

It's September 11 Again. It's been 7 years.

Colleagues,

It's September 11 again. It's been 7 years. And nothing has really changed. Especially in my nation. The basics of the Bible's political theology continue to be accurate. The nations continue to rage and the people plot in vain. The Babel story continues to be the blueprint: "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." [You know what that "tower with its top in heaven" signals. "God, move over."] Back down on the ground, Goliath continues to be the patron saint.

And the consequences are always the same. God does indeed "scatter" the Babel-bulders, often by their own hand. According to Psalm 2, the One who by divine right "sits in the heavens," that deity "laughs; the LORD has them in derision. Then he speaks to them in his wrath, and terrifies them in his fury." That also happened to the Chosen Nation, since they too opted for the Babel-blueprint, and to Babylon they indeed did go—in chains. All Goliaths get decapitated. And the people are clueless about what is happening. Why should we expect the descendents of Adam and Eve in our day to be any smarter than their primal parents?

Granted, those are texts from the Hebrew scriptures, but in the NT that "old" Biblical political theology doesn't change. There is no place where Jesus advises Herod or Caesar (or even Pilate in that epic tete-a-tete) how to turn nations away from such madness, such blindness. His program is focused elsewhere. "Repent and trust the Good News" is the compact mantra in Mark's

Gospel (1:15). You've got to change the hearts of the inhabitants—and that happens only one heart at a time in both OT and NT—before you can get them to change replicating in their national life the Goliath-mindset in their hearts. The program, as the NT epistles say, is to move folks from Goliath-mindsets to the mind of Christ. Where that mindset change doesn't happen, no change happens in the body politic either. Christians should not expect even mini-paradises. Freddie Mac and Fannie May are the Babel-Goliath reincarnations of this past week in the USA. What will next week's will be?

Even with the Goliath-mindset work in us humans, it's not just our doings either. God's hand is in the mix, God the critic, God the judge on the bench in the cosmic courtroom. "God gives nations the leaders they deserve." That's what Luther claimed. For all the gritching now rampant in our nation about the "Bush-years," has anyone—even any preacher—told us Americans this? Listen up. God bestowed on you the "Bush-years." No, it wasn't an event of "God bless America," but just the opposite. And except you change, change big time—aka repentance—it won't change.

"Change" is now the major mantra of both candidates for president in the USA. But the change they talk about is rearranging the deck-chairs on the Titanic. Then as now, it won't make any difference. God the Iceberg [literally, ice-mountain] looms up ahead. Deck-chair change will not "move mountains," and definitely not this one.

In the presidential primaries here in Missouri, Marie voted for Hillary and I voted for Barack (whose name means "blessing"). So that was a wash. But when Obama subsequently denounced his one-time pastor Jeremiah Wright for his straight-talk, his straight-from-the-Bible political theology, now applied to America, I lost heart. Not simply because Wright's political theology is

mine too, but because it's God's political theology. "Nation under God," yes, but under God's what? Under God's scrutiny, evaluation, verdict: "Weighed, and found wanting." That's what. Though both candidates now shout for change, neither seems to have a clue about THE change that this calls for. Whether it's Obama or McCain (or after that "just one heartbeat away"—Biden or Palin), we'll be getting the leaders we deserve. That is not good news. But it is not unfair.

You've heard in these postings before references to Luther's treatise on War Against the Turks (Muslims) in 1529. That little essay was my point of departure for the ThTh posting 7 yrs ago—48 hours after the WTC towers crumbled. I've just looked at it again. What's said there is still true. The crumbling inferno of our own Twin Towers of Babel—2557 days ago—has brought no change. [If interested in the ancient essay, you can find it at <https://crossings.org/thursday/2001/thur0913.shtml>]

"Change" (both as verb and noun) is the best nickel-word translation for repent/repentance in Biblical parlance. Could a president or a candidate for that office ever come out and simply say that to this nation? Lincoln did, right in the middle of the Civil War as God the critic turned us loose to kill each other—no al-Qaeda or Taliban needed. Could that happen again? God forbid. It's unthinkable. It was unthinkable in 1861 too. But it happened. These stern words from Jesus don't go away: "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

Here's what Lincoln (the first ever Republican president of the USA) said: "We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all

these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us! It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness."

Hanging on to Lincoln's last word, I can say, and so can you,

Peace and joy!

Ed Schroeder