

## WHO IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

**ALTHOUGH there is the proposal for Church unity, it is common knowledge that the question as to who is the head of the Church is one of the issues on which there still exists an area of disagreement. The right answer to this question is of paramount importance because it touches on the very foundation of the divine institution that is known as Church.**

The issue of doctrines is very important in the Christian Faith. St. Paul warned Timothy, a bishop in the early Church, to guard the doctrines of God jealously and charged him to warn others to "TEACH NO OTHER DOCTRINE".-1 Timothy 1: 3; 4: 16; see "also Galatians 1: 8, 9, *Authorized Version*.

It is an article of faith of the Roman Catholic Church that Peter the apostle was the 'rock' upon which Jesus Christ built his Church and that Peter was chosen to be the "**Head of the Church**" and the "**Chief of the Apostles**". Linked with this is the claim that every Pope or Bishop of Rome is a successor of St. Peter.

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Baltimore, James Cardinal Gibbons, stated: "The Catholic Church teaches also that our Lord conferred on St. Peter the first place of honor and jurisdiction in the government of His whole Church, and that the same spiritual supremacy has always resided in the Popes, or Bishops' of Rome, as being the successors of St. Peter." (*The Faith Of Our Fathers*, Eighty-third Revised Edition, page 78.)

A *Catholic Dictionary*, Second Edition, Revised, defines the "Church of Christ" as "the visible religious society... instituted directly by Christ under one head, St. Peter and his successors, the popes..." (Page 97).

A Roman Catholic magazine- *the Catholic Voice*, issue of June 1956 had this to say: "...Our Divine Lord called Peter the 'rock' on which His Church would be built ..." (page 81). And answering a question as to why our Lord appeared to St. Peter, *the Catholic Voice* of July 1956, stated: "... We presume that He did so because He had chosen Peter to be the Head of His Apostles and the Church." (Page 102).

The issues involved in this matter are very serious and are of tremendous spiritual interest to both Roman Catholics and Protestants alike as well as any other person who desires to acquire an accurate knowledge of the Christian Faith. It is the more interesting that the Roman Catholic Church bases its teaching about the primacy of Peter not merely on 'tradition' but on the Scripture.

### Holy Bible

We must admit that the awakening of the interest of the Catholics in the Holy Bible is a significant development in Christendom Under the heading, "BACK TO THE BIBLE", a Catholic news paper, the *INDEPENDENT* of Oct. 16-22, 1966, published: "One effect of the Ecumenical Council has been to re-awaken our interest in the Bible...Not only must Priests find in the Bible the source of their sacred learning, nourishment for their interior life and substance for the instruction of their people, but the people, too, should be encouraged and helped to read the sacred scriptures for themselves." In *Course No.6* of the "Catholic Enquiry Centre", published at Owerri, Nigeria, it is positively stated: "And for a Catholic the whole Bible is the word of God...It is a Catholic teaching that there is no error in the Bible."

We of the God's Kingdom Society always endeavour to keep an open mind towards one and all. It is our policy to call a spade a spade, or truth, truth, no matter who says it because we firmly believe that the truth belongs to God. Therefore, if the Roman Catholics are right we must sincerely admit that they are right, but if they are wrong, yes, we should not only say so but

we should also prove from the Holy Bible, which they believe is "the word of God", that they are wrong.

Indeed, we quite agree with Revelation John Laux, M. A., author of *A Course in Religion for Catholic High Schools and Academies* (Part III) when he stated that we should enlarge our knowledge, cultivate our reason, "to get an insight in- to the relation of truth to truth; to learn to view things as they are".

Now let us turn to the Holy Bible to get an insight into the relation of scripture to scripture about the truth of the question, "**Who is the Head of the Church?**" In order to avoid misgivings and for the benefit of our Catholic friends, all Bible references in this sermon, except otherwise expressly stated, are from the **Douay Version** which some call 'Roman Catholic Bible'.

### **This Rock**

When Jesus Christ came to the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples: "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" Some people, the disciples told him, said John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Jesus then asked: "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God." (Matthew 16:13-16) Following this reply, Jesus said: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee that: **Thou art Peter: and upon this rock I will build my church;** and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."- Matthew 16: 17, 18.

What has been described as the "charter of the Papacy" is drawn from this declaration of Christ. Thus in answer to Question 88, *The Explanatory Catechism* states: "I know that Christ appointed St. Peter to be the Head of the Church, because Christ said to him: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church. ... (Matthew xvi. 18, 19.)'"

At this juncture, we must say outright that the interpretation given the text by the Roman Catholic Church has given cause for dispute among Christians because some believe that Jesus Christ NEVER made Peter the head of the Church. No one, apart from Jesus Christ himself or God's word in the Bible, is competent to settle this dispute. Jesus Christ, it is clear in the Bible, did not say St. Peter is the rock; neither did he say that the church was built upon him nor that he was the head of the Church. **Rather Jesus Christ himself is the rock upon which the Church is built, and he is the head of the Church. The truth of this in the Bible is so clear that there is no room for doubt for anyone who keeps his mind free from prejudice.**

When Jesus said, "Thou art Peter", we know as a rule in grammar that Peter was the second person. And when Christ added, "and upon THIS rock", we can as well understand that he was no longer referring to the second person-Peter. If Peter were the rock, Christ would have said, "Thou art Peter, and upon thee, the rock, I will build my church". The contrast between "THOU" and "THIS" should not be confused. So when he said, "and upon THIS rock", Christ was pointing to himself, the Son of the Living God, as the one upon whom the Church would be built.

In fact, he is the rock or foundation stone. This fact is strengthened by St. Paul's statement concerning the natural Jews, to wit: "**And all drank the same spiritual drink; (And they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them; and THE ROCK WAS CHRIST.)**"- 1 Corinthians 10: 4.

### **The Foundation**

The "Catholic Truth Society" of London stated in a pamphlet, *What Do You Know about St. Peter and His Successors...*"One such essential feature of the Church was undoubtedly the authority of St. Peter. It was the foundation, and what could be more essential to any building than the foundation. If the foundation changes, the building changes. Our Lord actually compared His Church to a building erected on the foundation of St. Peter's authority."

We agree that Jesus Christ likened the Church to a building but there is no passage in the whole Bible which states that St. Peter is the foundation of the Church.

Long before the human existence of Jesus Christ it had been foretold that he would be a stone to be laid by God in Zion for a foundation—a stone, though rejected by human builders, that would still become the head-stone. (Psalm 117: 22,23; Isaiah 28: 16) Referring to Jesus Christ, St. Peter said to the Jews: "This is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, which is become the head of the corner..." - Acts 4: 10- 12; 1 Peter 2: 6.

The name Peter, from the Greek word *Petros* means a stone. It was Christ himself who called Simon, his apostle, Peter (John 1: 42) which spiritually signifies strong faith in God. Other faithful servants of Christ are also stones. That was why St. Peter wrote to the Christians: "Be you also as *living stones* built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

And turning to the prophecy relating to Christ, he added: "Wherefore it is said in the Scripture: Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious..." - I Peter 2: 3-8.

All the apostles make up the "Little Flock" but there are the "other sheep" whom Christ promised to gather. (Luke 12: 32; John 10: 16) Both the apostles, including Peter, who are the foundation members in the sense of being the predestinated and first fruits of Christ's disciples, and the "other sheep" are all built in ONE foundation, which is Christ. Said St. Paul: "Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners; but you are fellow citizens with the saints and the domestics of God, built upon the foundation of the APOSTLES and PROPHETS (note-NOT Peter alone, but all the apostles). **Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom (Christ, not Peter) all the building, being framed together, groweth up into an holy temple in the Lord.** In whom (Christ) you also are built together into an habitation of God in the Spirit." - Ephesians 2: 19-22.

Whatever remains in the argument of the Catholics, if any at all, is knocked out by St. Paul when he stated: "**For other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid: WHICH IS CHRIST JESUS.**" - I Corinthians 3:11.

Saint Peter was at no time given supreme power over the other apostles. If by Christ's saying "Thou art Peter" and so forth, he was understood by the apostles to have made Peter their head, why was it that after that occasion they still "disputed among themselves, which of them should be the greatest"? Even then Jesus did not say Peter was greater than anyone of them but he said, "For he that is the lesser among you all he is the greater." - Mark 9: 33, 34; Luke 9: 46-48.

St. Paul whose wisdom was commended by St. Peter, laboured more than all the apostles (1 Corinthians 15: 10) and he did not consider himself inferior to Peter or any other apostle. He said: "For in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing." - 2 Corinthians 12: .11; 11: 5, *King James or Authorized Version (A. V.)*.

**St. Peter recognised that he was an elder or an overseer just as other apostles were.** He wrote: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who AM ALSO AN ELDER, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof..." (1 Peter 5: 1-3, A.V.) **He did not say he was the only elder or head of the apostles.**

That Christ Jesus is the head of the Church and not St. Peter, there is no doubt. Concerning Christ it is written: "... And He (God Almighty) hath subjected all things under his (Christ's) feet **and hath made him (Christ) head over all the Church...**" - Ephesians 1: 19-23.

Exhorting the Christians in regard to the duties of husband and wife, Saint Paul used the relationship between Christ and the Church as an example, and showed that Jesus Christ, not Peter is the head of the Church. Said he: "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord; because the husband is the head of the wife, **AS CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.** He is the saviour of his body. Therefore, as the church is subject to Christ (not Peter, we reiterate) so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things." - Ephesians 5: 22-24.

What is more, Saint Paul described Jesus Christ as "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature". He added: "And he (Christ) is the HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he (Christ) may hold the primacy; because in him, it hath well pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell..." - Colossians 1: 15-20.

The truth of the matter is already made bare. Some may ignore it or argue it- it remains the truth, God's word of truth says that God "hath made him (Christ, NOT Peter) Head over all the Church". All we can do, if we are true to our conscience, is to accept the truth for our own good in the Lord. "For we can do nothing against the truth; but for the truth." (2 Corinthians 13: 8) And Jesus said, "You shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free."

## ARE WOMEN ORDAINED BY GOD TO PREACH THE GOSPEL?

**A WOMAN, by reason of her faith, knowledge and good understanding, can rise to a place of honour in the Church but there are offices and privileges which God never assigns to women.**

In certain church de-nominations women are allowed to stand in the pulpit before a mixed congregation to preach sermons or read out lessons, or say prayers on behalf of all others. When Dr. Billy Graham visited Nigeria some years ago, a certain woman mounted the pulpit at his campaign meeting at the Race Course, now Tafawa Balewa Square, Lagos, on Saturday January 30, 1960, and led, in an invocation or prayer, a vast congregation made up of bishops, apostles, evangelists, priests and so forth. However, in an open letter to the doctor evangelist published in the local newspapers then, the GKS showed from the Scriptures the impropriety of that practice.

There are those who send out their women to preach in the streets and from house to house. Some of these women do claim to have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit or to have been ordained by God to preach the gospel. Among those who regard themselves as prophetesses are some whose mission is to go along the streets ringing bells in the early morning to wake people from bed and shouting, "Wake and pray." in their tribal tongues. Thus we find that in certain church groups every other member is either a prophet or prophetess - and all claim to see visions and prophesy. So, people have been asking to know the true position of women in the Church.

We have often said that a number of wrong things are being done by many who claim to be Christians. This is so because the rules and doctrines of Jesus Christ as set out in the Scriptures are often relegated to the background and substituted with men's invented dogmas.

**There is not a single instance in the Bible of a woman who was ordained by God as a prophetess to teach or lead His people.**

### Presumptuousness

Some women were improperly called prophetesses in the Bible simply because they played some roles in the affairs of God's people. Nobody can prove that God ordained any of them. Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, was called a prophetess as recorded in Exodus 15: 20, just because she led the women of Israel (not men) in a victory dance after the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea. To show that she was not ordained to be a prophetess, God punished her with leprosy when she joined Aaron to assume that God was also using them, and they murmured against Moses. They said: "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us ?" Because of this God was angry, and He said: "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream... Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?... and behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow..." (Numbers 12: 1-15). It is worthy of note that Aaron was not punished - indeed he was ordained a priest - **but Miriam suffered for her presumptuous.**

As regards men like Moses, Joshua, Daniel, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and a host of others, it is clearly shown in the Bible that they were ordained by God. But who can cite any instance to show that God appointed any woman at any time to lead or teach His people?

It is a shame for men to be led by women in God's Organisation, and above all, it is contrary to the will of God. Men ought to rule or lead women. **It was when the Jews because of their**

**sins were forsaken by God that women dominated them. And God said: "As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths."** - Isaiah. 3:12.

The Roman Catholic Church is aware of the position of women, and they do not allow them to fulfill the functions of priests. Answering a question as to why Revelation Sisters are not allowed to say mass, the *Catholic Voice* of July 1956, stated among other things: "Since our Divine Lord chose only men as His Apostles so only men can become priests." And a Catholic newspaper, the *INDEPENDENT* of March 10-16, 1968, stated: "Men only can receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders: this is the law of God. Christ called men only to the apostolate, and ordained men only to the priesthood..." Obviously, this is the truth and the Roman Catholic Church gets our support.

When the Church of Sweden proposed to ordain women priests, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Fisher, warned the Archbishop of Sweden that "if Sweden ordains women priests, relations between the two churches will be broken off." (Vide the British *Daily Sketch*, Jan. 15, 1959)

### **Foible of Watchtower**

In the Salvation Army they have women ministers who perform the same duties as men. For this, they were severely criticised by the Watchtower Society. In the *Watchtower* magazine issue of Sept. I, 1962, page 540, the Watchtower Society wrote: "An unusual feature of the organisation is the prominence accorded women...As a result, women have had much to do with the direction and policy of the Salvation Army, often taking the oversight of men. In fact, for thirty years Evangeline Booth served as the head of the Salvation Army in the United States, and for five years directed the entire world-wide organisation...**In granting women equal ministerial privileges the Salvation Army does not follow Bible precedent...**" (*Emphasis ours*).

It can be recalled that the question of women claiming to be anointed or ordained by God to preach from house to house is one of the doctrinal issues on which the first President of the God's Kingdom Society, Brother G. M. Urhobo, disagreed with the Watchtower Society and for which he was persecuted and is still being slandered by those people who call themselves Jehovah's Witnesses. Many of their women claim to be anointed, and the latitude given the women had caused trouble in that organisation. In the book, *LIGHT* Book One, the Watchtower Society stated: "One of the original incorporators of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society was a woman, the wife of the president thereof, and she insisted on editing *The Watch Tower* and, being resisted, led other women to take a wrongful course against the Lord's work ... Even to this day the same influence attempts to interfere with the Lord's work ... The Lord had pointed out that the woman has her place in the church, **but her place is not to teach man nor attempt to influence man in his rightful performance of duty as a servant of the Lord.**" (Pages 30-31, *emphasis ours*) But we ask: If women are ordained by God to preach why should the wife of the President who claimed to be ordained be "resisted" for insisting on editing the Society's magazine when she was not proved to be inefficient? If the women receive the same anointing which the men have and which put both sexes on equal spiritual status as the Watchtower Society is teaching there should be no reason why the women should be prevented from discharging the duties for which they are ordained. Here lies the foible of the Watchtower Organisation!

## The Law

The truth, as the GKS has always maintained, is that God has never ordained or anointed any woman to be a preacher or teacher. If it were God's will that women should hold such a post in His organisation, Jesus Christ would have shown an example by choosing one woman, at least, to be an apostle. But he did not, and even when he selected other 70 disciples whom he sent out, two by two, no woman was included. (Matthew 10: 1-7; Mark 3: 13-19; Luke 10: 1-17) Though Jesus Christ had many women disciples, he did not send any of them to go about preaching.

It is contrary to the Christian rule for a woman to teach and lead men. St. Paul stated: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. **But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.** Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." (1 Timothy 2: 11-15) St. Paul did not say that women would be saved if they preached from house to house or in the street.

Women are described by St. Peter as "weaker vessels" and in modern terms they are known as the "softer sex". To send them to go from house to house preaching, is tantamount to exposing them to temptations. Modesty will restrain us from going into the details of certain reports about some women that have come to light in connection with their house-to-house preaching activities.

For allowing Jezebel who posed to be a prophetess to teach and to seduce men to commit fornication, the Church of Thyatira was rebuked. The Lord said: "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication..." - Revelation 2: 20-23.

The Watchtower Society's members cannot claim to be ignorant of these Bible facts. In their book, *"Equipped for Every Good Work"* (page 322), they commented on St. Paul's epistle to Timothy thus: "... The woman is not to usurp authority over the man, **but is to learn in silence and not be suffered to teach in the congregation or assembly. This is the Theocratic order.**" (*Emphasis ours*) From this it would appear that they understand that women are not ordained to be teachers or preachers. But the practice among them up till today is quite the opposite of the "**Theocratic order**"!

Women must not make speeches in the congregation or assembly of the Lord's people. Even if they have doubt on any issue, the law estops them from asking questions in the church. As it is written: "**Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: It is shame (or women to speak in the church.**" (1 Corinthians 14: 34, 35) It was on the basis of this authority we criticised Dr. Billy Graham when he allowed a woman to lead a congregation of bishops, deacons, and so on, in prayer at his campaign meeting.

In violation of the law of God quoted above, the Watchtower Society allowed Miss V. Dougaluk, Miss M. Hinds and Miss R. M. Dreyer to address an international assembly of "Jehovah's Witnesses" at the Yankee Stadium, New York City, U.S.A., on July 23, 1953, This was published in the *Report of New World Society Assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses, Yankee Stadium-New York City, July 19-26, 1953* at page 29. In the same report it was published on page 77, that "U.V. Glass gave sound advice to the sisters"-female members. He said among other things that a woman should not be upset "when a brother tries to counsel her", He added: "She should comment at meetings, but should not try to be a 'one-woman meeting.' She will do

better by giving others a chance to comment," Does this advice not run counter to the law of God as stated by St. Paul? The law says, "IT IS NOT PERMITTED UNTO THEM (women) TO SPEAK"! Why should she "comment at meetings"?

### **GKS Vindicated**

In a recent publication, *Life Everlasting in the Freedom of the Sons of God*, the Watchtower Society treated at length "The Places of Man and Woman in God's Arrangement", and therein they have come to agree with the GKS at last that women had never been ordained by God as priests, prophets, apostles or bishops. The following extracts from the book are quite explicit:

"The one whom Jehovah God raised up to liberate the twelve tribes of Israel from Egyptian slavery was a man, Moses the son of Amram. The ones whom God chose to do priestly service to him in behalf of the nation of Israel were men, the man Aaron and his sons...**God made no arrangement for priestesses.** ." (Page 248).

"Then the time came for Jesus to pick out twelve workers to be with him all the rest of his earthly ministry, Whom did he pick? Men, twelve of them, and he sent them forth as apostles, Likewise, when he sent out seventy additional evangelizers, it was men that he selected for this privilege of service. (Luke 10: 1-17) **In such choosing Jesus was following God's pattern.** Some women in proper circumstances, enjoyed some privileges in connection with Jesus, **but not those of the twelve apostles and the seventy evangelizers.**" (Pages 250 *emphasis ours*).

"It becomes plain that the Most High God Jehovah followed the same dealing with regard to the Christian 'Congregation of God' or spiritual Israel, as he did with regard to the Jewish congregation of pre-Christian times, or natural, circumcised Israel. That is to say, **God gave the preference to the males, the men, as regards official responsibilities within the theocratic organisation.** This fact is emphasised for us in Ephesians 4: 7-13... In that quotation from Paul's letter the words '**apostles,**' '**prophets,**' '**evangelizers,**' '**shepherds and teachers** are ALL in the masculine gender... In full accord with this, when the apostle Paul writes to Timothy about the qualifications for the service positions of 'overseers' and of 'ministerial servants' in the congregation, he specifically states that **they must be men...**(1 Timothy 3: 1-10, 12)" (Pages 255- 256, *emphasis ours*).

Surely, the foregoing excerpts are a vindication of Brother Gideon Urbobo and the God's Kingdom Society. And we thank God.

### **Good Works**

Although women have important duties to do in God's organisation, they must not be vested with authority to lead or teach men, neither must they be allowed to address the church. The example of Jezebel is enough to warn any group of Christians to refrain from permitting their women to peddle with the word of God. There are other good works women should do in support of God's work so as to be saved.

In the days of Jesus Christ on earth, he praised very highly a certain woman for her good work when she poured very precious ointment on his head. The woman did not preach, yet Jesus said concerning her: "Verily I say unto you.. Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." - Matthew 26: 6-13.

We are not saying that a woman cannot talk God's word at all-either by teaching her child the fear of God or preaching to another woman. She can, and that does not make her to be ordained by God. St. Paul stated that the aged women should "teach the younger women to be sober, to



love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."-Titus 2: 3-5.

Note that St. Paul says that the women should be "keepers at home" and not house-to-house trotters. Rather, it is women who have cast off their faith that wander about. Concerning such women, St. Paul wrote: "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not." (1 Timothy 5: 13) The apostle then advised: "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." (verse 14).

Some people think that it is by preaching only that one can be saved. This is very wrong and misleading. To put women forward, posing as having been ordained by God, to preach IS A SIN. We should learn from the fate of Miriam and Jezebel. As the Watchtower Society rightly put it in their criticism of the Salvation Army, "in granting women equal ministerial privileges the Salvation Army does not follow Bible precedent". And we add that any Church group which allows their women to preach in the streets and from house to house DOES NOT follow Bible precedent.

If we as Christians know that we are not to do our will but the Lord's, and if discipline and decency are to be maintained in the Church of God, it is very important that Christian principles and tradition as explained in this sermon must be adhered to. What is more, St. Paul says: "Let all things be done decently and in order." God is against lawlessness, presumptuousness and confusion.-1 Corinthians 14: 33.40.

Chief Justice Ademola hits The Point

### 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, originate 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". (I 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 Sept 20, 1963)

The evils of bribery are many. A driver who obtains driving license through bribery can constitute a menace on the public high-way. 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 everyone 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 service able 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 bad 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." (Lamentations 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 eggs, 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.

*The Love Of Money ( 2)***VANITY OF FALSE RICHES**

**"THAT which is ill got, though it may increase much, will not last long. A man may perhaps, raise a great estate in a little time, by usury and extortion, fraud and oppression of the poor, but it will not continue; he gathers it for himself, but it shall prove to have been gathered for somebody else that he has no kindness for," says Henry.**

We have always made it quite clear that it is not a sin for one to be rich. Solomon, who himself was the richest king in his days, said: "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it." (Proverbs. 10: 22) But the trouble with many people in our time is that they amass wealth through fraud, bribery and corruption, oppression of the poor and other evil means.

The God's Kingdom Society (GKS) had long foreseen that Nigeria would, sooner or later, be plunged into chaos because of the excesses of certain politicians and some godless people who thought that money was all that mattered in life. They therefore stopped at nothing in making themselves, by hook or by crook, to be rich. Thus many others in the public services and in private lives developed an unrestricted bent towards material acquisition, and the Nigerian society became infested with bribery and corruption and their attendant evils. Indeed, the Bible says: "He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him." -Proverbs 28: 22.

**GKS Vindicated**

Our warnings against the godless and materialistic tendencies and ideologies of the politicians and their followers, before and after Nigerian Independence, were not heeded; rather we were called names. Yes, "the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard". (Ecclesiastes. 9: 16) But how is it today? has the GKS not been vindicated?

We can recall that as far back as 1958, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe admitted at the banned NCNC Executive Committee meeting held at the Lagos City College, that they had followed the "SELFISH DESIRES OF OUR OWN HEARTS". This happened when there was an internal wrangle in the party. He asked his colleagues in that meeting to close their eyes while he read this prayer:

*"Our Father in heaven, we pray that You save us from ourselves. The world that You made for us, to live in peace we have made into an armed camp. We live in fear of war to come...We have turned from You to go our selfish way. We have broken Your commandments and denied Your truth. We have left your altars to serve the false gods of money and pleasure and power. Forgive us and help us. Now, darkness gathers around us and we are confused in all our counsels..."* (Vide the *Daily Times* of June 16, 1958, page 16-italics ours).

Let the lovers of money read over again and ponder the above prayer.

It is a pity that some of the very ills, which include bribery and corruption, that led to the fall of the First Republic are still rearing their ugly heads in Nigeria up till today. Many people are hypocrites. For while they pay lip-services to the cause of Nigerian unity, they perpetrate the evils that can ruin the nation, and make difficult for the honest ones the task of keeping Nigeria united.

## New Order

When the Military Government came into power, it promised among other things that "in the new order of things, there should be no place for subjugation of personal service to personal aggrandisement, nepotism and corruption". This was made known by the former Head of the Military Government, the late Major-General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, at a meeting in State House, Lagos, in February 1966. (*Daily Times*, Feb. 22, 1966)

In a "Statement of Policy" broadcast to the nation in August 1966, the present Head of the Military Government, Major-General Yakubu Gowon, stated: **"One point which I had not hitherto made abundantly clear is that my Government is very determined to stamp out corrupt practices and to bring to book all persons, including those recently released from detention, against whom there is evidence of improper practice and criminal acts,"** (*Morning Post*, August 10, 1966).

Following this assurance of the Military Government, certain measures have been taken by way of inquiries both at Federal level and in some of the States. The findings made known so far are shocking and reveal how corrupt some people, being looked upon as "gentlemen" and godly, are. We congratulate the Federal and State Military Governments on their bold steps in exposing evils and depriving crooks of their ill-gotten gains.

Some people do not fear God, neither do they learn from past mistakes or the experience of others. Today, bribery and corruption are again in full swing. The sins of those engaged in it shall find them out in God's time. - Numbers 32: 23.

Addressing a meeting of some officials of Local Government Councils in the Mid-Western State, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Benin City, was reported as saying, "Revenue collectors who should collect taxes to swell the coffers of the council in fact swell their own coffers by taking bribes of 5/- to 10/- from tax defaulters who find this cheaper than paying the normal expected tax of £3: 10/-. As a result the officials get richer and make capital investments all over the place out of proportion to their income level while the council gets poorer and cannot even maintain the rudimentary roads in its area." (Vide the *Mid-Western Nigeria PRESS RELEASE* of Thursday August 22, 1968).

Bribe-mongers have formed their own terms and phrases for the purpose of begging for tips or demanding bribes. The saying, "nothing goes for nothing", is common among them. The words, "kola" and "dash" are their popular synonyms for the word, *bribe*. You enter an office to ask for something to which you are entitled but the officer in charge, if he is of the corrupt type, will then tell you: "If you know how to 'walk', or if you 'walk' well, you will get it." Is it not surprising that a fully grown-up man must have to learn again how to walk in some offices? If you are not the sort of those who are used to such dastardly language or the "kola game", the officer and his colleagues may even laugh at your "ignorance" for not knowing what people are doing or for not "behaving as a gentleman".

It is our humble appeal that the Authorities should do everything humanly possible to get rid of this kind of evil men or vicious "beggars" in the public services of the country.

According to the Law Book of God, the Bible, it is not only those whose corrupt practices have come to the open that are guilty of sin, but also those whose offences are hidden. Except those still covered repent thoroughly to the pleasure of God, their "secret sins" shall be revealed in due time and great will be their shame. (Psalm 90: 8; Hebrews 4: 13) St. Paul said: "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise



cannot be hid." - 1 Timothy 5: 24, 25.

Another factor that is hardening the hearts of some people in their corrupt dealings is their hope in the secret societies to which they belong. It must be pointed out to such ones that their days are awaiting them. For when their cups of iniquity shall have been filled, God shall deal with them and reward them with the fruit of their doings. No secret society or human effort then can help them.

We believe that there are good people in secret societies. We appeal to such ones not to help the bad characters who, among them, involve themselves in criminal acts. If they do, they will be partakers of their iniquities or crimes; and though they may avert man's punishment or that of the Government, they CANNOT AVERT OR ESCAPE GOD'S OWN. HE WILL CERTAINLY PUNISH THEM. - Proverbs 11: 21; Isaiah. 3: 11; 1 Peter 3: 10-12; Ecclesiastes 12: 13 14.

### **The Role of the Church**

In a situation such as we find in this country, the role of the Church is of paramount importance. Religious leaders must always come out in a straightforward condemnation of evils such as fraud, bribery and corruption, and so forth. Their spiritual responsibilities are very great. This can better be appreciated from the following charge of God to His servant: "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." - Ezekiel. 33: 7-9.

All those who have been found to be corrupt and others not yet revealed are mostly members of one religious group or another. But what have their leaders done to check their excesses in violation of God's commandments? It is in this respect many church leaders in Nigeria have been charged with duplicity and as having failed in their spiritual duties.

After the tragic events of January 15, 1966, which resulted in a change of Government, the Baptist Church of Nigeria did a praiseworthy thing in promptly coming out with an open admission of their fault for lying dormant while some of their members who were politicians committed sinful acts in careless freedom. A document captioned, "MEMO OF THE NATIONAL SITUATION" dated February 1st, 1966, and signed by a leader of the Baptist Church, speaks for itself and states in part:

"During the five years when the British no longer determined our policies we have witnessed the effects of sin in various aspects of our national life. We have learnt to accommodate ourselves to acts of selfishness, greed, lusts, pride, corruption, tribalism, deceit. Less and less the freedom we had hoped were inherent in the lives of an independent nation became illusive...

"We Baptists once derived joy as champions of freedom and justice, of truth and honesty. However, our heads are bowed in shame as people observed that the distressing atrocities were committed in the area where our denomination had the strongest influence, where many Baptists were in key positions in Government and quasi-Government bodies. Many of us in the Ministry and in teaching, as well as in other walks of life, become ardent supporters of evil policies and practices in total disregard of Jesus Christ and his demands. We flattered corrupt politicians for personal private profit. We sang their praises in the Assembly of God's people. We connived at sin. Worst still, when some try to proclaim what they understand the will of God to be-two or three instances of such actually came to our hearing- some frightened Christians warned them to

be careful! We are living in fear! Need I extend the catalogue further to indicate how all of us were implicated in the moral confusion of the times? May God forgive us!"

The Baptist Church is not alone in this sort of unchristian attitude in tacitly permitting evil. There are several other religious bodies that are equally guilty, and they know themselves. However, the frankness and sincerity of the Baptist Church in owning its fault is appreciated. May God forgive them as they have prayed. But the GKS - this is no self-praise - on several occasions warned the nation against sin; her Press Release in the *Daily Times* of September 30, 1960 on the eve of Independence captioned, "Only By Righteousness will Independent Nigeria Survive", is an instance.

Before the Military take-over in January 1966, the GKS, through her President also warned against the danger ahead if things continued as they were at that time. Copies of the warning letter were sent to the late Prime Minister, the then Regional Governors and Premiers, Dr. Orizu, Acting President of the Federal Government, religious leaders and leading politicians in the country. But the warning was not heeded. Today, it is all of us - the guilty and the stubborn ones as well as the innocent - that are suffering! May God have mercy on us.

Although the Military Government has promised to stamp out corruption, we will be expecting too much to think that it can go beyond the limit of human strength. But it can do and achieve much with the support and co-operation of godly, honest people. The power to wipe out evil from the entire surface of the earth, rests with God alone. And very soon in this our Age, He, through Jesus Christ, will take action towards this end, and ALL INIQUITY will come to an end.

### **The Remedy**

Chief Justice Ademola was reported as saying "that bribery, though a dangerous disease, is curable", And he added, "**It can be cured only through a deep spiritual awakening, through the Ministry of the Christian Church,**" (*African Challenge* of March 1962, *emphasis ours*).

We agree with the Chief Justice, Anyone who claims to be a Christian and still indulges in bribery is not yet converted. St. Paul admonished that we should be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we might prove "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God", (Romans 12: 1,2) And he further said: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things (including fraud, bribery and corruption) are passed away; behold, all things are become new." -2 Corinthians 5: 17.

We have said enough to expose the vanity of false riches and the dangers of bribery and corruption. If those still engaging in them do not repent, all they acquire through bribery and corruption shall be destroyed by God. As it is written: "**For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery,** They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit." - Job 15: 34, 35.

Our humble advice is that those who have been giving or receiving bribes should repent of their sins so that God may forgive them. There is no sense in continuing to do that which always pricks your conscience, incurs the anger of men, lowers your prestige, and will eventually bring you the condemnation of God. It was the Psalmist who prayed: "Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide. **Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: in whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.**" - Psalm 26: 1, 9-10.

In Isaiah 55: 7, there is the warning that the wicked should forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his evil thoughts; that he should return to God and He will have mercy upon

him. And Jesus Christ directed an assuring call to all mankind when he said: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." - Matthew 11: 28-30.

No matter how many and serious your past sins may be, take an advantage of this opportunity you have of hearing or reading this sermon, and REPENT and retrace your steps to Jesus so that his salvation and other blessings may be your lot.

It pays to fear God, and to lead a godly and sober life. We cannot end this sermon without reminding you of the following admonition of St. Paul: "**But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**" - I Timothy 6: 6-10.

And to every true Christian the apostle added this exhortation: "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." - I Timothy 6: II, 12.

The remedy for the disease of bribery and corruption lies, therefore, in the fear of God by which "men depart from evil". (Proverbs. 16: 6) Christ's warning is that men should "beware of covetousness". - Luke 12: 15- 21; see also Hebrews 13: 5, 6.

O God, help us Thy sheep to keep Thy commandments always as eloquent evidence of our love for Thee and Thy Son our Redeemer so that we may be saved. Amen.

## THE BIBLE

**INDISPUTABLY, the greatest and most influential book in human history is the HOLY BIBLE. In spite of the violent attacks it has been subjected to by the most learned of atheists and agnostics, and despite the cruel persecutions it has suffered at the hands of the wicked, the Bible-by reason of its divine nature and the irresistible force of its sagely message-has continued to shine from age to age, even through the darkest age. And though it also has the unique honour of being the oldest book in the world, it is still the best-seller and never out of date.**

The Bible is an authoritative work containing all the books of both the Old and New Testaments. The word *bible* is derived from the Greek word *biblia*, the plural of *biblion*, which means the 'books'.

The whole of the Bible or part of it is sometimes referred to as "The Holy Scriptures" or "The Scripture". The word *Scripture* which means 'The writings' in English comes from the Latin word *scribere* -that is, to write.

Statistics of the Bible show, according to the *Cyclopedic Concordance*, that the whole volume is made up of 66 books, 1,189 chapters, 31,173 verses, 773,692 words and 3,566,480 letters.

Originally, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew language and the New Testament in Greek. At the time of Jesus Christ the books of the Old Testament had not been brought into a single collection. On a certain occasion when Jesus Christ went into the synagogue at Nazareth the book of the prophet Isaiah was delivered to him to read. He opened it and found the passage, which says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.... " When he had closed the book, as all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him, he told the people, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears".- Read Luke 4: 16-21.

The first complete translation of the whole Bible into English was made by John Wycliffe in A.D. 1380-1382. It was the first book ever printed through the process of movable type by Guttenberg, the reputed inventor of printing at Mentz, Germany, between the years 1450 and 1456 A.D.

We do not intend to go into much details here as regards the historical facts concerning the Bible. A writer once stated; "The Bible is a history book, which has itself made more history than any other history book. The events it has figured in are nearly as manifold and wonderful as the events it describes."

### Inspiration

What makes the Bible most distinguished among books is not only for the fact that it expresses God's will and purpose towards mankind but also because it was written under the inspiration of One whose wisdom and power are infinite. For this cause, the authenticity and reliability of the Bible is not open to question. It is true that some men, especially among those with academic training, have cavilled at and taken issue with the Bible but the Book of books has always triumphed.

The prophets and the apostles who wrote the books of the Bible were instruments that were used by God to do His work. David who was an anointed king in Israel and one of the prophets, said: "The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue." – 2 Samuel 23:2.

Several years after the death of David, St. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, confirmed that he (David) was moved by the Holy Spirit to make utterances. This happened when Peter, while addressing his fellow disciples, made reference to the Psalms of David (Psalm 41:9; 69:25; 109:8) concerning Judas Iscariot who betrayed our Lord, and whose office was to be taken by another. He declared: "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost (Holy Spirit) by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.... For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take."-Acts 1: 15-20.

Take for example, the case of Daniel the prophet who said that he did not understand what he heard. Yet God used him to write and He told him (Daniel) that people would in future be cleansed through the Holy Spirit to understand the prophecies and symbolisms of the Scriptures. Said Daniel: "And I heard, but I understood not then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And He said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." -Daniel 12: 8, 9.

Some people argue ignorantly on the basis of this statement of Daniel that nobody can understand the Bible. If this is true, then the Bible is of no use to man since it is incomprehensible. However, that view is wrong. God did not say that "the words" were closed up and sealed forever but "**till the time of the end**". And when that time arrives, what will happen? God gave the answer to Daniel: "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; **but the wise shall understand.**"-Daniel 12: 10.

We must point out that we are now in "the time of the end" or "the last days". And the prophecy of Daniel under reference is fulfilling in that while the light of God's word is breaking upon those who give themselves to righteousness and things of the Spirit, scorners and other people with carnal disposition stumble nearly at every scripture. We shall go a step further on this point as we progress in this sermon.

### **Moses Wrote**

The argument of some people that Moses did not write cannot be substantiated. There is abundance of evidence to the contrary. It was Moses who, under the inspiration of God, wrote the first five books of the Bible - namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

There was an occasion when Moses was called up into the mountain to receive instructions from God. He returned and told the children of Israel the words and judgments of the Lord, and the people promised to be obedient. The account further states: "And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel."-Exodus 24: 4. Again, in Deuteronomy 31: 9, 24-26, it is written: "And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and unto all the elders of Israel..... And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee."

On this matter no evidence can be more arresting or conclusive than that of Jesus Christ himself who testified to the truth that Moses actually wrote. In one of his encounters with the unbelieving Jews he made them know that the very Moses on whom they set their hope, wrote

about him. So, if they had believed Moses they would, also, have believed him. He said: "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: **for he wrote of me**. But if ye believed not **his writings**, how shall ye believe my words?"-John 5: 45-47.

To a mind that is free from prejudice, there cannot remain any doubt that the Bible is of divine origin. The accuracy of its prophecies and all the wonderful and wholesome wisdom that permeates the pages of the book lead us to the conclusion that it owes its authorship to a supernatural perfect intelligence. St. Peter made a categorical statement to this effect. He stated: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. **For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.**"-2 Peter 1: 20, 21.

Dr. Henry M. Morris who is credited with having studied some in most of the basic sciences, having belonged to many scientific societies and associated with scientists and intellectuals daily for 20 years and having taught in three great universities for 14 years, is "firmly convinced that every word of the Bible is inspired of God", In his book *The Bible and Modern Science*, he wrote: "One of the most arresting evidences of the inspiration of the Bible is the great number of scientific truths that have lain hidden within its pages for thirty centuries or more, only to be discovered by man's enterprise within the last few centuries or even years."

The learned doctor buttressed his view with instances which he cited by taking a look at the field of astronomy, sciences of hydrology and meteorology, medical and sanitary laws of Moses, which he said were far advanced of the times, and so forth.

### Discoveries

Today, it is no longer a hidden truth that more and more archaeological discoveries continue to lend support to the authenticity of the Bible. A few years ago the *LIFE* magazine devoted its special double issue of April 19, 1965, to *The Bible*. In its introduction it was stated among other things: "All the recent finds of scholarship have tended to raise, not lower, the status of the Bible as history. Cuneiform tablets now provide ample non Hebrew testimony to many biblical battles, migrations and peoples that rationalists once thought 'mythic'; so with other discoveries in Egypt, Babylon, Turkey and elsewhere... The discoveries are still coming in and expanding - 'to the point where it blinds us,' says one hard-working scroll expert - and will steadily enrich our knowledge of all biblical times, places and beliefs. But this enrichment is not an overthrow of the Bible. It is like adding instruments to an orchestra or deeper chords to a musical score!"

The evidence of Dr. Werner Keller, a professional journalist, who did a lot of research and had to do with the learned works of Biblical Archaeologists, is very material to the issue. He admitted that the "breathtaking discoveries, whose significance it is impossible to grasp all at once, make it necessary for us to revise our views about the Bible".

Dr. Keller, in his book *The Bible as History*, wrote: "No book in the whole history of mankind has had such a revolutionary influence, has so decisively affected the development of the western world, or had such a world-wide effect as the 'Book of Books', the Bible....In view of the overwhelming mass of authentic and well-attested evidence now available, and I thought of the sceptical criticism which from the eighteenth century onwards would fain have demolished the Bible altogether, there kept hammering on my brain this one sentence: '**The Bible is right after all!**'" (*Emphasis ours*)

In spiritual values, moral philosophy and even considered from historical and literary standpoint, the Bible has no equal. In any land or community where the Bible is relegated to the

background or where its knowledge is lacking, godlessness is bound to hold sway over the minds of men. What then will follow? Obviously, greed, avarice, corruption, licentiousness and every other form of evil will be the order of the day; and consequently, the way of peace and concord the people can never know.

Concerning the Bible, Abraham Lincoln said: "In regard to this great book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to men. All the good Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it, we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it."

Other men of reputation in history had at one time or another acknowledged the greatness of the Bible and confessed how they had derived immense benefits from it. But dictators and other evil men, for obvious reasons, dread the Holy Writ. "As an educating power, the Bible has no equal. Nothing so broadens the vision, strengthens the mind, elevates the thoughts, and ennobles the affections as does the study of the sublime and stupendous truths of revelation. A knowledge of its principles is an essential preparation to every calling. To the extent that it is studied and its teachings are received, it gives strength of character, noble ambition, keenness of perception, and sound judgment. Of all the books ever written, none contains lessons so instructive, precepts so pure, or promises so great as the Bible." (*Bible Readings for the Home*).

### Usefulness

With regard to the usefulness of the Scriptures, the testimony of the Psalmist is very striking indeed. Said he: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward." -Psalm 19: 7-11.

Moreover, St. Paul wrote to exhort Timothy, his fellow labourer in the gospel, to continue in what he had learned and that the holy scriptures which he had known from childhood "are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus". He added: "**All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished onto all good works.**" -2 Timothy 3: 14-17.

From the foregoing it is abundantly clear that the value of the Bible cannot be over-estimated. Therefore, to be ignorant of the Bible is to be blind to the essentials of life in relation to God Almighty and the power of the world to come.

Owing to the divine nature of the Bible and the highly spiritual inditement of its contents it requires the direction of the spirit of God to be able to grasp the significance of its allegories, prophecies, symbolisms and other sublime revelations. "But there is a spirit in man", said Elihu, Job's adviser, "and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them (the children of men) understanding." (Job 32: 8) So, anyone who has not the "inspiration of the Almighty", no matter how academically bookish or variegated he may be, cannot understand or interpret the Bible correctly. And St. Paul stated: "But as it is written; Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in

him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." -1 Corinthians 2: 9-11.

There are many who read the Bible not with a desire to benefit from its wealth of knowledge or to know God and understand His purpose but in order to find fault with or criticise it. Concerning such carnal people, St. Paul further stated: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spirituality discerned."-1 Corinthians 2: 14.

We must emphasise that if men want to enjoy lasting peace on this earth, the knowledge of the Bible is indispensable. An American educator and one-time President of Yale University, William Lyon Phelps, said: "Everyone who has a thorough knowledge of the Bible may truly be called educated; and no other learning or culture, no matter how extensive or elegant, can, among Europeans and Americans, form a proper substitute." He added: "I thoroughly believe in a university education for both men and women; but I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college course is more valuable than a college course without the Bible."

We therefore encourage men and women and even children who can read to develop the habit of reading the Bible with interest. As St. Paul truly said, it makes one wise; and, eventually, it leads those who follow its precepts and teachings to salvation in God's Kingdom.



### LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN

**THE blessedness that would mark the end of the faithful and the hopeless future of the unfaithful, notwithstanding their worldly and material achievements, were depicted in the parable concerning Lazarus and the rich man. This was one of the famous parables of Jesus Christ in which he expressed vital truths and taught important lessons, and by which he also distinguished himself as a teacher of great intelligence and perfect wisdom who came from God.**

In the first place, it will be necessary to reproduce, word for word, Luke's account in regard to what Jesus Christ said about Lazarus and the rich man. It is recorded at Luke 16: 19-31, as follows:- "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

"And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. "But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

"Then he said. I pray thee therefore father, that thou wouldest send him to my fathers house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

"And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither wilt they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

The foregoing passage is given a literal interpretation in certain religious circles. They hold the view that it is not a parable. Therefore their priests and other preachers cite the "experience" of the rich man to back their teaching that the wicked, after death, are tormented everlastingly in the "fire" of hell. They also make reference to the case of Lazarus to give solace to the poor among their adherents giving the impression that poverty is a passport to heaven!

Rev. C. I. Scofield, D.D., was of the opinion that the passage is not a parable. Commenting on the text he stated in his revised marginal renderings in *The Scofield Reference Bible* that verses 19-31 of Luke chapter 16 "are not said to be a parable". He added: "Rich men and beggars are common; there is no reason why Jesus may not have had in mind a particular case."

### Parable

We must express our disagreement on biblical grounds, with the view of Rev. Scofield though it is widely shared, believed and taught in Christendom. If the passage is taken to be a narration of a particular incident, then there are a number of things in it that cannot be reconciled with the revealed truth of the Scriptures. And Jesus Christ, in all fairness, would never subscribe to anything that contradicts the word of God.

Now let us consider certain points which we are going to raise in the light of the Scriptures, and the unreasonableness of interpreting the passage literally will at once become clear.

(1) What sins did the rich man commit that made him deserve to be punished in an eternal fire? Was it just because he in his lifetime enjoyed good things? Or is it an offence to enjoy good things of life? There was no evidence that he maltreated or oppressed the poor beggar. Who among bishops and pastors will allow an ulcerous beggar to sit by him at his dining table that while eating he would be inhaling the obnoxious odour emanating from his sores?

And on the other hand, what good works or righteousness did Lazarus himself do that qualified him to go to heaven? Was it because he was a poor beggar with sores being licked by dogs?

(2) If Lazarus had gone to heaven as certain churches are preaching why did Jesus Christ himself say, "And NO MAN hath ascended up to heaven", as recorded in John 3: 13? The Bible shows that nobody would ever go to heaven before Christ had ascended up there, and it is he (Christ) whom the Almighty Father has commissioned to raise the dead saints and to take them to heaven. And this work Jesus was scheduled to do at His second presence. He told the apostles: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14: 1-3; see also. I Corinthians 15: 50-55; 1 Thessalonians 4: 16, 17; 2 Timothy 4: 7, 8,) How could Lazarus go to heaven when Christ had not gone there to prepare the place nor returned to receive the dead saints to himself?

(3) Christ did not even say that Lazarus went to heaven but that he was carried by angels to "Abraham's bosom." And some churches preach that "Abraham's bosom" is heaven but Christ did not say so. *Bosom* means a person's breast or the enclosure formed by breast and arms. How then could Abraham's bosom accommodate all the righteous?

(4) What authority of the Scripture can the clergymen cite to show that a person in hell can see or converse with a man in heaven and vice versa? The heavens are higher than the earth (Isaiah 55: 8,9) and are very far away from hell. How can a finger tip dipped in water in heaven be taken to a man in the devastating, unquenchable flames in hell without the finger tip drying up? By the way, is it possible literally for a drop of water to quench the thirst of a person in torment in such a consuming fire?

(5) Moreover, the Bible makes it quite plain that a person who is gone to hell is silent and unconscious, and therefore he cannot see or speak. The Psalmist said: "Turn to me, O Lord, and deliver my soul: O save me for Thy mercy's sake. For there is no one in death, that is mindful of Thee: and who shall confess to Thee in hell?" - (Psalm 6: 5-6; *Douay Version*; see also Job 3: 11-19) And King Solomon said: "...For neither work, nor reason, nor wisdom, nor knowledge, shall be in hell, whither thou art hastening." - Ecclesiastes 9: 5, 10, *Douay Version*.

Since according to the Scripture just quoted, one cannot confess God or confess to Him in hell; and since one in hell cannot "reason", how could the rich man have begged for the quenching of his thirst, and pleaded that his brethren on earth be warned so that they might not go to that place of torment?

In fact, it is impossible for people who do not pray for understanding, and who are not led by the Spirit of God, to understand the parables of Christ. When his disciples asked him why he spoke to the people in parables, he answered: "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given...Therefore speak to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand..." - Matthew 13: 10-15.

## Interpretation

The truth with reference to Lazarus and the rich man is that Jesus Christ was speaking parabolically, and that is why a literal interpretation of the passage is very wrong and spiritually absurd. It is necessary to make a brief review of Luke chapter 16. This particular chapter opens with the parable of Jesus Christ concerning a certain rich man and his unjust steward. He taught his disciples a good lesson from that parable as to faithfulness in the service of God, and he warned: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." -verses 1-13.

The Pharisees who were notorious for their hypocrisy and covetousness heard all what Jesus said to his disciples and they (the Pharisees) held him in derision. But Christ told them: "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." (Verses 14, 15) He further told them of how everyone was laying claim to the kingdom of God and then showed the genuineness of the unfailing law of God. (verses 17, 18) It was in continuation of his address to the Pharisees he spoke the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. - verses 19-31.

We have made this brief review of the whole chapter so as to show that the parable under reference has relevance to the Pharisees who arrogantly claimed to stand in a better position before God than everyone else—a holier-than-thou altitude—and who went beside themselves to deride Jesus Christ the righteous. Today, in these last days, there are in existence the counterparts of the Pharisees, and so we are going to dwell on the major aspects of the parable as they apply to religious people in our time.

The *rich man* in the parable represents false religious leaders—the antitypical Pharisees—who are materially very wealthy and who also claim to be the custodians of the law of God but who in actuality do not possess the TRUTH of God or good doctrine that is necessary for salvation. Their end, according to the Scriptures, shall be bitterness and anguish—and that will be at the time of God's visitation which is impending.

Concerning such false religious leaders God said: "As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end therefore?" (Jeremiah 5: 27-31) About lying religious leaders and their followers Jesus Christ said: "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." -Matthew 15: 14.

It is a known fact that some religious bodies are even richer than Governments of the day and they are so absorbed in the politics of the world and other secular affairs that they devote less time to things of the Spirit.

Worst of all they do not give the spiritual food, the truth of Christ, that can nourish the people so as to obtain salvation.

For the fact that they lack the truth of God, the false prophets, regardless of their material possessions, are adjudged spiritually as poor and blind; and that bespeaks the misery that shall mark their end. To them, what Christ said as recorded in Revelation chapter 3, verses 14 to 18, is

applicable. Said he: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

### **Poor in Spirit**

The name *Lazarus* means, God's help. In the parable *Lazarus* represents all the people of God-lovers of truth and righteousness who need the help of God. Unfortunately, these people of goodwill toward God found themselves under the dominion of bogus religious shepherds who fed them but with untruths symbolised by *crumbs* in the parable. Jesus warned his disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees". And they understood "that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." (Matthew 16: 6-12) Christians of today are also warned to beware of and to examine in the light of the Scriptures, the teachings of their religious leaders.

*Death* in the parable means a change of condition-Lazarus from poverty to glory and comfort, and the rich man from "glory" to shame, torment and disfavour. Thus the *death of Lazarus* bear the sense of the change that came in the lives of the lovers of truth through the grace of God in that the time came when they were delivered from the errors and the vicious powers of counterfeit prophets and priests to the light of Jesus Christ where they are fed with the truth that gives spiritual nourishment, comfort and satisfaction. Indeed, God is the helper of the poor and needy. Said the Psalmist: "But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: Thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God." - Psalm 40: 17.

And Jesus Christ said; "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." - Matthew 5: 3, 6; see also James 2:5; Revelation 2; 9.

*Abraham's bosom* signifies the Lord's side of favour. To be in Abraham's bosom is a clear evidence of God's love and favour for one. This we can appreciate the more from the practical example of Jesus Christ and one of his disciples whom he loved and who was leaning on his bosom or breast. - John 13; 23; 21; 20.

And so when Abraham, the friend of God and the spiritual father of the faithful, will be resurrected with other ancient faithful on earth, not in heaven, those who are in favour with God, the faithful Christians at that time, will associate with him in God's Organisation but the false prophets shall be cast out only to be covered with shame and to suffer pain of mind. Hence Jesus Christ said; "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham. and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last." - Luke 13; 28-30.

It is the state of restlessness and shame -weeping and gnashing of teeth-in which false religionists shall find themselves when their errors, devilish doctrines, and hypocrisy are exposed and become known to the people that is parabolised as *the rich man's torment in hell*. There is a prophecy showing that the prophets who are preaching lies in the name of God and seeing false visions shall cease to put on their so-called religious or holy garments when people shall have known them to be charlatans. They win because of shame even hide their identity. As it is written; "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive; but he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." - Zechariah 13: 4-6.

This prophecy has already begun fulfillment, that is why the respect many religious leaders were commanding in time past has been on the wane. The claim of some of them to being in the main stream of orthodoxy cannot help them out neither can it stem the tide of their counterfeit glory from receding.

But the faithful Christians that are preaching the truth and who in time past were despised and treated as mediocres or the filth of society continue to shine in the light of Christ reflecting the glory of God. - Isaiah 60: 1-3, 14-17; Matthew 5: 14-16.

And there is a *gulf* which in the parable means the division between truth and falsehood or light and darkness, and/or the separation between those on the side of truth which belongs to God and those on the side of falsehood which is of the devil. The false prophets may seek for compromise and will want the truth to be preached in a soft manner so as to avoid the piercing judgment of God's word that exposes their hypocrisy and lies. (Isaiah. 30: 9, 10) But this will not be possible since the truth cannot be compromised, and since light and darkness have no communion. (2 Corinthians 6: 14-18) There is, however, room for tolerance and peaceful co-existence. ‘

We do not intend to go into further details but from the explanation contained in this *Sermon*, the truth of the matter is already made bare. Let no one deceive himself as to think that he will go to heaven by lending support to false doctrines or by being literally poor. And let false prophets and faked visionaries beware! What is important is the doing of righteousness or God's will. Jesus said: "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven."-Matthew 5: 6, 20, *Revised Standard Version*.