

24th October 2020

Money

“Papa! What’s money?”

Charles Dickens, Dombey and son

Charles Dickens allows Paul Dombey to voice an important question. What is money? Fred Ebb suggested in the song “Money, Money” from *Cabaret* in 1966 that money makes the world go round, implying that it’s the single most important feature of a modern society. Discuss! – especially in the light of Paul’s guidance in his first letter to his young friend, Timothy: “The love of money is the root of all evil.” But I want to suggest today that we ponder two other reflections on money to help us.

In *The Compleat Angler* from 1653, Izaak Walton offers this:

Look to your health; and if you have it, praise God, and value it next to a good conscience; for health is the second blessing that we mortals are capable of; a blessing that money cannot buy.

The Covid-19 crisis has raised matters we have long since sought to avoid – that we are all mortal; that health is, or should be, our priority; that we should give thanks for life and not substance, living and not years. Socrates, as far back as 300 years BC, suggested:

Virtue does not come from money, but from virtue comes money and all other good things to man, both to the individual and the state.

So, if we value life and health, let us have virtue as our foundation – the virtue of living well, to everyone’s benefit, for “the individual and the state”. From such righteous living good things will come for us all.

In the first century, the emperor Vespasian imposed a tax on public lavatories. His son, Titus, objected on the grounds that this was beneath the dignity of the state. The emperor, we’re told, took a handful of coins and held them under his son’s nose, and asked if they smelt.

The answer is obvious, of course: *Pecunia non olet* – “Money doesn’t smell”. But, if it isn’t used well, it might create a stench in our society none of us can stand!

A prayer for today

God of all gifts, guide me to use my substance well. Help me base my living on your righteousness. Give me health to use your gifts to your glory Amen

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>