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## REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUAL MAPPING

*Erwin van der Meer*

*Christian teaching on Spiritual Warfare is as old as the Scriptures. It was the Apostle Paul who admonished the Ephesian Christians to take their stand against the devil's schemes and to engage in spiritual warfare against the "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:11,12). But today we are being led into extra biblical teaching when we are urged to participate in "spiritual mapping" in order to engage in strategic high level spiritual warfare. In this article Erwin van der Meer explores Spiritual Warfare in the history of the Christian church and then focuses on this new emphasis within some Christian circles.*

*The following article was submitted by the author as an assignment for a MTh programme in Missiology on 2 May 2000 at the University of South Africa under the supervision of Prof. J.N.J. Kritzinger. The bibliography on the subject of Spiritual Warfare at the end of the article is itself worth this issue of AJET.*

### INTRODUCTION

Missiology is concerned about God's mission in human history and the church's participation therein. Part of this concern involves monitoring and evaluating contemporary developments, movements and trends in the world and the world-wide church of today, in the light of the *Missio Dei*. It is in this respect that we need to focus our attention to an emerging trend within evangelical

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mission circles, called 'spiritual mapping' with its emphasis on strategic high level spiritual warfare against so-called territorial spirits, which has been increasing in popularity, predominantly among Pentecostal and Charismatic (Neo-Pentecostal) Evangelicals since the late 1980's.

Virtually all Evangelicals will agree with paragraph 12 of the Lausanne covenant which states that we are engaged in a constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers of evil, who are seeking to overthrow the Church and frustrate the task of world evangelisation (Stott 1996:44). Actually, the theme of spiritual warfare between the powers of good and evil, between Christ and Satan, can be found throughout the New Testament (Longman 1995:18-19; Page 1995:267ff), and more ambiguously in the Old Testament as well (81-82, 88). Also, the Christian Church, throughout the ages, has affirmed the existence of such malevolent forces and has been involved in spiritual warfare against the powers of sin, evil, and the demonic forces under Satan's command (Thigpen 1994:29).

However, what is termed today as spiritual mapping and strategic high level warfare, appears to go a lot further, in its assertions and practises, than what has generally been accepted by the evangelical movement at large (Gilbreath 1995; Stott 1996:231, 238), or has been practised throughout the history of the Christian Church (Lowe 1998a:86ff). The proponents of spiritual mapping, with its related doctrines concerning territorial spirits and the power of blessings and curses, seek to add a peculiar spiritual warfare dimension to evangelism and mission; without which, they assert, evangelism and mission will be, and has been, less successful (Lowe 1998a:11-12). Consequently, we are confronted with groups of 'prayer warriors' spending enormous resources of money, time and material to travel to some remote place in the world which is perceived to be a stronghold of opposing spiritual forces, in order to battle these hostile forces through intercessory prayer, confession and proclamation (Lowe 1998a:13; 1998b:57; Sjöberg 1993:106ff), and split open demonic clouds of spiritual darkness (Wagner 1995a:47) so that mission and evangelism will become more successful in that place or region.

### THE NEED FOR MISSIOLOGICAL REFLECTION

As spiritual mapping is now gaining credibility among church leaders (Moore 1998:55), and becoming standard practise in many local churches and para-church organisations around the globe, it has become an issue which missiologists cannot afford to ignore. The validity of spiritual mapping, its presuppositions and claims, need to be evaluated in the light of Holy Scripture, and in the light of what the Church has recognised and affirmed throughout history. So far the movement itself has been spearheaded by evangelical missiologists such as C. Peter Wagner and Charles Kraft and several other evangelical theologians (Powlison 1995:33), and has been critiqued by some other missiologists and theologians. Yet, up to date most books and articles concerning spiritual mapping are written in popular style, with some of these in the form of best-selling novels among the laity (Peretti 1986; 1989), which makes scholarly interaction difficult. In this respect there is still a vacuum, waiting to be filled by theological and missiological contributions, critically examining spiritual mapping and its presuppositions concerning spiritual warfare.

Three useful works by evangelicals who recently engaged in a critical and scholarly evaluation of spiritual mapping and its related doctrines are: *Spiritual Power and Missions; Raising the Issues* (Rommen 1995), *The Holy Spirit and Mission Dynamics* (McConnell 1997), both published by the Evangelical Missiological Society (EMS), and recently: *Territorial Spirits and World Evangelisation*, published by the Overseas Missionary Fellowship (Lowe 1998). However, in spite of these three insightful books and several helpful articles, the debate still goes on, and the need for further reflection is critical. This paper is, therefore, an attempt to provide a meaningful contribution to the current debate on spiritual mapping.

### MEANINGS AND PRESUPPOSITIONS

Trying to define spiritual mapping is not an easy task. The term itself was coined by George Otis in 1990 (Otis 1993:32). But it seems there are as many definitions of spiritual mapping as that there are books written about it. However, most of the proponents of spiritual mapping will agree that it is about sincere Christians who are trying to discern and overcome those invisible realities that influence the visible world, especially those that may hinder the success of evangelism and mission (Priest 1995:19). Cindy Jacobs, a well-known leader in the field of spiritual mapping, sees spiritual mapping in terms of researching a city to discover any inroads Satan has made, which prevent the spread of the gospel and the evangelisation of that city for Christ (1993:77).

In this context special attention is given to territorial spirits which are considered to be demonic forces, under the command of Satan, that keep a territory in spiritual darkness (Wagner 1989:278). The territorial spirits are able to keep a territory in bondage, because there is a legitimate reason, a right, for them to do so due to atrocities, evils or sins committed in the territory concerned (Dawson 1994:34; Frangipane 1991:55; Harmon 1999:36). Demons are also believed to gain control through curses that have been proclaimed (Sjöberg 1993:108-109; Wagner 1991:131; 1992b:130ff), or through the (past) worship of idols, other religions or ideologies (Caballeros 1993:145). These elements, or demonic entrances, need to be discovered and mapped out, through historical, cultural and sociological research, charismatic inspiration (Arnold 1994:47; Dawson in Archer 1994:57; Frangipane 1991:168), and at times by questioning demons who are in the process of being cast out from individuals (Kraft 1995:118-119; Priest 1995:28-29).

Equipped with 'spiritual' weapons, such as militant intercession (Kiesling 1994:26), the quoting of Scriptures, identificational repentance (Sjöberg 1993:108-109), proclamation of forgiveness or deliverance, and by verbally breaking curses or telling demonic forces to go, spiritual mapping is followed by spiritual warfare in an attempt to overcome the demonic powers

that hinder the progress of the gospel in the target area. In support of spiritual mapping and strategic high level spiritual warfare, proponents report an increase in converts, openness for the gospel, church growth, miracles and other spiritual successes (Kiesling 1994:26-27; Wagner 1989:282-284; 1991:133ff; 1992:162).

### ORIGINS OF SPIRITUAL MAPPING

The term 'Spiritual Mapping' was apparently first coined in 1990 by George Otis, (Otis 1993:32), a former missionary with the Neo-Pentecostal evangelistic organisation, *Youth With A Mission* (YWAM). However, the underlying idea of ruling territorial demons, which may hinder the success of Christian witness in a certain geographical area, was expressed earlier by the third-wave<sup>1</sup> missiologists, C. Peter Wagner and Timothy Warner (Wagner 1989:278). Much earlier, around the 1920's, it was already suggested that intercessory prayer could remove the demonic strongman, i.e. "prince of China",<sup>2</sup> so as to pave the way for more effective evangelism (McGee 1997:83-84). In 1985 Bill Subritzky, in his book 'Demons Defeated' (1985:12-13), suggested that Satan places unseen princes and powers of the air over every nation and city with descending orders of authority all the way down to demons which walk on the ground and seek a home. These evil spirit beings are said to seek to rule over countries, cities and even over churches by bringing with them hordes of demonic powers such as envy, jealousy, unbelief, pride, lust and ambition.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The so-called third wave of the Holy Spirit movement, centring around Fuller Theological Seminary - School of World Missions, has a strong emphasis on signs and wonders, numerical church growth, evangelism and missions. Some of its well-known leaders include the late John Wimber, founder of the Charismatic Vineyard Churches, missiologists Charles Kraft and C. Peter Wagner, John White and Wayne Grudem (Powlison 1995:33).

<sup>2</sup> The idea of a demonic ruler or strongman keeping a nation under its hold is based on Daniel 10:12-20, as well as Deuteronomy 32:8 and Matthew 12:29.

<sup>3</sup> The tendency to demonise or personalise the vices goes back at least to the inter-testamental period. Some examples can be found in the writings

The modern view of spiritual warfare up to this point in time had been primarily concerned with the influence of demonic powers on individuals and groups of individuals, rather than geographical location. From the 1980's onward several of the presuppositions and concepts which became incorporated in the practise of spiritual mapping during the 1990's, such as the territoriality of demonic powers, the influence of blessings and curses, and many other concepts, could be found among the missionaries of *Youth With A Mission* (YWAM). It is, therefore, not incidental that a missionary with YWAM coined the term spiritual mapping (Otis 1993:32).

Already, in 1986 one could find groups of intercessors wandering throughout Amsterdam in so called prayer-walks organised by YWAM, claiming the soil on which they walked for the kingdom of God and back from Satan based on Scriptures such as Joshua 1:3 (YWAM 1986). Through direct special revelation in the form of visions, prophecies or intuition, leaders would identify what evil spirits were at work in a particular part of town and the demons would be bound in prayer after they had been identified by name or function, based on Matthew 18:18 and Mark 5:8-10.

Several years later these ideas crystallised into a book by Floyd McClung, who had been one of YWAM's regional directors, based in Amsterdam at the time (McClung 1990:51-52). Less than a year before this publication, John Dawson, another international leader of YWAM, published his book, *Taking Our Cities for God* (Dawson 1989), outlining similar notions of spiritual mapping, high level spiritual warfare on behalf of cities and neighbourhoods. That same year evangelical missiologist C. Peter Wagner published his controversial article, 'Territorial spirits and world missions' in the *Evangelical Missionary Quarterly* in which he also draws on the experiences of YWAM missionaries, including the director of the organisation, Loren Cunningham (1989:283; also Wagner 1992b:149). The concepts and ideas that led to the development of

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of the Qumran community [1 QM Col. xiii.11-12, 4Q510.5-6 (frag.1), 4Q286 frag.7 col. II. (in Martinez 1996)]. Also in Gnostic literature such as *The Teachings of Silvanus* and the *Apocryphon of John* (in Robinson 1988).

spiritual mapping within evangelical mission circles did not, however, originate in a contextual vacuum as a brief historical survey of the development of spiritual warfare in the Western world may demonstrate.

### **SURVEY OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN CHURCH HISTORY UNTIL THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

A merely casual study on spiritual warfare throughout the history of the Christian Church will soon bring to light that the spiritual warfare had very distinct meanings at different times and in different contexts. The church fathers to some extent regarded Satan as the source of inspiration behind heresies and false doctrines (Stevenson 1987:93; Gokey 1961:70).<sup>4</sup> Satan was also regarded as the source of inspiration behind the persecution of the Christian church (Stevenson 1987:60).<sup>5</sup> Spiritual warfare against Satan's devices was a matter of polemics and apologetics. Yet, the apostolic fathers most frequently described the spiritual struggle, against the demons and evil spirits, in terms of individual souls wrestling with sinful passions and temptations (Stevenson 1987:200; Lightfoot & Harmer 1992:417).<sup>6</sup> The church believed that the devil's forces of evil could be overcome through discipline, faith and common liturgical worship and prayer (Gokey 1961:71-72; Stevenson 1987:211). In some of the writings of the early church we see vices being personified as demons, while the virtues

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<sup>4</sup> Justin, *Apology*, 1.26. See also Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, 4-7; Chrysostom, *Letters of Chrysostom*, 31; Gregory of Nyssa, *Answer to Eunomius*, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Justin, *Apology*, 1.5-6. See also *The Letter of Ignatius to the Romans*, 5-3; *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 2-7.

<sup>6</sup> Origen, *De Principiis*, I, preface 5-6; *Shepherd of Hermas*, *Mandate* 12, 6:48-49. There are also many examples of this in other writings by Origen, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Chrysostom and others, which are not mentioned here for the sake of space.



are portrayed as good angels, either residing in, or affecting, the heart, or the soul (Gokey 1961:16-17, 109; Hall 1991:181).<sup>7</sup>

Later writings, especially of Gnostic origin, reflect a preoccupation with nomenclature and hierarchies of rank in the demonic kingdom or army, with Satan as the supreme commander, under him demonic emperors and princes, under them the common demons (Greenfield 1988:234, 312). However, not just the alternative traditions, but also at one stage in the late Byzantine tradition there developed a tendency to regard every aspect of time and space to have its own proper demon and/or angel (Greenfield 1988:313). Such demonic rulers could directly be affected by human actions against them, provided that those involved in the battle had the right knowledge concerning the demonic nomenclature, systems and hierarchies at their disposal (Greenfield 1988:316).

Later during the Medieval period the preoccupation with hierarchies and nomenclature of demons seems to have faded away. However, the devil and his evil spirits felt very real to believers in this period and they tried to ward these off by making the sign of the cross (Latourette 1953:535). Generally, the response of the church to the demonic in this period may have been marked more by gross superstition and speculation (Unger 1952:4, 85) than by careful theological reflection. On the day of Rogations,<sup>8</sup> priests would lead processions through the neighbourhood and the fields, carrying a cross, waving banners and ringing bells, in order to ward off evil spirits and demons (Lowe 1998:92). In the same period, the crusades against Muslims and heretical groups, such as the Albigenses (Gonzalez 1987:192), also reflect a tendency in the medieval church to regard spiritual warfare as a matter of physically fighting against evil on behalf of the church and

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<sup>7</sup> See for example *The Shepherd of Hermas-command 5,6*, (in Arnold 1979:281) or, *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. The figure of speech which describes vices as demons residing or inspiring evil inclinations of the heart is also found in Zoroastrianism and in inter-testamental Judaism, and may have exerted some influence on the demonology of the early church.

<sup>8</sup> The Rogation days are the three days before Ascension day.

Christianity. Quite often the battle was fought, not just on behalf of Christ and the Church, but also for an earthly ruler and his kingdom, as for example in the case of Charles Martel, and also Charlemagne (Hayward 1994:440-441; Latourette 1953:353).

Peoples resistant to conversion, such as the Wends and Prussians, or heretical groups such as the Cathari, were subjected to the sword (Latourette 1953:413). In the same spirit individual heretics were punished throughout the entire Medieval period, and from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards they were also executed (Gonzalez 1987:226-227). Bernard of Clairvaux, who was the motivating force behind what is known as the Second Crusade (Latourette 1953:411), justified the use of physical force against evil and heresy (Gonzalez 1987:225), as did many others. Later in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, Roman Catholic mystics, such as John of the Cross, Fransisco de Osuna and Miguel de Molinos, spoke of spiritual warfare as a matter of purifying the soul in order to be filled with God (Latourette 1953:853).

The Protestant reformers rejected many of the gross superstitions inherited from the medieval period. Martin Luther strongly condemned speculations concerning evil spirits and demons, without denying their existence or maliciousness (Lowe 1998:94-95). John Calvin also rejects the speculations of his day and age and portrays Satan and his angels as being permitted by God to tempt and war against believers with sinful temptations and inner disturbances, but they can be resisted by being steadfast in the faith (Calvin 1845:1.14:13-15). The main contribution of the Reformation concerning spiritual warfare was the rejection of fanciful speculations concerning the devil and the demons, and a renewed emphasis on the scriptural teaching concerning personal holiness and resisting sinful passions and evil temptations coming from Satan and his demons. That is not to say that the reformers were not guilty of some unwarranted speculation concerning Satan and his schemes, both Luther and Calvin referred to the Pope as being the Antichrist (Calvin 1845:4.7:24-25). Luther is also reported of having thrown an inkwell at what he thought was a manifestation of Satan (Christenson 1990:17).

Later reformed writings, such as those of the 17<sup>th</sup> century English writers John Bunyan and Downham, building on the theology of the Reformers and of St. Augustine, described the Christian life as a life of perpetual warfare against the evils and temptations of the devil, the world and the flesh (Muller 1980:319; Powlison 1995:35). Though, in contrast to St. Augustine, a transition had been made from the more objective imagery of two cities, the City of God versus the City of the World, to the subjective sense of personal pilgrimage and inward warfare against the devil and his schemes. The world is still the place of battle, but the protagonist is the human soul (Muller 1980:320), and the warfare is understood as spiritual and moral. Spiritual warfare had now become a highly individualistic affair, whereby each individual soul fights its own battle with temptation and sin. This attitude, consequently, led to an increased withdrawal by Christians from the world and involvement in its affairs.

There is little doubt that the individualism of the Renaissance, as well as enlightenment rationalism, influenced Reformed theology in this respect (Henry 1973:322-323). From the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards the influence of the Enlightenment on Christian theology caused many believers and theologians to reject the concept of a personal devil and demonic powers as outdated and irrelevant in an attempt to demythologise Christianity (Page 1995:267; Powlison 1995:23-24).

The more conservative believers and theologians resisted the demythologising of Christianity and continued to emphasise the reality of Satan, and the need to resist his temptations in one's individual life. At the same time, the fear of Satanic conspiracies, aimed at world domination and the oppression of the faithful, became a common element in many conservative Christian circles. Among the conservatives in the New World some believed that a satanic conspiracy was in operation in the war of the British against the North American colonies (Patterson 1988:445-446). The Roman Catholic Church, the Illuminati, the Jesuits, the Masonic lodge, or sects such as the Latter Day Saints or the Watch Tower Society, have also been referred to as manifestations of the satanic conspiracy for world domination (Patterson 1988:446-448). A

century earlier, among the puritans in the New World, the infamous Salem witchcraft trials were the scene of fear, hysteria and confusion, when a satanic conspiracy against the 'Christian' New World was feared and the alleged perpetrators were hanged (Lampros 1994:303-305)<sup>9</sup>. It seems that since Salem, this fear for a satanic conspiracy continued to work on the imagination of many North Americans, even into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

A less speculative, though equally controversial, development started just before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when a book was published by John Livingstone Nevius, a Presbyterian missionary to China, under the title, *Demon Possession and Allied Themes* (Nevius 1968). This book set the precedent for many similar books to be published in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and describes the experiences of missionaries and believers in China in dealing with possession, harassment or deception of individuals brought about by demons (Nevius 1968:1-110)<sup>10</sup>. John Nevius presents a lot of anecdotal evidence throughout his book concerning various demonic afflictions and records how persistent prayer, the preaching of Scripture, the singing of hymns and simple faith in God was effective in overcoming these trouble causing demons. In his book Nevius also provides a biblical evaluation and justification of his experiences and those of his contemporaries (Nevius 1968:243-290). The writings of Nevius, and the reports of other missionaries as well, caused many evangelical theologians at home to re-examine their theology of Satan, demons and evil (Chafer 1919:68). Nevius also records several anecdotes concerning

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<sup>9</sup> The Salem Witchcraft Trials took place in 1692 at Salem, New England, in which more than 100 persons were accused of witchcraft and nineteen were convicted and executed (Lampros 1994:303; Noll 1992:51).

A recent book evaluating the tragic hysteria at Salem is Jeffrey J. Richards', *The Cry at Salem: The Witchcraft Trials of '92'* (Lake Geneva, WI: Farley, 1992).

<sup>10</sup> Both John Nevius in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Frederick Leahy can be regarded as pioneer thinkers who addressed demonic phenomena, without turning to casting out demons, or other spectacular power encounters (Powlison 1995:35-36).

demon possession and harassment in Europe, some of which reappear to in 20<sup>th</sup> century writings as well (Nevius 1968:111-132).

### **SURVEY OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Satan and his demons received most attention within dispensationalist circles (Leahy 1975:7).<sup>11</sup> The existence, personality and power of Satan has extreme significance for the dispensationalist who expects Satan to organise a world-system which is anti-Christian in the last days (Scofield in Chafer 1919:iii; Lutzer & DeVries 1989:145ff). The two World Wars, with the horrors of nationalism, Nazism, militant communism, modern technological warfare and mass destruction, caused many Christians to reconsider the reality of Satan and his demonic powers (Unger 1952:xiii). Another contributing factor has undoubtedly been the revival of magic and witchcraft in the 20<sup>th</sup> century since the 1950's (Gardner 1954; King 1982:185-197), which obviously troubled many Christian believers (Unger 1971:17-18). The 'Cold War', that followed the devastation of World War II, also added fuel to various speculations and demonic conspiracy theories concerning an immanent anti-Christ in connection with communism, occultism and the so-called New Age movement (Patterson 1988:449-451).

Throughout their history premillennialist dispensationalists have been rather susceptible to conspiracy theories of history (Weber 1981:70), which can be attributed to their fairly pessimistic eschatology (Boettner 1958:350) with its emphasis on the total destruction of creation at Armageddon, after a satanic antichrist with his demon armies, and demonized followers, has made a final

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<sup>11</sup> Dispensationalism arose in its modern form from the work of John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). The theology that he promoted divided the Bible into separate dispensations, in each of which God is said to act from common principles, but varying mandates. Prophecy features large in dispensationalism, especially the efforts to perceive the divine plan of God for the end of the age, which according to many dispensationalists is at hand (Noll 1992:376-378).

attempt to thwart God's purposes (Chafer 1919:92, 109-110; Lutzer 1989:156-158; Unger 1952:190-191,200). Dispensationalists expect a world wide apostasy in Christianity which will result in a global pseudo-church under control of Satan or the Antichrist (Ryrie 1964:50; Lutzer 1989:113ff). Consequently, Dispensationalists have generally been very suspicious of the Roman Catholic Church and the Ecumenical Movement (Ryrie 1964:51-52; Barnhouse 1965:242-243; Livesey 1989:87ff, 124ff). The Antichrist could possibly even deceive believers and churches (Chafer 1919:135-140; Walvoord 1971:323-324) and needs to be resisted (Chafer 1919:70). Dispensationalism with its peculiar eschatology gained many adherents among Evangelicals in the United States in the period following World War II, notably in Baptist and Neo-Pentecostal circles. The 'Cold War' was without a doubt a major contributing factor with the threat posed by communism (Patterson 1988:450) in connection with the coming antichrist (Livesey 1989:86; Ober 1950:74-83). The Americans found themselves fighting in the Korean war, only to get caught up in the Vietnam war, and many other small localised wars in Middle-America and the Middle East. Everything seemed to indicate that the end was near.

Consequently, besides masses of apocalyptic and eschatological literature, also dozens of popularly written 'how-to-be-victorious-over-the-Devil' books were published in large numbers in the United States. These books were written to help individual believers prepare themselves against the schemes and assaults of Satan: *Spiritual Warfare* (Harper 1970), *The Adversary* (Bubeck 1975), *Born for Battle* (Mathews 1978) and many other books with fairly militaristic titles. Several other books were published in order to make the faithful aware of any new eschatological developments and satanic conspiracies in the world.

In the wake of the Middle East crisis in 1974, dispensationalist theologian, John F. Walvoord, published *Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis*. Hal Lindsay published his 'eschatological' best-seller, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970), speculating about the formation of a new Roman Empire comprising of ten core European nations, obviously with the European Community in

mind (Lindsey 1970:153-163, 184-185). Russia, China and the Middle East also play a major role in Lindsay's speculative eschatology.

The renewed popularity of the supernatural, the esoteric and even Satanism in the western world in the 1970's, combined with the rise of the so-called New Age movement, caused many Christians to ring the alarm bell (Christenson 1990:114; Van Dam 1988:35-36, 41-46). The last days now seemed to be very close at hand, for this is the period Satan would send his demons against believers more strongly and Christians must get ready for the battle (Bubeck 1975:15, 157). The New Age movement became the new focus of the watchmen of satanic conspiracies in the 1980s (Cumbey 1983:13ff; Livesey 1989, Marrs 1988; Patterson 1988:451-452)<sup>12</sup> <sup>13</sup>. Several popular books were published, containing spectacular, personal testimonies of Christian ministers or missionaries who battled against and overcame demons at home (Henderson 1972; Dickason 1987:187-213) and in foreign lands (Peterson 1972)<sup>14</sup>.

Some personal testimonies concerning demonic bondage and deliverance were also published on their own (Blankenship 1972; Ernest 1970). Binding demonic influence, loosing people from demonic bondage, breaking demonic strongholds in people's life,

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<sup>12</sup> Besides the books referred to in the text above, many others can be mentioned which reflect the same preoccupation with demons, satanic conspiracies and the like, such as Mark I. Bubeck's *The Adversary: The Christian Versus Demon Activity* (Moody 1975), Hal Lindsay's *Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth* (Zondervan, 1972) and *The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon* (Westgate Press, 1980). Many other books on demons, exorcism, New Age, and spiritual warfare published since the 1950s reflect a similar preoccupation with the evil supernatural.

<sup>13</sup> For an insightful and well informed article on the New Age movement in contrast to Evangelical Christianity see Norman L. Geisler's 'The New Age Movement' in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 144, (Jan-Mar '87). Also Douglas R. Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age* (1986) and *Confronting the New Age*. (1988), both available from Inter Varsity.

<sup>14</sup> Also see Moody Bible Institute, 1960. *Demon Experiences in Many Lands*. Chicago: Moody Press.

mind or family, deliverance from curses and aggressive warfare prayer, became key-concepts in the 'modern spiritual warfare' of Evangelical Christianity since the 1960's (Koch 1971:104-107).

Modern spiritual warfare has since been particularly popular among premillennialist Dispensationalist and those of Pentecostal or Neo-Pentecostal persuasion (Powlison 1995:32-33).

Most of the books about spiritual warfare, published since the 1950's, focus on how to tackle demonic influence in one's personal life or family (Robison 1991:53-72; Unger 1971). Special attention is given to the influence of curses, occult involvement, personal sin and the transference of sins of one's forefathers, as contributing to demonic bondage or affliction (Koch 1961:203-222; Dickason 1987; Wagner 1992b:129).<sup>15</sup> Deliverance from demonic affliction is achieved by commanding Satan to leave the presence of the afflicted, with all his demons, combined with prayer to God (Bubeck 1975:140-141). The believer may verbally tear down what are called strongholds of the Devil and plans of Satan formed against his or her mind, emotions and body (Bubeck 1975:143-144). The believers may also renounce and repudiate the sins committed by their ancestors and verbally cancel any demonic activity, and any curse, coming along generational lines (Bubeck 1975:87, 148; Dickason 1987:278-279; Koch 1971:104ff; McNutt 1995:101ff). In the process of exorcising demons questions can be posed to them in order to find out what their names are, their ranks in Satan's hierarchy and what gave them the 'right' to enter or affect the afflicted person (Bubeck 1975:147; Dickason 1987:193-207).

If a believer has given Satan and his demons legitimate ground for them to harass him or her, such ground can then verbally be

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<sup>15</sup> Other influential books are Frederick S. Leahy's *Satan Cast Out* (Banner of Trust, 1975) and Lutheran theologian Kurt Koch's *Occult Bondage and Deliverance* (1971), *Between Christ and Satan* (1971), *Demonology: Past and Present* (1973), *Occult ABC* (1978), all published by Kregel, Grand Rapids. In the Netherlands and Germany the books by Dr. W.C. Van Dam have been influential: *Demonen eruit, in Jezus' Naam* (1973), *Mensen worden bevrijd* (1985), *Wezens uit onzichtbare werelden* (1993), all published by Kok, Kampen.



reclaimed by proclaiming it covered with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, after first having asked God for forgiveness of sins, committed by oneself or one's ancestors (Bubeck 1975:86-87, 100-101, 151; Dickason 1987:162-163). Prayer in the context of spiritual warfare is generally redefined, from communication with God, to becoming a spiritual tool by which victory is appropriated over demonic principalities and powers (Bubeck 1975:104; Christenson 1990:93-99). Demonic strongholds, and the influence of the powers of darkness blinding unbelievers for the gospel, are believed to be broken and defeated through what is called confrontational, or aggressive warfare prayer (Bubeck 1975:107; Christenson 1990:105-106). Satanic counter attacks are of course to be expected, and reports abound of Satanists 'praying' for the breakdown of Christian marriages (Wagner 1992a:68-70) or of pastors and spiritual leaders under supernatural attacks (Wagner 1992a:35-36; Wagner 1992b:81-84). Confession of sins is also considered an important factor for gaining deliverance from demonic affliction (Dickason 1987:291); even aggressively confessing the sins of others, who may be unable or unwilling to pray, in order to precipitate their deliverance and conversion (Bubeck 1975:113-114). Proclaiming demonic powers to be bound in the name of Christ is believed to undermine and even defeat the hold they may have on people (Bubeck 1975:112; Christenson 1990:157-164).

Besides an enormous amount of 'anecdotal evidence' to support the various beliefs and aspects of modern spiritual warfare, some biblical justification is also given in the form of isolated proof-texts.<sup>16</sup> Portions of Holy Scripture like, Ephesians 6:10-18, 2 Corinthians 10:5, and 1 Peter 5:8, are understood as teaching aggressive warfare against Satan and his forces (Bubeck 1975:71-

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<sup>16</sup> Viewed from a careful exegetical perspective, the use of Scriptures by most proponents of modern spiritual warfare can only be classified as abuse of Scripture with a disregard for what the Bible-writers sought to communicate. Also the use of isolated Scriptures without taking into account what the Bible as a whole teaches about God, Christ, Salvation and the demonic realm is unwarranted. A good example of this kind of abuse of Scripture is found in Bubeck's, *The Adversary*, pp. 103-107.

73, 103-107; Christenson 1990:72-75, 95-99, 111-112), breaking down demonic strongholds in peoples' lives (Robison 1991:73-83). Nehemiah 1:6-7 and Daniel 9:1-19 are referred to in respect to the effectiveness of confession on behalf of others (Bubeck 1975:113). The words of Jesus in Matthew 16:19, 18:18 and also 12:29 are interpreted as a matter of binding demonic powers and loosing people from their grip or influence or spiritual chains (Harper 1970:114-115; Christenson 1990:171), while James 4:7 is referred to in relation to verbally addressing Satan or demons (Dickason 1987:343).<sup>17</sup> At times these techniques of spiritual warfare were also applied to deal with the alleged demonisation of buildings, places, (Christenson 1990:111; Harper 1970:105-107; Peterson 1972:25-30) and even objects and symbols (Burnett 1991:268-269; Priest 1995:4-6). It is in this context of modern spiritual warfare, with its various presuppositions and selective use of Scripture, that the practise of spiritual mapping has been developed within evangelical mission circles since the late 1980's.

#### **EVALUATION OF SPIRITUAL MAPPING FROM A CONTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVE**

Evaluating the modern concepts of spiritual warfare, including spiritual mapping, is not just a matter of biblical evaluation or of theological reflection, but is very much a matter of contextualization. We may well discover that the church, in the area of spiritual warfare, has become a captive itself, rather than setting the captives free. While we may admit that there is some merit and biblical justification for some of the aspects of spiritual

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<sup>17</sup> Commonly used phrases in modern spiritual warfare like: 'I break down Satan's strongholds', 'I proclaim the victory', 'I bind the powers of Satan', 'I loose any demonic influence', 'I pull down demonic strongholds', and similar expressions, reflect the ancient (partial) captivity of western culture and the western church, by the old barbaric European warrior tradition (Latourette 1953:414), with its glorification of individual heroes and great warriors, and may have its ultimate origin in ancient Indo-European mythology, rather than in the tradition of Holy Scripture (Hiebert 1994:204-208; Horton 1992:17ff, 337ff).

warfare<sup>18</sup>, we may well discover that in much of spiritual warfare the church has become captive to the Indo-European concept of the battle between good & evil (Hiebert 1994:204ff, Horton 1992:17ff). In the wake of World War II people have been desperately looking for power amidst a general feeling of powerlessness in the face of modern warfare, nuclear threats and technological and environmental disasters.<sup>19</sup> Instead of being a transforming power in our societies today, many, especially within the evangelical segment of the church, have succumbed to the patterns of this world, which provide us with a mindset other than the mind of Christ and a biblical worldview. Instead of confronting the real powers that are at work in the world, including the powerful dominant modern scientific worldview with its sins and evils, much of the evangelical church keeps its spirituality in the unseen realm of private experiences without any real bearing on the realities of our context (Newbigin 1986:40).

This kind of neo-mysticism with its emphasis on the unseen and spiritual, does not stand in judgement of the modern materialist society, with its mechanistic and atheistic mindset. It is not a transforming force in society. Instead, it simply co-exists. By virtue of peacefully co-existing with the status quo, without challenging its evils, mysticism actually collaborates with the dominant powers. The mystics are like warriors waving swords into the air (1 Cor. 9:26) without defeating anyone or anything, except their purpose. The dichotomy between the private religious experience and the realities of the public world, is actually part of the dominant ideology of pagan western culture (Newbigin 1986:132ff). Consequently, faith has become a private matter concerned with personal salvation, an inward righteousness, morality and peace, without much concern for justice, righteousness

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<sup>18</sup> To maintain that exorcism has no longer a place in the ministry of the church because it reflects a primitive understanding of reality reflects more the presuppositions of a modern rationalistic mindset and neglects the experiences and teachings of the biblical text and church-history (Page 1995:179ff).

<sup>19</sup> The revival of magic and the search for power in post-World War II western societies probably reflects the same trend.

and peace in the socio-economic and political realm. Mission then becomes a matter of individual private conversion and promotion of inward moral righteousness. Spiritual warfare then becomes a matter of battling those demons who allegedly hinder such conversion, or attainment of inward moral righteousness, rather than challenging the demon-inspired evil structures, false ideologies and idols in society (Wagner 1991:133). Yet, Christianity has always addressed the demon inspired structural evils and idols in its mission to the world (Newbigin 1986:95).

Therefore, the church in this present day and age, cannot afford to fight phantoms<sup>20</sup> and leave the idols that are served and promoted in our world unchallenged (Newbigin 1986:115ff). The world may indeed be enemy occupied territory, but he has no property rights. He is a usurper. We are not called to act as God's 5<sup>th</sup> columnists, carrying out commando raids (Bosch 1991:506), nor are we called to glorify individual hero's or knights who go out to challenge the dragons, or 'demonic windmills' like Don Quichottes.

We must, rather, act and live in this world in the affirmation that 'The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it' (Ps. 24:1), living out the victory already won by Christ. Spiritual warfare is, therefore, not a matter of power, for that matter has been permanently settled by God through Christ (Eph.1:16-23; Col.1:2:15), rather it is a matter of truth, love and reconciliation, of righteousness, holiness and peace, both individual and structural (Chester 1993:150ff).

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<sup>20</sup> The early Christian church often viewed demonic manifestations as mere phantoms, appearances, causing people to view reality as not reality, and what was not reality as reality (cf. Origen, *Against Celsus*, 1:9, 4:40; Tertullian, *Treatise on the Soul*, 2:4, 9:57).

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