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Challenging corruption By Elise L. Moore

The paying of bribes to obtain jobs, housing, protection, telephone service even, is unfortunately part of life for millions. In some countries, corruption is accepted as a privilege, or at least an inevitable abuse, of power. In fact, the United States is not exempt from the temptations placed before officials to profit illegally from their positions, as many news reports over the years have indicated.

There is a universal need to challenge corruption in all its forms. It is not merely the dishonest action that needs to be corrected but also the thought that excuses or overlooks unethical behavior. We can contribute to this important goal by earnestly and honestly examining what motivates us. Money? Position? Power? False gods all, which promise security and deliver little of substance—nothing that could not be taken away by another individual similarly motivated. Right motives have God as the foundation of action.

At the root of corruption is a mistaken concept of God. The one almighty Love may be misrepresented as capricious, with humanlike responses, like the deities of the ancient Maya or Aztecs. As Mrs. Eddy, the Discoverer of the Christ Science which heals and saves, wrote in *Unity of Good* (p. 15): “There are, or have been, devotees who worship not the good Deity, who will not harm them, but the bad deity, who seeks to do them mischief, and whom therefore they wish to bribe with prayers into quiescence, as a criminal appeases, with a moneybag, the venal officer.

“Surely this is no Christian worship!”

We can challenge corruption by learning the true nature of God as all-blessing. Acknowledging God as the Supreme Being, the source of all good, the impartial divine Principle, is the starting point. Willingness to know and do the will of God, to obey the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule, plants our feet on the right path. Through obedience to God's law the weakness of self-justification is replaced with the strength of self-discipline.

Renewing our moral integrity in this way energizes us to resist taking bribes or being tempted to abuse another's misfortune. As our motives continue to be purified and uplifted, the desire to serve God and bless our fellowman increases. This is evidence of Christ, the divine influence active in human consciousness. The Christ is present on earth today just as much as two thousand years ago to awaken the individual from bondage to materialism and save us from sin.

Christ Jesus continually challenged immorality, hypocrisy, ignorance and the ignoring of God's commands. Through parable and by example he taught and illustrated the power of God to heal and restore the hardened, self-satisfied sinner. On one occasion, a tax collector named Zacchaeus was completely changed by his encounter with Jesus (see Luke 19: 1-10). The Bible says that Zacchaeus was rich, perhaps through years of overcharging and extortion. Yet he suddenly promised to give to the poor and to restore four times as much as whatever he had taken improperly.

How was this transformation accomplished? The Bible indicates that Zacchaeus eagerly anticipated seeing the Master when he was to visit his town. And when Jesus requested to stay at Zacchaeus's house, he "received him joyfully." There is no reported use on the Master's part of psychological persuasion threats, or other material methods. Jesus relied on divine Principle, Love, to reach Zacchaeus and reveal his spiritual nature as God's image. Thus the man was transformed by the power of the Christ alone.

Jesus' method of healing corruption illustrates the effectiveness of prayer to bless not only the self-deceived sinner but also those who thought they were powerless to resist being victimized. Through Christ, man is not power-less but power-full. This is the true nature of man, who has God-given dominion. The same Christ, Truth, that regenerates the sinner empowers the innocent to awake to the all-power of God and the impotence of evil.

As Mrs. Eddy writes in *Science and Health*, "Love giveth to the least spiritual idea might, immortality, and goodness, which shine through all as the blossom shines through the bud" (p. 518). And this might supports and guides us. Every right thought, every right desire and action, is endowed with the might of God.

A friend of mine had an experience that illustrates the power of God to heal and save in the face of corruption. He lives in a country where it is known that many police officers are corrupt and violent. An admittedly wild party was raided one

evening. All the participants escaped except my friend, whom the police began to beat severely. When the assailants began talking of dousing my friend with gasoline and setting him ablaze, he turned to God with all his heart. He knew this was no idle threat.

He had learned something of the power and oneness of God through being introduced to Christian Science. In his extremity he reached out to God as the supreme power of good, present right there and then, who never punishes His beloved child but rescues and protects him. The beating stopped, and the police released my friend. Now, over a year later, his family is grateful to report that the ongoing prayers and efforts of many citizens have brought progress. There has been a noticeable change in the police force of their city. Steps have been taken to alleviate corruption, and the intense random violence of police officers has lessened.

Each of us has the right and the responsibility to challenge corruption. Evil is never the source of good. God is the supreme, divine Principle governing all. As we persistently acknowledge this truth and strive to live it consistently, we will find both the opportunity and the spiritual wisdom necessary to lessen and even overcome corruption.