

Pollution of the Mind

An AJET Editorial

In this rapidly changing continent environmental pollution has become an increasing problem. Much of this pollution has its origin in the West.

Thirty years ago the atmosphere around the cities of Kenya was clear. Even today the rich blue sky and puffy white clouds in the rural areas are breathtaking in comparison with the dull, overcast sky in the eastern United States. But Nairobi is no longer the "Green City in the Sun." A heavy pall hangs over the city. Hugging the earth in this capital city are thousands of vehicles, spewing out choking clouds of leaded emission. Streets are cluttered with plastic bags and containers which will not decompose. Human beings are clogging their lungs and contaminating the air with tobacco smoke.

All this pollution is the byproduct of unwise practices borrowed from the West. While Europe and North America are cutting back on their environmental disaster, developing nations of the world are accelerating in their pollution of the environment. While multi-million dollar law suits are being filed against tobacco companies in America by individuals and States for their crime of causing the deaths of millions of people and wasting billions of dollars in medical care because of tobacco, more and more people in Africa are lighting up their cigarettes in search of a good feeling.

As horrible as environmental pollution is, an even more harmful form of pollution is emanating from the West and few seem to be raising the alarm. Many throughout the world are fighting environmental pollution but few seem to be aware of the horrors of the pollution of the mind.

The Jews in the days of Jesus were greatly concerned about the ceremonial pollution which would make them unclean. The traditions of the Jews, such as washing of hands and cups and eating of clean food, were highly honoured by the Pharisees. Jesus became the target of criticism because of his failure to enforce ceremonial cleanness among his own disciples. Jesus replied to his critics, "Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'" (Mark 7:15). While we should all be concerned with external pollution, including our polluted environment, we should be even more concerned with moral pollution of the heart and mind.

Jesus went on to say, "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean,' For from within, *out of men's hearts*, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean'" (Mark 7:21,22).

Contemporary society is flawed *externally* with murders, fraud, corruption, evil talk, immorality, violent robberies and everything else which pollutes our culture. According to our Lord, these vices spring from the *heart* (*καρδια*). In biblical thought the *heart* is "the centre or source of the whole inner life with its thinking, feeling and volition." The *heart* refers to the "seat of physical, spiritual and mental life." The *heart* includes the thought life of the individual. Jesus declared that the primary problem with mankind and his culture is not the *external* environment but the *internal* heart of mankind, including his thought life, which creates the external pollution in our culture and environment.

Because "the *heart* is deceitful above all things and beyond cure" (Jer. 17:9), Jeremiah foretold of the coming Messiah who would "give you a *new heart*" (Jer. 36:26). Only through the new birth can the "heart of stone" be replaced with a *new heart*. But in the economy of God this inner part of the believer must be continually renewed. We know all too many professing Christians whose speech and conduct indicate a polluted heart and mind. Christians have a responsibility to feed their minds with thoughts which will not pollute the mind but which will edify and purify the mind.

"The good man brings *good things out of the good stored up in the heart*, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. *For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks*" (Lk. 6:45). Whatever one stores in the heart/mind will eventually spring forth in the vices familiar to us all.

As Christians we should all be concerned about the *pollution of the mind* which is invading Africa from the West. Our society is being infiltrated with moral pollution in movies, videos, TV and magazines which, when read and watched, can only pollute the mind. Christians in this great continent must begin to resist the moral pollution of TV, videos and movies. How can any Christian find entertainment in the violence, lust and greed which saturates our mass media? What responsibilities do we have in caring for our children who sit transfixed before the TV monster without any parental guidance or supervision? What should we do to clean up our moral environment? This is a moral challenge which Christians and churches must engage in. It is a matter of life or death.

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (Prov. 4:23). What steps are you taking to guard your heart from moral pollution?