

Yesterday (2Nov78) I had occasion to gather together, for some-one, my thinksheets on "Power" and "Principalities and Powers," and got stimulated to do this thinksheet in light of my current teaching of a course in the rise of civilization, which means the rise of human collective power (one of the texts being Wm.McNeill's great THE RISE OF THE WEST: A HISTORY OF THE HUMAN COMMUNITY, U. of Chicago/63), quotations in this thinksheet all being from p. 656).

that we're only #2, the Fertile Crescent being #1--so "the East" #3, and then....

1. The biblical ideal of power on earth is twofold: (1) the direct reign-rule-"kingdom" of God, = "theocracy"--supremely as announced by Jesus as imminent; and (2) individual control over one's life-support systems (shalom under your vine and figtree because Solomon's empire stretches from the Euphrates almost to the Nile and is also unthreatened by sea: 1K.4.25--the area called, in the Persian period, and so in glosses in our context, "Transeuphrates" --the crucial, northern reach of the Fertile Crescent, the ancient world's control-center of, literally, "civi-l-ization," the first city-developed sector of the globe). Let's call the second "Shalom #1" and the first "Shalom #2." Negatively, as one can ascertain by noting the many concordance reff. under "afraid," Shalom is a condition under which "none shall make them afraid" because power has established security for property-owners--but at what cost?

2. The human cost of property-security ("vines and figtrees," which are slow-growing and easily destroyed) is, or at least has been, police protection against internal threats and military protection against external threats *regardless of the injustice/justice of the threats*. Last week, I planted two more vines, gifts of a fellowclergyman in our town; and I don't want folks messing with those vines or anything else I own: I "sitting under" my possessions, thank you, in the condition of Shalom #2, and enjoying it more all the time, ever more thankful to the Maker of Heaven and Earth, while suffering occasional conscience-twinges upon thoughts of Shalom #1 (which poses the wider-context problem of this thinksheet). One of the things I thank God for, in this connection, is that in my religion I'm not a follower of some ascetic calling me away from worldly enjoyment, but rather of One who promises the goods of the good earth (though this One calls some to forego these goods for the present: not me, I think, though I am called to be ever aware of, and responsive to, the present demands of Shalom #1: "I will not eat cake if my brother does not have bread," said Eugene Debs ). Ambiguity, and unambiguous demand (love/justice)!

3. History's two great surges of power have been the rise of cosmopolis (1500-500BC, with David-Solomon smack in the middle) and the rise of "the West" (AD1650-1800: "Europe became the West. The only comparable event in world history was the rise of a cosmopolitan civilization in the Middle East between 1500 and 500BC"). The first of these two vast outward thrusts-bursts of power was from a PLAIN (Mesopotamia in the biblical period), and the second from an OCEAN (the Atlantic)--creating two great "melting pot(s)," centrally heated by more or less instant violence to maintain the public tranquility, injustice and all. Power moved from land to sea, then to air, now to "space." The reason we're "the West" is