



The King's Clothes

A parody is a comic caricature, a ludicrous likeness, an absurd analogy, a ridiculous representation which exposes a particular reality by comparing it to another of a different order. Parodies can be a useful literary tool to expose the "red herrings" of diversions which distract attention from real issues. By the use of parody one can be direct yet subtle at the same time.

Once upon a time there was a king. He was king over the vast kingdom of Ecclesiastica. This king was known far and wide for his vain delight in royal vestments. Aware of his propensity to lust after the ego-satisfying need-fulfillment of "pomp and circumstance," two enterprising con-artists offered to stitch for him some royal finery "fit for a king."

They explained that their product was so extraordinary and supernatural that it was visible only to the elite and knowledgeable, and invisible to those who "did not have eyes to see."

"Take my order," begged the king. "Money is no object!"

The king's assistants in charge of "quality control" did not want to appear ignorant,

unenlightened or even unspiritual, so they went along with the con-game. They gushed with praise for the king's non-existent garments.

"Beautiful!" "Inspiring!" "Moving!"

The citizens of the kingdom determined that it was in their best interest to "play the game" also. They, too, extolled the features of the fanciful and farcical finery.

Pompous pride outweighed practicality, prompting the king to organize a parade

through the aisles of the kingdom. All the subjects were cowed by fear into saying nothing about the absence of clothing. They only repeated pious platitudes of respect for royalty.

But one young child had not been "cued" for the pretense. When the king passed by him the child exclaimed, "The king doesn't have any clothes on!" They attempted to "shush" the child, but the unspeakable had been spoken and everyone knew.

Despite the exposure of his exposure, the king continued to play out the charade, declaring, "The procession must continue."

With all due respect to Hans Christian Andersen and his germinal thought in the fairy-tale of *The Emperor's New Clothes*, the adaptation of the story reveals much about the state of ecclesiasticism today.

The church is caught up in vested interests and in "pomp and circumstance." Rather than being "clothed in righteousness," the church is naked in its hypocrisy.

Everyone is joining in the codependent denial of "I'm Okay; you're Okay!" They are living a lie of self-delusion, and such behavior creates a fraudulent society of dysfunctional socialization.

Fear of ostracism and reprisal compels everyone to "play the game" and say nothing. Should anyone be inclined to speak out, the damper of social consensus for the maintenance of the status-quo is applied. Criticism is out of order: "Do not touch [the Lord's] anointed" (I Chronicles 16:22).

Christians tend to see in their church whatever they want to see. It takes the innocence of a child, the "mouth of a babe," or the intrepidity of a prophet to speak out and reveal the pretense.

The world already sees our nakedness, our lack of substance, as we parade our pompous piety. To continue the procession after the illusion of "being clothed and in our right mind" has been revealed, is fraudulent delusion enacted by a "deluding influence" (II Thessalonians 2:11, NASB).

Jesus, himself, said to one portion of his church, "You are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." (Revelation 3:17, NASB). He who has eyes to see and ears to hear, "let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Revelation 3:22). □

—Jim Fowler



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