

CHAPTER 4 CHRISTIAN LIBERALISM IS CONFUSED

**. . . a slight detour from the Road to Damascus . . . but
we'll get back on track soon**

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Introduction

My last tome centered on what I called, “The Road to Damascus” and how the politics of the “Syrian Card” is being played out by the West. But, before I get on that road again from a “Biblical perspective” I must address a few skeptics

and scoffers who scorn the “Messianic Scenario” written by D. R. Shearer and featured during this past week on www.thetribnet.org.

You see, you really can’t appreciate contemplating a Biblical reflection relative to the “Syrian Equation” without understanding the impact of this small dissertation . . .

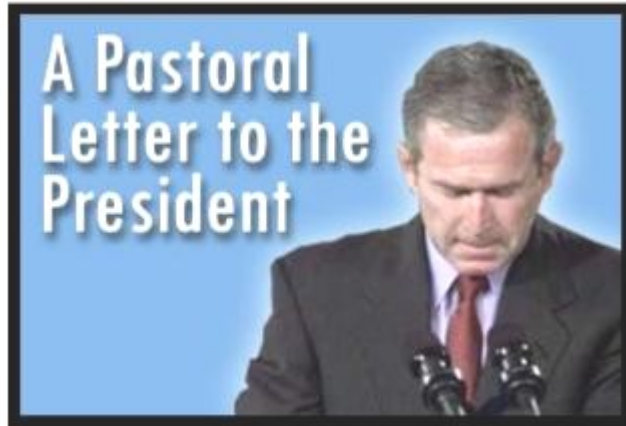
CHRISTIAN LIBERALISM IS CONFUSED

I find it altogether refreshing, in some ways, to read the ranting of the Rev. Rich Lang of Seattle’s Trinity United Methodist Church in the Ballard

District rail on the “Antichrist” elements within the Religious Right in his open letter to President George Bush featured in [Real Change](#):

Dear President Bush:

“You claim Christ but act like Caesar. There is blood all over your hands with the promise of even more blood to come. You sit atop the nations like the Biblical Whore of Babylon openly fornicating with the military men of might.”



“The power and seduction of this administration emerges from its diabolical manipulation of Christian rhetoric. . . the mirror opposite of what Jesus embodied. It is, indeed, the materialization of the spirit of Antichrist: a perversion of Christian faith and practice.”

Further, Lang is absolutely right on regarding the Christian Right’s quest for Dominionism (although he does NOT understand the nuances between evangelical Premillennialism and Postmillenarian Dominionists . . . somehow he lumps the whole lot of them together . . . and I’m leading up to the “Syrian Card” . . . eventually):

“The progressive church (a.k.a. “Liberal Church”) should bring back—and this sounds so crazy—the word ‘heresy.’ The end times theology and this other thing called Dominionism or Christian Reconstruction—those are heresies.’ Lang says not to believe Christian Coalition leader–turned–Whore of Enron–turned Bush/Cheney campaign lieutenant Ralph Reed when he claims the Christian right has no plans to upend the Constitution and impose its religion on civic life. ‘He’s a liar,’ says Lang. ‘Dominionism is the notion that God has given the dominion, the governance of the world, to the church. And so Christians literally are born to rule, by force if necessary, to bring the Kingdom of God on Earth. I believe that the theology that drives the Bush administration affirms this.’ When Falwell preached, ‘We must take back what is rightfully ours,’ his

ambitions did not stop at U.S. borders. This is a Church of a Law Unto Itself.”

Now, after the brilliance of Rev. Lang’s analysis facing America’s religio-political scene, he commits *spiritualized suicide* by these ludicrous remarks which are oxymoronic (I’ll explain):

“It’s so ludicrous!’ laments Lang. ‘Such a twisting of scripture (Note: Lang refers to Darby’s ‘Dispensational Truth’ and ‘Biblical Literalism’ juxtaposed to Augustinian ‘spiritualization’ of Scripture.). That history is scripted is something that it seems to me Christians ought to have an instinct to be repulsed against. You follow a code, there’s magical meanings in the text.’

“But Lang knows why people cling to millennial dreams—like Dubya’s, his life was saved by a fundamentalist church. ‘It attracted me because I came out of chaos. Alcohol and drugs; 19 years old and I was dyin.’ **I needed a strong fence around my life and people who cared for me, and I got both.** But after about a year of reading what they taught me, I started to raise questions.’

“Further study convinced him that **Augustine was on the right track**, after all, in **reading apocalyptic literature as spiritual advice, not a sneak preview of tomorrow’s headlines.** ‘Revelation is written to the churches in its time, not to the churches in the 21st century. It’s written to seven churches in Turkey.’ As for the Antichrist warnings in John, he reads them not as a literal prediction of Bush but as a warning against the eternal danger of his hypocritical, Mammon-worshipping, proudly elitist, heartless, narrowly legalistic spirit. ‘I John seems to be obsessed with language like this: ‘How can you say you love God, who you have not seen, if you do not love your brother and sister, who you have seen?’ Who are in need of food, clothing, shelter? The implication of the doctrine of the Antichrist is that there is an economic disparity in the community, and people are using their religion, not practicing it.’” (Article by Tim Appelo in The Seattle Weekly, December 8-14, 2004, [*“Is Bush the Antichrist?”*](#))

So, Lang really doesn’t see the Bible with a classical prophetic message for our time . . . simply a book of moral and spiritual lessons—powerful, but not prophetically predictive.

Lang's inane and oxymoronic comment here betrays a profound ignorance on his part regarding the current debate taking place within the Church. D. R. Shearer's [Messianic Scenario](#) brought out that the same Dominionists despised by Lang are the same ones who, like Lang, EMBRACE AUGUSTINIAN HERMENEUTICS. Lang excoriates these DOMINIONISTS, thinking they are Darbyites—akin to the *Left Behind Series* of Tim LaHaye! WHAT DECEPTION IS THIS!

What on earth does the Rev. Lang (apparently saved in an Evangelical Church and now a turncoat liberal . . . and a confused one at that) think Augustine was doing “back then” when he attempted to justify the Roman Catholic Church's KINGDOM NOW marriage with the Kingdoms of this world? Does he not have any historical sense of theology? Shame on him!

Yet Lang's “right track” Augustine thinking will prevent Christians from committing a “sneak preview of tomorrow's headlines” and from personifying the Antichrist; instead, they'll be protected from worshiping Mammon and commence loving their brothers and sisters? They will then live out the gospel by addressing the issues of “economic disparity in the community” as they embrace the spiritualization of Augustinian theology, while denying the future Antichrist! And, excuse me; dare Lang condemn the Mammon of the Evangelical wing of the Church when the United Methodist Church's pension funds and subsequent investments into all things Babylonian reach into the billions of dollars? I don't think you want to go there—something about throwing rocks from glass palaces.

No, this does not excuse those Biblical literalists who “say and do not”—for they profess a heavenly citizenship but act as if they lived in the KINGDOM NOW that Lang allegedly despises. St. Augustine read the Revelation as “spiritual advice” for one reason only: TO PERPETUATE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S RULE AND REIGN UPON THIS EARTH—the same “rule and reign” that the Rev. Rich Lang so deeply resents in his fellow Methodist, President George Bush! Rev. Lang renounces Biblical Literalism which has been hijacked by the same damnable theology that has condemned the Church to the Kingdoms of this World! Instead of the loving and caring community of fundamentalist believers who brought Rich into the SPIRITUAL KINGDOM ON EARTH, he despises his birthright, deprecates theology (that's the only conclusion I can derive from his self-hating confession) and places his trust in the road to Augustinian

destruction; the same theology embraced by every SOCIAL JUSTICE DENOMINATION on the globe.

D. R. Shearer is absolutely correct: REVIVALISM (getting people saved from alcoholism like the Rev. Rich Lang) is the mission of the Church. REFORMING THE SOCIAL STRUCTURES is “inconsequential” to the Gospel Message. Here’s the real “separation of Church and State” that Lang desires . . . but he can’t have it both ways.

Yes, the Bible is a book of “spiritual truth” which is unique and utterly profound—but it is a book with a real WELTANSCHAUUNG (“world view”). We’re called to be “salt and light” in this world. We’re told to love one another as Christ loved us and to “lay down our lives for the brethren” and to extend ourselves and our resources to a dying world . . . but first and foremost we are told that we are “in this world, but not of this world!”

What Lang and the liberals are so pushed out of shape about is the FACT that the conservatives have finally caught up to their game and are taking over the same TEMPORAL REIGNS OF POWER that were once the exclusive purview of the National Council of Churches! It was fine and dandy when the fightin’ fundies were “not of this world,” but once they got engaged in the “process” and tried to exert their influence like the “Progressive Christians” (and what a putdown is this term “Progressive” Christians” juxtaposed to those who apparently are not “Progressive?”) they became what Lang calls of “the spirit of Antichrist.” Now isn’t that convenient?

I guess the reason I’m so pushed out of shape, and “conflicted” over someone like Lang is this: The same deception afflicting the once stalwart Biblical literalists who despised the Kingdoms of this World; who, like Abraham, “looked for a city whose builder and maker is God,” yet are now being sucked into the vortex of Mammon and Political Power, is the same deception afflicting the Liberal or so-called Progressive Wing of the Church. They will not endure “sound doctrine” but will “spiritualize” the Bible to fit their social agenda and call it “righteousness” (a.k.a. “justice”), while denouncing the prophetic message of the Word of God for our time—not knowing that it is that very LITERAL, PROPHETIC PREACHING that is precisely what will save them and this generation for whom they are concerned!

Listen, Rev. Lang, drugs and alcohol were sending you straight to hell—some people came along who cared for your soul, you apparently got SAVED and DELIVERED (from drugs and alcohol) . . . so why didn't you see the worth of it all . . . and what's wrong with SOUP, SUDS, AND SALVATION?

“And in his brilliant 1997 book, *Stealing Jesus: How Fundamentalism Betrays Christianity*, author Bruce Bawer is quoted as saying:

“‘It's deeply dismaying that millions of Americans who call themselves Christians are believers in something that has virtually nothing to do with the gospel message,’ mourns Bawer. ‘Darby, Scofield, and company have been a disaster for Christianity in America. Millions of people think they are adherents of ‘traditional Christianity’ when, in fact, they have been roped into a newfangled religion based on bizarre theological propositions that Jesus would never recognize.’” (From Tim Appelo's article)

WHAT DO RED CHINA AND ST. AUGUSTINE HAVE IN COMMON?

The more I “get into” the mind of Liberal Christianity, the more bewildered I become . . . and to think I came out of the same Lutheran Church that Tim Appelo did! The “gospel message” that Bawer advocates is the same milquetoast, powerless Christianity of liberalism that's been fading from the American scene for the past fifty years! The same Norman Vincent Peale's attraction to New Age positive thinking, which, for a while when dynamic liberalism led the charge for Civil Rights, had a message but forsook that message for nearly every bizarre and cultic stunt that the American Cultural Circus could muster!

Sure, Darby and Scofield got goofed up when it came to their apocalyptic scenario of the Church's total escape from any future witness to the Kingdoms of this World; but at least they embraced a fervency of the gospel so impassioned and deliberate, that it preserved and rescued millions of those same Christians from the DEAD FORMALISM OF TRADITIONAL CHRISTIANITY whose roots were in this world, and not in the world to come! And, saved scores of alcoholics and drug addicts!

O.K. – end of detour . . . because I’m going to get real LITERAL now, real big into apocalyptic literature that Augustine doesn’t want me to read, and, by the way what DO Red China and Augustine have in common? Well, neither one of them wants their readers to include John’s Apocalypse in the publication of Mandarin Bibles. I’m sure Rev. Lang, who concurs with Augustine’s assessment of the Revelation, would appreciate the People’s Republic ban of the Revelation.

Also, I’m big into possible headlines you might be seeing in tomorrow’s papers! And, yes, THAT **THE** ANTICHRIST IS TO COME (I John 2:18) is an absolute fact, a fact that the Rev. Lang, Tim Bawer, et al, should take note of—because the same “spirit of Antichrist” they bear witness of in the world today (and I don’t deny that they have), shall one day VERY SOON, PERSONIFY himself and deceive the same masses for which Lang and Bawer express their concern.

Indeed, may the Lord who saved them, keep them from this final deception that ravages the Church at large, especially in these United States of America. The “LITERALISM” they allegedly fear, is (God forbid!) the same literalism which could actually save them from the deception sweeping the nations, especially this one!

THE FRENCH AND THE WEST vs. SYRIA

Meanwhile, the French, finding common cause with the “West” (i.e., the USA), and, no doubt in an attempt to get back into the good graces of Uncle Sam, co-sponsored with the USA a UN Security Council resolution (9 to 0, Resolution 1559) demanding that Syrian troops be withdrawn from Lebanon.

Syria, whose long history with French interference into its internal affairs is well known, responded in kind:

“Syrian officials followed up by calling for stronger ties between Syria and Lebanon . . . Foreign Minister Farouq al-Sharaa said the issue of the resolution was over, and Syria and Lebanon were now focusing on ‘strengthening relations’ . . . according to Murhaf Jouejati, a professor of political science at George Washington university and a Syria specialist, Syrian concessions on Iraq have gone unheard.” (The Daily Star, A Bangladesh Daily, Dec. 20, 2004)

“SYRIA IS AT THE CENTER OF THE PROBLEM”

By now, the “Road to Damascus” is all but paved with Abrams tanks, and it won’t be long before that actually happens, if [Jeffrey White](#), a former Middle Eastern analyst for the Defense Intelligence Agency gets his way:

“The Syrian role is part of what many intelligence officials believe are the increasingly organized attacks on U.S. forces. ‘In the last two months or so, this notion that this is a Baathist insurgency has gained dominance in the [intelligence] community,’ he said. Coupled with that, he said, *‘there is an increasing view that Syria is at the center of the problem.’*” (my emphasis)

Yes, the PLOT THICKENS, and the Road to Damascus is paved with Hamas, Hezbollah, Amal, dead Marines, dead Israelis, and, now, dead soldiers and contractors from Halliburton in Mosul. It’s almost time for GAME OVER and, as [Gary Leupp](#) in Counterpunch stated:

“Even if Israeli action provides the context (Leupp conjectures the IDF attack Hamas bases in Syria as a result of a horrific suicide bombing incident in Israel, perhaps as a result of Hamas leader Izz al-Din al-Sheikh who was assassinated by Israel in Syria in September, 2004), Israeli forces won’t be needed, and U.S. action will be lent some thin international legitimacy if a few hundred ‘coalition’ troops participate. Thus a second Arab nation will become Americanizedly ‘free,’ while Palestinians infuriated by these events will commit acts that will justify the ‘ethnic cleansing’ of the West Bank.”

So, just in case you’re not aware of the “West’s” justification to eliminate the “Syrian Problem” – think no further. The Bible is NOT silent about all this . . . we’ll get into that part of the “equation” in Part II of our two-part article on the *ROAD TO DAMASCUS*.