

SLANDERERS IN GOD'S JUDGMENT

Whoever makes a false accusation against his fellow-man in order to get him involved in trouble or to put him in a bad light before others is very uncharitable and wicked. And any other person who spreads such injurious accusation knowing it to be false or without hearing the accused's version is equally guilty before God. The royal law according to the Scriptures demands that "as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."

The sins of men are many and varied. Some people actually take pleasure in sins and so commit them willfully. Some others do so out of ignorance. And there are yet those who become partakers of the sins of others either because of their tendency to please men or to appear socially popular amid the worldlings.

A slanderer is one who utters false or malicious statement, tale or report designed to injure the reputation of another person. In biblical terms a slanderer is also a false accuser.

Both in the law of God and in civil law of the world; slander is an offence. The laws of the land concede to everyone a legal right to earn the goodwill and respect of his fellow men. And so if by the publication of a defamatory statement one causes another to be shunned by others or to suffer some damage, such publication is said to be an invasion of his legal right, and generally a cause for action. Lawyers know better about this.

Our purpose and concern is to treat the subject against the background of the law of God. In fact, by the standard of divine judgment the sin of slander is of far more serious consequence than what obtains in human society.

People have suffered in different ways because of false allegations or reports made against them. Have some not been cast into prison as a result of false accusation? Have some others not even been killed? Are there not people who have been sacked from their jobs because of malicious misrepresentations? And can anyone deny that slander or false reports have caused some homes to be broken?

Slander carries with it other vices such as whispering, back-biting, evil surmising, tale-bearing and so forth. And some of those who indulge in these things call themselves Christians. Except they repent they, whoever they are, shall bear their own judgment. The law of God says: "Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbour." – Exodus 20:16, Deuteronomy 5:20, Matthew 19:18

Furthermore, it is written: "you shall not utter a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man, to be a malicious witness. You shall not follow a multitude to do evil; nor shall you bear witness in a suit, turning aside after a multitude, so as to pervert justice." – Exodus 23:1, 2 Revised Standard Version

Many people are tale-bearers, backbiters and busybodies in other men's matters. They have a habit of poking their noses into people's private affairs with a view to telling tales. There are some whose tendency is always to exaggerate rumours that are already false. If they receive or hear a report against some other person they do not want to hear the version of the person who

is accused before they give their own verdict or set on the devil's work of spreading such false matters. The Bible says: "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." – Proverbs 18:13

What people should know is that God's judgment is against not only the person who commits an offence but also whoever condones or takes pleasure in the offence. – Romans 1:32

False Story

When in 1952 the God's Kingdom Society lost her first President, the late Gideon M. Urhobo, her detractors forged lies and slandered him with a view to bringing the Lord's Organisation – the GKS – into disrepute. It was wickedly alleged that St. Urhobo had earlier said he would rise the third day after his death. Some added that he took certain pills so that after being in a coma for three days he might wake so as to be acclaimed by GKS members as having risen from the dead. People like those whom Job called "forgers of lies" or the enemies of truth and righteousness did their worst to spread these fabricated tales far and wide.

If it is true that St. Urhobo said and did all that they alleged then he was a false prophet: blessing will surely be upon those who are saying it; but if he did not then whoever is responsible for or has contributed to that false story against the innocent must give account of himself to God who says, "Vengeance is mine." – 2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 12:19

It was Jesus Christ who said: "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." – Matthew 12:35-37

Those who rejoice at the troubles of others need be pitied: they are fools. King Solomon said; "...he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished." (Proverbs 17:5) Nobody is free from trouble in this world of sin. Many of those who rejoice at the death of St. Urhobo are no longer living. Before the death of some of them they began to rot with offensive odour all over the place while they were still breathing, and some others had no good burial. In what way then were they better than St. Urhobo?

Yet the members of GKS, for spiritual reasons, did not leap for joy when those detractors died. God said: "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." – Ezekiel 33:11

The God's Kingdom Society is one of the most misrepresented Church organizations. Those who made themselves her enemies are not tired of adding sin to sin in lying against her. At one time they said the GKS does not believe in burying the dead. When that became known to be false, they invented another lie to the effect that if any of the members dies the Society will carry away all his property.

Some people have also been saying that the GKS always takes the salaries or earnings of the members for her use. But the devil having made them stupid they do not care to reason how it is possible for those members to pay their house rents and maintain themselves and their families throughout the month or year. They are willingly blind to the fact that many who came to the GKS in a low state or who were living in penury are today blessed with landed property, cars and other necessities of life.

Those who are filled with envy at the progress of the GKS take delight in reproaching her for every misdeed of any member in her fold, as if the Society is responsible for such a wrong act.

Since the Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Decree of the Military Government came into effect, many people have been killed by the firing squad. Among those executed so far were atheists, agnostics, pagans and others who professed the Christian or Islamic faith. We do not hear people reproaching the religions or denominations to which the executed robbers belonged. It is the clergy and Imans who “blessed” the robbers before they were executed that people have criticized or reproached.

We know that if any of the executed robbers had been a member of GKS, her detractors, instead of holding up to shame such an ungodly citizen would have jumped up and down in excitement to rain reproaches or abuses on her. We thank God that no GKS member has committed the heinous crime of armed robbery; may He help us to be true Christians always, by His grace, to the glory and praise of His name. We of the GKS do not speak ill of any religion or church group for the sins or crimes of any of her members as it is unreasonable and foolish to do so. It is not the churches or religions the criminals belong to that send them to commit crimes. A church group can be blamed if only it condones such evils. But the GKS has always criticized those clergy who undertake the unholy job of “blessing” condemned hardened robbers because they do not have backing of the Scriptures.

The slanderers of St. Urhobo and the GKS ought to have realized by now that their propaganda has been a failure and that no amount of misrepresentation or evil-speaking can prevent God from blessing His work or Church. Despite all the machinations of wicked people the GKS continues, by the grace of God, to grow from strength to strength spiritually, physically and otherwise. The Psalmist declared: “Let them curse, but bless thou (God)...” – Psalm 109:28

What is more, Jesus Christ said “Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” – Matthew 5:10-12

Like Jesus Christ our attitude towards our detractors is that God may forgive them for they know not what they do, but on the ground that – according to the Scriptures – they repent of their sins.

God's Judgment

It does not pay to say or do things maliciously to injure another or cause him damage. God said: "Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously with thee? When thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled (obviously by God); and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee." – Isaiah 33:1

The point that must be brought home to those who take pleasure in slandering their neighbours is that they are putting themselves in danger of God's judgment. They will definitely be recompensed by the Lord for their evil deeds. Concerning such people God said: "Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." – Psalm 50:19-22

In this country and some others when women lost their husbands some people accuse them (the widows) of being witches who are responsible for the death of the men. But if the women die their husbands are no wizards! The pity of it is that some traditional zealots go to the extreme of molesting innocent women at a time when their hearts are heavy in sorrow and when most they deserve sympathy. To maltreat a widow is a sin. God said: "Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." – Exodus 22:22-24

Experience has shown that some who are loudest in calling others witches, are the very witches themselves. We agree that witchcraft is a sin, and every witch or wizard who does not repent or forsake evil cannot escape God's vengeance. (Deuteronomy 18:10-13, Revelation 21:8) The end of witches is never blessed – but marked with anguish and ignominy. Even then this does not excuse anyone to take the law of God into his hands or to defame the character of another on mere suspicion.

It is the one who slanders his neighbour or carries false tales about to cast detraction on him that is the worse sinner. Said King Solomon: "He who conceals hatred had lying lips, and he who utters slander is a fool. When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is prudent." – Proverbs 10:18, 19 Revised Standard Version

And God Himself said: "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer." – Psalm 101:5

It is for the reason that slander is a sin that St. Paul particularly warned that the wives of deacons who should serve as good example to other women must not be slanderers. (1 Timothy 3:11) He also charged the older women, who are entrusted with the duty of teaching the young ones, not to be false accusers. – Titus 2:5

Generally, all Christians are admonished not speak evil of one another. James the apostle wrote: "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge." – James 4:11

This by no means rules out the principle of righteous judgment by which evil can be condemned. Jesus Christ said: "...Judge righteous judgment." (John 7:24) And St. Paul charged Timothy as a

minister of the gospel: "They that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." – 1 Timothy 5:20

The condemnation or exposition of evil, provided it is based on truth, is justified. What the bible warns against are evil-speaking or slander and similar evils.

Slander is an evidence of lack of Christian love. Thus it is written: "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law." – Romans 13:9, 10

Let this sermon serve as warning to whoever has been slandering his neighbour so that he may repent and obtain divine mercy otherwise in God's judgment he stands condemned. – Proverbs 18:21, Matthew 12:36, 37