

## Answering Childish Presumption and Entitlement An Article for Chalcedon Report

Ronald Kirk  
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When a young child thrusts his foot out and says, “Mommy, my shoe’s untied,” expecting an immediate response, he practices sinful presumption. When an older child announces, “I’m going out!” he sinfully presumes upon the home and upon the parental trust given for the child’s welfare. This is not say these children are evil, but rather displaying the universal marring of the soul by the sin for which Jesus died.

Presumption selfishly expects and demands attention as a matter of course. Presumption says, “You owe me.” Now, in children, presumption comes quite naturally. God gave babies their trumpeting vocal reflex to answer any kind of discomfort, from hunger and wetness, to intestinal bubbles and infantile mood swings. A baby’s instinctive cry appears as a gift of God, so that sinful parents might attend to the helpless child’s need. However, the baby himself is sinful. Soon enough he realizes, “I can make Mom and Dad do what I want, if only I am loud and persistent enough!”

Ignorant or willingly blind parents will continue to indulge their baby, rather than attend to his needs and train him toward adulthood. A new television “Nanny” reality genre portrays a dysfunctional family with young children in constant tirade, terrorizing their parents. Meanwhile, the parents merely comply, enabling their sinful presumption. Mom and dad are nearly beside themselves as they bear their children’s capricious tyranny, but they will do nothing in response, except perhaps to yell and otherwise conduct themselves as childish as their young charges. Often, the parents appear ready to explode with anger, and sometimes they do. In the meantime, the children are in perfect control of the household, but with obvious damage to themselves and everyone about them, because sin is destructive as well as tyrannical.

While, the nanny helps the parents to regain control, she does so without addressing the underlying sin or the underlying spiritual issues, and often using humanistic means. Rather, the Biblical Christian knows that human speech and conduct produce eternal consequences (James 3:6). Under the Mosaic Law, cursing a parent and other evidently incorrigible child misconduct were capital offenses. The Scriptures teach that endemic human, rebellious sin grows into hardened character if not checked. It is barely to be remedied without great trouble, if at all. Sin is monstrous in its consequence as the first family found with their spoiled first child Cain. Therefore, Solomon calls upon the parent to *train up* a child. To train up, *Chanak* in Hebrew, means to *narrow*, *articulate* or *choke down* the path of conduct (Proverbs 22:6).

Present society does not readily recognize the magnitude of human sinful potential. In the past, Christian nations knew the grace of Christ through Christian society, which hindered sin’s societal effect. Today, presumptuous sin creates whole movements and institutions. Assuming evolution has hardwired human nature, the educational establishment manipulates behavior, but completely ignores training the character. Psychology institutionalizes presumptuous sin, justifying it as a natural response to the difficulties of life. Prototypical infantile tantrums thus grow into the tantrums of the spoiled Hollywood or privileged elite one may read about in the tabloids. Public tantrums in professional sports have become legendary. Childish, selfish presumption becomes hatred and murder. In schools, children use and abuse each other as stepping stones toward social acceptance and power. Outcasts seek revenge, with sometimes-bloody results. In traffic, the childish driver considers his own schedule and convenience supreme, at everyone else’s expense, and often with destructive or fatal results. In response, law enforcement imposes increasingly authoritarian regulation—so-called zero-tolerance—at the expense of self-restrained liberty, and with an increasingly slavish conformance void of principle or conviction. Impatience in store lines sours neighborly, civil relationships. Litigation runs amok against

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every field of endeavor, cutting to the marrow of economic productivity. Sinful presumption among employees justifies theft and confiscatory union demands.

Increasingly, demagogic politicians control a childish and presumptuous populace through entitlements. Entitlement-seeking citizens will apparently surrender all liberty to appropriate state granted security. In order to maintain power, the governing elite dole increasing largess in the form of entitlements, resources not theirs to give. We are “entitled” to a secure retirement, secure health, and secure life from cradle to grave. We are entitled to understanding when childish character vents in murder or outrage. In addition to engendering a slavish and dependent character, an entitlement mentality destroys civil relationships. In state schools under compulsory attendance, for example, every person is *entitled* to an education. The ignorant, entitlement oriented parent demands a “free” education of the state, assuming no personal responsibility for the result. The elitist educational establishment, which has come to hold the traditional family and parental authority in contempt, feeds parental indifference by systematically excluding parents from the educational process. Thus, parents thrust irresponsible children upon a school system that possesses no real authority to require anything of the student. Gone is the effective government of covenantal mutual submission, of real but limited authority, and of personal responsibility. Entitlement thinking polarizes the educational participants. Without the self-restraint of covenantal obligations, polarity and ineffectiveness in the classroom (and worse) result.

Such societal plagues and the presumption of childhood are intimately related. On the other hand, parents who train their children to ask to have their shoe laces tied, and ask permission to leave the house wield a great weapon against the sinful hardening of society, which has learned to seek civil governmental favor, rather than the grace of God. Parents who teach their children to delay gratification, to generously prefer others before themselves, parents who oppose their children’s fatal disposition toward selfish and destructive self-indulgence, and who teach them to trust God and be patient for His provision, these are the parents who help to restore grace to society. Increasing general graciousness, the opposite of presumption, will till society’s soil, making it more susceptible to the Seed of the grace of God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Here is effective evangelism in the world.