

The Nazarene Journal

The Voice of the Ebionites

Capitalism...
What is it Really Selling?



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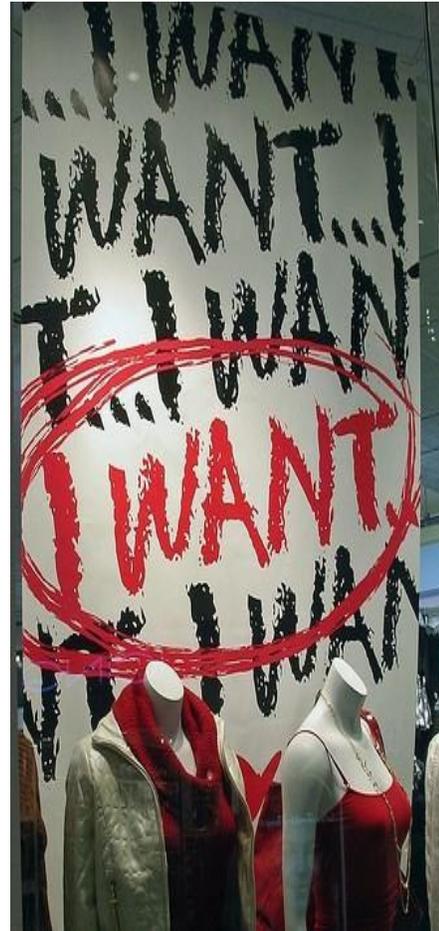
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The capitalist system provides a profit motive for sellers to exploit human desires for personal gain. What the capitalist machine does is move on the exploitation of deep human passions and fleshly desires, these passions and desires while strictly motivated by want and not need move products off the shelf to satisfy those “wants”, and in return create great profits for the system to continue. The commercialization of sexuality is one of the capitalist’s biggest tools. Since sex is a fundamental human desire, it has the entire audience captive with its sultry tools. “Sexuality is marketed directly, but sexual cues are also heavily associated with non-sexual products in capitalist market cultures as well. By associating sexual cues with products, such as cars or beer for example, the biological desire triggers are stimulated.” (R.G Price 2005)

Some of the most vulnerable victims of the exploitative machine are teens. The message to teens is that they can be sexy and mature if they have certain products. Beyond the understanding of the parent the machine is pushing children to have a concept of self that is purely sexual, and all of their identity is wrapped up in their image. Puberty, instead of being celebrated for becoming an adult and being taught the responsibilities of adulthood, is being exploited by sexual marketing and especially targeting to preteens and teens with highly sexual media. This is not just in the context of advertisements, but all media, including music, movies, books, and stories, etc. Increasing sexual awareness increases overall consumerism. A highly sexual culture is more open to consumerism because to keep up the image of the sexy mature person, the teens need to continue to buy the products to maintain the image. Therefore, a highly sexual young and adult culture is encouraged by capitalism.



The Attack on the Identity of Men and Women



Corporate America is sending a message to women that that they are capable, strong, and beautiful beings who only need to buy their products to portray how mighty and important they are. Capitalists draw on the insecurities of the people to sell them their products.

Women make up over 50% of the population in America and account for 85% of all customer buying decisions. Women dominate the marketplace and Corporate America knows it. Corporate America's message to women and minorities is simple: "embrace materialism." (R.G Price 2003)

Marketing isn't about selling things: it's about selling ideas and emotions. The main goal of marketing is making the consumer think either they can't live without the product or that their lives will be enhanced by the product. Research has shown that women do more purchasing than men, and thus, of course, Corporate America's message to women is, "you are an independent woman, and you deserve to buy whatever you want." This really has nothing to do with women's empowerment, and everything to do with encouraging irresponsibility to promote the sale.

Emasculation and Selling Masculinity

While marketing has played on the women's vanity and self-empowerment, it seems to have worked viciously to breakdown men's self-image. There is the corporate agenda to "feminize men" by the beauty and fashion industries, which has been popularized under the term "metro sexuality."



“Capitalist market society emasculates men to sell men back their masculinity through commodities. The message given to men is, ‘You are not masculine, but you can become more masculine if you buy these products.’ It's an attempt to threaten men's egos to prompt them into purchasing action through the fear of losing their social status if they don't buy enough stuff to prove how manly they really are.” (R.G.Price 2005)

The media has depicted men in the media as stupid mindless drones that are at the mercy of their overbearing wives and demanding bratty children. Men are depicted as Neanderthals with little intellect to make serious decisions, nor do they have healthy opinions.

Recently it has been published that not only American men but Irishmen, for example, are becoming more and more invested in the vanity that has pervaded society by capitalism. The Irishmen who are known for their love of beer is now more concerned about their waistlines and hair care than drinking beer. The average Irishman knows where to buy the right hair care products above the pub that has the best pint. Many men have now invested in the media's lust for the latest fashions and hair styles. Many men watching sports are highly aware of the players' social life and their personal flair. Recently there was a commercial showing a man doing squats to burn off his beer before enjoying anything else. Men are becoming vainer; they are very concerned with their calorie intake and having flat stomachs. While being healthy and fit is always good, the obsession with vanity that media has produced is becoming increasingly invasive. It has reached our men that have traditionally been fit by sheer necessity of work. But with little production, much consumption, and media everywhere, what is the alternative? Hard work?



By emasculating men, the media has subliminally sent a message to women that somehow, they are superior and in turn feel better about themselves therefore in many cases women are treating men as if they are intellectually inferior. By creating this low self-image men in turn are driven to buy products to boost their self-esteem.



Countering the Consumer Narrative

Most adolescents believe that their identity and fulfillment come through consumption, not by knowing and following Jesus in life. Belonging is found in a brand and its community. A sense of autonomy emerges from their power to spend and their ability to capture and broker the latest in cool. “We can invite kids to participate in and engage this life-giving contrast story. This requires considerable resolve and intentionality. The implications are far-reaching. They extend beyond the individual lives of adolescents to include a reformation in the way we do church. In youth ministry we have an extraordinary opportunity to recapture and rescript a sense of narrative, community, and mission for this emerging generation of adolescents.” (W.Loewen 2009.)

So, what can we do as God’s advocates? How do we teach our children the traits that our Messiah had like compassion, generosity, and service? We must be creative and intentional if we hope to compete against the jaws of capitalism. Perhaps the most effective strategy is to live like the apostles did, and that is a socialist-like community in which we all take part in the good of our fellow brethren. Being productive is everything! We must strive to prepare a culture that is within the laws of God. In the statutes and commandments of God are life. He has instructed us to be our brother’s keeper. By being a community that is sustainable is our key. Every person must contribute to the cause. It is our job as parents and believers to not only seek out our position in this movement but to develop and cultivate the positions for our youth.

References

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