E-ISSN: 1116 - 2619 P-ISSN: 3026-8524
MPRI-JHLAR | INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES, LITERATURE AND ART RESEARCH
VOL. 14 NO. 6 – OCTOBER, 2026

THE CHURCH AND ANTI CORRUPTION CRUSADE IN NIGERIA: CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONSTRAINTS

***DR. INUSA ADA; *ASABE AKHAINE, D.; & **OBA RAHAMAN TAIWO**

*Department of Arts Education (CRS), Federal University of Education, Kontagora. **Department of Arts Education (History), Federal University of Education, Kontagora

DOI: https://doi.org/10.70382/mejhlar.v14i6.0135

Abstract

This work dwells on how the church can discourage corruption through their various programmes. The nexus of this work therefore, is to consider the effort of the church in the bid to fight corruption not at the individual level but as a way to complement Government efforts in fighting corruption without compromising faith. This paper consequently, challenged the church leaders and the adherents to rise to the task of waging war against corruption in the church and Nigeria society for the sake of development. Those who are members of the church and they are involving in the corrupt practices should be exposed, brought to book and legitimately dealt with. Therefore, in order to do justices to the plight reiterated above we comply with the historical analysis and biblical contextualization, with the tools of interview and consultation of relevant literature. With these methods, we shall significantly highlight the contributions and constraints' of the Nigeria churches in combating this deadly phenomenon called 'corruption'. The study discovered poor wages, high cost of living, greediness, bad leadership, and pressure from extended families, societal influence and attitude of recognizing only wealthy people, moral decadence, poverty and unemployment as roots of corruption in Nigeria. The paper is of the view that for corruption to decrease in Nigerian society, religious leaders and adherents should apply the religious tenets to their whole life. They should not limit it to religious pretense only.

Keywords: Church, Corruption, Leadership, Crusade

Introduction

Corruption has become a persistent phenomenon in Nigeria. The purport of the above statement is that the menace of corruption has become a reoccurring issue among politicians and those holding power and occupying various public offices. They misuse and fraudulently and corruptly use and misappropriate funds and this has become a culture, a lifestyle and indeed a way of life. It is not surprising however to hear that the evil called corruption has also

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

found its way from private life into families, schools, private institutions and none is spared. However, the one that is emerging which is of a serious concern to every healthy mind in the country is the steady but speedy movement and persistent infiltration and breeding of corruption in holy centers or places of holiness that are naturally expected to drive the orientation for corruption free scenario in the public and private space. The issue expressed here is that corruption has entered the sacred places of worship in Nigeria such that the dimension of this vice in this area is better imagined than expressed. Regrettably, the 'Holy Men of God' and the 'perceived divinely anointed' ministers have been enveloped and swallowed by the flowing river of iniquity called corruption such that it now appears that all has lost sanity and control about the monster of corruption. Dario's postulation is that when corruption and corrupt practices are found where the 'so called people of God' dwell, then such a country is finished.

What it means is that instead of encouraging corruption, the church should be in the vanguard and forefront of anti corruption campaign and effort. Unfortunately in Nigeria, corruption in the church is not a new thing. Corruption and corrupt practices in the church in Nigeria take different dimensions ranging from misinterpretation of the word of God to suit their purposes, extortion in the name of prophetic miracles and prosperity as well as breakthrough, ethnical problems, charismatic and cloning of the psychology and thinking of the poor congregation in relation to their daily life problems to reassure them of solution to the problems that eventually do not come. Most irritating is the commercialization of every process, payment for counseling, payment for spiritual instructions, payment to come and have face to face encounter with the man of God, registration and payment for card for spiritual audience with the man of God, market crusades and days of prophetic battle of the holy spirit with satanic strongholds, sale of crusade T-Shirts, caps, badges, car stickers and so on including sale of apples for Christ, guava, divine mercy, salvation, financial breakthrough etc. Those in search of any of the above are either told to come out openly in the church to kiss the shoes of the man of God or to clean them, and after, such announcement is made in the form of seed. The question that still remains is: Do all these happened in the time of our lord Jesus Christ? No.

Conceptualization of Terms

Within the disciplinary parameters of social science, the issue of definition of concepts has not been problem free. This has been largely due to the eclectic nature and paradigmatic dispositions of respective disciplines within the field (Akindele et al, 1997:1). Given this, there is a need for caution on the part of any analyst in giving precise meaning to concepts in the social sciences, particularly when such meanings could not have been unconnected with the perspective, ideological persuasion or the unit of analysis of such analyst (Akindele et al, Ibid). Therefore, for more classification and their usage in this work it is appropriate to start the conceptual framework with the term religion.

Religion is a worldwide phenomenon; it is being practiced everywhere on the surface of the earth. Religion practices vary based on revelation, exposition, conviction and environment. These are reasons why there is no universally accepted definition of religion. Western scholars like Marx view religion as "Opium" of the masses, based on practice and environment where he found himself. In contrast, Durkheim views religion as a social organization based on his exposition and conviction.

Ilori (1993) view religion base on conviction and revelation as "a man relation to divine or superhuman powers and the various organized system of beliefs and worship in which these relationships have been expressed. The belief in the existence of such is general conviction common to all people and all stages of culture." Therefore, concluded his definition of religion as man's highest effort to know the nature of the ultimate to organize his activities in light of this knowledge and entered emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually into a relationship with the ultimate. In this paper, the concept religion applies principally to such system as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion (ATR) which involve obedience to a moral code set down in sacred scriptures and traditional norms and values of society, and participation in commons practices. Religion therefore, is a set of ideas and beliefs about the "supernatural" and its impact on the lives of human beings. These contain certain guidelines of behaviors and codes of conduct that individuals are expect to follow to maintain a good relation with the divine being and their fellow human beings.

Corruption

As a result of the complexity of corruption, its effects on the systemic existence of its victims as does its prevalence through the efforts of its perpetuators, its definition has continued to be shrouded by value preference and differences (Akindele and Adeyemi, 2011:8). This has to some extent complicated the attainment of a definitional uniformity on the concept within the academia and practicing world of administration

Different scholars from social sciences, such as; psychology, political science, Economics and religious studies have attempted a working definition for corruption from their various disciplines. However, all of the working definitions are interwoven. The most relevant definition to this paper is the one given by World Bank, Akindele (1995) and Osoba (1998). The World Bank defines corruption as the abuse of public office for private gain. Akindele (1995) defines it as any form of reciprocal behavior or transaction where both the power/office holder can respectively initiate the inducement of each other by some rewards to grant (illegal) preferential treatment or favour against the principles and interest of specific organization (or public) within the society. Overall, corruption covers such acts as: a) use of one's office for pecuniary advantage, b) gratification, c) influence peddling, insincerity in advice with the aim of gaining advantage, d) less than a full day's work for a full day's pay, e) tardiness and slovenliness. Osoba (1998, p.378) defines corruption as an "anti-social behaviour conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms, and which undermine the authorities" to improve the living conditions of the people.

Dike (2011) notes that though some of these definitions of corruption have been around for over decades, the recent development in Nigeria where discoveries of stolen public funds run into billions of US Dollars and Nigeria Naira make these definitions vary adequate and appropriate. He further observes that corruption is probably the main means of accumulating quick wealth in Nigeria. Corruption occurs in many forms, and it has contributed immensely to the poverty and misery of a large segment of the Nigerian population. Corruption has become institutionalized in Nigeria.

Corruption is the colonization of fraudulence; the brazen celebration of impunity, which pollutes the ethical hygiene of a society (Ogbunwezeh, 2005). Corruption is a worldwide phenomenon, but

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

prominent in countries of the third world, particularly in Africa. Johnston and Rose-Ackerman (1997) pointed out that the wide spread of corruption is a symptom of a poorly functioning state, and a poorly functioning state can undermine economic growth. Where corruption is situated in the structural nature of any society, countries with extensive natural resources may fail to develop in a way that benefits ordinary citizens (Edewor and Sokefun, 2002).

Sacred: The word 'sacred' means connected with God, it means a God considered to be 'holy' from the forgoing, the word sacred means holiness or sense of being holy in the likeness of God. Thus, 'sacred' as a word has to do with something that is pure and untainted and without blemish. The word sacred can also be used interchangeably with the word holiness. Holiness itself connotes and means in relation to God. The church is a holy place of worship. The word sacred signifies purity and holiness; it means God and anything else related to the name or worship of God and God dwells. The name 'Israel' is akin to holiness and it is also sacred, the place is known as a nation of God for the exemplary relationship known to God alone at the call of patriarch Abraham, (Dairo, 2007). The word 'sacred' carried, the intendment that the act done or expected of a person is meant to be holy. It is therefore expected that a place declared to be sacred is expected to be holy and where holiness prevail, corrupt practices are abhorred. Sacred Places and Centers of Worship: To many people, sacred places or centers of worship simply refer to holy grounds or holy areas where people assemble to pray and praise God; submit their petitions for divine intercession in relation to their problems.

It is also referred to as a church or simply a place of congregation by persons seeking divine attention. A sacred place of worship or centre of worship is a holy place where people irrespective of their denominations or belief pattern come together to talk to their God and engage in holy activities.

The word sacred is derived from the Latin word 'wikit sacer' meaning consecrated' or dedicated to the gods or anything in their power'. To Strong Concordance, the word sacred, has its origin from the Greek word 'hieros' meaning sacred, a sacred thing, a temple. The combined reading of the Latin and Greek word 'Sacred' clearly shows that the word sacred has to do with anything and everything that relates to God including a sanctuary, a temple, a church, a chapel, a consecrated place and a centre of spiritual or divine activity. In effect, a sacred place may be a place recognized as a place where people go or visit from time to time and from interval to meditate and have a kind of solemn interaction with 'God' or gods as the case maybe. Thus, a sacred place means the same thing to different people of different belief systems. Thus for Christians, they have churches, worship centers, sanctuaries, alters and consecrated places while for Muslims, the mosque to them is sacred. For the traditional worshippers, there are the traditional altars, shrines and 'okwu-agwu' where the adherents worship on daily basis.

The same thing applies to the 'hindus' and other religious adherents and faithful. What tends to be a common trait for all these classes of people above is that their respective 'sacred places' are seen as places of purity, holiness, where honesty and transparency reign. Nonetheless, the word sacred places or worship centers for the purpose of this paper refers to churches and other places where people gather to pray and praise God with petitions meant to be addressed and listened to by their divine and supreme leader, the Jesus of Nazareth or Jesus the son of the living God.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

The word sacred and sacred places are generally perceived and viewed as something revered due to the sanctity and seen by religious and even ordinary individual as being associated with divinity and worthy of spiritual respect or inspiring arena of reverence among believers. It is also inferred to mean a selected place or places for blessed and selected persons or individuals seen as children or followers of God or his representatives. Notwithstanding the sacred nature of the places mentioned above, it is regrettable that the reverence, the respect, the sanctity and integrity deserving and expected to be seen in these places have fallen to zero level and point in many societies and the situation in Nigeria with regards to the places concerned is not only unpleasant but despicable. The sanctity, sacredness or otherwise the holiness with which the church and worship centers are known have indeed decayed in Nigeria due to corruption. Corruption has engulfed the pillars and the foundation of our churches, none is exempted and like the icon of literature, Chinua Achebe said in his novel the 'Things Fall Apart' indeed, things have fallen apart in our churches and the center can no longer hold, all for the sake of corruption.

The Church

The Church in this work is conceptualized as the assembly, gathering together or association of followers of Jesus Christ. Simply, the church is construed as a place where like-minded persons converged with a sole aim of worshipping or fellowshipping. According to McKim, the term "church" in the New Testament essentially means "assembly." It may be found in two verses of the canonical Gospel of Matthew, twenty-four verses of the Acts of Apostles, fifty-eight verses of the letters of Paul the Apostle, two Hebrews letters, one James letter, three John third epistles, and nineteen Revelation pages. Unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity are the four traditional notes of the Christian Church (p. 2). In the phenomenological sense, a number of organizations refer to themselves as churches, maybe due to their desire for fellowship. According to Harper, the term is used to refer to local communities in the New Testament and, in a broader sense, to refer to all believers.

Although opinions on what constitutes orthodoxy differ, only orthodox Christians are traditionally regarded as belonging to the real Church. Based on the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, who was regarded by Christians as the Son of God and the Messiah, the early Church was established in Roman Judea in the first century AD. Scripture, which commands Jesus' followers and apostles to proclaim and teach the kerygma to the dying generations, is consistent with the common belief that the church started with Jesus' apostles. Originating from the Jewish faith of the first century, Christians welcomed Gentiles without compelling them to completely embrace Jewish practices (such circumcision). The similarities between Christianity and the Jewish faith include the Proselytes, God-fearers, and the Noahide Law. According to others, Christians were swiftly expelled from Jerusalem's synagogues due to disagreements with Jewish religious authorities. It is important to note right away that the church is Christ's body. The Bible makes no mention of the church being like or resembling a body. According to 1 Corinthians 12:27, the church is the manifestation of Christ in the world. Christ came from His lovely kingdom in order to devote Himself to it. Christ is clearly the head of the church, according to the New Testament. Christ's headship alludes to the source of the church's vitality rather than authority and the right to rule.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Christ provides the body with the nourishment it needs to survive (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16; Col. 1:18). It serves as the community's eye.

Religion and Corruption in Nigeria

Religion in Nigeria; especially, Christianity and Islam condemn corruption. As earlier mentioned, most of Nigerians belong to one of these two imported religions. Christianity does not accept corruption of any kinds. Christians rely on the Bible as their guide and constitution. Bible admonishes Christians to abhor crime against divinity and the fellow human beings. All forms of corruption are forbidden in the Bible as could be seen in the following scriptures; Deuteronomy 10:17, Proverbs 17: 23 and Exodus 23: 8 warn Christians against being partial and taking bribe. Similarly, 1Corinthians 5:9-11 urges Christians to quit mixing in company with fornicator, greedy person, extortioner, an idolater, reviler or drunkard all of which are corrupt practices. In Isaiah 33:15 God describes the one who will find his favor to be "the one who walks in continual righteousness, who speaks what is upright, who rejects dishonest, fraudulent gain, whose hands refuse a bribe rather than grabbing it, who closes his ear to talk of bloodshed, and who shuts his eyes to avoid seeing what is bad." At Ephesians 4:28 the Bible admonishes the thief to steal no more. Again in Roman 13:1-7 and 1Peter 2: 13-15 Christians are commanded to be in subjection to superior authority and to pay tax, fear and honor them. All these commandments are summed up by Jesus Christ as two greatest commandments, the love of God and the love of neighbor (Divinity and humanity). Love of God and love of neighbor would not allow any Christian to involve in any form of corruption (Matthew 22:37). In other words, if you love God and human beings you will not cheat, bombs, kidnap, assassinate, and steal from them. Despite with the above role of religion in fighting corruption in Nigeria, corruption is still spreading on daily basis. It was so because religious leaders and adherents in Nigeria continue to live a life hypocrite. They read the scriptures; the Bible and the Quran selectively. Those areas that deal with justice, morality, and well-being of the citizens were neglected.

Fighting Corruption in Nigerian Churches and Worship Centers

Many people have condemned the corruption in the holy places and worship centers but the menace has persisted. We argue that the reason why it appears the corruption in the sacred places are far from being controlled is that the churches itself encourage and support it. As contended recently, some of the church leaders promote corrupt practice and see nothing wrong in it. As Abonyi argued, a certain pastor in one of the Pentecostal churches was given a recommendation letter by his General Overseer because he donated and paid as offering a certain percentage of money gotten from fraudulent practices, the recommendation letter no doubt is a kind of commendation to do more and this is notwithstanding how he obtained the money. One of the convicted Chief Executive Officer of a certain bank in Nigeria after her conviction through a charge filed by EFCC and settled by plea bargain in which the offender forfeited many of her assets to government went for thanksgiving in a church and made donations to the church from her so called ill-gotten monies from questionable source, the church collected the donations and closed its eyes on how the monies were acquired. This indeed is corruption which the church shamelessly condoned.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

In addition to the activities of the church leaders in condoning corrupt practice in the churches and worship centers, the congregation are not willing to speak out against these unholy and ungodly activities and even those who speak out and are ready to speak out are usually victimized and stigmatized and labeled with bad names and called names and most times seen as Judas in the house of God simply because they voiced out and spoke out against the evil called corruption going on in the churches. Dairo stated that in the course of his research on corruption in sacred places, a famous king in one of the South Western States of Nigeria attended a church thanksgiving service after his coronation as king, he knelt down before the coordinating clergymen for prayer, what he did sounded as a ridicule to the kingship in the community in the eyes of his indigenes but he reacted saying he did not kneel down for man but rather knelt down before the clergymen as representative of the creator of the heaven and earth. Unfortunately, the king was disappointed to meet the same clergy at the Ogboni fraternity. This made the king to renounce Christianity as his religion. Many men of God and priests are corrupt in 'godly attire' fondly referred by Mfumbusa as an impairment of integrity.

There are many cases of rape, defilement, and manslaughter, disappearance of persons including children, women and men in worship centers. Fraud and other associated dubious acts are going on in churches and worship centers in all parts of the country in the name of special prayers for the victims, Records of pastors raping their members and having other sexual advantage over their members in the name of deliverance and breaking of satanic covenants and spiritual marriages with women and men in the river, rape of friend's daughters by pastors, gay sex immorality with church members and 'iru oru Mmiri' i.e spiritual cleansing in the river are popular in the East and the seeming sexual activities of pastors in the western part with their members including fake prophesies leading to breaking of marriages is no longer a new thing among our so called leaders of churches.

The prophecy is either that the husband is 'occultic' and wants to kill the wife or that the wife is a witch and wants to kill the man. The unsuspecting victims believe the prophecy and start acting on them and see the one she or he professed 'love' to from day one as a devil. Some of the leaders of the worship centers especially the Neo-Pentecostal Churches carry and perform sacrifices at different junctions to increase membership of their churches. Some also visit native herbalists and rituals are performed for them to increase their membership strength. They fight themselves where their churches are close to one other and one wonders whether it is still God that is being worshipped or money. Nowadays, crusades and night programmes are organized not necessarily to win souls for God but to make money and you see in many instances in such programs where the ministers of God begin to sell different kinds of fruits and other items to the highest bidder in the name of prosperity miracle seed sowing.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Corruption has become endemic in Nigeria and no sector is exempted. Corruption is not peculiar to Nigeria but is rampant in other African countries as well as other countries of the world. Corruption is motivated by greed and lack of self-discipline on the part of individuals and affects negatively the individual's integrity and name. Similarly, it does no good to the reputation of a country. The church and holy places of God in Nigeria is not free of corruption and the challenges

of fighting corruption in the church is more or less bigger than the church as it is rooted on the foundation and pillars of the church.

To defeat corruption demands collective effort and all hands must be on deck. In addressing the corruption and corrupt practice in the churches and sacred places in Nigeria, the following recommendations are suggested:

a- Nigeria must come up with a piece of legislation dealing specifically and essentially with the various categories or areas of corrupt activities in the churches, prohibit them and prescribe sanctions or punishments, this will serve as a weapon and deter future perpetrators of such acts when some are punished.

b- Extensive campaign for media reporting on church activities and corrupt activities in the churches should be encouraged. Like Osanaike said, there is still poor media reporting of church activities in Nigeria.

c- Church leaders must live above board and remove their hands in any act that will bring shame and indignity to the church. A situation where the church encourages criminals and receive money from questionable characters or find their ways into occultism to increase their membership cannot be tolerated as it makes the followers to lose faith, trust and confidence on them and the God they profess to serve.

d- The law enforcement agencies must be proactive and be ready to prosecute church leaders who are alleged to or have committed offences from pulpit including rape, defilement, drug smuggling or human and drug trafficking, killing of members, sexual abuse of members, for example, the trial of Rev King is commendable and this is not withstanding the alleged insinuations that his travail is orchestrated by rival pastors. The trial of other pastors who have also committed one crime or the other is commended and the tempo should be maintained. EFCC should also keep watch on the churches for financial crimes like money laundering because of the present wide unholy alliance of church leaders with politicians.

References

A .O. Dairo 'Sacred Corruption in sacred places, The Case of Some Selected Neo Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria' dairo.online.com.edu.(accessed 7/9/2025).

Agbede, F. (2019). "The Church and Governance: Advocating for Accountability in Nigeria." African Journal of Political Science.

Akindele, S.T. and Adeyemi, O.O. (2011), *Corruption and the Nigerian State: A*

Akindele, S.T., Adeyemo, D.O. and Olaopa, O.R. (1997), "Theory Building and

Appleby, Scott R. *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation*, NewYork: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000

Apyewen, U. A, Aboh, M. M, Yusuf, I &Yusuf, Murjanatu, *Religion and the Extent of Corruption in Nigeria,* in Global Journal of Human Social Sciences March 2021

Dike, V.E. (2011). "Corruption in Nigeria: A New Paradigm for Effective Control", in Africa

Economic-Analysis.http//www.africaeconomicanalysis.org/articles/Gen/corruptiondikehtm.html

Edewor, & Sokefun. (2002). *Where Corruption is Situated in the Structural Nature of any Society* (p.78). *Critical Discourse*, Saarbrucken Germany: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing:

McKim, D.K. (1996). Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms. Westminster John Knox Press.

Nixon, N.C.L. (1986). "Rapid Growth and High Performance: The Entrepreneur's 'Impossible Dream?'" Academy of Management Executive, 19(1), 77–89.

Ochulor, C. L., Metuonu, I. C., & Asuo, O. O. (2011). Corruption in contemporary Nigeria: The way out. *American Journal of Social and Management Sciences*. Retrieved from http://www.scihub.org/

Ojo, M. (2017). "The Church and Politics in Nigeria: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives." African Studies Journal, 56(3), 45-60.

Ottuh, P.O.O. (2015). Using Psychological Models to Evaluate Human Religious Experience. AICI Journal of Religious Studies and Theology 1 (1), 1-9.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]