

## THE LOVE OF MONEY (1)

“WHEN once ‘the love of money’ is allowed to rule in the heart, it becomes the prolific root of all kinds of evil. Every species of impiety, iniquity, and vice, in one way or another, grows from it; and a large proportion of the miseries, as well as the crimes of mankind, originates from the same source.” There is abundance of truth in this piece from Scott’s Commentary.

We are living in a world where men are engrossed in the pursuit of materialism. Men’s minds are inspired with extravagant passion for wealth and there is over-estimation of money among people of almost all walks of life. It is therefore not uncommon to come across those who say, “I must either get rich at all costs or I die”. Such are the class of people St. Paul described as “men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness”. But he warned that we should keep away from them. – 1 Timothy 6: 5. Let us get it clear straight away that money in itself is not evil but the love of it is a sin.

### Bribery

In this sermon we wish to expatiate on one of the evils that the love of money has caused to be instilled in the nerves of many people. It is an evil, though not peculiar to our country, that continues to pester our society in spite of public outcry against it. And what is it? BRIBERY! Bribery is a gift used corruptly to influence public or official action, or something offered to a person in order to persuade him to do a favour he ought not to do. It is a sin because it is a transgression of the law of God; and according to the laws of the land, it is a criminal offence. Anyone found guilty of it in the law court is exposed to a summary conviction. But then that does not free him from God’s own judgment and punishment EXCEPT he repents and STOPS taking bribes.

A point we must make clear is that both the receiver and the giver of a bribe are guilty of sin before God. Concerning the judgment of God, Paul the apostle stated that it is not only those who commit sins that are worthy of death but those, too, who aid and abet or have pleasure in or applaud them. (Romans 1: 32) It was on the strength of this understanding he admonished Timothy, his workfellow in the gospel, not to “be partaker of other men’s sins” but to “keep thyself pure”. (1 Timothy 5: 22.) People should therefore refrain from giving or taking bribes.

In the days of the civilian rule in Nigeria, the obnoxious odour of bribery and corruption stank to the high heavens. This diabolical practice was so widespread that from the office of messengers to that of high officials or the honourables were men who indulged heart and soul in it.

The stage was reached that a young man or woman from college with a School Certificate could hardly get a job unless he or she gave a bribe. In some cases poor applicant girls were carnally defiled by immoral employers – a thing they would not want done to their daughters. The position was such that in most cases employment was not based on the merit of qualification but on the consideration of how much, in cash or kind, was corruptly offered. It is sad to note that some on a high scale of salary demand up to £10 or £20 from a poor man who is seeking employment as a “labourer”. Sadder still is the fact that some of these labourers are sacked after working for a space of about three months or so, in order that the heartless bribe-grabbers may create chance to get more bribes. This is to show how callous and avaricious some men are, but God will certainly hear the cry of the poor and needy and plead their cause, so “that the man of the earth may no more oppress”. Yes, “the expectation

of the poor shall not perish forever”, and the unrepentant corrupt fellows who oppress and make things difficult for them will be uprooted by God. – Psalm 9: 17, 18; 10: 2-18.

Anyone who, because of corrupt gain, denies another of his civic right to hold any public office for which he is in every respect qualified, is wicked. He will be justly recompensed by God. “Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.” – Proverbs 11: 21; see also Isaiah 3: 11.

There is no record that God had ever dealt kindly with those who oppressed the poor; rather He punished them. Concerning the oppressors and bribe-mongers, God caused His prophet to write: “Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: THEY AFFLICT THE JUST, THEY TAKE A BRIBE, AND THEY TURN ASIDE THE POOR IN THE GATE FROM THEIR RIGHT...” – Amos 5: 11-13.

### **Corruption**

A Judge who takes bribe can be blind to the truth and thus pervert the cause of justice even though he had initially sworn an oath to discharge his duties without partiality, fear or favour. The law of God says: “Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause... And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.” (Exodus 23: 6-8) Furthermore it is written: “A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.” (Proverbs 17: 23) This kind of gift intended to corrupt a person is unlawful but there is nothing wrong in a gift that is an honest expression of charity which is void of a sinful motive.

A Grade “B” Customary Court Judge was once reported to have been found guilty of “judicial corruption” in a High Court, and was sentenced to two years imprisonment. The presiding Judge, as reported, remarked that “if our Judiciary is corrupt, there is no other safe place in this country”. (Vide the West African Pilot of September 20, 1963)

The evils of bribery are many. A driver who obtains a driving licence through bribery can constitute a menace on the public highway. A traffic offense overlooked by a policeman because of bribery can lead to a fatal accident. The blood of the victims in such a case is upon the head of that policeman as well as the driver and whoever is a party to that pernicious transaction. They are all accountable to God. Said St. Paul: “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” – Romans 14:12.

Before the eyes of responsible citizens the Police deserve every respect because of the importance of their duties to humanity, and the immense benefit the citizenry derives from their services. But the pity of it is that owing to the love of money and the same mania of get-rich-quick, corruption has insinuated itself into this serviceable department.

Cases of policemen found guilty of bribery and corruption in the law courts are many. Yet the ungodly ones do not take warning.

A police-constable was reported to have written a letter to a herbalist requesting that the ‘spirit’ be invoked to protect him so that he could take bribe. The Daily Times, issue of October 8, 1965, published that a first-class constable admitted in the Chief Magistrate’s Court writing a letter in which he requested the spirit to “protect me from the hands of my enemy. I wish to be promoted to the maximum rank in the Nigeria police force by 1968...Give me protection so that I could take bribe while checking on the road”.

The report added that the policeman “claimed that he was compelled to write it at the cemetery” and that he also went to the house of the herbalist, who was said to be his brother-in-law, to ask for medicine to cure stomach trouble and jaundice”.

Granted that a fake herbalist had promised all the “sweet nonsense” to a public officer and perhaps given him a dirty ring as an assurance of what the ‘spirit’ could do, we can just imagine what the character of that officer would be in his department.

The honest and God-fearing members of the Force will be doing a great service to the nation if they do not cover the corrupt ones whenever there is a clue to their criminal acts. It is not only a disgrace but also a betrayal of trust for any constable, who ought to enforce the law, to engage in clandestine corrupt practices. Such ones deserve no sympathy; they must be exposed and brought to book in order to save the good name of the Force and so that it may always command the confidence and respect of the public.

There are also allegations of bribery in certain hospitals, and it is true that some members of the public induce public servants to take bribes. In the Daily Times of June 18, 1960, it was published that “the Onitsha Branch of the Nigerian Union of Nurses has blamed ‘over anxious’ patients in connection with the allegation that some of the Onitsha General Hospital Staff were being tipped before hospital staff could attend them”, Any hospital staff who takes bribes from “over anxious” patients is himself a disgrace to, his noble humanitarian profession. And is it not true that some nurses are sometimes negligent, or cause delay, and make things difficult for some patients to make them “over anxious” in order to give bribes?

### **Awful Disclosure**

The former Chairman of the Nigerian Railway Corporation, Sir Ralf Emerson, admitted before the Elias Commission of Inquiry, that “there was corruption in every establishment, and that his Corporation was no exception”. (Vide the Daily Times of May 26, 1960). Sir Ralf deserved compliments for his frank statement, but we hold the view that the fact that corruption exists in “every establishment” is no ground for any top-man to wink at or take a less serious view of it in his own circle. No reasonable person will steal or throw acid upon himself because foolish people do so. “Act well your part, and there the honour lies.”

The head of a department who does nothing to resist or eliminate corrupt practices going on under his nose gives room for the inference that he himself is also corrupt.

In 1963, the Railway and Ports Transport Staff Union made an allegation of mal-practices in matters of promotion in the Nigerian Railway Corporation and urged the Federal Minister of Transport to conduct an investigation into it. Following this, the Chairman of the Corporation told the Daily Times: “It is true the union has on a number of occasions made allegations of bribery and corruption but the allegations have never been substantiated.”

(Daily Times of Nov. 30, 1963) But the report of the recent probe into the affairs of the Nigerian Railway Corporation but an awful disclosure of stinking corruption affecting some of its very top officials. Some of them have been sacked or barred from holding public offices. (Daily Times, April 20, 1968)

Before the Military take-over of Government, there were reports that some people left jobs of high salaries for those of low wages all because of the avenue open to them to grab bribes in the low-income ones. This shameless sort of people demanded anything – whisky, brandy, yams, cocks and even eggs – from people for their selfish ends.

The public life of Nigeria was damn corrupt. Ten percent had become a popular “epithet” for bribes. Is it not true that some honourable members’ speeches were sometimes drowned with shouts of “wuru wuru” and such like in Parliament? And were some Ministers not really corrupt? We can recall a publication in the defunct Daily Service of May 16, 1959, stating

that “a corrupt Minister is a greater danger to the country than anyone or anything can be. He can sell the nation while pretending to protect her interests...And no true Nigerian would like to see an independent Nigeria tossed about by FILTHY LUCRE... We are developing a false sense of values in this country. There is the feeling abroad that politics is a money making business...”

### **Weaknesses**

Sometime in 1965, a Member of Parliament asked the then Prime Minister as to when he intended “to introduce the projected legislation to deal with corruption as promised in two previous addresses by His Excellency to Parliament”. In answer, the Prime Minister said: “The proposal was abandoned because all the Governments in the Federation were not unanimous in introducing uniform legislation to deal with corruption. It was found that the main object of the projected legislation would be completely frustrated by persons involved transferring accounts to banks operating elsewhere in the Republic.” This was published in the House of Representatives Official Report of Parliamentary Debates (Second Parliament! Volume 18, No. 17, of Thursday, 22nd April, 1965.

The difficulties of the Prime Minister were quite understandable; but were those not ‘some of the weaknesses of his Government which had led to a chain of events until we now find ourselves in the throes of a civil war?

Let us now take stock of ourselves. What have we really gained, as individuals or as a nation, from all the hustle and bustle of dirty politics and the wealth corruptly acquired since our Independence? Is it not true that some had died before their time, others in jail and some others are now languishing in misery and dejection?

God’s word is always true. Some men may brush it aside or attempt to suppress it, but it will yet have its way and come true. King Solomon, under the inspiration of God, stated that righteousness exalts a nation, and added. “But SIN is a reproach to any people”. (Proverbs 14: 34) Have we not seen enough of this reproach in our country?

Today, Nigeria is groaning because of the heinous sins of some of her people which include bribery and corruption. The Government had been robbed of many good things through the corruption of certain people who were placed in privileged positions. There is doubt whether certain individuals were not even richer than the Government. Now, it is everybody including the innocent and oppressed poor that is bearing the brunt of their iniquities. It was Jeremiah the prophet who lamented: “Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities.” (Lamentation 5: 7) May God Almighty come to the rescue of the poor and oppressed and spare Nigeria for His mercy’s sake. Amen.

Wealth acquired through corruption or any other evil means is a curse, and decent people who are godly-minded have no respect for those who thrive on bribery and corruption.

Unless they repent they shall die suddenly and leave them to others. Thus said the Lord: “As the partridge sitteth on egg s, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.” “Though he heap up silver as the dust and prepare raiment as the clay;... the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver...”- Jeremiah 17: 11; Job 27: 13-23.

### **Retribution**

The Chief Justice of the Federal Supreme Court of Nigeria, Sir Adetokunbo Ademola, was once interviewed by a representative of the African Challenge and was quoted as saying that “fraud, bribery, and corruption are sin”. He went on, “The offender may enjoy wealth acquired through wickedness and escape punishment while alive, but his children and his

grandchildren after him very often suffer poverty and wretchedness because of his dishonest life. " (Vide the African Challenge of March 1962).

It is true that children do suffer the retribution of their father's wickedness, more so from God when they (the children) themselves behave like their father. But God provides in His law that if the children fear Him and do righteousness the iniquities of their father will not be visited upon them. – Numbers 14: 18; Exodus 20: 5, 6; Deuteronomy 24: 16; Psalm 106: 3; Acts 10:34,35.

We will add that if the dishonest man perchance escapes man's punishment, he can never escape that of God. This is more the reason why men should fear God and "abstain from all appearance of evil". (1 Thessalonians 5: 22) And St. Paul stated: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." – 2 Corinthians 5: 10.

How can the disease of bribery and corruption be cured? Please, read what the Chief Justice says backed with the soul- saving word of God in the next issue of "The Weekly Sermon".

May the good Lord help His sheep to do His will always so that they may be truly rich and saved. Amen.