

In vain will the Epistles be searched to find any trace of this gospel of amusement! Their message is, "Come out, keep out, keep clean out!" Anything approaching foolishness is conspicuous by its absence. They had boundless confidence in the gospel and employed no other weapon.

After Peter and John were locked up for preaching, the church had a prayer meeting but they did not pray, "Lord grant unto Thy servants that by a wise and discriminating use of innocent recreation we may show these people how happy we are." If they ceased not from preaching Christ, they had not time for arranging entertainments. Scattered by persecution, they went everywhere preaching the gospel. They turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). That is the only difference! Lord, clear the church of all the rot and rubbish the devil has imposed on her, and bring us back to apostolic methods.

Lastly, the mission of amusement fails to effect the end desired. It works havoc among young converts. Let the careless and scoffers, who thank God because the church met them halfway, speak and testify. Let the heavy laden who found peace through the concert not keep silent! Let the drunkard to whom the dramatic entertainment has been God's link in the chain of the conversion, stand up! There are none to answer. The mission of amusement produces no converts. The need of the hour for today's ministry is believing scholarship joined with earnest spirituality, the one springing from the other as fruit from the root. The need is biblical doctrine, so understood and felt, that it sets men on fire.

The Middletown Bible Church

349 East Street
Middletown, CT 06457
(860) 346-0907

A Complete Literature List is Available Upon Request

www.middletownbiblechurch.org

Entertainment in the Church

"Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth" (Psalm 96:6-9).

The Great God Entertainment

by A.W.Tozer

A German philosopher many years ago said something to the effect that the more a man has in his own heart, the less he will require from the outside; excessive need for support from without is proof of the bankruptcy of the inner man.

If this is true (and I believe it is) then the present inordinate attachment to every form of entertainment is evidence that the inner life of modern man is in serious decline. The average man has no central core of moral assurance, no spring within his own breast, no inner strength to place him above the need for repeated psychological shots to give him the courage to go on living. He has become a parasite on the world, drawing his life from his environment, unable to live a day apart from the stimulation which society affords him.

Schleiermacher held that the feeling of dependence lies at the root of all religious worship, and that however high the spiritual life might rise, it must always begin with a deep sense of a great need which only God could satisfy.

If this sense of need and a feeling of dependence are at the root of natural religion, it is not hard to see why the great god Entertainment is so ardently worshiped by so many. For there are millions who cannot live without amusement; life without some form of entertainment for them is simply intolerable; they look forward to the blessed relief afforded by professional entertainers and other forms of psychological narcotics as a dope addict looks to his daily shot of heroin. Without them they could not summon courage to face existence.

No one with common human feeling will object to the simple pleasures of life, nor to such harmless forms of entertainment as may help to relax the nerves and refresh the mind exhausted by toil. Such things, if used with discretion, may be a blessing along the way. That is one thing, however, the all-out devotion to entertainment as a major activity for which and by which men live is definitely something else again.

The abuse of a harmless thing is the essence of sin. The growth of the amusement phase of human life to such fantastic proportions is a portent, a threat to the souls of modern men. It has been built into a multimillion dollar racket with greater power over human minds and

"For centuries the Church stood solidly against every form of worldly entertainment, recognizing it for what it was—a device for wasting time, a refuge from the disturbing voice of conscience... For this she got herself abused roundly by the sons of this world...She appears to have decided that if she cannot conquer the great god Entertainment she may as well join forces with him."

A. W. Tozer
(1897-1963)

If the church is now supposed to raise the tone of the world by imitating it, things have strangely altered since the day when our Lord said, "Come out from among them...and touch not the unclean thing." When behaviour is growing every day more lax and licentious, shall believers lower the standard of their lives? If they do so their spiritual power will depart, and their reason for existence will be over. If there ever could be a time when Christians might relax their rigidity, it surely is not now when the very air is tainted with (moral) pollution. -Charles Spurgeon

human character than any other educational influence on earth.

And the ominous thing is that its power is almost exclusively evil, rotting the inner life, crowding out the long eternal thoughts which would fill the souls of men, if they were but worthy to entertain them. The whole thing has grown into a veritable religion which holds its devotees with a strange fascination; and a religion, incidentally, against which it is now dangerous to speak. For centuries the Church stood solidly against every form of worldly entertainment, recognizing it for what it was—a device for wasting time, a refuge from the disturbing voice of conscience, a scheme to divert attention from moral accountability.

For this she got herself abused roundly by the sons of this world. But of late she has become tired of the abuse and has given over the struggle. She appears to have decided that if she cannot conquer the great god Entertainment she may as well join forces with him and make what use she can of his powers.

So, today we have the astonishing spectacle of millions of dollars being poured into the unholy job of providing earthly entertainment for the so-called sons of heaven. Religious entertainment is in many places rapidly crowding out the serious things of God.

Many churches these days have become little more than poor theaters where fifth-rate "producers" peddle their shoddy wares with the full approval of evangelical leaders who can even quote a holy text in defense of their delinquency. And hardly a man dares raise his voice against it.

The great god Entertainment amuses his devotees mainly by telling them stories. The love of stories, which is a characteristic of childhood, has taken fast hold of the minds of the retarded saints of our day, so much so that not a few persons manage to make a comfortable living by spinning yarns and serving them up in various disguises to church people.

What is natural and beautiful in a child may be shocking when it persists into adulthood, and more so when it appears in the sanctuary and seeks to pass for true religion. Is it not a strange thing and a wonder that, with the shadow of atomic destruction hanging over the world and with the coming of Christ drawing near, the professed followers of the Lord should be giving themselves up to religious amusements? That in an hour when mature saints are so desperately needed vast numbers of believers should revert to spiritual childhood and clamor for religious toys?

"Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach. . . The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned ! For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim" AMEN. AMEN.

Taken from *Root of the Righteous*, Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1955, p. 32-33

"When amusement is necessary to get people to listen to the gospel there will be failure. This is not the method of Christ. To form an organization and provide all kinds of entertainment for young people, in order that they may come to the Bible classes, is to be foredoomed to failure."

G. Campbell Morgan

Page 2

Feeding Sheep or Amusing Goats?

By C. H. Spurgeon

An evil is in the professed camp of the Lord, so gross in its impudence, that the most shortsighted can hardly fail to notice it during the past few years. It has developed at an abnormal rate, even for evil. It has worked like leaven until the whole lump ferments. The devil has seldom done a cleverer thing than hinting to the church that part of their mission is to provide entertainment for the people, with a view to winning them.

From speaking out as the Puritans did, the church has gradually toned down her testimony, then winked at and excused the frivolities of the day. Then she tolerated them in her borders. Now she has adopted them under the plea of reaching the masses.

My first contention is that providing amusement for the people is nowhere spoken of in the Scriptures as a function of the church. If it is a Christian work, why did not Christ speak of it? "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). That is clear enough. So it would have been if He had added, "and provide amusement for those who do not relish the gospel." No such words, however, are to be found. It did not seem to occur to him.

Then again, "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers . . . for the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:11-12). Where do entertainers come in? The Holy Spirit is silent concerning them. Were the prophets persecuted because they amused the people or because they refused? The concert has no martyr roll.

Again, providing amusement is in direct antagonism to the teaching and life of Christ and all His apostles. What was the attitude of the church to the world? We are not sugar candy,—"Ye are the salt" (Matt. 5:13) ---something the world will spit out, not swallow. Short and sharp was the utterance, "Let the dead bury their dead" (Matt. 8:22) He was in awful earnestness.

Had Christ introduced more of the bright and pleasant elements into His mission, He would have been more popular but, because of the searching nature of His teaching, many turned away. I do not hear him say, "Run after these people Peter and tell them we will have a different style of service tomorrow, something short and attractive with little preaching. We will have a pleasant evening for the people. Tell them they will be sure to enjoy it. Be quick Peter, we must get the people somehow." Jesus pitied sinners, sighed and wept over them, but never sought to amuse them.

"Churches are always asking for money. But we are going to turn it around", said Rev. Tim Dyson of Church Alive in Tampa, FL. The church plans on giving away checks and gift certificates to newcomers—the most, a check of \$2,004.00. Friday evening's event will include clowns, a light show, and music from rock musician Clint Brown. Dyson says, "It takes creativity to reach out to new members". This from a minister who roars into services on a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. He has delivered sermons from a boat hauled into the sanctuary, and set up a boxing ring to fight demons of drugs and divorce."

"Church Offers Lure of Almighty Dollar", Tampa Tribune, Tampa, FL Jan. 21, 2004

Page 3

"But we must not be too rigid," says one. "There is no fear of that in these days. You will never go too far in holiness, nor become too like your Lord Jesus. If anybody accuses you of being too strict and precise, do not grieve but try to deserve the charge. I cannot suppose that at the last great day our Lord Jesus Christ will say to anyone, 'You were not worldly enough'—Charles Spurgeon.