

## Power versus Freedom

By Ronald L. Dart

If “power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely,” how is it that God has not been corrupted? This is one of the old challenges that unbelievers like to toss out to Christians. Actually, it is a perfectly legitimate question, and the answer opens the door to understanding and resolving a wide range of issues relative to God and the Bible.

It was Lord Acton who coined the statement about power, and I am beginning to understand in new ways why it is so. And, perhaps, it is becoming clearer why the founders of this country were so dedicated to the balance of power, and preventing the centralization of power. There is now, and long has been, a struggle between power and freedom. I think it is fair to say that there is enmity between power and freedom. Freedom is a threat to power, and power is a threat to freedom, and it has always been so.

### Can power corrupt God?

Why, then, does God not become corrupted by power? The answer is relatively simple, but for some reason, people don't see it. God has a goal in mind that requires freedom for all concerned. Perhaps we can all understand how having

an overriding objective tends to diminish every other consideration.

So what is that objective? Before I answer that question, I have to talk about the issue of freedom. It has been very much on my mind of late, because I fear a considerable loss of freedom is in the works for mankind—if present trends continue. To explain this, at the risk of boring you, I have to go back to the beginning. There are loads of unanswerable questions that arise from the early chapters of Genesis, and they serve as a distraction from what may be the most important bit of information found there.

You probably know the story well enough. In the words of James Weldon Johnson, God stepped out

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### Power versus Freedom

By Ronald L. Dart ..... 1

Estate Planning Made Easy..... 1

### Gifts of Retirement Plan Assets

By Paula E. Hughes, J.D. ... 2

### Let's Have a Feast You Can Afford

By Skip Martin ..... 2

**SPECIAL OFFER** Minor Prophets Series.... 4

Radio Update..... 4

In Memory..... 4

on space and he looked around and said, “I’m lonely. I’ll make me a world.” And so he set out to create. He made the sun, the moon, and the stars; he created plant, insect and animal life. He planted a garden eastward in a place called Eden. And then he made a Man.

*continued on page 3. . .*

## Estate Planning Made Easy. . .

Christian Educational Ministries would like to send you a *FREE*, easy-to-understand Estate Planning brochure, written by an attorney in layman’s language. This brochure lays out your options, why it is important that you understand them, and the need to make these arrangements while you can. Good planning can ensure that every portion of your estate goes where you want it to go and that unnecessary taxes will not be required on the things you have accumulated throughout your lifetime. All you have to do to receive this *FREE* insightful brochure (EPB) is to check the box on the enclosed card and we will rush it to you.

## Gifts of Retirement Plan Assets

By Paula E. Hughes, J.D.

Retirement plan assets include those held in defined benefit or contribution pension plans, profit-sharing plans, annuity plans, 401(k) or 403(b) plans, stock bonus plans, SEP-IRAs or Keogh accounts, and traditional IRAs. If you have established such a retirement plan, you have probably formed the basis for a financially secure future. While contributions to such plans, and appreciation of assets within such plans, are treated favorably for tax purposes during your lifetime and taxed only when you actually receive the income from the funds, they are nevertheless fully includable in your estate for estate tax purposes. To make matters worse, your heirs could be subject to

income taxes on funds they receive from such accounts as beneficiaries of your estate, amounting to double taxation!

There is a way to reduce or eliminate adverse tax consequences that result from the scenario described above. By donating your retirement funds to a qualifying nonprofit organization such as Christian Educational Ministries (CEM), you avoid both the estate tax and tax on the income you would have received, had you survived, from your qualified retirement plan, CDs, and other undistributed but earned income.

To donate the balance of your retirement account to CEM, list CEM as a beneficiary on the

account. If married, your spouse must sign a waiver, or make CEM the secondary beneficiary after your spouse. If you want to leave a portion of the retirement account to your children, specify the amount to be paid to CEM before dividing the remainder among your children. By donating retirement assets, you can avoid both estate taxes and income taxes attributed to you even on monies earned, but not distributed from your retirement plan, CDs, and other undistributed income accounts.

Be very careful to consult your tax advisor, plan administrator, or estate planning professional before implementing any gift of an interest in a retirement account.

## Let's Have a Feast *You* Can Afford

By Skip Martin, FA Chairman

With the national economic downturn, never before have you so needed to attend a Feast that will involve you and your gifts, where you will be inspired, uplifted, and taught the Bible to prepare you for what lies ahead. The Feast of Tabernacles is only four months away. Once again, CEM is going all out to make certain that there is something for everyone at the 2009 Feast of Tabernacles and that *you can afford to come*.

Our best speakers will bring powerful sermons to teach, inspire, uplift, help you to grow spiritually, and prepare you for what's coming. Exciting, well-planned YEA classes for children aged 3 to 20, beautiful

full-color lesson books, excellent teachers, and lots of interaction will help guide and prepare our youth for the future. Activities for all ages (many *FREE*) are planned: Meet 'n Greet, Beach Party, Cake/Pie & Ice Cream Social, Senior luncheon, dances, Family Picnic, movie night, Variety Show, Teen Mixer, golfing, fishing, and cruises. More activities for young adults and older teens are planned for this year. If you are interested in volunteering, please let us know at [holmes\\_hl@yahoo.com](mailto:holmes_hl@yahoo.com).

The economy is causing many of us to plan carefully, cut back where possible, and think outside the box. Two families can cut costs by living together rather than apart.

If you're looking for a roommate to share expenses, contact Faye Brown at CEM—she will keep a list of names to offer. Be sure to give your gender, general age, the type of accommodation you want, general price range, and contact information.

To help with housing expenses, a newly remodeled housing facility is available this year for anyone who needs to be within walking distance of the ECCC, or needs inexpensive housing. The Emerald Coast Inn & Suites, located next door to the Emerald Coast Conference Center, has a walkway to the ECCC. Rooms will be discounted

*continued on page 4 . . .*

*Power versus Freedom  
continued from page 1 . . .*

It is plain to see that man was the object of this whole exercise. Why that was so is a story all in itself. Then God concluded that it was not good for man to be alone. He put man to sleep, took one of his ribs, and fashioned a woman. To this pair, he gave the Garden of Eden with instructions to dress and keep it. So far, so good.

### **Why two trees in the Garden?**

But God had done something else that people seem to have a hard time understanding. He planted two trees in the Garden. The Tree of Life, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He told his man and his woman that they could eat of any tree in the Garden except one: The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Now here is the burning question: If he didn't want them to eat of that tree, why was it there? (You may want to write that question down and give it some thought. Ask your Sunday School teacher about it.)

Here is the answer: If you aren't free to disobey, you aren't free. And God wanted a man who was *free*. Man's freedom was an imperative of what God was doing with him, and so, man had to have a choice. If you ever need an example of what they call "free moral agency," this will serve well enough. One of the most interesting aspects of the story is that, having told them this, God left them completely alone in the Garden. Except for a snake.

You know the story, and the argument the serpent makes against the command. But God is not

present to argue with the snake. He has already told them. You can have every tree in the Garden but not this one. Well, they ate of the tree, their eyes were opened, and they knew they were naked and they proceeded to cover up.

### **Man granted complete freedom**

Then God came to the Garden and called out for them, "Where are you?" Now at this point, there should be many furrowed brows. What do you mean, "Where are you?" Isn't this God, who knows everything? Yes, it is God who knows everything he wants to know. What he had done was to leave instructions and then leave these two beautiful, naked, creatures together—entirely alone. He did not hide in the bushes and watch.

This was an essential element of granting to man complete freedom. God wasn't going to stand around and nag them. Now why did God do it this way? Why didn't he make creatures that could only do the right thing? Actually, he did. We call them cows or sheep. What God wanted were sons to share eternity, sons who chose God freely, and not because they had no choice.

So freedom was at the top of God's agenda, right from the get go. Why does power not corrupt God? Because he is absolutely committed to man's freedom and cannot get what he is after without it. This simple idea has far-reaching consequences.

Let's bring Jesus into the scene and consider the impact he had on the power structure of the time. Let me draw you a picture. Jesus was

in a synagogue on the Sabbath day, and there was a man there who had a withered arm. The leaders were watching him to see whether Jesus would heal on the Sabbath day. Jesus knew the arguments about Sabbath observance. He kept the Sabbath himself. The leaders there intended to put Jesus on the spot. They asked him if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath day (Matthew 12:10 ff.).

### **Jesus' impact on the power structure**

Jesus challenged the argument on its merits: "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." Then, Jesus told the man with the withered arm to stretch forth his arm. He did, and it was made whole on the spot. It was the most vivid answer that could have been given.

What followed would have been, in the normal course of events, an insane response. The Pharisees went out and held a council on how to destroy Jesus. Time after time, Jesus had healed the sick, released burdens, freed people captive to disease. And time after time, the fear of him and the hatred grew. But not among the common people. They had no problem with Jesus, but followed him everywhere and hung on his every word. What was the difference between, say, the Pharisees and the common folk? In a word, it was power. Somehow, the story of their deliberations and a bald statement of their motives

*continued on page 4 . . .*

*Power versus Freedom  
continued from page 3 . . .*

leaked out, and we know what happened.

It seems clear enough what the problem was: They feared the loss of power. And it is probably the fear of the loss of power that causes power to corrupt. Maybe that is a clue to understanding why an all-powerful God is not corrupted by power.

There is much more to say in developing this complex theme, and I say it in a new program titled, *Power versus Freedom*. It has not yet been aired, but you can have a *FREE* CD of it right now. Just check the box on the enclosed card and send it back to us. We have included an envelope for your convenience. You will want to have a copy of this, because it resolves some of the more complex questions ever asked about God, power, and man.

## *Special Offer*

### **Minor Prophets CD Series**

The Minor Prophets are 12 short, individual books that follow the Book of Daniel and complete the Old Testament. It would be a serious mistake to think these books are "minor." These books are poorly understood and their relevance has gone unnoticed because no one has taken time to explain them. Here's the opportunity of a lifetime to discover real gems as Ronald L. Dart shows you that these Minor Prophets are in no way minor in their content nor their significance. Some of these writings are recorded for us today. Carefully listen to these CDs and ask yourself how and why these things are happening. This remarkable series was recently updated to include all of the Minor Prophets. Thirty-three *Born to Win* programs are on 17 CDs (MPSC), with a bonus program of 1 Kings, normally priced at \$72.95, now *discounted until July 31, 2009 to only \$54.95*.



### *Radio Update*

#### **Ft. Smith, AR**

KBHN 89.7 FM  
Sun.-F 6:30 a.m.

M-F 7:30 p.m. & 11:30 p.m.

#### **Los Angeles, CA**

KTYM 1460 AM  
Sun.-F 4:30 pm

#### **Little Rock, AR**

KAAY 1090 AM  
M-F 5:00 a.m.

(50,000 watt clear channel)

M-F 7:30 pm

*Let's Have a Feast You Can Afford  
continued from page 2. . .*

to \$50 per night for CEM attendees. If you haven't made housing arrangements, be sure to check out the Tabernacles page at [www.borntowin.net](http://www.borntowin.net) for information about housing and discounts.

Join us for a great Feast of Tabernacles at the Emerald Coast Conference Center in Fort Walton Beach, Florida.

### *In Memory*

Christian Educational Ministries gratefully acknowledges the very generous donation made in memory of Jessie Richardson, a U.S. Navy veteran who died in World War II. As Christians and as a nation we are most grateful for his service to our country.

CEM also gratefully acknowledges the generous donation made in memory of Barbara Black, of Big Sandy, Texas, who passed away May 11. Barbara is survived by her husband, Charles, and several children and grandchildren. Our prayers and deepest sympathy are with them.

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