



Born to Win

A Tale of Two Nations

by Ronald L. Dart

Once upon a time, there were two nations. The one nation was *astonishingly* wealthy. Her cities were clean and prosperous. The crime rate was so low it was almost non-existent. In the countryside, family and corporate farms both flourished side by side. The population was growing steadily, but by her own children. Abortion was non-existent—not by law, but by the desire for children. Families were for the most part two-parent families, and they wanted kids. Good, big families were prized. On the farms, livestock was healthy and plentiful. Fields of grain were so productive that they had plenty to export to hungry nations around the world. The crops were free of blight and disease, the people healthy and strong. Their storehouses and silos were full of food. It seemed that everything these people put their hand to *worked*.

Militarily, their forces were not all that large; but they were astonishingly effective. Rogue nations feared to mess with these people and, after some embarrassing defeats, decided they're just better off leaving these people alone. Other nations realized there's something very special about this country. They were prosperous beyond most nations' wildest dreams. It rained when it was supposed to—they weren't vexed by flood or drought—and they were a generous people, sending astonishing amounts of aid to other countries. They led the free world.

But then there was another nation. They did not do so well. They got the same start the other nation had, but their cities were corrupt and crime-ridden. Their infant mortality rate was not what it could have been. Abortion was common. Their homegrown population was in decline. The family farm had all but disappeared, and the great commercial farms engaged in practices that let contaminated food onto the market. They had floods when they needed clear skies, and dry reservoirs when they needed rain. *Nothing* seemed to work like it should. The political climate was confused and confusing as leaders tried to find solutions, but all *they* could do was create laws. Agriculture began to languish with blight and disaster destroying crops. Food prices were high and going up. Where there had been floods, there were now dust storms. Progress against disease proceeded in fits and starts, and the country was losing ground on it. Cancer was taking some of her best and brightest right in the prime of life.

Militarily, she was still strong; but weak civilian leadership was undercutting the fighting services. She was losing where she used to win. Her fighting men were lying dead in the streets. The warrior class was, well, slowly disappearing. The country instituted the draft, and families saw their sons and their daughters sent to fight and die on foreign soil. Mental illness was becoming a blight on the cities, with homeless people (who were homeless because they were sick) sleeping on grates in the winter. Everything she set her hand to do fell apart. The solution to today's problem became the cause of tomorrow's problem. Crime in the city and in the country was becoming intolerable. Children were being raped and murdered. College girls were disappearing, never to be heard of again. Men would find their fiancée kidnapped and raped.

The economy seemed strong in some ways, but a man could build a house and lose it to the bank before he got to live in it. Because of disease, a farmer could see his animals all slaughtered in a vain attempt to head off an epidemic. Government was beginning to take everything a man had and give it to someone else...assuming, of course, the insects didn't get it first. A man could harvest a bushel of grain

where he had planted two bushels. As time went by, immigration—legal and illegal—began to change the demographics, and finally led to aliens dominating society. Instead of the nation lending to others, it began to borrow. The situation was bad and getting worse. In the end, something happened to them they never could have imagined would: They were invaded by an enemy and destroyed as a nation.

Now, when you sit and think about this for a moment, it might occur to you that this actually could be *the same nation* at different times in her history; and the time of transition would see a little of both countries reflected in her history. In fact, you may already have seen *your own country* somewhere along the line between these two extremes; because, in fact, these are two extremes at the far ends of a spectrum; and all the way across that spectrum you see, in varying degrees, what I'm talking about.

Now, what do you suppose makes the difference between two countries like this? There's bound to be a reason for it. And if a nation is trending one way or another, what might lead to a reversal of the trend? I suspect it's a lot easier to reverse the upward trend than the downward; because there is a kind of... What shall I call it?... a *moral gravity* that inclines us toward the downward trend. One thing we can say with certainty: The solution is not government. The problem is not organizational, it's not governmental; it is *moral*.

Now, I drew this tale of two nations from a chapter in the Bible. It arises from a speech delivered by a man named Moses. One day, he stood before the Israelites to put the whole thing in perspective for them; and they listened to him as he spoke; and he said:

Deuteronomy 28

NIV '84

¹ If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth.

² All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God:

And then follows the story of the blessed nation I drew on at the beginning of the program. Every bit of that I pulled from those first verses of the Book of Deuteronomy, chapter 28. He said:

Deuteronomy 28

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³ You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country.

⁴ The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks.

⁵ Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed.

⁶ You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.

What a wonderful promise this is. It's like that shining city on a hill. What a great situation to be in.

Deuteronomy 28

NIV '84

⁷ The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven.

⁸ The LORD will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. [...]

Think of that. Every thing you try—every new project, every new idea, every new business, every new invention, all the stuff you start—he'll just bless it.

Deuteronomy 28

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⁸ [...] The LORD your God will bless you in the land he is giving you.

⁹ The LORD will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the LORD your God and walk in his ways.

¹⁰ Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will fear you.

¹¹ The LORD will grant you abundant prosperity—in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your ground—in the land he swore to your forefathers to give you.

Everything is going to be abundant and work.

Deuteronomy 28

NIV '84

¹² The LORD will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season [*not floods*] and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none.

¹³ The LORD will make you the head, not the tail. If [...]

And here we are with one of those “if”s again.

Deuteronomy 28

NIV '84

¹³ [...] If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom.

I'm telling you, this is a really wonderful promise. But there is something you need to know about this: It's not magic. It is not magical. God does not take a wand like a fairy godmother and make it all work. How, then, *does* it work?

You know, I was just thinking about this: that if we could just find a country like this somewhere on the planet right now, we'd run down to the embassy and make application to emigrate there and see if we couldn't move in with those people. But seriously thinking about it, this comes about... a nation like that exists as a result of people following a tradition that was revealed long ago by God. Honestly, I think some people think of faith as something like magic—it's an amulet or a talisman they hang from the mirror in their car; it's a good-luck charm. If we obey God, he waves his magic wand and we make money. If we disobey, he waves his ugly magic wand in reverse and we get cursed. What I'm going to call on you to do this day is to make a paradigm shift in the way you think about God, faith, and religion.

Remember Gary Larson, the creator of *The Far Side* series of cartoons? There was a favorite of his... I mean, I've always enjoyed it. It's a cartoon showing God sitting before this giant monitor screen with a keyboard in front of him. There were various controls that were there, and on the right side of the console there was this very large button containing one word: SMITE. The idea some people carry with them is: If they sin, God hits the SMITE button and there they go; God puts them under some kind of a curse. And, if nothing happens right away, they assume that God has let them off. What they don't realize... and I'm afraid that we don't think of it correctly. What people don't realize is that sin carries the curse *with it*; it's in its hip pocket. It's just that the consequences do not become immediately apparent, and that's where the danger lies.

Now, let's go back to Moses speech again with this idea in mind: Both the blessings and the cursing are *natural consequences* of a way of life. Deuteronomy 28, verse 14. Moses said:

Deuteronomy 28

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¹⁴ Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them.

¹⁵ However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

Now, think very carefully about what Moses said. There's nothing magic about it. It's not bad luck. We have borrowed a word from the Hindus to describe it; it's "bad karma". And karma is not thought of as bad luck, it is the bad *results* of the things that you have done; and it doesn't depend on a higher power making it happen. The way Moses puts it is that the curses are chasing us down, they're dogging our heels; and if we deviate, become distracted, or slow down, they will *overtake* us. Now, I don't know about you, but I find that *more frightening* than the idea that God would do it himself. Why? Because God is merciful, sin isn't. It takes a *miracle* to get sin off your trail, and faith to keep it off.

Now, here is another thing to consider about the law of God as presented by Moses and by Jesus: The law of God is a *revelatory* device, not a *regulatory* device. In other words, it was given to *reveal* something, not to *control* behavior. It's a *huge* difference. It was regulatory, in a sense, under Moses because they had to govern a people. Apart from that, the law is a purely personal matter. Let me give you a good, classic example. Deuteronomy, chapter 22, verse 6 says this:

Deuteronomy 22

AKJV

⁶ If a bird's nest chance to be before you in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting on the young, or on the eggs, you shall not take the dam with the young:

⁷ But you shall in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to you; that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days.

Now, I'm not going to attempt to explain the environmental issues connected with this, but it's what we used to call "conservation". The realization is that, if I want there to be more chicks and more eggs next year, I need to leave that dam alone—leave that bird alone, let her go out there, let her find her mate, let them have another round of chicks. We've got to increase the population of birds; we can't afford to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. This is not a *regulation*. God didn't have an angel to supervise bird's eggs, and there were no bird police hiding in the bushes to see what you did. It was *entirely* up to you; and the consequences were entirely yours, as well. They might also affect your neighbor in process of time, sure enough; but it is a matter of simple conservation. What is revealed in this law is an eternal principle: Take care of the stuff you've got. You can extrapolate it from any number of life situations where you have to conserve the source of production. You can't afford to eat your seed corn. You can't afford to kill the goose that lays the golden egg (a tale which probably owes its origin to Moses). A people who develop good conservation habits will see a result in the environment.

Why should we do this? Well, Moses said it would prolong our days. In other words, the law is good for *us*; it's not for the birds. And it works; not because God sits up in heaven and presses a button on his console, or not because we fail to be prosecuted because God has gone somewhere else. God just doesn't bother enforcing his law day-to-day; he allows the consequences of sin to do that for him. All this is to train us to take the long view; not the short-sighted, selfish view we live with—"I want it, and I want it now!" It's one of the oldest and best understood principles of financial well-being. It's called

deferred gratification. Now let's take a look at the flip side of what Moses said—Deuteronomy 28, where we were before, verse 14:

Deuteronomy 28

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¹⁴ Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them.

¹⁵ However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

¹⁶ You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country.

¹⁷ Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed.

¹⁸ The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks.

¹⁹ You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out.

What he is telling us is: *Life will not work*. It will not work for you at all. I chose the title *Born to Win* for this radio program because God put us down here to fight, to win, to overcome; and you have to do that in a certain way. The law defines *a way of life*, a way of living, a way of treating your neighbor, a way of relating to God; and when you *do* that it changes your decisions, it changes your choices; and you begin to work *with* the world around you instead of selfishly against it. Keep in mind: The world is a hard place to live. You need all the breaks you can get. And if you decide to forsake God's commands, you won't get the breaks. Why? Because the breaks are *embedded in the commands*. That's important. It's so important I'm going to tell you again: If you decide to forsake God's commands, you won't get the breaks. Why? Because the breaks are *embedded* in the commands. Oh, I know Moses goes on to say that God will send some of the bad things that come our way. Some of the bad things that happen to us are *chastisement*, intended to turn us around. But frankly, in most cases God doesn't have to lift a finger; all he has to do is decide not to head off the bad stuff, just let it roll.

How bad can all this get? Well, in verse 20 of Deuteronomy 28, Moses goes on to say:

Deuteronomy 28

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²⁰ The LORD will send on you curses, confusion and rebuke in everything you put your hand to, until you are destroyed and come to sudden ruin because of the evil you have done in forsaking him.

You know, you almost need an "evil meter". Sometimes it seems like we're watching television these days, you need an evil meter to tell us how bad things are getting around the country. And you see it, and now it tells us: Sooner or later this is all going to catch up with you.

Deuteronomy 28

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²¹ The LORD will plague you with diseases until he has destroyed you from the land you are entering to possess.

²² The LORD will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish.

Now from where I sit, Moses is impressing on their minds in language they will understand what's going to happen if they adopt one way of life as opposed to another; but the truth of the matter is the

consequences of the way we live our life are more than enough than to have to have God add anything to it. When a nation becomes godless, the decline is inevitable. Now, if you want to see what this looks like, all you've got to do is take a look at the world around you. Take a look at the Third World. Look at the poverty, the war, the distress, the genocide that's going on in Africa and different places. Do you think that's happening because these people were unlucky enough to live in a land with no natural resources; it's because the stuff to have a good life aren't there? No. Basically, it's because they have not had a way of life taught to them, pointed out to them (or if it was, they have not lived it) that *brings them* the kind of things that could make a much better life for them. Then take a look at how the Third World is slowly invading Europe, which was once upon a time called "Christendom"; it was the stronghold of Christianity in the world. But no more. And now they are slowly but surely being overtaken by immigrants into their country who are changing the culture, changing the countries, and who really are certain to outnumber the Europeans and take over Europe. One author said it would become "Eurabia".

And after you've looked at all that, you can look at us. Here's an exercise for you: Find your Bible and keep it close at hand while you watch television news. Open it up to Deuteronomy 28 and, as you listen to the news, try to get a handle on where we are in relation to what God says here. How did the descriptions fit us? What are things like in society as a whole? Maybe you have heard of a better time in our country in ages gone by; and I think in many ways, certainly morally, there were better times. But just read through Deuteronomy 28; maybe mark a few things here and there, and watch them as they go before you on the news, and figure out for yourself—on a scale of one to ten—where are we along that line between the first nation and the second. Deuteronomy 28, verse 23, Moses continued—he said:

Deuteronomy 28

NIV '84

²³ The sky over your head will be bronze, the ground beneath you iron.

²⁴ The LORD will turn the rain of your country into dust and powder; it will come down from the skies until you are destroyed.

The people in Georgia got a taste of this recently, as it looked like for all the world that Atlanta could be *without water*. I mean, it's impossible to gauge what a *disaster* of great proportions that would be—a huge city...that their water taps run dry because all their sources of water, the lakes and everything else, have run dry because there is no rain. They've dodged that bullet, but it could happen again. What makes this sort of thing happen? Well, it happens because we make some bad decisions. One of them, perhaps, is too many of us living in one place instead of scattering us out across the land in family farms. (But that's another subject for another day.) In verse 25, Moses goes on:

Deuteronomy 28

NIV '84

²⁵ The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will come at them from one direction but flee from them in seven, and you will become a thing of horror to all the kingdoms on earth.

²⁶ Your carcasses will be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten them away.

You know, we got a little taste of that in Somalia; and we left that country with our tail between our legs. Moses said:

Deuteronomy 28

NIV '84

²⁹ At midday you will grope about like a blind man in the dark. You will be unsuccessful in

everything you do; day after day you will be oppressed and robbed, with no one to rescue you.

³⁰ You will be pledged to be married to a woman, but another will take her and ravish her. You will build a house, but you will not live in it. You will plant a vineyard, but you will not even begin to enjoy its fruit.

³¹ Your ox will be slaughtered before your eyes, but you will eat none of it. Your donkey will be forcibly taken from you and will not be returned. Your sheep will be given to your enemies, and no one will rescue them.

³² Your sons and daughters will be given to another nation, and you will wear out your eyes watching for them day after day, powerless to lift a hand.

Night after night we hear of missing children, and see tortured parents wondering what happened to their kids. Week after week we watch the agony of Natalee Holloway's family, and we *still* don't know what happened to that girl. And don't make the mistake of thinking it is just the foolishness and mistakes of the people who suffered. Jesus made that clear:

Luke 13

NIV '84

¹ Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

² Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way?"

³ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.

⁴ Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?"

⁵ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

We've got to understand something: It's not a mean, vengeful God that does these things to us; it is merely our own ways coming back on our heads. What can you do about it? The answer doesn't lie in the voting booth (as important as that is); the answer lies in you personally ordering your life according to the way of God. Yes, "Jesus saves", and the *way* he saves is by changing the way we live. Until next time, I'm Ronald Dart.

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