

The Love of Money

By Abu Atallah

If Christians do not love money and betrayal, why did the Christian church take the people's money in the Middle Ages? Also if the West is Christian, why have all the Western countries adopted the capitalist system and why are they taking advantage of the poor around the world?

Dear Friend: This is a good question. But before we look into this question we need to clarify some issues. You need to separate the West and Christianity. Not all Westerners are Christians. They are only Christians by name.

Actually there are more true Christians in the third world than what we have in the West. Christianity is not a birthright. Just because you were born with a Christian name does not make you a Christian. Christianity is a life commitment to the teaching of Christ. It is a total way of living. Not every Christian who calls himself or herself a Christian is a true Christian. Christ has made this point clear in Matthew 7:21-23: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

This is also have been spoken of in Philippians 4:8-9: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

This is a very clear statement that we should not measure Christianity by the behavior of those who claim to be Christians. But we measure it by Christ himself.

Let us now deal with the question at hand. The Christian view of money is a balanced one. Here is what Christ has stated in Matthew 6: 24: "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." As you see, Christ did not talk about making money. This is a necessity of life. We have to work and make money to live. But he is talking about priority and slavery to money. He is talking about *shirk* (worshipping another God with the Only true God). He is talking about worshipping money. If money becomes our obsession, and all our live is coveting it, then we have become slaves to it. Only Christ can save us and free us from any kind of slavery.

The Bible has addressed this matter of loving money in the following verses. Hebrews 13:5: "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'" We should work hard to earn our living but we should not worry about money because God will take care of all our needs. Matthew 6:26 makes this point crystal-clear: "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" This is a wonderful verse to show that God loves us and that we are valuable in His sight. God is the provider and sustainer.

The Bible also shows the danger of the love of money on our Christian life in 1 Timothy 6:10: "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money,

have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

Let us address what the church did in the Middle Ages. In the Middle Ages the church was dependent on the governments or kings or rulers to provide for its financial needs. Now very few churches are supported by the state. They are supported by their members and those who attend that particular church.

We also need to look at the biblical standards of how to take care of each other. The following verse shows that no matter what we do, we do first because of God and also before men. The main teaching here is that we should work very hard to do what is right. 2 Corinthians 8:21: “For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men.”

Another verse shows the mistakes and sins of the church in the Middle Ages. We are also guilty of doing this when we worry about money and forget about God. In 1 Peter 5:2 we read: “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.” Christ had a stern response to those who were using God’s temple or house to make money. People were buying and selling in the house of God. He emphasized that the house of God was for prayer. We read in Matthew 21:12-13: “Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the benches of those selling doves. ‘It is written,’ he said to them, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ [Isa. 56:7] but you are making it a ‘den of robbers.’ [Jer. 7:11].”