

## **AGNOSTINIA**

*On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness'... For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked (Matthew 7:22-23; Revelation 3:17).*

Young Jonas knelt before the Lord  
in earnest passionate prayer:

'Send me to Agnostinia  
to reach the people there;  
with wonders, signs and miracles  
I'll preach from town to town  
and in the Name of Jesus bring  
their idols crashing down.  
Society will be transformed  
and governments will yield;  
we'll influence the parliament  
and see God's Kingdom build.  
The Church will take authority—  
the head and not the tail—  
and presidents will bow the knee  
as godly laws prevail.'

He went to Agnostinia  
where all his dreams came true.  
He built a megachurch, a school,  
a Bible College, too.  
His orphanage was massive,  
its architecture grand;  
his television programmes  
could be seen across the land.  
He drew the sick and suffering  
with miracles galore  
and thousands were converted;  
he gave money to the poor.  
He loved to free the demonised  
as often as he could;  
(and stories of such miracles  
could only do him good).

'Just sow a seed of faith with us,'  
he said, 'And then sow more;  
your money will just multiply;  
it's guaranteed and sure.'

But...when a dying leper  
touched his fingers in the street  
he quickly pulled away from him—

he had to be discreet.  
A shivering urchin tugged his coat:  
'Please, sir, a coin or two?'  
He answered, 'Now look what you've done!  
This suit is just brand-new.'

He dined with famous people,  
stayed in all the best hotels;  
'twould compromise his image  
if he drank from village wells.  
He had a reputation  
and a profile to sustain;  
to satisfy his sponsors  
or his ministry would wane.  
His position was important  
with no time to give the weak;  
It was not for him to aid them;  
he had oracles to speak.  
Inconsequential people were  
for others to relieve  
(and they wouldn't have such problems,  
if they would just believe).

When the Books were finally opened  
and the judgements all made clear,  
Jonas waited to be honoured  
for the work he held so dear.  
And he could not comprehend it  
when he heard the Saviour say:

'I have seen your bold achievements,  
but your works are crumbling clay;  
I'm afraid I never knew you.'  
(Jonas' felt his body quake  
and he cried, 'I am bewildered!  
This must be a grave mistake!')

'You were seen to be successful  
in the eyes of humankind;  
but although you taught the gospel,  
you are naked, poor and blind.  
You relied on temporal talent  
not the wisdom from above;  
and mistook the love of power  
for the greater power of love.'

Barry Chant © June 2018.

Note: I dreamed up other names for Agnostinia, but all of them all already existed somewhere or in some other way. 'Paganía' (from pagan) is a region in Greece; 'Barbaria' (from barbarous) is a village in India; 'Infidelía' (from infidel) can be found on Youtube; 'Darkinia' (from dark) is a place in a children's cartoon; the risk of misreading or mispronunciation ruled out 'Gentilia' (from Gentile);

'Brutalia' (from brutal) appears in both a web game and a movie. 'Agnostinia' (from *agnostos*, Acts 17:23, and hence 'agnostic' i.e. 'unknown') finally proved to be both usable and appropriate, although it meant revamping the metre in a couple of lines.