

1. Things occur in human life and history which cry out for superhuman malevolence to compass them: human turpitude lacks the requisite dimensionality. Humans are small, fragile, brief creatures whose evil is small, fragile, brief. But humans experience, in addition to the evil they inflict on themselves and each other and their nonhuman fellow-creatures, evil that is not small, evil that is tough and humanly insurmountable, evil that is durable beyond human power to endure. Such suprahuman evil thrives best in societies that deny its existence. Our Enlightenment society has been such a society, unavailable to the biblical message about these "principalities and powers" (Eph.6.12). Now we are bathed in the bathos of exorcism, black masses, Satanic cults, chthonic "vibes," and astrology as threat as well as promise; and are in danger of foundering in our fears and nightmares, our despair of political processes and social institutions and economic structures--once divinized, now demonized. Increasingly, our Zeitgeist approaches the individualistic Weltschmerz of the Hellenistic world. Since that was the world into which our infant Faith was "thrown," the records of our infant Faith--the NT--should be more psychically available to us now than they were to our parents. That's a presupposition of this thinksheet.

1927;
2. A half century ago Freud (p.24, THE FUTURE OF AN ILLUSION [Anchor/64]) wrote: "Man's helplessness remains and along with it his longing for...the gods. The gods retain their threefold task: they must exorcize the terrors of nature, they must reconcile men to the cruelty of...death, and they must compensate them for the sufferings and privations which a civilized life in common has imposed on them." In addition to being superlative writing, this statement sorts out three essential functions of religion: (1) to answer the ominous in nature, (2) to justify socially imposed limitations on behavior, and (3) to provide a meaning-conquest of death, which comes upon us all through forces of nature and/or society. Says Papa F: Science has progressively deprived the gods of #1 and is helping relieve the burdens of #2--which leaves religion to specialize in death, whose conquest by reason-science is improbable. Yes, we religionists are in the funeral business, where--here I extend Freud--we can neither fail [since our clientele are the dead and the pre-dead, already] nor succeed [since pulling off resurrections is only an "illusion"].

3. Freud's brilliant, deeply flawed religion-analysis is the literary masterpiece of "the principalities and powers" against religion as life-affirming. Jesus (M.3.26 passim); and Paul (Ro.4.12; Gal.4.3,9,25, 5.25, 6.16; Phil.3.16; Col.2.8,20) likes the root "stec^h" and uses it for [to use the 1954 WCC theme] "Man's Disorder and [i.e., against] God's Design." Both Jesus and Paul see our world as open to, and to large extent subject to, "the dark powers" [Bonhoeffer's term] hovering immediately over our heads in the lower heaven, imposing on us an anti-God ordering that enslaves us to Satan's designs against God's design to free us, to liberate us from sin and death. For this, Paul's usual expression is "the elements..." ["stec^h"], rather than the immediately post-Pauline "the principalities and powers" [our usual code for the four expressions in Eph.6.12]: his emphasis is not on the power of these forces, but on the effects of that power: (1) the imposition of psychic-historical-institutional ordering ("structures and processes") which, instead of "saving"-freeing humankind, (2) bind us as slaves to oppression, sin, and death. [In Tom Oden's TAG terms, Paul tags himself as wanting divine "rigor" and societal "change": he's 2/2A, both judge and dissenter.] Grace in Jesus supervenes over, is "above" (Eph.1.21), every rule and power and name (1.22): that's Eph.'s way of paralleling the same truth expressed by Heb. vis-a-vis Judaism. "The elements" wall earth off from heaven horizontally, and people(s) off from each other vertically. Both Eph. and Heb. in this are faithful to Paul, for whom grace in Jesus makes all other past and present loyalties appear as bondage--including political and economic loyalties, in the "series"/"ranks" [rt. "stoc^h"] of "the world." [Mendenhall sees this as continuing the new revelation in Moses, under which ethics take priority over politics and human relations over economics; e.g., in his THE TENTH GENERATION, Jns.Hopkins/74: prophetism is the revelation's resistance to priestcraft's perpetual temptation to prostitute ritual

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ials for this final paragraph in the 6Sept76 NEWSWEEK feature article (p.62): "As a cultural phenomenon, the consciousness movement feeds on the romantic notion that inner experience alone can transform...As a religious movement, it signals a return to gnosticism, which always disparages common humanity in the name of higher truths....ignoring the demonic...."

to upper-class political and economic interests, the temple (1) connected to and controlled by the palace, and (2) infested with, and the servant of, commercial interests (cp. Jesus' "cleansing" of the temple)...sermons in the White House, competing pieties in presidential debates....the blindness of idealism gone arrogant, self-satisfaction become uncritical, realism gone rigid, action gone irrelevant and self-canceling, promises gone sour with excess and cover-up, power gone destructive, and "the poor," "the wretched of the earth," become invisible.] [E.g., see xiff and 65.]

4. To continue on Paul and the "powers and principalities," I see him seeing them in three dimensions:

(1) Chaotizing the divine order, seeping their cosmic anomia into human society. These "elements"--angels fallen, principalities come under Satan as false god, powers perverted to hubris, "gods" [Gal.4.8f]--are happiest to invade religion, so as work evil where good is to appear, viz. in the religious community with its ritual and moral principles, statutes, laws, customs. See Gal.3.23, 4.3,8f (cf. Col.2.8ff).

(2) Controlling political functioning. While Christians are to support government to the extent of its functioning for the good [Ro.13.1ff], Paul is not unsuspecting, knowing the powers of darkness, e.g. in the political death of his Lord. (The "authorities" and "rulers" having "authority"--Ro.13--include Roman officials and perhaps also Jewish political-judicial-ecclesial officials--as in 1Cor.2.8; cf. 1Cor.6.1-3, where nonChristian judges are "angels.")

(3) Effecting death. But these hostile "rulers, authorities, powers" [1Cor.15.24-27] become subject to Christ [Ro.8.38f: "angels and rulers and...powers"]: so "nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus," on earth or in death.

5. Markus Barth (THE BROKEN WALL [Judson/59], pp.89ff), considering Eph. Pauline, adds another feature of Paul's thinking here, viz. slavery (repression, oppression, exploitation). As a human "lord" [kurios] as slaveowner wields economic and political power over his slaves, so the "principalities and powers" have "dominion" [the same stem, in kuriotes: Eph.6.5-9; 1.21] over "the structures of economics and society" (p.90: "probable": "by the p. and p., Paul means the world of axioms and principles of politics and religion, of economics and society, of morals and biology, of history and culture."). He relates this to a demonic notice-taking of the appearance of Jesus [M.1.21-28]; God's "enlightenment" [Eph.1.18, 3.9, 5.8] reveals evil as well as good at "work behind and within the world of man" (p.91).

6. In NT, "p. and p." are not conceived in Eastern-hemisphere [gnostic, esoteric] ways, viz. in relation to salvation-as-enlightenment, but in Abraham-Moses-Jesus ways, viz. in relation to salvation-as-faith/obedience. Since faith/obedience are this- as well as other-worldly, "p. and p.," and Jewish and Christian response thereto, are without any doubt economic, political-social-cultural in sphere, and "religion" is exempt neither from their powers nor from worldly responsibilities for resisting them in the name of human liberation from all that binds and cripples, all that hinders the full flowering of humanity in justice, peace, and joy. ["The New Evangelicals" are doing some competent theologizing on this.]

7. PARADOXES: While denying the existence of skinless evil forces--i.e., claiming all evil is human--seems to lay superior responsibility on us, belief that evil is both with and without skin [i.e., both human and suprahuman] makes us responsible for resisting two dimensions of evil instead of only one; and while "The Devil made me do it" is an easy excuse, the belief in demonic forces should make the heart more generous with, and thus more helpful to, the entrapped [e.g., Eph.6.12: the enemy is not "people" (Ledyard tr.)].

8. Ironically, "the sensitivity movement" teaches the nonexistence of the demonic, and is to that extent desensitizing. This note I insisted on in providing the mater-