

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE REV. CANON V. J. HASTINGS-SPAINE BY
MRS VIOLA JONES



*“I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Come unto me and rest
Lay down thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon my breast
I came to Jesus as I was
Weary and worn and sad
I found in Him a resting-place
And he had made me glad”.*

These were the words of the withdrawal hymn chosen by papa to say farewell to his loving wife in February, 1999 and I will fittingly use these same words to pay tribute to a true hero, a real mentor and a role model in the true sense and meaning of the phrase, a rare commodity in our part of the world. I stand here to pay homage and publicly bid farewell to a loving and caring father, fondly called Papa, by his children.

Interestingly, I only became attached and developed a very intimate relationship with my father after the death of my mother. It was then that Papa became my close confidant and we were so close. I even discussed issues with him that I never shared with my mother and he was ever so ready to give honest opinion and advice on everything I laid in front of him. Papa was a very religious and God fearing man. We all know the positions and roles he played in the Anglican Diocese in Sierra Leone but it was his emphasis on prayer and putting God first in everything that has struck an indelible impression in not only my life, but that of his other siblings. Papa will always pray with us in time of exams, travel or any venture to be undertaken by us. If, in my numerous requests for advice as my chief confidant, he sensed a feeling of unease, fear or uncertainty in me he will, after counselling end with prayers together for wisdom and discernment and for God to be in control of the situation. He taught us to pray together and encouraged us to take an active part in the affairs of the church.

Papa was a simple, plain and modest man. He was a Gentleman. He was never attracted to the trappings of wealth, elitism and power. He commanded respect and also respected people. He was full of honesty and integrity. He was never afraid to say the truth. The only way one could earn respect from him is when people do the right thing. He respected the truth and would not go back on his words. In short he was very strict but upright. He was a man of few words but decisive action. He had an uncanny knack to see through people for what they really are and was never afraid to contend with hypocrites.

Papa loved children and showered a lot affection on his grandchildren. He always had some gifts for them when they visit him. He took a keen interest in their educational careers and always encouraged us to develop their talents and skills when they are identified. Education for him was the key to the pursuit of success and fulfillment.

Even in his retirement Papa retained a strong interest in education. He was constantly reading books, newspapers and magazines to keep his brain alert.

Papa always demanded the best from us, but with no pressure. At times I feel the sheer weight of high expectations just by bearing the name Hastings-Spaine. He had carved for himself such high standards in life that we, as children at times felt the strain and burden to live up to such lofty heights. It reminds me of Angelina Jollie-Voght, the celebrated artist who had to drop her father's name because it was too much to live up to his expectations. Thankfully I only relinquished my proud Hastings-Spaine name by virtue of my changed marital status and I believe that I have in my own small way tried not to disappoint Papa and lived up to his expectations.

Papa was very humorous and told us a lot of stories. He also had a very sonorous Tenor voice even though he was never a chorister.

Even after retirement from active service in the Anglican Diocese of Freetown, Papa continued to serve his church until health failed him. In Banjul, he was Priest in charge of St. Mary's Cathedral for several years after the military interregnum in Sierra Leone in 1997. He was also a dedicated Mason and was highly respected in the circle of freemason.

He was an exceptionally good person who made great impact in his home, the schools he headed, the Church and the society he lived. I pray that we all would live up to his teachings and preachings to become better persons and examples and make great impacts in our communities.

Papa, Uncle Victor, Pa Spaine will be sadly missed by the family and you all here.

Let me therefore take this opportunity on behalf of my family to express sincere thanks and appreciation to all who in diverse ways sympathized with us on the occasion of this great loss. More particularly, I must thank the Sierra Leone Grammar School Old Boys Association here in the UK for organizing this memorial and the invitation extended to my family. I am happy and intrigued to be able to represent the family who sends their best regards. Thank you very much and may God bless and sustain us all.