

Disillusionment and Redemption

By Ronald L. Dart

Many years ago, in the midst of a theological argument about what is required for saving a man's soul, I formulated another of what I call Dart's laws. Simply stated, it is, "Disillusionment Is Required for Salvation."

Most of us have experienced disillusionment at one time or another. A classic example is the mentor relationship, as the protégé comes to think his mentor has the answer to everything. A careless mentor may allow this sort of error to grow if he doesn't make it clear that he is not infallible. Sometimes, when the protégé comes to realize that his mentor has feet of clay, he enters what some call "The BOOM years"—Becoming One's Own Man.

Two other classic examples of religious gurus come to mind. They occurred right around the same time. Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart both got caught in compromising situations and were branded as hypocrites. Many of their followers suffered serious disillusionment over the scandals.

One wonders about Jim Jones' followers in Guyana who woke up suddenly to realize that the man was a suicidal maniac. For some, there was no time for the redemption that can follow disillusionment.

There are more examples in politics than space to enumerate. Adolph Hitler swept a whole nation along after him in an insane crusade for power that led to millions of deaths. Some estimates exceed 30 million. Finally his generals became disillusioned and planned a coup. They were forestalled from carrying it out when they heard that Chamberlain was coming to Munich to see the Fuhrer. Some of his officers finally tried an assassination which failed.

I am haunted by the Nuremberg rallies and the cry of "seig heil" that went up from the throats of thousands of young people. I wonder at the disillusionment they felt as their nation lay in ruins at the end of it all.

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Then there are the venal, crooked politicians who will stand in line at the day of judgment to face God's verdict on the things they have done and the people they have hurt. A striking example is the economic crash of 2008. Many of us were living in a fool's

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Why National Economic Woes? . . .

You may have lost your job. Lenders such as Fannie Mae, major banks, and corporations thought to be indestructible, have gone with their hat in hand asking our government for a bail-out. Our new president is trying to pass a stimulus package of trillions of dollars that you, your children, and grandchildren will pay for. Why? Malachi 3 tells us to begin with being honest. And honest people don't rob God. Malachi asks: "How have we robbed you?" Please read this chapter to see if it fits our nation, the most blessed on the face of the earth, in robbing God in tithes and offerings. Notice the consequences for not tithing, and the enormous blessing for obedience. Do you want God on your side during this economic crisis? Don't forget to tithe.

Jesus the Investment Banker

By Lenny Cacchio

The economy has a way of commanding our attention, and it should. While it's tempting to ask what Jesus might do in times like these, it's a tough question to answer without asking more questions. Do you mean what would he do as a carpenter from Nazareth? That would elicit an entirely different answer from what he would do as the King of kings.

Just for the fun of it, let's try to figure out what *Jesus the Investment Banker* might do. In fact, Jesus spoke a couple of parables that give us a strong indication of how he would approach a few challenges our economy faces.

In Luke 19 Jesus pictures himself as an investor who has a few bucks (or pounds) to put to work. He chooses ten people, gives them each the same amount of capital to invest, and tells them to do business with it while he's out of town.

Some time later, he calls his ten entrepreneurs together to assess how they have done. The interesting thing about this is that he gave capital to ten entrepreneurs, but in the parable he only interviewed three of them. Two of the three made good returns, and the third did nothing more than turn the original investment back over. Is it possible that the remaining seven lost everything? If so, it's interesting to contemplate why those seven weren't condemned for losing it all while the fellow who simply sat on his capital received condemnation.

In any case, the investment banker makes a decision. He takes the money away from the guy who has just the one pound that he was given and gives it to the guy who has ten. That sounds callous to our ears today. In fact the disciples themselves questioned the fairness of this: "But Lord! He already has ten pounds!" (Luke 19:25).

That is what Jesus the Investment Banker would do. Instead of subsidizing ventures that are destined to fail, he would direct his capital to the ventures that would be the most productive. That's as it should be. The banker began with ten pounds, and after his entrepreneurs went to work, his wealth had grown to 16 (10+5+1). If he had tried to subsidize the nonproductive enterprises via capital injection taken from the successful, he would eventually erode all his capital on the not so successful entrepreneurs, who would have been better served finding another line of work.

I suspect Ronald Reagan had this parable in mind when he said, "The government's view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it."

Jesus might have had in mind the proverb from Ecclesiastes: "Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that,

or whether both will do equally well" (11:16).

So Jesus the Investment Banker would not be doing to the financial system what some are doing today. Instead of injecting capital into failing institutions, he would be investing in those that have a proven ability to succeed. What would Jesus do? Something radically different from what is being done. And that should be no surprise to anyone.

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paradise, thinking we could use our credit cards indefinitely and it would never catch up with us. I recall one investor and investment advisor who remarked, “It will never catch up with you if you run fast enough.” She didn’t. She went to prison.

I knew a lady who ran up \$42,000 in credit card debt and had to declare bankruptcy. And that was long before 2008. We all had an illusion of prosperity, and the crash was inevitable.

That brings me back to the full statement Dart’s law of disillusionment: “To whatever extent one has illusions, disillusionment is necessary for redemption.” It is true that Hitler made the trains run on time. It is true that Hitler put men back to work and made a start on Germany’s terrible economic problems. It is true that he restored a sense of pride to a people who had lost a war. It is also true that his followers ignored his weaknesses in the illusion of empowerment, and he led them to destruction. Germany had to go through hell to their eventual redemption, and they have become a strong and viable part of the world community. They have, for the time, been redeemed.

There is one more thing you should know about illusions. I learned the hard way, and I am giving it to you free. If you have become disillusioned, you have no one but yourself to blame. We accept illusions because they give us something we want, need, or think we need—usually without having to pay for it. This may explain why disillusionment comes

so hard. People will fight for their illusions. They will defend them to the bitter end, as the Germans did, in spite of everything.

The adulation being heaped on President Obama is making me uneasy. Expectations have been built so high for the 44th president, one wonders at the reaction when the inevitable disillusionment comes. No mortal could live up to the giddy expectations developed around this man and his political campaign. The president of the United States is neither king nor dictator, much less a Messiah. The Constitution places him as an equal power against Congress and the Supreme Court. No man can live up to the promises of a political campaign, so the greater the promise, the harder the fall.

I suspect that President Obama would be better served with a smaller majority in Congress. Now, the Democratic Party cannot hide behind the Republicans, and President Bush will be in Dallas enjoying his retirement. Power corrupts, and future political battles will likely be among Democrats rather than between parties.

I say, let the disillusionment begin. Maybe we can get back to constitutional governance. But here is the problem with that. Studies have shown that mere facts have little effect on the preconceptions of people. They may even harden people in them. If that is the case, we may be headed into an even deeper political divide than we have experienced so far.

There was a time in Israel’s history when they had gone a long way down a wrong road. Since God had made a commitment to

them, he sent a prophet named Jeremiah, who stood in the town square and spoke: “Do its cool waters from distant sources ever cease to flow? Yet my people have forgotten me; they burn incense to worthless idols, which made them stumble in their ways and in the ancient paths. They made them walk in bypaths and on roads not built up” (Jeremiah 18:14-15 NIV).

You’d think someone would come to realize the idols were worthless. After burning incense to the idols, they still had stillborn babies, or crop failures, or famines. You’d think someone would say, “Hey, this isn’t working.” It is obvious, though, that commitment to the idol would blind a lot of folks. Jeremiah was there to call attention to what they were doing. He declared that their idols were an illusion, that their rites didn’t work and were leading them to destruction. So what was the response to the prophet? They said, “Come, let’s make plans against Jeremiah; for the teaching of the law by the priest will not be lost, nor will counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophets. So come, let’s attack him with our tongues and pay no attention to anything he says” (v. 18).

I have little doubt that there were individuals who did listen to Jeremiah, but they knew enough to keep their mouths shut. Jeremiah, commissioned by God, didn’t have that option, so he ended up in jail. Think about what happened in the light of National Socialism. There were people in Germany who had no illusions about where they were going. The ones who spoke up were shipped off to a death camp

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and went up, literally, in smoke. People don't like to be disillusioned.

Another prophet, writing a little earlier, had this to say to a people much like us: "All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest. His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber" (Isaiah 56:9-10).

Who are our watchmen? It depends on who you are. It may be the news media, but they are all dumb dogs that lick the hands of corrupt leaders of one ideology and bark at the other side. The watchmen of Israel, Isaiah went on to say, "are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant."

Since virtually all news corporations are in business to make money, this fits them well enough. Yes, some try, but they are few and far between, and they tend to have the effect of hardening the opposition against them.

Disillusionment, then, can exist at a very personal level, at the group level (group think takes you there), in communities, and even nations. If you can shed your illusions early on and get real, as the teens say, you will be all the better for it. I've been down that road some distance myself, and as I reflected on what helped me, I

naturally returned to the Bible.

A few days ago, I recorded a radio program titled *Disillusionment and Redemption*, and I would like to send you a *FREE* CD of the presentation, because it might help you avoid some of the heartbreak that lies in wait for all of us. To get your copy, just check the box on the enclosed card and send it back to us. The program will not air for some weeks, but you can benefit from having it now.

God bless you, and thanks for your continuing interest in the work of CEM and *Born to Win*. Please help us spread the word.

In Memory

Christian Educational Ministries grateful acknowledges a most generous contribution made in memory of Vernie Armstrong who passed away on November 29, 2008. His loving wife, Martha Armstrong, greatly misses him. Please keep her in your prayers. Our prayers and heartfelt sympathy go out to her in this most difficult time.



Radio Update

Roanoke, VA
WKPA 1390 AM
M-F 4:30 p.m.
Sun. 7:00 a.m.

Lynchburg, VA
WKBA 1550 AM
M-F 4:30 p.m.
Sun. 7:00 a.m.

Calendar of Events

Join Ronald L. Dart in Branson, MO, for the Passover Commemoration, Night to Be Much Observed, First Day of Unleavened Bread, and the following Sabbath. The Passover will be held the evening of April 7th. Mr. Dart will speak on April 9th and 11th. A variety of exciting seminars and fun social gatherings will be enjoyed by all. We hope you can make it to benefit from this bountiful table of spiritual food. This will be a time of growth and renewal. Call CEM for accommodation information and questions, 1-888-BIBLE-44.

Family Bible Retreat, Paris Landing State Park, Buchanan, TN, May 22-25, 2009. Come join us for another outstanding spiritual retreat Memorial Day weekend. Enjoy an inspirational sermon by Ronald L. Dart, interactive seminars on urgent and relevant subjects, exciting youth classes for five age groups (3-20), fun activities for everyone, and fellowship opportunities to bond with other Christians. Delve deeper into God's word and experience God's Spirit working in you. For reservations, call toll free: 1-800-250-8614 and mention CEM's reservation number 3669.

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and equipped for every good work.*