

Personal from. . .

Ronald L. Dart

Faith in a Box

I think I am at long last beginning to understand something that puzzles many people. How was it possible to hate a man who could make the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear; a man who could restore an insane person to his right mind? What on earth could motivate *religious* people to want to kill Him?

The Healer, of course, was Jesus, and the men who wanted to kill Him were the religious establishment of the day. The Jews had been through a lot to get where they were. They had endured 70 years of exile in Babylon, and even after they came home and restored the Temple, they had made their way through some terrible times. They had been oppressed by a Syrian power and then by the Romans, and through it all, they had to continually fend off challenges to the orthodox faith.

The Essenes had been marginalized. The Qumran community had been isolated. Mind you, the minority parties in Judaism were believers. They just read the law differently from the majority. And by the time Jesus came on the scene, the

majority had firmly established themselves as religious leaders of the Jews. The political structure of Judaism was a relatively stable, two-party system – Pharisees and Sadducees.

Then, Jesus appeared and posed the most serious threat to their power that they had ever encountered. And if you take your time reading the New Testament, it becomes plain that they didn't hate Him because He healed sick people. They hated Him because He was not orthodox. I use the term "orthodox," not in the sense of identifying a sect, like the Orthodox Church or Orthodox Jews. I use it in the broader sense of the word:

"conforming to established doctrine especially in religion."

Jesus' miracles of healing were undeniable. And they conveyed a certain cachet upon His teaching. But His first major message, the Sermon on the Mount, was an affirmation of the written law, and a serious challenge to *tradition*. Jesus was in clear defiance of the established religion of the day. He refused to conform. It was this that caused the leadership to come to the place where they were willing to kill Jesus if they could.

Pontius Pilate, hardheaded Roman that he was, saw through all this clearly. We don't know what he thought about Jesus, whether he believed anything he had heard about Him. But he had one thing crystal clear: He knew

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Bear Much Fruit

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." Many of our family members have found that supporting the work God is doing through CEM is a way to "bear much fruit." In so doing, they are able to help with such things as: the *Born to Win* broadcast; getting the Gospel out via CDs, cassette tapes, and printed literature; publishing YEA lessons to anchor our children and teens to Christ; and an adult Bible study course. Working together as a team can multiply the effectiveness of what you are able to give. All donations are gratefully received and judiciously used.

Unforgettable Family Retreat

Excited families checked into the hotel at the Paris Landing Resort, anxious to be fortified with physical and spiritual food. Great Subway sandwiches with all the trimmings, drinks, and cookies awaited them in the Hospitality Room the first evening. The room was immediately buzzing with Christian love, conversation, laughter, and fellowship.

Young and old alike were encouraged to participate in the well thought out Scavenger Hunt mixer. No, we weren't looking for a red ball or a green hair bow. We were trying to find people who lived in New Mexico, played the tuba in a marching band, been to China, etc., so we could know more about our brethren.

Everyone registered for the door prizes – albums of the *Born to Win* broadcasts on the books of *Samuel* and *Christian Holidays*. Of the two hundred plus people who attended this event, many were there for the first time. By moving this Memorial Day Retreat to the center of CEM's populated area, more people were able to join us for this inspirational weekend. Virtually everyone stayed under one roof at the hotel owned by the State of Tennessee. Convenience and accessibility were advantages everyone appreciated.

Sabbath morning began with a seminar by Michael Deering titled, *Using History to Make Disciples* and another by Larry Watkins titled, *Marriage, Love and Submission*. At 10 a.m. excited kids attended age appropriate classes and seminars with the theme, *Celebrate Freedom!* At the same time, Guy Swenson had adults in a seminar, *How to Do a "Camp Outreach" in Your Congregation*, and Trish Svehla in another, *He Said/She Said: Decoding Gender Talk*. Ron Dart gave us a heart searching sermon titled, *Leaving and Cleaving*, during the Sabbath worship service.

Sunday morning, kids eagerly found their way to YEA classes to learn more about the freedoms we have in Christ. Brethren were still wanting to learn more ways to grow, change their lives, live the life, and evangelize. Chris and Lisa Gregor helped fill these needs with a seminar titled, *Join the Revolution*, while Guy Swenson added another dimension with, *Nobody Ever Told Me How Jesus Evangelized!* Ron Dart took all of us deeper in understanding *How the New Testament Came to Us* during the 11 o'clock session.

Stephanie Smith put together a Sunday afternoon kid's swimming party, complete with pizza and drinks. Tasty pies, cobblers, ice cream, and coffee were served in the Conference Center Sunday evening for everyone. This provided a perfect atmosphere for socializing and bonding. The Scavenger Hunt had now come to an end. Winners were announced and prizes given.

Eager learners still wanted more. So children and teenagers made their way into their last YEA class or seminar Monday morning. Michael Deering treated adults to a seminar titled, *Star Wars and Christianity*, while Jim O'Brien inspired another group with *Landmarks in Christian Liberty*. The final farewell was given by Ron Dart. He exhorted us to *Apply Ourselves to Knowing the Bible*. He pointed out how brethren have slipped in Bible study over the years and why this isn't acceptable for Christians.

None of this would have been possible without Skip and Diane Martin's many hours of hard work, planning, and traveling to scout out the right place. They gave so generously of themselves to make this great event happen. Everyone there would like to express their heartfelt gratitude to them.

Okay, were there seminars, sermons, classes, or social events you wish you could have attended? If you weren't at the Paris Landing Family Retreat, you and your particular way of serving were greatly missed. You're family. When a family member is not there, he or she is missed. So we'll give you another chance next Memorial Day, which is also the Pentecost weekend. Plans are already underway for an even better Retreat at the same place.

A large block of rooms has been reserved, including a few three bedroom cabins for 2007. This place gets booked up early for the Memorial Day weekend. It would be to your advantage not to

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for a certainty that it was from envy that the Temple elite had delivered Jesus to him.

The funny thing about Jesus was that the common people loved Him. For one thing, people often like it when someone comes along and tweaks the establishment. Jesus Himself had no establishment to protect. He had a gaggle of disciples who had a way of coming and going, depending on what He had to say and what He did.

So, why do orthodox establishments tend to be antagonistic toward unorthodox teachers? It's simple. They are afraid. Questions are raised to which they have no satisfactory answers. So what they do then is try to intimidate their followers into not listening to this or that unorthodox teacher.

Actually, there is a part of me that understands that. It is a little frightening to have to face up to the fact that you have been wrong about some very important things. I know, because I've been there. But having been there, I learned something very important. I had nothing at all to fear from the truth. And I learned that it is okay not to have all the answers. One of the sweetest phrases in the English language is: "I don't know." In that simple confession, the door is opened so you can come to know.

When you look at the history of Judaism before Jesus, and the history of the church after Jesus, a fundamental truth begins to emerge. Judaism of the first

Temple period and Christianity late in the first century were both plagued with heresies that sprouted like weeds in their otherwise green lawns. Now if you plan to have any cohesiveness to your faith, heresies have to be answered. But in both cases, the leadership was unable to close out the issues being raised, and so they finally just slammed the door on the argument. They put their dogma into a nice box, tied it with a ribbon, and put it on the shelf of things that have been settled.

"If you don't believe this," they said, "you are certainly not one of us." Excommunications often followed. Sometimes even murder.

Now there is a problem with that little box of dogma up there on your shelf with a ribbon tied around it. It may be the best approximation of the truth that could be established at the time. But in closing the box and declaring it "The Truth," the establishment puts an end to growth. The only thing that could be done was to make a complete break with the establishment, as Martin Luther finally did, triggering the Protestant Reformation.

What does all this mean to you? Well, if you are a Christian, chances are you are a member of a church which in turn may be a member of a larger denomination, which is also a member of what is called sometimes, the Mainstream of Christianity. Chances are your church, your denomination lives in its own orthodoxy. It is important that

your church knows what it believes and that it makes the distinction between orthodox and unorthodox teaching. This does not mean the church has any right to tell you what you have to believe, but that it is important to maintain cohesiveness in the face of forces that might well divide, or even destroy, the church.

God knows how much of that goes on. It was a major factor in the early church, and it was in fighting off the heretics that some of the great orthodox doctrines were codified. Think of it this way. It is good to think outside the box, but you need to remember where the box is.

There is more than I can cover here, so I would like to send you a *FREE* CD or cassette tape of a message titled, *Faith in a Box*. To receive it, just check the box on the enclosed card and indicate whether you want a CD or a cassette tape. We are in the process of a changeover because it is becoming increasingly difficult to find parts for our high speed tape duplicators. Technology is passing them by.

Thanks for listening, and keep in touch.

Yours, striving for the faith,

Ronald L. Dart

P.S. While we depend on our friends for contributions and support, please don't hesitate to request the message even if you can't afford to give right now. Someone else has given to cover your request.

Why Should YOU Attend the Feast in Chattanooga?

- ▶ You will hear uplifting sermons that will take you deeper into God's Word.
- ▶ You can attend many Christian living seminars that will help you in your daily walk.
- ▶ Your children and teens can attend fun, effective, age appropriate classes that will change behavior and anchor them to Christ.
- ▶ CEM will provide hospitality rooms and group activities, such as a family picnic and a Pie and Ice Cream Social for fellowship and bonding.
- ▶ There will be plenty of excellent, convenient accommodations to fit your budget.
- ▶ A *FREE* city bus system will save you parking fees and take you where you want to go.
- ▶ Chattanooga is a beautiful city in the mountains with a river, caves, and exciting entertainment for every age group – IMAX 3D theater, Ruby Falls, Lookout Mountain, the largest fresh water aquarium in the US, a children's museum, Children's Discovery Center, the Incline, Mystery Dinner Theater, and great affordable eateries are just a few things you'll enjoy.

Go to www.borntowin.net and click on 2006 Feast of Tabernacles to learn what a great Feast awaits you in Chattanooga beginning the evening of October 6th and continuing through the 14th. No preregistration required. Everyone is welcome.

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delay in calling 1-800-250-8614 for your reservations and give CEM's group number 3078. Continue to watch www.borntowin.net and the LTW for exciting information and more details. We also plan to have information about RV and tent camping for those who are so inclined. These spiritually uplifting retreats are well planned for Christian development and bonding with others. We want you to be there next year. Start planning now so you can make it.



Radio Update

Kansas City, MO
KCWJ 1030 AM
M-F 11:30 a.m. &
Sun 7:30 a.m.

Calendar of Events

Chicago, IL Christian Renewal Conference - Avery Coonley School, 1400 Maple Ave., Downers Grove, IL, July 15th and 16th. Ronald Dart will be speaking Saturday at 2:30 p.m. and again Sunday at 9:30 a.m. Contact Larry Watkins at lsw@cemnetwork.com or 1-888-BIBLE-44 for additional information.

Tyler, TX, Meet the Teacher - will be held at the United Heritage Bank, 1620 S. Broadway on July 29th at 2 p.m. Everyone is welcome. For more information call Larry at 1-888-BIBLE-44.

In Memory

Christian Educational Ministries gratefully acknowledges the generous donation made in memory of Okemah Epperson of Texarkana, TX who passed away May 25 of a massive heart attack. Our heartfelt sympathy and prayers go out to her husband, Ray, and her family. Okemah will be greatly missed by all of us, and the Epperson family is in our prayers.

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*That the man of God may be
proficient and equipped for every
good work.*