



## “What am I bid?”

*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 very useful verbal or literary tool to expose the “red herrings” of diversions which distract attention from real issues; to expose “hobby horses” whereby men keep reverting back to repetitive over-emphasis without critical thought; to expose inane traditions which become familiar ruts wherein we fail to recognize the absence d’esprit. By the use of parody one can be direct yet subtle at the same time.*

The auctioneer extolled the virtues of the item before him, carefully noting its finer features. His resonant voice and gesticulated enthusiasm had the audience hanging on his every word. This man knew how to control a crowd; he was a master manipulator. Choosing just the right moment of intensity, he opened the bidding.

“And what am I bid for this priceless piece?” His banter had a rapid, staccato-like beat and a sing-song cadence that seemed designed to excite and elicit an impulsive response.

But there were few bidders in the first round. So, without missing a beat, the undaunted auctioneer interjected, “Don’t pass up the opportunity, my friends. There may not be another. This is a one of a kind, limited edition. Don’t go home without it.” And without pause he opened another round of bidding.

A hand went up here, another there, but again the bidding was painfully slow, almost like pulling teeth. So, taking another slight interlude to catch his breath, the auctioneer noted the necessity of this item in everyone’s life. He explained the regret that would be suffered if people did not take advantage of the opportunity right now.

“You can’t do without it. Don’t pass it up. Act now; it’s your last chance. I have five; who’ll make it six? I have six; who’ll make it seven? It’s now or never, folks. It’s your last chance to get in. Going...Going...Gone!”

The gavel banged to signify the conclusion of the bidding.

Is this not reminiscent of the pressurized public invitation that is used to conclude many preachers’ sermons week after week? Those extended evangelistic invitations have



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an uncanny resemblance to an auction of men’s souls.

Master manipulators, those ministers are trained to be. With increasing volume and rapidity of speech they build their message to a peak of intensity that plies upon the sensitivities of people’s emotions. The “Invitation Hymn” is selected for its particular cadence and solemnity in order to appeal for an impulsive and subjective “decision” of the moment, regarded to be decisive for eternity. Many wonder later whatever possessed them to act so impulsively, and resolve never again to make a decision while caught up in an emotional pitch and the hypnotic effects of crowd hysteria.

We need to reconsider the settled seriousness by which any person should make such a decision to invest their entire life and stake their eternal destiny upon the personal receipt of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of their life. □

—Jim Fowler