

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

HARRY BOWERS, EDITOR

7844 GRIMSBY CIRCLE, HARRISBURG, N.C. 28075

NOVEMBER 2016

ARTICLES FROM THE PAST

A note from the Editor: Before printing *The Living Waters Newsletter*, for 16 years we printed a church newsletter. We thought our readers would be interested in some of these articles from the past.

RELIGIOUS COMPRACHICOS (1998)

Most of us have never heard the word “comprachicos”...it is a word describing “a strange and hideous nomadic association, famous in the seventeenth century, forgotten in the eighteenth, and unknown today,” stated the late Ann Rand in her book *The New Left* that had a chapter entitled *The Comprachicos* in which she quotes Victor Hugo’s writing from the nineteenth century where he describes the comprachicos. It is a Spanish word meaning “child buyers” who not only kidnapped and sold children but had a hideous method of turning them into side-show freaks by stunting growth, mangling features, and disfiguring their faces with iron masks. Stupefying powders were passed for magic and incisions by iron was part of their inverted orthopedics to produce dwarfish mutant monsters to entertain kings and royalty. Hugo describes a practice in the Far East that achieved the same thing. They would take a child two or three years old, place it in a porcelain vase, grotesque in shape, without cover or bottom, so the head and feet protruded. The child expanded without growing, slowly filling the contours of the vase with its compressed flesh and twisted bones. This bottled development continued for several years. At a certain point, it became irreparable. When the vase was broken the child came out in the shape of the pot, mutilated and deformed. Rand further states: “It was a whole science. Imagine an inverted orthopedics. Where God had put a straight glance, this art put a squint. Where God had put perfection, they brought back a botched attempt. Where God put harmony they put deformity. And in the eyes of the connoisseurs, it was perfect...”

Although I do not agree with the philosophies of Ayn Rand, she makes an interesting application of this terrible practice by saying: “The production of monsters...helpless, twisted monsters whose normal growth has been stunted, goes on all around us. The modern comprachicos do not place a child in a vase to adjust his body to its contours. They place him in a progressive nursery school to adjust him to society...they are comprachicos of the mind.” Reading this I thought of Philip’s translation of Romans 12:2: “Do not let the world squeeze you into its mold.” Satan is the great comprachico who by means of TV, movies, videos, satanic music, peer pressure, indulgent parents, and anything else the world offers and uses to mold fashion, not the bodies (although to look at some of the outlandish styles and body adornments of some young and many not so young people you might dispute this), but the minds into twisted and grotesque shapes of ungodliness.

The modern comprachico that should concern us the most is the religious ones, turning the church into a religious shopping mall or spiritualized country club who mold the minds and thinking of so many who blindly follow their twisted and monstrous teachings. Peter describes them as “false teachers who secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who

bought them...and many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned, and in their greed they will exploit you with false words...they are like brute beasts born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed” (II Pet. 2:1-3, 12).

The lame, disfigured, deformed, hunchback or dwarf was not permitted to serve the Lord in the tabernacle (Lev. 21:18-20), because he was not physically able. A mind spiritually dwarfed and disfigured by false teaching is of no value to God. A church mutilated with the modern religious right political fundamentalism or the religious left who have neglected the basic teachings of scripture cannot in any way fulfill God’s eternal purpose for man.

TO HAVE A GOOD APPEARANCE (1996)

Irving Stone’s *Clarence Darrow for the Defense* tells of an encounter Darrow had with some fellow lawyers who were twitting him about his appearance. Darrow’s answer: “I can’t understand why you chaps look so different from me. I have my suits made at the same tailors you do; I pay as much for them. I go to the same stylish shops to buy my haberdashery. The only thing I can figure is maybe you dudes take off your clothes when you go to sleep at night.” Darrow’s tongue-in-cheek answer reminds us that this is the way many Christians manage to have a good appearance before the world one day a week. On Sunday morning in church services they have on “the whole armor of God,” but upon facing the world on Monday, they have taken it off. The next Sunday morning the armor is unwrinkled, unspotted, unused, clean and still has that new look. The reason for this is that it has not been worn during the week. They have during the week the same appearance about them as the rest of the world. As believers, the modern church has tended to measure success by the same standard used by non-Christians. Rather than living out the gospel before the world, most Christians have patterned their lives after the world. We have forgotten the words of Paul to the church in Corinth: “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, the weak things of the world to shame the things that are strong, the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen the things that are not, that he might nullify the things that are” (I Cor. 1:27, 28). We tend to see ourselves as more sophisticated than they, representatives of both the wisdom of our age and the wisdom of God. Far from being despised by our culture, we expect and often receive the praise of the culture. Paul’s instruction to them was to uphold the truth of God in every domain of life: marriage, money, the spiritual gifts, attitude toward unbelievers, and harmony between believers, worship and discipline.

Alexander Schemann in *The East and the West May Yet Meet* wrote of the schizophrenia that characterizes Christianity today. He said “People tend to be unaware that their Sunday worship service, from beginning to end, repudiates the culture that they daily uphold as their way of life.” It is sad that the effort of churches today to be “relevant” brings about their irrelevance.

When we take the values of the world and try to use them in God's work we lose our reason for existing. Instead of exposing modern idols, we promote and serve them and try to use them to appeal to those who need most to be set free from them. A quote from Isaiah 30:9-11 is as applicable today as it ever was: "for this is a rebellious people, false sons, sons who refuse to listen to the instruction of the Lord. Who say to their seers, 'You must not see visions' and to the prophets, 'You must not prophesy to us what is right, speak to us pleasant words, prophesy illusions. Get out of the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.'" In the words of Revelation 3:17: Don't tell us we are "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked"...yes naked...no armor.

JESUS SAVIOR NOT ENOUGH (2004)

In the opening verses of two of his epistles, Ephesians 1:3 and II Corinthians 1:3, Paul states "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Peter makes the same statement in his epistle (I Peter 1:3). This is a new description of God. In the Old Testament He is said to be "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In these passages He is said to be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is not only a new revelation of God, but it says something about Jesus. He is the Lord Christ. "Jesus" was the name given by the Father through the angel when he appeared to Joseph, "you shall call his name Jesus, for it is he who will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Paul states that "God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus" (Acts 13:23). "Jesus" then was his human name, divinely given, who is God's anointed Messiah or Christ. Peter declares on the day of Pentecost that this man, "Jesus of Nazareth, was put to death, raised again, and was exalted to the right hand of God" (Acts 2:22-23). He then states "God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom, you crucified" (ver. 36). If Jesus were God then why did God make him Lord and Christ? We do not make him Lord, he is Lord. Thus he is declared in scripture to be our "Lord and Savior" (II Pet. 1:1, 2:20, 3:2, 3:18). He is Savior because of the cross (a crucified Christ). He is Lord because of the resurrection and ascension. He is both "Savior" and "Lord." To us he cannot be "Lord" without first being "Savior" but he can be "Savior" and never be "Lord," and this is not enough. In the Old Testament the word "Lord" is exclusively used of God. He is always "the Lord God." In the New Testament it is used of both God and Christ, but also has a more common usage in that it is applied to anyone in authority. Generally, when used to refer to Christ it would have been in this common Jewish usage of the word. But after the resurrection only God and Christ is called "Lord." (There are a few references where the word refers to a man such as I Corinthians 8:5 "there are many lords." In I Peter 3:6 "Sarah called Abraham lord," and in Revelation 7:14 John uses the term in referring to an angel).

If God has made him "both Lord and Christ" this means that the Lord God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has given the status that only God occupied in the Old Testament to His son. Now all things have been given to his Lordship. "He raised him from the dead and seated him on His right hand in the heavenlies far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age, but in the one to come, and He put all things in subjection under his feet" (Eph.

1:20-22). Therefore, we are to "confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord" (Rom. 10:9), and "every tongue will confess Jesus is Lord" (Phil. 2:11). Jesus asked "why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say?" (Luke 6:46), and Peter says: "Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord" (I Pet. 3:15).

In today's religious world, where the word of God is so often taken lightly, you hear very little about Christ being Lord. The invitation is "accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior" "ask Jesus into your heart" "invite him into your life" "whisper the prayer that will change your eternity" "Jesus I believe you and receive you into my heart" "just sign a card and we will send you some literature." None of these statements is based upon biblical terminology. We are not just being technical. The call of Jesus was a call to discipleship which means commitment and behavior that shows evidence of that commitment. Contemporary Christians have been led to believe that if they recited a prayer, signed a card, walked down the aisle, were baptized, or had some religious experience they are saved. Jesus rejected some very good people, people we would think would make good church members, such as Nicodemus and the rich young ruler. We would be happy to welcome a devout man such as Cornelius into our membership, but Peter had to proclaim to him words whereby he would be saved. In contrast to the easy believe-ism of today or "cheap grace" as Bonhoeffer called it, Jesus taught that the cost of following him is high, and unless one is willing to pay the price they cannot enter the kingdom. When it is stated that God made him both *Lord and Christ* God is saying the aim of salvation is not just to save us but to save us in order that we might "become conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). When we are told that "the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men (Titus 2:11) we are told what is demanded when we receive that grace: "instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age (because) he gave himself for us that we might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify to Himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good deeds" (12, 14).

THE POWERFUL DEATH LOBBY (1993)

For many years I have pointed out the fact that many Christians and churches actually glorify death. Refusing to recognize death for what it is: an enemy, it has become to many a "door" into a better life, so we have glorified it in song and sermon (especially funeral sermons), and have given so much attention and exhortation about death and dying that we have ignored life and living in the present day. Many times I have felt alone in my crusade against the Christian's love affair with death. It was refreshing to read a recent article in *The Atlantic Monthly* (a purely secular publication), which discusses what it calls "our support system for death," The article goes beyond the funeral parlors, cemeteries and crematoria and shows how doctors, lawyers, insurance companies, the Social Security trust fund, family structures and organized religion in which all play a part in our embracing what it calls our "death program." After speaking of the powerful lobbying interests in Washington to keep pet policies intact, the article states: "The death lobby must be the most powerful of all." All this says that the secular press sees what many Christians and churches refuse to see: we are sometimes more interested in death than in life. Contrast the emphasis on the death of Christ with so little on his resurrection.