is encouraging us to pray and work for a manifestation of church across Europe that will cause there to be an even greater shake up than was caused at the time of the former Reformation.

There are fears in the UK (as well as in other European nations) about a united Europe. This is understandable both from a political and spiritual perspective. However, if the church in the UK does not engage with the reshaping of a spiritual unity within the church in Europe, and make a choice to share the burden of our corporate guilt, we will have no-one to blame but ourselves when a demonic and domineering Europe rises up. Dare I suggest that the Lord is calling for a united Europe - at the level of the body of Christ, and that the enemy wants to counterfeit this with an oppressive and even persecuting structure.

If through listening to negative voices about Europe the UK church

responds by withdrawing then those voices will prove to be self-fulfilling prophetic voices. If however, the church rises up in prayer and love then a new Europe could be formed. The Gospel must again shape up the continent that God graced for so long as a mission sending continent, and for that to happen the UK church must respond by embracing her European identity and destiny.

John the Baptist

One final biblical analogy that I believe will help us. I was present in a city where the unity among church leaders is as significant and as deep as I have seen anywhere. The unity could not be described as superficial for the pastors have wept with each other asking for forgiveness, the one of the other. They asked me if they should see themselves as a 'city eldership'. (I always find the answer given in those situations very educational, as the Holy Spirit loves to respond to our honest, humble search after truth.) Here was a situation that some might claim was very close to manifesting a city eldership, but surprisingly I found myself saying the following:

You are not to see yourselves as a city eldership, but you are to live, pray and exist with the burden and mandate to release a city eldership. When it comes through some of you might be part of it, some might not. However, if you do not live with the responsibility of producing a city eldership then it might not arise; also if you were to see yourselves at this time to be that city eldership you will actually prevent it from fully rising.

In other words their task was to be that of intercession, of standing prophetically for what was coming, and of calling for it. Their task was not to make claims for themselves, or to see themselves as what was coming.² I then went on to say that were to be like John the Baptist, who faced a similar line of questioning in John 1. So, as I close this chapter, let's take a brief look at the dialogue in that chapter, and in particular John's response.

² I also now understand that a 'city eldership' is not just going to consist of the church pastors but of those called to take responsibility from across the diversity of the city. As our understanding changes it makes it even more important that we do not over-define situations. It is often very difficult to undo what we have put in place. What we do today might be appropriate for this season and might move us forward, but it might prove to be the very obstacle that we have to remove in the next season.

Who are you?

The representatives of the Jewish Temple authorities came to John to ask him to state who he was. In doing so they gave him some alternatives. With each option presented he responded with a denial. Jesus was clearly the fulfilment of the first option presented ('are you the Messiah?'). John's also denies that he is the fulfilment of the last option ('are you the Prophet?'). He was not the Prophet for it was Jesus who truly was the Prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15-17). It is however the middle option in John 1:21 that they gave to John ('are you Elijah?') that we know to be most accurate. For Jesus himself said that John was indeed the Elijah that had been promised (see for example Matt. 11:14 for Jesus comments and Malachi 4:5,6 for the promise of Elijah).

Why then does John deny this identification? It is most unlikely that John did not self-consciously see himself as the fulfilment of the Elijah prophecy. I suggest that for John to do what he did would have been very difficult had he not seen understood himself as carrying the spirit of Elijah. Also given that John's father, Zechariah, had been told explicitly by Gabriel of John's identity it seems most unlikely that this identity was kept from him. So I am sure that John knew very well that he was indeed the person destined to stand in the anointing of Elijah.

Why then the denial? Two reasons. First, Jesus had said that John was Elijah *if* the people were able to receive it. The fact that they were asking the question indicated that they were not in fact receiving him as Elijah. So his answer to the question 'are you Elijah?' is in effect 'no I am not - at least I am not Elijah *to you*'. Those sent from heaven only fully succeed in their mission when they are received as ones sent.

The second factor, though, is that John is so focused on what is to come that he cannot be diverted to discuss his own identity. When forced, he describes himself simply in relation to what he was called to do. He was a voice, crying out in the wilderness. If he did not stand in the gap until he saw who was to come established he would have failed. What positive purpose could possibly result from debating who he was? If he fulfils his task then indeed it can then be said that he was Elijah, but not before. And if he does fulfil his task then it was never about him anyway, but about the one who was to come.

It is this attitude that must permeate all current activities. We are to be voices that intercede for what is to come. We are to take ourselves so

seriously that we are willing to live and die for what is to come. We, however, realise that what is to come is so much greater than we are that we cannot raise ourselves up with great titles. So we take what we are called to do very seriously, but can never view ourselves with intrinsic importance.

The great call from the heart of the Holy Spirit is for a body to rise up that will truly partner with him to stand in the gap between what is here and what is to come. We are calling for something apostolic to rise up, and it is necessary during this phase that we do not make claims prematurely. What is coming is greater than what is here; when that arrives we will need to decrease. Indeed for John this eventually meant he lost his head, and I suggest that there will be some current heads that will need to be removed when a new apostolic dimension rises.

If Malachi 4:6, which speaks of the hearts of parents and children being reconciled, has helped shape us over these past few years, I suggest that we will now have to embrace Jesus words that 'freely we have received, freely give' (Matt. 10:8). Even if we have paid a price for something the grace of Jesus means that we have received it freely. If we received it freely we are not owners of it but stewards. If stewards we need to be wise, but if we are not owners we have to give it away freely.

The idea that one generation received something through paying a price and any subsequent generation will have to go the same route is false. Whatever we have received is for the benefit of those who are coming. Our ceiling needs to become the floor for the next generation. They can then build in ways that we were not able to.

I believe this is a time for fulfilments, a time for investing into the rising generation. It will soon be time to recognise what we have longed for is becoming increasingly manifest, then that will signal that we who have led must give way. At that stage if God will further grace us we can then partner with what is rising. It is possible to receive a fresh impartation but only as we reposition ourselves.

The Lord is calling the church to revival, to be awakened so that a day of true fulfilments can be our experience. This call will also take the church to the Middle East. Could it be that the glory of God will spread back to the trouble spots of our world? This is our time to respond as the fulfilment of God's promises are, in part, in the hands of the saints. For this to take place we must not be sluggards but make preparations for the visitation and

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habitation of God.

Chapter 2

The Basic Shape

In the preface I spoke of the early message I carried as being an emphasis on unity and united prayer. These two important components I have developed since that time and as this chapter unfolds I will enlarge on how I see these now. I also believe that there is one other major component that needs to be added to those two – that of the godly stewardship of the space that is opened up through prayer. Further, the context in which the whole shape is effectively developed should manifest two elements that signify the inbreaking of the kingdom of God. So I am going to look at these five aspects that need to be developed.

So, to summarise, the three components to transformation are:

- a recognition of the unity of the body
- prayer that covers the ‘territory’ at all levels
- an occupation through godly stewardship of the space that is cleared

The two contextual elements that then give shape to the context will be that of:

- *justice*, and
- the inbreaking of God’s reality through *supernatural signs*

The unity of the body

A major conviction gathered from Paul’s letters is that there is one body in a given location. He wrote to the one church in a given location, although he was well aware that the one-geographically-located church found expression in a diverse number of settings. So, for example, he wrote to, ‘the church in

Corinth' (1 Cor. 1:2), and yet within any given place he acknowledged that the church did not necessarily all gather together in one location. An illustration of this is in his letter to the Romans where we read that he instructed those that received his letter to greet the church that met in another location in the city - at the home of Priscilla and Aquila (Rom. 16:3-5).

There were diverse locations where believers met, but Paul worked hard to ensure that there was a true unity in the midst of the diversity. He rebuked those who divided themselves along the lines of who their favourite apostolic ministry was (1 Cor. 1-3).

A major stumbling block to many people is the scandal of the disunity of the church. Although we should not be naïve and think there are no issues to work through in order to express unity, we cannot entertain legitimate hopes for transformation without also seeking to make a contribution to a greater manifestation of reconciliation within the body. Although a shallow unity based on the lowest common denominator will not be very effective, it is clear that we have to move far beyond seeing other expressions of the one body as the competition.

So in pursuing an expression of unity in a specific location we will have to consider what barriers need to be dealt with and what that unity could look like - all expressed amidst a healthy diversity.

The diverse prayer of the saints

Paul said that we are to 'pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication' (Ephes. 6:18) indicating that we cannot quickly declare that one type or style of prayer is the right one and any other style is wrong. I suggest then that we need to promote a multi-level approach to prayer.

Prayer that is varied will all help contribute toward the removal of offences (or we could say the undoing of the negative effects of history) and the release of the destiny of a place. Discovering how to develop the multi-levelled approach to prayer will be a key to breakthrough.

An occupation through godly stewardship

Words such as 'ruling' and 'reigning' are problematic as we often interpret these through a dominating (and thus fallen) understanding. However, 'ruling' in the sense of seeking to bring God's order through humble stewardship is

necessary if we are to rise to our calling.

As we pray and undo the effects of history it is vital that whatever is cleared is occupied. Jesus made this clear in his teaching about the casting out of a demon (Matt. 12:43-45) where he implied that once a demon has been evicted it is important that the 'house' is not left empty. Hence it is vital that the church (not in the institutional sense, but in the sense of 'church' as the people of God) rise up and finds her place in the context of society. Part of transformation will come as the church finds how to become immersed in creation.

How the people of God engage with their community will be vital. It cannot be one of domination *over* and imposition on the community, but one of servanthood *within* and *among* the community.

Two elements necessary to give a healthy kingdom context

- **Justice**

The prophets of the Old Testament are vocal during periods when those in power within the context of Israel ignore issues of justice. The laws of God that govern every aspect of the life of Israel are spiritual laws, but those laws of spirituality do not just speak into issues of morality, but into economic and societal dimensions. The kingdom of God demands an outworking through justice. Any true focus on transformation will carry this aspect, and justice will be more than an element we pursue - it will be a framework in which everything will develop.

- **Supernatural signs**

When John the Baptist had a question over the identity of Jesus (Matt. 11:2-6) he sent disciples to him to ask the question, 'are you the one or do we look for another?' Jesus replied by telling them to inform John what they were seeing and hearing. They were to tell John that there were miracles taking place (and the poor were the ones hearing the good news). The evidence of the inbreaking of the kingdom of God will be seen through such signs.

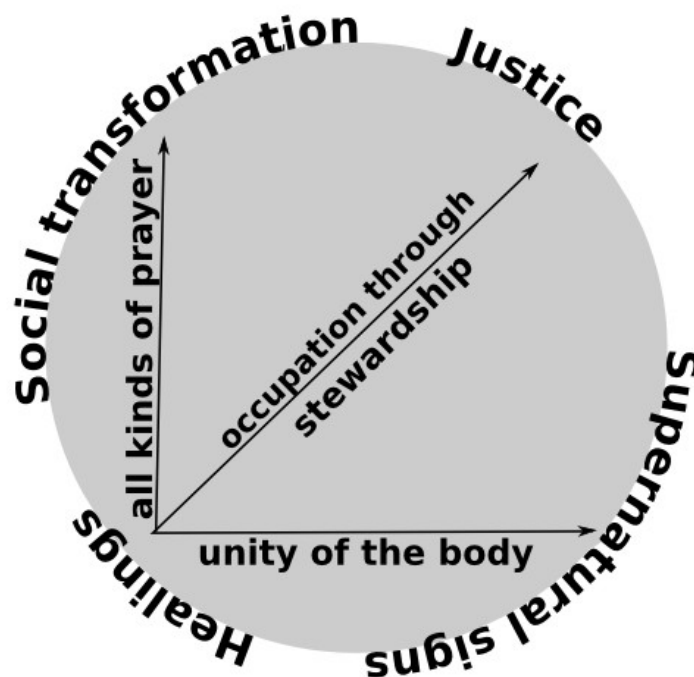
In the opening verses of Acts, Luke writes that his first volume (Luke's Gospel) was an account of all that Jesus *began* to do and to teach. Acts, by implication is the continuation of the works and teachings of Jesus but now through his body. There is no mandate to suggest that the inbreaking of the

kingdom of heaven, in ways that cannot be explained through natural means, is something that we are no longer to expect. Such signs are very much part of the context in which we are expected to work.

Whenever justice manifests it can be seen as miraculous as it demands a change of heart, but justice is something that rises up from the earth, whereas healings and miracles are signs that breaks in from another dimension. We need both, and both are the context of the kingdom – both are signs of the kingdom’s advance, and the presence of the King.

The term ‘supernatural’ might be problematic, but in using this term I am suggesting something that belongs to the age to come breaking in to the here and now in ways that cannot be anticipated from a natural standpoint.

We can illustrate the basic shape as follows:



The following chapters will follow through the implications of adopting this basic shape, but for now we can note that we will have to abandon every aspect of competition and in expanding our vision of the body we should realise that there is room for many diverse expressions. Only a full release of the body of Christ will be sufficient for the task that is before us. Transformation is not the call for a few to be involved in, and is not something that takes place within four walls but must be the expression of the body in

the context of all of creation.

The shape of the church (the wineskin) is indeed an important issue, as so many 'shapes' are spectacularly unhelpful at facilitating this agenda, but it also needs to be said that the start of the journey is unlikely to be in the realm of seeking to change the shape. Wineskins do not produce wine. The initial approach has to be of a transformation of mind and through that a desire to see the empowerment of all the saints of Jesus Christ - this will lead to a change of wineskin, either through the church yielding to that empowerment of the saints or through a separation of the body from the restrictions placed upon them as they find a repositioning in God's creation. We cannot avoid the implications for the shape of church, but the primary focus has to be the release of the saints to their calling. The release of the body is a more primary issue than the change of structure, but the former will subsequently have a major impact on the latter.

We must develop relationships for territory's sake

In 1996 I had heard the Lord speak to me that the time was coming when I needed to purchase some sackcloth, and in February 1998 while out jogging he told me that this was the time. It was so clear that I believe I could still go back and pinpoint the spot where he spoke to me as my feet touched the pavement while running. I managed to obtain some sackcloth and had a friend make up suitable clothing to wear. As I meditated on the meaning of the sackcloth God began to unfold something to me, which I had the privilege of sharing in some settings in the Spring of 1998. I have also had the challenge of living up to those words ever since.

In March, 1998 attended a conference for three days dressed in the sackcloth. On the third day I was given the privilege of publicly addressing the conference. I stood in my less than elegant clothing to say:

God is calling for the church to dress herself in new clothing. This is the clothing of humility. We are to take off the clothing that we have been wearing and realise that we have not done well in caring for our nation. As we humble ourselves we are then to lift our eyes up over the walls that we have built and reach out to others in the same territory or region. If we can embrace a level of humility we can then reach out to others for relationships for territory's sake. We have related in the past with those with whom we have had a common identity - we have experienced relationships for identity's sake. Those relationships cannot now take us any further. We are not to be unfaithful to previous relationships but if those relationships for identity's sake ever prevent

us laying hold of relationships for territory's sake we will have to sacrifice the former for the sake of the latter. We are to get off the train of convention - it is terminating here. These are days to journey where we have never gone before.

Among a number of other aspects I went on to speak of prayer teams coming to city after city, of prophets rising up but that many would be wearing different clothing which would make it difficult for us to recognise them, of those who were going to make vows before God, and even shave their heads as a sign of their commitment to God (particularly among the youth). These were critical days when we needed to press right in.

Little did I realise at the time how formative those words would be for what the Lord was about to lead me into, and I remain convinced that we need those relationships so must allow God to join us together in humility. If we do not do that we might have temporary success but in reality the territory will inevitably shape the church, rather than the church shape the territory as Jesus intended.

The need for a people who live in the midst of their city in a different spirit is necessary if we are to see our cities and areas impacted. An understanding of the term 'city' will also help us understand how powerful a concept it is and again how vital it is to live relationally with a servant-heart in that context.

Shaping our city - or being shaped by the city

The term 'city' is used in Scripture to refer to literal cities, but the concept can be applied to all manner of corporate bodies of people: so that at a macro level it can refer to a city as we understand one or even to a whole nation, while at a micro level the concept can be applied to a smaller institution such as a school, a club, a business or even a church.

The concept of 'city' can be applied to this broad spectrum, as many of the early cities we encounter in Scripture would have been small settlements, whereas later cities were of considerable size. The concept is really being applied to all relational structures, hence the macro and micro applications.

Behind the concept there is something which the Hebrew mind-set was very at home with, namely that there is a corporate entity that is larger than the sum total of individuals and which over-rules and affects the individuals involved within any organisation. This way of thinking can be contrasted with

the extreme form of individualism put forward in the 1980s, by the then prime minister of the UK, Margaret Thatcher, who in one of her speeches said that, 'There is no such thing as society.'

In everyday experience we all have some understanding of the nature of the corporate entity. For example, we can talk about a good school or the spirit that is within a football club, or even the spirit of a city - what we can call the corporate spirit of the organisation. It is this concept that has caused some (academic) thinkers to reject the idea of demonic spirits suggesting that language about demons is simply an ancient way of speaking about the spirit of an organisation. There really is no need to dismiss the issue of the presence of the demonic as their presence is best understood as attaching themselves to the 'corporate spirit', thus they re-enforce and bring a level of overall bondage to the corporate entity that they attach themselves to.

An organisation (city) is not totally independent of the people involved but these organisations have a 'spirit' that is above and beyond the individuals. The city then is not solely dependent on the individuals that reside and relate within it and it is the dynamic of the city as a corporate entity that will seek to shape the individuals.

Most of us who read this book will have had involvement in church and perhaps in different churches over some period of time. Our experience of church will be such that we will have learned the nature of a corporate identity. It is important that a church (or any group of people who are relating together) discovers an identity (and therefore call) and lives up to that identity. Given time every group of people, including a church will drift away from the original call of servanthood, becoming more of a consumer rather than a servant. By nature there is a tendency (as we will explain) for any corporate body to become set on survival with the lives, time and finances of people going in to support its ongoing survival. This is why I believe there is the case for something like corporate exorcism to take place within every Christian body on a regular (perhaps annual?) basis. By this I mean something along the following lines: that those who identify with that body address the corporate entity, declaring that they as people are there to serve God first and not the corporate body; that they tell the corporate entity that they will not seek its survival, but are demanding that it serves the purposes of God. If there are buildings that are owned or utilised by that Christian body I would even suggest that they lay hand on them and likewise declare that they as a

people will not serve the building but demand that the building serves the purposes of God.

Biblical background to the city

The creation mandate (Gen. 1:28) spoke into two areas: the family (be fruitful and multiply) and rulership of the earth (subdue and rule). The family (and by extension all relationships) are constantly under attack for it is through relationships that the image of God is revealed. Likewise the command to rule is constantly attacked and corrupted so that authority is no longer exercised through servanthood but in dictatorial and oppressive ways. City building is part of the fulfilment to rule. Indeed creation does not end on the sixth day, it simply changes mode. From then on God is continually at work with people as he calls them to work with him in the process of filling up and subduing the earth, hence it would appear that there will be elements of creation, including where we have co-operated with God, that will come through the fire of judgement.³

Cain builds the first city and names it after his son, Enoch (Gen 4:13-17). There is more to this city than a simple fulfilment of the creation mandate. Building after the fall the city is itself fallen, yet this city is more than simply fallen: it is built away from the presence of the Lord, perhaps an indication of Cain's continued defiance of the ways of the Lord. In naming the city he seeks to perpetuate his own name. Here in this city is represented the alternative to fellowship with God, with an attempt to feel secure and significant without God. False fellowship through excluding God is always the direction a city will move toward unless held in check through the obedience of God's people.

The second city builder is Nimrod (Gen 10:8-12). This warrior-king is presented as building cities that are centres of military power, thus his cities become a symbol of domination. Both these early cities indicate an independence from God and a desire to establish identity and power.

From then on much biblical history centres on cities: Babylon and Nineveh, Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon, Rome and Jerusalem, Damascus, Antioch, Ephesus and many others.

³ The visions of Revelation do not bring us back to a garden, but the city that comes down from heaven truly is a garden city. Perhaps even the visions show that our works are transformed by his work.

The most famous of the early cities is Babel where the people come together with a desire to make a name for themselves and be gathered together (Gen 11:4). Babel lies unfinished; symbolising that no human city will ever fully achieve its goal for nothing can replace the lost presence of God or satisfy the desires of humanity for fellowship and significance in relationship. Babel, though, is not just unfinished – for it is rebellious through and through. It is not in submission to the God who comes down but expresses the vain attempt to rise up in self-achieved significance to the heavens. The city then becomes, as expressed in Babel and in the enduring symbol of Babylon, an expression of rebellion, refusing to live in submission to the living God.

This leads us (once again) to consider that in the fall there is a threefold rebellion that results:

- Individual rebellion
- Corporate rebellion of the city, the fallen structures
- The Satanic rebellion

Every city (or institution) will have within it the Babylonish that is seeking to come up and establish itself. This is so much the case that even Jerusalem, that city that was intended to be the city of *shalom*, becomes Babylonish itself (see Revelation 11:8 for a damning comment on the earthly Jerusalem of Jesus' day). The great prophetic city becomes the city that kills the prophets (Lk. 13:34). Only a new Jerusalem coming down from the throne of God will deal with the Babylonish that is present in her, and bring her through to her destiny (Rev. 21:2). God has a desire that in every city there is a coming down of his presence that will transform the city into all that God has desired for her. While at the same time there will be a Babylonish element that is growing up in every city. Progress will always be in part. There will never be a total fulfilment until the *parousia* but our prayer must be that the city will be significantly transformed through making room for God to come down. Every city then is a mixture of Babylon and the new Jerusalem.

The origins of an institution (city)

People come together with vision (either explicit or implicit) and work together to set up something that will facilitate the vision. At this stage the city has a measure of flexibility and malleability. Input at this stage is most critical as what is put together is like a DNA that will shape the future.

The city that develops is founded then to serve the purposes of the founders, so, from a prayer perspective, discovering the foundations of a city will prove very important to understand and subsequently deal with the issues presented by the city. One of the key questions to be asked is always: 'why is this city here?'

Once a city is founded it is named. Through being named it gains an identity and over a period of time it will develop and gain what can only be described as a personality. When coming to pray for a city we really want to understand, through both discernment and research, what the true identity of the city is.

The developing city

In time the organisation or city takes a firmer shape and begins to develop. As it develops it gains an independent power. Although this concept can be difficult for us in the Western world to grasp, we begin to see a corporate spirit coming into being. As this independent personality develops it becomes increasingly independent of the founders. Instead of, as in the initial phase, being shaped by the people, it now begins to shape the people.

Over time the developing city becomes increasingly set in its way and resistant to change. Here we can think of the issue of church life and its resistance to renewal in the words that are uttered: 'We have never done it this way before, and we are not going to start now!' The city (or institution or even church) originally created to serve the people, now at this stage of development begins to use people and resources to serve it. It demands loyalty, commitment and obedience, and rewards those who do so well. (It is worth noting that there is a difference between loyalty and faithfulness. Relationships require faithfulness for them to succeed; systems require loyalty.)

A most important point to note is that the rate of development in a city is continual but does not take place at constant pace. There will be times of significant accelerated change and those will be poignant moments for engagement spiritually. The city's future will be more open to change than than at any other time.

I can remember being in the city of Leeds and asking the question as to where the obelisks were in the city. The response was that there were none

that anyone was aware of. The next day I was explaining that I sensed that the city was seeking to redefine itself and that at such a stage it will always go back to its Babylonish roots and re-enforce them. Someone present, who was involved in city council meetings, confirmed that this was exactly what was currently taking place. He then went on to say that the city was remodelling part of the centre and that two obelisks would be erected either side of the entrance to one of the main city buildings. (Two obelisks marked the entrance to the sun god temple in Egypt and are normally a strong indication of Masonic influence.) We then proceeded to go to that area of the city and were surprised to find that particular building had twin towers, each built in the shape of the Babylonish ziggurat towers, with each one being surrounded by four obelisks! At the time of redefinition it was evident that the city was seeking to re-enforce its original idolatrous roots.

Whenever there is a desire to redefine an identity there is an extra ability at that stage to influence the future. This is similar to the input that influences a person growing up. At key stages of development significant input will influence the future of that person more than at other stages.

As suggested the city moves from flexibility of shape to gaining an independent personality, demanding to be served it manifests an instinct to survive at all costs. Babylon, the archetypal rebellious city, says: 'I will continue for ever - the eternal queen!... I will never be a widow or suffer the loss of children' (Is. 47:7,8). Survival will take place even if some of the people are sacrificed in the process.

The city is fallen & open to the demonic

Created by fallen people the city is a reflection of their fallen creativity. It is important we understand that fallen does not necessarily mean completely evil, for what is fallen can be open to redemption. However, the fallenness of the city means that it will always press toward an idolatrous position as it lays claim to a level of allegiance that only God can require. The city will require its people to serve and honour it and will challenge God himself for the position of worship. God rightly states that, 'I am God and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me' (Is. 46:9). We can compare this with the challenging counterfeit spoken by Babylon: 'I am, and there is none besides me' (Is. 47:8), or by Tyre: 'I am a god; I sit on the throne of a god' (Ezek. 28:2).

Whenever idolatry sets in, a door is opened to demonisation for behind

idols are demons (1 Cor. 10:10-20). In the case of the city we even see this with the Hebrew term '*ir*' translated as city for it also carries the meaning 'Watching one (angel)'. Inherent to the city is the concept of an angelic force standing watch behind and over it. So with Isaiah 14:12-14, which could well be a reference to Satan, there is envisaged a supernatural power behind Babylon that is cast down. We find the same with Tyre in Ezekiel 28:12-17. Behind the institutional structure is a spiritual power.

In asking where the power in a city lies we need to look to another dimension. In the extreme of the Babylon of Revelation we discover that it is describes as 'the great city that *rules over* the kings of the earth' (Rev. 1:18, italics added). Here the kings do not reign supreme, they simple serve the purposes of the city. The ultimate rebellion is where the city is out of control having an evil 'mind' all of its own.

This is why cities are such a focus: the demonic are looking for the 'earthing' they provide while Jesus is looking for their transformation. There is always a relationship between the political / economic / social positions of power and the spiritual. If the demonic takes hold of a city to a most significant level then those who hold institutional power will be those who are linked to that demonic source.

Jesus has broken the authority of all powers

At so many levels it can be said that Jesus came into the world at the right time. He came to a nation that was under the power of Rome (political power), under economic oppression through the Herodian dynasty and under religious oppression through the legalistic nationalism of the Pharisees, while beyond and behind those powers there was a great level of oppression from the demonic powers. At the cross he submitted to the will of God, and his submission totally exhausted the power of the enemy. The rebellious powers lost all their strength for submission is more powerful than rebellion; love is stronger than hate. The authority of Jesus means that the demonic can be confronted and the city brought back to serve the king. He has risen with all authority in heaven and on earth.

The church must be committed to walk in the footsteps of Jesus picking up his mantle to confront the powers with the same submission to the Father. Transformation is a process and a battle. Much of the change that has to take place is internal (both personal and inter-relational in the body of Christ).

There also needs to be a vision of the kingdom of God coming 'down' in the same way that John saw the New Jerusalem coming down from God's throne. Vision is so important and such vision comes in the context of prayer. Prayer gives revelation and there has to come a time when the revelation is realised in our midst.

Revelation - release - realisation

Prayer should lead us to a place of revelation for without revelation nothing ever leaves heaven. As we wait on God strength is renewed and we mount up with wings like eagles (Is. 40:31) - we begin to see from a whole new perspective. Many times I have been in a context where we have us to set aside a few hours with much of the time spent in worship, waiting on God, so as our eyes could be opened to spiritual realities. The challenge is not to latch on too quickly to the first piece of revelation that comes, but to learn and wait so allowing God to take us deeper in revelation. Early on in this journey I heard Colin Easton quote Proverbs 19:2, 'one who moves too hurriedly misses the way', and I have sought to make that a guiding principle. It is too easy to make assumptions about what is revealed or even become so taken up with it that we become blind to further revelation. As we continue to wait the revelation can deepen.

Recognising that we need revelation means that we have to focus in a major way on waiting on God for sight to come. It is vital that the church in a given region receives revelation about her own role, that the region itself receives understanding of the redemptive purposes of God, and that there is an embracing of what is to come.

Revelation by itself is insufficient but must lead to prayer and appropriate action for the revelation to be released. The release of what has been seen is itself a process. We have to pray for the kingdom of God and all it entails to come, for whatever is in heaven for a particular place to become visible on that specific part of earth. In other words if we simply see something by revelation this will not be enough, we will have to pray this through until we know that it is in process of release.

Release does not always come easily for there will be major resistance to it. This is why it is vital that we never forget what has been seen in the place of prayer, but what has been seen must be kept 'alive' through prayer. In prayer we gain vision that is from God (outside of prayer we often lay hold of

fantasy, it is not sufficient for a dream to have a Christian element in it to make it true vision) and that vision is always beyond us. The vision will be challenged but in prayer we keep calling for the will of God on earth. As we persist our faith grows in spite of the lack of visible evidence of a shift around us. As our faith grows we are moving what we have seen from simply being revelation to a process of release.

In certain locations, particularly where there is a strong Masonic element, it is even possible to get something in motion but the final point of connection eludes us. It is this principle of 'missed connections' that I have observed so many times where the Masonic is strong. So even when everything seems to be 'signed, sealed and delivered' there is a final missing of fulfilment of the promise. So we persist until we know that we have it in motion, at first there will be no external evidence that this is the case, but increasingly there will be external evidences as the day of fulfilment comes close.

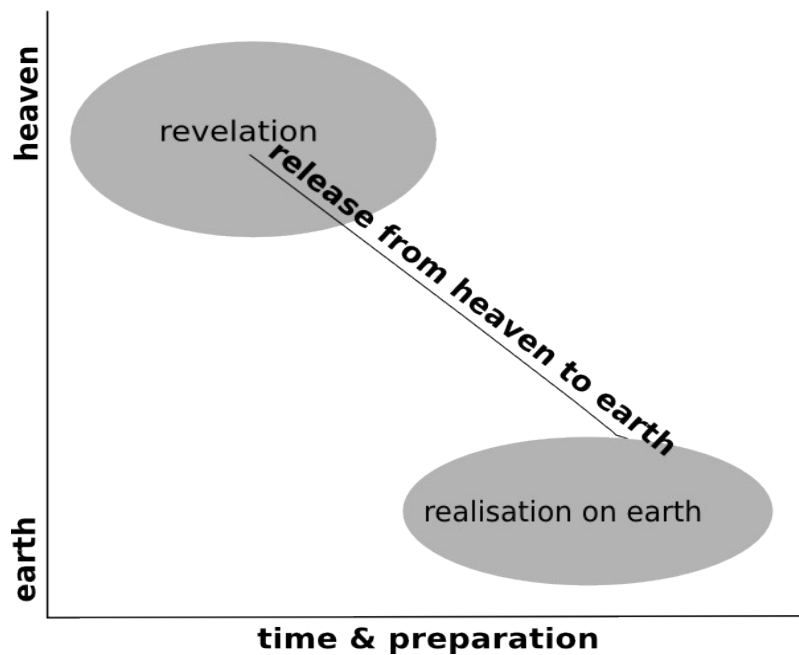
I believe our whole lives need to be made up of new aspects concerning the will of God that are being revealed to us, together with other aspects that we know are no longer locked up in heaven but are on the way toward us, and other aspects around us that are the fulfilment of what was once only real in vision form.

So prayer moves from prayer for revelation: 'Lord open our eyes'; to prayer that what has been seen will be released - this is where there will be prophetic declarations in prayer as to the will of God and a calling for everything resistant to the will of God to give way; to prayers of thanks for the realisation of what once was only revelation. These prayers of thanks will also be supplemented with prayers that what has been realised will be truly established and not stolen away.

The key to the process is persistent focused prayer and appropriate response. I seek to explain it this way: if God reveals something to me and I am at position A, I need to pray for the revelation to be released according to the will and timing of God. The release begins to come in due season but is designed to connect with me when I reach (for example) position D. I cannot connect where I am at currently. Although the fulfilment is for my situation the context and even my understanding will be different by the time it comes. This is why all prophecy is best interpreted after the event! I often wonder what Peter would have preached had he been handed the book of Joel prior to

the day of Pentecost. After the experience at Pentecost it was easy: 'This is that.'

We must develop vision that sees into heaven - that sees the unseen. We have to develop a persistence until what we have seen 'leaves' heaven and is in process of coming toward us. We also must allow ourselves to be impacted for change during this time - inevitably there are changes and preparation in us before we see manifest around us what we simply saw as vision some time before. During this process the changes that take place are internal - for eventually it is what he does in us that he then does through us.



Chapter 3

Keys to the city

It was my good friend Jim Thwaites who first engaged me in conversation over the limited perspective I was carrying about reaching a city.⁴ At the time of the conversation I was promoting unity and prayer as the two key elements that needed to be in place for a city to be reached, and was passionately seeking to promote the former and provoke the latter. I have gladly embraced the necessity of a third element of the release and empowerment of believers to be committed to and engaged with the diverse spheres of the city.

Leadership

Leadership is a gift from God and many of us have had the bad experience where there has been a lack of clear leadership. In the same way that this is true within a local setting, so it is true in the setting of a city. A lack of city-wide leadership can be so debilitating to progress. Conversely, many of us also have had the bad experience of over-controlling leadership where no one is released and the only vision that count is that of the person or people with official leadership titles.

Both experiences often stem from fear within those in leadership. Fear of making mistakes or of what people will say can paralyse leaders from setting out a direction, and fear of losing control or becoming redundant often results in leaders who hold on to control. The knowledge of when to be present in a situation as a catalyst and when to be absent is one of the gifts of wisdom that we need desperately from the Holy Spirit.

⁴ His books *The Church beyond the Congregation* (Paternoster Press: Carlisle, 1999, revised edition, 2000) and *Renegotiating the Church Contract* (Paternoster Press: Carlisle, 2001) have been very influential on my thinking, and I recommend them as foundational reading.

So much of this is resolved when we abandon the concept of leadership as being 'leadership over' to the concept of leadership being 'leadership within' (a church or a city). Jesus himself said that his followers were not to lord it *over* and that he was one who was *among* them to serve (Luke 22:25-27). All bodies need leadership, but we certainly do not need dictatorship.

A process has been underway now for some time. The shorthand phrase 'pastoring the city' has become a useful handle to keep us focused on one of our main goals, namely that of reaching the city as a whole. It has been great to have those who have pastored churches confess that their church is only one congregation of the whole body in a region. It has been wonderful to see them embrace one another and together take on responsibility for the whole geography where they and their colleagues are situated. Leadership unity is indeed precious.

If only more cities could experience this we would be a long way further down the road than we are. However, effective 'pastoring' of the city is not going to be achieved by simply having all the church pastors together, but by releasing those people who will take responsibility for all the different areas of the city. These are the ones who together are called to stand in a pastoral role for the city as a whole. In other words we cannot draw a straight line from 'pastors recognising they are pastoring a congregation of the one church' to 'pastors who once pastored congregations now together pastor the city as a whole'. If that was the way to progress we would likely discover that the (gathered) church was being pastored while the city remained uncared for.

The line that we draw from 'church pastoring' to 'city pastoring' is not straight and there is at least one very definite and wonderful detour. There are many spiritual leaders for our regions who do not have time to easily conform to our church schedules and I believe the Holy Spirit is pleased that they don't have this time. Their commitments lie elsewhere and most of their time is spent outside the parameters of what we have called church. (We might even find that there are some potential city pastors who have become disjointed from church as it currently exists and are going to be released into city pastoring without coming back through the system that we have called 'church'.) Leaving on one side the issue just raised, and returning to the suggestion that many spiritually anointed leaders are already correctly positioned in the spheres that make up the city, we will soon discover that church leadership will have to learn to make a relational detour to support

them (and be educated by them) in order that the pastoral people for the city rise up from within the many spheres of our cities. So a few paragraphs on these spheres will be in order, and then we might be able to plot some of the progress that is necessary.

Spheres of the city

Some of the key elements that have to be engaged and impacted within the city are: government, education, media, health, business and the arts. Our desire is not to produce a Christianised place where every aspect is sanctified through having a Bible verse on the top of the letter heading, but where every sphere of the city is being influenced to act in a godly way that genuinely enhances goodness and acts as a catalyst for the presence of God to come. As believers work for the prosperity of their city (and by that I do not simply mean economic prosperity) so there should be growing connections with the men and women of peace (see Jer. 29:7; Lk. 10:1-12). Not all of them will be Christians, but God will anoint them for their task, and I believe a number will become god-fearers and some indeed will become full believers in Christ.

If the appropriate people from the spheres are to be drawn through to stand in their place in the city it will be vital for a number of current church leaders and ministries to take time to come alongside them so that there can be a mutual influencing one of the other. Those in the spheres will need to know how their faith can make a difference – a difference that is beyond where their faith simply makes ethical demands on them, or where it requires them to witness. Ministries will need to learn of the challenge that these people face so that they in turn can be forced into finding ways of making their own teachings relevant to life situations. Those church leaders will have much to learn, but if God has anointed them to equip the saints then those in the spheres will also benefit enormously.

I suggest that this process of repositioning for some current church leaders is exactly where a number of cities and regions find themselves at this moment of time. The challenges are great but the treasures to be released are beyond our wildest dreams.

Prayer & Prophetic watch ministry

Although it takes more than prayer to see a breakthrough, without prayer there will be no birth and what is birthed will not be sustained. Prayer brings

about great changes, and I am most grateful that God is a God who hears and answers prayer. Many breakthroughs are going to come, not because we have prayed but because the prayers of previous generations are awaiting an answer in our time. Many prayer warriors have died but they have died in faith.

The challenge facing many leaders and also many who carry responsibility for different aspects of a city's life is to be dependent on prayer. By so stating it I am not suggesting that prayer is meant to replace hard persistent work, but to acknowledge that without a prayer dimension we will never express our dependence on the Living God intervening. We need both prayer and disciplined hard work to be in place. It is through prayer that God can energise the hard work and also over-ride all our corporate wisdom. Through prayer he can release a word that worldly wisdom would reject, but as we obey God a channel is opened for the Spirit of God to move.

We will need to see a multi-levelled approach to prayer develop. To help us grasp this let me use some categories to describe these levels. Categories are helpful in analysing although most categories are inadequate to express what takes place in the flow of life. That will certainly be true in what follows, but I hope that the three categories I am suggesting will at least help to give a framework to develop and release all kinds of prayer in the city in a way that does not undermine unity.

Ongoing prayer

The first category I have termed 'ongoing prayer'. By this I mean the everyday prayers of the individual saints and the corporate prayers of the congregations. If we see that as the foundational level we will be doing everything in our power to encourage that, and if we advocate any other aspects of praying we will introduce them in such a way that the ongoing level of prayer is not discouraged.

In theory we should get 100% agreement on the need for and the benefit of this type of praying. It is therefore essential that those who carry a mandate to give a lead in a city context, whether that is to lead in prayer or in any other way, continue to find ways to encourage the prayers of the saints. Consideration should be given to this so that no communication about on prayer undermines this. We want to encourage the maximum number of people praying in a city. So as we move on to examine another two categories

we need to bear in mind that we must be committed to encourage the everyday prayer of the saints.

Strategic prayer

The second level of praying I have termed 'strategic prayer'. I believe that strategic prayer is needed so that we do not simply release more prayer, but that the 'more' begins to cover what is often not covered. If we can convince the whole church to pray more, the likelihood is that more of what is already being prayed for will be covered, and that there will be whole aspects our city that will remain uncovered. I pray for my neighbours, and if I were to decide to pray more it is most likely that I will then pray more for my neighbours. In other words I will pray for more of what I am already praying for. That is a good thing, but it inevitably leaves many things in our localities not covered in prayer. Strategic prayer needs a measure of shaping, so that the essential elements of the city are covered. Strategic prayer will aim to target the geography as a whole so that the whole geography is covered and not just the areas where the church's presence is strong. It will consider the demography of the city so that all the diverse social aspects are covered. Strategic prayer will look at the institutions (particularly the ones that shape the life of the city) and the positions of influence to make sure that they are covered. It will give attention to the entry points to the city, such as the education and trade aspects, as well as considering the physical entry points, so that they are all well and truly being covered in prayer.

These aspects do not just happen, but are covered as someone, or a team, takes responsibility for this. This is where a prayer strategy is developed. Although I might wish to imagine that the vast majority of believers will agree with the need for such a type of strategy, it is probably only something like 60% of believers who will actually agree. How many will be involved in such a strategy will vary from city to city, but the percentage will likely be considerably less than the 60% that I suggest will agree with the theory. A lack of numbers though is not a problem as I advocate that we do not try and convince everyone but work with those who wish to flow in that direction. Our task is not to persuade but to release the maximum numbers who wish to participate, without discouraging those who cannot respond but are continually given themselves to the level we have described as 'ongoing prayer'.

If we present strategic prayer in such a way that it is understood as some form of superior way of praying we will soon find ourselves in trouble. If we do not present it as elitist, but rather present it in such a way that it is open to others joining, I believe we can have the best of both worlds. We do not discourage those who cannot 'buy' in, but encourage them in their ongoing praying, while we release those who have a passion for strategic prayer. My goal is not to cause competition, but a harmonising of the work of prayer, so that the maximum numbers are being released to their heart-felt convictions. It is the responsibility of those graced to give a lead to ensure that this takes place.

Other than in a few areas where there might be some small disagreements (such as over praying for those in institutions; praying for institutions to change; praying for the entry points to a city; etc.) what I have suggested so far should not be too difficult to put into practice. A measure of maturity is needed to work toward the releasing of people to their different convictions. It is this issue of release that is the key and the challenge, so some perspectives on releasing the third level of prayer ('prophetic praying') now needs to be addressed. I am aware we can hit some controversial and even potentially divisive situations but it is my conviction that we need to see these people released and released in a way that does not jeopardise the unity in our cities.

Prophetic praying & releasing the watchpersons

First then to a definition of what I am including under this term. The terminology might be inadequate but I am using this term 'prophetic praying' to distinguish it from the strategic prayer I have outlined above, and suggest it as an inclusive term to cover such prayer activities as: the discerning of spiritual powers over an area; the practice of spiritual mapping; cleansing the land of the effects of historic sin; the making of prophetic declarations, and the like.

I am more than happy to accept that not everyone will be convinced of the need for prophetic praying (as I have defined above), nor for the validity of it. In fact I am glad that there are those who disagree with my convictions on these subjects, as I am not arguing that such activity is central to the Christian faith. (I might wish to try and persuade people that they are key elements in winning the battle for a territory, but I cannot legitimately argue that they are

among the central tenets of our faith.) Strategic prayer is not too controversial but as there is no universal agreement on this third level of praying it becomes clear that it is this type of praying that presents a major challenge to the unity within a city. However, if we handle this well we can find a way forward that makes us find a new level of unity – a unity not based on total agreement but on commitment to one another.

In a given set of relationships across a specific geography we will discover that perhaps only 15% of the people will have a conviction about the rightness of such ways of praying. So how do we process the inevitable tension that results? There is (as always) no other way forward other than a relational one.

There will be the need for openness and honesty between those who wish to pursue this course and those who are called to give oversight within the geography. We cannot have those who are the prophetic prayers seeking to convince those in leadership of the rightness of their beliefs, but neither can those in leadership insist that the only prayer that is practised is one that they can endorse or agree with. No one has a monopoly on truth – either at a doctrinal or practical level.

I therefore advocate that those in leadership seek to endorse and release the people with the conviction to their calling, and that those who are called to prophetic intercession do not put themselves above those called to lead. True unity has to be based on the endorsement of each other, not the endorsement of a particular practice. The safeguard in it all is that we hold each other to our first calling, that of seeking ‘first the kingdom of heaven’. There must be no greater motivation than to see an area impacted for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If those who seek to pray in a particular way are doing so because of their desire to see the Spirit of God come in power to save, then, in all honesty, God will probably even allow for some error in practice to be present. He does not primarily bless right practice but what flows from a pure heart.

These watchpersons are the ones who will be dealing with the spiritual elements over the city, in the sense of discerning what they are, and how they have come to be rooted in that location. In their communication, they should not express any form of superiority, for it is the ongoing prayers of the saints that is the base from which everything else flows. Yet it is also true that what they hear needs to fuel the prayers of the whole church – this simply means

again that at the level of communication there is wisdom as to how things are expressed.

This means that we are looking for a unity that is expressed in an even greater level of diversity, with people being released (within Scriptural boundaries) to their callings, but with the requirement that they maintain the unity of the Spirit. So in simple terms I suggest the following:

- Honest relationships where no one seeks to control the other party through trying to convince them of their beliefs, nor through exercising disapproval. We are not to make one another in our own image.
- Those called to lead (or perhaps better, those who are called to create an 'eldering' culture) are to release those who have the conviction to pray in these prophetic ways. Releasing does not require that we agree with every practice nor even that we understand someone's convictions. We can approve of people without having to endorse their practice. It does mean though that we do not criticise their practice.
- The only restriction can be when there are practices employed in praying that are *clearly* unbiblical. And by this I do not mean when they are simply in the realm of what I am uncomfortable with. So for example I am well aware of the controversy surrounding the rightness, or otherwise, of addressing spiritual powers, but I am unable to see how (biblically) a person can insist that this practice is forbidden, as there are biblical perspectives on both sides of the argument. Even if one were uncomfortable with it we would have to be very slow at insisting that it ceased or that we made it an issue of fellowship. Within the bounds of Scripture people have to be released to their convictions, and their convictions might go beyond my *interpretation* of Scripture.
- Finally, that prophetic praying is presented as one more way of praying, and that it is not superior to, nor does it replace, other forms of prayer. In presenting it in this way we are releasing those with conviction to this form of prayer and that we are approving of them without in any way discouraging every other vital form of prayer that is taking place.

If our desire for the city or territory to be impacted is always bigger than our desire for others to agree with our beliefs or practices then we will not go too far wrong, and even when we find ourselves in tension we will find a way forward. If we can hold through in our differences then our unity will not be

threatened but will even go deeper. We can live with tensions, and sometimes God uses the tensions that surface in our relationships to push us to the place of holding together because of God's acceptance of each other, and not accepting a level of unity that is based simply on a low level of agreement with each other.

So in all the above I am simply advocating that we find ways in which all kinds of prayer can be released, and that it is done in the context of approval. Our cities will not be won when we do everything right or when all our beliefs are correct, but there will be significant shifts when the unity we seek releases the body of Christ into a greater measure of diversity.

We need all kinds of prayer to be released, so let us make an agreement that we will seek to encourage one another to express our God-given convictions in a spirit of humility. It is easy to criticise that which we do not understand, and sadly criticism can become one more means of control. It was for freedom that Christ set us free, so the spirit of the Gospel means we must 'err' on the side of release not of restriction.

Before introducing the next chapter there is one more area for consideration.

The Amos-type prophets

Some time ago the Lord spoke to me that it was time for the Amos anointing to be released. This prophet spoke out the word of the Lord, but his main focus was in the realm of issues of injustice. There are prophets who are today speaking into these realms, but sadly there is usually a disconnection between the typical 'charismatic' prophets and these people. This is yet another aspect that has to be added to the mix. In our cities there are those with the calling to reawaken the church to her task of being the voice and hands for justice, and the enemy has separated them from those who are praying and those who are discerning powers over the city. The truth is they belong together. Again we will have to find ways of releasing people to their burdens and creating bridges between those of different persuasions, so that we do not force those with one set of beliefs to impose their beliefs on others, but that there is a mutual influencing of each other. These Amos-type prophets are also those who are called as watchpersons, and often are those who are either immersed in, or engaged with, the spheres of the city

Diversity

We need then a great diversity of prayer released in our cities. Not everyone will necessarily be able to embrace all aspects of the diversity. This is not a problem, as our unity is not based on everyone agreeing on every point. There is a deeper unity that we have to contend for and this will mean, in the context of prayer, we will gladly grapple with how we can effectively see people released in these different ways. We will have to work our way through this relationally as inevitably (and rightly so) there are different beliefs on such thorny issues as spiritual warfare.

Unity does not mean that we all believe the same thing. In fact I am not too sure that God is committed to bring us to that type of unity. He is committed to us working together though because we love one another and believe the best about one another.

If we wish to see prayer developed through to the place where a city is being spiritually 'harnessed', that prayer will include the basic ongoing daily prayers of the saints. That indeed is perhaps the most important element in prayer for it provides the foundation for everything else. In theory all believers should be able to buy into this type of praying, and nothing must be done to discourage that. However, I also suggest that there is a very real place in the city for the development of strategic prayer that increasingly covers every aspect of the life of the city. Finally, I believe there will be the need for prophetic prayer and the release of those who have been gifted by God for fulfilling a role that we can call being prophetic watchpeople. I am well aware that this type of ministry and the associated practices are controversial, but I suggest strongly that this is developed without demanding that everyone is in agreement. Unity is stronger than agreement, and we can hold together even when there is disagreement. That is the heart of the Gospel for it is through the Gospel that former divides are healed.

I plot below what is a common journey in the context of our cities. The descriptions are a guide rather than an accurate map. There is a critical phase of those in current (church) leadership being willing to move relationally to stand alongside those in the spheres - and it needs to be emphasised that it is 'alongside' not 'above'. This has to coincide with a calling from those within the spheres for this, and from that meeting point we will begin to see emerge those who are called of God to 'pastor the city'. Prayer in all its diversities will then fuel the whole process. The goal is certainly not to impose a new

structure, but to create a canopy over a city, and an involvement with a city, so that a harvest of righteousness rises up.

Leadership:

- Moving from 'I am pastor of this church' and my calling is to see it grow and be successful, and that other churches are the competition ('surely we have to be realistic: after all we are all fishing in the one pond').
- Through a willingness to meet other leaders at an honest level, and the developing of unity events where we can begin to move toward some substance to the language that there are many congregations of the one church in the city.
- They begin to see the spheres and those who labour in them. They are drawn out to stand alongside such people in support.
- They no longer demand that such people express their commitment through their attendance and their tithe, and there is the beginning of people taking their place in the city to a genuine expression of the church in the city.

Those engaged in the spheres in the city

- Move from understanding the 'call' as being to 'full-time' ministry with the work that they themselves do as simply being 'secular'.
- To understanding that those in secular employment have a purpose but that this is mainly in the realm of supporting the local church financially and with expertise so that the church (and other ministries) are successful. (Often there is an adoption of 'kings' and 'priests' type language to describe this situation - such language will eventually prove to be unhelpful.)
- They begin to understand that they are called to see godliness expressed in their sphere; and to draw the good out of the sphere.
- They then are able to draw on those with ministry gifting so that there is a level of equipping in the place of work. They now understand that the work is the ministry.
- Their commitment to the city becomes very clear, and they do not get sidetracked through an inordinate level of loyalty to the local church.

Many begin to spiritually enter the realm of pastoring the city.

Prayer in all its dimensions:

Ongoing: that deepens and broadens and is encouraged in such a way that there is a genuine increase in the belief in and expression of prayer.

Strategic: a wave of prayer that not everyone is involved in but begins to cover the geographical and demographical aspects of the city, the key institutions and the points of entry to the community.

Prophetic intercessory acts and the release of prophetic watchpersons: these acts begin to deal with the historic issues in our cities and release the destiny of the geography. The watchpersons hear heaven's agenda and are used to fuel the ongoing praying that takes place. Their anointing will bring a focus to the strategic level prayer.

And amidst all of this a growing voice calling for justice is heard and listened to: the Amos-type prophets find their place.

If the above type of journey is engaged with there is the possibility of the city being pastored, with some of the current pastors becoming city pastors, and some very definitely not. They will all find their place alongside many who have come from the spheres and from the army of intercessors. They take their place - and no one needs a title, for their calling is not in the title but in the task that is before them.⁵

5 The difference between the language of 'Apostle Paul' and 'Paul, an apostle' is not simply pedantic nor semantic. The former description (and I note this is the most popular today in many circles) is titled and status-oriented. The implication is that this person is very important and needs to be submitted to. The latter is a responsibility that Paul (or whoever) has to live up to. He (or she) will be judged by how they fulfilled their calling.

Chapter 4

A Spiritual Warfare Guide

Interest in, and an understanding of, spiritual warfare and intercessory prayer has grown over the past years. The growing material now available on the subject and the rise of many diverse prayer movements indicates that the Spirit of God has been very active to release a great momentum on a global scale within the church at this time. This is overwhelmingly a positive sign for Jesus made clear that the house of the Lord was to be identified as a house of prayer for all nations. This interest has also given rise to diverse theories concerning the nature and origin of demons, territorial spirits and the like. I do not intend to add yet another theory (thus implying everyone else is wrong and I am right!), but want to give some understanding so that we can find a way forward without polarising and also be expanded regardless of what theory is subscribed to.

Effective spiritual warfare is not simply praying in a certain style or with a certain understanding. Taking (and occupying) ground is more complex than we sometimes think. In a very real sense all of life is about spiritual warfare, thus we need to think holistically about warfare.

Fundamental definitions

Before exploring different views of spiritual warfare I want to bring foundational definitions to two areas, namely spiritual warfare and intercession. By so doing I will essentially locate these terms both in who we are as individuals and also in relationship to others. Both, I believe, need to be rooted in life.

Spiritual warfare is not some specialist department within the church so should not be locked up in some mystic realm that only the spiritually elite

(often gnostic) can connect with. At the most basic of levels spiritual warfare is simply living for Christ in the context of a hostile environment. Our environment is hostile being set against the work of God. That hostility is external: the world system and the devil; and also internal: the flesh. Spiritual warfare in simple terms then is living for Christ in the face of opposition. It does not begin with discerning some demonic presence but in following Jesus in taking up one's cross daily. Unless we understand and embrace this we can become ineffective in warfare. We can end up making strong declarations in prayer, we can confront all sorts of power but then all-but immediately cancel out the effectiveness of our prayer through the way we live and relate to others.

The other word I wish to define is intercession. Intercession is to stand in the gap between the Living God and what is. It is more about where we stand than what we say. It is to stand rooted in God's creation and live in such a way that our very lives call for the coming of God's kingdom **from heaven to earth**. If we stand in such a position we are likely to pray, but intercession is more about a life-orientation than about prayer.

In spiritual warfare there are two key elements: first, we are to hold the ground that God has given to us (so it is essential that we know what that ground is) and secondly, we are to make our contribution to the advance of the kingdom of God (and therefore retreat of the kingdom of darkness). This second element means we need to know what ground is currently under the sway of the enemy and discover what we need to do to dislodge him.

Diverse views on spiritual warfare

There are diverse viewpoints on spiritual warfare and although we always want to think that our views have been informed by a pure reading of Scripture, humility requires that we acknowledge that the beliefs we subscribe to are in part dependent on our world-view, our experience and our actual approach to Scripture. For example, if we believe the Bible to be an inspired book but that we need to make adjustments to the text as it comes to us from another culture, and that it uses language that must be understood in a non-literal way, then that would shape us in a way where we would be unlikely to give much credence to the presence of demonic spirits.

Our experience teaches us to interpret Scripture a certain way and for those of us who believe the canon of Scripture is to be the guide regarding our

beliefs and practices there are enormous challenges facing us. We have to acknowledge that those who both seek to follow Jesus and be obedient to Scripture don't always come to the same conclusion. We see this, for example, in the current debates relating to the ordination of women, or in the debates from a former era over the rights and wrongs of slavery.

I will now acknowledge my own approach to Scripture, and as I do so will seek to defend it as a biblical approach to the Bible! I am sure I will not persuade all who read what follows, but trust it will reveal some of my own presuppositions and also encourage all to re-examine how biblical our own approach to Scripture is.

A biblical approach to the Bible

Acts 15 concerns a most critical period of church development, when a decision needed to be made over what requirements should be made of Gentile converts. In reality it was over whether the converts needed to also become Jewish proselytes. In examining how they moved forward we discover that they had a creative approach to the writings they saw as authoritative and that the early Jewish Christians operated with a dialogue between experience and the text.

So looking a little more closely at the passage we see them wrestling with the issue of Gentiles who have come to believe in the Jewish Messiah and the implications of that for the early church. The Hebrew Scriptures address pertinent aspects relating to this issue such as the flow of Gentiles coming to worship at Zion, the blessing of Abraham flowing to the nations etc., and other related subjects. But we note that the early church did not simply examine the relevant Scriptures in a vacuum for they were not dealing with the issue at a theoretic level. They actually come to the issue creatively, and I suggest that their approach is essentially what follows:

- They have Scripture 'within' them. They are immersed in the biblical narrative and texts. So these are not believers who are willing to do whatever 'feels right' to them. These are biblically orientated believers.
- Yet they are not text-bound. They want to hear what the Holy Spirit has been doing so as their understanding of Scripture follows the activity of the Spirit. First they hear from Peter and his account of the household of Cornelius incident, and then they listen to what the Spirit is doing

through the apostolic work of Paul and Barnabas.

- Once they have listened to the activity of the Spirit, it is then that James quotes an Old Testament Scripture which they all perceive addresses their situation.

So there is a creative interaction between Spirit and Scripture. By so doing they avoid the two dangers of


- a) simply reading Scripture without any experience, or
- b) simply bowing to experience regardless of Scripture.

In summary then: Scripture is the guide, but Spirit-inspired experience must illuminate Scripture. Our beliefs and practices need to fall within the boundaries of Scripture but careful reflection on our experience must be brought to Scripture so as its pages become illuminated in fresh ways.

It is this conviction that undergirds my own approach to Scripture. Hence there are practices and concepts which I am more open to now than a few years ago, simply because my experience in prayer has been a shaping element in my reading of Scripture. With this as a backdrop I now wish to cast an eye over four views that sit on a spectrum of beliefs about spiritual warfare.

An overview of positions on spiritual warfare

The table below illustrates the spectrum of beliefs on the subject. The left side of the spectrum tends to be reflective of those who are within academic institutions, with some but not all, coming from a more liberal position. The right side of the spectrum is more reflective of those who are practitioners, many of whom are missiologists and charismatic.

			
<p>The language of power has to be demythologised. Paul is already doing this in his day and we continue the process. Power language refers to the outer form of institutions that oppress and to their inner spirituality.</p>	<p>There are spiritual beings but the language is vague. We do not confront them but rather we proclaim the truth of the Gospel.</p>	<p>The kingdom of darkness is organised, spiritual beings exist but we do not address them, we proclaim truth and live for Christ, but will employ weapons such as praise to overcome them.</p>	<p>The kingdom of darkness is organised, there are spirits which are territorial, and our task is to bind them so that the works of God can be loosed. This often means we can indeed address them</p>

The demythologising of principality language

Under this approach, the language of principalities and powers are reduced to mean political structures, social systems and institutions that exercise an effect on society. It is normally held that these structures have both an outer form and an inner spirit, but the inner spirit is not to be understood as spirits in the sense of independent personal beings. If we were to subscribe to this view then we would understand that when the Bible uses terms that relates to 'the powers' it would be essentially speaking of the institutions that surround us, within which we live our lives. So to take a city would be to be involved in the institutions in such a way that they begin to serve God and his creation.

The spiritual powers are personal

This view holds that the Bible is not too specific in its language. So when it comes to a discussion regarding the concept of territorial spirits the response would either be one of denial or of agnosticism, and there would be an inability to see the relevance of such a belief. Many evangelicals would share this viewpoint.

Spiritual powers that are highly organised

As we move along the spectrum we come to the position where many Charismatic and Pentecostal are comfortable. Here there is a belief in a hierarchical demonic kingdom where there are clear definitions of roles, responsibilities, power and authority. Ephesians 6:12 is often used to back up this belief in a hierarchy within the spiritual world. With this viewpoint the main understanding about our task is that we are to take the gospel into territory that is being ruled over by hostile forces and need to come in an opposite spirit to the currently dominating spirits within the particular area. There might be a belief in territorial spirits but a drawing back from actually addressing them directly.

Territorial spirits and addressing them

This view is an amplification of the view expressed above, with the addition both of a belief in territorial spirits and that have been given permission to address (and bind) them. Through binding these spirits it is expected that a level of freedom will come to the people of that area to respond to the gospel.

A response to the views

Almost inevitably no one view will be sufficient to explain the complexities of the spiritual world and spiritual beings and their interaction with the material world. In responding I wish to make a comment on the two extreme positions which left by themselves seem to me to be in need of some modification.

The powers are not spiritual beings but earthly institutions (view 1 above)

The argument is expanded as follows: Paul used the language of his day to describe the powers, and although he uses spiritual language he is really describing earthly powers and institutions, governments and the like. Paul has already in measure re-interpreted the language of his day and we need to do likewise.⁶

Given the above view, the role of the church in spiritual warfare is not to address the powers in the heavens, but the powers on the earth. The

⁶ Hendrik Berkhoff, *Christ and the Powers* (Herald Press, 1962) is foundationally very influential here, while Walter Wink's writings, (e.g. *Engaging the Powers* (Fortress Press, 1993)) makes a most significant contribution within this viewpoint.

church is to challenge them to come into their God-given role of servanthood and to confront them whenever they are oppressive. We can summarise the understanding of these powers under the following three headings:

- The earthly powers are good and are necessary for ordered life within society.
- These powers are fallen, so are not perfect and will always tend toward oppression. When they oppress the people they can be described as 'demonised'.
- These powers, though, are to be redeemed and the church must be involved with them calling them to godly order so as their God appointed role is fulfilled, which simply stated, is to order and serve human relationships.

Responding to this viewpoint I wish to make some positive and some negative comments. First, positively:

- The church must never live an isolated life that allows it to divorce itself from social evils; in true prophetic fashion the church is to be the voice for the oppressed and marginalised.
- It is also true that the language of 'principalities and powers' can refer to earthly rulers. So in Luke 12:11 we read, 'When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry...' (rulers and authorities (*tas archas kai tas exousias*) are the same words we find in Ephes. 6:12).

However there are some negative comments to be made also:

- Although as noted in Luke the terminology can refer to earthly powers they do not always refer to such powers. In Ephesians 3:10, for example, they are described as being 'in heavenly realms'.
- Also given that Paul uses such language in his letter to the church in Ephesus, which was a centre for occult and magic, means that far from being encouraged to demythologise the language, the reader already had a framework to understand such language. Indeed Paul actually uses the language of the day to describe gods, demons and powers, thus there is no significant demythologising going on in this letter.

Given the above points it means that we are not able to reduce the issue of spiritual warfare to that of confronting earthly institutions. As we will see,

there are major truths within this viewpoint, but it is the reductionism that I do not feel is justifiable. There are earthly powers that have to be engaged, but we cannot reduce the demonic to simply being the inner nature of these earthly powers.

Binding and loosing the spiritual (and personal) powers (view 4 above)

The teaching on this is straightforward: the powers are personal and need to be confronted and addressed. They need to be bound through being addressed directly in prayer so as people can go free. Again I have positive and negative comments. First, positively:

- The language of Paul is taken seriously within this viewpoint. Credence is given to the existence of the demonic world, and the power of prayer is emphasised. There is some biblical support to this view as it seeks to address the theme of 'binding whatever Satan has loosed' and 'loosing whatever Satan has bound' (see, for example, Luke 13:10-17).

Again, however, there are some negative comments that need to be made:

- In the extreme this viewpoint can lead to a fantasy of discovering demons behind every problem.
- Worse still it can foster such a spiritualised approach that the church never gets its hands dirty. By fostering a belief that our warfare is heavenly can mean that all we are called to do is to pray at a distance and never get involved with our world.
- And, thirdly, it is actually not too easy to justify the practice of binding territorial spirits biblically. One of the most consistent criticism of this viewpoint is 'where is the practice of binding and loosing as expressed in this viewpoint found in the New Testament'. (I will seek to address this in due course.)

I suggest that there are truths to be found in these two extremes but that they both need to be modified (and indeed one will modify the other). By the end of this chapter I will propose a holistic perspective on spiritual warfare that will be informed by these perspectives, and in the ensuing chapters as the practice of warfare is explored it will become evident that the practices I advocate are shaped by these understandings. Before coming to present my own framework for spiritual warfare there is one other aspect that is worth

exploring at this stage.

World-views and spiritual warfare

Our world-view is something that will affect how we approach spiritual warfare. A world-view is the lens through which we see the world, it is the filter that our experiences go through in order to be interpreted. This lens or filter will shape the way we respond and live.

The four world-views below are taken from Walter Wink's *Engaging the Powers*. We might use alternative terms for them, but they are useful examples to help us discern our own prevalent world-view.

The spiritualistic world-view

This is where life is sharply divided between soul/spirit and body. The essential 'me' is the soul, so that I simply live in my body. Under this view the real world is the spiritual realm. Things happen here because of the spiritual world and there is a belief in the need for harmony to be restored. Salvation, under this viewpoint, becomes an escaping from this world and often the dissolving of the person into the bigger spiritual reality of 'god'. This is an Eastern world-view, although it is now more prominent in the West through new age type movements. The opposite to this viewpoint is:

The materialistic world-view

Under this view there is no heaven, no after life, and no spiritual realm. The spiritual world is simply an illusion. This has been a strong Western world view, with the effect that there is simply (physical) cause and effect.

When we set these two world views side by side we can see how one affirms the spiritual realm as real and denies the reality of the material realm (the spiritualistic world view) while the materialistic world view does the exact opposite.

The theological world-view

In using this term Wink neither suggests that all theologians adopt this viewpoint nor that it is a good theological viewpoint, but that it has tended to dominate in the thinking of the bulk of Christian thought. (Inevitably those who hold to this belief tend to be Western and without a great experience of

the demonic.)

This holds that the spheres of the spiritual and the material remain very distinct from each other. We move from one to the other at death, but there is no significant relationship or interaction between the two. Although angels and demons exist they do not normally invade this world as they belong to 'the other' world. So in practical terms this view can lead more to the Eastern (spiritualistic world-view) approach to spirituality, where we focus on getting 'souls saved', while appearing Western in the sense of not being focused on the spiritual and heavenly realm in the here and now. Unlike Scripture, heaven becomes only a place where we go to at our appointed time and is not a dimension that can invade present time and space.

The ancient / biblical world-view

In this viewpoint every thing earthly has a heavenly counterpart. Events occur simultaneously in heaven and on earth. For example, when war takes place on earth there is war in heaven. What happens on earth affects what happens in heaven and vice-versa. We see the reflection of this world-view in passages such as Revelation 12 where we read of warfare in heaven at an angelic level, but that the success of that heavenly warfare is tied to the fact that 'they (the saints on earth) overcame him....' We also see this viewpoint informing the narrative about Moses' hands being lifted up in prayer. As he prevails in the heavenly realm so Joshua prevails in the earthly realm.

We can layout the differences in the viewpoints as follows:

	Spiritual realm	Earthly realm
Spiritualistic view	This is the real realm	Is not 'real' - either a pale reflection of reality (the spiritual realm) or it can even be an illusion
Materialistic view	Does not exist	Any idea of an after-life is absurd, only what is seen and can be physically sensed is real
Theological view	There is a gulf between the two realms. Angels and the departed belong to heaven, the angels do not interact with us and we will make our journey to the heavenly realm after death	We live by faith in this realm, but are living for the time when we 'go to heaven'
Ancient / biblical view	The two realms are real and interconnected. Warfare occurs in both simultaneously. What happens there affects here and vice versa.	

So in all of this it is important to realise that our world-view will affect our approach to spiritual warfare, and that we need to continually allow the biblical world-view to inform our understanding.

If our world-view is simply spiritualistic then we will major only on the issue of the demonic. If it is a non-creation orientated world-view (reflected, for example, in a statement such as, 'we are not human beings having a brief spiritual experience, but we are spiritual beings having a brief human experience' type of approach) then we will be focused on the 'real issues' of heavenly warfare, which will sadly mean non-earthly engagement.

If our world-view is more materialistically orientated we will not anticipate great shifts through prayer. We will accept that this is simply the way things are: bad things happen. However, we might well engage with the institutions and places that are responsible for justice.

In the Western world it is normally either the theological approach that is subscribed to, with demons in the 'air' but with these powers divorced from the physical and political life; or it is a variation of the materialistic world-view where demons do not exist (certainly in any practical sense of the word). In the charismatic world there has often been a losing of sight that all powers are

'earthed', so there can be a tendency to discern spiritual powers and seek to address them, without any rationale or understanding of how they arrived there, or gained a foothold.

The relationship of heaven (and the heavenlies) to the earth runs throughout Scripture. Indeed the primary contrast and comparison is not between heaven and hell but between heaven and earth. Sadly, there has been a shift of emphasis away from the call to bring heaven to earth now, and away from the final realities of a new heaven and a new earth, to an emphasis on what happens at death, and a corresponding emphasis on a spiritual existence beyond the grave.

A belief in heaven and the interaction of heaven and earth means that our primary role is to bring the order of heaven to the earth: as expressed in the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:10). Our goal is to see Satan fall from heaven as we participate in the ministry of Jesus (see Luke 10:18 and Rev. 12:7-12). This interaction of heaven and earth can be seen strongly in the letter to the Ephesians where our warfare is 'in the heavenly realm' (Ephes. 6:12) and also in the understanding that we (who are on the earth and in the church) are seated with Christ in heavenly places now (Ephes. 2:6).

Heaven then is not so much a place to go, or a place related to a future, post-death experience, but is more a description of a position or dimension of power, authority and reality that affects the affairs of humanity on earth. It is the place or dimension where the will of God is being done in all its fullness, without the presence of evil. It is this that we are praying for.

So in Luke 10:18, where Jesus stated that he was seeing Satan falling from heaven like lightning while the disciples were ministering and casting out demons, he wants them to understand that the reason why they were successful was that their names were written in heaven. Their names (identities) were in the ascendancy, and this was the reason why their warfare on earth was successful.

An understanding of the interaction of heaven and earth are vital issues to grapple with in the practice of warfare. All we have laid out above means that we can now look at a basic framework for our warfare.

A basic understanding of our warfare

Genesis introduces us to many themes that are developed throughout

Scripture. We find there the existence and personality (relationality) of God; the creation of the world as distinct from yet coming from God; the intrinsic goodness of creation (understood by the repeated phrase that God 'saw that it was good'); the creation commission of humanity to be in unique relationship to God, to one another and to the creation as it is filled up and subdued. We also discover some negatives such as the entrance of sin into the world and the resulting impact on all relationships: including the divine / human relationship; the relationship between people; but also the relationship of people to the earth, and the rise of the Babylonish system as well as the human / angelic relationship. The best one word summary of these effects would be 'alienation', thus a good understanding of our commission would be that of 'reconciliation'.

If Genesis 1 and 2 is the prologue; chapters 3-11 give an outline of the extent of the problem as a backdrop to the story of Israel as being the answer to the issue of the fall. Israel was to be the light to the nations, God's redeeming nation. All of this subsequently gives us the background for Jesus' incarnation who came to redeem both Jew and Gentile, for the Gospel is the power of God to all, to the Jew first but also to the Gentile.

Salvation is much more than a ticket to heaven. The problems that result from the fall were earthly and human, so salvation and warfare is about becoming agents and participators with Christ in bringing heaven to the earth. (And although the Christian faith leaves room for the incompleteness of this prior to the return of Christ this understanding sets the agenda for us, calling us to pray and work for his kingdom to come in our own set of relationships and geography.)

Although we find ourselves in a fallen world and exposed to evil powers, yet we are to be the redeemed people actively participating with the Christ of God in bringing heaven earthwards. The battle lines are therefore set and we can see a pattern from Genesis onwards as follows:

The battle is between Satan and humanity

A most important principle is that the battle is not being fought between God and Satan as if they are equal but opposite powers (known as dualism). If only that were the battle then in reality it would all be over before it had started! Genesis 3:15 places the enmity between Satan's seed and the seed of Eve (between the demonic and the human realm). This battle is simply over

rulership of this earth.

For the will of God to be done there needs to be a coming together of the Spirit of God (who brooded over...), the word of God (and God said...), together with God's people (let them rule...). Satan always seeks to divide the people from the Spirit and the word, so that we are no longer able to rule as God's representatives but simply yield to Satan and his schemes thus becoming his agents.

There is a transfer of authority that takes place in Genesis 3

When humanity gave up the God-given right to rulership. Satanic powers then gained an entrance and began to outwork their plan for the world. We can see this reflected in the titles that are consistently given to Satan in Scripture:

- the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4)
- the ruler of the kingdom of the air (Ephes. 2:2)
- the prince of this world John 12:31 (NB: on the lips of Jesus and literally 'the ruling one')
- and, the whole world is said to be under the control of the evil one (1 John 5:19)

The effects of the fall are immediate in causing multi-dimensional alienation. People are alienated from God, from one another and even from their land. Like the people of Israel at a later time, Adam and Eve experience the effects of sin as God throws them out of the land. (This connection with the land will be a major theme that we will return to in due course.)

Jesus: as the second man comes to restore what has been lost

Jesus, comes as God's anointed messenger incarnated in human flesh to restore what humanity lost. He lives by God's word and is anointed without measure and thus through his perfect submission the will and rule of God is expressed. The kingdom therefore draws near in him.

He comes not to gain victory for God but for humanity. The humanity of Christ is an essential truth and the denial of his humanity is the spirit of antichrist (1 John 4:2,3). He comes as the seed of woman to fulfil the promise

that through the seed of the woman the head of Satan will be crushed (Gen 3:15; Gal. 4:4). Thomas Finger says that,

The incarnation marked God's irreversible entrance into battle, it was waged throughout Jesus' struggle with Satan in the wilderness; his continuing encounters with demonic, religious, and political opposition; and finally the terrible depths of Gethsemane and Golgotha, and his triumphant emergence from the tomb.⁷

The wilderness confrontation is foundational in our understanding of spiritual warfare. In Genesis the serpent came to humanity's territory, but in the Gospels Jesus came to invade the Satanic territory. In the Garden we read the question: 'has God said', but in the wilderness Jesus responds repeatedly with what God has said. In the Garden there was a problem as they ate, in the wilderness he overcomes as he fasts. The motivation in the Garden was to be like God (cf. also Isaiah 14:14), but Jesus though in the form of God does not grasp that equality, but rather humbles himself and becomes obedient right the way through to death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2:6-11).

Very tellingly there is the offer of the kingdoms to Christ by Satan (Luke 4:5-8) which is not something that is challenged by Jesus, for he understands that until they are won back the kingdoms of this world are under the grip of Satan due to the transfer of authority as outlined in Genesis 3. (Here is an essential premise: Satan's authority is dependent on what is given to him.) Jesus has actually come for the kingdoms of this world (Ps. 2:8; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 7:9; 11:15), but he will not do it Satan's way.

However, it came about that there is angelic involvement in the rulership of this present order of things we can note that in the completeness of all things, when under Christ as the head all things have been put back together (Ephes. 1:10) and we break fully into the new age of the kingdom that that world will not be subjected to the rulership of angelic powers, but to the rule of redeemed humanity (Heb 2:5; 1 Cor. 6:3). So through the coming of Christ there is both a restoration of the original with the full eradication of evil, and also a fulfilment in that the future age goes beyond this age and is more than simply this age without any evil present.

⁷ T. Finger, in *Essays on Spiritual Bondage and Deliverance*, (ed.) Willard Swartley (Institute of Mennonite Studies Occasional Papers, No. 11, 1988).

Jesus bound the strong man in the wilderness for his own ministry

Jesus said that demons cannot be cast out until the strong man has first been bound (Matt. 12:29). He spent much of his time casting out demons hence it is clear that he bound the devil decisively in the wilderness and followed this up in his 3 years of ministry thus demonstrating the reality of this binding through spoiling his goods, setting people free from bondage.

(It is in this context that we read of the conflict with the Pharisees over the issue of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. If they do not acknowledge that Jesus' activity is due to the anointing of the Spirit, there can be no forgiveness in this age or the age to come, for in Jesus God's decisive entrance into the world of human bondage has begun. There is no alternative plan for the fullness of God is in this one who has come, and the anointing is on him for deliverance.)

When in the Gospels the disciples cast out demons they operated under the anointing of Jesus in a delegated way. This is the same as the elders who operated under Moses in the Old Testament. However, once Pentecost has come there is a shift and truly the authority of heaven through the presence of the outpoured Spirit is given to the people of God in their corporeality.

He bound the powers through the cross for the church

Scripture says that Jesus made an open show of them publicly (Col. 2:13-15). The picture presented is of the victorious, returning Roman general parading the defeated powers before the jubilant people. So we read that, angels, authorities and powers are in submission to him (1 Peter 3:22), and that he did all this for the church (Ephes. 1:22-23). Hence post-resurrection he can state that, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him, so the disciples are then to go to all nations.' There are no more barriers, but there will be continual warfare.

If Jesus bound the strong man in the wilderness we must gain our definition of bound from this. Here we can gain an understanding of the concept 'bound'. Satan is still active after the wilderness and indeed at that encounter only departs from Jesus waiting for an opportune time to return. To bind something does not mean to eradicate but seems to be more along the lines of 'to place restrictions on', 'to put boundaries around', or 'give the

decisive blow to' something. The abolition of the presence of evil is what takes place at the return of Christ. However, we note that in the life of Jesus although Satan is still active after the wilderness the tide has truly turned.

So the battle is set from the early narratives of Genesis through the last Adam and on through the church. Binding will take place as the church yields to God's word by the power of the Spirit and confronts the enemy in his many forms. We cannot decide to be involved in warfare, we have been committed to war. Either we will be effective and take ground or we will be ineffective, by neither exercising authority for ourselves nor on behalf of others in setting them free.

Having laid out all the above we are now ready to draw the threads together and describe the battleground as informed by Scripture.

The complexities of our warfare: heavenly and earthly powers

Warfare involves every aspect of human life so it is not surprising that we must resist the temptation to over-simplify the aspects involved in warfare. We will need to acknowledge the presence and reality of both heavenly and earthly powers that have to be engaged with.

The heavenly powers

- Created by God but fallen (Col. 1:15,16)

Scripture seems to indicate some sort of fall of a proportion of the angelic order prior to the fall of humanity in the Garden. (There are those who argue for an angelic fall after that of the human fall and this can be sustained by a reading of Genesis 6 in that light. Regardless of the timing of the angelic fall we face the reality today that there are fallen heavenly powers.) These angelic forces have a relationship to the nations, cities, religions and indeed the diverse aspects of society and culture that we engage with. So the created, but fallen heavenly powers are involved in the complexities of human relationships, organisations and structures (see such Scriptures as Deut. 32:8; Ezek. 28:11-16; Matt. 16:23; 1 Cor. 10:20; Gal. 4:3,9; Rev. 2:13).

- The powers have been defeated by Christ (Col. 2:15)

The decisive blow will not take place when Jesus returns but has already taken place through the cross. At the return of Jesus the effects of the decisive blow

will be implemented in fullness. Although the powers continue to exist and exert their authority their end is in sight (indicated by the demonic cry of Mark 1:24; and 1 Cor. 2:6 indicates that through the cross an irreversible process has begun ensuring that their power is passing away and that they are awaiting a final judgement).

The church wages war with the powers - we are here to remind them of, and to re-enforce, the victory of Jesus (Ephes. 3:10). We also need note that in spite of the rebellious nature of the demonic powers there is a dimension to the Lordship of Christ which means that God uses them sovereignly. God works all things to a redemptive end.

- Satan's kingdom still continues

Matthew 12:22-28 indicates that the kingdom of Satan is not divided but highly organised. Although Satan is the author of confusion and chaos this does not mean that his work is chaotic and disorderly. Anything that is strongly together and ordered but refuses to yield to the purposes of God can be described as chaotic in the sense of not fitting with God's order. The enemy's work is far from chaotic as can be seen from Paul's description of Satan's work as, 'his wiles', or 'his schemes' (2 Cor. 2:11; see also Ephes. 6:11 for some indication of structure).

There is significant structure and strategy in what Satan puts his hands to but there are also inbuilt weaknesses within his kingdom for it is not built on love and faithfulness.. Further there is also the major weakness of pride. Pride means that a person has to leave evidence of his or her mark on something. Hence it is possible to see the handiwork of Satan.

We cannot seek to move forward without confronting the powers in the heavens with the victory of Christ and in some way enforcing it in that realm. However, not only are there heavenly powers but there are also earthly powers.

The earthly powers

We can see how the heavenly and earthly are related when the Bible is read through the lens of the ancient world-view outlined above. That ancient world-view held that there were heavenly counterparts to earthly powers. So we read of the heavenly prince of Persia or Greece; and we read of the angels of the churches in Revelation. The Pauline language in Colossians is of 'things

visible and invisible' that are part of the created order of 'thrones or dominions or rulers or powers' (Col. 1:16), and in Isaiah 24:21 we read that the Lord will punish both the heavenly powers and the earthly kings.

We see the same beliefs coming through in the prophetic writings when it speaks of a city falling and the heavens being shaken. When an earthly power falls it means that the heavenly powers are also being reordered. Scripture says that God promises to shake the heavens and the earth again - for they are not independent spheres and when one sphere shakes the other one also shakes.

Putting all this together it would seem that the heavenly powers primarily work through the earthly structures. The earthly structures are not in themselves demonic, rather they are fallen (less than they should be) and can be used by the demonic realm (but they can also be redeemed and brought to serve God's purposes). These earthly powers are never found in a static position for they are exposed to the reality of warfare where ground is gained and ground is lost. Today what might serve God could tomorrow oppose him. Conversely what today might be oppressive could tomorrow be redeemed to bring freedom.

The most common collective term for the earthly powers is the word 'world' (*Gk: kosmos*). Wink helpfully uses the translation 'domination system' for this term. It is from domination that Christ came to set us free. Whenever the world is abandoned by the people of God it will become open to the fallen practice of oppression and domination, which in turn will open it up to demonic presence and control.

John 8:23 gives an outline of the battle in the religious sphere. The Pharisees are of this world system, Jesus is not; they oppress, he sets free. But behind the world system is the father of the system - the devil (John 8:44). Thus we see this twofold dimension of an oppressive earthly power or institution and the demonic reality standing behind to energise it.

The hallmark of the kingdom of God is true freedom. It was for freedom that Christ has set us free and so we are to live as those who are free (Gal. 5:1), living as those who know the world system is passing away (1 Cor. 7:31). So at a very real level spiritual warfare is living as free people who refuse to be conformed to the spirit of this age.

We are now in a position to outline the nature of the warfare and the

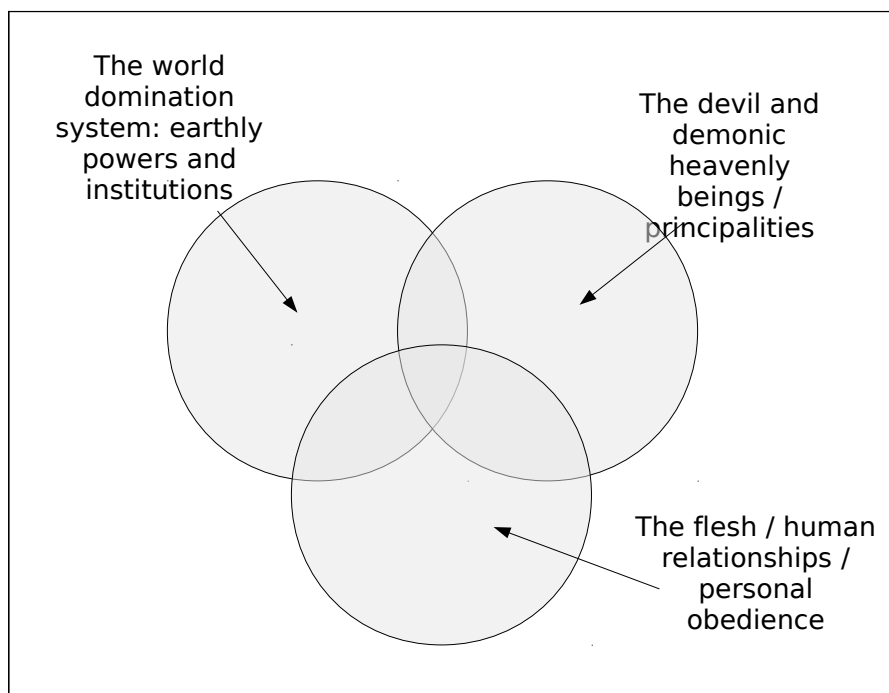
three inter-related arenas where it takes place. Ephesians 2:1-3 present three issues:

- sin / flesh
- the ways of this world
- the ruler / spirit of the power of the air

Likewise Ephesians 6:12 talks of three spheres. It says that our battle is not against:

- flesh and blood, but against powers in two spheres:
- this dark world
- the heavenly realms

We can illustrate the battle arenas as follows:



The flesh

The battle is to see humanity free to be all that God intended. Sin is to miss the whole point of why we are alive. Salvation is to be set free in relationship to God in order to serve the body of Christ and wider humanity. We battle our own flesh but only in order to be able to help others who are ‘flesh and blood’

to come to a new place of relationship with God.

The world / domination system

As those set free we are to war against every and any structure or power that seeks to enslave people. We cannot simply pray; prayer must give way to action. But action must be birthed and continually sustained through the place of prayer.

We are to be set against every earthly anti-Christ structure. Our proclamation is that Christ is the Lord of all; that true government comes from the throne in heaven. We will have to learn how to engage those powers for we are not simply to be confrontational, but are essentially called to engage those powers wherever possible from within in order to bring them to their redemptive purpose. Such an approach will give meaning and value to every day work. The church is to be expressed beyond the meeting place and God has more to say into this realm than simply instructing us to be ethical and to witness verbally to our faith when we can.

We are in the world but are not to be of it; in other words we are not to imbibe of the spirit of this world. The world spirit is that everything is here to serve me and to further my welfare. It seeks to put me at the centre. Parading as freedom this spirit actually brings about an enslavement of those who submit to it. But once we are removed from the centre and God is given his rightful place we are then in a place where we can begin to call every person and structure to discover the reason for their existence. This purpose can only be found in relation to him.

If we are truly not of this world it will soon be discovered that we cannot be bought (which is the heart of the issue of the mark of the beast). For warfare to be effective our values must be different, our life-styles need to be different to that of the world

The powers in the heavens above

We are set against the demonic power. We are to make known to them the manifold wisdom of God. Although this making known will primarily come through our lives it will also encompass our praying. Prayer must be at the centre of that warfare for it is not against flesh and blood, and it was in the context of our warfare that Paul encouraged the saints to 'pray in the Spirit at

all times in every prayer and supplication' (6:18). Prayer and prophetic declarations coupled to appropriate engaging activity will be the key to effective warfare.

Although we accept the reality of the existence of the demonic we do not accept their right to dominate and rule. Paul gave us a lead in this declaring that such powers are only 'so-called gods' (1 Cor. 8:5-6).

Conclusion to an introduction to spiritual warfare

Warfare means that we will seek to engage the earthly powers and confront the heavenly powers with the manifold wisdom of God. As we engage the earthly powers we will be affecting the heavenly powers, and vice versa. Warfare will need to take place on both fronts if we are to set people free from their bondage to Satan and allow them to come to the point of a freedom where they can begin to discover the point of being alive. Only a full engagement by the people of God in every aspect of creation will really bring us to the point where effective warfare is waged. We cannot ignore the heavenly powers nor can we ignore the earthly dimension to life. The original commission to 'fill up' remains and in order to do so we will also need to subdue the powers that are hostile to the filling of all things with the beauty of Christ. So as we engage in warfare on both the heavenly and earthly fronts it will be necessary to be led by God in order to discover the strategy for a given situation.

This chapter has sought to address foundational issues and I trust it has not been too heavy. I have written it as it is essential that our framework for warfare is a healthy and full one. Having laid the foundation we can go on to look at different ways by which we can be effective servants of the Lord in co-operating with the Spirit for the advance of the kingdom.

Chapter 5

Down to Earth

In this chapter I will seek to develop a theology of the land. Evangelists often speak of an area that is unresponsive to the Gospel as 'hard ground' and I suggest that the language is perhaps more literal than sometimes is appreciated. People need to respond to the message but the land too needs to be addressed: in the words of Jeremiah the prophet, 'O land, land, land, hear the word of the Lord' (Jer. 22:29, one of George Whitefield's favourite verses). Although the prophet addresses the nation he is very focused on issues of land.

A theology for land will flow from a good creation theology and will be based on an appreciation for the way in which God has valued material creation. In spiritual warfare terms this means that we will not simply be praying toward an open heaven, but that we will be working for a responsive earth. Isaiah suggests this mutuality between heaven and earth when he says, 'You heavens above, rain down righteousness; let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide, let salvation spring up, let righteousness grow with it; I the Lord have created it' (Is. 45:8). We see the need for the healing of the land in the language of the classical revival text of 2 Chronicles 7:14, so we will be looking for God not only to revive the people but also to 'heal the land'.

This issue of healing the land is an important development in praying for a region and it has a direct parallel in the sphere of personal deliverance. In seeking to bring personal deliverance to an individual we do not simply look to cast out a demon without giving consideration to removing the landing strips. To do so would be most unwise as the latter state could turn out to be worse than the former state.

One of the convictions that I have come to over a considerable period of

time of praying for cities and regions is that we minister to a place in a way that parallels ministry to an individual. It is interesting to note in Matthew's record of the Scripture alluded to in the previous paragraph (Matt. 12:43-45) that we discover that Jesus' application of the principle of not only casting a demon but of ensuring that the 'house' is not left empty. Jesus does not simply apply the principle to that of the individual person but applies it to a whole generation.⁸

When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this generation.

His warning concerns a whole generation that is seeking freedom and makes it clear that the principles that apply with individual cleansing need also be applied generationally. If there is also a reference to the Temple in Jesus' words then we find that Jesus applies the deliverance principle of repentance at three levels: the individual, the Temple and a whole generation. In prayer we are learning to think corporately and geographically with many of the same principles that apply in praying for an individual being directly applicable in the wider settings.

Basic creation theology

God declared that creation is good. Creation is not to be deified; it is not divine but it was always intended to speak to us of the Creator and his invisible attributes (Rom. 1:20). The whole of the created order was intended to help us see the character of God. Creativity itself has a divine purpose to bring us to God and God to us. Music and art, for example, should connect the material realm to the spiritual. God himself came to the original humans in a sound (Gen. 3:8,10). Idolatry is when any aspect of creation or creativity becomes the end product rather than the means through which God is found.

Earthly creation was given to humanity to steward and look after. The

⁸ And by using the term 'house' there is certainly more than a passing reference to the Temple in Jerusalem. There the Temple authorities had brought in demonic presences for economic gain (under the pretence of religious convenience). Jesus provoked them to cleanse the Temple and then to fill it with its divine purpose as a 'house of prayer for all nations'. This was not responded to and the latter state, within a few decades, was worse than the former state.

whole earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, but humanity was given a special connection to the earth. Originally placed in a garden the sense is that humanity was given a home with the express commission of making the whole earth a place where God could be at home. This understanding of humanity and the earth as intrinsically linked can be seen in the creation of humanity from the dust of the earth. This relationship between humanity and the earth can also be seen in Revelation 12:16 where we read (albeit in apocalyptic language) that the 'earth came to the help of the woman.' This linking of humanity and the earth means that human sin affects creation. The earth itself became cursed as a result of the human fall (cursed 'because of you' (Gen. 3:17)). Paul picks this theme up stating that the whole of creation is groaning waiting for liberation, and he indicates that its release is related to the redemption of the sons of God (Rom. 8:18-23). The cross is God's wonderful answer to human bondage, but the freedom of the sons of God is to be the answer to creation's bondage. Creation will only experience full and permanent freedom at the return of Jesus but we are now to act prophetically in the light of that return. Even prior to the *parousia* we are challenged to act in such a way that healing begins to flow to the earth and its inhabitants.

The early chapters of Genesis show that the effects of sin are alienation and disconnection. Alienation takes place between God and humanity, between individual people themselves, between nations, and between people and their geography. So we find that when sin takes place Adam and Eve are thrown out of their garden. There is a disconnection that takes place and the land becomes cursed so that it will then begin to yield thorns and thistles. From now on humanity will have to work hard to enable the earth to be fruitful. Cain's sin also has a direct result in his relationship to the earth. The earth will not welcome him for he will be 'a fugitive and a wanderer' (Gen. 4:12). Murder is a most serious act and will always pollute the earth. The blood of Abel crying out from the land for justice (Gen. 4:10) can only be silenced by the blood of Jesus that speaks 'a better word', calling for mercy (Heb. 12:24).

God brings Israel into a covenant and this covenant includes a promise of land but when they sin they lose the land that they have been promised. Although the land had been promised to them for 'all generations', as a result of their sin they find that they become separated from their Promised Land. The dislocation means they go into Exile as the land becomes sick and vomits them out (Lev. 18:28). Hence as the people humble themselves and intercede

there is the possibility of the land being healed. The very process of repentance brings healing to the people, but the promise of God is to bring healing beyond that to the deeper level of the land. Could it be in some revivals that people are healed but the land remains sick? Perhaps when land is not healed we can reap a harvest for a season, but then the land returns to its former state, causing a premature termination to the season of fruitfulness.

It was experiences where I observed how people were impacted by the pain of the land that caused me to go back to Scripture and examine what Scripture actually had to say. A simple concordance search will show how often the word 'land' or 'earth' is used and this in itself is revealing. As I researched I discovered that there were four core sins that affect the land.

Sins that affect the land

Idolatry

This is the most fundamental of all sins. It is the erecting of another god to replace the living God. When Israel entered the land they were to thoroughly cleanse the land from all previous idolatry:

Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land where you are going, or they will be a snare among you. Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and cut down their Asherah poles. Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land; for when they prostitute themselves to their gods sacrifice to them, they will invite you and you will eat their sacrifice (Exod. 34:12-16).

A similar response was required when the people were returning from Exile for again the land had been polluted through idolatrous practices:

The land you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the corruption of its have peoples. By their detestable practices they have filled it with their impurity from one end to the other. Therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them at any time, that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it to your children as an everlasting inheritance (Ezra 9:11,12).

There are numerous scriptures indicating the pollution on the land through idolatry and Jeremiah (writing at the time of Exile when the land was vomiting the people out) focuses on this aspect:

During the reign of King Josiah, the LORD said to me, "Have you seen

what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there. I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it. I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery. Because Israel's immorality mattered so little to her, she **defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood**. (Jer. 3:6-9, emphasis added).

I will repay them double for their wickedness and their sin, because they have **defiled my land** with the lifeless forms of their vile images and have filled my inheritance with their detestable idols (Jer. 16:18, emphasis added).

Behind current civilisations there are often old covenants where previous inhabitants have raised altars to false gods and within current civilisations there is often also idolatry. Today false gods are still set up and time, relationships and finances are often sacrificed to them. The old idolatries and the new ones are often related for land that was once polluted will attract further pollution, until a generation rises up that will be radical and bring about a cleansing. Where the land has been wedded to false gods that land will become resistant to the gospel and will seek to spew those who bring the gospel out of its mouth. Our task in taking territory is to respond to God in humble repentance so that land is cleansed and becomes fruitful.

Sexual immorality

Leviticus 18:24-30, a passage dealing with sexual immorality, makes two things very plain. First, that sexual immorality pollutes land, and second, that the effects of sin on the land is not to be limited to the people of Israel and her land. Rather the relationship of any people to their land is affected through sin.

Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things, for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. **And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.** Everyone who does any of these detestable things—such persons must be cut off from their people. Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the LORD your God (Lev. 18:24-30).

As noted above this passage is a key in showing that these issues are not to be restricted to Israel. Although Israel and her relationship to the land is unique, it is not unique to the point of being so different that there is no point of comparison to that of other nations. So we suggest that the relationship of people to land is a general principle based upon these biblical precedents:

- The example for Israel is based on what happened before to the previous inhabitants. The land vomited them out and this is to serve as an example to Israel as they seek to take possession of the land.
- The principle that is in effect with Israel has already been in operation before the covenant with Israel. The whole aspect of people and land is rooted in creation and has been outworked in the life of Adam and Eve and in the murder of Abel by Cain.
- The promises to Abraham although specific to the Promised Land ultimately were with the whole earth in mind (Rom. 4: 13).
- In Acts 17:26 speaks of the times and boundaries that were set for all the peoples. People are connected to land in specific ways. That is why original inhabitants (often called first nation people) have a unique authority to cleanse land. This Acts text can be seen in operation in Deuteronomy 32:8 where Yahweh fixed the boundaries of the nations. God has lands for all people and they are required to steward those lands (thus Scripture can even speak of an 'exodus' of other peoples: Amos 9:7 speaks of Ethiopians, Philistines and Arameans being brought up to their lands).
- For this reason God judges other nations and not just Israel. For example, Zephaniah 2:1-10 brings judgement on the land of Moab using the same terminology used of Israel. They will experience the land producing thorns and thistles and they themselves will be overcome and lose their land.

Woe to you who live by the sea, O Kerethite people; the word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines. I will destroy you, and none will be left... Moab will become like Sodom, the Ammonites like Gomorrah - a place of weeds and salt pits, a wasteland forever. (Zeph. 2:5,9).

- We also note that whenever sin reaches a certain level that people get dispossessed of their land. So Abraham's descendants were to go to Egypt for four generations until the sin of the Amorites was 'complete'

(Gen. 15:12-16).

- Finally, it is this understanding that gives meaning to the wealth of the nations flowing in to the New Jerusalem. There is a wealth deposited in and throughout the whole earth that people were to steward. In discovering this wealth they were to bring it to the God of all creation. Through the gospel disciples of Christ have been commissioned to go to all nations, proclaiming to all creatures the message so that in turn what has been deposited there would be brought back to God.

Blood shed

The third category of sin that pollutes the land is that of blood shed. We have already seen this with account of Cain murdering Abel. I quote three other Scriptures below:

Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it (Num. 35:33).

They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons. They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and **the land was desecrated by their blood**. They defiled themselves by what they did; by their deeds they prostituted themselves. (Ps. 106:36-39, emphasis added).

The sin of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of bloodshed and the city is full of injustice. They say, 'The LORD has forsaken the land; the LORD does not see.' (Ezek. 9:9).

Bloodshed does not only apply to the taking of innocent life but also to such practices as abortion or the making of blood pacts. Bloodshed is often coupled to idolatry where sacrifice is committed for the sake of the god that is being worshipped.

Martyrdom is exceptionally powerful for it is the giving of lives in the same flow as that of Jesus. This principle also applies with respect to those who serve the enemy. I have discovered that the enemy will keep those alive he desires but willingly sacrifice their lives when their death is of more value to him than their life.⁹

I can remember taking time to pray on the site of the murder of 1,200

⁹ In 2 Kings 3:27 there is the record of the King of Moab sacrificing his own first-born son and the battle then turned in his favour. The power of blood sacrifice should not be under-estimated.

Celtic intercessors (an event that took place in 613 AD) and being deeply moved by what I encountered. Prior to that prayer event I found it virtually impossible to find anyone who lived in that city who even knew of that historic bloodshed. Amazingly within a few weeks of praying into that event the local newspaper carried a two-page article describing the original slaughter. It seemed that the enemy wished to keep the event covered from sight so that it could not be addressed, however, once it had been addressed the whole event was then visible for all to know about.

I have been informed that Hitler took earth from battlefields where German blood had been shed on it and brought it to the Olympic stadium in Berlin. Hitler seems to have used the stadium as some sort of Temple where he could practice occultic rituals, and by taking blood stained earth there it illustrates yet again the desire of demonic powers to tap into death. Having been on that site to pray I am not surprised that Hitler did this: the oppressive powers that are present there are quite obvious.¹⁰

Broken covenants (often leading to false covenants)

The final core sin that affects land is that of broken covenants. (I also add to this the sin of false covenants, which would include such practices as freemasonry.) A basic Scripture reference here is Isaiah 24:5 where we read that 'The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.' Perhaps the best biblical illustration of broken covenant polluting the land is found in 2 Samuel 21:1,2. There we read,

During the reign of David, there was a famine for three successive years; so David sought the face of the LORD. The LORD said, "It is on account of Saul and his blood-stained house; it is because he put the Gibeonites to death."

The background to this passage is found in Joshua 9:15,16 where we read that Joshua made a covenant with the Gibeonites. Saul broke this covenant and judgement came upon the land. Soberly, we note that although the covenant Saul broke was not one that he made, nor was it made in his generation that nevertheless there was a major consequence to his action. We also note that the result of the broken covenant was not experienced directly by Saul and his

¹⁰The king of Moab sacrificed his first-born son on the walls when the Moabites were besieged, and the effect was that Israel was driven back (2 Kings 3:26,27). This indicates how the demonic powers respond to blood sacrifice.

generation but the impact was felt by his successor (David) who himself was a man after God's own heart. This challenges our Western individualistic mindset, but illustrates that sin and its effects are transgenerational. We will never effectively deal with issues in our society without recognising that the effects of sin go beyond the generation that committed the sin.

Where covenants between peoples have been made and then broken there will be pollution on that land. I wonder how many historical treaties have been broken and have yet to be addressed in repentant prayer? There are those who claim, for example, that none of the agreements made between the European people who came to North America with the Native Americans were honoured. In such situations there is a price to pay and it is no surprise that even Christians have to fight to keep their marriages intact.

Broken covenants also open up a land or a society to the embracing of false covenants. The most common form of false covenant in Western society is that of Freemasonry. The evidence of Freemasonry can be seen with many cities having key buildings that have been designed according to Masonic patterns. Often the very architecture can reveal such designs: with towers shaped as per the Babylonian ziggurat towers, or the presence of obelisks. Even the lay out of the streets can reveal Masonic-type patterns. One aspect of the demonic is that it has to eventually show itself for pride is its downfall and pride means that it cannot bear to go unnoticed. When the Masonic presence is strong it will the impact key positions of power such as judiciary, police, clergy, politics, business and education. Freemasonry is seductive and secretive and when it has a stronghold in an area there will often be signs in the church of its impact. Perhaps surprisingly, I have come to the conclusion that it is a goddess spirit that lies behind Freemasonry. However, this might explain why it is a female statue of liberty that was donated to the USA by the French Masonic movement and why as men are seduced into it the effect is that this goddess spirit calls for a marriage-type commitment. It is therefore no surprise that marriage comes under severe threat wherever there has been the presence of Masonic vows. Here are some of the signs that indicate a strong Masonic presence:

- Division, of marriage and other God-given relationships
- The silencing of the prophetic
- The seduction (often sexually) of worship leaders away from their calling

- Strong accusation against male leaders (and I do not state this because I believe in a leadership is male position)
- The marginalisation of women
- Prevalent sickness which can often be directly related to the oaths taken in Masonry
- Confusion and disagreement over issues of revelation
- Contention over teaching with what is clear being ignored and gnostic elements being emphasised

The effects of the four root sins

Although we have separated out these four sins they are often inter-related, but it is the effect of these sins that we need to address. The effect is to pollute the land so that a particular geography will not yield up the harvest of righteousness that it was intended to. Whenever these sins have impacted an area there will be a drawing to that area of subsequent sin of the same type thus causing a re-enforcement and through the repetition a stronghold is established in that area.

Where these sins have been present the church will have to live from a different orientation. The polluted land will resist attempts to get rooted by those who wish to dig over that land for righteousness' sake. The challenge to the church will be to become so rooted that it becomes an effective cleansing agent through living differently. The church must not be shaped by the sins of the land, thus polluting the land yet further, but must derive its shape from heaven thus cleansing the land. In a later chapter we will look at the church as the cleansing agent, but at this stage I simply wish to underline that the first step toward any cleansing will always be that of embracing the way of the cross and being clothed with humility.

King Josiah sought to bring reform to Israel at a deep level he sought to deal with these root issues (2 Kings 23). It is also a very strong possibility that it was an understanding of these root sins that in part lies behind the letter to the Gentile believers in Acts 15, where they are told to abstain from, 'food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, for the meat of strangled animals and from blood.' The three issues of idolatry, fornication, and murder were the three cardinal sins in Jewish eyes and avoidance of these were held to be binding on the whole human race from the time of Noah.

Warning signs that land is polluted

There are four main warning signs that land has become polluted and Ezekiel 14 states these as:

- **Famine:** this does not always appear as lack of literal food (although it can be) but can manifest as a lack of what we need, which can include a lack of the word of God or a lack of resources to fulfil what God has commissioned (Ezek. 14: 13).
- **Ecological disaster:** where things just simply go wrong and society does not holding together as it should (Ezek. 14:15).
- **War:** this can be in the form of outright violence, or where covetousness, contention, division and dispute are experienced (Ezek. 14:17).
- **Pestilence:** where levels of disease of different types are beyond what would normally be expected. Again this can be with reference to physical disease but can also include relational, spiritual and emotional disease (Ezek. 14:19-20).

(In Revelation 6:8 we find these same four judgements are released on the earth through the opening of the fourth seal.)

As suggested these warning signs do not have to manifest their literal physical form but whenever they become visible in whatever form, they are designed to indicate that the land has become polluted. The likelihood is that where there is clear evidence of pollution that we will discover a mixture of 1) ancient pollution, with 2) some current activities that have re-enforced the ancient pollution, and that 3) the church has succumbed to the same sins to some degree. All three of these issues will need to be dealt with in order to bring about a cleansing.

Marks that accompany transformation

Alistair Petrie in his book *Releasing heaven on earth*¹¹ lists seven blessings of God on the land (taken from Lev. 26:4-10). I list them below as they serve a good contrast to the four effects on the land above:

- **Ecological health:** even where there can be a change of climactic conditions, with seasonal balance restored.

¹¹ Alistair Petrie, *Releasing Heaven on Earth* (Michigan: Chosen, 2000), pp 200f.

- Economic health: where a better return is experienced and fresh wisdom is evident in management.
- Personal security: for example in lower crime rates being noted.
- Civil security: such issues as a greater level of harmony with racial tension dropping.
- International security: the nation itself begins to come into its redemptive gift as God's presence and favour is experienced.
- Honour and growth: God's visitation becomes a habitation and then the nation experiences divine guidance, security and favour.
- Innovation and creativity: this is where untapped riches come to the surface.

A fifth issue to be dealt with

The above four elements that pollute land are root issues but there is a fifth element that, although not as fundamental, also affects the land. It is also something that is very pressing in every generation and often proves to be a way in for healing the land. It is that of inter-generational healing.

Our Old Testament closes with the promise of a visitation of Elijah to bring about reconciliation so that the land does not experience a curse. We read that Elijah 'will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse' (Mal. 4:6). We can also compare this with Paul's reference to Old Testament law in Ephesians 6:2,3. There he says, ' "Honour your father and mother" - which is the first commandment with a promise - "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." ' Paul sees a link between the generations (and families) being in harmony and the people being in harmony with their land.

If the hearts of parents can be turned toward the children then there can be healing that flows. The turning of hearts would mean that the older generation should seek to discover what it is that God has placed in the hearts of the next generation and then encourage them in their pursuit of God. This reconciliation runs deep and the primary requirement is on the parents to turn and whatever else this turning means it certainly cannot mean that there is a demand on the next generation to simply do everything the same way that

the previous generation has.

Healing the land

Scripture uses pictorial language to express God's blessing on the land (for example, 'the trees of the fields will clap their hands') and although we should not press for a literal interpretation, but neither should we make the language so metaphorical that it no longer has any meaning. God's blessing brings fruitfulness to the land. The Jews saw the wilderness as the abode of demons as its barrenness was a sign of the curse. Hence this was the place where Jesus confronts the devil. Wild animals are found in the wilderness being symbolic of a lack of harmony in creation, but it is in that place that Jesus is said to be with the wild animals (Mark 1:13). Harmony is restored through Jesus for he has come to turn the curse into blessing, to bring restoration. We, too, need to bring a harmony to all creation, bridging the gap through how we live and pray between heaven and earth. The land needs to be cleansed and ministered to. The sound of worship, prayer and the activity of walking the land all call for a fresh season of harvest. Although our activity cannot bring about irreversible transformation we need lay hold of our commission for the earth is the Lord's and as we connect with the land we need to evict all squatters.

A colleague of mine, Stuart Lindsell, pointed out to me the potency of John 10:40-42 when understood against the backdrop of the issues surrounding land. We read,

Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. Here he stayed and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true." And in that place many believed in Jesus.

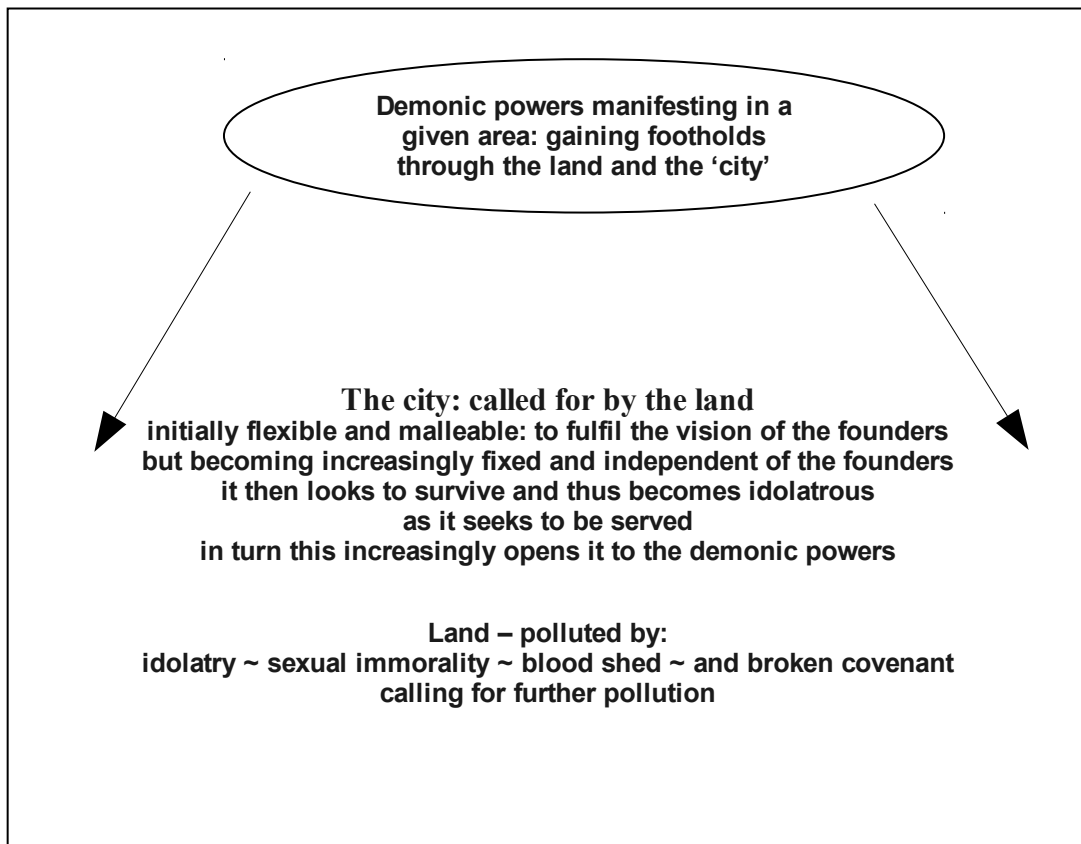
The immediate chapters have borne testimony to the unbelief of many Jews, particularly in the Jerusalem context (John 7:10-10:39). In this short passage John (the writer) underlines the issue of geography,¹² and this place was yielding fruit. It is the history of humble repentance that had taken place there that was one of the keys in the healing of that land. In that place the ground was fruitful, it began to yield up a harvest of salvation as 'many believed in

¹²There are six references to geography in those few short sentences: 'went back', 'across the Jordan', 'to the place', 'where', 'here', and 'in that place'. There is one reference to history - the reference to John having been there in early days baptizing. History does indeed shape geography.

him there.' Land can be healed; it can become fruitful, but only as repentance takes place.

Territorial spirits?

There has been considerable debate over the existence of territorial spirits and arguments have been advanced that have suggested that these angels were originally given by God to bring order to the nations of the world (Deut. 32:8 is often quoted in defence of this view that God 'set up the boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of God' - NIV alternative translation, following the Dead Sea Scrolls). I am not going to argue the point one way or the other here as I believe it is more important to understand that demonic powers have an influence that is dependent on the ground they are given. Given the discussion on land and also bringing in an understanding of the idolatrous development of the city it should become evident that demonic powers will inevitably manifest themselves in a given territory (hence I am happy with the term 'territorial spirits'), but that in dealing with them we will necessarily be focused on removing their footholds through cleansing the land and delivering the city. Before moving on, in the next chapter, to suggesting some initial elements that will be necessary in dealing with such powers I will close this chapter with two illustrations. The first a literal illustration in the form of a diagram that will pull the elements of land, city and demonic powers together; the second an illustration in the form of a story that will illustrate what can flow from land pollution. In viewing the diagram it is best to read it from the bottom up. The land is polluted which in part shapes the development of the 'city'. These two elements then give ground for demonic influence. Under some views of territorial spirits it would be argued that demonic powers are already present in that area, however, the key element to grasp is that regardless of a prior presence they only effectively gain their power through the ground that is given.



The second illustration is a report from a prayer walk I undertook with a team one afternoon. During the morning session the Lord dropped the word 'rivalry' in my mind, and I asked if that particular town had any historic rivalry with another town in that area. The response was, 'not at any significant level,' so I did not pursue it further. In the afternoon while prayer walking we came to pray outside a particular church building and someone commented that this was built on land that two brothers who had fallen out with each other had fought over. They were rivals and it was their family that had effectively founded the town. They then told me that this church, which had been of a Trinitarian faith, had been infiltrated by Unitarians and eventually had become a Unitarian church. At the time of the prayer it was still owned by the Unitarians but was now rented by a good Trinitarian denomination. However, the people with us also went on to explain that from that building it was possible to trace the majority of church splits in their town.

We walked about 50 metres and came to the old bridge over the river. Here we were told that the river marked the boundary of two parishes. The

parish church building on the side where we were standing was close to the river, the church building on the other side was some way from the river. It was thus easier for those who lived in the other parish but close to the river to simply cross over the bridge and attend the 'wrong' parish church. As is often the case the church that had been losing out (the 'our people and our money' syndrome) came and established a building near the river to gain back what had been lost. In so doing they came under the spirit of rivalry that had plagued the town since its inception. We then crossed the bridge and I was informed that the first Masonic lodge that took root in the town took root at that spot. The Masons had tried earlier to start but had been unsuccessful. I asked the question, 'Which came first: the Masons taking root, or the parish church opening its building in response to the spirit of rivalry?' The answer, as expected, was that the church conceded the ground first.

In the course of no more than 100 metres we experienced an amazing journey through the spiritual history of that town. What a salutary lesson: the church could have cleansed the ground as it came in an opposite spirit and gladly gave away people and finances, but rather it had come under the same spirit as the town and the subsequent spiritual history of the town was that of living with the consequences.

On the particular afternoon in question we had with us two brothers who for years had worked together in leadership within the church and we were able to stand with them on that land as they prayed asking God to reverse the effects of history and committing themselves, by the grace of God, to live differently. As is so often the case when God reveals something that needs to be put right he also supplies the resources to effect the change.

Chapter 6

Called to Cleanse

We have looked at key issues that give demonic powers their foothold in a given geography and by means of the final illustration began to give some indication that the church is called to be the agent for cleansing. Pollution occurs within a geographical setting and this is one of the reasons why we need to discover the geographical connection that God wants to give us: if we are going to cleanse territory we will need to press through with relationships for territory's sake.

The challenge for the church in spiritual warfare is not that of learning a new technique or set of beliefs about demonic spirits, but to live as Jesus always intended us to by the power of the cross. Sadly the church in certain regions is probably not being a cleansing agent but simply adding to the pollution already there. The battle is real and once land is polluted it will allow growth that will harmonise with existing pollution but will resist any planting that seeks to come in an opposing spirit. It is for this reason that it is difficult in some areas to plant church as the very ground seeks to vomit out what is entering that area.

Cleansing the land

In the chapter on land I indicated that there were four primary sins that pollute land and I am going to look at each of these in turn. Jesus set us a major precedent in the Sermon on the Mount when in using the phrase 'you have heard it said, but I say to you' he indicated that what is required of disciples is an inner obedience not simply an outer conformity. In applying this principle to sins that pollute land we will want to make sure that the sins that pollute are absent from the church, not only in an external sense, but that the

very spirit behind these sins is also absent.

So taking them in turn we can ask, 'what would it mean for the church to be guilty of the spirit of idolatry'. Paul in Colossians 3:5 says that greed is a form of idolatry and Samuel suggests that stubbornness is like idolatry (1 Sam. 15:23). Idolatry can take the form of overt trust in anything other than God. The subtlety of idolatry is that images are intended to reveal God to us but when they become the point of focus they take the place of God. Even creation itself, Paul comments, can become a focus for worship. Given this understanding the church, as a God-given image, is here to point to heaven's realities, for those who come in touch with the body of Christ are to come in contact with something that is all-but an extension of the incarnation. So whenever the church takes too much of a central role, when it over-promotes itself, it will always be in grave danger of further polluting the land.

A church that is living in an area of strong idolatry will find strong temptation to be independent of other churches, displaying no need of others. The leadership will be pressured to require strong allegiance, demanding loyalty at a level that is reserved for God alone. So a church that is to break this stronghold will have to come in the opposite spirit with a willingness to give away, to sow its resources when there are no immediate benefit, being willing to see other churches have the outward signs of success.

When we come to the issue of immorality this is certainly an issue at a sexual level and Paul consistently urges the believers of his day to be pure. I consider, too, that other lust issues within church can come under this category. It could be a lust for power and authority. It can also be where there is a perverting of that which is pure. The difficulty with sexual immorality is that sex in itself is not wrong, but what fundamentally determines the acceptability of it is the context in which it takes place (heterosexual marriage). Sex is not wrong, but the context must be right, and immorality is to use a God-given gift and express it within the wrong boundaries. So in applying this principle within the church we can have a church that has right desires (and perhaps even a genuine prophetic calling) but is expressing those desires within the wrong context. A (right) desire to change the spiritual atmosphere of an area expressed in a (wrong) context of independence and superiority will perhaps do more to pollute than to cleanse. This is compounded where there is a spirit of denominationalism - there has to be love for the body as a whole and not some love for one's own kind over and

above others.

In examining these issues I have often wondered if we have cancelled out many of our prayers for revival once we leave the place of prayer and declaration, simply through the way that we have carried on as church. A spirit of humility coupled with a desire for the unity of all God's people will help ensure that the church contributes to the cleansing of the geography.

Two down, two to go! Behind the taking of life is anger, so where such manifestations as rage or criticism reign supreme it is more likely that the church has come under the pollution of the area and will fail to bring any cleansing. Further if 'the life of the flesh is in the blood', where a church was drawing life out of people and not being life-giving it would be in grave danger of simply polluting the land yet further. If the church simply demands that the people involved serve the vision of the church but gives no consideration to getting behind and supporting the vision of the people that God has anointed within that body, perhaps it is coming close to sacrificing lives rather than empowering the body to do the works of service.

The final sin (broken covenant) does not need too much expansion for the church has had more than its fair share of broken relationships. For a church to be clear of this sin would mean that it embraced a commitment to live faithfully, honouring God-given relationships, while dealing with issues of division that often surface around social or racial distinctions. Openness and transparency would be a characteristic of church committed to cleanse with a corresponding willingness to expose every divisive party spirit.

In the above paragraphs I hope I have communicated that spiritual warfare is about the health of the church more than anything else. (There will also be acts of repentance and specific prayer that will be involved in cleansing an area, but the foundation must be that of the life of and relationships within the church.) Paul states that the manifold wisdom of God is to be made known now to the principalities and powers, which although a theological truth needs also to be expressed pragmatically.

The church: engaging the city

If only spiritual warfare meant that our hands never became dirty, but to believe that would be to act so differently to Jesus or the early church. It is vital that we engage the structures around us, and some of the people within

the church who need more support than others are those who are in the front line of spiritual warfare – those who have to engage in the highly idolatrous arenas of business, politics or the arts. Thankfully the Bible is not silent on these issues and it is vital that we know that we can and must work within the structures. For example, Daniel or Joseph both engaged structures that were opposed to the God of the Hebrews and came to great power within those same structures. It is only at the extreme stages of the corporate demonisation of the structures that God's people are told 'to come out of her' (Rev. 18:4).

The structures can never become the ultimate authority in our lives nor are they to be the source of our values, so in engaging the structures it is key that the believer is never bought by those structures. This is a most challenging arena for it is within this environment that the powers will come against those who engage, desiring to steal, kill, and destroy such people.

If spiritual warfare involves the whole of life the greater impact will take place as the whole body of Christ stands in their place. The challenge is there for the ministry gifts to equip the whole body of Christ for the whole task of transformation.

In engaging the city there are some necessary requirements:

We will have to care for the city

It is said of Nehemiah that he mourned for days when he heard of the state of Jerusalem (Neh. 1:4). Like Nehemiah we must pray for the city, but not simply from a distance. We will have to pray from within for we too belong to the city. Where we live is our city, our place. This is why we need to be wary of those who speak of judgement but stand aloof. Judgement begins at the house of God for two reasons. First, because the standards are higher within the church than outside, and secondly, because if judgement is coming to the city the house of God is required to stand in the gap through intercession, so that any coming judgement will come first to the house of God.

We must plan for the city with a long-term goal

We will have to develop relationships with those who have a vision for the city. We are to come together for the sake of territory. As we do so we will not be able to ignore the presence of the demonic for if we are to see the city

experience freedom it will not simply come through social action, or engagement at a structural level. Strategic heavenly warfare will also be involved. Likewise it will not simply be through prayer but there will need to be an engagement with the structural powers. There has to be both strategies in place for it is through the structural powers that the demonic agenda is outworked.

The church as the means of redemption within the city

The church is set within a specific geographic location. 'To the church in....' indicates more than the church's geographical location. It is a reference to a specific and purposeful planting of church in order to be the redemptive element within that area. If the church is to effectively fulfil this task there will be two aspects that will need to be embodied:

The church must have a counter-flow of life

In Luke 19:41-46, Jesus comes first to the city of Jerusalem and then goes to the Temple. There are two stages to this one movement. Jesus approaches the city and sees it both physically and spiritually. Weeping over Jerusalem he pronounces that the city is facing judgement. However, his journey does not end there for there is yet hope of averting judgement. He continues the journey to the Temple. If he finds in the Temple a counter flow of life then there is hope for the city. (Even in the situation with Sodom and Gomorrah in Abraham's day the issues were the same. Those cities were under judgement, but in real terms the cities were judged simply because there were insufficient righteous people who would stand in the gap.)

When Jesus enters the Temple he encounters what Jeremiah did centuries before him (Jer. 1:1-15). The Temple was no longer a house of prayer but a den of robbers. The Temple has succumbed to the spirit that had pervaded the nation and the city. It was no longer the redemptive element in the city for it had abandoned its calling to pray. Judgement on the city could not now be averted and within a generation both city and Temple were destroyed.

The church is the equivalent of the Temple (1 Cor. 3:16) and must be that house of prayer that is standing in the gap for its area. If the city is to experience blessing then there must be a presence of God within the Temple. The church must be a house of prayer, not a den of robbers; it must be the

salt within and the light to the city. There must be a counter-flow of life to the self-preservation that is within fallen society.

Prayer then must be at the heart of the church if we are to change the city, and there needs to be a sober realisation that Jesus has placed the church in the gates of the city. Hence how the church relates together will greatly influence the city. In one town I spoke to the churches present and told them that their town was 'rich pickings' for church planting. By this I meant that it was an attractive place to plant a church, for there would be some success due to the nature of the place, although it is doubtful if this would result in there being any great shift in the percentage of the town that would acknowledge Christ. Having told them about their town I then went on to say that if another church was planted that they were not to complain, for they were actually inviting other churches into the town through the way they were relating together. If the churches of a place all live in independence there is a spiritual atmosphere created that is one of independence. So by default the churches were actually inviting in yet more independence. My challenge to them was to break the independent spirit between them so that a different spiritual climate would be over the church in the town. Then I said either independent plantings would not be possible, or when new groups came to town they would begin to flow as yet another congregation of the one church. The authority in the church is awesome, but it is more related to how we live than how loud we pray.

This issue of independence is a vital one to be counteracted. Sitting with leaders I asked about the businesses and shops in their town and how they related together. In simple terms we decided they were there in competition with one another but could use one another and even co-operate together when it was to their benefit. This then led me to ask if there was a difference between the spirit within the churches of the town and the spirit that operated in the wider market place. Too often we have to sadly confess that the church has simply imbibed of the same spirit.

Standing for the redemption of the city the church needs to be a house of prayer for those who will not or cannot pray. This calls for the church to look outward and stand together so that it has the necessary counter-flow of life to the city.

The church must be engaged with the city

This counter-flow of life, however, is not to be expressed in separateness to the life of the wider community. Holiness is 'in the world but not of it'. When the geography is entered in the same spirit that Jesus entered Jerusalem (weeping over the city) there is a level of authority that is experienced. To weep over the city gives us a new level of authority to enter and engage the city. There has to be a deep connection with our territories for there to be a release of authority.

So it is these two elements: the counter-flow of life yet engagement that are key. The letters to the churches in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation are most instructive with respect to spiritual warfare. Whenever a church is critiqued there are clear allusions to their city in terms of the history or geography of that city: in effect what is being said is that the city has been shaping the church, rather than the church shaping the spiritual environment of the city. When the church has no counter-flow of life the light of the church is already in danger of going out for the darkness of the city is already overcoming the church.

The intercessory role of the church means that it will stand in the gap to confess sin for those who will not confess sin, knowing that judgement will begin at the house of the Lord. There can only be hope for the city when the church stands in that intercessory, priestly position holding back the judgements of God, calling for mercy. Such prayer must lead to for they go hand in hand. Compassion must lead to engagement.

I have discovered in praying that there are certain things that follow when the church abandons its role to engage its area (and likewise certain things happen when the church presses through to its God appointed role).

If the church abandons engagement with the city then:

- the demonic will shape the city, and
- the city will shape the church, and
- the demonic will release into (earthly) power those who serve that agenda.

If the church engages the city then:

- the demonic powers will be limited in their scope, and

- the city's spiritual atmosphere will be shaped by the church, and
- there will be a release into power of those who serve Christ, or some of those in positions of power will find faith in Christ (the challenge will then be how they use their power and position of influence).

The turning point is whether the church will engage its geographical setting. Little wonder it is through the church the manifold wisdom of God is made known.

Addressing the church in the city and addressing the city

As we have engaged in prayer I have discovered that there comes a point when the church has to be addressed prophetically in a corporate sense. The church is more than the congregation that we belong to but is itself a corporate body in the locality. We also participate in the spirituality of the corporate body in the city. There comes a time to speak to the church with the prophetic voice of the Spirit. Like John the Prophet there is a time to say, 'To the angel of the church in...'. There is a time to call the church in the city to be responsive to the will of God. If we do not address the church in the area we will live with the consequence of the spiritual powers in that area addressing the church, dictating what the future of the church will be.

Time and again we have spent time speaking to the church, encouraging the church to rise up, to respond to the call of God. When a prophetic anointing is present it is not even vital to have the entire church represented, but it can be done when there are those present who can stand in a position of authority for the church in that region.

It is vital that the church is addressed first, for it is through the church that the powers are effectively dealt with. There can also be occasions when the city as a whole can be addressed. This should not be done if we have bypassed the church - the church needs to be addressed first, to come and obey the king. However, at the right time whole cities and regions can be addressed in the spirit. We find that Jesus and other prophets did so in Scripture. This again challenges the prevalent view in the Western world. Jesus addressed Jerusalem as 'the city that kills the prophets' and had we been present we might have been tempted to respond with the thought that it is not the city but the people who live in the city that kills the prophets. However, even if all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were to leave and a whole

new people populate the city, Jerusalem would still be 'the city that kills the prophets'. It is the city that kills the prophets and from this we understand that it is a corporate personality that can be addressed.

At the right time and under the right anointing that corporate personality can be addressed. Indeed even the debate over addressing territorial powers is somewhat lesser when we consider the Scriptural evidence for addressing the city as a whole. And taking this concept somewhat further, perhaps what is known as territorial spirits - 'a spirit of such and such' over a place, is really only the manifestation of the spirit that is both within and over the city. It is interesting that when the Scriptures speak of spirits over a place they are described as 'the prince of' that place, such as the prince of Persia or the prince of Greece. Perhaps then the territorial spirit over a city, for example over Brighton, is simply 'the spirit of Brighton', which then might have certain characteristics.¹³

I trust in reading this chapter that it becomes clear that I believe effective spiritual warfare can only be done through church in a locality growing up into all that Christ is and growing out into all that Christ has come to impact. When I was initially preparing a set of notes that this book is based on I invited about 30 people to a day of dialogue on what I considered were the more critical and controversial aspects, and invited feedback. One person said to me that they thought I had put two things together that I should separate. They said that I had taught on prayer and on the shape of church. The next day that person rang me to say they wanted to retract their suggestion as, after reflection, they were aware that the two were intrinsically related. I believe prayer and the shape of church must go hand in hand.

There is one final aspect that I wish to address in this chapter. Although not fully in the flow of this chapter, it does relate to the nature of spiritual entities being present in gatherings, and will resonate with anyone who has come under a prophetic anointing for a town, a city or a region. Understanding this will also help preserve sanity amidst the battle.

Spiritual entities present

In some gatherings, particularly in ones that are flowing out of intercession for

¹³I will return to the issue of addressing territorial spirits in a later chapter - these are simply some initial comments, the key issue here is to note I am suggesting that there are key times when it is vital that the city as a whole is addressed prophetically.

whole geographies there are spiritual entities that are present. I have experienced this first hand on a number of occasions and unless it is discerned it is easy to, mistakenly, make the judgement that these spirits are present within the actual congregation that is assembled. Having prayed many times in the wonderful nation of Wales the Welsh revival of 1904-05 has been of great interest to me, and I consider that this was one of the elements that closed that revival down. Evan Roberts, at 26 years old, was gloriously used of God to spearhead that revival, but it becomes very evident toward the end of that move that he became almost paranoid about what was present in those revival meetings. I believe the critical, hostile spirits were present in those meetings but that they were not as present as he thought within the people. Spiritual entities were there to criticise and perhaps they should either have been addressed head on or simply ignored.

Coupled with the above I consider that Roberts was let down by a lack of fathers who stood with him to help him through, which in turn gave room for a matriarchal spirit to cause a measure of sidelining. How the enemy loves to confuse for this can leave a deep fear of women being released, assuming that the problem is female rather than spiritual.

So in such gatherings we should not be surprised when overwhelming feelings of hostility or criticism are encountered. Those spirits are being provoked but it is vital not to project them on to the people. I suggest that those spirits are either addressed directly or are ignored. Regardless of whatever strategy is adopted it is important not to project the opposition on to the congregation.

As we turn to look at practices that should be employed in prayer we must remember that the effectiveness of any practice will be based on the health of the body of Christ. Hence in this chapter I have tried to lay a foundation by calling the church to live in the sacrificial flow of Calvary.

Chapter 7

A Time to Engage

The church engaging society at every level is what is necessary for effective change to take place and for the demonic powers that rule to be disempowered. This engagement will go beyond prayer to intercession in the fullest sense of the word: of standing in the gap. However, prayer must be at the heart of all intercession and in this chapter I want to explore the whole aspect of prophetic intercession, which will include the controversial area that has become known as 'identificational repentance'.

Prophetic intercession - a definition

There has been an increased restoration of prophetic gifts to the church in the past few decades, and a term that has been increasingly used in prayer circles is 'prophetic intercession'. Like most terms it is one that needs some explanation, and we need to make sure that we are not tagging the word 'prophetic' on the front of our practice in order to justify what we are doing.

'Prophecy' is that manifestation of the Spirit that declares the mind and will of God into a situation, so by inference prophetic intercession is where the mind of God over a given situation is discerned through waiting on him and then prayed back into that situation. It is to discover the will of God and to pray specifically 'your will be done'. Prophetic intercession is where the relevant and immediate word of the Lord becomes the shaping element in how we pray, and what we do. It picks up the burden and direction of the Spirit and prays it both back to the Lord and into the situation.

Many times prophetic action is provoked as a result of hearing the Lord. This prophetic action might be as simple as prayer walking a particular area, or it might include, for example, going to a specific site and pouring oil and

wine on the ground. Prophetic action is when we actually do something that is claimed to be an embodiment or illustration of what the Lord is saying. The act will illustrate and portray that which is being prayed or proclaimed. (In due course I will suggest that given the nature of imagery, prophetic action can even be the means of releasing what is being imaged.)

Prophetic action is not uncommon among the prophets of Scripture. Ezekiel took a brick and set up the siege of Jerusalem or he shaved his head as a sign (both found in Ezek. 4). Again it was Ezekiel who wrote on two sticks symbolising the re-uniting of Israel and Judah (Ezek. 37). Jeremiah hid a loin-cloth in the earth until it rotted (Jer. 13). Such examples are numerous and are not exclusively found in the Old Testament. Agabus took Paul's belt and bound him to demonstrate what would be Paul's experience in Jerusalem (Acts 21). It is very likely that Jesus breathed on the disciples pre-Pentecost as a prophetic sign that in some way released the full breath from heaven on the Day of Pentecost (John 20 / Acts 2).

Prophetic intercession that is confined to words can be easily related to, for we all have an awareness that God speaks. It is often prophetic actions that raise questions - at times because some people try to baptise certain bizarre behaviour through labelling it as 'prophetic'. To help understand the power of true prophetic action it is important to explore the nature of imagery.

The nature of imagery

Imagery and images are powerful. They can become the means of leading us to the place where we confront the reality that they image, or they can become the stopping off point effectively leading us toward idolatry. So, for example, an image that Christ himself gave of the bread and wine can either cause us to feed on the body and blood of our Lord, or they can become a superstitious end in themselves.

Imagery is truly sacramental, in simple terms this means that what is imaged is actually released through the image, for imagery both points us to the reality that it pictures **and** draws to itself what it pictures.

As stated above the prophets often demonstrated their prophecies. These demonstrations were more than a creative means of communicating, but an important means by which the prophetic word was actually released. Prophetic actions therefore will be a vital aspect of intercession. It is because

of this that we need to go and walk land; why we will be ready to take oil and anoint places; why we will pour out wine on the ground; why we will go and kneel in certain geographies; why many places of past revival will be revisited as prophetic acts of opening up the old wells. This is why we will seek to image what we have seen in the heavens on specific land for, through the very imagery, the rule of God will make an impact in time and space.

By means of prophetic action we have often prayed in areas of great conflict or even bloodshed and poured out wine on the ground, speaking in word and deed of the shed blood of Jesus that atones. We have erected a cross and knelt before it in places where the demonic has gained a stronghold, thus imaging a people whose model of power is taken from the cross. We have driven stakes in the ground with Scriptures written on them to demonstrate that the whole earth is the Lord's. Sources of rivers have been prayed over for rivers physically (sacramentally) speak of the river of God's blessing. (Many rivers were dedicated to gods in our historic past, so need to be set free from that bondage.) We have gone to some of the earliest Christian sites in the UK to pray in those places and prophetically connect with the past and ask God's help to enable the church to be in the same apostolic flow as those early saints. The scope for prophetic action is endless. It is important that we do not reduce any activity to the realm of 'magic' ('do this and that will follow') but that we are led by the Spirit and connect the action to passion and faith.

It is not possible to fully explain prophetic action for there is always an element within it that is beyond the rational, but this does not excuse behaviour that is irrational or bizarre! In all of this we must avoid attaching the label 'prophetic' to something to justify it, but when God leads us into activity that is truly prophetic there is a release in the heavenlies as we enact on earth what God has shown us. I have also noted that often there are amazing changes of weather either as we have engaged in such activity, or immediately following. I remember praying in Llantwit Major (probably the oldest Christian site in the British Isles) and the sky was a deep clear blue. Within half an hour of praying, the skies were black, there were flashes of lightning and the streets were literally running with waters like mini-rivers. While most people in the town understandably took cover from the weather, a number of the prayer team were standing in the streets in the rain for the waters were symbolic of the waters of revival that we had been praying for.

Changes of weather and other signs that follow intercessory activity are

to encourage our faith to persist in prayer. The sign is not the thing itself but often signifies that a change is underway. The following story will illustrate the nature of signs.

A Brazilian team came over to the UK and felt to pray in certain cities. However, in one of those cities they were not welcomed in by the church leaders of the city, so the team did not feel they could enter the city, but prayed for it from a hill overlooking it. While in prayer there was a vision of a cockerel that 'ruled the roost' in a farmyard, so much so that whenever another animal sought to express itself the cockerel it would quickly silence it. This was discerned to be a picture of the ecclesiastical control that was in the city. Some years later we were invited to that city as a prayer team and, just before we were due to travel there, a wonderful intercessor rang me to say she had been in prayer and the Lord had instructed her to go to a church building in the centre of town, as the ecclesiastical control was centred there. She drove to the building and was amazed to see that the weather vane on the roof was actually a gold cockerel.

Research was to show that that church had been responsible for putting a number of people to death who had during the Reformation era. Ecclesiastical control was probably present prior to that period, but whenever the church takes life a major door is opened for a stronghold to establish itself.

As a team we knelt on the spot where some were martyred to offer ourselves repentantly for what had taken place. Amazingly we were joined by non-church goers who watched and listened as we prayed – it was almost as if they were giving their approval to believers demonstrating their faith in public. (Sometimes the community is waiting for the church that professes faith in God to pray for them. If the church is not going to pray then who will?)

Within a few weeks I had another phone call from the same intercessor. This time she told me that the church's roof had begun to collapse and the cockerel was on its way down! The purpose of prayer is not to cause roofs to collapse but signs often take place after prayer!

Signs have to be received by faith, but for those who have been praying signs will speak powerfully.

In summary prophetic intercession can be:

- where we pray back to God what he has spoken to us. We have heard his counsel and this is what shapes our prayers.

- where we take this word and declare it into the situation that he has spoken to us over.
- where we enact out what God is saying and declaring. This cannot be an empty act (such as staking out ground if we are not prepared to live in such a way as to take the ground through our prayers, actions and relationships).
- there is another element that is truly prophetic intercession - what has become known as 'identificational repentance'. The terminology can be contentious, and others have used terms such as 'substitutional confession'; the terminology is not totally essential but the heart commitment is. I prefer the term 'repentance' as repentance goes beyond confession to contrition and a commitment to a change of life.

Identificational repentance

This aspect of prayer has proved to be very controversial for two reasons: 1) I am not convinced that those who take an adversarial position have always understood what is meant by the term or often assumptions are made about what is practised, and 2) there are genuine questions over the biblical defence for such practices. I will proceed by a) seeking to explain what identificational repentance (abbreviated to IR from now on) is and what it is not, then b) giving the underlying theological and biblical rationale so that c) suggested parameters can be put in place for its practice and answers to some very practical questions can be given.

What is identificational repentance?

The practice itself is quite simple - it is to confess the sins of a group that one belongs to or identifies with, to representatives of a group that have been sinned against. This is not primarily because the persons themselves have been directly involved in those sins, but rather that those involved in making confession stand in solidarity with the sinning group to such an extent that they identify with the sin of those who actually committed the sin.

(It can also be noted that in stating that the persons confessing the sin have not been directly involved in the sin is not to be taken to mean that there is complete innocence. That can never be claimed, for Jesus declared a very real similarity between, for example, murder and anger. So the

identification is often very real for who can claim to be totally innocent? And if we were to push the question to the point of asking how we would have responded had we been alive at that time, we can easily see that there can be a very real identification with the original guilt. Jesus specifically confronted that defence in Matthew 24:29-36.)

A good example of IR would be where we as Christians make an apology to Jewish and / or Moslem representatives for the crusades and what was done in the name of Jesus. Through the heartfelt apology there is a desire to clear the ground in seeking to remove any current offence, but there is also the belief that in making such an apology it addresses more than the current offence - through IR there is the claim that it clears the way to break the spiritual bondages brought in by the original sin. In other words IR claims that it is not simply dealing with psychological and current barriers, but also with spiritual strongholds that are rooted in past events.

It is also important to state that IR is not seeking to repent vicariously in the sense of bringing about in any direct way the personal salvation to those people who sinned. It is not repentance by proxy for the dead that could lead to their salvation: it is not some new form of universalism. It does, however, claim to be a repentance for the sins committed by a group through identifying in a meaningful way, although the original 'sinners' might well now have died or that they are currently unable or unwilling to confess their sin. So IR does not bring about personal salvation, but through repentance it seeks to deal with the *effects* of that original sin.

Some essential theological presuppositions

- An understanding of corporeality

I have touched on this already in previous chapters and again need to emphasise that there is a corporate reality that is bigger than the sum total of the individuals. Not only are there corporate realities but Scripture also demonstrates that sins committed in the past can still have an effect at a later date - even after those who were involved have died. Sin brings judgement and bondage, and these effects go beyond that of the individual and they have a lasting effect beyond the lifetime of the original people. A most poignant example of this we looked at earlier in 2 Samuel 21:1-4, where we read of judgement coming on a generation in Israel for sins committed by a previous king. In that passage Israel is viewed as a corporate entity and

suffers as such. The sin of a key individual against another people group brought judgement on Israel as a whole and this judgement took place to people, some of whom were not alive at the time of the original sin.

- A belief in the church as a priesthood

We are all very thankful for the Reformation and its revelation of the priesthood of all believers, but I suggest there is an understanding of priesthood that goes beyond that revelation. The Reformation rightly told us that we have direct access to the Father as individuals but we also need to understand that the church as a body is called to a priestly role on behalf of the nations. This flows from the understanding of the call of Israel to be a light to the nations, to be the means of salvation coming to the Gentiles. (Indeed there are some scholars who question if the will of God was ever to have a priesthood within Israel, and that the original intent was to have the whole nation as a 'holy priesthood' set apart for the nations of the world.) The church then is to embody that call to be a holy nation and a royal priesthood, a calling that needs to be carried corporately.

The priestly ministry is one of reconciliation – it is a ministry of standing between two alienated parties and bringing them together; it is one of carrying in some measure the guilt of the sinning party on their behalf. It is standing in the place of those who are under judgement seeking God in order that they might experience mercy. (I am not suggesting that the priestly ministry is one of vicariously atoning for sin – only Jesus has done that, but that the priestly ministry is one of confessing the sins of others *as if those sins were their own.*)

The above two presuppositions do not directly answer the three principle practical questions of: 'how far back to do we go in the confession of sin?'; 'who has authority to stand in the gap?'; and 'how many times do we need to be involved in IR?' These questions need answering (and will be in due course) but the two presuppositions immediately place a responsibility on the church as a corporate body to stand in the gap clothed in a priestly anointing on behalf of those who are alienated from God and from each other.

What is the biblical evidence for IR?

Underneath the theology of IR is the belief that is embodied in the well-known texts that speak of the visitation of sin of the fathers to the third and fourth

generations. This teaches that the effects of sin do not stop at one generation. Sin must be dealt with, and sin is dealt with through repentance and forgiveness.¹⁴

There are Scriptures (notably, Ezek. 18:20 and Jer. 31:29-30) that say the person who sins will be punished and that they are not punished for the sins of their fathers. This however, is not a denial of the principle of the effect of sin from one generation to another. These texts issue the challenge to a current generation to break with the sins of the past, and that they were not to suggest that punishment (Exile in these instances) was taking place simply because of the sins of the fathers – the generation being addressed were to acknowledge their guilt and break with their rebellion. We will be judged by the sins we commit, and it seems that there is grace in every generation to break from the bondages of the past. We cannot hide behind what has taken place in previous generations as the excuse for the mess we are in. The sins of the past might well give us insight into, and could even explain why our generation is in bondage, but there are no excuses that can be offered.

Sin is dealt with through confession and repentance: ‘Whoever confesses and forsakes sin finds mercy’ (Prov. 28:13). In Scripture the confession of sin, both corporate and generational is practised. In the Old Testament there is a confession that goes beyond personal sin to that of parental and also national sin. I list below a number of Scriptures that will illustrate these points (the emphases are added):

But if they will confess their sins **and the sins of their fathers** – their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies – then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. (Lev. 26:40-43).

We have sinned against the LORD our God, **both we and our fathers**; from our youth till this day we have not obeyed the LORD our God.... we have sinned against you. O LORD, we acknowledge our wickedness **and the guilt of our fathers** (Jer. 3:24,25.)

For our backsliding is great; **we have sinned against you**... O LORD, we acknowledge our wickedness and the **guilt of our fathers**; we have indeed sinned against you (Jer. 14:7,20).

O LORD, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with

¹⁴Passages such as the following can be consulted to see the element of transgenerational sin: Exod. 34:5-7; 20:5-6; Lev. 18:25; Num. 14:18,33; Deut. 5:9; 7:10; Is. 65:6-7; Jer. 32:18; cf. Job 21:19; Ps. 79:8; 109:14-16.

shame because **we have sinned against you**. The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets (Dan. 9:7-10).

From **the days of our forefathers until now, our guilt has been great**. Because of our sins.... But now, O our God, what can we say after this? For **we have disregarded the commands**... Shall we again break your commands and intermarry with the peoples who commit such detestable practices?... O LORD, God of Israel, you are righteous! We are left this day as a remnant. Here **we are before you in our guilt**, though because of it **not one of us can stand** in your presence (Ezra 9: 6-15).

I confess the sins we Israelites, including **myself and my father's house**, have committed against you. **We have acted very wickedly** toward you. **We** have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.... (Neh. 1:5-7).

I have quoted a number of these Scriptures at length for a reason. As we read them the impact of the language should hit us. In these intercessory statements we have strong confession and identification. We encounter repentant and contrite language; we read how the righteous feel the shame of the sin of the nation. The righteous do not distance themselves from the sins that have been committed. They do not pray 'forgive those who have sinned', but rather confess, 'we have sinned'. The confession is so deep that it is as if the sin had been committed directly by those making the confession.

This is the task of intercession - it is to so identify with the sins of the people with whom we belong, that we confess those sins as if they are our own. Indeed it is to acknowledge that they *are* our sins for we belong with those who have sinned. These are not 'their' sins but 'our' sins. This level of identification means that we will be ready and willing to own the sins of the church and even the sins of the nation.

- How does this shape up with the New Testament?

First, the Old Testament Scriptures are our Scriptures and they were *the* Scriptures of the early believers. It is inconceivable that those early Jewish believers would have seen themselves in a different tradition to the intercessory prophetic tradition that was running throughout their Scriptures. There is no reason to suggest that they would have overturned such participation in the intercessory ministry of confession. The patterns laid down in the Old Testament, unless they are clearly rescinded through finding their fulfilment in Christ, are expected to continue. The Old Testament stories are there as examples to us (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6,11). We can hear the same

flow of identification in Paul when he wishes that he could be accursed for the sake of his own people (Rom. 9:3). He carried their rejection of God in himself, and not only their rejection but also the sins of many others, for surely there is some element of this that lies behind the statement that he was 'completing what was lacking in Christ's afflictions' (Col. 1:24). He self-consciously stood in the flow of Jesus' own intercessory and priestly ministry.

The New Testament example of extreme identification is to be found in the life and death of Jesus. At the cross Jesus becomes what he was not in order that we might become what we are not and could never become by ourselves. And in the life of Jesus one of the most significant points is his baptism. At his baptism there is a marker put down indicating that his years of silent training have come to an end, and that his public ministry of prophetic reconciliation is now beginning - that ministry that eventually found its conclusion at Calvary. The baptism of Jesus gives us a visible model of identification, and of IR.

- The baptism of Jesus as model

Matthew 3:13-17 states it this way (emphasis added):

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "**Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.**" Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Here we see Jesus taking his stand with the apostate nation. He does not stand aloof castigating them for their sin, but rather, as with the others who were baptised he would have entered the water to confess sin. This was not a baptism to declare allegiance to God, it was none other than a baptism for the forgiveness of sins, hence John's reaction. Let me be clear that Jesus did not confess his own sin for he had none, but, like the prophets before him, he would have confessed the sins of the people with whom he identified, *as if they were his own*.

This is true incarnational ministry and the church must continue in the same flow. It is identificational, confessional, but also repentant in the sense of asking for forgiveness. The baptism of Jesus was not merely personal; it was **representational**, for as Israel's Messiah he embodies the nation within himself. (This is further shown by the quote over him (a combination of Ps. 2:7

and Is. 42:1-2), and also the thrust into the wilderness for his 40 days, retracing the steps of Israel for 40 years in the wilderness.) Jesus has willingly taken on the call of Israel at his baptism and eventually this will cause him to experience the depth of Israel's curse of Exile (Gal. 3:12-14) – not just Exile from a land, but from God himself so clearly heard in the cry of dereliction, 'My God, My God why have you forsaken me?' All of this was experienced so as the promises given to Abraham might flow to the nations of the world.

The cross needs to be understood in the same flow. It is not simply to be understood in some forensic way as if an angry Father were punishing someone by proxy and so releasing his anger. Rather the cross is the ultimate in Jesus' identification with us, as he becomes sin in our place. He takes in himself, to the cross, all who respond to him by faith where our sin is judged, so that we can truly say 'when he died, I died'. The cross so understood is the culmination of what he has been doing throughout his life and ministry as exemplified by his baptism. His baptismal identification led him on an irreversible course all the way to the cross in total identification with the people who had sinned. The baptism is what put the marker down and released the life-giving Spirit to him in a new way for that task.

Redemption flows from the cross, not from us; the cross is a finished work, but we are to flow in that same Spirit; we are to imitate him. We surely, who are not innocent, can follow the one who without any sin identified in confession with those who had sinned. The church is to be the extension of the incarnation: because he is with us to the end of the age, and we have received the Spirit of Christ, we have to live the same way.

The baptism of Jesus is the model that must shape our lives. It took hold of the Old Testament story and brought it to the climax of the cross, so that all subsequent bodies of people who claim to be followers of this Christ might flow in the same ministry of reconciliation.

In concluding this part of our discussion I note that an understanding of IR will develop from confession of sin to God, to repentant confession to offended parties through the following steps:

- repentance on behalf of the people of God: the church. There will be repentance for whatever has been done in the name of Jesus. We can never distance ourselves from what has gone on for truly 'we have sinned'.

- repentance for the nation where we live, for we belong to that people group. The church is called to act as a priest for the people – the church is placed in land / geography, so that it can be a priest in that area. The church, for example, in Amsterdam is the priest for Amsterdam, the standing in the gap body for that city. The church there is to confess the sins of that city.
- the above two points are basic to intercessory ministry where in prayer we carry repentance before God on behalf of others. By extension of the above we come to an understanding that the church is also to make confession, not only to God but also to people. Sin is also to be confessed horizontally, and so there will also be confession made representatively on behalf of the offending party to the group offended.

Such a confession, however, will go beyond simple confession to repentance. It is the Spirit of Christ who leads us to willingly stand in the gap that calls us to the place of repentance. Repentance means that there will be no distancing from the pain and hurt, or from the guilt. There is a painful rawness to IR that takes the person beyond objective confession to contrite repentance. It is this level of identification that will safeguard against some professional itinerant IR ministry. *Real identification is always costly and painful.* Repentance begins with confession but goes beyond that. It must lead to a change of heart and also, if appropriate, restitution. Hence my preference for the term *identificational repentance*.

Practical questions

- Who stands in the gap?

The only accurate answer is that it must be those who are led by the Spirit. Many times a process of IR begins in a most inadequate way with one human being standing in the gap for another group. The closer the relationship between that individual and the group being represented the more of the gap that can be filled. So the repentance of a national ruler on behalf of the nation will fill more of the gap than that of the sole individual. But in IR it is often an individual with the conviction that has to start the process. If an intercessor does not begin the process, it is unlikely that the national ruler will ever stand in that gap to repent.

- What sins are to be repented of?

Again we must give a similar answer to the one we gave above. The sins to be repented of are whatever the Holy Spirit leads us to confess, and however far back the Holy Spirit leads us to go. This cannot be mechanistic but must be in response to the Spirit and it is the issue of conviction that is vital. If research unearths sins of our 'fathers' this cannot automatically be responded to, as heart conviction needs to rise rather than mere mental assent based on facts of history.

Our approach should not be to dig until we find something to repent of, but through prayer and careful research the Holy Spirit will lead to appropriate areas that need to be addressed. Likewise, in response to the question of 'how often should something be repented of in this way?' there is no absolute answer. In part because, as per any area of intercession, the question of how often do you pray cannot be answered in absolute terms. Each time there is intercession / IR there is a filling in of the gap. This process continues until there is a release from the burden. With IR there is a further aspect to be considered. As IR is not simply vertical prayer, but impacts on horizontal relationships, wisdom is needed so that what is done is genuinely helpful and redemptive. It is not to be done simply to cleanse the conscience of the person making the identification but in order to bring healing to the wound and deliverance from the bondage. This leads us to consider the following question:

- What process is appropriate?

First and foremost it must be that of *listening*. This will mean that we often have to hold back until we first have stood with the offended party and have heard the pain and offence. This can be through personal and direct contact or it might come to us as we hear the pain through the information gained by research that has been done. There is a place for careful research but *this must lead to a conviction of sin, so that true repentance is made*. This discipline of listening leading to conviction will help safeguard against a simplistic outworking.

Listening will also mean that we cannot come with our agenda - or worse with our desire to cleanse our conscience from guilt. We need to hear from the other party, and in that sense let them set the agenda.

Assuming we also give credence to the whole area of a theology of the land there will be times when the journey will have to be to a specific geography where the sins that need dealing with took place.

A few summarising comments

If we embrace the concept that sin has a **corporate effect** – and that this is particularly true where it was someone in a position of authority that committed the sin – we will readily embrace that in our societies there is much scope for repentance by the people of God. Once we add to this the concept that this corporeality **transcends the generation** within which the sin was committed we will begin to grasp the necessity of identificational repentance.

If we then add to the above the further element that when sin is not dealt with there is **an accumulation** of that sin – see, for example, the sobering words of Jesus in Matthew 23:30-36 (emphases added):

And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. **Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!** "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. **And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation.**

Judgement is only averted when root issues are dealt with so if we can identify with the people who have sinned we can be used to deal with the roots of sin and offence. (The book by Brian Mills and Roger Mitchell, *The sins of the fathers*, is an excellent resource particularly for those who live within the UK, and likewise the book *Healing America's Wounds* by John Dawson serves the same purpose for believers in the USA.)¹⁵

In conclusion I suggest that the key issue involved in understanding IR is to *grasp the call to allow the incarnational model of identification as exemplified in the baptism of Jesus to affect every area of church life*. The church is to see a model in Israel, personally and perfectly embodied by our Lord, and then seek to live in that flow prophetically. As the church does this then there can be a measure of the eschatological healing to the nations in the here and now. Healing of this order does not take place unless past sins and offences are dealt with and Scripture informs us that sin is removed through confession and repentance.

¹⁵Brian Mills and Roger Mitchell, *Sins of the Fathers* (Tonbridge: Sovereign World, 1999); John Dawson *Healing America's Wounds* (Ventura: Regal, 1994).

In previous chapters we have outlined footholds of the enemy that are established territorially and we will discover that IR is a powerful tool to see the issues of history that affect both geography and demography healed. IR is a tool, but more than that. It challenges us to live as Jesus did, always willing to stand in the gap, rather than stand aloof protesting one's innocence.

Chapter 8

Earthing our Activity

The previous chapters have dealt with significant amount of theory behind prayer and warfare, and although I have touched on issues of practice throughout it is time to look in more detail at suitable practices and a way forward. As all of life is warfare we are either contributing to the advancement of the kingdom of God or contributing to the opposite. We are either 'making a sound that attracts heaven' or taking part in the sound that repels heaven. Warfare consists of both defensive and offensive elements within which there are specific practices and targeted efforts that we can look at.

Defensive warfare

Submission to God

Submission to God is the most vital element in warfare. We come under the Lord's authority for he is a warrior: 'The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name' (Exod. 15:3). The Scriptures that talk of submission to God and in particular the ones that speak of humility are in the context of warfare and encountering the devil. James 4:7 is one such well known Scripture:

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

It is set in the context of humility. The preceding verse tells us how God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble, and the immediate passage finishes with the instruction to, 'Humble yourselves before the Lord' (Jas. 4:10). Humility is appropriate clothing for warfare. Once we are clothed with that clothing there is a protection that covers us and we will be able to progress to places in warfare that would leave us vulnerable otherwise.

I can remember in one prayer week being caught in a difficult situation. I was staying at the home of the leader of one of the churches, and he would press me with questions as to how we were going to be able to go forward given the tense relationships between churches. I had no wisdom to offer. On the Friday morning the team who regularly pray for us sent me an email saying, 'The Lord says humility is the way forward.' I did not disclose the content of the email immediately but did do so after a church leader came to the prayer time that morning in tears saying that in his personal devotions that day God had spoken to him saying, 'Where there is humility there is always a way forward.' The icing on the cake was when the church leader with whom I was staying told us how he had to travel to London that day so had not been with us, but as he drove back into his town, he heard the Lord say that he was not to fight but to submit, for humility would pave the way forward. I am not always too quick to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying, but I think that day the message was loud and clear!

The Lord finds humility a major draw and it is humility that makes the blood of Jesus an effective covering. Another Scripture that emphasises humility in the context of warfare is 1 Peter 5:5-8

And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another... Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God... Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour...

Humility means we will not press for our revelation to be heard, but we will be willing to learn from one another. Even when we have part of the picture, we will not insist on our voice being listened to, as we will realise that it is more important to go forward together than separately. More takes place, even if we somewhat miss the mark, but go forward in humility together, than if we were to get everything 'right' but move forward in arrogance. As soon as we are arrogant we are wrong - even when we are right!

The health of the church is the key to warfare

In the warfare passage of Ephesians 6:10 the opening word is: '*Finally...*' Although I am not insisting that there is a strict chronological sequence to the letter or that we cannot enter warfare until we have established every other point, there is a principle that the church needs to be suitably prepared if the warfare is going to be effective. In Ephesians there is a lot that has gone on before 'the finally' statement. We read of the purposes of God and the plan to

're-head' everything in Christ; the exaltation of Christ; the adoption of those who are in Christ as sons called to sit in the heavenlies; the calling for the body to maintain the unity of the Spirit with the release of the five-fold ministries to promote this unity; the ethical issues of living out who we are with the outworking of all the above in the practical spheres of relationship as we are to 'submit to one another out of reverence for Christ' (Ephes. 5:21).

It is fitting that he ends the letter with instructions on warfare - for such a church that has broken through to stand in all the above can take an effective place even in a day of evil.

Effective warfare depends on the health of the church on earth, for although warfare is heavenly it would appear that the strength of the angelic forces in the battle is in proportion to the health of the church on the ground. We see this in the letters to the seven churches where John is told to write to the angels of the churches: there are heavenly counterparts to the earthly realities, and also in Rev. 12 where the heavenly warfare between the angelic forces is made effective by the overcoming saints on earth.

Put on the full armour of God - Isaiah 59:15-17; Ephesians 6:10-11

Although there is an individual application for these weapons the essential thrust of Paul is that the armour is corporate. In Ephesians Paul speaks of the church as one 'new man' (2:15) and calls us to grow up into the reality of this one new man (4:13). I will give a short summary of the weapons below with a corporate application for them:

The belt of truth. This was the first piece that was put on, as the belt was the means by which all other pieces of clothing were held together. Truth cannot be reduced to head-knowledge; truth is centred in a person and is essentially to do with right living. Truth is connected to integrity and faithfulness so we are called to live according to the revelation we have, hence the requirement for the church to live up to her calling in every area.

The breastplate of righteousness. This is certainly to do with the righteousness that we have in Christ, but the heart of righteousness is to be faithful to the covenant that we have been brought into. It is the requirement for the church to hold true to her side of the covenant. In 1 Thessalonians 5:8 Paul calls it a breastplate of 'faith and love'. Righteousness cannot simply be

passive. It is active and the breastplate of righteousness comes into place as the church actively lays hold of the covenant with God and seeks to live in the light of it.

Feet fitted with the shoes of the gospel of peace. The church must always be willing to run and walk over the mountains with a proclamation of victory. ('How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings' (Is. 52:7).) Our gospel is a gospel of peace and the term 'peace' is not a middle of the road term. It is (like so many Hebrew terms) a relational term. It speaks of peace three ways - with God; with one another; and over the enemy. The church must be at peace with God through submission to the will of God, we must pursue living at peace with all as far as is possible, and we must subdue the enemy as we stand with the God of peace who will crush Satan under our feet (Rom. 16:20).

The shield of faith. This shield was designed to cover and protect and was also to be extended over others for their protection. It is vital that we know what God has given us and extend that shield.

The helmet of salvation (1 Thess. 5:8 calls it 'the hope of salvation'). Hope is a wonderful protection for us. Hope relates to what we do not yet see and it is essential that hope stays alive. Expectation birthed in God is vital and if we are to be effective there must always be something in the church, in spite of difficult circumstances, that says 'there is a way'.

The word of God as a sword. This is not simply a set of memorised Scripture (although that is most important - consider Jesus' response to the devil in the wilderness). In warfare we need the living active words from heaven for our situation for it is through them that we obtain the means to advance.

Prayer. When Paul speaks of prayer he takes away all the boundaries. We need every variety expressed. It seems that there is such a variety of ways of praying that are acceptable to God. I sometimes stop and ask a rhetorical question after we have been involved in praying in a way that we sense was prophetic. I ask the question, 'What did that achieve?' My response is, 'I don't know but my guess is it achieved more than would have been achieved if we had simply sat around debating how we should pray about this situation.' In other words when in doubt, let's pray. Although we are keen to hit the mark as we pray, it is also true that we can wait forever for the right way to pray. Prayer changes things. It opens doors for the sake of the gospel.

The above weapons are essentially a set of life conditions. They are a description of a ready church, standing its ground even in evil days. If we are to defend the territory we must get to the high ground. That high ground is who we are in Christ. It means that we will be getting on to the front foot not the back foot. We will be getting to the place where we detect the threats early and deal with them. The enemy is looking for whom he can devour, so we are to be *alert*.

Revelation 12:11 informs us that we overcome through three elements: the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony and an attitude to life that is not placing self-preservation as the first agenda item.

We overcome through the blood of the Lamb and do so by living in everything the Lamb has purchased. If we do not have the Spirit of the Lamb we will find it difficult to take on the face and characteristics of the Lion. If we embrace the Lamb we will live in submission to the will of the Father and in submission to one another.

Our words are vital in holding the ground that God gives us. Through our confession we will counter all the attacks of the enemy as we hold our ground. When the devil comes to steal away the word that has been sown (Mk. 4:15) by questioning 'did God really say?', we must confess what God has said. As we go back to what we know God has said we will prevent confusion entering. In the fight of faith there are many unanswered questions but if we continue to build on what we know God has said we will keep the enemy at bay. Resisting the temptation to become passive we must lay hold of that for which God has laid hold of us. Some things only come to us through warfare, and a passive acceptance of things as they are, often fed by discouragement and doubt, will stop us fulfilling the will of God.

There is an intimidation that comes from the devil that we must not bow to. Although there is a timing to all offensive warfare, we prepare ourselves through the constant reminder that whatever spirit is resisting the will of God that the words of recorded in the gospels are still applicable: 'this kind comes out' and 'even the spirits are subject to us in your name' (Mark 9:29 and Luke 10:17).

Effective warfare is based on embracing the cross – they did not cling to life even in the face of death. Staying alive cannot be the number one priority if we are to be effective, nor even keeping alive our particular expression of church.

Offensive warfare

Depend on the king (Ps. 44:6,7)

We are to depend on his strength and wait for his strategies as we wage war. Although the most youthful among us can become weary those who wait on the Lord become strong (Is. 40:28-31). As we wait on the Lord we mount up with eagles' wings - our vision and vantage point changes as we gain revelation. So all effective warfare begins in actively waiting on God.

Remain focused on the goal

Our goal is unashamedly territorial. It is to see the will of God expressed in a particular patch of earth. We will not be vague in our praying, but focused, looking for the coming of the kingdom where we are. We will seek God for revelation about what is hindering the coming of that kingdom, with the full awareness that he gives revelation in proportion to what we can effect.

Offensive warfare begins within

Our effectiveness is in proportion to the health of the church and as we begin to identify the strongholds it is vital that we first deal with them within the community of faith. Jesus' authority was unquestioned because the enemy could find nothing in him (Jn. 14:30). There was no landing strip, no place, no foothold in his life.

As we identify the strongholds through discernment or discovery we go to war. We first seek to identify the same spirit within the community of faith as is in the wider community. Following the pattern that Jesus gave, if we discern murder in the wider community we would seek to drive all anger and rage out of the church through repentance and prayer; if adultery was the issue to be confronted then Jesus taught that lust would have to be battled against. We can consistently apply this principle most effectively to every area of warfare. If we can show that we have no practicing witches in our midst we still would not be able to declare the church as free from the spirit of witchcraft and with a clean bill of health. We would have to deal with the desire for control, the practice of manipulation or domination within the church for us to be clean. And so we could go on: where masonry is an issue in the community we need to ensure that the church is free from secrecy, false

pacts, favouritism, restrictive attitudes toward women, etc.

So once we discern the strongholds we drive them out of the church and seek discernment how we engage them in the community. Wisdom is often needed whether there is first an engagement in the community or whether we need first to significantly clear the heavenly realm. Both will need to be done, and it is best for the heavenly and the earthly strategies to go forward together, but often it is one strategy that first opens the door to the other.

Own the word of the Lord

As we wait on the Lord we begin to hear the strategy of God for a situation and we will have to align ourselves with the strategy God gives. We must own the word of the Lord. I was stunned to read Elijah saying that 'it will not rain except at *my* word...' (1 Kings 17:1). This was not a proud boast by Elijah, but indicated a total identification with the word of the Lord. We too must so identify with the word of the Lord that all other options are closed to us. If we fail we fail, but we will not compromise on what God has said. As we clear ground we must occupy it

Nature abhors a vacuum. As we clear an area of spiritual powers we seek God for wisdom as to how the saints of God now need to live within the spheres where the spiritual powers were once dominant. The feet of the saints must be planted to occupy the ground. God will give ground to those who live and are planted there. Those who are actively occupying the ground are the key in warfare. There are those who are more called into the realm of prayer, but there must also be those who are ready to get actively involved.

I had a strange vision one day. I saw people who were of normal height but their legs had retracted up into their bodies, so that their feet appeared immediately out of their trunks. God said that they needed to extend their legs. They looked normal and related at a normal level but their feet never touched the ground. They sounded normal but their over-spirituality meant that they could never take ground. How does one take ground? By taking ground! In other words putting one's feet down somewhere and saying, 'this is where I will be engaged.'

Prepare for the reaction

We are not to create a faith environment that expects reactions but we are to be realistic, knowing that often the battle becomes more intense once we engage. (I believe we can minimise the reaction if we are clothed in humility, for there is a hiddenness that occurs when humility is our dress.) Holding through in the reactive phase is vital. This is why we need to sit down as we go to war and weigh the cost of the warfare - to help us decide we also need to weigh the cost of not going to war! That cost is always far greater.

Warfare brings the hidden work of the enemy out into the open. Before Jesus came to the synagogue it was possible to have a service that was 'decent and in order' but once he arrived the demons called out. The old religious status quo (perhaps Latin for 'the mess we are in') was forever disturbed.

When the heavenly warfare was successful (Rev. 12:7-17) it only served to make things worse on earth. Once the devil and his angels were cast out of heaven then a fury was unleashed against the saints of God as there was then only limited time left.

We prepare for the reaction but we know that the intense heat cannot last. We stand in the evil day for that day will pass. Even if we cannot advance at that time it is essential that when the evil day subsides that we discover that we have not lost the ground we already had. There are times when we cannot gain ground due to the intensity of the resistance, but if we will not stop the day will end and then we can advance. All God is looking for is an unstoppable church. Guess what? An unstoppable church cannot be stopped! This was the problem with King Joash. Having received a prophetic word about being used of God to totally destroy the Arameans, he stopped striking the ground and within a few minutes of receiving that prophetic word it was cancelled (2 Kings 13:14-19).

Jesus experienced a most intense battle in the wilderness but we read that Satan left him waiting for an opportune time. The intensity of the battle was over. In similar fashion we read in the early chapters of Acts of the hostility against the church but in Acts 9:31 we read, 'Then the church... enjoyed a time of peace.' The intensity cannot last. If God chooses to allow a particular nation to remain under major intense opposition (as in China today) I believe it is for the sake of the whole, it is redemptive and intercessory for the sake of other nations. Generally speaking though that intensity begins to

wane. It is important when that takes place that we do not relax but maintain the offensive in prayer.

Receive a spirit of war

Finally, we must press beyond that of theory and beyond that of discovering good practice to an encounter with the Lord who trains us for war (Judg. 3:10; Ps. 144:1). There is an anointing that we can receive from him that will break the passivity within us and get us ready for war. The Lord himself is not passive but provocatively calls for war (Joel 2:11; 3:9-16). He is looking for a fight!

There are anointings of the Spirit that come through touching the heart of God for warfare. It is important as we press in on God that we are not simply warfare orientated: worship of Jesus is the highest call. Yet the two are not in opposition for in Psalm 149 the expression of warfare was birthed in the place of intimacy.

In summary then effective warfare, both defensive and offensive, is to do with the church growing up into the anointing that was on Jesus, far more than it is to do with learning a theology of warfare. We need to embrace methods that will help us fulfil the task we are called to and our intercession will be enhanced significantly through what is commonly known as 'spiritual mapping', but no method or theology will ever replace a healthy church as the effective means for advance.

Before closing this chapter and looking at issues of transformation through prayer strategy I want to look at the issue of addressing demonic strongholds directly - often known as addressing territorial spirits.

Can we address territorial spirits?

- How we use the Bible in testing practices

When we come to the issue of examining a practice to decide if it is biblical or not, to a large extent our answer will have been determined already by our approach to the Bible. If we only allow what is specifically commanded, and believe that we must find texts that explicitly describe the practice in question, we will likely be very cautious about addressing spiritual beings. If, however, we seek to make sure that our practices are within the boundaries of Scripture, even if they are not specifically mentioned we will approach the

question with more freedom. I lean much more toward the latter approach, as I believe this was the purpose for which Scripture has been given to the community of faith.

If freedom is the starting point – we will ask ‘is this forbidden?’, rather than ‘is it specifically mandated?’ If this characterises our approach we will seek to scrutinise a particular practice to make sure it accords with Scripture and does not deny specific Scripture nor clear teaching within it, rather than find specific Scriptures that we could then use as proof texts.

I also believe we are looking for revelation from heaven so our practices will carry a measure of the prophetic, so that what is right for one place and one time might not be immediately transferable to every other situation. Another principle is that in embracing a particular practice we need to avoid the temptation of believing in techniques that will achieve the goal in and of themselves. That is to come close to practising magic, although I do believe there is a basis for understanding that oil, water, wine, and salt, for example, have sacramental properties.

When we apply all of this to the question of addressing spiritual beings I do not see where this practice is specifically forbidden in Scripture. And although the classic Scripture quoted (Matt. 18:18) to defend the practice of ‘binding and loosing’ does not have a primary reference to binding demons there is a consistent biblical theme of binding whatever the enemy has loosed, and loosing whatever the enemy has bound.¹⁶

There are two passages – Jude 8-10 and 2 Peter 2:10-12 – which some have used to suggest that it is inappropriate to address spirits directly. These passages are essentially parallel passages so I will only quote the Jude passage below:

In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings. But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals – these are the very things that destroy them.

These passages are addressing arrogant heretics who ‘slander celestial beings’, not addressing the issue of addressing in the name of Jesus spiritual powers. The words indicate that in some way there were taking a superior

¹⁶See for example Tom Marshall’s booklet in the Explaining series, *Binding and Loosing* (Tonbridge: Sovereign World, 1991).

position, speaking in a condemning way to heavenly beings, and the word used for the heavenly beings (*doxa* – literally ‘glory’ so by extension would mean something along the lines of ‘glorious heavenly being’) that are being spoken against would suggest that the beings are not demonic but angelic. This is a far cry from addressing demonic spirits. However, it is the example of the archangel Michael that one could argue might be more relevant to the discussion about addressing demonic powers. Jude uses the example of Michael’s behaviour by way of contrast. So he says that when Michael confronted the devil (and not as in the heretics’ case good angels) he did not slander the devil. If the archangel Michael did not slander the devil how foolish it is for these heretics to think they can slander good angels. If Michael’s action is to be an example then we should not slander the devil, but can certainly say, as he did, ‘the Lord rebuke you.’

If this Scripture was to be quoted as evidence that it is unbiblical to rebuke spiritual powers then two things would need to be demonstrated: 1) that rebuking a spiritual power is to slander them as that is the term used in these passages, but nowhere in Scripture is the word slander (literally to ‘to bring a blasphemy’) used as an equivalent to the word ‘rebuke’; and 2) that the term ‘the Lord rebuke you’ carries a very different meaning to the term ‘I rebuke you in the Lord’s name’. On this latter point we find that in Zechariah 3:2 the Lord himself says to Satan, ‘the Lord rebuke you’ which surely indicates that in that occasion the phrase is equivalent to, ‘I rebuke you’. So, if indeed it is a step, it is a very small step to move from ‘the Lord rebuke you’ to ‘I rebuke you in the Lord’s name’.

I suggest then that these two parallel passages have virtually no direct bearing on the subject of addressing in direct speech demonic powers, but are a challenge to live in humility and to ensure that any rebuke is being done sincerely in the name of the Lord.

There is one further aspect that is worth mentioning at this point on the issue of addressing spiritual powers. There is a common biblical practice within Scripture of prophetically addressing cities as entities, and it would seem likely that in addressing a city as a whole the very spiritual powers that have attached themselves to a city are included in such an address. If that is the case we then have occasions where (at least implicitly) spiritual powers are addressed.

So in approaching Scripture as I suggest and in examining what the

Scriptures themselves say it seems to me that addressing spiritual powers is nowhere forbidden. And provided that the people involved in such a practice are clothed in genuine humility and are being led by the Spirit I would not be able to argue that such a practice is unbiblical. However, the three points that follow are, for me, more important than the actual practice itself.

- Have we cleared the ground?

If we were to assume that addressing spiritual powers is not a forbidden activity I would first ask where a body of people were following this approach a basic question: 'why are you seeking to bind those powers?' For if we are going to be wise (and not to mention effective) we would have to be ready to answer the more basic question of our willingness to occupy the ground that we are seeking to clear. If through binding such powers we believe we do not need to get our hands dirty, or have no intention of being involved in our community, we will either be ineffective or we will be in grave danger of coming under deception. The most important question to be answered is the willingness to participate in engaging activity.

I suggest that the practice of addressing spiritual powers directly not being highlighted in Scripture is actually helpful. If it were reported that Paul always did this as he entered a town we would have people employing this as a technique, either with no effect or worse causing all sorts of problems as a result of 'binding the strong man'. However, please take note that I am not suggesting that the practice of binding demonic powers is forbidden, only that given the lack of mention of this practice in the New Testament that this should make us cautious and as the appropriate questions as we come offensively in prayer.

- Binding is not absolute

In using such terms as 'binding the strong man' I also want to bring an understanding to what we mean by binding. We noted in an earlier chapter that in spite of the fact that Jesus bound the strong man this did not mean the end of his activity. So it is evident that to bind something is to place restrictions on the thing that is bound rather than to eliminate it. So even when we use the language of binding in prayer I suggest what is meant by it is that we are enforcing the victory of the cross as we stand in that victory ourselves and begin to occupy the ground. Perhaps the language is more prophetic (and eschatological) than it is literal. So to use the language of 'binding and loosing' is to pray in a specific way what is the will of God in that

situation.

What we do know is that if everything that has been bound in these past 20 years had been totally bound there would not be a lot left to deal with! So it is better to understand the language in a relative rather than absolute way, with the binding of the enemy meaning that we are placing boundaries around him so that his goods can be plundered.

So given this understanding it is better to invest our language with meaning and to act accordingly. If we use the terminology we would need to understand what we are meaning by it so as our prayers are effective, rather than beating the air. And in so doing we can return again and again to the prayer of binding provided we as the church are increasingly occupying the ground. Having said that I am very open to the possibility that there is a time when we declare 'be bound' and at a very real level the demonic powers are bound in a way that they have not been before.

- Jesus looks for rootedness

I find that Jesus' encounter with the Gerasene demoniac most challenging in approaching the issue of confronting territorial spirits. Mark tells the story in a provocative way. Three times we read of people begging Jesus with respect to territory and on each occasion Jesus responds in a way that is most surprising.

In encountering the demoniac we realise that he manifests the spirit of that area. The Decapolis was a somewhat unruly place and most governors found that it was best to leave it alone. It never could be fully tamed and controlled. So we read that,

no-one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No-one was strong enough to subdue him (Mk. 5:3-5)

The fact that he manifests the same as the spirits that control this area should not surprise us. Wherever there are dominant spirits their effect will be seen in people. The man speaks on behalf of the demons and so effectively it is the demons that beg Jesus not to throw them out of the territory (5:10). As it is they that request to go into the pigs, we have to realise that when they are sent into the pigs this does not mean that they have to leave the area. Perhaps at one level it is surprising that Jesus does not drive them out of the area and concedes to their request. We do note, however, that nowhere is ever the same again after Jesus has been there and that he will always set

people free.

The next request comes from those who live in that area. They request that Jesus leaves the area (5:17). Again it is a surprise when we read that Jesus responds by getting into the boat and leaving. Mark tells the story in a way that is meant to surprise us. Jesus does not drive the demons out of the region and he himself leaves when the people beg him to. However, once we realise that the people of the area would rather have the inconvenience of living under the demonic powers than the challenge and cost of Jesus' presence, we can understand that it is the people who are giving the demons their authority to stay.

However, the major twist in the story is the end part. The healed demoniac watches as Jesus enters the boat and, not surprisingly, requests Jesus to leave the territory and be with him (5:18). This time Jesus refuses! Jesus allows the demons to stay while he himself leaves, but then refuses a healed demoniac permission to leave – if that does not confuse us I am not sure what will!

There is something going on here at a very deep and challenging level. The man has to stay as a seed of deliverance for the whole area. If he stays there is a deposit in that ground that can call for the return of Jesus, whereas if he leaves there will be nothing there that can effectively call for Jesus to return. The key to dealing with spirits that rule in an area (territorial spirits) is for the people of God to become territorial, praying and living 'on earth as it is in heaven'.

The sobering challenge of this passage is that Jesus did not leave behind a great quantity of disciples, nor even a mature believer. All Jesus needs to begin a transforming process is a seed that will be sown in the ground to live (and die) for that region. We cannot effectively deal with demonic spirits in an area unless we are ready to get rooted. By all means let us bind spirits, but we must make sure that whatever language we use that we are taking the ground through an active occupancy.

I believe Paul operated with the same set of principles. He could claim that he had fully preached the gospel from Jerusalem to Albania in something around a 10 to 12 year period (Rom. 15:19). He clearly had not proclaimed to every person the good news of Jesus, but he had planted churches throughout that region that were to engage with their area in such a way that he knew he had left behind enough to reach that whole region. In his letter to Corinth his

language reveals that he considered he did not need to plant something large to reach an area. The church at Corinth was not one of the healthiest on record, nor one of the biggest – particularly given the size of Corinth. The city of Corinth was around 300,000 and the church numbered no more than 150-200. (In Romans 16:23 Paul writes from the house of Gaius who hosted the whole church of Corinth in his home.) Even if we said the church numbered 300 people the church was only 0.1% of the entire population of the city! Without giving any consideration to the health of the church, from a simple statistical perspective we would assume that the church would have had no hope of impacting the city. Paul, however, when he prayed for the church said his hope was that their faith would grow (2 Cor. 10:15), and said if it did grow then he would be released to proclaim the gospel in new territory.

I perceive that Paul, like Jesus, believed it was not necessary to have large numbers to deal with territorial problems, but for those who were called as followers of Christ, to make sure they were rooted in the ground and then to reach up to heaven for the presence of the Spirit to come and transform their area.

Can we bind territorial spirits? I consider we can but that any binding will only be as effective as the level to which we become rooted. Some readers might not be comfortable in using 'binding' words but we should all be able to agree that the primary call is to occupy the ground and from there to call for the presence of Jesus.

Chapter 9

Gaining Ground

In approaching this chapter I wish to acknowledge the inspiration that the videos 'Transformations' have been and also the practical wisdom that is contained in the book, *Informed Intercession* by George Otis Jr.¹⁷ Both the above resources are invaluable in shaping coherent prayer strategies for whole regions. The Transformation video series in particular has caused so many people to focus on the very real possibility of seeing towns, cities and even nations transformed - where there is an experience that goes beyond what we have normally thought of as 'revival'.

What qualifies as transformation?

This can be defined as an experience within a community where a visitation of God has brought about significant change, not only to church life with conversions to Christ, but where the community as a whole has been affected so that the effects can be measured in such areas as the economy, the crime rate, and the overall spiritual atmosphere of the whole place. Transformation will take a community beyond the conversion of people, but will include that; it will deal effectively with such continuums as idolatry and pollution on the land, and will bring about a profound shift in the spiritual atmosphere of the city.

Foundational ingredients for transformation

The foundational basis for transformation is the coming of the presence of God as believers erect appropriate altars and offer themselves as acceptable offerings on them. This does not take place overnight for there are usually

¹⁷George Otis Jr., *Informed Intercession* (Ventura: Renew, 1999).

false altars (and sometimes very ancient ones) that must also be torn down. Alongside those false altars there can also be some old godly altars of sacrifice in the region that need to be rebuilt - or to use the language and imagery of Genesis 26 ancient wells that need to be re-opened.

Otis identifies five elements that are essential for transformation; the first two he suggests are present in all situations that have had a measure of transformation:

- 1) Persevering leadership
- 2) Fervent united prayer
- 3) Social reconciliation
- 4) Public power encounters
- 5) Diagnostic research /spiritual mapping

The issue of *persevering leadership* is one that focuses us on the land, for the breakthroughs that are sought after come do not come without a radical commitment to the territory where God has placed us. There must be a rootedness there if there is to be a routing of entrenched enemy forces. *United fervent prayer* requires a clear focus and determination coupled to the hard work of strategic planning. Such fervent prayer is often fuelled by diagnostic research into the area being focused on..

The road to transformation

Again, borrowing unashamedly from Otis, there are three distinct and measurable steps that lead to transformation. He terms these 'spiritual beachhead', 'spiritual breakthrough' and 'transformation'. I find the stages very helpful as a focus for they discourage a belief in the myth that one day the heavens will open and everything will be wonderful. Unity and prayer are hard work, but if we know the goal that we are working toward we can endure some of the hard graft along the way.

The goal in gaining a *spiritual beachhead* is to bring a core of people through to a persistent place of focus where they find themselves unable to go back. There might be no guarantee of success, but they have firmly closed the back door. In establishing a beachhead the initial numbers are often small, but once it is established and maintained there is the possibility of moving through with increased numbers to a breakthrough. The key elements prayer-

wise in the early stages of establishing this beachhead is to pray that a fresh spirit of humility and a greater appetite for unity and prayer will come upon the church (and the leadership) in the region.

As unity begins to emerge it will be severely tested but we must press through to a deeper level that embraces a corporate vision for the geography, and a desire to see church in the locality expressed. Like Isaac as these wells are re-dug it will feel as if they are being filled in as quickly as they are dug. There will be setbacks, but it is only as we persevere that we come to the place of 'Rehoboth', where God makes room for us (Gen. 26:17-22). I have set out below in tabular form some of the characteristics as we move through to establishing a beachhead.

Pre Beachhead	Beachhead phase 1	Beachhead phase 2
Fragmentation / individualism	Small numbers together:	Growing numbers, expressing:
Disunity	Praying that a heart for unity and prayer will develop	United prayer
Little perceived need of others	Repentance - prophetic action between churches	Corporate repentance / humility
Divisions accepted	Divisions recognised and addressed	Social reconciliation, e.g., racial healing
Focused on own church	Reaching out to other churches	Vision focused on territory

Spiritual breakthrough can follow on from gaining a beachhead and Otis describes it as characterised by rapid and substantial *church* growth. Such a breakthrough comes as critical mass is achieved and is only ever entered into and then sustained through fervent prayer. It is all-but necessary to have this prayer fed by consistent diagnostic research as this helps to produce a focus on key areas where strongholds have been holding the geography back from a visitation.

In this stage of moving to breakthrough it is important that leadership holds through on the direction they are setting. There has to be:

- courage to counteract the fear that there is going to be no breakthrough. There has to be a boldness of faith, and a willingness to risk losing something of the old for the sake of the new.
- the embracing of vision that goes beyond unity as simply being for our sake. The vision must be of a unity for the sake of the territory and as engaging the enemy.

Even after a breakthrough has taken place there can be the failure to press in for a transformation. If there is a settling down through the satisfaction that 'our church is growing' then there will be a drawing back. ***The goal of our church growing must be abandoned*** and this is why the biggest challenge to press right through to a place of transformation will manifest wherever there are larger churches, particularly in affluent areas.

Throughout the whole process there must be a persistent movement within diverse churches bodies to increasingly see themselves as:

- expressions of the one church in the locality, and
- other congregations (and expressions that are non-congregational) as their partners not their competitors, so that
- each expression becomes willing to share resources with their partners for the sake of the gospel.

If a measure of spiritual transformation is to take place the breakthrough stage has to be persisted with selflessly until there is a move of God beyond the church into the community. This is one of the great challenges in revival as so often the movement becomes, by default, from the community to the church. This community transformation will, almost certainly, only be achieved as old community (cleansing the land and addressing the city) issues are dealt with often through identificational repentance and persistent and aggressive warfare.

Throughout the preceding paragraphs I have mentioned the important contribution to the process that diagnostic research brings. This term has often been called 'spiritual mapping' and it is to that area that I now turn my attention.

Spiritually mapping a territory

The term 'spiritual mapping' can sound somewhat mystical, but in simple

terms it is the name given to an investigative process that helps us gain an understanding why a place has developed in the way it has. Earlier in this book we have laid out certain presuppositions that lie behind the concept of spiritual mapping. The two most key elements are an understanding of the effect of sin on land, and an acceptance of the corporate nature of a given community that means the community today has a connection to the past. An insight into the history of a place will therefore be most important when we come to look at spiritual mapping. Effective mapping, though, is not simply a practical process, but needs to be undergirded by discernment. Indeed the best mapping seems to flow out of prayerful discernment.

I write this chapter while on a prayer week and a situation occurred this week that will illustrate this aspect of discernment and research working hand in hand. As I drove in to our initial meeting point I drove past some land that was physically desolate, but I sensed was also spiritually polluted. The following day I shared this with those who were together to pray and said my conviction was that there had been bloodshed on that land, although I said I could not prove my conviction. An informed person in that area knew that there had been a battle nearby (within a few miles) but knew of nothing in that immediate area, but also informed us that the land was home to the majority of drugs and crime in that area – at least then I knew that the current manifesting problem was consistent with what one might expect on land that had been previously polluted by blood. We prayed on the land, pouring out a bottle of wine sacramentally to declare that the blood of Jesus can cleanse completely.

The day after the prayer, that same leader was in a community wide meeting where a lady was present who had been doing historic research. She said that the very land that we had prayed over had witnessed a major battle and had actually at one time been known as ‘the field of blood’. Time and again we have found historic research backs up discernment, and it often seems to be the case that once something is uncovered through prayer that any needed historic research then quickly comes in line.

So spiritual mapping is not a substitute for prayer, nor a substitute for discernment, but discernment should be able to be backed up by research, and as the research begins to back up the discernment so faith grows and specific targeted prayer can be released.

The Old Testament examples of spies sent into the land by both Moses

and Joshua to carefully research the land give some basis for understanding the need to examine land before seeking to occupy it. These two passages describe spying the land in order to physically take possession of it but given that these Old Testament accounts are often given as physical examples to illustrate our spiritual task, these particular examples suggest that we will need to be equally thorough in our research to ensure that our desire to see the Spirit of Christ impact territory is fulfilled.

In Acts 17:16 Paul saw that the city was full of idols. He had spent time examining the nature of the city and used that as his basis of engagement. His familiarity with the culture seems to have been at a significant level for he was able to quote one of their own poets. And from a New Testament point of view the best examples of spiritual mapping are found in the second and third chapters of Revelation in the prophetic words given to those churches. The spiritual battles and issues that the churches were facing were described in terms that clearly alluded to the social, historical and even geographical features of their cities. Although some of the points are missed on us, the original hearers would have heard such specific references to their own city that the point would have been clear.¹⁸

The purpose of mapping

Mapping is to help us understand our community through discovering *why* it is the way it is. It is based on a conviction that the shape of any given community today is based on what has taken place over a period of time. George Otis suggests it is to answer these three questions:

- what is wrong with my community?
- where did the problem come from?
- what can be done to change it?

In Acts 17:26 we find that two key elements provide the context for people to exist: those elements are history and geography. There we read,

He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.

Spiritual realities intersect with people in time and space, so in spiritual mapping these two aspects (time and space) will be important for us to

¹⁸In *Impacting the City* there was a focus on these seven letters, and likewise in later chapters in this book.

consider. Theologically behind this approach is a belief that sin makes a geographical impact and unless dealt with the effects are cumulative over time.

From the historical perspective research into what took place in a given area will help us gain both a feel of the land and an understanding how a particular community has developed. (I like to see the parallel between ministering to a city and an individual. In ministering to an individual there are three main questions to be answered: what has this person done to give the enemy a foothold? What has been done to this person that has opened them up? And what has taken place in their family line that makes them vulnerable in a particular area? Once those questions are answered it normally becomes evident how the enemy has been at work and prayer can be targeted accordingly. As Scripture seems to treat cities as personalities there is not too big a jump to make in ministering in a similar way, so it is appropriate to ask similar questions of a given community.)

Practical areas for research

I list below a set of questions that illustrate aspects that when examined often reveal the demonic strategy. I do not suggest that these questions are in any way a full list but they will serve as typical questions to be answered, and in seeking a consistency of language I will use the term 'city' throughout, but this could be replaced by such terms as 'town', 'village', community, 'region', etc. (For a much more comprehensive list of questions I suggest using Appendix 1 in *Informed Intercession*).

- **Questions surrounding the conception and birth of a city**

What took place in this geography even before there was an established city?

Why did this community grow up in this specific city?

What was the specific vision of the founders?

Was there a specific founder, and if so how did he / she relate to the city he / she founded (the community is effectively his or her child)?

Is there an original name to the city and has there been a change of name? What did those names mean, and what was their significance?

Is there evidence of rivalry within the community, thus indicating internal

divisions? Are there those attitudes towards neighbouring cities?

The above questions are simply examples of what we are looking for and the desired outcome is to understand something of the origins of the city. Often it is possible to see in the very physical layout how the city has developed and on some of our prayer weeks we have seen what can be described as a 'birth canal' out of which the community has developed. It is often good to prayer walk that canal and call for a cleansing so that what is brought to birth in the future is clean. If there are strong Masonic roots in a place the evidence of a 'birth canal' is often clearly evident, and it is normally possible to walk that route in prayer and physically see in the architect and layout the Masonic influence. (Freemasonry has made such a major impact in our societies spiritually precisely because those who were Masons tended to belong to the ruling and influential classes – so called 'secular' authority, such as political and civil authority, is also spiritual, so when those in authority make false covenants the impact of those covenants make their imprint on the wider society.)

- **Questions around the upbringing of the city**

What successes and failures have been experienced, and how were they responded to?

How have relationships with neighbouring cities developed?

What critical events / decisions have taken place that have shaped the city?

What have influential people said about this place? Have there been any defining statements in literature about this city?

Has the city persecuted those from a particular racial, religious or minority background?

What sins or injustices have been tolerated?

In asking these types of questions we are seeking to discover the events (and the responses to those events) that will have contributed to the personality of the city today. One of the key things that we will want to observe is where events (and responses) have simply re-enforced any ancient bondage. The enemy has a scheme and there are patterns to be discovered. Also through this line of enquiry we are likely to find that the personality of the city begins to show itself – this personality will be a parody of what the city or community

is called to be in God. The work of the enemy does not create an alternative identity but a perversion of what God intended.

- **What is the history of the church in relationship to the city?**

How did the church come to be here in the first place?

How has the church been accepted?

Did the church accept the city or was there opposition to the entrance of the church?

Have there been key times when the church has failed the city, for example, through not addressing key issues, or perhaps through abandoning it by relocating for reasons other than for the sake of the gospel, or has the church become critical, without a corresponding care, of the city?

Has the church acquiesced to wrong alliances?

Is there evidence of a Masonic influence in the church?

Have there been scandals that have weakened the church's witness?

Is there a history of church splits?

What is the average size of congregation today and how does this compare to the national average for this type of city?

Are there many believers who have been burned by church and no longer attending a congregation?

What is the geographic spread of the church?

Are there any larger congregations and why have they grown?

What is the health of the church? Is there a good foundation of unity and prayer? And is there recognised leadership for the territory

In asking these type of questions we are seeking to discover the church / city relationship. If the church has failed the city there will need to be repentance and repair brought to the relationship. I remember in one town where it was evident that the church had consistently moved away from the town, abandoning first the fishermen of the town, then moving out of the centre of the town for financial reasons. By the time we came to pray there the main churches were located on the edge of town. In prayer we sought to address this and stood with leaders as they knelt in the high street to repent before

God (and before the town) for having distanced themselves from the town. It was particularly powerful time as we realised that, as is often the case, the church had taught the town how to relate to it. If the church distances itself from the town (by default) the church is inviting distance into the relationship and will always struggle to engage the town, until true repentance is made. Jesus gave spiritual authority to the church and it is often the church that has set the spiritual atmosphere in a place.

As the above research reveals strongholds and issues that need to be dealt with there has to be an owning of the responsibility for the state of the city by the church. So the issues that arise will need to be addressed and this is where repentance – and inevitably identificational repentance – will be a key. In our personal repentance and standing in the gap for those who have sinned (for we and our forefathers have sinned) we will be undermine strongholds that have resulted from both past and present sin.

- **Questions about the current shape and future aspirations of the city**

How does the city present itself today? What logos are employed to illustrate the city? What phrases does the city use to describe itself?

What developments are taking place?

Who is the city seeking to attract?

What other cities has this one twinned itself with, and what is known about them?

What plans are there for the city?

Are there anniversaries that will be celebrated, and if so what plans are being made for that?

In addressing the city as it currently presents itself we are looking to discover the continuity with the past, and also to see how the city is projecting itself forward.

In all research it is important to remember that it is to fuel prayer in such a way that we hit the necessary targets; and it is vital that we maintain a constant focus on the overall desire to see lives set free from the bondages they find themselves gripped by.

Map the research

A most practical way of plotting the research is to use blank transparent acetates with an outline of the community that is being researched on each one. (If there is access to a suitable computerised mapping programme then that will achieve the same goal.) Again the suggestions below are simply examples.

- Use one sheet for ancient events and carefully plot their geography.
- Take another one to plot the presence of current community strongholds, such as where there are areas of drug abuse, crime, family violence, etc.
- Use another sheet to plot the presence of visible false altars – occult / pornographic shops, Masonic lodges or temples (and places with clear Masonic architecture), Mormon temples, Eastern religious meeting places, etc.
- Plot the institutions, such as police, judiciary, civil authority, hospitals, schools, etc.
- Plot the churches and where there is overt Christian presence.

In doing the above (and please remember that the list is not intended to be exhaustive) we will be plotting historical events within their geographical context. Once these are completed it is then possible to use one transparency to overlay another so that specific geographies become highlighted as being in need of targeted prayer.

Other aspects to consider in mapping

Again the following are examples as mapping is not simply an end in itself but is to serve and fuel intercession.

- The twinning of cities is a most common feature, and by so doing there is a link in the spirit that is created (I suspect most twins have come about through Masonic connections). By twinning there are aspects of the twin city that will reflect spiritually in the other city. Beyond specific twinning it becomes clear that there are historic relationships with other cities, and often other nations, that have opened a door of entry to spiritual powers. If there have been gifts from dignitaries that carry spiritual significance meaning from other places those also will have

opened a door.

- Consider the layout of cities for the very images created attract demonic powers. This can be the very layout of the streets, the architecture of the buildings, the presence of obelisks or other war memorials, statues to particular people, mausoleums – often placed near where there are strong images which effectively become temples being fuelled by death. Often the architecture will carry Masonic symbolism (such as twin pillars) or shapes (such as designed around squares), and it is worth noting in the Masonic context that Mormonism derived many of its rituals from Masonry.
- Give particular consideration to historical entrance points within a geography and the pathways that went from those entrance points. The initial entry point is an important one for foundations are often spiritually laid at that point. Any physical and spiritual pathway that is sourced from that time and place will either re-enforce or seek to undo the initial entrance.
- If there were ancient roadways through an area find out what is on them today. Often they will become places for illegal drug traffic. Likewise plot such things as ancient market places, or (in Europe) where Roman Temples or army barracks were situated.

All mapping is to inform and feed intercession and must be harnessed to leadership within the city. It is vital that these three elements of mapping, intercession and leadership, work hand in hand as God will give revelation in proportion to what we are able to deal with in prayer and are willing to occupy as church. The ground that has been cleared must be occupied. So prayer should feed off the research but also give direction to the research, and the research and prayer together need to come under the care of God-appointed leadership.

As targeted prayer develops there will be the need to develop a coherent prayer strategy for the relevant territory. It is not simply more prayer that is required, but more strategic prayer that will open a place up for a breakthrough. We are not to despise any form of faith-filled praying but we have to also give consideration to the need for a strategic and consistent covering of the area.

It can be helpful to consider our city under different headings to make

sure we are covering what needs to be covered. Headings such as: **geography, demography, the gates, the institutions, and the churches.**

The desire then would be to cover an area according to those categories. There will be overlap (so many institutions are also gates) but that is not a problem as it helps make sure that no aspect of city life misses out on prayer. Eventually every location, every person, all key institutions and entry points are covered. I include the category of the churches as we need to make sure that the saints themselves are not being left vulnerable to the backlash. In developing a strategy it might well be that different groups of people will take one of the above categories and use that as their framework for contributing to the overall prayer strategy.

Teaching on prayer and the release of researchers will also become very important. In all of this we must approach our geographies with a depth of humility and love that means we are willing to live and die for them. The Christian community is called to live in such a way that as much as possible of the communities where we live will come through the fire of judgement and find its full and true liberation in the age to come. Until then we are to live, relate and pray for that 'new Jerusalem' to come down in our midst, in the here and now, to pray that the leaves of the tree will even now begin a healing process in the nations. We wait for the *parousia* for the fullness of that vision, but we must join together now and call for his kingdom to come. Now we are to be engaged in sowing whatever is in our hands and hearts with the prayer that true revival will follow. A revival that does not just yield numbers of converts who come and join our church, but a revival that impacts the church so that it is transformed to follow Christ into every sphere of creation. Then we can hope for the transformation of our communities. *Maranatha!*

Chapter 10

Paradigm Shifts

One of the difficulties that most of us have is that we know exactly where every other expression of church is wrong but are blind to where we ourselves are missing the mark. If the type of church we are connected to has taken time to examine the New Testament and look to structure ourselves in the light of what is expressed there (perhaps with a belief in elders, apostles and prophets) we can find that this compounds our difficulties. Why do I say that? Because whenever two items have a close resemblance it proves even harder to see the differences. Ever remember, as a child doing the little picture quizzes where there were two almost identical pictures with only a few differences and the challenge was to find all the differences? That can be what faces us when we look at our expression of church and then read the New Testament. We tend to read the text through our current experience of church and so when we read the biblical words we subconsciously substitute our style of church. Paul planted churches just like ours!

We all need a paradigm shift, or in simple language a new way of seeing things. As this takes place it will help us shape what we are in without being too critical of other expressions of church. As we explore some paradigm shifts below we will embark on a journey from one set of parameters to another, from one way of thinking to another.

Church paradigm shifts

The culture is demanding a change of shape in church. In saying that I know that there will be those who object saying that we have to be biblical in shape. My response is that if we are going to be biblical then we have to be shaped by the culture. In one sense it was the fallenness of humanity that called for a

change of shape in the Godhead – or more exactly God’s interactive love with his world brought about the Incarnation, for we read that, ‘For God so loved the world...’

If the church can recapture a love for the world then it is the church that will change shape more than the world will. Peter Ward uses the helpful phrase of Liquid Church,¹⁹ of a people that flow into the shape of the container they are filling. I cannot overstate the change that will take place in church experience in the Western world in these next few decades. It is not simply that we have people bored with church as we have it, nor that it is time to be experimental for experiments sake, but I believe it is because we are coming to a season of having our prayers answered for transformation. Any transformation in the world has to begin with a transformation of church.

I take great hope with the changes in society. Our post-modern world is more similar to the world of the New Testament than the world I grew up in – one shaped intellectually by the Enlightenment and ecclesiastically by Christendom. If we can respond to the changes this can be our best day. It can mean wonderful days for our society.

I am not going to focus strongly here on the changing shape. There are many excellent resources in print and on the web that can be obtained.²⁰ I will simply give you my conviction of the way forward. If we can focus on seeing the body released we will have some hope of the church changing. If we focus too much on changing the church we might never see the body released from the prison it has been in for centuries. Change has to take place and the emphasis has to be on a release of the saints not simply putting the right structures in place.²¹

From local church to church in the locality

The main emphasis on church particularly within Protestant models of church has been that of the local church. We have emphasised the need for believers

¹⁹*Liquid Church* (Peabody: Hendricksen, 2002).

²⁰Two recent books that I consider are worth reading in this respect are: Neil Cole *Organic Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005) and Alan Hirsch *The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006). The centrality of the mission of the church in these books is refreshing and challenging.

²¹Putting the right structures in place can still end up with a top-down hierarchy which will soon become institutional where social power is conferred and concentrated at the top.

to belong to a local church. There they can be nurtured and cared for and find a place of accountability. Some of that might have been necessary and even helpful. However, the weakness has been that we have interpreted the Bible as if it states that local churches were what the apostles planted. But apostles did not plant local churches in the sense that we have them, rather they planted church in the locality. There was a geographical boundary to the churches that were planted and within those boundaries there was the very real sense of there being one church. To illustrate what I mean I use the following illustration: Paul planted a church in Corinth, but Peter did not come along at a later date and note that although there was the Paul expression of church, the city really needed the Peter expression. Rather as apostles they worked together in and for the one church.

Although there are very practical issues such as defining the (geographical) boundary to the one church it is very hard to move away from the concept of the church being one within a given region. The very term used for church, *ekklesia*, is most informative. It was a secular word used of the gathering of the city of those who through citizenship of that place had a shaping role in the life of the city. A couple of short quotes will prove very informative: *ekklesia* was 'the popular assembly of all the competent citizens of the *polis*, city'; it was the assembly where 'fundamental political and judicial decisions were taken'.²² In planting one church in a region Paul was planting those who through their involvement and commitment to that region were being called by God to have a shaping role in the future life of that region.

This indeed places a major mantle on the church and gives church a major role in society. Given this major call it is not surprising that Paul's desire for the church was that there would be an increase of faith in order to grow into the task. He makes this explicit in the Corinthian situation (2 Cor. 10:15,16). The church at Corinth was probably only around 150 or so people, for we know that 'the whole church' was hosted in the home of Gaius (Rom. 16:23) and that Corinth itself was a major city of something over 300,000 people. If these figures are close to accurate the church was only 0.05% of the population. I have often wondered what my prayer for a church in such a setting would be, and my guess is that I would encourage them to hold on but encourage them that we were praying that greater resources might be added to them. By way of contrast Paul hoped their faith would grow, and that as

22L. Coenen, article on 'Church' in Colin Brown (ed.), *The Dictionary of New Testament Theology Vol. 1* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1975).

their faith grew that they would fill out that geographical area so as he in turn could be released to move on to 'lands beyond' them.

We now have considerably larger resources than the Corinthian church had but our resources are fragmented (and sometimes worse than that as we often find that the fragments are in competition with one another). If we wish to claim to model ourselves on the New Testament somewhere down the line we will need to answer the question 'how big is your church?' with an answer that is not simply reflective of the size of our local congregation, but begins to include all those who have bowed the knee to Christ within the territory assigned for us.

My point in all this is not to put forward a view that local church is dead or needs to die, but that we should no longer defend the view of local church as being biblical. I recently challenged a group of church leaders to put as their first point on their church promotional leaflet 'we are not a biblical church'! Although tongue-in cheek my point was to keep us focused on moving forward toward something that more resembles the New Testament. There will always be diverse expressions of the one church, and we must begin to embark on a journey of expressing church in the locality if we are to connect with the calling of church to shape up our region. That expression cannot simply be of doing mission at a given time but of being incarnated in the community.

Many of our concepts have to be challenged. The leadership of the one church in the city in the New Testament was also probably more fluid than we realise. Based on the Hebrew concept of eldership their primary function was not to oversee the minutiae of peoples' lives but to protect the environment where people lived their lives, so that the gifts could be developed and flourish. The one church gathered in many settings, but the primary setting was a life setting of the home. To meet in the home in both the Jewish and Graeco-Roman worlds was not simply the same as to meet in a cell in the twenty-first century. It was to meet in an environment where life was already taking place.

In writing what I am writing I am not being prescriptive, rather I am simply calling for a re-imagining the body of Christ so that we are both related to the twenty-first century and in line with the original apostolic shape. An expression of church in the locality also carries with it a further dimension that demands a new way of thinking.

Church connected to its locality

New Testament church was intended to be *in* the city or region. The believers were rooted in that place. For example, Corinth was much more than the place where believers happened to live – it was *their* place. The believers might have their citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:20) but this was not understood as a hope that one day they would depart this evil world for a better place. Rather that, just as Philippi was an outpost of Rome in a foreign land, so the church was understood as an outpost of heaven in a foreign environment. It was there to imprint the area (indeed their area) with heaven. The place where they were planted was the very place where the gospel was being outworked for them.

The shift in thinking that is demanded by this concept is of moving from this being the church that I attend, or even this is the church where I work to this is *my* city, *my* piece of geography where God has asked *me* to take responsibility.

I remember taking two consecutive prayer weeks in a city in England. The second week was on the south side of the city, a part of the city that was impoverished both economically and spiritually. I was unsure as to how the pastor of the church that was hosting us was finding the week, but later found that it was a life-changing week for him. He was not originally from that city but had pastored there for 10 years and was considering that it might be his time to move on. Prior to that week he said that this city was the city where he worked, but God did a work in him that week that meant that the city became his city from that time on. He was now taking up his role in helping to pastor his city. It cannot be proved that the ensuing result is directly connected but I am deeply suspicious that it is. Not too long after this shift the church began to experience a minor, but unprecedented, breakthrough with a significant number of people beginning to spontaneously come to the church from a non-churched background.

There are three helpful words that have helped me focus on this aspect of the church rooted in the locality. The three words are: *FOLD*, *FIELD* and *FLOCK*. The flock need to come to the fold for healing, nurturing, sustenance, strength, care and direction, but they do not belong within the fold. They belong in the field and the field is the world. The fold is there to enable the flock to live life in the field. True spirituality does not consist of the activities of prayer and Bible reading but of living life as Jesus did, of being good news in a

hostile environment. If the flock do not come to the fold for refreshment, and if they do not engage in prayer and Bible reading it will not be long before true spirituality disappears, but it is also true that until the flock engages in the wider sphere we cannot claim to be expressing true spirituality. We can use other biblical analogies such as the leaven only being active when in the dough, or the salt needing to be salt of 'the earth'.

The implications of the two shifts above are: unity is not to be seen as a luxury, it is a necessity. This unity is not to be a unity that simply gives us a bigger church than we had before, but rather it is a unity that will connect us with our geography. It will be a unity that will honour our diversity as churches but will draw us together into the geography where we are.

Theological and world view shifts

Closing the gap between the spiritual and the material

The Greek world-view is the one that has tended to dominate the theological world. In this viewpoint the other world is the real world and so spiritual (non-material) existence is of the highest importance. Life after death is a key issue within this belief and salvation is often expressed as an escape from this world. The Hebraic world-view, however, was radically different to this. Here are some immediate and relevant differences:

The Greek hope for life after death becomes a hope for (physical) resurrection from the dead at the 'reversal'. Life after death was not a major issue for the Jew it was the hope of participating in the kingdom of God – which always had an earthly outworking. The controversy around the resurrection was precisely that. The claim was not that Jesus was alive but that he has risen bodily. This had enormous implications for the Jew and was a strange concept indeed for the Greeks.

Salvation expressed as a desire and even need of escape from an evil world becomes a commitment to the transformation of a fallen world. The movement shifts from being that of earth to heaven to the reverse. It moves away from the destruction of an evil (material) creation to an aspiration for its fulfilment. So creation was not seen as evil, but as fallen and in need of freedom.

The church does not become the goal in the sense of some sanctified

waiting room where we can sing our songs until we are taken to heaven, but becomes the agent of releasing people into the world. So we will be challenged to change from a mission to simply bringing people into the church to helping the church get out into the world. We will move from understanding the church sphere as the field to recognising the world as the field.

In summary as we grasp a shift here from Greek to Hebraic thinking we will be seeking to express the desired movement as from heaven to earth and out into the world through the church. (The Greek view, by way of contrast, would be take us out of the world, into the church, so as in due course we can be off and up to heaven.)

The relationship between individualism and the corporate

Most of us have been brought up with an underlying principle that democracy is the ideal to be aimed at. This idea that we all count equally is not totally wrong and there is something right about giving all responsible people a voice and a vote. But behind this view is often an elevation of the individual outside of any real corporate setting, an elevation of personal rights. Within the Hebrew world-view everyone has significance but within the whole.

Society is more than the sum total of individual lives and spiritually we also need to adjust our thinking so as we understand that there are corporate realities beyond and above the individual. We need a shift toward corporate thinking for it is through the church as a whole (and not just isolated individuals) that the manifest wisdom of God is to be made known to the principalities and powers.

The Greek way of thought has led us to the concept of the strong Christian that can survive alone. It has even fostered the belief that we can operate independently of one another and that we should develop our own independent ministry. It is not that such a view is totally wrong: for we do need to be able to survive even if all other believers were to fall, but there is the desire in Scripture for *the church as a whole* to stand up under the anointing of Jesus. It is the anointing that was on the head that is to come down over the body.

If we were able to grasp this corporate way of thinking we would have fewer problems and questions about many of the 'why does this happen', or 'why does God not do such and such' type of questions. Probably there are

fewer healings than we would like for the reason that the body as a whole has not grown up. (In 1 Corinthians 11:28,29 Paul gives his main reason why some have died prematurely and others are sick. He says it was because of a lack of discerning the body – through not living in wholesome relationships. And it is challenging to note that Paul does not say that only the ‘guilty’ had become sick.) There would be fewer demands for personal blessing if we understood the corporate nature of the covenant. When the Exile to Babylon took place we discover that righteous individuals like Ezekiel or Daniel also went into Exile and they never complained that God was not honouring his covenant with them now that they were the tail not the head. Those faithful people were in Exile because of sin, yet not their own, but the sin of their people. The covenant that we are in is a covenant that is made with the people of God as a whole and we need to realise that individuals in the church can be adversely affected through the faithlessness of the corporate people.

If we can accept this perspective, confession of sin becomes easier. We can far more readily confess that ‘we’ have sinned. It is interesting to note that the righteous who were in Exile had no problem confessing sin for they belonged to the people who had sinned. They were not caught in a paralysis seeking to analyse exactly who had sinned.

In prayer and warfare this perspective of corporate realities means that it is the corporate body that must rise up to deal with issues of warfare.

An understanding of corporate sin / curse and not simply individual sin

This follows on from the previous discussion. The effects of sin go beyond the immediate time when they were committed and they also go beyond the individual or even generation that committed those sins. Scripture talks of curses and blessings and although we should not come to Scripture simply gathering texts together to prove a point, we recognise that there are sowing and reaping scenarios which do not just affect the individual but can affect generations and even geographies.

The former concept is more readily accepted for there is the well-known Scripture about the sins being visited to the third and fourth generation. The Bible bears ample testimony that without repentance sin reaches a level over a period of time so that eventually judgement comes on a particular generation. This is how it was in Jesus’ day for he said that all the blood of the

innocent prophets shed was going to bring judgement on this generation (Lk. 11:49-51). This could well be the meaning behind the Pauline statement that in the fullness of time Jesus came (Gal. 4:4). It seems likely that Paul considered that sin had reached such a proportion that even the nation that was to be the redemptive light was itself now under an irreversible curse. All hope of them living up to their calling had gone, so Jesus came taking their curse upon himself, and in that sense died for the Jew first so that the blessing of Abraham might flow to the Gentiles (Gal. 3:13,14).

The concept of this trans-generational aspect to sin is not too hard to embrace, but there is also a geographical or land aspect to sin that I will develop in the next chapter. People and land are intrinsically related and when people commit sin upon land that land will be greatly affected.

The implications of these paradigm shifts are that we will be looking and praying for an increased manifestation of the impact of the kingdom of God in the here and now; that we will not be looking for an escapist salvation, but one of engagement with the territory. We will also have to consider how we relate to those who have gone before, how what has been sown in the past is affecting both our current generation and geography.

Practical paradigm shifts

The paradigm shifts that follow will draw upon the biblical and theological material above and also take the conclusions above further in practical application.

A commitment to land and territory

Repeatedly we have said that the kingdom of heaven is to come to earth. We are to till the ground and make it a fruitful place for the king to return to. In the Johannine account of Mary's encounter with Jesus there is an ironic aside when we read that Mary thought Jesus to be the gardener. Indeed this is his correct identity. Adam had departed the Garden where death had been pronounced, but this last Adam rises from the dead re-commissioning those who will work with him tilling the soil again. He truly is the gardener inviting co-workers into the field.

If we are to see an advance of the kingdom this will be expressed primarily geographically so we will need to reach out for those territorial

relationships that take us beyond our comfort zones. In those relationships we will discover that we are called together *to pastor and disciple a territory* not just a church. Our responsibility does not end with the walls of the church for the whole world is God's rightful habitation. There might be a specific call to pastor within the church, but the church is called to pastor the area where it is situated.

If we recognise that biblically there is only the church in a given city or region then the people are not simply in the church, but the church must be placed in the city / region. We have heard that Jesus has been asking for his church back. Why does he want it back? Because it belongs to him having bought it with a price is certainly one of the reasons. But I consider that he wants his church back in order to give it away to the cities and regions of our nations. The words from the lips of leaders that these are 'our people and our finances' must be silenced, for the people and the finances to fulfil the task are to be released for the sake of preparing the field for harvest.

These concepts lead to a new framework for unity. Unity is no longer about more and more churches joining an organisation, but it is about an increasing number being joined together around the land (or, perhaps better, the presence of the Lord in the region). With the land becoming the centre we move away from what has traditionally taken place where there is an organisation at the centre and those who join that organisation at a later time need to first pay their dues before their voice can be heard. Rather we move toward the situation where we all discover a new level of joining to each other, and around the land, as new people come on board. Each time there is an increase there is also a change in the nature of who we are, rather than simply an increase in the size of the pyramidal structure. In a very real sense we will be allowing, and perhaps even insisting that, the territory shape the church.

The church beyond the gathered setting

I unashamedly borrow this concept from Jim Thwaites book *The Church beyond the Congregation*. We must see church in its primary shape as not gathered around a pulpit nor communion table but as the people of God involved in all of life, so that the church can be 'his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all' (Ephes. 1:23). If Christ is to be found throughout all things and his right is to fill all of creation we will never be able to connect with his

fullness until we connect with where he is to be found. A church meeting with a corresponding parochial agenda will never be able to contain the fullness of Christ, but when the people of God have been released to fill out all the spheres where the claims of God are being made. Then when we meet together the purpose of that gathering is to be a support for the church seeking to express the fullness of Christ in all creation. The church can begin to grow into that fullness but only when there is this expression beyond the gathered setting.

So the task of the body is to empower the saints in every sphere, to close the gap between the sacred and the secular. The highest calling is to follow Christ wherever he leads. If ever we need Spirit filled people in the whole dynamic of life and society it is now.

Unity events often gather pastors and intercessors but others tend not to get involved. So unity must be expressed beyond a meeting and the concept of the church beyond the congregation leads also to a new understanding of unity. The church *is* united at the point where the saints of all diverse church backgrounds find themselves - in the market place. The church is united in the context of creation; the task of the congregation is to equip the people for the engagement of all creation.

It leads to a new purpose and setting not only for church but also for the ministries God has set in the church. Ministries need also to direct their anointing and gifting into supporting the church as it comes together beyond the gathered setting. There is the need for humble prophetic and apostolic input into the very places and institutions where the people of God are living out their faith. The manifold wisdom of God needs to be expressed in all of secular society so that the world becomes a place where the sacred presence of Christ is manifest.

These issues are key for a long-term breakthrough in spiritual warfare. It can sound rather radical but in truth it is simply refocusing the church on the original setting that it was given: multiply and fill all of creation.

Once the church (the various expressions in relationship with one another) is placed in the right location - as defined by the specific geography and the 'secular' society we will discover that there is:

- Grace to reach the city / territory

There is no mismatch between what is planted in a region and the challenges

of that region. Paul could claim in a 10-12 year period that he had run out of territory having fully proclaimed from Jerusalem to Illyricum (modern Albania) the gospel (Rom. 15:18-20). One can only accept that perspective if the viewpoint is held that the churches planted in their localities had grace to reach their area. In order to connect with that grace we need to embrace the church in the locality and allow for faith to rise.

- The resources of the locality become more accessible to the church

There are resources that are locked up in cities and regions. If local church is my container then my resources will come out of that container; if it is church in the locality then there is a larger resource; but if the church in the locality is placed within that locality as a whole doors begin to open to the church and the church begins to make a connection with the resources of that place.

I am not suggesting that the resources will come automatically, but the ability to connect is vital. When we connect we begin to expose what we connect with to the presence of God. Like the High priest of Israel we begin to carry what we represent, and are connected to, into the Holy of Holies. If we are not connected we can only pray for a place ('God bless this place') but once we connect we can begin to take a place with us as we pray to the throne of grace - we begin to say to a place, 'We are taking you with us into the presence of God'. We can never connect to the extent that the High Priest did to Israel for there was a covenant at work there, and we will not connect to the extent that Jesus did on the cross for sinful humanity, for his identification with sinful humanity was total, but nevertheless we can make a meaningful connection that exposes the place and people we are connected to, through prayer, to the presence of God. As we connect and care God begins to soften the hearts of those who hold the resources and we find the church can begin to become the receptor of those resources.

- Workers for the field get released

Resources are multi-faceted and people are a major part of the resource. There are workers that the Lord wants us to call for to come into the harvest field. It is important that we understand that they are not coming simply for our fold, to enhance our church. Jesus spoke the words about workers in the context of lifting up his eyes and seeing the harvest field. It is to people who can see the harvest field, and who will reposition themselves for it that workers are coming.

- Help to reach the city

Once we move forward with a church in and throughout the locality expressing a desire to release heaven to earth through the church there is help that can come to reach the locality. There are tribes who will be called to cross over to help us (Num. 32). There are connections with ministries and people that God wishes to give us. They might have no connection today with our locality, or with our particular stream or denomination, but God desires to give us a connection. God-given connections release a multiplication not simply an addition (Scripture indicates that one may put 1000 to flight, but that two will put 10,000 to flight).

There is a challenge currently lying with those with apostolic and prophetic ministries for there is a strong call to move beyond that of being prophetic and apostolic to a defined stream or denomination. Indeed I suggest that to be apostolic or prophetic in the current thrust of the Spirit that it is vital to become apostolic and prophetic to places and people that are expressing the unity of the body. It is time for partnership with the church in the locality to be expressed - it is time to live and minister on the basis that the 'day of the streams is over, the day of the river is here'.

I am convinced that God wants to give us resources but we need to position ourselves not for the church but for mission. We need to adopt the paradigm shifts that God is bringing to us, leaving behind old petty jealousies and begin to partner with others for the sake of the harvest.