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THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE CROSS FOR THE INVISIBLE POWERS
AND THE STATE AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF
1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-8 AND COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

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February 1971

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INTRODUCTION

The history of interpretation of the New Testament in the twentieth century is marked by the emergence and decline of many movements and many "schools" of thought, but within this multiplicity of interpretation there is one constant factor, and that is the honest attempt to listen critically to the New Testament writers as witnesses of faith of the first century. One result of this approach has been the recognition of the fact that the Christians of the first century shared with their contemporaries a world-view which, quite unlike our own, was highly mythological. The Gospel went out into a world in which men believed themselves and the whole of life to be under the control of cosmic deities and principalities and powers. It was into such a world that St. Paul went out proclaiming "the word of the cross" (1 Cor. 1:18).

If the primary factor in the life of man in the first century of our era was religion, then perhaps the second most important factor was the State. In the twentieth century the State has become almost totally secularized, despite the fact that the United States still stamps "In God we trust" on its coins, and nations of the British Commonwealth often imprint "F.D." (Fidei Defensor) on their coins. In the course of this study we hope to demonstrate that such a "demythologized" view of the State as we have today was impossible in the first century, and that on the contrary the State, like the whole of life, was considered to be under the control of invisible cosmic principalities and powers.

"For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). That is the first word that must be said

over Pauline theology--it is a theologia crucis. In this study we shall attempt to show the implications of Paul's proclamation of the cross for the invisible powers against the background of two short passages from his letters. These two passages, 1 Cor. 2:6-8 and Col. 1:15-20, have been singled out in particular because both explicitly mention the cross in relation to the powers.

Along with the resurgence of interest in the mythological worldview of the New Testament, some scholars, particularly in Germany and particularly in connection with the emergence of the Third Reich and World War II, have made much of the connection between cosmic powers and the State. As we shall see, the debate as to whether invisible powers do or do not stand behind earthly authority seems to have become heavily bogged down on Rom. 13:1-7. Since the thesis being defended in this study admits to some kind of connection between the invisible powers and the power of State, we have deliberately chosen as one of the passages for detailed consideration 1 Cor. 2:6-8, which has also been used "politically" in the debate over Romans 13, but to a much lesser extent.

Our aim in this study is to discover the implications of the cross for the invisible powers and the State against the background of two Pauline passages which in our opinion are very relevant to the topic. In the first part of this study we shall trace the history of the discussion on invisible powers and the State in this century. Then we shall turn back the clock many centuries and examine the background relevant to our topic. With this general introduction and background material in mind, our task shall be to examine what each of the two

passages that have been chosen has to say about the meaning of the cross for the invisible powers, and then to draw out for a Pauline view of the State those implications which we feel are justified.

THE INVISIBLE POWERS

The Discussion concerning the Invisible Powers in Modern Times

It is probably safe to say that in any era of church history the problems and presuppositions of that era inevitably color the exegesis of Scripture. Concerning on the nineteenth-century interpretation of those passages in St. Paul's writings where principalities and powers are mentioned, H. Barchhof writes:

In the last century little attention was paid to this part of Paul's faith and thought. Either one read therein the confirmation of a conventional orthodox doctrine about angels and devils, or else they were seen as vestiges of antiquated mythology in Paul's thought, with which more enlightened ages had made no account.

The latter view expressed here epitomized the attitude of the rationalistic theologians of the nineteenth century.

The emergence of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule in Germany in the last decade of the nineteenth century brought into question many of the presuppositions of Rationalism. The theologians of this new school sought to illuminate contemporary knowledge of primitive Christianity by studying seriously the religious and social environment in which it grew up, especially Judaism and those non-Christian religions and philosophies which were likely to have affected the life and thought of

¹ H. Barchhof, Christ and the Powers, translated from the Dutch by John H. Yoder (Scrivener, from Verloren Press, 1962), p. 9.

CHAPTER I

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the primitive community. Their careful research revealed, among other things, that the doctrine of angels, demons and cosmic powers was not an unimportant area on the fringe of New Testament theology that can be unceremoniously swept under the rug (as the theologians of Rationalism had done), but an area that must be reckoned with seriously if a full understanding of the theology of St. Paul is to emerge.

The first scientific investigation of Paul's concept of the spiritual powers from the point of view of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule was made by Otto Everling in a monograph of 1888 titled Die paulinische Angelologie und Damonologie, but the most monumental work on the subject was, and still is, Martin Dibelius' Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus. Despite its antiquity this work is still a classic and has not been bettered. Dibelius diligently works through the Pauline corpus, giving much attention to the relevant background in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and treating also the Talmud and Midrash. He shows that the Geisterwelt is by no means peripheral in Pauline theology, but is of decisive importance for an understanding of such central concepts as Christology and eschatology.³ Unlike some theologians who succeeded him, Dibelius was not interested in the powers as one who believed in their existence personally, but as a religionsgeschichtliche theologian interested in understanding Paul as Paul.

²Martin Dibelius, Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1909). On page one Dibelius cites the monograph of Everling (which was unavailable to the present writer) and comments on it briefly.

³Ibid., p. 5, makes this claim, and goes ahead to prove it admirably.

Geister- und Teufelsvorstellungen sind im Schwinden, auch der Engelglaube hat seine Stätte mehr in der bildenden Kunst als in der Religion; aber immer wird es die Christenheit dem Paulus nachempfinden, dass nichts uns scheiden kann von der Liebe Gottes.⁴

It is to the credit of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule, and to Dibelius in particular, that the Geisterwelt is now taken seriously in commentaries and works that deal with the theology of St. Paul.

It would appear that nothing else of great importance was written on the subject for another twenty years, and that when the discussion was taken up again in the early thirties it took a decidedly political turn.⁵ During the early years of the Third Reich and Hitler's rise to power many theologians felt uneasy about the power-politics and injustices being carried out in the name of the State, and some of them used an interpretation of Rom. 13:1-7 first suggested by M. Dibelius in 1909, which enabled them to get around the unqualified obedience to the State that seems to be demanded in this passage. In his Geisterwelt of 1909 Dibelius had written concerning the ἐξουσία⁶ of Rom. 13:1:

⁴Ibid., p. 208.

⁵Ernst Käsemann, "Römer 13, 1-7 in unserer Generation," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, LVI (1959), 316-376. Käsemann has documented the history of the debate very thoroughly. For other summaries of the debate, see: Hans von Campenhausen, "Zur Auslegung von Rom 13: Die Dämonistische Deutung des 'ΕΞΟΥΣΙΑ--Begriffs," in Festschrift Alfred Bertholet zum 80. Geburtstag, edited by W. Baumgartner and others (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1950), pp. 97-99. Oscar Cullmann, "The Kingship of Christ and the Church in the New Testament," in The Early Church, edited by A. J. B. Higgins (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), pp. 134-135. Oscar Cullmann, The State in the New Testament (revised edition; London: SCM Press, 1963), pp. 7, 70-71. Valentin Zsifkovits, Die Staatsgedanke nach Paulus in Röm. 13:1-7 (Wien: Verlag Herder, 1964), pp. 57-58.

⁶The following transliterations will be used frequently: ἐξουσία - exousiai, ἄρχων - archōn, ἄρχοντες - archontes.

Auch hinter der heidnischen Obrigkeit hat Paulus wohl Gewalten aus dem Geisterreich gesehen (Rm.13); freilich gilt es hier (wie Rm.8:20): "die aber sind, die sind von Gott verordnet."⁷

G. Dehn and other theologians opposed to the Hitler regime used this interpretation to justify their stand against the Third Reich. As Käsemann has pointed out in his survey of the theological struggle over Romans 13, the important point in Dehn's article "Engel und Obrigkeit" is not so much that spiritual powers stand behind earthly authorities (the interpretation borrowed from Dibelius), but that angels fall, and consequently the earthly rulers controlled by them can become demonized. In 1936 that could mean only one thing: Romans 13 does not require conscientious obedience in all circumstances.⁸ K. L. Schmidt, using a similar argument from Romans 13, took up a position that was even more politically outspoken, because he boldly linked the exousiai of Romans 13 with the beast of the abyss of Revelations 13, in the following way:

Der irdische Staat . . . dessen Kraft und Würde an ihrem Ort wahrhaftig nicht unterschätzt werden, gehört gerade nach Röm 13 zu den ἐξουσίαι, d.h. zu den Engel- und Dämonenmächten, von wo aus der Zugang zu der biblisch-apokalyptischen Auffassung vom Staate als dem Tier aus dem Abgrund deutlich wird.⁹

The significance of this interpretation for Germany of 1934 is quite obvious.

⁷Dibelius, p. 200. He later rejected this interpretation (in 1936); see Cullmann, State, p. 70.

⁸Käsemann, LVI, 352, discusses Dehn's article, which was unavailable to the present writer.

⁹Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "Zum theologischen Briefwechsel zwischen Karl Barth und Gerhard Kittel," Theologische Blätter, XIII (November 1934), col. 332. See also: "Das Gegenüber von Kirche und Staat in der Gemeinde des Neuen Testaments," Theologische Blätter, XVI (January 1937), cols. 1-16.

The theologians in favor of the Third Reich (sometimes called "brown-shirt" theologians) clung tenaciously to the traditional Roman Catholic, or its variant, the conservative Lutheran, interpretation of Romans 13 in which the exousiai are held to be the earthly rulers (and nothing else) who receive their power and right to govern as a function bestowed by God in the structure of the orders of creation.¹⁰ On the basis of this traditional exegesis of Romans 13, the national-socialist theologians pledged themselves to the new regime by signing a document composed of twelve articles, one of which reads:

Wir sind voll Dank gegen Gott, dass er als der Herr der Geschichte unserem Volk in Adolf Hitler den Führer und Retter aus schwerer Not geschenkt hat. Wir wissen uns mit Leib und Leben dem deutschen Staat und diesem seinem Führer verbunden und verpflichtet. Diese Verbundenheit und Verpflichtung hat für uns als evangelische Christen ihre tiefste und heiligste Verantwortung darin, dass sie Gehorsam gegen das Gebot Gottes ist.¹¹

Perhaps the most controversial figure in the whole debate was Karl Barth, who broadened out this theological-political controversy much wider than Romans 13 and the exousiai. Käsemann comments:

While it is a fact that the theory of angelic powers standing behind the earthly authorities has had some influence on this interpretation [that of Barth and his school] its centre of gravity does not lie there. The concern of Barth and his disciples is with the present Lordship of Christ over all the world as it is

¹⁰Ernst Käsemann, "Principles of the Interpretation of Romans 13," in New Testament Questions of Today, translated by W. J. Montague (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969), pp. 200-203, outlines these traditional positions and their inherent dangers.

¹¹These articles, drawn up by national-socialist theologians (including G. Kittel) in 1934, are to be found in Karl Barth und Gerhard Kittel, Ein theologischer Briefwechsel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1934), pp. 4-6.

directly and powerfully proclaimed in the primitive Christian hymns.¹²

This Christological interpretation of the State is Barth's unique contribution to the debate, and we find it in a nutshell in his Heft of 1938.¹³ His argument runs like this: Since the State, like the invisible powers that stand behind it, stands under the Lordship of the risen Christ, the church cannot take up a neutral position over against it. Despite Christ's Lordship, the powers still attempt to manifest a wicked demonic independence from God through the medium of the State; thus the State can indeed become "demonic" and manifest itself as the beast of the abyss (Revelation 13).¹⁴ His conclusion is that the members of the church, as those having knowledge of this mystery, are to assume political responsibility and are to take up a critical position over against the State, and not behave as if they were in a night where all cats are grey.¹⁵

The foremost opponent of the angelological interpretation of the State, and of Karl Barth in particular, was G. Kittel. In Christus und Imperator, 1939, he argues that the doctrine of national angels is nowhere to be found in the theology of St. Paul. His struggle against

¹²Käsemann, New Testament Questions, p. 205.

¹³Karl Barth, Rechtfertigung und Recht (3rd edition), in Theologische Studien, edited by K. Barth (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1948), Heft 1. Barth writes, p. 20, "Wir befinden uns, wenn das Neue Testament vom Staate redet, auch von dieser Seite gesehen grundsätzlich in christologischem Bereich."

¹⁴Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 18.

Karl Barth is best mirrored in the Briefwechsel between these two men, which was published the same year it occurred (1934).¹⁶ Kittel was joined in his attack by F. J. Leenhardt and by Otto Eck, the latter calling the exousiai-theories "adventurous and completely absurd."¹⁷ When World War II broke out, the deadlock between the two groups of theologians over the word exousiai was still unresolved. It is difficult to ascertain just to what extent politics colored exegesis in this particular stage of the discussion, but it certainly was a factor of considerable magnitude, especially in the case of Barth and Kittel.

The war did not silence the debate, because outside Germany Karl Barth continued to lecture and write, and in the early forties his voice was joined by that of Oscar Cullmann of the Basel faculty. The first statement of his position (to which he has remained steadfast until this day) appeared in a brief writing titled "Königsherrschaft Christi und Kirche im Neuen Testament" of 1940.¹⁸ In this writing Cullmann spells out in greater exegetical depth, especially with reference to the eschatological dimension, the position taken up by Barth in his Heft of 1938, with its Christological foundation of the State.¹⁹

¹⁶Cited supra p. 5, footnote 11. Christus und Imperator was unavailable; however a good summary of his position is to be found in G. Kittel, "Das Urteil des Neuen Testaments über den Staat," Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie, XIV (1957), 651-680, especially pp. 675-680, in which he attacks the "dämonistische" interpretation of Rom. 13:1.

¹⁷Cited by Cullmann, The Early Church, p. 135.

¹⁸Supra p. 3, footnote 5. This is the English translation of the 3rd German edition.

¹⁹Supra, pp. 6-7; Cullmann's presentation agrees with Barth's entirely.

Cullmann adds an appendix on the exousiai of Rom. 13:1, in which he defends the angelological interpretation against Kittel and Leenhardt.

1946 saw the publication of his very popular book Christus und die Zeit, in which he devotes a whole chapter to "The Invisible Powers and the State."²⁰ In this chapter he reiterates his position, only this time from a different perspective, since he is more interested here in the powers than in the church, including at the same time a reply to E. Brunner who had attacked his "Christological foundation of the State" as a position that would lead to a "fanatical intermixture of Church and State,"²¹ and including furthermore a section in which the political implications are quite concretely spelled out, as the following quotation shows:

[By comparing National Socialism with the Roman State] . . . too much honor has been given to National Socialism. Only the Roman State's surpassing of its limits in the imperial cult and the therewith connected aggression against the Christians, but not its general exercise of its functions as a State, can be compared with the State demonism that we have experienced in the most recent past.²²

After the publication of Christ and Time the debate took a decidedly theological turn, partly for the simple reason that the war had ended and the Third Reich had collapsed, but more importantly because the position taken up by Cullmann in Christ and Time, in which the salvation-historical approach was strongly championed, brought

²⁰Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time, translated by Floyd V. Filson (revised edition; London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 191-210.

²¹Ibid., p. 206. Brunner is cited by Cullmann in the course of his defence.

²²Ibid., p. 203.

him into sharp conflict with the then-emerging Bultmann school with its existential-demythologizing hermeneutic. In his Theologie Bultmann by no means denies that St. Paul's concept of the cosmos included invisible powers:

The "kosmos," although on the one hand, it is God's creation, is, on the other hand, the domain of demonic powers: the "angels," "principalities" and "powers" . . . "the rulers of this age" . . . "the elemental spirits of the kosmos" . . .²³

Bultmann passes over in silence the whole debate as to whether in St. Paul's view these spiritual powers stood behind civil authority. It is not difficult to construe what this silence means, because in an article evaluating Christ and Time he dismisses Cullmann's position in one ridiculing sentence: "It is painful to see that the grotesque misinterpretation of 'authorities' (ἐξουσία) in Rom.13:1ff. recurs to the angel powers."²⁴ What Bultmann would find so grotesque and ridiculous is not only that Cullmann interprets the exousiai angelologically (Bultmann does so himself in the case of the archontes of 1 Cor. 2:6-8),²⁵ but also that Cullmann accepts the reality of such cosmic powers at work in the State in the twentieth century. Because of his demythologizing hermeneutic Bultmann finds this quite ludicrous:

For the world view of the Scripture is mythological and is therefore unacceptable to modern man whose thinking has been shaped by science and is therefore no longer mythological Have you

²³Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, translated by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 257-258.

²⁴Rudolf Bultmann, Existence and Faith, selected, translated and introduced by S. M. Ogden (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), p. 234.

²⁵Bultmann, Theology, I, 173.

read anywhere [in the newspapers] that political or social or economic events are performed by supernatural powers such as God, angels or demons?²⁶

This survey of the discussion on the invisible powers in modern times has shown that with Everling and Dibelius the objective study of "die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus," and its importance for Pauline theology, got off to a very good start. It has been shown furthermore that, unfortunately (but perhaps inevitably), the problem of the powers became one-sidedly bound up with the political issue, which resulted in a theological impasse over the interpretation of the exousiai of Rom. 13:1. Since the amount of literature published on Rom. 13:1-7 by many and better scholars is of such massive proportions, and since the debate on that passage still seems to be unresolved,²⁷ the present writer has deemed it prudent to view the problem of the invisible powers and the State against the background of two passages other than Romans 13, one of which (1 Cor. 2:6-8) has been used "politically" but to a much lesser extent than Romans 13 (by Cullmann and others), and both of which speak of the powers in relationship to the cross (in this way we hope to remain faithful to St. Paul's all-pervading soteriological concern). Before studying the two passages, we wish to spend the rest of this chapter on the important task of discussing that part of the background of St. Paul's theology which is relevant to the thesis topic.

²⁶ Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 36-37.

²⁷ Zsifkovits, pp. 62-64, lists those on each side of the debate with reference to the exousiai of Rom. 13:1. It would seem that there are more against the angelological interpretation of exousiai, than there are for it.

The Background

Our understanding of St. Paul's theology is somewhat proportionate to our understanding of his environment. Of course it is impossible to assert what went on in St. Paul's mind, but by studying the theological tradition in which he grew up, the world-view of his environment, and the various situations he addressed, it is possible to ascertain to a greater degree of probability how St. Paul understood the various words and concepts which appear in his letters. In our study we do not wish to attempt a reconstruction of the background of St. Paul's thought in general; rather we shall look at this background from one particular angle: Do we find in St. Paul's background any evidence of a doctrine which envisions spiritual powers as standing behind the earthly authorities of State?

Turning first to the Old Testament Scriptures, which were St. Paul's Bible, we find that the theocratic ideal was ingrained in old Israel at all stages of her history. When Israel began having her own kings, a situation arose which required a theological explanation: How can the theocratic ideal be maintained if Israel has a king? In the first place, the sacred writers took great care to point out that this was a concession on God's part to the weakness of the people (1 Samuel 8), and furthermore, when the monarchy became firmly established, the palace and the temple were brought into close proximity (2 Samuel 7), and finally, the king was always designated at his enthronement as Yahweh's anointed and Yahweh's servant. Israel's emergence as a self-conscious nation in competition with other great nations forced upon

her a further question: Since Yahweh was now confessed as the Creator (for example, Is. 42:5), in what way does Yahweh, as cosmic Creator, exercise his rule over the foreign nations?

The Deuteronomist's answer to this question was that Yahweh rules over the nations through astral deities. In Deut. 4:19-20 this thought is veiled behind a polemic against idolatry:

When you raise your eyes to heaven, when you see the sun, the moon, the stars, all the array of heaven, do not be tempted to worship them and serve them. Yahweh your God has allotted them to all the peoples under heaven, but as for you, Yahweh has taken you, and brought you out from the furnace of iron, from Egypt, to be a people all his own, as you still are today (Jerusalem Bible).

Thus in the Weltanschauung of the Deuteronomist Yahweh rules directly over Israel, but over the nations through intermediaries; this is quite explicit in Deut. 32:8-9:

When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance
when he separated the sons of men,
he fixed the bounds of the peoples
according to the number of the sons of God.
For the Lord's portion is his people,
Jacob his allotted heritage.

In the apocalyptic section of Isaiah (chapters 24 to 27), which probably is a late section dating from the same period as the Deuteronomist, we find a similar connection between the supernatural powers and the rulers of earth, set in a parallelism in connection with the coming judgment:

That day, Yahweh will punish
above, the armies of the sky,
below, the kings of the earth;

(Is. 24:21, Jerusalem Bible)

As the footnote in the Jerusalem Bible explains, the "armies of the sky" are "the stars, regarded as deities in the semitic pagan world."²⁸

The Deuteronomic doctrine gave a satisfactory answer to the problems facing Israel in her new situation. It has three strong points in its favor, as Caird has pointed out: (a) It did justice to the reality of pagan religion and of the pagan political power with which religion was inseparably associated; (b) It asserted that all authority comes from God; and (c) It preserved the distinction between two modes of divine sovereignty.²⁹

In the Psalms there are numerous passages which hint at a connection between foreign gods and the rulership of their respective nations. In Psalm 82, for example, Yahweh is pictured as holding a divine council among the gods, and condemning them for their unjust rule:

How long will you judge unjustly
and show partiality to the wicked? . . .
They have neither knowledge nor understanding,
they walk about in darkness . . .
I say, "You are gods,
sons of the Most High, all of you;
nevertheless, you shall die like men,
and fall like any prince" (Ps. 82:5-7).

In the Psalms the tone is more polemical than in the theology of the Deuteronomist. Whereas in the latter the astral deities of the nations are considered to have been appointed by God, in certain of the Psalms these gods of the nations are deemed to be only idols, since it is Yahweh who made the heavens (for example, Ps. 96:4-5).

²⁸The Jerusalem Bible (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966), p. 1179, footnote "k."

²⁹George B. Caird, Principalities and Powers (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1956), pp. 6-7.

Billerbeck has noted an interesting development in the Septuagint, which often tends to interpret as well as translate. Quite frequently the word אֲרַחֲמֵי , which one would expect to be translated ἄρχοντες , is translated instead δουλόρια .³⁰ This is a particularly strong piece of evidence for the case we are making here: so interrelated was the thought of earthly rulers and the invisible powers standing behind them, that in a passage where the original sense was the earthly princes, the Septuagint translation is made to refer to the angelic powers.

The Book of Daniel brings us much closer to the New Testament in terms of chronology.³¹ In the "Great Vision" (chapters 10 to 12) we find this very interesting reference:

The prince of the kingdom of Persia has been resisting me [the angel speaking to Daniel] for twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the leading princes [LXX: εἰς τὸν ἀρχόντων], came to my assistance. I have left him confronting the kings of Persia [LXX: "I have left him with the prince of the kings of Persia"].

(Dan. 10:13, Jerusalem Bible)

This passage is virtually meaningless unless read against the background of Persian ideas concerning the cosmos, particularly the idea that each nation is controlled by its own angel ("prince"). Israel had taken up this idea and interpreted it against the background of her faith in Yahweh. The prince of Persia is one of the guardian angels of the nations, but the special people of God have for their guardian

³⁰Paul Billerbeck and Hermann L. Strack, Excuse zu Einzelnen Stellen des Neuen Testaments, in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1965), IV, part I, 501.

³¹Jerusalem Bible, p. 1132, gives good reasons for dating the Book of Daniel between 167 and 164 B.C.

angel the greatest of all angels, the archangel Michael. According to the Book of Daniel, in the time of the End all the nations shall be brought to ruin, even the great Greek empire (chapter 11), because Michael will arise and all the nations will suffer unparalleled distress, except for Israel, who will be spared (chapter 12).

This study of selected Old Testament passages shows that even in the canonical writings there is a tradition linking supernatural powers with the government of the nations. It is a late tradition in which the influence of Persian ideas is extremely prominent, especially in the case of Dan. 10:13. This tradition does not receive much attention, mainly because it was late, and was relevant only for one aspect of Israel's life, namely, her relationship to other nations in the eyes of Yahweh. For our purposes the most important of the Old Testament passages is the one from Daniel, in which the term archontes clearly refers to supernatural angel-powers, who have been assigned individually to each nation to control it.

In the eschatology of Judaism two tendencies, both strongly dependent on Persian and Babylonian ideas, are noticeable: (a) Burgeoning speculation on the precise nature of the coming age, which, contrary to what we find in the prophets, will not be ushered in on the plane of history, but through a cosmic catastrophe; (b) A marked dualism between the forces of good and the forces of evil. Because of this apocalyptic trend the doctrine of national angels, of which we saw only glimpses in the canonical writings, is given much fuller expression, as we shall see.

In the pseudepigraphical literature, especially Ethiopic Enoch, Slavic Enoch, the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, and the Book of

Jubilees, angelology is highly developed and systematized, although not consistently so (in fact, the systems are quite often contradictory). In Slavic Enoch there are ten ranks of angels (Rangstufen) corresponding to the ten classes of angels (Engelklassen); the higher the heaven, the higher the rank of those dwelling in it.³² In the second heaven dwell the angels of destruction and plague, and in the third the powers who will administer vengeance upon the wicked spirits in the last judgment. Because of their duties the angels of the second and third heavens were considered more or less evil, but in the fourth heaven are the holy angels, and in the fifth and sixth heavens are the angels of the Presence who serve the righteous. A portion of Slavic Enoch's description of the sixth heaven is pertinent to our study: ". . . these archangels make the orders, and learn the goings of the stars, and the alternation of the moon, or revolution of the sun, and the good government of the world" (Sl. En. 19:2). In its description of the sixth heaven the Testament of Levi mentions among these angels the "thrones" and "dominions" that are also mentioned in the New Testament (for example, Col. 1:16): "And in the heaven next to this are the thrones and dominions, in which always they offer praise to God" (Test. Levi 3:8). Not only does the activity of the angels of the sixth heaven encompass control of the stars and the government of the world, it also penetrates to minute details like the lives of people and the growth of grass:

³²Paul Billerbeck, Die Briefe des Neuen Testaments und die Offenbarung Johannis, in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash, edited by H. Strack and P. Billerbeck (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1965), III, 583.

And those angels that rule over the seasons and the years, and the angels that are over rivers and seas, and the angels that are over the fruit and grass and everything bubbling [sic], and angels that organize all the life of all people and write before the Lord's face (Sl. En. 19:4-5).

The seventh heaven is of particular interest for our study, because Slavic Enoch uses the same names for angel-powers in his description that we find used in the epistles of the New Testament:

and I saw there a very great light, and fiery troops of great archangels, incorporeal forces, and dominions, orders and governments, cherubim and seraphim, thrones and many-eyed ones, nine regiments . . . (Sl. En. 20:1).³³

Slavic Enoch does not say much about their activity, except that they "kept bowing down to the Lord" (Sl. En. 20:3), but since he implies that they are of the same kind as those of the sixth heaven (archangels), only more glorious (great archangels), it is not incorrect to assume that their function is likewise cosmic rulership, with particular duties in regard to world government and the cycle of nature. In Ethiopic Enoch there is a section where the seven archangels are named and their functions described. According to this account Uriel is specifically in charge of the world, but the others play a part, not only in keeping the spirit-world under control, but also the world of men. For example, Michael looks after the best part of mankind, and Raphael is in control of the spirits of men.³⁴ In fact the very

³³The emphasis is mine, not the translator's. In the footnote to this verse R. H. Charles has the following comment: "dominions, orders, and governments . . . thrones. So, exactly Col. i. 16 *εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἰσχυραί εἴτε ἐξουσίαι*. Cf. Eph. i. 21 . . . also Rom. viii. 38; Eph. iii. 10, 15; I P. iii. 22; I En. lxi. 10." He also finds an interesting parallel in Dionysius the Areopagite. This footnote is found in R. H. Charles, editor, The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), II, 441.

³⁴See Eth. En. 20:1-8.

titles given to these powers of the seventh heaven denote rulership: "thrones," "dominions," "lordships," "authorities," and "powers." They are, as Billerbeck says, fixed Engelklassen named according to activity and commission.³⁵

In the Book of Jubilees the nature of the angels' activity in the sphere of world government is spelled out more precisely:

For there are many nations and many peoples, and all are His, and over all hath He placed spirits in authority to lead them astray from Him. But over Israel He did not appoint any angel or spirit, for He alone is their ruler, and He will preserve them and require them at the hand of His angels and His spirits, and at the hand of all His powers in order that He may preserve them and bless them, and that they may be His and He may be theirs from henceforth for ever (Jubil. 15:31b-32).

This Weltanschauung shows a definite affinity to the canonical Deuteronomist,³⁶ and also to the thought expressed in Ecclesiasticus 17:4, on which it almost seems to be a commentary: "Over each nation he has set a governor, but Israel is the Lord's own portion" (Jerusalem Bible).

However the tradition which we saw in Daniel, in which Israel also is under the control of an angelic being (admittedly the greatest one of all, Michael), is likewise attested in the pseudepigraphical writings, with the striking difference that the dominion over Israel is not restricted to Michael alone. For instance, in Eth. En. 89:59-90:27, the seventy angels (called "shepherds") of the seventy nations of the earth are commissioned to pasture the sheep (Israel) and to destroy

³⁵Billerbeck, III, 581.

³⁶Supra, pp. 12-13.

only as many as God commanded, but they disobeyed. C. Morrison has pointed out that this is really one explanation given to account for the excessive suffering of Israel at the hands of foreign powers. It is put down to disobedient national angels who will be punished for their misdeeds.³⁷

In the Martyrdom of Isaiah, a Jewish writing of the first century A. D., the thought that Israel can fall prey to evil angel-powers is likewise expressed, only in this case the blame is laid at the feet of wicked kings in Israel:

And Manasseh forsook the service of the God of his father, and he served Satan and his angel powers And Manasseh turned aside his heart to serve Beliar; for the angel of lawlessness, who is the ruler of this world, is Beliar, whose name is Matanbuchus. And he delighted in Jerusalem because of Manasseh, and he made him strong in apostacizing (Israel) and in the lawlessness which was spread abroad in Jerusalem (Mart. Is. 2:2 and 4).

In the doctrine of national angels there is an unresolved dualism. As we have already seen, certain passages speak of them as angels of God, exercising authority in his name (for example, Deut. 32:8; Sl. En. 19:4-5; 20:1), but in other places they are represented as being evil (Jubil. 15:30-32). Part of the reason for this is that Iranian dualism, with its sharply defined dual hierarchies of good and evil angels, influenced Israel's thinking, but probably a greater part of the reason is the fact that Israel, in her monotheistic confession, anathematized the gods of the nations, as we have seen in the case of the psalms.³⁸

³⁷Clinton Morrison, The Powers That Be--Earthly Rulers and Demonic Powers in Romans 13:1-7 (Naperville, Ill.: A. R. Allenson, Inc., 1960), p. 19. See Eth. En. 90:1-27.

³⁸Supra, pp. 13.

Thus the gods of the nations came to be identified with the angels of rulership, and because of this association were considered evil, at least potentially so.³⁹ In Eth. En. 19:1 the gods of the nations are identified with the Fallen Watchers, and in chapter 61 of the same book the wicked "shepherds" (angel powers) are to be judged at the epiphany of the Son of Man for their oppressing of the Elect. Billerbeck has shown that there was no consistent teaching on the gods of the nations in Judaism, but various teachings.⁴⁰

Rabbinic Judaism adds practically nothing to the complex and contradictory systems of the apocalyptic writings, simply because it was very little concerned with such speculation. Billerbeck comments:

Das rabbinische Judentum, das sich mit der Angelologie weit weniger befasst hat als die pseudepigraphische Literatur, unterscheidet meist nur zwei Engelklassen: die Engel des Dienstes u. die Engel des Verderbens.⁴¹

The New Testament likewise is not interested in apocalyptic speculation for its own sake, as we shall see later on.

³⁹Billerbeck, III, 48.

⁴⁰Ibid., III, 48-53. Billerbeck outlines four different teachings:

- (i) The gods of the nations are angels whom God has placed over the seventy nations of the earth.
- (ii) The gods are demons doing the devil's work.
- (iii) The gods are deceased rulers who received divine honours in the after-life.
- (iv) The gods of the nations are "nothingness" who became lords because people believed them to be such. Since this interpretation conflicts strongly with the others, the midrashes reflect a certain embarrassment with it, saying, "Die angesehensten Schriftgelehrten sind auf den Plan getreten, diesen Fragen jede Beweiskraft zu nehmen" (p. 53).

⁴¹Ibid., III, 581.

Our survey of the non-canonical literature has shown that the doctrine of national angels is quite widely and clearly attested. Secondly, we have seen that there is a connection between *ἐξουσία*, *ἀρχαί*, *δυνάμεις* (and the like) and the government of this world, within the general scope of their cosmic activity. Finally, we have seen that in some instances the angels of rulership are represented as servants of God, and in other places as being evil (servants of Satan, demons, idols), and that this dualism is unresolved. In speaking of the New Testament's background in Jewish eschatology, R. Bultmann writes:

In this view, the forces that threaten Israel in the present are only superficially foreign nations or world empires; back of these are demonic powers or Satan himself.⁴²

The Invisible Powers in the New Testament-- A General Introduction

Before turning to the New Testament proper, it is necessary to look briefly at the Weltbild of the Graeco-Roman world as a whole, since the apostle Paul, although a one-time Pharisee of the Pharisees, went out into the gentile world in order that he might become all things to all men and thereby by all means save some (1 Cor. 9:22). The primary source for the background of St. Paul's theology is, of course, the Old Testament and his background in Judaism. Scholars argue as to what extent Paul was influenced by Hellenistic Judaism, by proto-gnostic mystery religions, and other non Judaeo-Christian traditions, such as cynic-stoic philosophy, as he went out proclaiming the Gospel to

⁴²Bultmann, Theology, I, 172.

diaspora Jews and pagan Gentiles. The extent of such influence is not decisive in the present context if the thesis that "there was a common Graeco-Roman concept of the State ... whose ruler was divinely appointed in relation to a cosmic system of spiritual powers"⁴³ can be upheld. This idea is strongly championed by C. Morrison, and the case he presents is compelling.⁴⁴

Morrison shows, in the first place, the importance of the Near Eastern background, which is the source for such ideas. In Egypt the divinity of the king, as son of Re, had a particularly political significance. In Persian mythology the affairs of State were at the same time affairs of the cosmos because of the doctrine of national angels. And in the case of the Hittite religion, the weather god was represented as the equivalent of Re, when, for example, Hattusilis III and Ramesses II made a treaty. A scholar of the history of religions school of the turn of the century, F. Cumont, has shown in his very thorough study, Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans, that in this Near Eastern Background it is really only the Iranian religion that is of decisive importance for the great revolution in the religion of the Greeks and the Romans, since both semitic paganism and the religion of Egypt transferred to the West in the way of cosmology and astrology only what they had first learned from Persia in the East.⁴⁵

⁴³Morrison, p. 99.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 68-101.

⁴⁵Franz Cumont, Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans (unaltered republication of the English translation of 1912; New York: Dover Publications, 1960), p. 42.

Since the Greeks had made their gods an appendage of their πόλις the decline of the πόλις and the growth of the Greek Empire left the door wide open for the influence of oriental religions, whose cosmology was far more adaptable to universal dimensions. This transformation of the old Greek religion took place in the time of the Seleucid Empire, when hellenistic culture came into contact with Babylonian civilization.⁴⁶ Later on, oriental cosmology and astrology revolutionized the religion of the Romans, when the spread of their empire also brought them into contact with the East. Cumont believes that one of the most important figures in this diffusion of astral religion into the West was Posidonius of Apamea (born circa 135 B.C.),⁴⁷ who synthesized the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, on which he had been brought up, with the astrology and angelology of the East. The triumph of oriental religion and astrology is mirrored by the fact that Augustus and Tiberias were converted to the ideas of the disciples of Posidonius.⁴⁸

It is erroneous to think that the Roman government in the first century of our era thought of itself as "secular." The oriental religion adopted by Augustus gave his successors the theological pretext for claiming divinity, for "the emperor is the image of the Sun on earth, like him invincible and eternal (invictus, aeternus), as his official title declares."⁴⁹ The emperor could never have made such a claim

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 33.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 46-50.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 53.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 54.

if there had not been a widespread diffusion of oriental cosmology in the Graeco-Roman world, both in the realm of popular philosophy and in the systems of learned men. Morrison concludes:

If we are to appreciate the world in which the Church was born and spent its early years, it is imperative that we conceive of it as a Church in the Roman Empire. The corollary, so important for this study, is simply that there can be no proper understanding of what early Christians, Jews and their pagan contemporaries understood as the State . . . apart from that world view enveloping aeons and daimones, providence and powers, in which the ruler was both divine by appointment and human by birth, and the boundaries between the spirit world and the world of humanity and nature were fluid and often imperceptible.⁵⁰

In the Pauline literature, in fact in the New Testament as a whole, the apocalyptic speculation concerning the nature of the cosmos and the systematization of angelological hierarchies within this framework, which we noted in the pseudepigraphical writings, is almost completely lacking.⁵¹ Cosmology and angelology are left undeveloped in the New Testament, and are never schematized. H. Sasse writes in his article on "κόσμος":

In the NT there is no express cosmological teaching. . . . it is impossible to integrate the pieces into a consistent scheme and to call this the world-view of the NT.⁵²

The reason for this is simply that the New Testament is a proclamation of the Christ, and nothing is permitted to detract from his centrality. The narratives of the evangelists are "the gospel of Jesus Christ"

⁵⁰Morrison, p. 99.

⁵¹The apocalyptic literature which we do find in the New Testament is conservative in comparison with the Jewish literature (cf. Mark 13 and pars., Revelation 13).

⁵²Hermann Sasse, "κόσμος," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by G. Kittel and translated by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1967), III, 880.

(Mark 1:1), written for the express purpose "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Similarly, Paul confesses that "I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words of wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:1b-2). Thus it would be an injustice to the New Testament, and a fruitless task besides, to attempt to force upon it a cosmology or an angelology which it simply does not possess.

Therefore Dibelius rightly concludes:

Da die Gedankenwelt des Paulus überhaupt kein System in unserem Sinne ist, so müssen wir uns auch bei seinen Geistervorstellungen vor allzu eifrigem Systematisieren und Gruppieren hüten.⁵³

The fact that there is no express cosmological teaching in the New Testament does not mean that the New Testament writers did not share with their contemporaries a common Weltbild, the broad outlines of which can be sketched. Even as a theological professor and an engine-driver, although far from being experts in astronomy, share a common belief that the world is a small round globe of infinitesimal size in relation to the vast universe of which it is a part, so also St. Paul shared with his contemporaries the view that the earth was a flat disc at the centre of the cosmos, supported above the water on pillars, and enclosed above by the firmament with its stars, and above which were arched the heavens.⁵⁴ Of particular importance to this study in connection with this ancient cosmology is the fact that the New

⁵³Dibelius, p. 181.

⁵⁴See Hugo Odeberg, The View of the Universe in the Epistle to the Ephesians (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1934).

Testament writers shared with their contemporaries the belief in principalities and powers and angels and demons.⁵⁵ This cosmological framework was not something merely inherited from their background in Judaism, but was held in common with all other nations in their foreground (that is, in the common Weltbild of the Graeco-Roman world).

Morrison writes: "The Christian gospel has never been based on a particular cosmology, but was proclaimed as intelligible to the accepted views of its own age."⁵⁶

The Gospels speak of good angels who praise God (Luke 2:13-14), bring messages from God to men (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:26; Acts 1:11; 10:3), protect children (Matt. 18:10), strengthen Jesus in his ministry (Luke 4:11; 22:43), and assist in the last judgment (Matt. 13:39; 16:27). In the Book of Acts there is even an allusion to the belief that each person has an angel individually assigned to him.⁵⁷ More prominent in the Gospels is the belief in demons. These occupy a more central position in the evangelists' theology because, as servants of the devil, they had come to harass the inbreaking of the kingdom of God. In the Beelzebub controversy Jesus proclaimed to his opponents, "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20). The exorcism stories and the way the evangelists

⁵⁵Martin H. Scharlemann, "The Secret of God's Plan. Studies in Ephesians--Study Three," Concordia Theological Monthly, XLI (June 1970), 339-341, has a sound survey of the ancient Weltbild with its principalities and powers, and how Paul understood it.

⁵⁶Morrison, p. 87.

⁵⁷Acts 12:15. Disbelieving that it could really be Peter knocking on the door of the house the people within exclaimed, "It is his angel."

have presented them show that Jesus' ministry was a work of cosmic dimensions: in his person and work the kingdom of God was breaking in on the plane of history, and Satan and his evil powers were being overthrown.⁵⁸

The relationship between the demons of the Gospels and the principalities and powers of the Epistles is difficult to define. Schlier makes no distinction at all,⁵⁸ it would seem, whereas D. Whiteley does:

The demons of the Synoptic Gospels are the putative cause of afflictions which come upon individuals and are now treated, with varying success, by physicians and psychiatrists. The "principalities and powers" are the concern of politicians, sociologists, and others.⁵⁹

Obviously in making his distinction Whiteley has at the same time attempted a demythologization. However, his point that a distinction should be made is valid. In the framework of the heavens of Jewish apocalyptic, the principalities and powers are the great powers at the top of the hierarchy, the demons and spirits are the "little folk" at the bottom. And yet there is a continuity between the Gospels and the Epistles, as they address the problem of the Geisterwelt. The event that links the saying of Jesus, "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you," and the words of Paul, "For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor argels,

⁵⁸Heinrich Schlier, Principalities and Powers in the New Testament (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961), pp. 40-52. This section of the book forms chpt. 2, "Jesus Christ and the Principalities," of which pp. 40-44 deal with demons in the ministry of Jesus. P. 45, when moving from the Gospels to John and Paul, no distinction is evident.

⁵⁹D. E. H. Whiteley, The Theology of St. Paul (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 19.

nor principalities . . . nor powers, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39) is the death and resurrection of the Lord. Because of the Christ-event Jesus is Lord and Victor of the powers.

Among the powers of the cosmos which were defeated in the cross and resurrection Paul frequently mentions principalities (ἀρχαί), authorities (ἐξουσία), powers (δυνάμεις);^{60a} dominions (κυριότητες), thrones (θρόνοι), names (ὀνόματα);^b rulers (ἄρχοντες),^c lords (κύριοι),^d gods (θεοί),^e angels (ἄγγελοι),^f devils (δαμόνια, δαίμονες),^g spirits (πνεύματα),^h spirits of wickedness (πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας),ⁱ elements (στοιχεῖα),^j and world-rulers (κοσμοκράτορες).^k

From St. Paul's usage of these names several facts emerge: (a) These names are derived from Judaism, especially from the apocalyptic writings, as we have seen.⁶¹ Since Paul was writing to both Jewish and Gentile Christians, the thesis defended above,⁶² namely that the early Christians shared with Judaism in the common Weltbild of the Graeco-Roman period, is

⁶⁰Eph. and Col. have been included in the list, although their authenticity is disputed.

a. Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15.

b. Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16; Phil. 2:9.

c. 1 Cor. 2:6-8; Eph. 2:2.

d. 1 Cor. 8:5.

e. 1 Cor. 8:5; 2 Cor. 4:4; Gal. 4:8.

f. Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 4:9; 6:3; Col. 2:18.

g. 1 Cor. 10:20-22.

h. 1 Cor. 2:12; Eph. 2:2.

i. Eph. 6:12.

j. Gal. 4:3, 9; Col. 2:8, 20.

k. Eph. 6:12.

⁶¹Supra, pp. 15-18.

⁶²Supra, pp. 21-24.

enhanced. (b) St. Paul often strings these names together in lists,⁶³ and, assuming that the titles were familiar to his hearers, never once bothers to explain what they mean. Cullmann comments:

It is impossible to know how the various earthly spheres of influence are distributed among them [the powers] since we do not know if the various terms . . . were synonymous in New Testament times or whether,⁶⁴ as appears likely, there were differences in meaning among them.

The important thing for St. Paul was not apocalyptic speculation concerning the nature of the powers, but in the words of M. Dibelius, "Wie steht der Christ zur Geisterwelt?"⁶⁵ The fact that Paul nowhere explicitly explains how he understood these terms has been the main cause of the debate as to whether in his writings the principalities and powers were conceived of as standing behind earthly rulers or not, especially in the case of Rom. 13:1 and 1 Cor. 2:6-8.⁶⁶

Before turning to a study of 1 Cor. 2:6-8 we wish to summarize our findings to this point, since it is against this background that we shall attempt to explicate the meaning of the term "rulers (archontes) of this aeon." First of all, then in certain late sections of the canonical Old Testament writings there is a tradition, not widely attested and mainly influenced by Iranian ideas, linking angel-powers with the government of the nations. Secondly, we have seen that in Judaism the idea of national

⁶³E.g., Rom. 8:38-39; Col. 1:16; Eph. 1:21; 6:12.

⁶⁴Cullmann, The Early Church, p. 120. See also Dibelius, p. 182, and Schlier, p. 16.

⁶⁵Dibelius, p. 182.

⁶⁶Morrison, pp. 17-39, summarizes the arguments of those who opt for an angelological interpretation of exousiai (Rom. 13:1-7), and pp. 40-54 sums up the arguments of those who opt for a purely empirical interpretation.

angels received much more prominence due to a greater measure of Iranian influence and a flowering of cosmic speculation. In the third place, we have seen that the angelological and cosmological speculation of Judaism is conspicuously absent in the New Testament; that the New Testament writers, as their fathers and brothers in Judaism, shared in the common world-view of those times, although of course interpreting this in the light of their faith;⁶⁷ that the New Testament was concerned with the invisible powers only insofar as they affected the believers' life in Christ; and finally, that St. Paul used in Jew-Gentile situations the same names for angel-powers that are to be found in Jewish apocalyptic, without however making any effort to distinguish them, or explain what he meant by such terms.

Since in Judaism the whole of life, even the growth of grass, was considered to be under the control of an angelic hierarchy, and since this world-view was not the exclusive property of Jewish theology, but something from an Iranian source shared by Jews and pagans alike in the Graeco-Roman world, the question that arises for our study is this: What are the implications of St. Paul's preaching of the cross for the world-view which he shared in common with his hearers, particularly for the invisible powers who were thought to control human existence? And a further, consequent, question is this: If the thesis that there is a connection between angel-powers and civil authority can be upheld also in the case of the New Testament, and Paul in particular, what are the

⁶⁷What they shared in common would be designated in German as "Weltbild," and how they interpreted it would be designated "Weltanschauung."

implications for a Pauline view of the State, since these powers relate in some sense to Christ?

THE ONES AS A KIND OF JUDICENT TO THE

INVISIBLE POWERS OF THIS AREA--

1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-8

The meaning of ἄφραστοι τοῦ αἰθέρος οὐρανοῦ

Against the background of the general introduction to a theology of invisible powers in the New Testament just presented,¹ we wish now to focus upon the meaning of ἄφραστοι τοῦ αἰθέρος οὐρανοῦ in 1 Cor. 2:6-8. G. Belling has written a very concise and informative article on the word *arabbi*, which appears in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.² He shows, first of all, that in classical Greek *arabbi* designated simply a "high official," but that it was also used in religious literature, although comparatively rarely.³ He cites one instance where it is used of θεῶν, and mentions how in a work of Plato "we meet *arabbi* who exercise a divinely willed oversight over individual parts of the creation. These are cosmic rulers with specific spheres of authority . . ." Commenting on the doctrine found in Plato, G. B. Caird writes:

Following the example of the Babylonians, the Greeks had identified the planets with the five principle gods in the pantheon--Zeus, Aphrodite, Ares, Zeus, and Kronos--and these are the

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-31.

² G. Belling, "ἄφραστοι," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by G. Kittel, translated and edited by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich., and London: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), I, 488-489.

³ *Ibid.*, I, 488.

CHAPTER II

THE CROSS AS A SIGN OF JUDGMENT TO THE INVISIBLE POWERS OF THIS AEON--

1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-8

The Meaning of ἀρχοντες τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου

Against the background of the general introduction to a theology of invisible powers in the New Testament just presented,¹ we wish now to focus upon the meaning of ἀρχοντες τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου in 1 Cor. 2:6-8. G. Delling has written a very concise and informative article on the word archōn, which appears in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.² He shows, first of all, that in classical Greek archōn designated simply a "high official," but that it was also used in religious literature, although comparatively rarely.³ He cites one instance where it is used of θεός, and mentions how in a myth of Plato "we meet archontes who exercise a divinely willed oversight over individual parts of the creation. These are cosmic rulers with specific spheres of authority . . ."³ Commenting on the doctrine found in Plato, G. B. Caird writes:

Following the example of the Babylonians, the Greeks had identified the planets with the five principle gods in the pantheon--Hermes, Aphrodite, Ares, Zeus, and Kronos--and these are the

¹Supra, pp. 21-31.

²G. Delling, "ἀρχων," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by G. Kittel, translated and edited by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich., and London: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), I, 488-489.

³Ibid., I, 488.

names which in their Roman guise the planets bear among us to this day. These astral gods were known to their worshippers as ἀρχοντες.⁴

In the Septuagint archōn is consistently used to translate the Hebrew word לַשָּׁרֵן (meaning "prince") from Genesis through to Chronicles. In the historical books archōn (LXX) denotes a military general and is occasionally used with reference to the leaders amongst the priesthood (LXX: Neh. 12:7). Its use in the Book of Daniel parallels that of the myth of Plato just cited. Here, as we have seen,⁵ the context clearly shows that national angels are meant, and the point to be noted at this juncture is that the word used is archontes:

The prince [LXX: ὁ ἄρχων] of the Kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; but Michael, one of the chief princes [LXX: εἰς τῶν ἀρχόντων τῶν πρώτων] came to help me . . . (Dan. 10: 13)⁶

Delling has correctly recognized in the theology of the Book of Daniel the very close relationship between the archōn of each nation and the fate of that nation on the plane of history. He writes:

To a large extent the ἄρχοντες are the opponents of the people of God who are resisted by the One like a man (later the Messiah) and His allies, and who will be defeated in the last days. In its conflict with earthly enemies the people of God is really engaged with these celestial powers.⁷

⁴George B. Caird, Principalities and Powers (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 14. See also Franz Cumont, Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans (unaltered republication of the English translation of 1912; New York: Dover Publications, 1960), p. 27.

⁵Supra, p. 14.

⁶In the "G" version of the LXX archōn re-occurs with the same meaning in Dan. 10:20 and 12:1.

⁷Delling, I, 488-489.

In the New Testament, as in the literature just surveyed, archōn can be used in some instances of earthly rulers and in others of "evil spirits, whose hierarchies resemble human polit. [ical] institutions."⁸ The study of archōn in Bauer's lexicon shows that the word can mean: (a) Ruler, lord, or prince, usually referring to earthly rulers, but in the case of Rev. 1:5 to Christ; (b) Authorities and officials in general, frequently with reference to Jewish authorities (especially in the Gospels), but occasionally referring to pagan officials; (c) Evil spirits, especially Satan, who is ἄρχων τῶν δαιμονίων (Matt. 9:34) or as the Fourth Gospel calls him, ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου (John 12:31).⁸

Since in the New Testament archōn can mean a civil servant, an evil power, or even Christ, the question that arises is in what sense is it meant in 1 Cor. 2:6-8?⁹ The interpretation to be presented here will be defended from two angles--the linguistic argument and the theological argument.

Paul uses the word archōn, or its plural, archontes only four times.¹⁰ In Rom. 13:3, "For the rulers archontes are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad," the meaning is disputable, because if one

⁸W. Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, translated and adapted by W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 113.

⁹Ibid. Bauer leaves the question open in the case of 1 Cor. 2:6-8: "Many would also class the ἄρχοντες τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου 1 Cor. 2:6-8 in this category, i. e., of evil spirits . . . but the pass. [age] may belong under the mng.2 above [authorities and officials in the secular sense]."

¹⁰Alfred Schmoller, Handkonkordanz zum Griechischen Neuen Testament (Stuttgart: Privileg. Württ. Bibelanstalt, 1960), p. 68.

interprets exousiai of 13:1 as referring to earthly rulers alone, then the same would apply in 13:3. Conversely, an angelological interpretation of exousiai would likewise apply to archontes. Since this argument is unresolved, the meaning of archontes is debatable in Rom. 13:3. St. Paul's only reference to archōn in the singular is in Eph. 2:2, where Satan is called the ἀρχὼν τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ αἵρος . It is important to note here that St. Paul is referring to his Christian readers' former life in the old aeon-- κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, of which Satan is archōn. Against the background of this passage, a strong case can be made for asserting that ἀρχόντες τοῦ αἵνος τούτου in 1 Cor. 2:6-8 is a general term referring to demonic supernatural powers, of whom Satan is chief. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that, whereas the evangelists use archōn in an unambiguously secular sense, Paul does not. There is a very real probability that in 1 Cor. 2:6-8 St. Paul understood and used archontes in the sense we saw it used in the apocalyptic literature of Judaism, particularly Daniel, where the term is used with reference to national angels. This possibility can be given a good theological foundation as we shall now demonstrate.

The sub Pontio Pilato of the creed moves one to ask, when reflecting on it, however did he get in there? For modern Christians this phrase is important because it reminds them that the Christ-event is rooted in history. In early Catholicism, docetic tendencies would have made the phrase important for the same reason, but its origin lies somewhere else, namely in the fact that "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3b). E. Lohse has shown that

the early Christians were faced with a problem which required an explanation: "How could this be, that the Messiah instead of appearing in glory and majesty should offer up his life on the accursed tree?"¹¹ From the very beginning this question was answered by saying that this was God's will, and as evidence of this fact Scripture was adduced. For example, Psalms 22, 31, and 69 are repeatedly connected with the accounts of Jesus' passion.

Of particular interest for this study is the fact that the trial scenes are narrated in the Gospels against the background of Ps. 2:2.

Lohse writes:

As it is stated in Ps. 2:2 that the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and his anointed, so now the Roman ruler and the Jewish king stand together as the judges before whom Jesus must appear while the raging mob demands his execution.¹²

In fact, this connection is quite explicit in the Book of Acts. In Acts 4:26-28, Ps. 2:2 is quoted from the Septuagint (rulers: "archontes") and applied directly to Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles and the people of Israel, who conspired against the Anointed, Jesus, "to do whatever thy [God's] hand and thy plan had predestined to take place" (verse 28). In the sermons of Acts this same theme is often repeated, as for example:

And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers (archontes--3:17).¹³

¹¹Eduard Lohse, History of the Suffering and Death of Jesus Christ, translated by Martin O. Dietrich (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 8.

¹²Ibid., p. 91.

¹³Cf. Luke 23:13, 35; 24:20; Acts 13:27; 4:10.

Thus there is an early, well-attested tradition, both in the passion narratives and in the sermons of Acts, linking earthly rulers with the death of Jesus. This tradition receives marked expression in the writings of Luke, who alone employs the term archontes in this connection, and so persistently that it would appear to be a stock-phrase of the tradition, derived from Psalm 2. Coupled with this is the fact that Luke, Matthew and John, the only New Testament writers besides Paul to use the word, clearly use archōn, usually in the plural, referring unambiguously to earthly rulers or officials, except where it is used in the singular with explicit reference to Satan.¹⁴

In view of the early tradition linking earthly rulers with the death of Jesus, it would seem at first glance that there is no reason for interpreting the archontes of 1 Cor. 2:6-8 who "crucified the Lord of glory" in any other sense.¹⁵ However such is the weight of evidence on the side of an angelological interpretation that some of the scholars who argue against it in the case of Rom. 13:1, concede it in the case of 1 Cor. 2:6-8.¹⁶

The first argument is the linguistic one, which we have already looked at. Whereas Luke uses archontes unambiguously in the sense of earthly rulers, Paul does not. Since this aeon (ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος) is a

¹⁴Schmoller, p. 68.

¹⁵Trevor Ling, "A Note on 1 Corinthians ii.8," Expository Times, LXXVII (1956), 26. He defends an empirical interpretation on the basis of such a linguistic argument.

¹⁶For example, C. K. Barrett, R. Bultmann, H. von Campenhausen and G. Delling. On Rom. 13:1; C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), pp. 244-245; Bultmann, supra, p. 10 (footnote 24); von Campenhausen and Delling are listed in

terminus technicus in Pauline eschatology for the fallen creation under the wrath of God, the archōn of this age is Satan (2 Cor. 4:4 goes so far as to call him the "god" of this age), and those spiritual powers who rule with him are likewise called ἄρχοντες τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου.

On the theological side there is first of all the argument from context. In the immediate context we find the word καταργούμενοι (1 Cor. 2:6) which could hardly apply to Herod or Pilate, but rather is eschatological language referring to ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος and its στοιχεῖα, δυνάμεις, ἄρχοντες and the like. As Dibelius has pointed out, "Was hatte auch bei sterblichen Menschen die ausdrückliche Bestimmung καταργούμενοι für einen Sinn?"¹⁷

Secondly, that "this aeon" together with its "rulers" cannot be interpreted in any secular sense is evidenced by the fact that in the wider context of the passage (2:6-16) the wisdom of God is set in sharp contrast over against the wisdom of this aeon and its archontes-- a wisdom that is obviously conceived of as spiritual too, as we shall see. The σοφία that St. Paul polemicizes against is not that of

the summary of Valentin Zsifkovits, Die Staatsgedanke nach Paulus in Rom 13:1-7 (Wien: Verlag Herder, 1964), pp. 62-64. On 1 Cor. 2:6-8: C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 70; Bultmann, supra, p. 10 (footnote 25); Hans von Campenhausen, "Zur Auslegung von Rom 13: Die dämonistische Deutung des ἘΞΟΥΣΙΑ-Begriffs," in Festschrift Alfred Bertholet zum 80. Geburtstag, edited by W. Baumgartner and others (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1950), p. 100; Dellling, I, 489.

¹⁷Martin Dibelius, Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1909), p. 90. See also: Hans Conzelmann, Der Erste Brief an die Korinther (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1969), p. 79, "Der mythische Kontext führt zur Deutung auf Dämonen ebenso die wichtige Prädikation τῶν καταργουμένων. Es sind die Trabanten des 'Gottes dieses Aons' (2 Kor 4:4)."

political rulers, but it is "eine Elementarlehre--höhere Gnosis"¹⁸ in which some of his Corinthian hearers were dabbling. In 1 Cor. 2:6-16 St. Paul is really saying: Some of you people like to talk about wisdom, but your so-called wisdom is a mere doctrine of angels--archontes that are doomed. We preach to you the wisdom of the new age, God's secret hidden wisdom revealed to us in the Spirit. Thus the context shows that both kinds of wisdom, the wisdom of this aeon and the true wisdom of God, are thought of as being supernatural, and thus can have nothing to do with earthly political rulers. Conzelmann writes: "Gegen die politische Deutung spricht: Was sollen irdische Machthaber mit der übernatürlichen Weisheit zu tun haben?"¹⁹

Thirdly, there is the argument from the nature of St. Paul's theology in general, which, as Dibelius correctly states, always seeks the driving forces of salvation history in the spiritual realm, and therefore it is highly improbable that in 1 Cor. 2:6-8 Paul would be alluding to the human authorities responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus.²⁰ How does St. Paul find the "triebende Mächte der Heilsgeschichte immer im Geisterreich"?²⁰

"For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord" (Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν Κύριον-2 Cor. 4:5). At the heart of St. Paul's preaching is the early Christian confession "Jesus is Lord," and to this fact his letters are a living witness. Wherever Paul went, he proclaimed Christ's victory over tyrannical enslaving powers. Jesus

¹⁸Conzelmann, p. 76.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 79, footnote 47.

²⁰Dibelius, p. 90.

Christ is Lord; therefore Christians are free from the power of sin (Romans 6), the power of the law (Romans 7 and Galatians 3), the power of death (Romans 8), free from the power of the archontes of this aeon, whether that be Satan himself or the *σταχεία, ἄγγελοι, ἄρχαί, δυνάμεις ἐξουσίαι, κυριότητες, κοσμοκράτορες*, in fact, free from any power in the whole creation (Rom. 8:38-39).

The background for such an angelological interpretation of archontes in St. Paul's thinking is to be found in Judaism, in which he grew up, and the popular world-view of his time in which Judaism shared, as we saw in our first chapter. It could well be that in 1 Cor. 2:6-8 Paul is alluding to the Book of Daniel, not only because we find there the term archontes used in an angelological sense, but also because the Danielic Son of Man theology (especially Daniel 7) was of decisive importance for the early Christian *κύριος*-confession. Even as in the vision of Daniel the Ancient of Days vindicated the one like a son of man and gave him dominion over all things, so God vindicated Jesus in the resurrection and put him over all things. Therefore the archontes of this aeon are being put out of action (1 Cor. 2:6). The apocalyptic speculation attending Daniel's vision is absent in Paul, but the thought of cosmic victory over rebellious archontes found in Daniel is present in Paul, only viewed from a post-Easter, Christological perspective. Thus far our intention has been to show how an angelological interpretation of archontes in 1 Cor. 2:6-8 is of a piece with St. Paul's theology and the world-view of the period in which he proclaimed. The validity of this interpretation should emerge more clearly as we study the implications of the Christ-event for the archontes of this aeon.

Before concluding this section it is necessary to define as clearly as possible how we interpret the term archontes. By ἀρχοντες τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου in 1 Cor. 2:6-8 we understand Paul to mean an all-inclusive term for angel-powers, who, through the instrumentality of earthly rulers and their peoples brought about the crucifixion of Jesus. The term itself refers only to the angel-powers, and not simultaneously to their human agents as if the word were ambiguous, as Cullmann would suppose. Cullmann maintains that the term archontes refers simultaneously to both,²¹ but we have already shown how improbable it is that human powers could be meant. There is quite a difference, as von Campenhausen has pointed out, between maintaining that the invisible forces are at work in world-history and its leaders, and asserting that the term archontes per se refers simultaneously to both:

Selbst wenn wir zugeben wollen, dass Paulus bei der Nennung der dämonisch-mythischen "Archonten" einmal auch an ihre irdische "Werkzeuge" gedacht haben mag, folgt daraus noch nicht, dass die Vorstellung der "Herrschenden" beide Bedeutungen als solche in sich verschmolzen habe.²²

Cullmann's hypothesis is correct insofar as it recognizes the close connection between invisible powers and human authorities, but it is an overstatement to the point of faulty exegesis to insinuate that St. Paul used archontes ambiguously implying both at the same time.²³

²¹Oscar Cullmann, The State in the New Testament (Revised edition; London: SCM Press, 1963), pp. 51-52.

²²von Campenhausen, pp. 100-101.

²³Cullmann seems to have modified his position from what, in our opinion, was a correct interpretation to an incorrect one. In his writing of 1940, "The Kingship of Christ and the Church in the New Testament," in The Early Church, edited by A. J. B. Higgins (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), p. 121, he writes: "They [the angel-

The interpretation of the present writer follows that of M. Dibelius, who commenting on the difference between 1 Cor. 2:6-8, where the archontes are responsible for the crucifixion, and 1 Thess. 2:15, where it is of Ἰουδαῖοι, writes:

So erklärt sich der Widerspruch zwischen I Kor 2:8 und I Thess 2:15 durch die Einsicht, dass dort die wirklichen Urheber der Kreuzigung, hier die ausführenden Organe genannt werden.²⁴

The angelological interpretation is furthermore supported by R. Bultmann, C. K. Barrett, H. von Campenhausen, G. Dellling, H. Conzelmann, J. Hering, C. H. Powell, E. Walter, E. Stange, A. von Schlatter, S. G. F. Brandon, G. B. Caird, and Heinrich Schlier.²⁵ Cullmann's position

powers] are the ἄρχοντες τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, who crucified the 'Lord of glory' in their ignorance of the 'hidden wisdom of God.' (1 Cor. 2:7-8). Herod and Pilate were merely their executive organs." We concur with this interpretation, but in his more recent work, The State in the New Testament (Revised edition; London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 51, he goes further, claiming that when Paul uses the term archontes "he speaks of both," using Acts 3:17 and 13:27-28 to prove that also earthly rulers are explicitly meant by archontes in the 1 Corinthian passage. However, that Luke uses a word in one sense does not necessarily mean that Paul employs it in the same sense.

²⁴Dibelius, p. 200.

²⁵Bultmann, Barrett, von Campenhausen and Dellling, supra, pp. 37-38 (footnote 16); Conzelmann, p. 79; J. Hering, The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, translated from the 2nd French edition by A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock (London: The Epworth Press, 1962), p. 16; C. H. Powell, The Biblical Concept of Power (London: The Epworth Press, 1963), p. 173; E. Walter, Der Erste Brief an die Korinther (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1969), p. 49; E. Stange, Der Erste Korintherbrief (Leipzig und Hamburg: Gustav Schloessmanns Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1936), p. 25; A. von Schlatter, Paulus der Bote Jesu--eine Deutung seiner Briefe an die Korinther (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1934), p. 111; S. G. F. Brandon, The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth (New York: Stein and Day, 1968), p. 15; Caird, pp. 16-17; H. Schlier, Principalities and Powers in the New Testament (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961), pp. 45-47.

is taken up by W. Schweitzer, G. Macgregor, H. Berkhof and W. Boyd.²⁶
 The political interpretation is defended by J. Schniewind, F. Godet,
 and A. Robertson and A. Plummer.²⁷

The Secret Hidden Wisdom

Within a short time of St. Paul's departure from Corinth rival factions formed within the community. Those who boasted of their attachment to Peter ("I belong to Cephas," 1 Cor. 1:12) were probably Jewish Christians originally from Palestine or Syria; those who boasted "I belong to Paul," were probably the majority of the faithful who were incited by the pretensions of the others; the Apollos faction was probably an intellectual minority who had been captivated by the oratory of the scholarly Jew from Alexandria (see Acts 18:24-28); finally, there was the "I belong to Christ" faction, who boasted of special mystical relationship to Christ not shared by the others.²⁸

²⁶Wolfgang Schweitzer, Die Herrschaft Christi und der Staat im Neuen Testament (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1949), p. 22; G. H. C. Macgregor, "Principalities and Powers," New Testament Studies, I (1955), 22-23; H. Berkhof, Christ and the Powers, translated from the Dutch by J. H. Yoder (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1962), p. 14; W. J. Peter Boyd, "I Corinthians ii.8," Expository Times, LXVIII (1957), 158.

²⁷Julius Schniewind, "Die Archontes dieses 'Aons, I Kor. 2,6-8," Nachgelassene Reden und Aufsätze, edited by Ernst Kähler (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1952), p. 105; Frederic Godet, Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, translated from the French by A. Cusin (reprinted from the 1886 edition; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1957), I, 136; A. Robertson and A. Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1929), pp. 39-40.

²⁸Richard Kugelman, "The First Letter to the Corinthians," The Jerome Biblical Commentary, edited by R. E. Brown, J. A. Fitzmyer and R. E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 256.

Conzelmann is probably correct in stating that the "pneumatisch-enthusiastisch-individualistische Tendenz" is not to be sought out in the individual factions, but rather should be viewed as the source of the party-spirit as such.²⁹ The stark realism with which St. Paul presents the cross immediately after chiding the squabbling Corinthians (1:17, 18, 23; 2:2) would suggest that the spiritual snobbery arose out of an exaltation Christology which overshadowed the cross and displaced it from its rightful centrality. Conzelmann comments:

In Korinth wird es offenbar im Sinne eine Orientierung an der Glorie des erhöhten Herrn aufgefasst: Durch die Erhöhung ist das Kreuz annulliert. Diese Glaubensverständnis äussert sich als spiritueller Aufschwung des Einzelnen zum Herrn: Individualisierung und Gruppenbildung auf dieser freien "pneumatischen" Grundlage sind eine komplexe Erscheinung.³⁰

Against this background it is clear that Paul's excursus on wisdom in 2:6-16 is apologetic. Σοφία , τελείοι , μυστήριον , αποκρυφίμμενον , δόξα , and γνῶσις are all Stichworte of mystery language, which St. Paul "baptizes" and casts back in the teeth of his hearers, not without a measure of sarcasm, as Dibelius has observed:

Paulus hält den auf Weisheit und Erkenntnis pochenden, die "Torheit" des Evangeliums verachtenden Korinthern entgegen: auch ich besitze eine Weisheit aber ihr - ihr seid zu unreif dazu!³¹

Paul does not say what he means by that which he labels the "wisdom of this age" (2:6), but it is probably similar in content to the kind of

²⁹Conzelmann, p. 48.

³⁰Ibid., p. 48.

³¹Dibelius, p. 88.

syncretistic proto-gnosticism³² found not only in the pagan Greek world but which had also made inroads into Hellenistic Judaism (for example, Philo), and which we find Paul opposing in his letters to the Galatians, Ephesians and Colossians, among whom belief in intermediary powers in the cosmos was threatening the Gospel. Since in Corinth Paul was addressing a Jew-Gentile situation, it is probable that under the general term archontes he is including not only "thrones," "powers," "dominions," and the like, but also the angel-powers who mediated the revelation of the Torah (the σοφία of the Jews) on Mt. Sinai (Gal. 3:19).³³ We conclude: it is highly probable that in St. Paul's thinking any religious or philosophical system to which men cling other than the Gospel is the "wisdom of this age," of which the real source is the archōn of this aeon (Eph. 2:2), Satan, and all those who rule under him--the archontes.³⁴

Paul talks about the wisdom of God, rather than defining explicitly what it is, in 2:6-16. In his apologetically-motivated clear differentiation of it from the wisdom of this aeon the following points emerge:

- a. The wisdom of God has nothing to do with the wisdom of this age or its archontes (verse 6).

³²By "proto-gnosticism" we mean that complex and highly diversified phenomenon of the 1st C. which anticipated the flowering of Gnosticism. Basically it is a way of salvation centering around the concept of gnosis. Man seeks to find out his fate and to attain to glory (absorption into the divine) by seeking knowledge from the cosmic intermediaries who control the whole of life.

³³Caird, p. 47.

³⁴Conzelmann, p. 81, correctly rejects the interpretation of Wilckens that the rulers of this age are identical with the wisdom. "Nein, die Weisheit wird 'gesagt'; sie ist die Lehre über diesen Herrn." It would seem that Robin Scroggs, "Paul: ΣΟΦΙΑ and ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΟΣ," New Testament Studies, XIV (1967), 42-43, seeks the source for the wisdom motif in 1 Corinthians too exclusively in Jewish sources.

- b. None of the archontes of this aeon can understand it (verse 8a).
- c. A consequence of this lack of knowledge is that the archontes crucified the Lord of glory (verse 8b).
- d. The wisdom of God is secret, hidden and pre-existent (verse 7).
- e. It is revealed through the Spirit of God (verse 10), not through the Spirit of the world (verse 12).
- f. Only those in the Spirit can understand this wisdom (verses 14-16).

The reason for Paul's cryptic, guarded language is that he does not want to "spill the beans." He is playing the game, meeting his hearers at their level, and using their language in the interests of winning them back for the Gospel. To divulge the "secret hidden wisdom" imparted among the *τελείοι* would be unfitting, firstly because it would no longer be a secret, and secondly because even yet they are babes in Christ, not ready for the solid food (1 Cor. 3:1-2).

However, in the section 2:6-16, certain hints are given concerning the nature of the wisdom, which, when read against the background of 1 Corinthians 1, almost give the whole game away to those who have eyes to see. No doubt it was St. Paul's very intention that the *τελείοι* should discover the *μυστήριον* to a considerable extent. Paul's excursus on wisdom is, in fact, a fine example of a sympathetic presentation of the kerygma in a situation so delicate that a wrong approach could have spelt total alienation.

What then are the clues as to the nature of this wisdom which Paul conceals in 2:6-16? In 2:10 it is stated that this wisdom is revealed "through the Spirit . . . who searches everything, even the depths of God." The "depths of God" sounds as if it could be some

intelligence about the nature of the heavens and the cosmic orders of angels (the kind of thing that would have interested the Corinthians). But verse 12 indicates that the Spirit who searches the depths of God does not give knowledge about such matters, rather about "the gifts bestowed on us by God" (verse 12b). This would strongly imply that the wisdom of God, as imparted by the Spirit, concerns the salvation of believers, and this surmise is attested by the phrase εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν (verse 7b). God's secret hidden wisdom decreed before the ages is that man are to share in the supernatural δόξα (no doubt a Corinthian slogan), of which the Lord is Christ (verse 8) and not the archontes, who did not recognize him as such and therefore brought about his crucifixion through their human "agents"--"und das ist wiederum ein Beweis, dass sie die Gottesweisheit nicht kannten."³⁵

If the "mature" among the Corinthians had read correctly the signs posted by St. Paul in 1 Cor. 2:6-16 they would have called to mind the clear words of 1 Corinthians 1, which are indeed the key to the mystery of this wisdom:

Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:20b-24).

The wisdom of God is that he was pleased to save those who believe through Paul's "foolish" preaching. In both sections (1:20-31 and 2:6-16) the substance of the wisdom is the same--ὁ λόγος τοῦ σταυροῦ

³⁵Dibelius, p. 92. His line of argument has been followed in the last paragraph.

(1:18),³⁶ but whereas in the former it is presented in all its simplicity and stark realism, in the latter it is presented as a higher teaching of wisdom, "nämlich den Einblick in den kosmischen Hintergrund der Kreuzigung."³⁷

"The Word of the Cross" as a Judgment of God
upon the Archontes

Quite frequently in St. Paul's writings the main point he is making is abundantly clear, but the train of his argument in reaching that point does not always follow through consistently or logically. Conzelmann has shown that this is true also of 1 Corinthians 2. Paul's main concern is to present the theology of the cross against the "Erhöhungschristologie" of the Corinthians, and the result is "die paradoxe Verbindung von *κύριος* und Kreuz."³⁷ But in presenting the theologia crucis St. Paul involves himself in a double contradiction. Firstly, in 1 Cor. 2:1-5 he asserts that "I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words of wisdom," and yet in 2:6-16 he proceeds to do just that. Secondly, in his attempt to place the historical event of the cross against a cosmic-mythical background a further contradiction arises: if the archontes did not recognize Jesus, why did they crucify him?³⁸ It is to this question that we shall now turn.

³⁶Our understanding of the "wisdom" brings us into disagreement with Scroggs, XIV, 35, whose thesis is that Paul must have had an esoteric wisdom teaching entirely separate from his kerygma.

³⁷Conzelmann, p. 81.

³⁸Ibid. Perhaps "contradiction" (Widerspruch) is a little strong. Possibly it is preferable to call it an "inconsistency."

It is not extremely difficult to sort out the motives of the different human agents through whom the archontes were carrying out their plan. The Jewish leaders condemned him under their law as a blasphemer, but knowing that such a charge would not hold water in a Roman court, they accused him before Pilate as being "politically suspect,"³⁹ perhaps even as a zealot pretender to the royal throne of Israel.⁴⁰ Lohse sums up:

However the hearing before the high priest may actually have gone, it is certain that the Jewish authorities and the Roman procurator were ready to work together to bring Jesus to the cross.³⁹

Since the ignorance of the earthly rulers in condemning Jesus to death is a Synoptic, and especially Lucan theme, whereas in 1 Cor. 2:6-8 it is clearly the invisible powers standing behind these men who are meant, we will leave off the discussion on the motives of the earthly rulers to ask the question important for our discussion: in what way are we to interpret the ignorance of the "archontes of the aeon" and what were their motives?

One attractive solution to Paul's second apparent non sequitur (that is, if the archontes were ignorant, why did they crucify Jesus?) is implicit in the kind of interpretation represented by H. Schlier:

the demons did not realize that obedient love is not only stronger than death, even and precisely when it suffers death, as

³⁹Lohse, p. 87. See pp. 67-88, "The Trial."

⁴⁰Cullmann, State, pp. 25-44, argues quite convincingly that the Romans crucified Jesus as a zealot pretender. The strongest argument is the inscription over the cross (see p. 37).

it always will, but also in the very act of dying destroys all being that lives apart from God.⁴¹

Schlier would find the locus of their ignorance in the event of the cross itself, rather than in the person of Jesus Christ. Because the archontes did not understand the nature of his work, they did not recognize him. Schlier distinguishes between "know" and "know about." The archontes know about him and fear "in the same way St. James tells us (2:19) the demons tremble before God,"⁴¹ but because they do not know him, they do not recognize him (presumably he means that kind of "knowing" which is faith). Attractive as this solution is, it does not seem to do full justice to 1 Cor. 2:8,⁴² which would imply that the archontes were ignorant of the plan of salvation (that is, the wisdom of God) as a whole, including the Lord of glory himself: "None of the rulers of this age understood this [ἦν , referring to Θεοῦ σοφίαν-- v. 7]; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). The reason why the Lord of glory remained unknown to the archontes is that, in humbling himself and going the way of the cross, he laid aside his former glory (Phil. 2:6-7) and so deceived them. Thus the archontes were ignorant both of the plan of salvation as a whole, and of him who was sent to carry it out.

M. Dibelius, Hans Lietzmann, C. T. Craig and H. Conzelmann have pointed out the similarity between the interpretation of 1 Cor. 2:8 just

⁴¹Schlier, p. 46.

⁴²Conzelmann, p. 81, "Der Wortlaut macht diese . . . Deutung kaum möglich."

presented and ideas found in certain early gnostic-Christian literature, especially the Ascension of Isaiah.⁴³ The last named portrays the descent of Christ to earth as a journey through the heavens. The lower Christ descends, the more he must change himself. This he does by stripping off the garments of light, which are the heavenly *δόξα* with which he was formerly clothed. Concerning his existence on earth we read, "dass er allen Himmeln und allen Fürsten und allen Göttern dieser Welt verborgen war" (Asc. Is. 11:16).⁴⁴ Furthermore, a reason of sorts is given for the crucifixion, namely, that the Adversary (Satan) incited the children of Israel to crucify him out of jealousy ("aus Neid"). The motif of hiddenness is also present in the letter of Ignatius to the Ephesians. In 19:1 we read: "And the Virgin Mary and her Offspring were hidden from the prince of this aeon, likewise also the death of the Lord."⁴⁵ Dibelius plausibly holds that the origin for such a notion is to be found in the attempt to answer the question that would have been raised, "wie kommt es, dass die Feinde aus der Geisterwelt sich diese Ankunft ihres grössten Gegners ohne Widerstand gefallen liessen?"⁴⁶ The answer given was, of course, that the Lord of

⁴³Dibelius, pp. 92-95; Hans Lietzmann, An die Korinther, I-II (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1949), pp. 12-13; C. T. Craig, "I Corinthians," The Interpreters' Bible (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), X, 37-38; Conzelmann, p. 81.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 236. Pp. 234-237 Dibelius has a German translation of relevant sections of the Asc. Is., which was unavailable to the present writer in the original.

⁴⁵Lietzmann, p. 12. The quotation is in Greek; the translation here is mine.

⁴⁶Dibelius, p. 94.

glory laid aside his glory and concealed himself so that the antagonistic invisible powers would not recognize him.

If the archontes did not recognize the Lord of glory, and this interpretation does seem most probable,⁴⁷ why did they bother to crucify him? The answer of the Ascension of Isaiah, that it was out of jealousy, is not very satisfactory, and is hardly what St. Paul would have had in mind. The inconsistency in Paul's thinking, which he was not even aware of in all probability, should be allowed to stand in all its dissonance; if there was a reason in his own mind, he does not tell us what it is. Perhaps some light is thrown on this problem if we conjecture that, in St. Paul's thinking, the archontes conceived of Jesus as just another prophet, and that it was necessary to incite men to oppose and kill him, just as in the case of the prophets of old (Matt. 23:37 and 1 Thess. 2:15) since these men oppose the rule of the prince of this world.⁴⁸

According to the Lucan passion narrative the first word from the cross was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Although these words were addressed to the men responsible for putting him on the cross, and not to the invisible archontes, the point being made is that ignorance can never be a neutral quantity in the Scriptures; it is always culpable. The Old Testament

⁴⁷This interpretation is supported indirectly by Eph. 3:10, where it is stated that it is the task of the church to make known the manifold wisdom of God (the Gospel) to the (ignorant) principalities and powers.

⁴⁸Hering, p. 17, proposes a different conjecture: "But Rom 8:38 is significant in this connection: these powers felt that Christ threatened their dominion by introducing into the world a force (the love of God) superior to the 'fate' which they controlled."

distinguishes between sins committed "unwittingly" and those done with a "high hand" (Num. 15:27-31). This is true also of the archontes of 1 Cor. 2:6-8--their ignorance is culpable and because of it they stand under the judgment of God.

The great paradox is that the very act perpetrated in ignorance--the crucifixion of Jesus--is at the same time God's act of judgment upon them, as St. Paul clearly attests in Col. 2:15: "He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them ἐν αὐτῷ." The ignorant deed (1 Cor. 2:8) and its punishment (Col. 2:15) all happen in one event--the Christ-event. The ἐν αὐτῷ could mean either "in him" (Christ) or "in it" (the cross). Which ever way one interprets it, the context clearly indicates that the crucifixion is involved (σταυρῶν, verse 14). If ἐν αὐτῷ means the cross, then we are not to think merely of the death of Jesus per se, but rather we are to understand σταυρός as a key word implying the whole Christ-event--suffering, death and resurrection--even as ὁ λόγος τοῦ σταυροῦ (1 Cor. 1:18) is a key word for the kerygma as a whole.

In the light of St. Paul's theology in general it would seem preferable to interpret ἐν αὐτῷ as meaning "in Christ,"⁴⁹ for the locus of God's triumphing is first and foremost in his raising of Jesus from the dead, and then retroactively, in view of the resurrection, in the crucifixion also. In other words, the cross can only be interpreted as a victory when it is seen against the background of the

⁴⁹Martin Dibelius, An die Kolosser Epheser an Philemon (Tubingen: J. B. C. Mohr, 1953), p. 33, interprets ἐν αὐτῷ as referring to Christ, with God as the subject of the sentence, and not Christ, as some do.

resurrection; otherwise the cross would mean nothing else than utter defeat--the archontes through their human agents, unwitting of whom they were crucifying, would unwittingly have gained for themselves a total cosmic victory. But the resurrection changed No into Yes, and turned defeat into victory.

The exaltation of Christ to Lordship at the Right Hand begins in St. Paul's theology only with the resurrection;⁵⁰ the inclusion of the cross as an integral part of the exaltation and glorification of Jesus is peculiar to Johannine theology.⁵¹ This in Col. 2:15 the cross is the battlefield, the scene of the life and death struggle between God and the archontes of this aeon who crucified his Son (1 Cor. 2:8). Because of what they had done in their folly and ignorance, the cross is a sign to the principalities and powers of judgment--a judgment that became a reality on Easter morning when Christ was raised as Lord and the powers were stripped of power. He is Lord of glory, even on the cross, in view of what he had been, and in view of what he was to become. We conclude: in the cross and resurrection, viewed as one whole great event, "the decisive victory over the powers has already been achieved."⁵²

⁵⁰Cf. Phil. 2:8-9, "[Christ] humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him . . ."

⁵¹Cf. John 12:27-36, especially verse 32. See also, Lohse, p. 65.

⁵²Cullmann, State, p. 55; similarly, Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, translated by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 299, "By death and resurrection the old aeon with its powers has been basically stripped of power."

Summary Exegesis of 1 Cor. 2:6-8

σοφίαν δὲ λαλοῦμεν ἐν ταῖς τελείαις : Paul begins his apology for the Gospel (2:6-16) using the language of mystery which the "mature" (as they thought themselves to be) in the Corinthian congregation would have found appealing. σοφίαν δὲ οὐ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου οὐδὲ τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου : Paul sharply distinguished the wisdom which he is about to impart from what the Corinthian spiritual "snobs" would have considered wisdom. The tone therefore is polemical, but only mildly so, since he sympathetically couches his apology in the very words and thought patterns which his hearers used. The wisdom which Paul imparts is by no means a higher teaching of wisdom and knowledge such as would come from cosmic intermediaries (archontes) whose wisdom and sphere of activity is confined merely to this aeon. τῶν καταργουμένων: The wisdom which the Corinthians seek from the cosmic powers is futile and empty, since these powers are being put out of action--they are doomed. καταργουμένων. looks forward to verse 8, where the reason for their condemnation and subjection is spelled out. ἀλλὰ λαλοῦμεν θεοῦ σοφίαν: Having discredited all other forms of wisdom, Paul announces the kind of wisdom he imparts: it is the wisdom of God. This is a bold claim, since he is claiming a revelation direct from the Deity, without the need of intermediaries. In 1 Corinthians 1 Paul had already defined what he understood by the wisdom of God--it is nothing else than "the folly of what we preach . . . Christ crucified" (1:21, 23). In 2:6-16 this same wisdom of God is being presented as an

esoteric teaching of wisdom. *ἐν μυστηρίῳ, τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην :*
 In using this language St. Paul is again accommodating himself to his hearers, by using their slogans to defend the Gospel. As we have shown earlier, in 2:6-16 Paul really does attempt to present the Gospel in a mystery that would become patent for the "mature" who had eyes to see. We find out in what sense the wisdom is "hidden" in verse 8. *ἦν προώρισεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων :* Once again there is a veiled polemic. The wisdom of God is far superior to any other kind of wisdom because it was fore-ordained before the aeons and their rulers and their wisdom ever came into existence. *εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν :* The wisdom of God is revealed for a purpose, a salvific purpose. The attainment of glory was the very thing the Corinthians were hoping to realize by seeking wisdom from the cosmic intermediaries. Apparently some of them thought they had already attained that goal and that there was therefore no point in believing in the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12). Paul makes the claim here that only the wisdom of God can lead to the attainment of glory. *ἦν οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἔγνωκεν :* Since the cosmic powers are of this aeon, they are incapable of imparting or knowing anything of God's wisdom, which antecedes and far transcends the knowledge of these archontes. The tacit implication is that the Corinthians are wasting their time seeking wisdom from the archontes, since the wisdom of God is now revealed in the Gospel which Paul proclaims. *εἰ γὰρ ἔγνωσαν, οὐκ αὖ τὸν κύριον τῆς δόξης ἐσταύρωσαν :* Here the polemic is no longer veiled. The religious enthusiasm of the Corinthians with its sophisticated search for wisdom in the spiritual realm of cosmic forces is cut to the heart with one bold daring stroke. The same

spiritual powers from whom the Corinthians were seeking wisdom and knowledge so as to be able to attain to glory, are ultimately the culprits, who, in their blind ignorance of God's hidden wisdom (the plan of salvation), had crucified Jesus, who is none other than the Lord of that glory which the Corinthians were striving so eagerly to attain. Paul could very well exclaim "O foolish Corinthians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?" (compare Gal. 3:1), but of course he refrains, since he is addressing a more sensitive and sophisticated audience than in Galatia. In a word, Paul is bringing down a theologia gloriae with the theologia crucis.

Since it was Jewish and Roman authorities who killed Jesus, and yet here the blame is laid at the feet of cosmic powers, it is evident that Paul conceives of a very close relationship between the two, whereby the human rulers are considered as instruments or agents, carrying out the plan of the cosmic powers that stand behind them.

CHAPTER III

THE CROSS AS AN ACT OF RECONCILIATION INCLUSIVE OF THE INVISIBLE POWERS OF THIS AEON-- COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

Col. 1:15-20--An Early Christ-Hymn

Before embarking upon a study of Col. 1:15-20 a brief word on the authenticity of the Colossian letter is in order, since this is disputed by some; for example, E. Lohse believes that the question of authorship ought to be left open (offengehalten),¹ and Hans Conzelmann posits a choice between Paul and a Schülerkreis, apparently opting for the latter.² R. Bultmann, E. Käsemann, G. Bornkamm and E. Schweizer also cast doubt on its authenticity.³ The arguments against Pauline authorship are linguistic and theological: in language there are forty-eight words in Colossians that appear nowhere else in Paul, and in the theology of the letter Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology, and the teaching on the apostolic office and baptism are presented in a perspective that is somewhat unique.⁴ However there are strong

¹Eduard Lohse, Die Briefe an die Kolosser und an Philemon (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1968), p. 31.

²Hans Conzelmann, "Der Brief an die Kolosser," in Die kleineren Briefe des Apostels Paulus, by H. W. Beyer, P. Althaus, H. Conzelmann, G. Friedrich and A. Oepke (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1965), p. 131.

³Joseph A. Grassi, "The Letter to the Colossians," in The Jerome Biblical Commentary, edited by R. E. Brown, J. A. Fitzmyer and R. E. Murphy (Engelwood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 335, lists these scholars.

⁴Lohse, p. 37.

arguments in favour of Pauline authorship, particularly the personal references (for example, 1:1, 24-29; 2:1, 5; 4:3, 4, 10, 18) and so "the majority of scholars still accept Paul as the author."⁵ The present writer favours a Pauline authorship, although it is conceded that it could have been written in collaboration with one or more disciples and signed by him.⁶ In our discussion the question of authenticity is important, though not crucial, since the tension between reconciliation of the powers and victory over the powers, of which we shall be speaking, exists within the letter itself (1:20 as opposed to 2:15), and so it is not a case of Colossians against the other Pauline writings.

However it is very doubtful that Paul composed the Christ-hymn embedded in the letter. The strongest argument against a Pauline authorship of the hymn is the linguistic one. In the short space of six verses there are thirteen or more words or concepts which either appear nowhere else in Paul or only very rarely.⁷ A further question that has been raised is whether this hymn was incorporated into the original letter, or whether it was interpolated at a later date. Grassi says that an "overwhelming majority of exegetes" hold that it was in the

⁵Grassi, p. 335.

⁶It is even possible that the letter was written by a Schülerkreis after his death, and that the letter is only "Pauline" in an indirect sense. However, 4:18, "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand," cannot be taken lightly.

⁷This is my counting of the findings of Lohse, pp. 78-79. Some examples: εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ (v. 15) appears elsewhere only in 2 Cor. 4:4; ἄρατος (v. 16) nowhere else; ἄρατοι only seldom, and never in contrast to ἄρατος; ἄρατοι nowhere else; Κυριότης only in Eph. 1:21; πρωτεύειν and εἰρηνοποιεῖν are hapaxlegomena.

original letter, and this is supported by the fact that many of the hymns' themes appear elsewhere in the letter.⁸

If St. Paul did not compose the hymn, then a further question arises: what is its origin? Kasemann has pointed out that if one deletes τῆς ἐκκλησίας (verse 18a) and διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ (verse 20), we have a hymn that is not specifically Christian.⁹ He sees 1:12-20 as a primitive Christian baptismal liturgy which has made use in verses 15 to 20 of a hymn to the gnostic redeemer.¹⁰ E. Lohmeyer interprets it against the background of the Jewish Day of Atonement.¹¹ Against these two interpretations Lohse has convincingly argued that the hymn has its Sitz im Leben in the synagogue of Hellenistic Judaism. He writes:

Aus der hellenistischen Synagoge hat die christliche Gemeinde das mit stoischen Wendungen formulierte Bekenntnis zu Gott dem Schöpfer übernommen und es mit ihrem Bekenntnis zu Christus verbunden.¹²

Apparently the first scholar to recognize the hymnic structure of Col. 1:15-20 was E. Norden in his Agnostos Theos of 1913.¹³ The hymn

⁸Grassi, p. 336. The themes that reoccur are: image (1:15; 3:10); principalities and powers (1:16; 2:10); head (1:17; 2:19); pleroma (1:19; 2:10); reconciliation (1:20; 1:22).

⁹Ernst Käsemann, "A Primitive Christian Baptismal Liturgy," in Essays on New Testament Themes (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, 1964), pp. 154-159.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 159-164.

¹¹Ernst Lohmeyer, Die Briefe an die Philipper, an die Kolosser und an Philemon (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1964), pp. 44-47.

¹²Lohse, p. 89.

¹³Cited by Grassi, p. 336.

divides naturally into two parallel strophes--creation and reconciliation. Each strophe begins with a relative clause (ὅς ἐστίν . . .), followed by a series of key words and phrases that reoccur: For example, πρωτότοκος (15b, 18b), ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ (16a, 19a), καὶ αὐτός ἐστίν (17a, 18a). The most plausible reconstruction of the hymn is that of J. M. Robinson, although this is only a conjecture, but a good one.¹⁴ The following text is a literal translation of the hymn as it has come down to us. The deletions suggested by Robinson in his reconstruction have been underlined with a broken line. The heavy underlining represents what we consider to have been interpolated by the Colossian author as he employed this hymn.¹⁵ If the deletions suggested by Robinson are made and two lines are transposed to the end, then a hymn emerges, consisting of two parallel strophes each having three parallelisms, which we have marked in thus: a¹a², A¹A², and so on.

¹⁴James M. Robinson, "A Formal Analysis of Colossians 1 15-20," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXVI (1957), 270-292, has a very thorough study of the form of the hymn, including a discussion of the attempted reconstructions of others. His reconstruction is found on p. 286. Reginald H. Fuller, The Foundations of New Testament Christology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), p. 214, is of the opinion that there are three stanzas (creation, preservation, redemption) in the hymn, but the stylistic arguments in favour of two stanzas, as outlined by Robinson, would seem to overwhelm Fuller's position.

¹⁵Lohse, p. 80, shows that τῆς ἐκκλησίας is a kommentierender Zusatz which gives a new interpretation to the idea of σώμα. More certainly is διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ an interpolation, since the δὲ αὐτοῦ makes sense if the phrase is deleted, but nonsense if it is included.

STROPHE A

- (a¹) Who is the image of the invisible God,
 (a²) the first-born of all creation;
 (b¹) for in him were created
 (b²) all things in the heavens and on the earth:
the visible and the invisible
--whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--
 all things were created through him and for him;
 (c¹) and he is before all things,
 (c²) and in him all things hold together.
 [He is the head of the body]--the church.

STROPHE B

- (A¹) Who is the beginning,
 (A²) the first-born from the dead,
 [that in all things he might be pre-eminent];
 (B¹) for in him God was pleased to make
 all the fullness dwell,
 (B²) and through him to reconcile all things to him(self)
--making peace through the blood of his cross--
 whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens.
 (c¹)
 (c²) 16

Our analysis of Col. 1:15-20 shows that we have before us a conflated hymn, which, in its original form, may have been used in the Hellenistic synagogue in praise of $\Sigma\phi\acute{\iota}\alpha$ or the $\Lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$.¹⁷ We cannot be sure of its original form, nor whether those sections which Robinson and others consider to be additions were made by the Christian community in Asia Minor as they used the hymn in praise of Christ,¹⁸ or by Paul

¹⁶Translation is mine.

¹⁷Martin Dibelius, An die Kolosser, Epheser, an Philemon (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1953), p. 11, "Logos oder Sophia." Lohse, p. 90, "Das christliche Bekenntnis knüpft an diese Vorstellung von der Schöpfungsmittlung der Weisheit an und überträgt sie auf Christus, um die universale Gültigkeit des Christusgeschehens auszusagen."

¹⁸Lohse, p. 81, suggests that a conflation of the hymn could have taken place already in the oral tradition of the community: "Möglich bliebe die Vermutung, es könnte schon in der mündlichen Überlieferung eine derartige Auffüllung erfolgt sein."

as he used the hymn in the Colossian letter, with the exception of τῆς ἐκκλησίας (verse 18a) and διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ σαρκῶς αὐτοῦ (verse 20b), which are almost certainly interpolations made by St. Paul. We feel that it is also distinctly possible that the phrase εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι (verse 16b) is a Pauline touch, added in the interests of polemicizing against the Colossian heresy. The conclusion of R. P. Martin in his study of the hymn is in our opinion very sound:

Our conclusion, then, is that Colossians 1:15-20 embodies early Christian tribute, set in hymnic form, to the Church's Lord, which the writer borrows from the liturgical praxis which was familiar both to himself and his readers.¹⁹

The early Christians expressed their resurrection faith by confessing that Jesus is Lord (Ἰησοῦς Κύριος). This confession does not simply date back to the Hellenistic church as W. Bousset and R. Bultmann have claimed, but was already in use "among the Aramaic-speaking Palestinian followers of Jesus,"²⁰ Undoubtedly various Hellenistic usages affected the development of the use of the κύριος-title, but, as C. H. Dodd has pointed out, "since the title 'Lord' is given to Christ in a testimonium which is as clearly primitive as anything we have, it seems unnecessary to go farther for the origin of the usage . . ."²¹ The testimonium referred to is of course Psalm 110,

¹⁹Ralph P. Martin, "An Early Christian Hymn," The Evangelical Quarterly, XXXVI (1964), 199-200.

²⁰Oscar Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament, translated by S. C. Guthrie and C. A. M. Hall (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 203. Pp. 203-234 are titled "Kyrios Jesus and Early Christianity."

²¹C. H. Dodd, According to the Scriptures (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 121.

the most frequently quoted Scripture in the New Testament. Its frequent usage was to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is Lord *κατὰ τὰς γραφάς*. In its original Sitz im Leben this psalm referred to the enthronement of a king of Israel to whom the promise was given, "Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool" (Ps. 110:1). The early Christians, on the basis of a tradition that goes back to Jesus himself (Mark 12:35-37 and parallels), applied this psalm directly to Christ. No longer at home in the oriental enthronement imagery of the psalm, the New Testament writers felt no embarrassment about interpreting the throne of God as the spiritual realm, and correspondingly the phrase "till I make your enemies your footstool" as referring to the "spiritual powers of evil, overcome by Christ through His cross."²² In fact such an interpretation is perfectly consonant with the early church's background in Jewish apocalyptic, as we saw in our first chapter.

It is against the background of Psalm 110 that the risen Christ is praised in 1 Peter 3:22 as one "who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities and powers subject to him." A very clear linking of the *κύριος*-confession with the subjection of angel-powers is to be found in the Philippian Christ-hymn:

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord (*κύριος Ἰησοῦς χριστός*), to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:9-11).

The *κύριος* -confession of the early church is likewise reflected in the Colossian Christ-hymn. In this hymn, as in the other early

²²Dodd, p. 120.

confessions and hymns, Christ is Lord over all things by virtue of his resurrection, but the new thing is that he is also Lord by virtue of the fact that all things on earth and in heaven, including even the cosmic powers (who are particularly singled out--Col. 1:16b) were created in him. Thus in the Colossian Christ-hymn the early confession has been broadened out to cosmic proportions so that Christ is pre-eminent from beginning to end of the plan of salvation:

Von Schöpfung und Versöhnung, Kosmologie und Soteriologie ist also die Rede, um Christus als den Herrn des Kosmos, der Haupt des Leibes ist und dessen Regiment das All umgreift, zu preisen.²³

Christ as the Mediator of the Creation of the Whole Cosmos

Even as later reflection on Yahweh who had redeemed his people out of Egypt led Israel to confess him as Creator of heaven and earth, so also early Christian reflection on the historical Jesus led the early community to confess him not only as the Redeemer who through death and resurrection is now *Κύριος*, but also as him whom God had designated as Mediator of the creation of the whole cosmos. Furthermore, even as Israel's confession of Yahweh as Creator stemmed, at least in part, from apologetic motives, so also the confession of Christ as Mediator of the creation is emphasized by St. Paul in the Colossian letter because of the nature of the Colossian heresy.²⁴ In

²³Lohse, p. 79.

²⁴Dibelius, p. 10, "Es könnte zur endlichen Besiegung der Mächte durch Christus nicht kommen, wenn sie nicht schon in Beziehung mit ihm ständen: ihre Schöpfung durch ihn Col. 1:16, seine Kreuzigung durch sie I Kor. 2:8. -- 2. [= zweitens] hat Pls. [Paulus] diese

the Colossian congregation were people "insisting on self abasement and worship of angels . . . not holding fast to the Head [Christ]" (Col. 2:18-19). Mention of angel-worship and the belief in the intermediary power of the $\sigma\tau\omicron\iota\lambda\epsilon\iota\alpha$ (2:20) would suggest Hellenistic proto-gnostic ideas on the one hand, but on the other hand the mention of dietary regulations, Sabbath observance (2:16), and asceticism in general (2:21-23) would suggest Jewish influence. In a careful study, showing both the similarities and differences between the Colossian heresy and Essene heterodoxy (as portrayed in the Qumran Scrolls), E. Yamauchi concludes:

We are left then with a heresy [at Colossae] with elements that resemble Jewish heterodoxy, on the one hand, and with elements that anticipate the later development of Gnosticism, on the other hand.²⁵

Very probably, then, both incipient-gnostic and Jewish ideas had been synthesized in the syncretistic heresy of Colossae. It is difficult to ascertain whether the gnostic ideas came into the Colossian congregation via Hellenistic Judaism or from pagan sources. Probably it is more correct not to posit an alternative, but to consider that these ideas were widely spread abroad throughout Asia Minor because of the common hellenistische Popularphilosophie.²⁶ If proto-gnostic ideas

christologischen Gedanken über die Mittlertätigkeit des Christus bei der Schöpfung sonst mehr vorausgesetzt als entwickelt. Dass er sie hier ausführlich darstellt, erklärt sich, wenn wir sie als Antithesen zu den in Kolossae zur Zeit vertretenen Spekulationen auffassen, die den Anlass zu Col. bilden . . ."

²⁵E. Yamauchi, "Qumran and Colosse," Bibliotheca Sacra, CXXI (April 1964), 152.

²⁶Lohse, p. 89.

concerning the cosmic powers had come into the congregation via Hellenistic Judaism, the worship of these powers certainly did not.

According to Dibelius, and this hypothesis suits the evidence admirably, the Colossian Christians had fallen into the error of limiting the work of Christ merely to the forgiveness of sins, and overlooking his totality, with the result that in their syncretistic system belief in Christ as the Forgiver of sins stood alongside angel-worship and asceticism practiced in the interests of gaining knowledge and enlightenment.²⁷ Thus Christ would have been considered as one among many cosmic mediators.²⁸ Paul employs as part of his equipment for waging war against this kind of thinking the two-strophe hymn (Col. 1:15-20) which sets forth Christ as the one cosmic Mediator of both the creation and reconciliation of the whole universe.

We have seen how it is possible that this hymn, in its "unbaptized" form, was used in the Hellenistic synagogue, and that probably it was adapted and used by the Christians of Asia Minor in praise of Christ. Paul has undoubtedly adapted it further to suit his purposes, especially by the addition of τῆς ἐκκλησίας and διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ. Whatever the original form and the past history of this hymn might have been, St. Paul's adaptation of it is for the purpose of showing the Colossians that Christ is Lord over all things including the

²⁷Dibelius, p. 11. "Sie waren in den Irrtum verfallen, das Heilswerk des Christus nur auf die Sünde der Menschen zu beziehen und seine Totalität zu übersehen."

²⁸Martin H. Scharlemann, "The Scope of the Redemptive Task," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXVI (May 1965), 292, "The false teachers at Colossae were quite willing to concede that Jesus Christ might indeed be one of these intermediary beings."

cosmic powers not only in the realm of redemption but also in the realm of creation, is emphasized strongly in Col. 1:15-20, but is by no means peculiar to this passage, for we read in 1 Cor. 8:5-6:

For although there are many so-called gods in heaven or on earth . . . yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

If in Col. 1:15-20 the Lordship of Christ extends back to the beginning of time, it also projects into the future to the end of time, so that his Lordship encompasses all time and all space.²⁹ This projection to include all that lies in the future is accomplished by the *πρωτόκοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν* (verse 18). Christ not only heads up the whole creation as the image and first-born of God (verse 15), in whom, through whom, and for whom all things were created, but he also heads up the new creation as its first-born and beginning through the fact of the resurrection. It is the two-fold use of the idea of "first-born" that divides the hymn into its two constituent strophes.

Christ as the twice first-born is Lord over all things in both aeons, including the powers.³⁰ This is brought out by the fact that thrones, dominions, principalities and authorities (verse 16b) are the only things in the whole creation explicitly named as having been created in Christ. It could well be that verse 16b is a Pauline gloss, interpolated into the hymn in the interests of showing the superiority of Christ

²⁹Lohmeyer, p. 68, "Schöpfung und Versöhnung treten in Wechselbeziehung wie Anfang und Ende."

³⁰Dibelius, p. 28, "An der Schöpfung aber, unter 'aller Kreatur' werden die Geistermächte besonders betont . . ." (emphasis mine). Cf. also Lohse, p. 91. Cf. furthermore Col. 2:10, Eph. 1:20-23.

to the invisible powers whom the Colossians were worshipping. Having laid this foundation of the totality of Christ's lordship over the powers in the Christ-hymn early in the letter, St. Paul is well-armed for the heavy attack which he then launches upon the Colossian heresy (2:8-23):

See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ [verse 8] . . . [God] disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him. Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath [verses 15-16] . . . Let no one disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels [verse 18] . . . If you with Christ have died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? [verse 20].

We have already noted how the *ἑξουσίαι*, *κυριότητες*, *ἀρχαί*, and *ἐξουσίαι* of Col. 1:16b were mentioned in Slavic Enoch among the great archangels of the seventh heaven.³¹ It is obvious that St. Paul is not using these terms in exactly the same sense as Slavic Enoch where they are assigned a positive value as servants of God high in the angelic hierarchy. For Paul, who is not interested in differentiating them, the angel-powers are evil because of what they were doing to his hearers.³² In St. Paul's view the powers are weak and beggarly (Gal. 4:9), their wisdom is only a wisdom of this aeon (1 Cor. 2:6, Col. 2:23), they crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8), but their tyrannical legal demands have

³¹Supra, p. 17.

³²H. Berkhof, Christ and the Powers, translated from the Dutch by J. H. Yoder (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1962), p. 23, asserts on the basis of Col. 1:15-17, "The Orders as such cannot be evil, but much rather have a positive value in God's world plan. They can preserve us in Christ's love . . ." We find this interpretation untenable in the light of Col. 2:8-23 and Eph. 6:12-17.

been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14) and God has stripped off their power, triumphing over them in the death of his Son (Col. 2:15).

Since St. Paul conceived of the angel-powers as being capable of evil, is it possible that he could have at the same time assigned a positive value? One thing is certain: St. Paul could not have said, as the author of the Letter to the Hebrews unabashedly does, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?" (Heb. 1:14).³³ As we have seen, the whole government of the world, including control of nations and the lives of individuals and even the growth of grass, was thought of in Judaism as being under the supervision of angels. Lohmeyer would see such a world-view implicit in the Colossian Christ-hymn:

Gott ist also nicht mehr unmittelbar Herr des Himmels und der Erde; Schöpfung und Leitung sind gleichsam auseinander getreten; die Leitung ist Engeln überantwortet, wie die Schöpfung dem "Erstgeborenen" gleichsam überlassen wurde.³⁴

Paul nowhere denies the existence of angel-powers; furthermore, he nowhere denies that they have been entrusted with the government of the cosmos, and would even seem to imply this, as the term archontes of this aeon (1 Cor. 2:6-8) and verse 16 of the Colossian Christ-hymn would suggest. However, their wisdom is only of this aeon and is therefore inherently evil, otherwise they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8). St. Paul does not speculate on the proper function of the cosmic powers in the government of this world, although he

³³This statement, interestingly enough, is a commentary on the "enemies" made a stool for Christ's feet (Heb. 1:13; Psalm 110). Cf. supra, p. 64.

³⁴Lohmeyer, p. 58.

does imply that they do have a function. His primary concern is to show that such angels are, for those who believe, God's angels, created in Christ, and through his death and resurrection stripped of their tyrannical power, so that finally they might all become subject to God, that he might be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28).

**Christ as the Mediator of the Reconciliation
of the Whole Cosmos**

It was a soteriological concern for his hearers that led St. Paul to proclaim not only the forgiveness of sins, but a reconciliation of cosmic dimensions. It is surely no coincidence that the hymn to the cosmic Mediator of creation and reconciliation is set in a context of "for you" forgiveness:

his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (1:14) . . .

[the Christ-hymn--1:15-20]

. . . And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death . . . (1:21-22).

Paul is wishing to show his readers in Colossae that he who forgives their sins is the only mediator in the whole cosmos--he is Lord also of those cosmic powers to whom the Colossians want to be enslaved. Having made this point he feels confident to say, "If with Christ you have died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you still live as if you belonged to the world?" (Col. 2:20).

In the hymn itself the fact that the same Christ who forgives sins is also the Mediator of the reconciliation of the whole cosmos, including the invisible powers, is brought out by the stark realism of the phrase "making peace by the blood of his cross." As we saw above,

the phrase underlined is almost certainly a Pauline interpolation into the hymn, in order to give the hymn a more concretely historical orientation.³⁵ Here as everywhere reconciliation is proclaimed by St. Paul as having taken place through the cross (for example, Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18-19; Eph. 2:16). By the addition of the phrase "through the blood of his cross" Paul is stressing for his readers the fact that the same Christ in whom they trust for forgiveness of sins is not one Mediator among many, but the only Mediator, through whom the cosmic powers themselves were created and reconciled.

It is most important that we remain faithful to St. Paul's soteriological concern, and view the reconciliation of the whole cosmos in its relationship to the reconciliation between God and man brought about through the Christ-event. The cosmos is to be reconciled to God not for its own sake but because it is part of the creation, which God made for man. Even as the creation shares in the alienation effected by the fall of man, so does the creation share in the hope of reconciliation effected through the cross. This is the thought of Rom. 8:18-25, where the creation groans in travail, not for its own sake, but for the "revealing of the sons of God" (verse 19), which is nothing else than the "redemption of our bodies" (verse 23). Lohse writes in this connection:

Das grosse Schauspiel der Entmächtigung der Gewalten und der Versöhnung des Alls ist allein um der Menschen willen geschehen, denen der durch Christus errungene Friede zugesprochen wird.³⁶

³⁵Lohse, p. 80. The expression he uses is, "fester geschichtlicher Bezug."

³⁶Ibid., p. 103.

The fact that reconciliation has taken place implies something not even mentioned in the hymn, namely, that the unity and harmony of the cosmos have been shattered by a mighty breach. Paul never speculates on the Fall, either of Adam or of the angel-powers or of the creation. He says simply that in Adam all have sinned (Rom. 5:12-21), and that the whole cosmos is in bondage to decay (Rom. 8:21). Even as once all things had been created by God in Christ, now they are reconciled to him in Christ. This reconciliation takes place through the peace-making act of the cross (Col. 1:20b).

At this point the words of Col. 1:19-20 will be lifted out for special consideration, since a clear understanding of them will help us to understand in what sense reconciliation is meant.

For in him God was pleased to make
 all the fullness dwell,
 and through him to reconcile all things to himself
 --making peace through the blood of his cross--
 whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens.
 (Col. 1:19-20, translation mine)

The supplying of the word "God" shows that he is interpreted as the subject of the sentence, and not τὸ πλήρωμα, as the translation in the Revised Standard Version would imply. In either case the meaning is much the same, but having God as the subject is preferable for two reasons: (a) God is the indirect subject (of passive verbs like "were created") and Christ is the agent in the first strophe on creation; one would expect the same in the second strophe where reconciliation is the theme; (b) Since with the exception of Eph. 2:16 God is always the subject of the verb καταλλάσσω and its

derivative, ἡποκατάλλασσω, it would seem strange and fairly improbable to have τὸ πλήρωμα as the subject of the verb to reconcile.³⁷

Καταλλάσσω was a technical term in Greek marriage records referring to the reconciliation of estranged husbands and wives.³⁸ Paul uses it in this sense in 1 Cor. 7:11, but elsewhere he uses this verb, and he is the only New Testament writer to use it, in a soteriological sense.³⁹ Used actively it refers to God alone (2 Cor. 5:18-19), and passively of man as the recipient of God's reconciliation (Rom. 5:10). Thus reconciliation is a unilateral work of God accomplished in and through Christ, and in it men are the recipients. Büchsel has pointed out that the true answer to the question whether men are active or passive in reconciliation is not so much a clear Yes or No, as that "they are made active."⁴⁰ Reconciliation does not simply mean the removal of guilt before God, but it encompasses the "total life situation of man,"⁴¹ including the relationship between Jew and Gentile (for

³⁷Friedrich Büchsel, "καταλλάσσω," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by G. Kittel, translated and edited by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich. and London: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), I, 255-259. He lists besides Eph. 2:16 as a place where Christ is the subject also Col. 1:22 (pp. 258-259), but a well-attested variant is ἡποκαταλλάγητε of which God would be the indirect subject, not Christ; "You were reconciled [by God] in the body of his flesh."

³⁸Ibid., I, 255.

³⁹Cf. Alfred Schmoller, Handkonkordanz zum Griechischen Neuen Testament (Stuttgart: Privileg. Württ. Bibelanstalt, 1960), pp. 272 and 55. Also Büchsel, I, 255.

⁴⁰Büchsel, I, 256. He says furthermore, "We have received reconciliation, yet not as blows are received, but in such a way that God has besought us (2 Cor. 5:20)."

⁴¹Ibid., I, 259.

example, Eph. 2:14-17), and between man and the cosmos, especially between man and the enslaving powers (Col. 1:20; 2:20). The cross is the peace-making act in which God says No to sin, hatred, tyranny and anything which would cause a rift in the creation which is now being re-created in Christ, who is the Beginning and First-born of the New Creation. M. Scharlemann writes:

As Lord of the universe and Head of the church, Jesus Christ came to reconcile all things to God . . . Jesus Christ became incarnate to heal the many rifts in⁴² the universe, whether they be cosmic, historical, or personal.

The "how" of reconciliation decreed by God in his *εὐδοκία* through his Son is unfolded in Col. 1:20b: "making peace through the blood of his cross." Dibelius has pointed out that if it were not for the nails, the crucifixion would have been "gar keine besonders 'blutige' Strafe."⁴³ The reference to blood is therefore primarily theological, as J. Behm has pointed out in his article on "*αἷμα*": "The interest of the NT is not in the material blood of Christ, but in his shed blood as the life violently taken from him."⁴⁴ Peace is established through the bloody violent death of the Christ. This is one of the paradoxes of the New Testament--peace is wrought through passively endured violence. Perhaps St. Paul's thinking in verse 20b is colored by Jewish ideas in connection with the sacrifice of a goat on the Great Day of Atonement.

⁴²Scharlemann, XXXVI, 297.

⁴³Dibelius, p. 20.

⁴⁴Johannes Behm, "*αἷμα*," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by G. Kittel, translated and edited by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich., and London: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), I, 174.

Much of this motif has been made by E. Lohmeyer,⁴⁵ and in rejecting his interpretation so completely Lohse has perhaps thrown out the baby with the bath water to a certain extent.⁴⁶

The peace between God and man, and ultimately between God and the cosmos, was brought about through violence--the violent death of Jesus Christ. And yet, as Dibelius has pointed out, "Christus hat sich auf friedliche Weise zum Herrn des Alls gemacht."⁴⁷ The friedliche Weise accurately reflects Paul's theologia crucis: by going the way of suffering and the cross, by allowing himself to be put to death violently, Christ has rendered unnecessary, or rather borne in his own body, the great cosmic struggle by which man is freed from the tyranny of the principalities and powers. The event of the cross is the great self-destroying blunder of the archontes because it is at the same time the secret hidden wisdom of God; the climactic event that made the one a blunder and the other the wisdom of God is the resurrection, through which the tables were completely turned--unwitting, seeming victory became utter disaster, and seeming disaster became complete victory. Thus in the εἰρηνοποιήσας of Col. 1:20 "vom Friede zwischen Gott, Geisterwelt und Menschen die Rede ist."⁴⁸ But, it must be stressed, the inclusion of Geisterwelt in the scheme of salvation is motivated from a purely soteriological concern, and not for its own sake.

⁴⁵Lohmeyer, pp. 66-68, 43-47.

⁴⁶Lohse, pp. 83-84.

⁴⁷Martin Dibelius, Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1909), p. 131.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 132.

In presenting the cross as an act of reconciliation of cosmic proportions, St. Paul undermined the angel-worship which he was combatting in the Colossian congregation. For since Christ is the one Mediator of the creation and reconciliation of all things in the heavens and on the earth, whether visible or invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, there is now no longer any need for any other cosmic mediators. Those to whom the Colossians looked for mediation were themselves created and reconciled in Christ, therefore "let no one disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels . . ." (Col. 2:18).

The fact that the cross is an event of decisive importance for the whole cosmos is stressed heavily in the Colossian letter, but it is not a concept unique to this writing, since also the Synoptic passion narratives exhibit a cosmic dimension. Mark, for instance, in placing his little apocalypse (chapter 13) just before the passion account shows thereby that he wants to present the Christ-event as the cosmic catastrophe in which the Kingdom of God breaks in upon this aeon.⁴⁹ In the passion narrative itself we read that at the sixth hour "there was darkness over the whole land . . ." (Mark 15:33; 13:24), and Luke adds that "the sun's light failed" (Luke 23:45), while Matthew adds that at the moment of death "the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints were raised . . ." (Matt. 27:51-52). This is all traditional imagery employed to describe the eschatological Day of the Lord, with

⁴⁹Eduard Lohse, History of the Suffering and Death of Jesus Christ, translated by M. O. Dietrich (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), pp. 98-99.

its cosmic cataclysm (for example, Amos 8:8-9; Rev. 6:12-14). The cosmic significance of the cross is not peculiar to Paul; what is unique is that the whole cosmos is included in the hope of reconciliation.

In summarizing this section of our study two important conclusions regarding Col. 1:15-20 need to be stressed: (a) In singling out the principalities and powers in its word on creation (verse 16b), St. Paul is not assigning to them a particular worth or importance; on the contrary, the hymn, as St. Paul has adapted it, is stressing their subjection to the Lordship of Christ according to the will of God, also in the realm of creation. (b) Only from the soteriological vista of the second strophe (particularly verse 20b) and the context (particularly 1:14 and 1:21-22) can the cosmic sweep to include also the invisible powers in creation and reconciliation be viewed in its proper perspective.⁵⁰

The Two-fold Eschatological Tension

Since New Testament eschatology, using traditional imagery, speaks in some places of the destruction of the old aeon with its prince and those angel-powers in his service, and in other places, such as the Colossian Christ-hymn, of cosmic reconciliation including all things, we are brought face to face with the tension between reconciliation and destruction of the powers. This tension is complicated by another tension--the eschatological tension between even-now/not-yet in the

⁵⁰Denys Whiteley, The Theology of St. Paul (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 31, writes: "It may be that St. Paul is more concerned with the completeness of Christ's victory than with the fate of the powers." (not just "may be" but "very definitely")

doctrine of the two aeons. What is the nature of this two-fold eschatological tension, and can it in fact be resolved?

With regard to the fate of the powers, three types of sayings are evident in Paul: (a) There are those sayings that describe the relationship of the powers to the present Lordship of Christ as one of subjection, or a process of subjection;⁵¹ in such sayings Psalm 8 and Psalm 110 and the *Κύριος*-confession of the early church are certainly in the background of St. Paul's thought.⁵² (b) A second group of sayings speaks of the final destruction of the angel-powers in the parousia. This is quite explicit in 1 Cor. 15:24, and is implied by 1 Cor. 6:3 where it is said that Christians are "to judge angels." The New Testament as a whole frequently speaks of the old aeon as something that will be completely destroyed in the parousia and replaced by "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1).⁵³ (c) Explicit references to a reconciliation of all things, including the things in the heavens (that is, the principalities and powers) are to be found in Eph. 1:10 and Col. 1:20, and also Romans 8 hints in this direction--"the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (verse 21).

⁵¹1 Cor. 2:6-8; 1 Cor. 15:25-28; Eph. 1:21-22; Phil. 2:10; 3:21b; Col. 2:15. Cf. also 1 Peter 3:22; Heb. 1:14; 2:8-10. Perhaps also 1 Tim. 3:16b, "seen by angels" (??).

⁵²Supra, pp. 63-65. Ps. 8:8 is quoted directly in 1 Cor. 15:27 and Eph. 1:22.

⁵³For mention of angels in connection with destruction, see Matt. 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6. Generally of destruction, see 1 Thess. 5:2-3; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8-12; Revelations, passim.

It would be an injustice to the New Testament to attempt to harmonize out of existence such a tension between subjection and destruction and reconciliation; we must let it stand just as it is in all its dissonance. However there are certain theological insights which, while not reconciling the irreconcilable, throw light on the problem and permit us to understand a little better what is essentially a mystery.

In 1 Cor. 2:6 the decisive word of concern to us here is *καταργούμενοι*. According to Bauer's lexicon, *καταργέω* is used in some places to mean "make ineffective," and in others "to abolish, wipe out"; the latter sense is suggested for 1 Cor. 2:6--"doomed to perish."⁵⁴ However there is good reason to interpret it in the former sense, "make ineffective"--the archontes are "being put out of action"⁵⁵ at the present time, because having crucified the Lord of glory they stand under the judgment of God. "Being made ineffective is more consonant with the thought of "disarming" in Col. 2:15, which is parallel in thought to 1 Cor. 2:6-8, since both passages speak of the cross in relation to the powers.

If our interpretation is correct, then the theme of reconciliation in the Colossian Christ-hymn does not appear so contradictory: reconciliation between God and the cosmos takes place through the subjection and disarming of those rebellious powers who tyrannize man in his whole life situation, that is, in the world. Where Christ is not Lord, there the

⁵⁴Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, translated and adapted by W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p.418.

⁵⁵G. H. C. Macgregor, "Principalities and Powers," New Testament Studies, I (1955), 24.

cosmos is at enmity with God; where Christ is Lord, there reconciliation has taken place, but only through the subjection of principalities and powers, as the repeated use of Psalm 110 in connection with the *κύριος* confession demonstrates.

In the second place, the theology of a cosmic Christ and correspondingly of a cosmic reconciliation receives marked attention in the later writings of St. Paul, namely, the Ephesian and Colossian letters. It is not unnatural that in broadening out Christology and soteriology to cosmic dimensions, a certain tension should arise over against St. Paul's earlier writings. B. B. Caird writes:

I think we may assume, however, that Paul developed his hope of cosmic reconciliation not as a substitute for his earlier belief in the defeat of the powers but as its complement, and that the powers could be reconciled to God only when they had been deprived of their evil potentiality and made subject to Christ.⁵⁶

Finally, this tension between ultimate destruction and reconciliation should be viewed against the background of the even-now/not-yet tension of Pauline eschatology. There seems to be in the early Paul (particularly 1 Corinthians) a subjection theology with reference to the powers that culminates ultimately in their destruction in the parousia (1 Cor. 15:24-28), and a subjection motif in the Colossian and Ephesian letters which culminates in final reconciliation.⁵⁷

This is not as harshly contradictory as would first appear, when one bears in mind that the resurrection in the parousia is an event yet in the future towards which Paul and all Christians peer through a

⁵⁶G. B. Caird, Principalities and Powers (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 83.

⁵⁷Subjection: Eph. 1:22 and Col. 2:15; final reconciliation: Eph. 1:10 and Col. 1:20.

particularly thick and dark glass, and in struggling to describe the mystery St. Paul can, and does, use more than one set of ideas. In 1 Corinthians 15 he uses the imagery of death and destruction out of which springs a completely new kind of existence (for example, in 1 Cor. 15:36-44 he uses the imagery of a seed dying and springing forth into new life). In the Ephesian and Colossian letters the resurrection is seen as a process, beginning with Christ, the Beginning and the First-born from the dead (Col. 1:18), through whom God is reconciling all things to himself (1:20), so that ultimately all things will be united in him (Eph. 1:10), that in all things he might be preeminent (Col. 1:18b).⁵⁸ In the first set of ideas the old aeon is transformed through a process of subjection climaxing in radical destruction and death out of which emerges new life; in the other set of ideas the transformation is a more peaceful process of subjection which reaches fulfillment when all things are gathered up in Christ. In both processes there is change in continuity--one emphasizes more the change, the other more the continuity.⁵⁹

In Pauline eschatology there is a tension concerning the ultimate fate of the angel-powers in the parousia, as we have just seen. There is another tension, also characterized by an even-now/not-yet

⁵⁸John A. Mackay, God's Order--the Ephesian Letter and this Present Time (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1953), p. 60, "God has constituted Jesus Christ the unifying center of a vast scheme of unity whereby the celestial and the terrestrial orders . . . shall be joined together in a united Commonwealth."

⁵⁹For example, the continuity in the process which emphasizes change is expressed by the use of *κρίσις* and not *ἔσθ* (Rev. 21:1; 2 Cor. 5:17).

concerning the situation of the powers in the present, that is, in the time between the resurrection and the parousia. There is a group of passages which speaks of the powers as already defeated and subject to Christ; for example, Eph. 1:22:

God has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church.⁶⁰

At the same time there are passages like 1 Cor. 15:24-28 and 2:6 in which the subjection is an ongoing process in the present that will reach its fulfillment in the parousia. In Eph. 6:12-20 Christians are exhorted to contend against evil powers, yet in Eph. 2:6 it is said that in Christ believers are already sitting in the heavens above all the powers. What are we to make of this tension?

Cullmann is certainly correct in asserting that in the resurrection of Christ the powers have already been defeated, but that the final victory is yet to come. He is fond of likening the situation of the powers in the eschatological tension of the present to a situation that often occurs in warfare (presumably he has World War II in mind), in which D-Day is separated from V-Day by an interval of time:

The decisive battle in a war may already have occurred in a relatively early stage of the war . . . but the war must still be carried on for an undefined time, until "Victory Day."⁶¹

Such imagery is adequate only if Paul's soteriological perspective is always kept clearly in view. It is not as if Christ, unseen to men, is gradually conquering the powers one by one, in an apocalyptic

⁶⁰Cf. also Col. 2:15; Phil. 2:10 (1 Peter 3:22).

⁶¹Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time, translated by Floyd V. Filson (revised edition; London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 84. This imagery is also used by Macgregor, I, 24.

celestial battle;⁶² he conquered once and for all on the plane of history through his death on the cross and the resurrection, and this victory is actualized in and through people who in faith accept it. In Rom. 8:37-38 it is people who are conquerors over the invisible powers because "nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Cullmann by no means overlooks the centrality of faith in this connection,⁶³ but there are times when he seems to lose sight of St. Paul's soteriological concern. For example, he is fond of talking about the powers as being "bound to a rope," and that "their power is only an apparent power" in the interim time, in view of the resurrection and Lordship of Christ.⁶⁴ The New Testament does not seem to say anything more than that the resurrection victory, which will become manifest and will reach its fulfillment in the parousia, is present in this aeon in no other way than in the hearts of Christians who by faith share in the new aeon, that is, in the body of Christ--the church.⁶⁵ The powers are subjected only for those who believe they are subjected.

⁶²Wolfgang Schweitzer, Die Herrschaft Christi und der Staat im Neuen Testament (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1949), p. 36, seems to have isolated the victory from its proper locus.

⁶³Cullmann, Time, pp. 231-241. "Resurrection Faith and Resurrection Hope" is the title of the last chapter of the book.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 198.

⁶⁵Heinrich Schlier, Principalities and Powers in the New Testament (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961), p. 52, "And the church is also the realm in and through which the principalities are defeated time and again by Jesus Christ and where their final ruin is foreshadowed." Likewise Berkhof, p. 31, "The cross has disarmed them; wherever it is preached, the unmasking and the disarming of the Powers takes place."

CHAPTER IV

SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR A PAULINE VIEW OF THE STATE

In this last chapter we do not intend to construct a Pauline theology of the State, let alone a New Testament theology of the State, but merely to draw out a few implications from our study for a Pauline view of civil authority. It would be an injustice to the theology of St. Paul to wring out from his letters rigid, timeless, dogmatic truths concerning the State. His writings were Christian proclamation and instruction to communities in all sorts of different situations with all sorts of different needs. C. H. Powell comments in this connection:

We must not over-press the references, nor wrest from them too definitely a theology of civil power, for in the New Testament one cannot escape the sense of a certain indifference to the State.¹

However, it is legitimate, not only to comment on those passages like Romans 13 in which St. Paul makes explicit reference to civil authority, but to supplement this knowledge by drawing out implications from other passages.

¹Cyril H. Powell, The Biblical Concept of Power (London: The Epworth Press, 1963), p. 177. See also E. Käsemann, "Principles of the Interpretation of Romans 13," in New Testament Questions of Today, translated by W. J. Montague (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969), pp. 196-200. This section is titled, "The Understanding of Pauline Parenthesis," and makes the point that the New Testament is not a "Dogmatic Theology" nor does it contain a logically articulated system of ethics in our sense (p. 196); and then follows a study on the nature of Pauline parenthesis.

The Invisible Powers and the State

Our study has shown that St. Paul, as a Jew steeped in the Old Testament and Judaism, as a missionary familiar with the Hellenistic synagogue and Greek popular philosophy, and as a citizen of the Graeco-Roman world shared with his contemporaries the view that the whole of life was under the control of cosmic invisible powers. The origin of this belief in all probability goes back exclusively to Iranian cosmology and astrology, which had influenced not only the theology of Judaism, but the religious thinking and daily life of the Graeco-Roman world of the first century. It seems Paul's primary source for this knowledge was his background in Jewish apocalyptic, but because of the widespread belief in such cosmic powers he could address both Jews and Gentiles on the subject without needing to explain himself.²

The possibility that St. Paul shared in this common knowledge becomes virtually indisputable when we turn to his writings. Like his contemporaries (but unlike man of the twentieth century), Paul does not distinguish sharply between the natural and the supernatural, even in the affairs of government. Without any embarrassment, he can speak in one place of the principalities and powers as the perpetrators of the death of Jesus (1 Cor. 2:8), and in another place of the human authorities (1 Thess. 2:15). Indeed, a superficial reading of 1 Cor. 2:6-8 would give the impression that by the term archontes the earthly rulers are meant; it is only when one retraces one's steps and

²Supra, pp. 11-31 provide the evidence for what has been said in this paragraph.

examines the context and the background of St. Paul's thought carefully that it becomes clear that by archontes Paul means the invisible powers who in the ancient cosmology were thought to be operative through the earthly rulers, so that what happens on the earth between nations and peoples was considered to be a mirror of what is happening in the heavens. This effortless change from naming the earthly authorities to naming the invisible powers which we noted in the case of 1 Thess. 2:15 and 1 Cor. 2:8 is evident also in the case of 1 Cor. 6:1-3, in which Paul scolds the Corinthians for going before unrighteous magistrates, since the "saints" are to judge angels in the parousia.³

What we have said in the preceding paragraph all goes together to show that St. Paul conceived of a very close relationship between the invisible powers and the rulers of State. But to suggest as Cullmann does, that Paul uses a term like archontes or exousiai ambiguously to imply both seems to be without solid foundation, at least in the case of 1 Cor. 2:6-8 as we have already shown,⁴ which, along with the heavily disputed Romans 13 passage, in which he seems to be on even thinner ice,⁵ are the foundation stones of his argument. Cullmann's hypothesis is neat and attractive, and supports his case admirably, but the fact is that it seems to be "too good" for the evidence he produces.

³Oscar Cullmann, The State in the New Testament (revised English edition; London: SCM Press, 1963), pp. 49-50.

⁴Supra, p. 41.

⁵A. Strobel, "Zum Verständnis vom Röm. 13," Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, XLVII (1956), pp. 67-93, has shown that exousiai and other terms in Rom. 13:1-7 were frequently used in Roman administrative language.

If the whole of life was considered to be under the influence of cosmic powers, Cullmann and others do not seem to be doing full justice to St. Paul and the witness of the New Testament in general when they onesidedly emphasize one area of human existence--the political--when considering the activity of principalities and powers. Paul seems far more interested in how faith in Christ crucified and risen sets Christians free from the tyranny and harassment of the invisible powers in their daily lives than in any theory of the "demonization" of the State. The latter task is not illegitimate, but it must be seen in proper perspective.

On the other hand, no matter how one might exegetize Rom. 13:1-7 and 1 Cor. 2:6-8, it is erroneous to think that just one area of life--the political--can be exempt from those powers which, in the world-view Paul shared with his contemporaries, rule over the whole of life in this aeon. Assuming for the moment that archontes of 1 Cor. 2:6-8 is a term referring only to the invisible powers, and that exousiai of Rom. 13:1-7 is a term referring only to the civil authorities, and that thereby Cullmann's double-character interpretation of these terms falls flat on its face, the consequence is not, as Käsemann would believe, that a neat distinction between the State and the invisible powers in Paul's view has been established.⁶ There is no reason why Paul could not on one occasion explicitly mention the earthly authorities (Rom. 13:1 and 1 Thess. 2:45) and on another the invisible powers (1 Cor. 2:6-8 and Col. 2:15), presupposing all the time a close connection

⁶Käsemann, pp. 204-205.

between the rulers of State and the powers of the Geisterwelt that stand behind them.

The Powers and the State under the Judgment of God

The archontes not only rule over this aeon and the lives of people, they also tyrannize their lives. The powers which in the world-view of the New Testament stand behind the events of human history are not to be interpreted against the background of that kind of fatalism, whereby men are mere puppets on strings manipulated by uncontrollable fates. In St. Paul's theology man is always responsible for his actions. Satan (the archon) and the powers (the archontes) are not at work for evil where and when they please, but only in the "sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2) who listen to them. Their tyranny over the whole creation is actualized in and through man, who in the creation was placed in a position of authority over against the creation (Gen. 1:26). Without fallen man the invisible powers would have nobody and nothing to tyrannize. The whole creation is in bondage to decay and yearns to be free because man sins.

The wickedness and tyranny of the powers is actualized in and through mankind. In and through the earthly authorities the archontes of this aeon brought about the crucifixion of Jesus. In 1 Cor. 2:6-8 Paul is interested primarily in portraying the culpable ignorance of the archontes and what their wisdom, which is of this aeon, leads to-- they crucified the Lord of glory. But since, as has been shown, invisible powers and their human agents are bound together in the thought-world of the New Testament in a way that man of the twentieth

century finds almost impossible to comprehend, we feel justified in drawing out the implication that because of their share in the crucifixion the earthly rulers, as agents of the archontes, likewise stand under the judgment of God, and thus a question mark is placed alongside their activity and authority.

Rom. 13:1-7 is St. Paul's only extended statement on civil authority, and here the State is assigned a high dignity. St. Paul never says outright that the rulers of State are capable of wickedness (except 1 Thess. 2:15, where Jewish authorities are meant), that the State can become "demonic"⁷ or that it is the "beast of the abyss" (Revelations 13); there are only hints in that direction. In 1 Cor. 6:1-3, where the "saints" are exhorted to keep away from the unrighteous magistrates of government whose angels Christians are to judge in the parousia, the tacit implication is that because of the evil angels these authorities of the State are fallible and capable of injustice and evil. In 1 Thess. 2:15 the Jewish authorities are censured as those "who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets . . . and [who] displease God." The closest St. Paul gets to saying anything which would imply that the State can become demonic is in 1 Cor. 2:6-8. Perhaps it is not incorrect to ask the following question on the basis of this passage: "If the archontes working through the officials of State can in ignorance of God's plan of salvation do a deed as evil as crucifying

⁷By "demonic" we mean, not just that angel-powers and demons stand behind the rulers of State, but that these powers can, through the instrumentality of wicked men, lead the State away from its proper function as servant of God into committing all manner of wickedness in disobedience to its God-given rightful function.

the Lord of glory, what might they do through the State when they deliberately set out to do evil?"--and to conclude therefrom, in the light of Revelations 13, that the State can indeed manifest a demonic character.

This is an implication which we have drawn out, because we feel that it is consonant with St. Paul's theology. He himself never verbalizes this implication, probably because silence about the evils of the Roman administration was the most prudent course of action for one in his position. C. H. Powell writes:

Since the ruler himself is a child of this age exercising power in this aeon, from the very outset his fallibility must be reckoned with. Indeed, as Lord Acton's dictum reminds us, power itself corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. We can expect, therefore, in terms of New Testament demonology, to see the ruler fall victim to the angelic forces that have themselves grasped at power.⁸

The rulers of this world, both the invisible powers and the earthly authorities, stand under the judgment of God. In their culpable ignorance, they had crucified the Lord of glory, and for this they stand condemned. They are being put out of action. It is the "folly" of the word of the cross (1 Cor. 1:18) that brings this judgment into sharp relief, "for God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise" (1 Cor. 1:26). The cross disarms and unmask the principalities and powers (Col. 2:15). From this we may conclude that in no sense is civil authority ultimate. The Christ-event shows up the fallible non-final character of this aeon and its rulers, both the invisible rulers in the heavens and the visible rulers on the earth.

⁸Powell, p. 178.

In the time between the resurrection and the parousia the invisible powers can manifest their demonic character through wicked rulers, by claiming for the State that which belongs only to God, and yet the powers have already been overcome. The victory is realized in this aeon by faith, and it will reach its τέλος when every rule, power and authority shall have been completely subjected by Christ (1 Cor. 15:24-28). Therefore nothing in this aeon, including civil authority, has the right to make absolute claims on anyone, because this aeon and its powers have already been overcome by a Greater One.

The State and the Invisible Powers Included in the Reconciliation

In our study of the Colossian Christ-hymn we noted a universalistic sweep which gathers up all things both in heaven and on earth not only in the creation in Christ, but in the reconciliation which God achieved by "making peace through the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20b). This means that all existing authorities, whether invisible thrones, dominions, principalities and authorities (1:16b) in the heavens above, or their visible human agents such as the rulers of State on the earth below, are somehow included in the reconciliation, for God was pleased to reconcile all things whether on earth or in heaven through the cross (1:20). Reconciliation took place through the peace-making act of the cross and includes the disarming of the principalities and powers and the stripping off of their usurped tyrannical power. Reconciliation therefore includes the subjection of all things to the Lordship of the risen Christ.

This interpretation of reconciliation to include the subjection of hostile powers to the Lordship of Christ, along with the notion that these cosmic powers stand behind the earthly authorities, has been used by Barth and Cullmann to demonstrate that the State has a "Christological foundation."⁹ In the light of the New Testament it would seem that it is perhaps pressing the concept "Lordship of Christ" too far to speak of a "Christological foundation of the State." While it is not in itself an erroneous formulation it seems that Cullmann has to do some exegetical "gymnastics" to get there, especially to arrive at the conclusion that the pagan State is an unwitting "member" of the kingdom of Christ.¹⁰ On the positive side it must be said that Cullmann's position is a corrective to any theology which would tend to dichotomize creation and redemption, since the State is not only an order of creation but is included in the "all things" reconciled by God in Christ (Col. 1:20).¹¹

The main objection which we wish to level against the Christological foundation of the State is that it tends to isolate Christ's victory from the soteriological context in which we consistently find it

⁹Supra, pp. 5-8. See also, K. Barth, Rechtfertigung und Recht (3rd edition), in Theologische Studien, edited by K. Barth (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1948), Heft 1. Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time, translated by F. V. Filson (revised edition; London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 193, 202-210.

¹⁰Cullmann, Time, p. 204.

¹¹Clinton Morrison, The Powers That Be (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1960), p. 112, "Christology was not a self-contained supplement to a standard theology, but the central point from which Paul comprehended the whole of God's revealed plan."

in the New Testament.¹² Here we find ourselves in agreement with C. Morrison who distinguishes clearly between the "realm of Christ's authority (all things from the beginning) and the locus of his victory (those who believe)."¹³ In the old aeon Christ's complete and all-sufficient victory is actualized only in those who by faith accept it.

Because of the world-view of the Graeco-Roman period it was necessary for the New Testament writers to proclaim the significance of the Christ-event in terms of liberation from the powers, since belief in such powers was a significant factor in everyday life. It needs to be stressed, however, that the confidence that the Lord who had presided over history from creation and who had redeemed men from the tyranny of the powers through cross and resurrection would also bring this Heilsgeschichte to a triumphant conclusion, is a confession of faith, rather than an objective pronouncement about the situation of the powers or the Christological foundation of the State. The Roman government and the powers which stood behind it were no different on Easter morning than three days previously. The Christ-event did not objectively "weaken" their power, or bind them "as to a rope."¹⁴ It is only in relation to those who believe that the powers are bound, conquered, and defeated by Christ, and then only in relation to the New Man; the Old Adam is still assaulted by the evil powers.

¹²Supra, pp. 83-84.

¹³Morrison, p. 122.

¹⁴Cullmann, Time, p. 198.

Christ came, suffered, died and was raised not to give this aeon and its institutions a Christological foundation but to reconcile it to God by transforming it into a new aeon, whether by a process of radical subjection, destruction and rebirth (1 Corinthians 15), or by a more peaceful process of incorporation into Christ (Ephesians and Colossians). Thus we conclude that the State cannot be assigned a Christological foundation on the basis of the Christ-event directly; if one wishes to use the term at all, it must rather be with reference to the realm of creation, creation in Christ (Col. 1:16).¹⁵

Because the State is a human institution (1 Peter 2:13--*ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει*) it belongs to the old aeon, and unlike the body of Christ, the church, the *καὶνὴ κτίσις*, cannot be a member of the kingdom of Christ. Yet for all that the invisible powers and the State share in the reconciliation in the same sense that the whole of life under the old aeon groans in travail for God's great New Thing (see Rom. 8:19-25). Just exactly how the powers and the State share in the hope of reconciliation of all things seems to be a mystery that will be unfolded only in the resurrection at the parousia, when all things will become new.

¹⁵G. B. Caird, Principalities and Powers (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 25, "Their [the powers'] authority belongs not to the order of redemption but to the order of creation. Paul achieves universal centrality of Christ not by making the authority of the powers depend upon the Cross but by declaring that Christ is God's agent in creation . . . [Col. 1:16 is quoted]."

CONCLUSION

In this study we have attempted to demonstrate the implications of the cross for the invisible powers and the State against the background of two Pauline passages. As we have seen, St. Paul went out into a world in which men believed the whole of life, including the governments of nations, to be under the control of invisible cosmic powers. Our study of 1 Cor. 2:6-8 has shown, on the one hand, that St. Paul proclaimed the cross as a mighty power unto salvation by which the rebellious invisible powers are judged, conquered and subjected; and our study of Col. 1:15-20 has shown, on the other hand, that St. Paul included the invisible powers amongst the "all things" that were not only created in Christ but "through the blood of his cross" also share in the hope of reconciliation.

Since the discussion on the invisible powers in this century has often been bound up with the question of the State (somewhat one-sidedly, unfortunately), we have attempted to draw out from our study, in the light of St. Paul's background and on the basis of the two passages, those implications for a Pauline view of the State which we feel are justified.

There are two areas for further study that suggest themselves: First, there is the whole problem of demythologization. Our study has made it abundantly clear just how strange and alien the world-view of the New Testament is to a modern reader of the Western world. St. Paul operated with a world-view, which, with its tiny three-tiered universe and hierarchies of cosmic invisible powers, is quite unlike

our own. In translating the message of Paul into the thought patterns and language of today there is a need to demythologize the framework within which he operated, without at the same time watering down the reality of evil and the fact of the "demonic," or robbing the Gospel and emptying the cross of its power as a mighty victory over the powers of evil.

Secondly, we suggest as another area for further study arising out of this paper the ethical implications--what in St. Paul's view would be the Christian's attitude over against the State? Our study might suggest that a Pauline ethic of the State is broader than Romans 13 and the unqualified obedience that seems to be indicated there. We would suggest that in a Pauline view of the State, the Christian's attitude would be characterized by ambivalence, in view of the fact that on the one hand the earthly authority has been instituted by God (Rom. 13:1-7), yet on the other hand is capable of "demonization," since through the rulers of State the invisible powers crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:6-8).¹ Following on from this there is the further task of translating a Pauline view of an ethic of the State into modern terms. The ethic of the State is a big field, and involves the whole problem of hermeneutics, a proper understanding of the meaning of Pauline parenesis, and once again the question of demythologization when it comes to the problem of the "demonic" in the State in the twentieth century.

The ultimate, final, and important implication of the cross for the invisible powers and the State is expressed best of all in the

¹Cf. Oscar Cullmann, The State in the New Testament (revised edition; London: SCM Press, 1963), pp. 68-69.

great affirmation made by St. Paul himself (Romans 8):

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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