

Living to Win

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Civil Religion

From Ronald L. Dart's Program Notes

The world is seeing the rebirth of a very old religion, and hardly anyone realizes what is happening. Half the people are paying no attention, and the other half are looking in the wrong direction. No, I am not talking about the new world order. And I am not talking about the earth goddess, Gaia. These are new. The religion I am talking about is very old.

I became aware of it after the State of the Union address in 1993. As a political speech, it was brilliant. Enthusiastic, confident. The President was very excited about the challenges he faced and what he was going to do about it. But, as I listened to his speech, I slowly became aware of something. I wasn't listening for it, but it became apparent as he went along. From beginning to end, there was no acknowledgment of God. There was not even a "God bless America" at the end.

I can't help but wonder if that was a first for a State of the Union address, because every president I can remember referred to God routinely in his speeches. But as I listened, I felt that if I had heard a

reference to God, it would have seemed contrived and out of place.

But just because there was no mention of God did not mean that the speech was not religious. It was religious in a very odd way. But the religion in question had nothing to do with God as we normally think of God. A passage from Deuteronomy 8:10-20 came to mind near the end of the speech: "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes,

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which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God . . . And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for

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It's a Team Effort . . .

CEM is a small, dedicated organization trying to do big things. In and of itself it is very limited. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he told his disciples that from here on out it would be a team effort. They had the specific responsibility to go make disciples. They were to impact the lives of others. That same Great Commission applies to each one of us. One of many ways you can impact the lives of others is to sponsor the *Born to Win* broadcast in your own community. Call Cathy Gibbons of GG Media Productions, our media agent, at 903-839-7070 to discuss how you can team up with CEM to multiply the impact you have on others by sponsoring the *Born to Win* broadcast.

The Christian Harvest Festival

Excerpts from *The Thread, God's Appointments with History* by Ronald L. Dart

One of the great losses to the nominal Christian faith was the abandonment of the holydays of the Bible, their dismissal as merely “Jewish” institutions. And surely, one of the greatest of the Christian holydays is Pentecost, because it was on this day that the church was empowered to do its work. Some even call Pentecost the birthday of the church.

But on that first Pentecost of the New Testament church, no one even thought of abandoning this festival. They were too high with the experience. Imagine yourself sitting in a room with 120 of the first disciples of Jesus. You have been through an emotional roller coaster the past two months, from the triumphal entry into Jerusalem of the Messiah, to his ignominious torture and death, to his resurrection. All of you saw him alive, some of you saw him ascend to heaven.

Suddenly, with no warning, the room is filled with a great roaring sound, and something very much like fire shimmers across the ceiling of the room, and a little stream of that fire descends upon each of you sitting in the room. Then each of you finds yourself with the ability to speak in a language you have never spoken before and bursting with a message about the wonderful works of God. They baptized 3000 people that day!

Once you look past the incredible experience of the day, *what did it all mean?* To the Jew,

Pentecost was not a stand alone festival. It was the 50th day of the harvest that had begun seven weeks ago, with the presentation to God of the wave sheaf and bread of fine flour mixed with oil in the Temple. To the disciples of Jesus, Pentecost was the Feast of Firstfruits, and the baptism of 3000 souls on that day was a sharp reminder of what they were about.

But what is the Christian connection? The Apostle Paul made the connection to Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23: “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him” (NIV).

The early Christians made the connection almost automatically. “You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be completed” (Leviticus 12:14-15). Note this well. When Matthew says that Mary first saw Jesus on

“the first day of the week,” what he said in Greek [the language in which Matthew wrote, originally] is that Jesus appeared to Mary on the “first of the Sabbaths.”

Matthew is referring to the first day of the weeks between the offering of the wave sheaf at the beginning of the harvest, and the offering on the Feast of Firstfruits, which occurred seven weeks later. “Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD. From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, baked with yeast, as a wave offering of firstfruits to the LORD” (Leviticus 23:16-17 NIV).

We know Jesus as the Bread of Life, the unleavened bread that was without sin. But on this day two loaves of leavened bread are presented to God as an offering of the firstfruits. The comparison to the Feast of Firstfruits is deliberate, and the Apostle James explains: “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be *a kind of firstfruits* of all he created” (James 1:17-18 NIV).

This holyday is not about the resurrection of Christ. It is about the resurrection of the saints. In a sense, Pentecost looks to the Day of the Lord—the return of Christ

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Civil Religion

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it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.”

I don't mean to pick on the President, because he merely represents all of us. But his speech was a classic example of what God warned us not to do. Now, I would be willing to bet that you think we have not done this. Maybe we have not been as thankful as we should be, but at least we haven't gone after other gods. Don't be so sure.

Some time ago, I came across a phrase in an editorial that I had not seen before. The author was talking about our “civil religion.” I learned that our civil religion has its holy writ, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. When our fathers founded this country, they believed in God. “Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion.” It was not their intent to rule God out of public life, but to avoid sectarian religion gaining control of the government and dictating forms of worship.

But they recognized that any government must be founded on some moral authority, and the moral authority they recognized was God. They believed that all men were *created* equal, and that they were endowed by their *creator* with unalienable rights, and they included those words in the Declaration of Independence.

This document and the Constitution made possible the ending of slavery in this country. The founding of our civil religion was on God. But the founding fathers knew how intolerant religion is, so the Constitution prohibited the establishment of a religion or any laws prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

Theoretically, that should have worked just fine. What the founding fathers did not foresee was that the State itself could become a religion.

***It is in the nature
of Government
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prerogatives of God.***

It is in the nature of government to assume the prerogatives of God and to put on the mantle of religion. As I listened to that State of the Union speech, I was struck by the staggering scope of the President's plans. This was not a foreign policy speech, it was domestic policy, and the President had a plan to solve all our problems.

He was going to eradicate our economic problems, deal

with poverty, health care, crime, education. If it was a problem, he was going to fix it. Listen to this paraphrase of Psalm 103: “Bless the State, O my soul, and forget not all its benefits: Which forgiveth all thine iniquities; which healeth all thy diseases; Which redeemeth thy life from destruction; which crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Which satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. The State executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.”

This was the thrust of the President's State of the Union address. There was no remembrance of God, and the State was going to do for us all the things that God said he would do for us. The speech even used the language of religion. The State calls on us to sacrifice. Has the State become our god? Have the churches failed, and the State has stepped in to fill the vacuum? What will be the effect of this upon our lives? Is the State the religious power that the Apostle Paul saw at the time of the end, which will set itself up above all religion? What if the modern State supplants God? And what will save you from falling into its trap?

Ronald L. Dart explores these questions in the light of Scripture, and the answers are chillingly applicable to us, today. You need this CD of *Civil Religion*. Request your *FREE* CD by returning the enclosed card.

*The Christian Harvest Festival
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and the resurrection of the dead when the firstfruits are presented to God. But doesn't the term "firstfruits" imply there will be later fruits? In Palestine, there were two major harvests: grain in the spring, fruit in the fall. Consider how Jesus spoke of this. "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field'" (Matthew 9:36-38).

You don't have to be a scholar to see what Jesus is talking about. He is talking about people, not grain. It was the people who were scattered and leaderless. There were so many of them, and so few to provide help and direction. The harvest of lives is out there in great abundance, Jesus told his disciples. Pray to God that he would send more workers out into the harvest. In the New Testament, the harvest is a repeated analogy for evangelizing the people of the world so they can be harvested as the firstfruits to God.

At Christian Educational Ministries, we are laborers in that harvest of people. Every one who helps us in our work is a laborer, too, as are all who teach others to do all things that Jesus commanded. Still, it is ever true that laborers are few. The work of the harvest remains. Will you help?

Calendar of Events

Feast of Pentecost - Sunday, June 12, 2011. CEM plans to join the Texas Fellowship for Pentecost services. Watch www.borntowin.net for details and directions, or call Paula Hughes at 1-888-BIBLE-44.

Feast of Tabernacles 2011 - Join us in celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles! This year Christian Educational Ministries will be hosting the Feast of Tabernacles at the Sevierville Events Center in Sevierville, Tennessee, October 12-20, 2011. Opening night services begin at 7:30 pm on Wednesday, October 12, 2011. You will also be able to view all services at Sevierville, Tennessee, via Video Live Streaming at: <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/cem-network>. We will add more information under the Feast of Tabernacles section of the website soon. Please check back, or call the office at 1-888-BIBLE-44 or 903-839-9300 or email Paula Hughes at paulahughes@borntowin.net.

Radio Log

A down turn in the economy is difficult. Virtually every household and many businesses have had to tighten their belts. We at CEM are doing the same thing. After much prayer and careful examination of how each radio station is producing, we made a decision to cancel 13 of our least productive radio stations. This was certainly done reluctantly, and we hope that anyone affected will be able to pick up the *Born to Win* broadcasts on another station. We also pray that it won't be long before we're able to go back on every one of these stations. You can play a major part in bringing these stations back on the air by supporting the *Born to Win* broadcast. In the meantime, be sure to listen to the broadcasts any time of the day or night on the web at www.borntowin.net.

Please Notice:

For your convenience, an envelope is enclosed for your Pentecost Holy Day offering (Deuteronomy 16:16-17).



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