

### **Engaging the Powers part 3**

**The powers are good, the powers are corrupted, the powers will be redeemed**

**St. Ignatius of Antioch, in his letter to the Romans 3:3, says;**

**The greatness of Christianity lies in its being hated by the Domination system not in it's being convincing to it.**

In the Hymn of the Cosmic Christ in Colossians 1:16 - 17.

The powers are described as having been created in through and for Christ.

'For in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether Thrones or dominions or rulers or powers-all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together'.

The Colossians' hymn is the assertion against the pain of human suffering, that the principalities and powers that afflict the world with so much evil, are not autonomous, not independent, not eternal and not utterly depraved.

The social structures of reality are Creations of God. These structures are answerable to God because they are made to serve the humanizing purposes of God in the world.

Believers are delivered from the Domination system and freed from the enslaving power of the old Aion, (Age, Epoch of the world). These powers are the necessary social structures of human life, and it is not a matter of indifference to God that they exist. God made them. This is asserted, chanted, intoned in song into the teeth of everyday experience of institutional and structural evil. Without institutionalisation, ideas never materialize into action. Institutions are indispensable for human existence, and they have a right to be concerned about their own survival.

One must be careful here, to assert that God created the powers, does not imply that God endorses any particular power at any given moment; God did not create capitalism or socialism, but there must be some kind of economic system.

**The Greek word, AION, or AEON, the Domination EPOCH, AGE.**

The second biblical term often interchangeable with Kosmos, translated as world, in the English versions, is the mysterious word, **AION**. Just as in the use of Kosmos, meaning spatial, or systemic, The meaning of Aion is temporal. The image is of time, of reality, from its Inception.

Time like an ever-flowing stream, God created the ages, the AEONS or the world's periods.

Hebrews 1:2, conveys the temporal sense, so by translating it as worlds, plural, it indicates a

succession of epochs. Again in Hebrews 11:3, 'When Time began, the (worlds) ages were created by the word of God'. . John 9:32, when a Blind Man is cured people cry never since the world began (not out of the Aion) it has been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind.

The present world period however is under the power of Evil. Here again as with Kosmos the term AION takes on a unique sense in some New Testament passages.

2 Corinthians 4:4 The present evil (World)Epoch, is organised under Satan, the god of this world-period, who has blinded the Minds of the Unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ.

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Luke 16:8 'The children of this (World) AEON, (age), are more shrewd, in dealing with their own generation than the children of light'. Here generation, is further limited to the present of current living representatives of the Domination epoch. Jesus gave himself to set us free from the present evil Aeon.

### **The powers unmasking the system.**

The Kosmos, the world, teaches us what to see. We live as individuals within a social structure. A structure that is like a living organism, it takes on the power of a living entity. But the cultural organism lives within us. We are individual units within an organised Society, but organised Society is represented and incarnated, within our Minds. We create the rules and customs, which then in turn control us.

Whatever the system tells us is real, is what we are allowed to notice, everything else must be ignored. In other words, we give the system the power to condition our perception of reality. In this way we are taught to mistrust our own experiences. This means that every observation we make of events, is a directed observation, for or against a particular point of view. Every mind is a contaminated mind, by means of a network of suppositions and assumptions. So all descriptions of our experiences are conditioned and value-laden.

Different schools of thought, will be able to describe the same observed behaviour in incompatible ways. The Observer, is conditioned to observe behaviour in a particular way according to one's conditioning. The result of this limitation on what we are allowed to see, is a miniaturization of our living world in time. To some extent these limitations are the results of a system that is deliberately blinding us to God's true intent for Humanity.

In John's Gospel, 9:39. 'For judgement I came into this system that those who do not see, May see, and those that see, (*who believe themselves to be God spokesman but have reduced religion to a male club that excludes all but the morally upright and financially privileged*) - may become blind'. And this is the judgement. The Last Judgement transported right up to the present moment of encounter with the truth. That the light has come into this system. And people loved Darkness, rather than the light. John 3; 19.

In John's Gospel 18:36, Jesus answers Pilate, 'the new reality of which I speak is not of this old system of domination (Kosmos). If it were, my people would fight, that I would not be delivered to the Jewish authorities. But the new reality of which I speak does not take its rise from the Domination system (Kosmos). My kingdom is not of this system.'

Violence cannot cure violence. The the new reality abhors violence, but it has its own quite amazing forms of power which those stuck to violence cannot comprehend.

Jesus understood that there were many men and women ready to be delivered from the Domination system. Those who long for the Equalitarian non-hierarchical reign of God. Mark 8:36 He says what does it profit people to gain the whole system, (Kosmos), and forfeit their lives. John 12:25 Those who hate their life in the system, will keep it for an eternal age, life (Aionic).. This is not an injunction to self Loathing, but a very down to earth observation. Only those who find their lives detestable under the powers, will have the courage to reject the latter's inflated authority.

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In the epistle of James 2:5, 'Has not God chosen those who are really poor in the Domination system, to be rich in faith and heirs of the new reality. That he has promised to those who love god.' 1 John 2:15 - 17. read this replacing the word **world** with the Domination system.

The New Testament writings and in particular the letters of Paul, were written in the light of this revelation of the Domination system, in relation to a slave revolt by an oppressed people. The Hebrew people recognised the nature of the Domination system, whose eyes have been opened by the exodus, and by the time of the early church, the cross. Now they can see a different reality, and a world, that had been invisible. The all-pervasive exploitation of the many by the few, now rendered visible, Judged and found wanting. Those with this new sight needed no longer to subject themselves to the delusion that formally shaped their alienated picture of the world.

1Cor. 1:20-21. 'Where is the intellectual, where is the scholar, where is the debater of this domination epoch. Has not God rendered ridiculous the wisdom of the Domination system. For since in the craftiness of God, the Domination system did not know God through wisdom. God decided through the nonsense that we declare, to save those who believe.

In that spirit, Paul can say, 'may I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the Domination system which crucified Jesus, has been crucified to me and I to the system'.

Where John uses Kosmos to unmask the Domination system from a structural point of view, Paul prefers Aion, to distinguish what we might call the Domination epoch. (Age)

This period is not just a corrupted time, characterised by the loss of present, clock time, time ticking down towards death, time as a commodity, not to be wasted, an enemy that must be fought, a precious fluid that we cannot hold in our hands. All these are natural human limitations. It marks the unbearable extension of oppression from Generation to generation and century to century, presided over by Satan, the god of the Domination epoch.

Liberation must involve the healing of our relationship to time. we must redeem time. Galatians 4:5. Evil in history was not always present; it had an origin in time.

Likewise evil, will not always exist. It has an end in time when this aion is superseded by the aion to come.

2 Corinthians 4:4 The present evil Epoch, is organised under Satan, the god of this time of the world. Who has blinded the Minds of the Unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ.

**The Greek word Sarx**, is the most Miss-Translated word in English bibles. Sarx is commonly used for flesh. For Paul, the phrase, Kata Sarka, refers to the physical substance we are made of, for the physical body, it can also be used for the self, or one's being, or for human beings, or for Humanity in general. Less frequently, it denotes physical genetic descent or ethnicity. Rarely it

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denotes sexual desire, which is the usual miss-translation. But Paul especially, uses it to refer to a person alienated from God, one who is chasing the values of the Domination system.

Kata sarka, is dominated existence, a life lived according to the dictates of the Domination system.

Like Kosmos and Aion, Sarx is part of creation, corrupted and in need of redemption.

Salvation does not mean Deliverance from The Body. On the contrary what we await is precisely the redemption of our bodies, (soma). Romans 8:23. Paul writing in Greek is perhaps thinking of the Hebrew term **Nephesh**, which means the breathing person, the total self the animated body the total human being, body and soul together. Acts 2:26-27 reflects the same view.

2Cor. 10:3-5 'We live in the (en sarki) (Domination System), of course, but the muscles that we fight with are not of the (kata Sarka) Domination System. Our war is not fought with weapons of the system, yet they are strong enough, in God's cause, to demolish fortresses. We demolish rational calculations, and the arrogance that tries to resist the knowledge of God; every thought is our prisoner, captured to be brought into obedience to Christ.

Those who enter the new reality of God, receive not just a new heart and a new spirit, but a transformed relationship to the world and to time and even to their bodies. Rev. 21:5 See I am making all things new.

#### **The Powers are Fallen. Corrupted.**

The doctrine of the 'Fall', is not part of Hebrew theology. Nor of Greek Orthodox Christians. It was developed in the western Latin rite churches.

{John Barton in his Book 'A history of the Bible. Points out}

It can come as a shock to Christians, when they first encounter a mainstream Jewish reading of the Hebrew bible. In Judaism to generalize a little, the Bible is not a story of disaster and Rescue, but much more of providential guidance. The main character in Judaism is not Adam, as it has developed down to modern times. There is no emphasis at all on the Garden of Eden story as an account of the fall of human race. More Central is Abraham, the founder of the people of Israel, and the biblical story is about how his Descendants lived in the land that God gave them, we're expelled from it when they sinned, but we're afterwards allowed back and given an ongoing existence. There is no emphasis on salvation, at least not in the other worldly and individual sense that Christians have given that word. But rather on divine leadership and guidance of the people living under oppression throughout history. The prophets are read, but they are seen as guides for the path. Predictions of the messiah though there are a few, and these are seen as military or religious leaders, and not in anyway central or very important, they are of minor interest. The difference in the way the Bible is read in Judaism can be seen in how to books are arranged. The last book in the Bible is not a prophetic book, as it is for Christians. The book of Chronicles, is the last book which ends with the Exile in Babylon, and Jews being given permission by the Persian ruler Cyrus, to return to the Promised Land. The final word in the Bible in this arrangement, is the Hebrew, vey'al 'Let him go up'. That is let anyone who wishes return to the land. that is why Jews wanting to immigrate to Israel now known as 'Aliyah' going up, from the Hebrew word Alah. For

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Jews throughout much of history, the Bible has not been about the fall and Redemption, but about how to live a faithful life in the ups and downs of ongoing history. The first 11 chapters of Genesis from creation through Adam and down to Abraham are a Prologue of history of Israel, rather than setting the main themes of the collection of books that follow.

For the Jews the Torah or Pentateuch, are overwhelmingly important. Alongside it there are the prophets and the writings but these less important.

Christians have tended to treat all of the Old Testament as a kind of Prophecy even the Psalms have often been read as predicting the Messiah. For Christians, the Old Testament is a single work for them the Pentateuch runs on in two other historical books to make what some of the father's actually call Enneateuch, 9 books, then the teaching books, such as Psalms and Proverbs. The work finds its climax in the words of the prophets foretelling the coming Messiah.

By the time the early church had assimilated the teachings of both Jesus and Paul, it had a religion that understood the Bible as something quite different to the way the Hebrews understand it. The 2nd and 3rd century Christians, who developed this view, were not inventing something new, they were drawing on the consequences of what Jesus and Paul had taught. It is a reading that extends beyond the natural sense of the Hebrew bible, and makes fresh claims and proposals about the relationship between god and the human race, that does not contradict the Old Testament but does move outside it.

Christians then proceeded to read the Old Testament as the 'word'. They took these new ideas and in the process they distorted its natural meaning, because they wanted the two testaments to hang together as a seamless whole, despite the fact that they tell significantly different stories.

By the time of Irenaeus, in the late second century A.D.. appeal can be made to something called the rule of faith, which is a summary of the basic Christian belief analogous to the creed' and indeed lying at the root of present creeds., The rule of faith, became both key for interpreting the Bible and also a summary of its contents. There is a kind of feedback loop between the two.

The Creed, emphasises the Trinity, the nature of God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But there is only one explicit reference to God as Trinity in the New Testament, Matthew 28 Verse 19.

Jesus born of the Virgin Mary has only two references in the New Testament, Matthew and Luke. But that term is never used again in the New Testament.

Paul in particular never mentioned the virginal conception of Jesus. Nor does any other book of the New Testament including Mark, John, Acts and the other Pauline letters. Instead of a gospel preached by Jesus, Christians came to believe in a gospel about Jesus. Jesus became the gospel.

The 'Fall', a mythical timeless term, used to describe the nature of evil in the world. There is truth in the story that God created everything good. And that human choices corrupted the system. Also that this evil can be uncovered and eventually redeemed.

The idea of the fall, provides us with an understanding of evil in the world. It provides us with a reason for the reality of evil in society. It also asserts the Goodness of God's creation and the sovereignty of God. The fall shows up the structural frailty of human social institutions that

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become the powers. It reminds us that we cannot be saved by anything within the domination powers, but only by something outside of the power structures. The Fall challenges us to recognise Radical evil for what it is. The social evil we live with. The brutality of people trafficking, slavery, oppressive military regimes, corporate businesses that put profit before the welfare of its workers. And so many other evils that take on a demonic personality that become acceptable as we become used to it.

Evil the result of thousands of years of Human choices for power and control, only to become subject to that power and domination. The doctrine of the fall has been perverted to justify the worst kinds of oppression. Governments use it to justify the brutal enforcement of rule and order against a possible Chaos through human inherent evil and sinfulness in trying to overcome and change the system of powers.

The Gospel has been used to teach that humanity is basically rotten to the core, and born to evil. (echoes of the Myth of Marduk and Tiamat) it has been used to teach that there is no possibility for humans to be good or to make good changes to the existing order.

The Powers and humanity were created good by a good and loving God. There is no account of the creation of demons or evil spirits in the scriptures. But an institution becomes demonic when it changes its purpose from serving the human good, to self serving idolatry.