

The Idol of Entertainment

1 Corinthians 10:7, “Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.”

The particular idolatry which is referred to here is, the worship of the golden calf that was made by Aaron in Exodus 32:1-6.

Notice first, *the people sat down to eat and drink*. They partook of a feast in honour of the golden calf idol. It was common to keep a feast in honour of an idol, and that the food which was eaten on such an occasion was mainly the meat which had been offered in sacrifice to it. This instance was particularly to the apostle's purpose, as he was cautioning the Corinthians against the danger of participating in the feasts celebrated in the heathen temples.

Notice secondly, *the people rose up to play*. The Hebrew word used in Ex 32:6, (HEBREW,) means to laugh, to sport, to jest, to mock, to insult, (Ge 21:9;) and then to engage in dances accompanied with music, in honour of an idol. This was often practised, as the worship of idols was celebrated with songs and dances. This is particularly affirmed of this instance of idol worship, (Ex 32:19;) and this was common among ancient idolaters; and this mode of worship was even adopted by David before the ark of the Lord, 2Sa 6:6; 1Ch 13:8; 15:29.

All that the word "to play" here necessarily implies is, that of choral songs and dances, accompanied with revelry in honour of the idol. It was however the fact, that such worship was usually accompanied with much licentiousness; but that is not necessarily implied in the use of the word. Most of the oriental dances were grossly indecent and licentious; and the word here may be designed to include such licentiousness.

We see how quickly the worship of God among the people had degenerated into a carnal form of entertainment.

The word *entertainment* can be defined as something affording pleasure or amusement.

Amusement is an interesting word. We think of an amusement park today. In the late 15c. the word amuse meant, "to divert the attention, beguile, delude," A Sense of "divert from serious business, tickle the fancy of" is recorded from the 17th century, but through 18c. the primary meaning was "deceive, cheat" by first occupying the attention.

Man has never had such abundance and diversity of entertainment as in the 21st century. The life is filled with theaters, movies, musical entertainments and electronic games, sports competitions, books, newspapers, magazines and so on. It seems that today's man should be many times happier than those who have lived in the past.

However, it turns out to be the opposite. Today's man often feels very discontented and unhappy with life, even more so than his parents and grandparents. Unprecedented modern epidemic abuses of tobacco, liquor, drugs, and promiscuity is a convincing proof of it.

It is known that a noticeable percentage of population in large cities suffer from various mental diseases that even the best psychiatrists cannot cure. The large number of psychic disorders can be explained only by the disturbed balance of complex human nature: the need for entertainment and fun on the one hand, and acute spiritual emptiness on the other.

One of the biggest idols that has consumed people's hearts and minds is the god of entertainment. People look to entertainment to make them feel happy, fulfilled and alive. It consumes their time, their money, their devotion, their thoughts and their hearts.

Television, computers, smart phones, i-pods and wii's bring the idol of entertainment right into the privacy of our own homes so it can be adored and followed every single day.

Sports has also engulfed our culture and we worship this god of entertainment with fanaticism and undying devotion.

So many lives revolve around favorite sports team and there is such an adoration for them that moods, happiness, and dispositions are determined by whether they are winning or losing.

So many people know more about their famous star's life than they know about Jesus Christ and the Bible.

Our culture has become distorted by its obsession with fame and entertainment. Who would you rather spend time with Christ or the world? Who would you rather devote your heart to the Savior or Hollywood? Who is more important and worthy of your heart?

“In every field, from business to politics to marketing to education, the dominant mode has become entertainment. . . . In other centuries human beings wanted to be saved, or improved, or freed, or educated. But in our century, they want to be entertained. The great fear is not disease or death, but of boredom.

The causes behind this insistence on being amused are grave. Behind the happy faces are empty heads and hearts. Entertainment becomes necessary when life has lost all meaning -- where nothing in the outside world connects with or energizes what is going on within.”

The title of my message is *The Idol of Entertainment*. The god of entertainment has sunk its idolatrous roots into the church and each of us should pray and examine our hearts that this idol is not sitting on the throne of our hearts. There are two observations I would like to make.

1. Entertainment is not the work of the church.

C.H. Spurgeon wrote, “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.

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.

Has not entertainment and amusement captivated the lives of our nation?

The Lord's house is forsaken for pleasure and entertainment and idleness.

We read in Isaiah 58:13-14, “If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.”

1898 (See Below)

BOSTON, Sept. 20.—The New England Sabbath Protective League, of which the Hon. George F. Hoar is President, to-day sent to Mayor Josiah Quincy a resolution protesting against the action of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen in giving an official reception to the Mayor and Aldermen of Milwaukee last Sunday.

The resolution was prompted by the announcement in the daily papers that the Mayor and other officials of the city, on the 18th instant, gave to the guests of the municipality an official reception, including visits to various city institutions and public works, an excursion down the harbor, a banquet with speeches and other public exercises.

The league protests against "this official secularization of the Lord's day as an act which, it believes, is violently in contrast with the time-honored history and traditions of this city, which was styled in the address to the visitors 'A typical city of the East.'"

A.W. Towzer writes, "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?"

The following is from a newspaper article which appeared in the *Tampa Tribune*, Tampa, FL (Jan. 21, 2004), "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 \$2004.00. 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."

Entertainment is not the work of the church.

2. Christians can enjoy good entertainment.

There is a place and time for entertainment in the life of a Christian, but even then, entertainment should meet certain criteria.

In what kind of climate am I placed?; Am I adversely affected?; What kind of dress is required?; How much time do I spend?; How expensive is it?, and what kind of impression am I making on others by participating in it? are some questions to ask ourselves.

1. We read in 1 Corinthians 15:33, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."

The word rendered "communications" means, properly, a being together; companionship. It refers not to discourse only, but to companionship.

A Bible commentator observes, “Paul quotes these words from Menander, a Greek poet.

Menander was a celebrated comic poet of Athens, educated under Theophrastus. His writings were replete with elegance, refined wit, and judicious observations.

Of one hundred and eight comedies which he wrote, nothing remains but a few fragments. He is said to have drowned himself, in the fifty-second year of his age, B. C. 293, because the compositions of his rival, Philemon, obtained more applause than his own. His pride was hurt.

Paul quoted this sentiment from a Greek poet, perhaps, because it might be supposed to have weight with the Greeks. It was a sentiment of one of their own writers, and here was an occasion in which it was exactly applicable. It is implied in this, that there were some persons who were endeavouring to corrupt their minds from the simplicity of the gospel.

The sentiment of the passage is, that the companionship of evil-minded men, who are impure in their lives, tends to corrupt the morals, the heart, and the sentiments of others.”

2. We read in Philippians 4:8, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

The object of the apostle is to recommend holiness and righteousness to God’s people in every point of view; and to show that the Gospel of Christ requires all its professors to have the mind that was in Christ, and to walk as he himself also walked. They were not to attend to one branch of righteousness or virtue only, but to every thing by which they might bring honour to God, and good to their fellow man.

When our longings for something detract from our loving and trusting God, we are guilty of idolatry.

Whatsoever things are true. All that is agreeable to the teaching of Christ in creation and redemption. How can two walk unless they be agreed upon?

Whatsoever things are honest. Whatever is decent.

Whatsoever things are just. Whatsoever is agreeable to justice and righteousness.

All that ye owe to God, to your neighbour, and to yourselves.

Whatsoever things are pure. Whatsoever is chaste. In reference to the state of the mind, and to the acts of the body.

Whatsoever things are lovely. Whatsoever is amiable on its own account and on account of its usefulness to others, whether in your conduct or conversation.

Whatsoever things are of good report. Whatsoever things the public agree to acknowledge as useful and profitable to men; such as charitable institutions of every kind, in which genuine Christians should ever take the lead.

Think on these things. Esteem them highly, recommend them heartily, and practice them fervently.

In closing, entertainment is an idol that many bow themselves to. Entertainment is not the work of the church. Christians can enjoy good entertainment. When you love Christ and the Bible like the world loves its entertainment, and when hard work and study *become* your entertainment, then you are on your way to success; not just monetary success, but triumphant in all areas of your life, including your future relationships, responsibilities, and above all, your preparation for eternal life with God! Let us pray!