

Living to Win

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Christian Educational Ministries

To Honor God

From Ronald L. Dart's *Born to Win* Notes

Once upon a time there was a people who had returned to their homeland after a generation in exile. These people had been tasked by God with repairing the Temple and restoring worship.

It wasn't that God dwelt in houses made with hands. The Temple was symbolic, a center of worship, a reminder of who God is—really—and of what is really important about life. But life wasn't working very well for them. They were in the middle of an economic failure—a position not unlike where we find ourselves today.

They had been told by the prophets from Isaiah to Jeremiah to Ezekiel why they were going into exile before it actually happened, so they just might listen to a prophet this time. God sent Haggai: "Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: 'Is it time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?' Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: '*Give careful thought to your ways.* You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. *You earn wages,*

only to put them in a purse with holes in it.'

"This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,' says the LORD. 'You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?' declares the LORD Almighty. 'Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house'" (Haggai 1:3-9 NIV).

Ouch! Do you suppose there is a lesson here that speaks to where we are today? The theme, "You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it," sure sounds familiar.

We have run smack up against economic failure, and we have no idea how bad it will be or how long it will last. And if we think our government has a clue what to do about it, we are dreaming. But

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

To Honor God

from Ronald L. Dart's notes 1

Your New Opportunity 1

Economics and the World Order (Part 2)

By C. Roderick Martin 2

Financial Statement 4

maybe we could learn from Haggai, the prophet, to give careful thought to our ways. There has been a systematic rejection of God in our land for a long time now. And God has looked on us and said, as he said to the Jews by Haggai: Prosperity isn't working very well. Let's try poverty.

When I think about what Haggai told these people, it is different, but it resonates: "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while my house remains a ruin? *Give careful thought to your ways.*" Okay. I did that and what it said to me is that people have been looking after their own wealth, building their own fine

continued on page 3. . .

Your New Opportunity . . .

If you make one New Years' resolution, resolve to make an eternal difference by helping CEM get the Gospel out with your donations. Help the *Born to Win* broadcast return to more and more radio stations in 2012.

Economics and the World Order (Part 2)

By C. Roderick Martin, a CEM board member

European and American politicians continue to put off making the difficult choices required to avoid a financial meltdown, the likes of which the world has not seen. To date, the actions taken amount to little more than, “kicking the proverbial can down the road.” I liken these politicians to a man jumping off a 100-story building, falling 98 floors, and yelling, “Nothing has happened to me yet!” In the years to come, many will look back on this period with great regret and say, “We should have known.”

When the dogwood first buds, we know spring is near. A red sky in morning means bad weather is coming. When the morning dew turns to frost, is winter not imminent? Did not Christ say, “When the fig tree’s branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know summer is nigh.” These prescient signs we quickly discern, but dark clouds gathering over Europe, just over the horizon, go undetected by most Americans and Europeans. With most people today, until dire circumstances affect one personally—altering one’s lifestyle or threatening one’s family—little attention is paid to strife in countries oceans apart.

Why should we care about Europe’s debt; banks fearful of lending to one another; stagnate growth; Italian bonds commanding in excess of seven percent? Before we can answer these questions, we must understand the difference between macro- and microeconomics. In the simplest terms, macroeconomics looks at the economy as a whole, and focuses on issues such as

growth, unemployment, inflation, and business cycles.

Microeconomics studies how individuals (firms or households) make choices influenced by economic forces. Think of it like a ship sailing the seas: wind speed and direction, wave motion, atmospheric conditions, even invisible gravitational forces, all affect the ship in various ways—these are macro. Poor crew attitudes, a defective ship’s rudder, a jib set too early, a captain who spends more time with Caribbean rum than plotting course—these are micro. For the purposes of this series of articles, our concentration will be macroeconomic.

In addition, we should have a cursory knowledge of the European Union (EU). Created in the aftermath of World War II, the EU is a unique economic and political partnership between 27 European countries. With the implementation of the Treaty on European Union on January 1, 1993, a single market with a single currency was born. Today, the EU comprises seven percent (327 million) of the world’s population and 20 percent of the world’s exports and imports. The mere size of the EU, coupled with the fact it is America’s largest trading partner, dictates we should closely watch any political or economic developments. Should a currency crisis or recession hit Europe, it would have an enormous impact on the US. A severe recession in Europe would most certainly lead to recession in the US. If Europe sneezes, the United States

gets a cold.

A word about US debt; consider the following: current US debt exceeds \$15 trillion (this is equal to 100 percent of GDP, which measures total value, in dollars, all goods and services produced in one year); total US debt—\$54 trillion; debt per US citizen—\$174,230; debt per US family—\$659,938; US unfunded liabilities (Social Security, prescription drugs, Medicare)—\$16 trillion. This equals \$1,035,956 per taxpayer (source: US Debt Clock.org). These numbers are difficult to fathom. Personally, I cannot wrap my brain around such staggering numbers.

Since \$4.8 trillion of US debt is held by foreign countries (short-term debt), we find ourselves at their mercy. Why? Once or twice a week, the Fed auctions US Treasuries. This provides the monies to operate our government. Foreign governments buy our Treasuries for several reasons: the US is a very safe investment because we have a stable government, rule of law, and we have never defaulted on our debt. These instruments—US Treasuries—bear interest. If the Fed cannot attract buyers at a certain interest rate, they raise the rate. However, there is a point the Fed will not exceed at any given auction (target rate). If they cannot get enough buyers at a given rate, they simply buy the Treasuries themselves, increasing their Balance Sheet. At the end of each auction, the Fed publishes the coverage rate. Usually, this rate is between three and three and a half. This means there were

*To Honor God
continued from page 1 . . .*

houses, and have utterly ignored what is really important.

This is not to say that it is because we haven't built a church building. And I don't think we need to rush out and build a national temple. That's not it. By now, everyone knows that millions of Americans have been living way beyond their means. They have bought houses they can't pay for in the hope that the value of those houses would increase enough so they could sell them and make money. They were living in a fool's paradise. They had no idea of the financial chicanery going on with government guaranteed loans, nor of the colossal size of debt they and others had incurred.

"Give careful thought to your ways." What has been your *god* in these years that have brought us to this place? Your god is the one you pay the most attention to. It is the goals that you sacrifice to achieve.

People have talked much about the greed on Wall Street, but no politician has the courage to talk about the greed of the buyers of overvalued real estate. Years ago, when there was a bubble in California, I wondered why people were buying homes when they were going up 25 percent a year. Didn't everyone *know* that couldn't go on?

I asked a real estate agent. Yes, she told me, people know that, but they believe in *the bigger fool theory*: "I know I am a fool to pay this much, but a bigger fool will come along and I'll sell it to him." This was just months before the bubble burst.

I want to make something clear. I

don't want to be taken wrong. This message is not about money or about buildings. It is about priorities: *Giving careful thought to our ways*. It seems plain that God, the real God, has not been very high on the list. Maybe that would be a good thing for us to do. Sit down and make a list, not of what your priorities should be, *but what they have been*. What have you been putting first, second, third on the list of important things, and where has God been on that list?

Here is what God told Haggai, and the people at that time. Haggai, bless him, wrote it down for us. "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?"—"Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house."

In other words, your priorities were all wrong. I would have taken care of you, but you have to put me first. It is for your own good. So, what should we do?

"Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored."

So there it is. *It is the honor due to God* that we should be thinking about. The temple? They would build it, but after Jesus came, it would be destroyed yet again. If God is not honored at the Temple, he will not honor it. Our task is different from theirs—we have no Temple to build—but the principle is the same. Think about your life and about God and reorder your life.

Their task was to get timber and build the house. You must decide what your task is. But it will have

something to do with honoring God.

Another Prophet called people on the carpet about this: "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?" (Malachi 1:6 KJV).

This is not about money nor about buildings, but that is not to say things like that don't enter into the equation. For example: "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9-10).

Giving to God has nothing to do with any need he has. In fact, he has no needs that a man can fill. So what is the purpose of all of this? You really need the *FREE* CD of this message, *To Honor God*, given by Ronald Dart in his usual clear style. It will give inspiration as it directs you to understand God's purpose for you and how God works. Don't put this newsletter down before you order this *FREE* CD today. You'll be glad you did. As we start this new year, we hope you will honor God with giving back to him your tithes and offerings. When you give to CEM, they will be used effectively in getting the Gospel out on the *Born to Win* program.

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

*Economics and the World Order (Part 2)
continued from page 2. . .*

three to three and a half more buyers to cover the sale of Treasuries. This figure should be monitored closely. These auctions are extremely important. Interest rates on mortgages, car loans, student loans, credit cards, all tie to US Treasuries.

The inner workings of the Federal Reserve are very complex and sophisticated; one would need many hours of college level study to grasp how it works. However, for our purposes, think of it in the following way: You are in debt and you can no longer pay your monthly bills. To raise cash you have an auction, to sell some furniture you no longer need. You prepare a list of this furniture—call it your Balance Sheet. If your grandmother’s hutch is not bringing the price you believe it should, you bid a higher price. You have bid against yourself. You keep the hutch and it remains on your Balance Sheet. You still need cash to meet your monthly bills, so you go to your bank and borrow the money, or you put it on your credit card.

If the Fed cannot raise money through these auctions to pay the operating expenses of the Federal Government, it has one option you and I do not have: it can print the money. Its citizens back US government debt. Consequently, without our knowledge or approval, our portion of this debt as citizens, increases daily (review US Debt Clock referenced earlier).

Today, most of the US debt (short term) is held by Japan, China, and England. For several years, they have been the largest purchasers of US debt. Recently, China has reduced its US holdings and is no

longer buying the quantities it once did. Perhaps it is now easier to understand what impact this could have on you personally.

It is not my intent to offer solutions. Frankly, the enormous economic problems facing the US and Europe are far too complex for me. I hope that we can simplify the perplexity of the issues and better understand the state of affairs in which we find ourselves. Can we rely on governments and politicians to guide us through the troubled waters ahead? History has proved we cannot. In July 2008, Bernanke (Federal Reserve Chairman) and Paulson (Treasury Secretary) testified before a joint session of Congress that the economy was sound. President Bush echoed these sentiments, albeit these were the conclusions of his economic advisors. Two months later, during one weekend in September, these same men told a select committee of Congress and the President the US was facing a total financial collapse that would spread throughout markets worldwide within 48 hours after a US collapse. We had to act before the markets opened Monday morning. Either these men lied to Congress and the American people or they did not see it coming. What is truly frightening is the latter. Oh, “the plans of mice and men.”

I am reminded of an old Yiddish proverb, “Man plans, and God laughs.” What is ironic is the economic Armageddon facing this country and Europe is of our own making. The Hand of Providence is absent. Unbridled greed, pride, and vanity have led us to where we are today. We have forgotten it is God who blesses this country and

**Christian Educational Ministries
Statement of Cash Flows
for the Year Ended
October 31, 2011**

RECEIPTS:	
Contributions	\$1007596
CEM Bookstore	102658
Other Income	6153
	<u>\$1116407</u>
EXPENSES:	
A/V Supplies	\$ 26897
Occupancy	15479
Office & Adm. Expenses	21032
Mailing Expenses	18500
Postage	69182
Printing	51700
Media-Radio & Prod	764565
Telephone & Utilities	19873
Editorial Services	5882
CEM Bookstore	14443
Employee Benefits	25701
Wages & Payroll Taxes	267649
Summer Camp	130
Total Operating Exp.	<u>\$1301033</u>
Decrease in Fund Bal.	(\$ 184626)

**Feast of Tabernacles
Statement of Operations 2011**

Total Offering	\$ 26663
Total Expenses	21175
Increase in Fund Bal.	\$ 5448

(Reflects receipts through
October 31, 2011 only;
excludes in-kind donations)

because we have forgotten who our God is, we are about to reap the whirlwind. There is a Day of Reckoning and it is fast approaching.

In our next article, we will examine the European Union’s debt and how a collapse in the Euro could cause a worldwide depression. Is there anything we can do to protect ourselves?