

Living to Win

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The Road

By Ronald L. Dart

I like *World Magazine*. It is a fine Christian news magazine that is much more hip than staid, old *Christianity Today*, but I was a little jarred when the July 26 edition landed on my desk. The cover was a photo of Pastor Geoff Seuratt, speaking at Seacoast Church in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina. Mind you, I don't know Pastor Seuratt, nor the church he leads. But the picture has taken some getting used to.

Pastor Seuratt was leaning on a pedestal, with one hand in the pocket of a pair of faded jeans which, while clean enough, hadn't seen an iron in a very long time. The jeans, following the style of the day, were long enough to drag on the floor and to partially cover bare feet in sandals. His shirt was short sleeved, apparently wash and wear, because it hadn't been ironed either. And the shirt tail was not tucked in.

Religious Obsessions

It is surprising, in a way, to observe how Christian folk become obsessed with method, with custom, with doctrines, creeds, worship styles—even dress. One significant denomination is divided

over whether it is right to use musical instruments in church. And people choose where to go to

Increasingly, Christian folk and Christian culture are having a diminishing effect on society as a whole.

church depending on whether the music is traditional or contemporary. There is a significant church movement today called "multi-site churches." They are succeeding, it seems—growing like weeds.

But there is something troubling about the whole picture. Increasingly, Christian folk and Christian culture are having a diminishing effect on society as a whole. Some are praying for another great awakening, and there may be one—or not. Others are struggling

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Tax Advantage . .

The end of the year is approaching and you'll soon be looking for every tax write-off you can find. CEM is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. What this means to you is that every contribution you make to CEM is tax deductible. Keep this in mind as you make your contributions and as you do your tax returns.

Are They Really Smarter Than You?

By Lenny Cacchio

“Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?” (John 7:48).

“Are you going to believe me or your own eyes?” (Groucho Marx).

I hate to admit this, but after a major political event I am more fascinated by the journalistic commentary that follows than the event itself. That might be because so many political events and speeches are yawners reminiscent of college Speech 101.

But I’m also interested in other peoples’ takes on what happened, even though it might remind me of Groucho Marx’s line at the head of this column: “Are you going to believe me or your own eyes?”

Jesus had the same type of press. He healed the sick, raised the dead, fed the multitudes, and taught a new and living way. If that’s all he ever did, it’s doubtful that the religious elite of the day would have tried to destroy him. But Jesus had a little problem. His teachings did not fit in the little box of religion that his contemporaries had constructed for their concept of God. He preached unique ideas that threatened the current power structure. That was a threat they could not let stand.

Jesus once healed a blind man, who then came to the conclusion that, “If this man were not of God, he could do nothing” (John 9:33). The religious leaders’ retort? “You were altogether born in sin, and do you teach us?” (v. 34). Are you going to believe us or your own eyes?

Another time, the Pharisees and chief priests sent a contingent of Temple guards to arrest Jesus, but his teaching was so compelling that the guards refused their orders. “Never has a man spoken like this,” they told the Pharisees, who retorted, “Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed on him? These people who are ignorant of the law are cursed” (John 7:48-49 paraphrase).

These religious elites clearly held a high view of themselves and a condescending view of the unwashed masses. When they said, “These people who are ignorant of the law are cursed,” they sounded suspiciously like certain elements of our own culture.

It’s good to seek out others’ opinions and to listen to their learned commentary, but no one has a right to tell you how to think or to call you names if you happen to disagree. There is a lot of that going on these days.

FREE OFFER

Have You Heard This?

Many of our readers have not heard many of the insightful, edifying sermons in our archives. This month we want to make *Why I Keep the Seventh Day Sabbath* available *FREE* to our readers. Most every Christian believes in the Ten Commandments, and that the Fourth Commandment has been changed. In Ronald L. Dart’s personal testimony you’ll gain answers to many questions which may surprise you. Learn when the Sabbath was instituted, for whom the Sabbath was given, how all Ten Commandments were in effect in the Book of Genesis, and untangle subtle, superficial, sophistry used as arguments against Sabbath observance today.



***Radio
Update***

Ava, MO
KKOZ 1430 AM
Sunday 7:00 a.m.

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to adapt to a changing society. Their motives are good. They are trying to be relevant to the world around them. But that calls to mind something Paul said: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1-2).

So here we sit, with the challenge of fitting in and yet not fitting in, of being relevant in a changing world against the challenge of *overcoming the world*. Meanwhile churches divide over issues of style which have little to do with our real mission in the world.

It was common for the first Christians to speak of their faith as “The Road.” It was indeed, a way of living, a road of life. It was not merely a style that differed from Judaism, as a teenager rebels against the style of his parents.

A Way of Life

That said, division seems to be in the spiritual DNA of the church. And it may be God’s way of diminishing our human power in favor of his own. Years ago, one of the spiritual gurus of the day made a statement that I have never forgotten. He said, “First we must understand what Christianity is not. It is not a way of life.”

I don’t know where he went with that, because I never heard the rest of it. Perhaps he thought it was a way of believing, of worship, or perhaps he thought of Christianity as a faith—or a philosophy. A friend of mine who was an admirer of that guru and heard his statement was sitting in Bible class one day, and his eye fell on a Scripture. It was a short passage, and told how two disciples took a visitor aside and “expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” (Acts 18:26). It hit my friend like a ton of bricks. He didn’t hear another word in class that day.

For Luke did not say that they expounded the faith of the Lord more perfectly. They expounded the way of God. Language can be treacherous, because the meanings of words change over time. The Greek word in this case is *hodos*, which means, quite simply, a road. The word *way* means the same thing, but the connotation of the word has shifted since the King James boys translated the Bible.

I had never really run a word study on *hodos* before, so I did, and found it striking. For the first Christians, Christianity was a faith, but unless you hit the road, the faith went nowhere.

Paul learned this the hard way on the road to Damascus. He had asked for and received authority to go to Damascus with instructions that, “if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem” (Acts 9:2).

Note well, he was not looking for any of this belief system, not any of this sect, not any of this faith. Rather he was after any “of

this road.” Of course, Paul got knocked down on the road to Damascus and everything changed.

The Christian road was not mere rebellion against Judaism. It was a road leading in another direction. If you’ve heard people speak of how Faith in Jesus turned their lives around, you should realize that the reason for the change is the road they walk has changed.

What is The Road?

It was common for the first Christians to speak of their faith as “The Road.” It was indeed, a way of living, a road of life. It was not merely a style that differed from Judaism, as a teenager rebels against the style of his parents.

It is fascinating how often those who rebel by refusing to conform to society, turn around and conform to a different society—that of their own age cohorts. The Christian road was not mere rebellion against Judaism. It was a road leading in another direction. If you’ve heard people speak of how faith in Jesus turned their lives around, you should realize that the reason for the change is the road they walk has changed. It is not enough to change the way you think. Jesus calls for change in what you do, in the road you walk, and the direction you walk on that road.

As I studied, it was impressed ever more deeply on me how the first Christians thought of their faith. It was the road they walked, and it affected everything they did. It was

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far more than where they went to church or who they hung out with. Jesus was their master, the Lord of their life. At the Last Supper, Jesus told the disciples, “Where I go, you know, and the road you know.” Thomas was confused and asked how they could know the road. Jesus continued, “I am the road, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

What Jesus revealed on this and other occasions was that salvation is not merely an event. It is a way, a road we must walk. And the realization that you don’t sit in the road has always been there. That road can seem long and lonesome. But mercifully, we don’t have to walk it all alone. Jesus walks it with us.

And if we would stop bickering about style, and system, and all the things that distract us, if we could lay aside the rebellious spirit that keeps us preoccupied, we might find ourselves walking alongside others who have hit the road and who struggle along with us.

I have developed this subject more thoroughly in an upcoming radio program titled, simply, *The Road*. It will be some time before the program is aired, but we would like to send you a *FREE* CD of the program, along with another message. To receive it promptly, just check the box on the enclosed card and send it back to us. We have enclosed an envelope for your convenience. God bless you in the road you walk.

Men Are All Equal. . .

How Do You Know?

By Jim O’Brien

“Four score and seven years ago our fore fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” When Abraham Lincoln stood on a battlefield in Pennsylvania and uttered these words, he defined why more blood had been spilt in this war than any in American history. This nation was built on the concept that “all men are created equal.”

This idea of universal equality has a religious foundation. The Declaration of Independence states, “they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. . .” These rights transcend national borders. They are rooted in natural law that declares “these truths are self-evident.” That is, it is obvious to any thinking man that God created the world to operate this way.

How Are Men Equal?

Yet nothing is clearer, on the surface, than that all men are NOT equal. There is a manifest inequality between any two people. So, how should we understand the sense that we are all equal? Well, the equality in question is not a physical equality. It has nothing to do with strength, appearance, athletic prowess, or even comparable intelligence.

We are all equal in being fit for the “rule of law.” In America the symbol for justice is a blindfolded lady holding a set of scales. It means the law applies equally to everyone. It does not apply different penalties to citizens because of wealth, political affiliation, height, sex, race, or religious beliefs.

Where did the founding fathers get this idea? Well, prepare yourself—it came right out of the New Testament. Remember the uproar in the Book of Acts? In the words of Luke there was “no small disputation” (Acts 15:2). What were they arguing about? It all came about because Peter had baptized Cornelius and his family. Cornelius was a Gentile. On that occasion, Peter uttered a profound truth that echoed into the American system of ethics, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34).

The repercussions of this are far reaching. For one thing, it means that both Jews and Gentiles are equal under the law. Of course, that means Gentiles are in every way as much subject to the law as Jews. Will any man claim that Gentiles were given an inferior spirit that renders them incapable of understanding right and wrong? The Apostle Paul declared that before God: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ

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Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). If a man is looking for a New Testament command for Gentiles to obey God’s law, he need look no further.

Today’s Application

What does all this mean for us today? The same thing it meant for men 2,000 years ago. Men are equal insofar as they can understand what is right or wrong, and insofar as they exercise the will to conform to right. A child, because of insufficient age, may lack the understanding to keep from running in the street, so he must be kept inside the fence. An adult may have mental deficiencies, so he must be confined. Homes for the elderly are one of the few places which allow people to enter from the outside but are locked to keep occupants from leaving.

Our traffic laws don’t say that females can only drive 55 mph but males can drive 65 mph. You aren’t judged guilty for being 5’ 2” and innocent if you’re 6’ 1” —or if you have blue eyes rather than green. We are judged on our ability to comprehend right and wrong. This system of justice recognizes a spirit given by God that is common to all men.

But Christians have another gift. After Jesus was resurrected, members of the church were gathered in Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost when tongues of fire descended and “sat upon each of them.” The hierarchy was flattened. Each person received the Spirit of God.

And that has made all the difference!

Brace Yourself

By Lenny Cacchio

Brace yourself. Someday you’ll be in the Kingdom of God, and you’ll be shocked who you will see there.

Maybe it will be a preacher who kicked you out of his church and slandered you in front of the congregation.

Maybe it will be a boss who prodded and drove you mercilessly in the name of greater profits and efficiency.

Maybe it will be the petty thief who ran off with your purse and peace of mind, but who repented in prison behind bars and found God.

Or maybe it will be someone

you slandered or gossiped about, or deceived in a business deal.

Maybe it will be a case where you are the wronger, rather than the wrongee.

We know that these scenarios are real ones; there will be people in the Kingdom of God who for whatever reason we just don’t like in this life. I sometimes ponder what the meeting between Stephen and Paul will be like—Stephen, who breathed his last words while being stoned to death, and Paul, who supervised the operation. Stephen had no way of knowing

Making Life Work

SPECIAL CD OFFER

Is your life really working as well as you would like, or does it need a tune-up? If it does, you will find these 24 *Born to Win* self-help programs on 12 CDs to be what the “doctor” ordered. Each program will inspire and motivate you to let God personally guide and direct your life’s course. Drawn primarily from Ecclesiastes and Proverbs, this series examines many problems of life in the light of the Scriptures. More than any other series, this one reflects the theme of the *Born to Win* radio program. Normally \$54.95, now only \$43.95. MP3 format, playable only on players that support MP3, is \$19.95.

that Saul of Tarsus would one day be Paul the Apostle, one of the bravest and greatest evangelists for the faith he once despised.

I wonder what words Paul will use when meeting not just Stephen in the resurrection of the just, but others upon whom Paul brought death and torture for the faith, people whom he would now call brothers and sisters in the Lord.

What will they say to each other, or more to the point, what will we say to each other when we meet our personal Saul of Tarsus in the Kingdom of God?

Those Whose Heart God Had Moved

By Cynthia Saladin

“Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:5 NIV).

The Oregon Trail has always fascinated me. Long wagon trains. Circling the wagons at night, with animals inside for safety. Eggs nestled in flour barrels to keep them from breaking. Meat hung to dry inside the wagon canvas even as the wagons kept moving. River crossings. Camping in the shadow of Independence Rock on the banks of the Sweetwater River. The deep ruts still visible today. Absolutely fascinating!

There is even a computer game called *The Oregon Trail*. I guess that’s when I started to realize that traveling the Oregon Trail was very risky. There was no assurance you would make it to Oregon. I don’t think I ever played the whole game to Oregon; I usually succumbed to cholera, snake bite, thirst, or something before I could even make it out of the badlands of Wyoming. And the game only gives a glimpse of the reality. As more and more people traveled west, the Indians became more and more hostile. One was quoted as having said there couldn’t be anyone left in the East; they were all traveling on the Oregon Trail.

The wagon circles at night were necessary for protection. Not many, but a few wagon trains were completely massacred by Indians. Other calamities such as broken wheels, lame oxen, wagons swept away or tipped over during river crossings—all of these calamities could mean the difference between

life and death. Many people died of illness, accident, or snake bite. Even if you were ill, you still had to travel. The train couldn’t stop. They were fighting time. The train had to get across the Cascade Mountains before winter! It wasn’t so much the Rockies that were the problem because Jedidiah Smith had found South Pass, but once the travelers reached the mountains further west, travel by wagon was extremely precarious.

The Whitmans were the first to get a wagon through, but just barely. And once they got to the Snake River, everyone knew it was only a matter of time before the canyons and cliffs would necessitate abandoning wagon travel altogether. The people had to make rafts to finish the trip into Oregon.

What Kind of People Would Do This?

Once I realized the huge undertaking it was, I began thinking of the kind of people who would have made the trip. It wasn’t for weaklings. It wasn’t for someone who couldn’t pull his own weight. How difficult it would have been for pregnant or nursing mothers, or very small children! You don’t hear much about it, but sometimes entire wagon trains turned around and went back to what was familiar.

The goal was Oregon—a rich, fertile land, a chance for a new start. But there were very few people. There were few places to replace what they had to leave

alongside the trail to lighten the loads to prevent killing the oxen. It was unsettled. It was uncivilized. It would mean years of backbreaking work to become established. It required having a few neighbors with whom you traded labor. One of the enticements was a place where house was not built upon house, a place where a man could go and hear himself think. The net result was self-reliance. And definite reliance on God.

I can’t imagine how the people made it to Oregon without trusting God. The perils of the trail were great! How could they persevere without faith that God was with them and would not give them more than they could bear? The Bible might be the only book most of the families took to Oregon. They treasured it. They memorized verses from it. They read aloud by the campfires at night. For many, only faith in God could have gotten them through to Oregon.

The picture of the Oregon Trail is much more familiar to most of us than Ezra and Nehemiah rebuilding Jerusalem. But there were distinct similarities. Dangers in travel. Dangers from those who didn’t want the walls rebuilt. Starting over, with only a handful of people. It would have been discouraging, hard work. From the time the first people returned until the Temple was finally rebuilt, was 20 years! Perseverance. Dedication. Faith that God was leading them. It

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*Those Whose Heart God Had Moved. . .
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wasn't for weaklings. It wasn't for someone who couldn't pull his own weight. I had not considered it before, but there were people in Babylon who stayed there. Not everyone immediately jumped up and followed Ezra and Nehemiah back to Jerusalem!

“Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:5 NIV).

What About You?

So, what about you? Has God called you to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem or to travel the Oregon Trail? Physically, no. But, metaphorically? Maybe.

Do you have faith in God? Has His hand been evident in your life? Have you felt Him calling you into a deeper relationship with Him? I would submit that if you are among the firstfruits of God's harvest then you have been called, as a Christian in these times, to a deeper devotion and dedication that we normally consider.

God wants a godly seed. He wants children who love and obey Him because they have taken captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. He wants people who have been purified in the fire and have stood the test of time. He wants a people wholly devoted to Him!

You're on the Oregon Trail! You have committed your life to Christ as much as those people committed theirs to reaching Oregon. You're

going to have difficulties. It's going to be uncomfortable. It could be downright dangerous. What are you going to do? Have you prepared for the trip? Are you going to persevere regardless of the obstacles? Are you shoring up your relationship with God by Bible study, prayer, meditation, and fasting, so that you have faith to keep going?

Or are you going to look at what you've left and desire to return to something more comfortable? Temporal, but comfortable. Are you going to give up? Are you going to exhibit a lack of faith and turn back?

I am truly amazed at how many people traveled the Oregon Trail! Five to six months of traveling every day. Not easy! I am also amazed at the perseverance of the people rebuilding Jerusalem. Twenty years! Not easy! But God moved their hearts and they obeyed. God didn't call them to easy or to convenience. God called them to obedience, to faith in Him, to a deeper commitment to Him than others were perhaps willing to make. What has God moved your heart to do? What has He called you to do? “Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing (Matthew 24:46).

To Vote or Not to Vote

By Allie Dart

For the first time in the history of our nation we will have either the first black president in the White House in 2009, or the first female vice

president, depending on how people vote. The 2008 presidential election will have unprecedented results and consequences. We've heard the word CHANGE! touted by Senator Obama and REFORM! by Senator McCain. But never forget, change for the sake of change may not be the answer. Change can be good or bad and reform depends on what is being reformed.

Among other things, Senator Obama has pledged to make defense cuts during war time, to cut spending on national missile defense, to begin, after taking the oath of office as president, to pull our troops out of Iraq. His global poverty act would commit the United States to spending \$845 billion dollars over the next 13 years. He favors drivers licenses for illegals, and wants to give them welfare and Medicaid, allow them to participate in Social Security, and he opposes making English our national language.

Senator McCain, former combat pilot and Vietnam POW, supported the surge in Iraq. If McCain occupies the Oval Office in January, he promises to reform immigration and Wall Street. He promises to give medical care control to the patient and to make health care portable and affordable while lowering costs and insuring care for high-risk patients. He says “drill here, drill now” while pursuing alternate energy strategies. He promises to lower taxes to aid in the creation of more jobs.

Every person eligible to vote should pay close attention to the candidates' proposed changes or reforms. God has given us our country and Christians have a

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What Our Readers Say

“Dear Pastor Dart, I surely miss hearing you on the radio here in Knoxville. For whatever reason the station that carried u’r broadcast put [another program] in its place during the night—anyway, my question to you is an important one because depending on how you/we believe makes an eternity of difference. I think I once heard you say that at the final judgement of unbelievers/and non repenting persons would be destroyed—forever—rather than being punished in eternal conscious torment. I have always questioned how a loving, but just God could subject ANYONE TO ETERNAL TORMENT while somewhere else—others are enjoying HEAVEN—which I can’t conceive. I am a born again CHRISTIAN, however with all my faults and on again-off again sins, I ask this because I TRUST u’r understanding of scripture. Could you explain u’r interpretation of this subject & don’t you hold the belief that ALL are in the grave until JESUS 2nd coming, which to me IS what the Bible teaches? PLEASE send me any/all u’r teachings about these things. . . THANK YOU & GOD BLESS. Hope to find you on the radio and that I get an I-pod and download u’r teachings.”

[If you are interested, or have questions about this subject, call CEM at 1-888-BIBLE-44 and request the *FREE* booklet *Is There Really a Hell Fire?*]

“Good morning once more, yesterday after sending my email I spent time on your website & learned that the messages can be downloaded & as a matter of fact I

found the teaching that I was inquiring about. Just a testimony, yesterday while listening to that teaching I was eating my lunch inside my vehicle as Pastor Dart’s teaching went on, the Spirit of the Almighty was working inside me. Pastor, keep on teaching; suddenly, I couldn’t contain me anymore I started crying I could feel the love that God has for us & the plan He has for each one of us. It is hard to explain, but I felt his presence but also the Holy Spirit gave me a teaching on why a Christian person shouldn’t be united in matrimony with a nonbeliever. PRAISE HIS MIGHTY NAME. I just want to share that with you, my brother in Christ. If at all possible I would like to obtain the CD.”

“This is to express my sincere appreciation for the excellent series you sent me entitled *Making Life Work*. Your album would have even been more helpful if only you could have sent it in 1938. On board NAUTILUS. Apparently we each sent letters prior to hearing from the other fellow. From your date of service I estimate that you served a four year enlistment. I’m lucky enough to have a computer tech as a close friend. Ex Navy and Civil Service. The moment I mentioned your Navy rating TD1 he stated that it was a rating reserved for whiz kids. You seem to qualify. I’ve seen some mighty good men that were still E4 or 5 after 8 to 10 years of service, they could pass the test time after time only to be informed that there was no quota

available which meant that they could not be advanced. . .”

“I recently received a beautiful card from you in the mail thanking me for supporting CEM. My modest donation is the least I could do to help. It is amazing to me that you give away so much material for free on the web. I wish I had more money to give.

“CEM has been such a great institution for me that lending my support is a pleasure. I have never heard a sermon or radio program of yours that I didn’t learn something from. The weekend bible study has become a favorite of mine too and you are doing a great job of it.

“I am excited to join all the good folks like yourselves in Panama City Beach for the feast this year.

“God bless you folks.”

*To Vote or Not to Vote
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responsibility in this election to make a difference. After much prayer and in-depth study of the candidates, Christians should exercise their God-given right by going to the polls November 4th and casting their vote of conviction. Never before have the stakes been higher.

Christian Educational

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