

**RELIGION AND CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA:
ETHICO-MORAL VIEW**

Aitufe, Veronica Okpohowunwa, Ph.D

*Religious Management and Cultural Studies. Ambrose Alli University,
Ekpoma, Edo State. Phone number: 08037326104/08077534615
Email: pastoraaitufe99@gmail .com*

Abstract

In this 21st century, the global landscape is a patchwork of faiths. Religious expressions are heading in various directions at the same time, and political conflicts involving religions are assuming great importance on the world scene today. All religions teach that one should not hurt others, should not lie, should not steal, should not usurp others' rights, should not be greedy, but rather should be unselfish, considerate and helpful to others. Corruption, on the other hand, is the behavior that deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in position of public authority because of private motives such as desire for wealth, power and/or status. The focus of this paper is to theoretically examine the compatibility of religion with corruption, or otherwise, and how religion can be used as an instrument to curb corruption and its excesses in Nigeria. The methods adopted in this paper include: historical, analytical, observational and evaluative. The paper discovers that religion is not compatible with corruption but that the practitioners can be corrupted. It recommends that religion should be clearly separated from the politics and economy of the nation in order to avoid a dangerous mix up. Finally, the paper concludes that Nigerians must allow what they learn from their various religious doctrines to mold and transform their characters and lifestyles positively. Arising from the results of the fight against corruption so far, it is obvious, that it requires more than the rule of law to win the battle because it is also a moral one.

Key Words: Compatibility, Corruption, Ethico-Moral, Nigeria, Religion.

Introduction

The history of religion is as old as the history of man himself. Religion also exists in great variety. In Nigeria, religion is sine qua non (indispensable) to more than 90 per cent of its population. It has affected the lives of many in so many ways. While each religion has its own norms, values and acceptable standards, it is generally agreed that most of them condemn corruption and other anti-social behaviours. Evidence of this is found in their doctrines. Since, more than 90 per cent of the Nigerian populations are Muslims, Christians or Traditional Religion affiliates. These three religions, by doctrines, do not condone corruption in anyway, one would have thought that the degree of social morality would be very high thereby minimizing the prevalence of corruption but, very disappointedly, the reverse is the case.

Corruption is found everywhere in Nigeria. This social cancer, according to Edet and Bamgboye (2017) has eaten deep into the very nature of the Nigerian society. Corruption is high among politicians, bureaucrats, the academia, the judiciary, the police, the army, and the customs. Even religious organizations are not spared by this social malady. Corruption is manifested in different dimensions in both private and public lives of Nigerians. It ranges from electoral malpractices, poor service delivery, contract inflation/poor execution, bribery, money laundering, ghost workers syndrome and immoral behaviors such as rape, stealing, outright looting of public treasury and the like. Corruption in Nigeria has become systemic and endemic. The most worrisome of all is that most of those perpetrating corruption are religious affiliates whose religious doctrines abhor corruption. Corruption is a global malaise which has not spared any country of the world. However, its alarming pervasiveness in Nigeria, particularly in the public, has affected the country's quest for accelerated socioeconomic and political development. This has become a matter of serious concern as it happens in spite of the view that a vast majority of Nigerians are ardent religious adherents. This, of course, brings to question the role of religion in combating corruption and whether or not religion is compatible with corruption or otherwise. There is also the question of whether there are elements of corruption in religions as practised today. It is generally believed that religion is meant to provide guidelines for everyday life through rules and regulations. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to assess the role of religion in combating corruption in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications:

(i) Religion

Religion has been blackmailed and castigated in Nigeria as being the root cause of all kinds of troubles. As erroneously noted by an observer:

It would appear that religion as a whole has failed in its mission. Religion is supposed to unify people, but instead it has helped to divide and separate them more and more... (Bidmos, 2006).

Statements such as the above are frequently made by individuals privately and in public fora thereby putting a question mark on the usefulness of religion in the present-day Nigeria. However, some observers believe that riots tagged religious disturbances are stage-managed by outsiders who are not involved in religious practices. The aim of such stage-managed disturbances, according to them, is perhaps to find empirical evidence to substantiate the assumption that religion is associated with trouble. This is a systematic plan towards proposing the need to eliminate religion in public life. The question is, is it possible to completely eliminate religion from the human society? While we ponder on that question, let us quickly take a look at what religion is.

In many cultures and eras, religion has been the basic foundation of life and it permeates all aspects of human existence. But from the time of the European Enlightenment, religion has become, in the west, an object to be studied, rather than unquestioned basis of life (Fisher, 2008). Cultural anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers, psychologists, and even biologists have looked at religion through their own particular lenses, trying to explain what religion is and why it exists (Fisher, 2008). Just as it is difficult to have a uniform definition of religion, a number of religious practitioners and scholars have attempted different definitions, some of which are noted below: Geertz (1993) defined religion as a “system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulation of conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing; these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.” Ferre (1967) defined religion as “one’s way of valuing most comprehensively and intensively”. Similarly, for the theologian, Tillich (1957) stated that faith is “the state of being ultimately concerned”, which in itself is religion. Religion is the “substance, the ground and the depth of man’s spiritual life” (1959).

Religion is the expression of man’s belief in and reverence for a super human power recognized as the creator and governor of the universe (*Watch Tower*, 1990). It involves devotion to some principles, strict fidelity or faithfulness, conscientiousness, pious affection or attachment (*The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 1995). Adenugba and Omolawal (2014) conceived religion as faith in the divinely created order of the world, agreement with which is the means of salvation. In this sense, the authors claimed that the term applies principally to such system as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which involve faith in a creed, obedience to a moral code set down in sacred scriptures, and participation in common practices.

Whatever definition one ascribes to, religion is seen in terms of the “sacred”, “divine”, “intensive”, “valuing”, “devotion” or “ultimate concern”. It also has to do with man’s relation to divinity, to reverence, worship, obedience and submission to mandates and percepts of supernatural or superior beings. This includes all forms of belief in the existence of superior beings exercising power over human beings by volition, imposing rules of conduct, with future rewards and punishment (Onimhawo, 2015). In Nigeria, the two major religions are Christianity and Islam, taking over about 90 per cent of the entire population while the remaining 10 per cent goes to the adherents of Traditional African Religion (Adenugba and Omolawal, 2014).

ii. Corruption

Corruption is not only a crime, it is an antisocial behavior. This is why it is forbidden or, rather, expected to be forbidden in every human circle and society. Some societies have

successfully curtailed the spread of the vice, whereas in others, including Nigeria, both the citizens and the leaders seem to have wholeheartedly accepted it as a way of life. Majority of the people in Nigeria, have bowed to the sweeping wave, (in a hurricane form) of corrupt practices (Umoh, 1983). Corruption, according to Umoh (1983), has no standard definition. However, a few definitions will be given here for proper guidance. *The World Bank* (1997) defines corruption as the abuse of public power for private gains or (benefits). Khan (1996) viewed corruption as the “behavior that deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the action of someone in position of public authority because of private motives such as wealth, power or status.” Transparency International (TI) defined corruption as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.” Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) Act, (2000) defined corrupt acts to include “bribery, fraud and other related offences”. The Vision 2010 Committee defined corruption as: “all those improper actions or transactions aimed at changing the normal course of events, judgments and position of trust.” In Nigeria, according to (Tom and Bamgboye, 2017), corruption is most usually taken to mean “the receiving or offering of money or other clear advantage in return for contract, not being obliged to discharge obligation, obtaining a job for which one is not qualified, sidestepping justice, leaping ahead of a queue and the like. Arising from the definitions above, one can summarize the definitions of corruption thus: “an improper, unusual, abnormal, unethical, out of place acts, actions or behaviors aimed at taking advantage of others or situations for personal and selfish purpose(s).”

Literature Review

Marquette (2012) agrees practically that religion as an instrument to control or eradicate corruption may be very difficult. This is because religious organizations and individuals themselves look to their creator to gain wealth and, often times, project an image of material success. This is why, according to this view, these organizations and individuals’ dominant prayers or petitions to their creator is to make them richer and more successful. This observation needs to be a bit strengthened out in the sense that two different things are being lumped up together here. If one is to go by the definitions of corruption above, one of which is “fraudulently obtaining what does not rightfully or legally belong to one by a crooked method with the motive to short-changing another person.” Therefore, praying to God in the first place may mean that one does not even want to exert normal human efforts to get a thing (physical or by means of human wisdom) and, therefore, depends on the creator to supernaturally do it or provide for one. It could also mean that one needs divine empowerment and wisdom to apply oneself more meaningfully and reasonably in one’s vocations or jobs to earn the “extra” money or favour legitimately. This is different from someone who claims to be religious but depends on his or her personal “smartness” to cut corners for personal benefits, which is corruption.

Omilusi (2015) rightly observes that Nigeria is one of the most religious in the world, but that religion is often being employed among politicians, policymakers and religious leaders, as a determining factor in who occupies public offices and is also a major influence on the policy direction of government at all levels. He laments the intrigues and nuances that usually go into this process which, more often than not, lead to a compromise of public interest. In his view, the ruling class is the one in power, while the government is only in office. The government is the small group in charge of major institutions of the state, particularly the legislative and administrative machinery. The ruling class constitutes the power centers-politicians, cultural religious, the rich and the coercive institutions such as the military, the police and the judiciary who, he said, are not “subject to control” by any other body in the society.

This is where the big problem lies, because they are the ones who flout the laws of the land and disregard the rules and regulations of the faith to which they profess to belong. I quite agree with him, they are the category of Nigerians who meet at night hours to do what they cannot accomplish in broad light, Mondays through Thursdays and Fridays and Sundays. They occupy front row seats in Mosques and Churches. They are the ones who indulge in all kinds of corrupt practices, fearlessly, and they owe no one apologies. Ironically, they are also applauded by those who are supposed to complain. Painfully, though, considering their central position in the Nigerian state, the fight against corruption and wrong religious professions and confessions are mere deceptions and illusions, or mere bubbles in the air.

Edet and Bamgboye (2017) in their paper entitled “The Role of Religion in Combating Corruption: The Nigerian Experience, have this to say:

Religion is a way of life. Most religious beliefs and doctrines are antithetical to corruption. A vast majority of Nigerians are religious faithful and belong to religions that do not condone corruption. Despite this fact, corruption, like air, is found everywhere in Nigeria.

The researchers are of the view that religion is a veritable tool for combating corruption in Nigeria depending on how it is perceived by its faithful. They, however, cautioned that religious faithful must live not only by precepts but also by examples. In other words, they must be good influences in their homes, their immediate environments, public offices and larger society. They observed that corruption is a social cancer and malady which has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian society, and it is prevalent among the small and big as well as the low and high of present-day Nigeria.

In a research undertaken by five eminent researchers, Davis, Jegede, Leurs, et al, (2013) who focused their work on four major countries of the world namely: India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Tanzania, they noted with regret that the roles expected of religion and religious organizations have been neglected in main stream development studies, policy

and practice, despite the importance of religion in developing countries and the longstanding engagement by religious organizations in service delivery and other development activities. In summarizing their work, they noted that religious organizations themselves claim that they have advantages over civil society organizations in the following ways:

- They draw on spiritual and moral values;
- They are able to mobilize religious adherents estranged by secular development discourse;
- They have a strong organizational structure that reaches into remote and rural areas, and are trusted;
- They link the grassroots, making them (members) close to the poor and enabling them to be responsive in their activities;
- They have a high degree of legitimacy, are well networked nationally and are usually embedded in politics and governance;
- They have international links, which may safeguard their autonomy and enable them to source fund;
- They are less-dependent on donor funding and, finally:
- They have capacity and expertise in some key development areas.

Be that as it may, religious faithful are supposed to be monitored and regulated by the religious organization they purported to belong. Two reasons are likely to be responsible for the religious organizations' inability to exert reasonable control over their members whose behaviours are unbecoming:

- (i) It is either they do not want to risk losing such member(s) and their financial benefits or
- (ii) They do not want to set standards for members which they cannot sustain.

Types and Origin of Corruption in Nigeria

Aluko (2008) has identified different types of corruption to include: disobedience to law and constituted authority, electoral corruption, moral corruption and financial corruption. He, however, maintained that though corruption of any form is detrimental to national development, today, the worldwide emphasis on corruption is focused on financial corruption and its ascribed devastating effects on the poor nations of the world. He opined that the essence of financial corruption is bribery, illegal and greedy acquisition of public funds which, otherwise, should be invested for public good.

In Nigeria, it is believed that corruption is ubiquitous (being present in all places at the same time); for this reason, people often wonder how corruption made its way to all aspects of public and private lives. It is found in government circles among legislators, the executive, the judiciary, bureaucracy, commerce, the academia, law enforcement agents and in religious circles, (Tom and Bomgboye, 2017). Suffice it to say that although its ubiquity is generally acknowledged, its magnitude and character is often restricted to different social and cultural factors. Umoh (1981) remarked that part of the confusion

surrounding corruption and corrupt practices in Nigeria is that opinions differ about the concept just as the attitudes of people about it differ”. In other words, what some Nigerians regard as corrupt practices are applauded and accepted by others.

Many scholars are of the view that this social malady was planted by the colonial masters (Tom and Bamgboye 2017). For instance, Lacville (1991) asserts that it is no exaggeration to say that most government purchases today in French and British colonies are subject to over-invoicing because it was directly inherited from them. In his words, the real big kick backs are in the building, public works and military supply sector which are dominated by firms from France, Britain, Italy and Germany. Corroborating this view, Nkrumah (1972) and insisted that “bribery and corruption which had been part and parcel of the colonial setup must be stamped out”. Not only did the colonizers instill corruption into the public life, according to the researcher, they also taught traditional rulers how to perpetrate same to their own advantage. The colonial masters used chiefs as tools to exploit peasants and involved them in other corrupt practices which were not known to the people before their arrival (Tom and Bamgboye, 2017). Also, sharing the same view is Chinweizu (1978) who correctly observes that:

Chiefs were granted a percentage commission on the taxes they collected. They were also allowed to keep for themselves, part of the money given to pay the laborers they supplied. They were privileged social class, exploiting the peasantry for colonial masters.... Now with French propping them up, and supplying the effective basis for their position, they greatly and systematically abused their ancient duties and privileges. Becoming brazen exploiters of their position, they impose extra dues on populations ...they invented new obligations and impose them upon the populace. They levied money to pay for new houses, cars and pilgrimages to Mecca. They overtaxed the population and kept excess taxes; they invented new tax items for their private benefits.

It was also discovered that another source of corruption into Nigeria was the merchants who bribed chiefs with money, gifts, foreign and funny names, as well as flattered them with titles, frequent visits and patronage of the kings’ regular parties (Umoh, 1981).

Through the impression that foreign government (administrators) were not for Africans, corruption was indirectly introduced. This created an attitude of disloyalty, unfaithfulness and irresponsibility on the parts of civil and public African officials. Unfortunately, these negative attitudes were carried over and became ingrained in them when they became leaders of their own country (Umoh, 1981). Government was seen and is still seen today as a legitimate avenue to plunder and amass wealth because government appears not to be for the people.

Although majority of Nigerian scholars accused the westerners and colonizers for the introduction and existence of corruption in Nigeria, a few among them, including David-West (1976) differ. To him, the origin of corruption can be traced to human psychology (insatiable wants). These psychological attitudes include self-respect, self-importance, self-esteem, belief in self-worth, confidence in self, personal pride, among others. Those who take to corruption, according to him, neither have self-respect nor confidence in themselves. In other words, they are mean, depraved and low-spirited. This view, I share very strongly with him. Those who covet, steal and scheme are not the very poor ones, but supposedly the above average and well-to-do Nigerians who are found in all walks of life. Nigerian secular leaders and politicians are living examples. Besides, if it is true that corruption came into the country with the colonizers and almost fifty-eight (58) years after independence, the evil that started little is still on the increase, Nigerians must critically look inward so as to identify its true source(s) and be prepared to deal with it decisively.

Factors That Encourage Corruption in Nigeria

There are a good number of factors that encourage the continuous existence of corruption in Nigeria in spite of a few attempted efforts to curb the menace, some of which will be discussed below. Top on the list is ambition. This fact is explained by Akin-George (1991) as follows:

The Nigerian worker must strive to build his own house, find his means of transportation, look after his health and that of his family members, train his children, and so forth. In discharging these functions, he hardly receives assistance from the government or his employer. Yet his income level is very low compared to his daily requirements. The thought of the future ordinarily drives him to engage in corrupt and other fraudulent practices if and when opportunity occurs.

These observations above are very correct and the temptation today appears to be more than ever before. The existence and operations of cooperative organizations in tertiary institutions and government organizations have further enlarged these claims, needs and desires. The result is that some workers, junior and senior staff alike, borrow almost all their earnings and are left with nothing to run their daily affairs. The implication of this attitude is that anything and everything can be done to survive (corruption) within the period of repayment. They lie, scheme, manipulate and compromise their faith and “go with the impression and expression that it does not matter” Borrowing from a cooperative to solve one problem or the other is not evil in itself, but the inability to meet up with other obligations because of over-borrowing is.

The demand/desire for many children, especially males, is another factor that greatly encourages corruption in Nigeria, coupled with the fact that many started having these children even when they had no reasonable source of income. Akin-George (1991) asserts that the demand for a large family and the pressures from extended family members drive the weak-hearted to engage in corrupt practices. He further observes that since our culture imposes on the Africans responsibility for extended family in addition to one's immediate family's needs, some weak-hearted people tend to find unethical means of discharging such responsibilities.

Some also claimed that the culture introduced to the Africans by the whites recognizes only the rich, no matter how the wealth was acquired, thereby excluding the poor. The society also approves the notion of the end justifies the means even when the rich occupies a position of public trust (Tom and Bamgboye, 2017). It is further noted that those who acquire wealth dubiously are those singled out for honor, praise, promotion and recognition in public fora. Both in the secular and religious circles, when they donate large sums of money they are praised and offered special seats and attention. This, according to them, is against the traditions of Africans before the arrival of the colonizers who honored and respected only hardworking individuals. Umoh (1981), supporting this view, observes that:

Ethics and morality are now for the dogs. Those who amass wealth by thievery, cheating, trickery, robbery, burglary, bribery, embezzlement and all sorts of traditionally unapproved or corrupt means are accorded the greatest respect in the society today. They are among the first to be chosen as leaders and representatives of the people. They are among the chairmen and occupants of the high tables at social and religious functions.

Akin-George (1991) added that it is not uncommon to see corrupt individuals being selected for a string of titles (traditional and secular). They are also the persons, the people joyfully name after their children, streets, schools, hospitals and public institutions, while the poor, hardworking, innocent and honest persons are shunned and disrespected.

Effects of corruption in Nigeria

Corruption has spread throughout the length and breadth of the nation. It is seen in government, sciences, sports, academics, commerce, religion, judiciary and lots more. Ehusani (2004) observes that many Nigerians often fraudulently procure medical certificates, medical claims, sick leaves, and permits from hospitals, even when they are hale and hearty. According to him, they falsify the age of their children, fake birth certificate in order to get their children into schools of their choices. They also declare

false affidavits when seeking jobs or visas, and obtain false academic certificates and driving certificates. For you to be urgently attended to in government or private hospitals, you must know somebody or buy recharge card for someone.

The cost of corruption is believed to be far-reaching in many diverse ways. Some of which include high cost of living, high cost of production, diminished quality of products, fewer jobs, because so many are being hoarded by big political fathers and uncles for their children and siblings who are still at lower levels in universities, payment of lower wages because many people are chasing few jobs (Watch Tower 1995), employment of least qualified persons, irregularities in the employment procedures, inefficiency and production of substandard goods in both public and private sectors, low investment, fuelled capital flight, increased unemployment/inflation, etc. These, and many more, created acute degree of poverty, caused a severe decline in the quality of life and life expectancy (Ehusani, 2004).

Religion and Corruption in Nigeria

There are three major religions in Nigeria as stated earlier on. It is believed that about 90 per cent of Nigeria's population belong to these religions. These religions are African Traditional Religion (ATR), Islam and Christianity. Good enough, none of them condones corruption in any form. In the traditional African society, ill-gotten wealth is condemned in very strong terms and such were never appreciated or honored. Today, even the African traditions have been polluted because such persons are honored and respected. Christianity, for example, is against all forms of corruption. The Holy Bible is the guide and constitution of Christians. The Bible admonishes believers to shun corruption in the following scriptures: Deuteronomy 10:17; Proverbs 17:23; Exodus 23:8; 1 Corinthians 5:9-11; and Isaiah 33:15. God describes the one who will find his favor to be one who walks in continual righteousness, whose speech is upright, who reject dishonest, fraudulent gain, whose hands refuse to accept bribe, etc. In Ephesians 4:28, the Bible admonishes Christians (those who steal, to do so no more). In Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-15, Christians are commanded to be subject to senior authority and pay their taxes and faithfully discharge every of their civic responsibilities. To crown it all, Jesus charged his followers to love God and their neighbors above all things (Matthew 22:37). As could be seen from the scriptures cited above, all forms of corruption and other atrocities are thoroughly forbidden in the Bible.

Similarly, the Quran's stand on corruption is very clear as noted by Azeez (2014). He observed that Islam looks at corruption from moral and ethical standpoints. According to him, Islam offers a universally robust instruction for human behavior. This revolves around social justice, equitable distribution of wealth, provision of basic necessities and the protection of the weak against economic exploitation by the strong. Muslims are also

expected to render accountable and transparent services in public offices (Azeez, 2014). Listed below are some of the verses of Quran which forbid Muslims from indulging in corrupt practices: Suran 4:10, "Indeed, those who devour the property of orphans unjustly are only consuming into their bellies fire, and they will be burnt in the blazing." Others include Suran 5:8; 4:58; 6:165; 30:41; 11:113; 2:188, and many others. From the foregoing, it is obvious that the religions practised in Nigeria have zero tolerance for corruption and other forms of social vices.

Since majority of Nigerians are Christians, Muslims or affiliates of African Traditional Religion, a high degree of morality is what is expected and not otherwise. Unfortunately, this is not so. Most government officials accused and convicted for corruption ranging from bribery, misappropriation of public funds, embezzlement and so forth, are all religious affiliates. They include former Inspector-General of Police, former governors, former ministers, bank officials, civil servants and businessmen (Tom, 2013). Many religious leaders today extort and financially manipulate their members, violate traffic rules, indulge in examination malpractices, are adulterous, immoral, outrightly display their ill-gotten wealth, scramble and covet for ministerial positions, etc. They live extravagant lives at the expense of their innocent members with the exception of only very few.

Some religious affiliates in Nigeria are very corrupt and have made the nation to be sick socially, economically, while a good number of legislators who profess to be Christians or Muslims flagrantly allow money to exchange hands before passing any appropriation bill into law (Tom and Bamgboye, 2017). The students and lecturers who are involved in all manner of unwholesome academic activities also profess one religion or the other. The terrorists who detonated bombs to kill innocent souls are also religious affiliates. Other forms of corruption that are commonly practised today by religious affiliates include cheating, rape, assassination, kidnapping, and robbery (The Nation, 2016).

In the midst of all these, there is hardly any instant where religious leaders in Nigeria are seen or heard taking a stand against their erring members. Sadly, religions in Nigeria are rather seen or used as cover by corrupt religious affiliates to perpetrate one evil or the other. In this regard, Adenugba and Omolawal, (2014) observe as follows:

Religion is, unfortunately, a negative support for a government as most government officials use it to abuse the collective conscience of the people through their deceit and manipulation. It could be seen that long before the global economic meltdown currently being experienced, Nigeria has been experiencing religious meltdown and, not only has it failed to curb corruption, it has in itself become a channel of corruption today.

Although the above observation seems to be indicting Christianity specifically, African Traditional Religion and Islam are not exempted. Although some scholars are blaming the inabilities of Christian and Muslim leaders to prevail on their erring members which they tagged foreign religions, the Traditional African Religion has also, quietly, followed suit. Some scholars are of the view that Islam has a more powerful influence on their members than Christianity in many regions because of its stern personal disciplines of prayer and fasting, and for its greater integration of so many aspects of life through faith. Even at that, it also appears to be silently applauding bribery and corruption in secular affairs today. Besides, Islam appears to be more concerned with members' private than public morality (Tom and Bamgboye 2017). From all indications, religions in Nigeria appear to have failed in their collective and individual responsibilities to mold, modify and control the characters and activities of their members.

Ethico-Moral View

This section of the paper is specifically to look critically at morality, religion and corruption. Therefore, the insight in this regard will help to distinguish, to some extent, between religion and moral in the area of corruption. A few observations and conclusions can be streamlined. Although religion and morality are not the same thing, there are obvious links. Religion includes belief in a transcendental reality particularly and/or a spiritual being, religiosity (which is signified by the beliefs held and practices in which adherents engage), as well as an affiliation with a religious organization (Marquette, 2012). In this sense, religion has to do with supernatural realities, with sacred and ultimate power. (Rakodi, 2007). On the other hand, Geert defines morality as: (i) descriptively, to refer to a code of conduct put forward by a society or some other group, such as a religion, or accepted by an individual for his or her own behavior, and/or (2) normatively, to refer to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons (Geert, 2011). In this sense, religion certainly can be, and most often is, concerned with morality, but morality does not have to be concerned with religion (Marquette, 2012). The way in which corruption has been defined in recent years moved the discursive arena away from corruption as a problem of personal or social morality to one where the problem is instead a question of inadequate institutions. The most commonly used definition of corruption in use today, especially in policy circles, is "the abuse of public office for private gain" (World Bank, 1997).

Morality is loosely implied in this definition of corruption; it is not made explicit. This definition overtly or covertly has limited connection to public office and economics (Polzer, 2001; Marquette, 2003). However, the question of corruption in the contemporary world has so far been taken up almost solely by moralists. This means those whose starting point for corruption research is a moral problem to be fought, rather than a social problem to be understood.

It is often argued that corruption can only be understood in terms of its multidimensionality. Legal or public sectors' definitions, such as the one provided by the World Bank, may not capture what society, generally speaking, believes to be corruption, which may depend upon an individual's position vis-à-vis opportunities to engage in corruption. According to Migdal (2001), what may be easily labeled as corruption or criminality, such as nepotism or smuggling in contrabands goods, can also be looked at, for instance, as morality of favoring kinship ties over meritocracy or one expressing the right of movement of people and goods across the boundaries arbitrarily imposed by state law.

I said all these to point out the fact that what is lacking from much of the current research on religion and corruption is a sense that there may be alternative ways people view corruption which in their minds may be moral issues. Another challenge of linking religion, morality and corruption, is that there is a distinction between religion and morality, though such dividing line may be slim. There is an important distinction to be made between public morality and private morality. There are also two different types of moral standards: ascetic and social. They are overlapping in a number of ways. But specifically, religions deal mostly on personal spiritual matters which should be extended to public workplaces.

It is important to emphasize here that the real solid foundations for personal integrity, honesty, patriotism, justice, hard work, transparency, accountability, love, satisfaction, selfless service, and many more, are to be laid at the home front, strengthened in schools and refined in religious organizations. In other words, religion is only a part of an overall "package" of moral upbringing. These days when ministers of God in Christian circles are seen as "good for nothing," who, according to majorities, are there to deceive, manipulate and exploit their members for financial gains. Most of their genuine teachings are often contradicted and scorned at home, academic circles and social gatherings. Therefore, so many members keep to the characters and behaviors they brought from their homes.

Salvation, in Christian context, is a right standing with one's creator is a personal thing and not a congregational matter. Those who are regarded as religious affiliates today may not actually have been "saved" in the real sense of it, and there is no magic wand by which the minister of God can identify them except by their actions and it is impossible to impute moral character by physical means. If corruption, which is a social problem, cannot be thoroughly handled socially by relieving such corrupt officers of their means of living (jobs) which are hard to come by as a deterrent, there is not much religious leaders can do in order not to destroy that person(s) spiritually. For instance, suspending an erring member from one church, may not serve the desired goal as such member(s) can decide

to relocate to another denomination entirely. It is the heart of the individual that must be renewed and transformed so that the individuals do not have to conform to the societal social vices Romans 8:1-2.

Concluding Remarks

The new century has dawned with flagrant materialistic greed, crime, amorality, ethnic hatred, violence, corruption, and family crises, together with money making syndrome both in the secular and religious circles. But being sick, perhaps the world is ready to be cured. There is indeed a globally increased interest in religion, which could not be said to be in the best interest of the society particularly new forms of traditional religions as well as new religious movement (Fisher, 2008).

Nevertheless, the negative signs of our times are interpreted by some as the darkness before the dawn, chaos from which will emerge a new and great order (Fisher, 2008). Religious organizations are not standing in isolation from other organs and institutions in the society. Those who flock these religious organizations are the individuals (males and females) who, as it were, are already “polluted and sick” in homes and society. Religious organizations will need the cooperation of the home, the school and the society at large where the individuals spend greater part of their time, to be able to carry out their refining, cleansing and purging assignments of individuals for a better society. In this collaboration, no one (home, school, society and religious body) is expected or permitted to stay aloof and apportion blames endlessly. There are to complement one another in the spirit of understanding and honesty.

References

- Adenugba, A., & Omolawal, S. Religion, Values and Corruption in Nigeria- A Dislocated Relationship. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*. Rome: MCSER and publishing, 2014.
- Akin-George, J. Corruption and Economic Crime. Daily Times, 1985.
- Aluko, S. A. “Corruption and National Development”. *A Lecture Delivered at the Center for Democratic Development, Research and Training. Kaduna, Nigeria*, as part of the Activities of Professor Bala Usman Annual Memorial Lecture, 2008.
- Bidmos, A. M. *Inter-Religious Dialogue: The Nigerian Experience* Lagos: Panaf Publishing, Inc., 2006.
- Chinweizu. *The West and the rest of US*. Lagos: NOK Publishers, 1978.
- David-West, T. Anatomy of Corruption. Sunday Times, December 12, 16, 1978.
- Davis, C., Jegede, A. Leurs, R., etal. *Comparing Religious and Secular NGOs in Nigeria: are faith- Based Organizations Distinctive?* International Development of Universities of Birmingham, 2013.
- Ehusani, G. P. *Religious Organisations and the Challenges of fighting_Corruption_*

- A Paper Presented at National Seminar on Corruption. Organized by the NASRUL-LAHL-Faith Society of Nigeria (NASPA) At the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs Lagos August, 5th, 2004.
- Ferre, F. *Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion*. Scribner, 1967.
- Fisher, M. P. *Living Religions* 7th New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2008.
- Geertz, C. "Religion as a cultural system" In the Interpreter of Cultures, 1993.
- Geertz, B. *The Definition of Morality*. The Standard Encyclopedia of Philosophy Zalta E. (ed). Available at <http://plato.Standard.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/mortality-definition>, 2011.
- Lacville, R. "Origin of Africa Corruption" Guardian (July 30), 1991.
- Marquette, H. *Finding God 'or' Moral Disengagement in the Fight Against Corruption in Developing Countries? Evidence from India and Nigeria: Wuley Online Library*, 2012.
- Marquette, H. *Corruption, Politics and Development: The Role of the World Bank*, Palgrade: Basingstoke.
- Migdal, J. *State in Society; Studying how states and Societies Transactions and constitute one another*. Cambridge Universities press: Cambridge, 2001.
- Nkrumah, K. *The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*, New York: International Publishers, 1972.
- Onimhawo, J. A. and Adamu, C.A. "Repositioning Religion for Democratic Governance: Towards the Practitioners Option". *International Journal of Governance and Development* vol. 4(1), January, 2015, 309-320.
- Polzer, T. *Corruption: Reconstructing the banks Discourse*. DESTINY Working Article NO. 18, December, 2001.
- Rakodi, C. Understanding the Roles of Religions in Development: The Approach of the Rad program, Rad Working Article, available at www.rad.bham.ac.uk, 2007.
- Tillich, P. *Dynamics of Faith*. Harper Perennial, 1957.
- Tillich, P. *Theology of Culture*. Oxford University Press, 1959.
- Tom, E. J. and Bamgboye, P. O. "The Role of Religion in Combating Corruption: The Nigerian Experience". *International Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 11, (2), April, 2017.
- The Nation. April, May, June, 1991.
- Umoh, E. *Corruption: A social cancer in Nigeria*. Uyo: Renson in International Journal of Social Sciences Press, 1981.
- Watch Tower. *The Watch Tower* New York: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, June 1995.
- World Bank. *World Development Report* Washington D. C., 1997.
- World Bank. *Helping Countries combat Corruption: The Role of the World Bank*, The World Bank: Washington D. C., 1997.