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## The Eagle, a Picture of an Elder

*Alcímides Velasco, Venezuela*

In the Bible we meet more than 30 references to the eagle. According to Leviticus 11, these huge birds are classified as unclean. It's interesting that the Creator of all species, in His infinite wisdom, has given even to those more abominable animals their peculiar qualities. Even the serpent, toward which we feel the most aversion, is characterized by prudence, because the Lord counsels us to imitate this characteristic. He can also employ an unclean creature for a noble purpose. Did He not use the dirty, black raven to carry bread and meat to the prophet Elijah? (1 Kings 17:6). In the same way, He can make use of the fierce eagles to give us important spiritual lessons. In this article, let's consider different characteristics of these birds, applying them to the work and service of the shepherds of the flock.

### Its Flight

The eagle is the bird that mounts up very high; it rises up to the point that it is only a dark speck in the sky. In the book of Obadiah, v. 4 says "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." The condor can soar to 7,000 meters high. The Creator has given it strong wings. Proverbs 23:5 says concerning riches, ". . . certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven."

To lift up the soul to heaven is a figure in the Bible of the attitude of prayer (Psalms 143:8, Isaiah 37:4, Daniel 9:18). Prayer is also present-

ed as something that elevates; Psalm 141:2 says, "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." Everyone in the assembly is called on to lift up and rise in prayer to God, but those who feel the burden and responsibilities of the assembly who should rise higher. They watch for our souls like those who must give account (Hebrews 13:17). The apostle Paul, night and day, didn't cease to pray, making mention of everyone in particular in his prayers (Ephesians 3:16, Colossians 1:9, 1 Thessalonians 1:2).

The High Priest carried the weight of the tribes on his shoulders and over his heart. The eagle differs much from other large birds like the ostrich. The ostrich buries her eggs in the earth and is hardened to the point that she sees her offspring as if they weren't her own, not fearing that her work has been in vain (Job 39:14, 16). The eagle, on the other hand, puts its eggs very high, hidden in precipitous locations, and becomes extremely fierce against any intrusion that intends to take away its brood or its eaglets. Woe to one that would attempt it! The shepherd that loves his flock puts it in a location that is secure, and in the grasslands that receive the oxygen from heaven for the delight of God's flock.

### Its Vision

The profound and intense visual ability that the eagle has is another of the marvels of the animal kingdom. The powerful lenses of the modern telescope fall short of the sharp spectrum of a flying eagle. From the most remote heights, it observes its prey, calculates, and then with amazing precision, captures and victoriously carries its victim in its talons.

In the spiritual realm, this is a figure of spiritual perception, of sharpness in discernment, that sanctifies its ability to recognize evil. The term "bishop" signifies "overseer" or one who is located above and watches.

Peter tells us of those who have lost their spiritual vision, who have no ability to see afar off (2 Peter 1:9). An elder needs to have clear

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spiritual vision in order to

- a. Detect a disheartened condition in the emotional expression on the face of one of the sheep (Genesis 40:6-7).
- b. Perceive and discover hidden sin (2 Samuel 12:7).
- c. Be able to recognize potential gift and ability in the younger ones (Acts 16:1).
- d. To be sensitive to whatever plot might exist against the assembly or right doctrine (Acts 15:1).
- e. Have spiritual penetration to clearly distinguish a godly attitude from a carnal condition.
- f. Have wisdom to be conscious of the spiritual pulse of the flock of God.

There is no doubt as to the need for true elders with vision and spiritual scent like the eagle; those of whom it can be said as of Moses at his death, "his eye was not dim" (Deuteronomy 34:7); and also what was said of the blind man when he was healed, that he "saw every man clearly." (Mark 8:25).

### Its Vigor

Where does the eagle receive renewed strength to maintain its dominance for many years as the king of birds? From what Job 39:27 concludes, that it instinctively obeys the dictates of its Creator. The wise God has provided it with a means to renew its youth. Psalms 103:5 alludes to this constant process of renovation. Naturalists say that every spring, its instinct makes it rise to a precipitous escarpment where it is alone for a short time. There a biological process takes place. It divests itself of its old plumage, worn out from the effect of the sun and the friction of the air currents. Isaiah 40:31 says concerning this, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

The true pastors are like "oxen that are strong to labor", and their experience should be like that of Jacob, who could say, ". . . in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes." (Genesis 31:40).

Jethro, seeing the load that Moses was carrying as a shepherd of Israel, said to him, "Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and

this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone." (Exodus 18:18). The apostle Paul said, "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." (2 Corinthians 11:28). How much more the elders as they deal with many responsibilities? In the same way that a battery of a car loses its charge in the process of starting, and it needs to be recharged by means of the alternator, with us it is the same.

We pray for our elders, that they might be continually revitalized. Because of this, God exhorts us to obey our shepherds, so that they may accomplish their work with joy, not with grief, because this isn't profitable for us, (Hebrews 13:17). It is alone with God on our knees, where we encounter strength, alone with God in His Word. Moses came down from the mount with the brilliance of the glory of God in his face; under the influence of this impression, with holy energy, he could vindicate the character of God and His law in the midst of a wild people. (Exodus 32:15-24).

### **Its Velocity**

These birds are swift in flight, they launch themselves upon their prey with dizzying velocities. Concerning Saul and Jonathon it was said in 2 Samuel 1:23, ". . .they were swifter than eagles. . ." The same is said of the horses of the Chaldean army in Jeremiah 4:13, Lamentations 4:19. The Lord said that the heavenly Father feeds the birds of the air; but they don't remain comfortably in their nests waiting for God to bring them their provision. They seek their food with diligence. The apostle Peter, speaking of the qualities of an elder said, "Feed the flock of God which is among you. . . with a ready mind." (1 Peter 5:2). "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord (Romans 12:11). The shepherd of the parable in Luke 15 was quick and agile to seek the lost sheep; and did not return until he was carrying it on his shoulders. Zechariah 11:17 says, "Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock!" It is sad, but there are pastors that are quick to excommunicate, but slow to visit and indolent to restore. Proverbs 27:23 says, "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds." The apostle Paul gives thanks for Titus's care. God put into the heart of this faithful brother to

go, out of his own will and concern, to Corinth (2 Corinthians 8:16). Brother Fairfield (Venezuela) said on one occasion that the great primary necessity in Venezuela wasn't for full time workers as it was for genuine elders.

We pray that the Lord will give more grace and diligence to our beloved shepherds. The Lord said, ". . . I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. . . I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away. . ." (Ezekiel 34:11, 16).

### **Its Vocation**

This bird of the air is a faithful teacher; it teaches its eaglets that their sphere of life is to life high above in the clouds. This is exemplified in the beautiful passage in Deuteronomy 32:11, that says, "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings. . ." The expression is proverbial: The eagle teaches its young to fly, and later it leaves them to fly alone. This single bird knows the time when the eaglet should receive its first practice about flight; she isn't too soon or too late. She lets them fall in the air, then when she sees them nearing the ground, she lifts them up upon her plumage at the opportune moment. It isn't prudent to have the platform available for a new believer; one might lift a young believer very high, but later see him fall spectacularly to the ground. But this isn't the first time that this has occurred in our assemblies. Neither is it wise to put a muzzle on those who labor. How fortunate those elders are who feel the supreme calling of God to prepare others, step by step. The young of today will be those who will fill the voids that will come when the present leaders in their ministry are gone. To form deacons, prepare elders, model future workers is the task of elders who have foresight, generous hearts, who have elevated perspective. Egotism doesn't have any room in these men; mean-spirited, stingy aspirations are excluded. The elder that fears that another might progress and take away his responsibility, isn't an elder with heart nor calling. The apostle Paul said to Timothy, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:2).

## Prologue to John's Gospel, pt. 5

*Joel Portman*

John has introduced the themes that will predominate in his gospel and which he will develop. They are the deity of Christ as the eternal Word, the unique and ultimate revealer of God to man, the Originator of all things, the source of all light and truth, and the unique Person who was from eternity but became truly man. These themes form the basis for what John amplifies in the chapters that follow. In this way, the gospel of John is different from the synoptic gospels. It doesn't begin in time, but in eternity. It begins from God working out toward men rather than His incarnation. It presents Christ in His character as the Burnt Offering, who voluntarily presented Himself as the One Sacrifice that would bring complete honor and satisfaction to the heart of God, giving Himself for the glory of God. So that the emphasis is on the deliberate, voluntary movements of the Eternal One to accomplish this work to "finish" all that God desired. So that v. 11 declares that "He came" and v. 14 says that "the Word became (JND) flesh" which was an active step and not passive. The emphasis on His determination to act in this way is emphasized throughout the entire gospel.

We can hardly pass over John 1:14 without further noting that this is a verse that contains vital and precious truth concerning the incarnation of the Son of God. John cites two evidences for the reality of His incarnation: One is His real presence among men and the other is the witness of the apostles. They had the experience of personally scrutinizing Him and testifying to the reality of His humanity (see 1 John 1:1-3). In beholding His glory, they witnessed a glory that only one who was the only begotten of the Father could express, and it was linked with a manifestation of grace and truth. When Moses in Exodus 33:18 petitioned Jehovah to show him His glory, the response was, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." The experience recorded in Exodus 34:6, was a display of God's glory in His

abundant mercy and graciousness, goodness and truth. This is an aspect of His glory that is unique, and which was seen perfectly in the Word.

He is "the only begotten Son" or, "only born" of a father, which signifies that He is more than the "unique Son", though that is true. However, to use the word "unique" only translates one of the Greek words and omits the full meaning of "monogenes". Others instances of the word are in Luke 7:12 ("only son", 8:42 ("one only daughter"), 9:38 ("mine only child"). It is also found in Hebrews 11:17 with reference to Isaac, as the only son in a unique, promised relationship as compared with Ishmael. Vincent's Word Studies amplifies its meaning well by saying, "John's word marks the relation to the Father as unique, stating the fact in itself. Paul's word places the eternal Son in relation to the universe. Paul's word emphasizes His existence before created things; John's His distinctness from created things. Monogenes distinguishes between Christ as the only Son, and the many children (tekna) of God; and further, in that the only Son did not become such by receiving power, by adoption, or by moral generation, but was such in the beginning with God. The fact set forth does not belong to the sphere of His incarnation, but of His eternal being."

Since many contrary heresies were being promoted in John's day, and possibly many were centered in Ephesus, he was led of the Holy Spirit to write in simple words that express profound truth which defends the Person and nature of the Lord Jesus. A. C. Gaebelien has a length passage in his commentary on John's Gospel that, though long, deals with some aspects of those heresies and how this verse serves to contest them. (If anyone desires to pass over this, you may, since it is perhaps more detailed than some would like). He says that this verses answers at least five heresies concerning Christ. First, it contradicts Docetism, which was a branch of Gnosticism, that denied the corporal reality of Christ, holding rather that He only had an "apparent" human body. John, here and in 1 John 4:2-3 asserts that Jesus Christ has come "in flesh", that is a genuine body in which He yet continues. It also combats Arianism, which teaches that the Lord

is not true God. Saying that 'the Word' became flesh, he refers back to 1:1-3, where attributes of deity are given to Him. It negates teaching of Appollinarianism, which "taught that our Lord was God and Man, but this system held that our Lord only had a human body and not a human soul. The word 'flesh' contradicts this, for it means a real man with body and soul." It opposes Nestorianism, that holds that "the Godhead made one person and the manhood another person. This is answered by the text, 'the Word became flesh,' which shows union and not separation." It is against Eutychianism, that "confounded the natures of our Lord and taught that Christ is from two natures, but not of two natures." This verse confounds and answers all such heresies and others. How essential it is that we be accurate and scriptural when speaking or thinking about our blessed Lord Jesus Christ!

Following those remarkable statements, v. 15 continues with John the Baptist's remarkable, brief testimony to Christ. Again, his words are full of meaning as he "beareth witness" (present tense, since his declaration, though given long before the gospel was written was, and still is, valid), that the One coming after him was before him. That paradoxical expression is designed to validate that Christ, who followed John in time, actually preceded him in existence, for He was from eternity, while John began when he was born. It also is saying that the One who is announced by the forerunner is always greater than the one who goes before. In John 3:30, John declared that "He must increase but I must decrease." In saying so, he indicates that his ministry was temporary and anticipatory and would decrease, but that of Christ would be permanent and increasing. Isaiah wrote that "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. . ." (Isaiah 9:7). John was the greatest of all prophets, (Matthew 11:11), for he had been given the privilege of announcing the imminent coming of Christ, but the greatest of all prophets was lesser than the One of Whom he prophesied. Another prophet, Micah, said that "His goings forth have been of old, from everlasting" (5:2). So that in this verse we see that the Word was John's successor in time, but has precedence in position and preexistence in

terms of duration.

The greatness of the Word became flesh is emphasized in v. 16. Available to all who received Him is the "fullness", a word that indicates the completeness, the over-bounding sufficiency of all that is found in Him, and the complete lack of anything. It would seem that John is emphasizing that in the supply of grace that continues, "grace for grace" or "grace in place of grace", that there is limitless supply for every need. He provides grace for salvation, and grace for preservation. There is grace for the past and grace for the present. We find grace in prosperity and also in adversity. The supply that meets our need and ministers every blessing is inexhaustible, and it can be found at every stage of our lives. Israel woke every day except the Sabbath to find the provided manna, just as God had promised, and it was there despite their unbelief and failures. What an encouragement to come to Him, who is the "Bread of Life" and the "Living Water" along with other ways which He uses to present Himself. Our lack is not because of His inability to supply! It is due to our failure to seek and receive.

The law given by (through) Moses was truth without grace in one sense, though there was grace supplied during the dispensation of law. God answered the failure of Israel to perfectly obey the law by giving the sacrifices, all of which pointed to the finality of the work of Christ. The law made demands but didn't supply the grace to fulfill them. Grace and truth in perfect balance have been clearly displayed, centered and supplied in Jesus Christ. John develops this pattern in his gospel. When dealing with the Samaritan woman, (ch. 4), He began by telling her what His grace could supply, but with her interest piqued, He brought out the truth that she must face regarding her sinful condition. In ch. 6, the Lord speaks words of grace to those who sought Him, but when their unbelief was exposed (v. 52), the truth that He expressed (v. 64) caused many to go back. We see His grace emphasized in 8:21-43, but finally the truth that revealed their father is in v. 44-58, after which they took up stones to stone Him. Grace and truth always existed in Jesus Christ, but that perfect harmonious expression wasn't seen until He

came unto His own. On our part, we tend toward one or the other; some tend toward truth at the expense of grace while others lean toward grace at the expense of truth. Only in Him the perfect, harmonious balance was always manifested and was an aspect of His glory that He revealed.

He alone was the Revealer of God. Some try to use v. 18 to teach that since no man has seen God at any time, that means that He wasn't God. But that is certainly not what John writes; to do so would contradict all that has gone before! No man has, nor can see God, for God is spirit. The only One who has revealed God is the eternal Word, both incarnate and in flesh. All revelations of God in the Old Testament were the Son. He is the "Angel of Jehovah" to Israel. He was the One who came to Abraham's tent in Genesis 18.

Again Hebrews 1:1-2 makes clear that while God spoke through the prophets in times past, that manner of speaking was partial, fragmented, temporary, and variegated. "In these last days" (at the end of the days) He has spoken through (in) Son". Again He stresses this truth in John's gospel more than once. In 12:45, He said, "He that seeth me seeth him that sent me." In 14:9 we read that familiar verse, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father . . ." The truth is also taught in Colossians 1:15, "Who is the image of the invisible God. . ." So we bow in wonder and appreciation before Him, "Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Hebrews 1:3).

We trust that this consideration of John's introduction to the gospel will help to enhance our worship and appreciation for the One who descended and who has now ascended, and in whom every expression of the eternal God has been manifested.

*(concluded)*

## Christian and Money, pt 3

*Robert Surgenor*

### Some Soul-Searching Questions

**A**llow me to be politically incorrect by asking you a few questions. Have you ever made a sacrifice by not purchasing a wanted item, and giving the money to a needy saint? How many pioneering laborers have you personally supported with your substance? Have you ever sought to win a soul to Christ by sharing your substance with them? Have you ever shared your temporal blessings with Christians less fortunate? This does not mean that we are to be inconsiderate of our own needs. "There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up." (Proverbs 21:20). The Christian is not to waste his money, but rather use it in a discrete way so as to honor the Lord.

Are you happy to give money to others? Does it fill you with joy? If not, then you have a love of money, which is a root of all evil, which while some coveted after have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Timothy 6: 10).

### Rich Christians

We do have Christians that are rich, not resulting from covetousness and greed for more, but from natural circumstances. Unlike most of us, riches have just fallen their way. What are they to do with their wealth? God has the answer. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

First of all, they are not to think themselves better than others, a trait seen among many rich people. I have met meek and lowly millionaires, and in conversing with them they seem to be more interested in others than in themselves. God has given them riches, not for security's sake, but rather that they might trust in the living God, who will give them delight in the right use of their wealth.

**LOWLINESS OF HEART IS REAL DIGNITY,  
AND HUMILITY IS THE BRIGHTEST JEWEL IN THE  
CHRISTIAN'S CROWN.**

They are to do good, meaning "to be useful," ready to distribute, willing to communicate. "Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." In other words, by conducting themselves this way, they are building for themselves a better heaven; they are investing for the future. We presently have eternal life, but we are exhorted to lay hold on it, meaning that we are to live in the full blessing and enjoyment of it down here.

### **Owe No Man Anything**

Christians are to be diligent and wise as to the spending of their money. J.C. Penny, when starting in business would not sell any item unless the customer had the cash. He sold nothing on time, saying that the credit concept catered to covetousness. Today, the credit card is a great convenience, but it can be abused. How easy to purchase an item and not have the money to pay for it. Before purchasing any item, the Christian should have the cash on hand to pay the monthly credit card bill when it arrives. If he doesn't have the funds to cover his purchase, he should use self restraint and not make the purchase. Let him save his money first, and then buy the item. Think of all the money wasted on credit charges because of one's covetousness. It is tremendous.

I am so thankful that I have never been in debt. All the money that I have saved by not being charged interest, I have been able to use for the Lord. Remember, this little exhortation is still in your Bible – "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another" (Romans 13:8). If you can't afford it, you shouldn't buy it. "The borrower is servant to the lender." (Proverbs 22:7).

### **The Snare of Stocks**

A person's investment in stocks is termed, "mild gambling." It betrays a desire to be rich. Not only this, it is an unequal yoke, for a stockholder becomes a partner in the business, with other ungodly persons. It is a snare to be avoided.

### **Loaning Money**

If a poor brother approaches you in need of a loan you can loan him money but should not charge him interest, for God says; "If thou lend

money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury" (interest) (Exodus 22:25). However, if a prosperous brother comes to you and needs more money for a business venture, then he should feel obligated to give you interest on the loan, for he is not poor.

### **Living Righteously**

Americans have lost the art of living within their own means. Many are head over heels in debt. Let us who are Christians be wise and careful how we spend our money, for all that we possess belongs to the Lord. Let us not be stingy, neither wasteful with our substance, but with sobermindedness, and prayerfulness, employ our money in such a way that God will be honored. God says; "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9-10).

"As base a thing as money often is, yet it can be transmuted into everlasting treasure. It can be converted into food for the hungry and clothing for the poor. It can keep a missionary actively winning lost men to the light of the gospel and thus transmute itself into heavenly values. Any temporal possession can be turned into everlasting wealth. Whatever is given to Christ is immediately touched with immortality." A.W. Tozer (1897-1963).

### **The Generous Farmer**

A farmer who was known for his generous giving could not be understood by his friends how he could give so much and yet remain so prosperous. One of them asked him, "We cannot understand you. You give far more than any of the rest of us, and yet you always seem to have more to give." "Oh, that is easy to explain," the farmer said. "I keep shoveling into God's bin, and God keeps shoveling back into mine, and God has a bigger shovel."

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over" (Luke 6:38)

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD

of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 3:10-12).

### THE WISE BUILDER

There was an old saint who owned a plantation,  
One of the greatest in this wondrous nation.  
The money he spent was all for himself,  
Not a place in his mansion was there a bare shelf.

On his plantation there was a small shack,  
Inside was a slave, a Christian and black.  
He had very little, but shared what he had.  
Living in poverty, yet very glad.

One day the slave died, leaving nothing behind.  
Folks wept at his funeral, for he was so kind.  
Later in life, the plantation saint died.  
The funeral was ornate, but nobody cried.

On the street of gold, a great mansion he saw  
It was his black slave's, he wondered in awe.  
If my slave has this, how much better will mine be.  
An angel said, "Really? Well, come and see.

He saw a little shack, and was told that was his.  
He said, "Why is my slave's so much better than this?  
"Your slave sent ahead more material to build.  
While you spent all for your earthly house to guild."

You may go the world over, and you will not find a single believer who is disappointed in the once-crucified, now-glorified, soon-coming Savior. This is the best answer to the skepticism of the day. Take any class of society, the highest or the lowest, and there is not an instance of ONE who trusted in the Lord and was confounded.

## How do our Meetings differ from Others?

By the late Mr. George Goodman, London,  
taken from "Wholesome Words", Issue #4

The difference lies chiefly in two things: SIMPLICITY and LIBERTY. These are no novelties, but the recovery of that which has been lost to the churches, in large measure, by the encroachments of time.

The apostle Paul feared lest the Corinthians should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3); and this has happened in a large majority of cases, among the churches, through the traditions of men and man-made ordinances (Colossians 2:20; Matthew 15:9).

1. We acknowledge no professional ministry. It is clear from 1 Corinthians 12:7, that the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is given to every believer to profit withal, Himself dividing to every man severally as He will. The body is to be edified by that which every joint supplieth. The churches are not to be ministered to by a class to whom a monopoly is given, but by "the effectual working in measure of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16).

This does not mean confusion; for the ministry must be by the Holy Spirit, and in true submission to the Lord who is not "the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33); but it means LIBERTY for Him to use whom He will, and to edify His people by the ministry of all to whom He has given grace and gift, as He shall lead.

2. We will be bound by no liturgy. It is quite clear that neither Christ Himself, nor the Apostles, drew up or imposed upon the churches an order of service or forms of prayer. By what right those who have done so have made themselves judges of how the Lord's people should worship, and by what authority they have bound them to certain forms of prayer—we cannot tell. Certainly there is nothing in Scripture to justify it.

True spiritual worship requires much exercise of heart; and this, a large majority who attend what is called public worship, are not prepared for.

3. We have no pre-arranged order of service, with its selected hymns and chosen passages of Scripture, and duly appointed preacher with a carefully-prepared sermon. This is quite permissible and profitable for Gospel services and teaching meetings, where the evangelist or teacher is alone exercising his God-given gifts for the conversion of the lost, or the instruction of the saved; but for worship it is surely out of place as limiting the liberty of the Holy Spirit in the mutual edification of God's people and the free expression of their worship.

Moreover, there are times of silence and meditation that would be hindered were the service to go on in an arranged manner. How fruitful are such times only those who know what worship by the Holy Spirit is, can tell.

4. We refuse to silence the humbler worshippers because of their lack of education. We have no sympathy with those who tell us they cannot listen to an uneducated ministry. Because a speaker drops his "h's" or is ungrammatical it is presumed that he cannot utter a word from the Lord or be used by the Holy Spirit to edify His people. This is absolutely contrary to the mind of God, as revealed in Scripture (1 Corinthians 1: 19—31). When Dr. John Owen was twitted for going to hear a Tinker (John Bunyan) preach, he wisely replied, "I would give all my learning for the tinker's grace." We do not disparage education, but that it be education in the Scriptures and in grace and good works, and not merely the knowledge that "puffeth up" (1 Corinthians 8:1).

5. We will not listen quietly to heresy. It is one of the saddest features of our modern life that those who profess and call themselves Christians will be content to sit in silence under false ministry, where the foundations of the faith are assailed and the authority and sufficiency of the Word of God are denied. Our open meetings are a safeguard against this danger. Where the honour of our Lord is assailed or the authority of His Word challenged, it would certainly not be allowed to pass unrebuked.

6. We do not allow our Assemblies to be interfered with by others, nor to submit to outside authority. We hold that Scripture teaches that each of the "churches of the saints" is directly responsible to the Head of the Church, and to Him alone. Fellowship with other Assem-

blies is maintained, but it is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and of the Faith, and not of any outward organization. This not only maintains the liberty of the Spirit, but is a safeguard in days of persecution, and who may say how soon they may be upon us. If we were organized with an earthly head or central government, the enemy would know where to strike; but if we remain as individual "churches of the saints" (1 Corinthians 14:33), the blow that scatters one, only leads to the scattered members forming other Assemblies wherever they are driven, as in the case of the persecution under Saul of Tarsus (Acts 8:4).

These then are some of the features that distinguish our Meetings from those of other Christians. We believe they are all Scriptural; that they are but a return to the spiritual order of God for His churches.

***If we could stay ourselves on God, and leave Him to work in His own time and way; if we could really believe His promises, then we could be at rest, even though a thousand rose up against us.***

## **The Great God— Entertainment**

*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 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?

*Whatever you and I may be privileged to do for Him, let it be too scriptural in its character and too decided in its results to be mistaken for the works of man. Press on, the end is near. The promises are full enough to tide you over every trial and every difficulty by the way.*