



## Evil Men in the House of God: An Analytical Study of the Involvement of Christian and Muslim Clerics in Crime in Nigeria

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**Abstract.** The rate of involvement of supposedly men of God in crime across the world and particularly in Nigeria has become a matter of serious concern for many people. For one thing, it calls to question the sanctity of the pulpit and for another, the relevance and perhaps the need for religion in human society. Stories of the involvement of ‘men of God’ in all sorts of crime make headlines in local and international newspapers and magazines. A good number of these ‘priests and ministers of God’ surprisingly confessed to committing those crimes. Some of the crimes were also committed within the premises of the ‘House of God’. This paper therefore, seeks to find explanations for this phenomenon on the one hand, and on the other offer recommendations on how to minimize it, and if possible, halt it. This is with a view to giving religion and its advocates the honour they deserve in human society. The paper adopted the analytical approach. It is divided into seven parts. Part one which is the introduction opened the paper. This is followed by part two which gave the meaning of crime, the nature of criminals and punishments to be given for crimes. Part three presented the perspectives of Christianity and Islam on the concept of crime. In part four, an account of some criminal cases involving Christian and Muslim clerics in Nigeria was given. This is closely followed by a critical analysis of the crimes involved in by men of God, finding reasons for the phenomenon. In section six, ways of curtaining the scourge were suggested while the last section drew the conclusion.

**Keywords:** Crime in Nigeria, men of God, clerics, Pastors, Imams, House of God

### 1. Introduction

Crime, undoubtedly, is part of human experience. It is a phenomenon that man has had to contend with from antiquity to date. The murder of Abel by Cain recorded in both the Bible and the Qur’an is a pointer to this fact. It is therefore a thing that man across generations and civilizations has struggled to minimize as it is not possible to eradicate it. What is however worrying is the involvement of men of God in all sorts of crime. Hardly will a day pass without reports of one pastor or an Islamic cleric being investigated for or found guilty of one crime or the other in Nigeria. Surprisingly, some of them expressly confessed to committing the crimes for which they are being investigated or prosecuted, attributing it to the handiwork of Satan. Crimes for which they have been accused of or being prosecuted for include but not limited to illicit sexual acts (like rape, fornication, adultery, incest), fraud, drug peddling, armed robbery, human trafficking, trade in human body parts, murder etc. The celebrated case of Rev. King who was sentenced to death by hanging for setting a member of his church ablaze is very apposite here. The condemned cleric was said to have poured petrol on six members of his church and set them ablaze for an offence which he classified as ‘acts of fornication’. (*The Punch*, August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015). This paper therefore seeks to find explanations for the involvement of those who are supposed to guide the unguided to God in crime with a view suggesting ways of putting a stop to it. This, it is hoped, will also help in reducing crime generally among the people and specifically among this category of people.

### 1.1 Of Crime, Criminals and Punishment

A dictionary definition of crime gives it as a specific act committed in violation of law. It is also defined as an offence for which there is severe punishment by law. The term “crime” therefore, describes many different forms of illegal behaviour that usually threaten the life, liberty, or property of others, either directly (such as rape or murder) or indirectly (such as conspiracy or impersonation). There are some criminal activities that potentially only affect one’s own person, such as drug use or suicide. Such activities still constitute an assault on life since lives belong to God who created man and not to man who carries it about. Men are merely stewards and custodians of lives on behalf of God.

It is necessary to draw a distinction between crime and sin so as to have a clearer picture of what crime is. Crime is defined by the laws of the state and comes under the jurisdiction of the civil government while sins, as stipulations of God that man must not do are to be dealt with by God Himself or family members or religious organizations on behalf of God. While all crimes (as defined by God, but not necessarily the state) are sins, all sins are not crimes punishable by civil authorities. Many sins (i. e violation of God’s Law) are outside the jurisdiction of the state. For example, polytheism and fornication are not defined by laws of many states as crimes yet they are sins before God. Sometimes men have criminalized bad behaviours, with the goal of limiting behaviours that were not criminal according to God, but rather were sinful, or potentially sinful. An example of this is an attempt to cause societal breach.

Crime is rampant throughout the world and different nations try combat crime in different ways with varying degrees of success. Different countries enact different laws to prohibit a vast range of different actions, and to varying extents. While certain crimes are considered a highly local phenomenon, others have a much more extensive impact, having great economic and social consequences for the human society across several countries. Crimes like robbery, burglary, assault and theft experienced by many people on daily basis may seem to be largely an urban phenomenon driven by local factors. Yet, such petty or conventional crimes may differ significantly between districts in a single city. The proximity of perpetrators to their victims, the vulnerability of targets of crime, the availability of firearms and drugs, the presence of gangs, the population density and the pressures and tensions on a certain community are all said to contribute to an increased rate of crime in the society. At the other end of the

spectrum are forms of transnational organized crimes. These include trafficking in goods and persons that can involve extended cross-national networks. It is also said that there are close links between organized and petty or conventional crime. Crimes such as burglary, robbery and assault frequently become part of the *modus operandi* of groups involved in transnational organized crime.

It is said that reported crime is not the same as actual crime and that statistics have been developed for administrative purposes, not for satisfying research interests. In many developing countries Nigeria, crime data are either fragmented, of poor quality or not available to the public. International comparisons are said to be even rife with misunderstandings. Both the 2014 United Nations’ Report of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the 2015 Report of the Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice attest to this. The vagaries of changing laws, statistical practices and the idiosyncrasies of those involved in defining criminal incidents make it difficult to draw any conclusions when comparing statistics from different areas or different times. It is also said that the crimes punished under the penal codes of different countries (the crimes that are usually noted in the statistics) are generally the “traditional” offences,

Staples (2001), believes that how crime is defined reflects the relationship between the rulers and the subjects. According to him, the ruling caste defines those acts as crimes which fit its needs and purposes and characterizes as criminals individuals who commit certain kinds of illegal acts, while other such acts are exempted from prosecution and escape public disapprobation because they are not perceived as criminal or threat to society. Reasoning along the same line, Darrow (1993) also posits that the ruling class makes laws that suit it and because the people in that class control the earth and therefore consequently make the laws, they make laws that suit them and cannot therefore break those laws. Hence, the poor who belong to the low class are usually the law-breakers. His actual words may be more impressive here. He writes:

*Most of all our criminal code consists in offences against property. People are sent to jail because they have committed a crime against property. It is of very little consequence whether one hundred people more or less who go to jail ought not to go – you must protect property, because in this world property is of more importance than anything else. (P. 293-294)*

He continues:

*How is it done? These people who have property fix it so they can protect what they have. When somebody commits a crime it does not follow that he has done something that is morally wrong. The man on the outside who has committed no crime may have done something. For instance, to take all the coal in the United States and raise the price two or three dollars when there is no need of it, and to thus kill thousands of babies and send thousands of people to the poorhouse and tens of thousands to jail, as is done every year in the United States – this is a greater crime than all the people in our jails ever committed; but the law does not punish it. Why? Because the fellows who control the earth make the law (p. 294)*

Darrow reasons further that if the poor who end up in jail had the opportunity of making laws, the first thing they would do would be to punish the fellow who gets control of the earth. He also argues that most of the crimes for which people are punished are property crimes. Of course, he admits that there are personal crimes, like murder and rape, he posits that these are very few. Quoting Reiman (1995), Kappeler, Blumberg and Potter (2001) also share the sentiments of Darrow when they write:

*Think of a crime, any crime. Picture the first “crime” that comes into your mind. What do you see? The odds are you are not imagining a mining company executive sitting at his desk calculating the costs of proper safety precautions and deciding not to invest in them. Probably what you see in your mind’s eye is one person physical attacking or robbing something from another on the threat of physical attack (pp. 59-60)*

Thus, crime is considered a configuration of what the ruling class wants it to be.

The other side of the argument is whether criminals are born criminals or they are a creation of the society. Mitford (1993) has recorded the interesting discourse among scholars of different disciplines on the issue. Criminologists, physicians, psychologists and psychiatrists have all contributed to the debate. According to Mitford (1993), the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso believed that some people are born criminals and bear physical stigmata to show it. According to Lombroso, all criminals have long, large projecting ears, abundant hair, thin beard, prominent front and sinuses, protruding chin, large cheekbones. Specifically, he notes that thieves have mobile hands and face; small, mobile, restless, frequently oblique eyes; thick and closely set eyebrows; flat or twisted nose, thin beard, hair frequently thin. Rapists, according to him, may be

distinguished by brilliant eyes and delicate faces while murderers may be distinguished by cold glassy eyes; nose always large and frequently aquiline; jaws strong, cheekbones large, hair curly, dark and abundant. Mitford (1993) further remarks that a skeptical English man named Charles Goring, a physician, decided to check up Lombroso’s findings by studying the physical characteristics of 3,000 prisoners, measuring their noses, ears, eyebrows, chins and comparing them with those of scholars over a period of 12 years. Goring concluded that; “From this comparison no evidence has emerged of the existence of a physical criminal type” (p.262).

Subsequent research efforts indicate that pyknic type (which means stout, squat with large abdomen) is more prevalent among occasional offenders while the aesthetic type (of slender built and slight muscular development) is more often found among the habitual criminals. Other researches show that human race can be divide into three namely endomorphs, soft, round, comfort loving people; ectomorphs, fragile fellows who complain a lot and shrink from crowds; and mesomorphs, muscular type with large trunks who walk assertively talk noisily and behave aggressively. According to Mitford (1993), people should watch out for them; they are the criminal type

Psychologists and psychiatrists in contributing to the criminal type debate posit that criminals, misdemeanants, delinquents and other anti-social groups are in nearly all cases persons of low mentality. Other studies indicate that those behind bars compare favourably with the general population in intelligence. It is said that since we seldom arrest and convict criminals except the poor, inept and friendliness, we can know very little of the intelligence of the criminal world. It is quite possible that it is, by and large superior. Conclusively, Mitford (1993) posits that skull shape, glands, IQ and deviant personality aside, to get a more pragmatic view of the criminal type, one merely has to look at the composition of the prison population. Thus, he concludes:

*It seems safe to assert that there is indeed a criminal type - but he is not a biological, anatomical, phrenological, or anthropological type; rather, he is a social creation etched by the dominant class and ethnic prejudices of the given society (p.268).*

It is for this reason that Darrow (1993) believes that criminals should not be sent to jail. He argues that most of those behind bars are there because the system that criminalized the acts that took them there had failed to provide a system of doing justice. According to him, if the courts were organized to

promote justice, the people would elect somebody to defend all those criminals. For him, therefore, the solution to crime is in the axiom, “live and let live”. He writes:

*The only way in the world to abolish crime and criminals is to abolish the big ones and the little ones together. Make fair conditions of life. Give men a chance to live. Abolish the right of private ownership of land, abolish monopoly, make the world partners in production, partners in the good things of life...The only way to cure these conditions is by equality. There should be no jails. They do not accomplish what they pretend to accomplish. If you would wipe them out there would be no more criminals than now. They terrorise nobody. They are a blot upon any civilization, and a jail is an evidence of the lack of charity of the people on the outside who make the jails and fill them with the victims of their greed (p. 295)*

Darrow argues that further that there might be some few elements who, due to their make-up would commit crimes just for the sake of committing them, his position is that such persons “should be sent to the hospitals and treated, and not to the jail”. According to him, this category of people would entirely disappear in the second generation, or at least in the third generation. Hence, Staples (2001) concludes that one of the key elements in securing the citizenry’s obedience to a nation’s laws is the belief of the citizens that the laws are fair. In King’s (1993) words, “a just law is a man-made law that squares up with the moral law or the law of God” (p.274).

Parker (2001) however submits that people who commit crimes appear to share the prevalent impression that punishment is an unpleasantness that is best avoided. To him, all criminals do not want to be caught, and if caught, would give all it takes to avoid the stipulated punishment for the crimes. His words:

They ordinarily take care to avoid being caught. If arrested, they ordinarily deny their guilt and otherwise try not to cooperate with the police. If brought to trial, they do whatever their resources permit to resist being convicted. And even after they have been convicted and sent to prison, their efforts to secure their freedom do not cease. It is a struggle from start to finish (p. 4).

It is said that of all crimes, violent ones are those that perhaps have the greatest potential to negatively affect human, social, political and economic development. Kappeler, Blumberg and Potter (2001), however, believe that most violent crimes which do threaten societal well-being are committed by

relatives, intimate friends and acquaintances – those trusted by the victims most – not by psychopathic, predatory strangers lurking in urban shadows. They also believe that most violent crimes do not involve the use of a weapon.

## 2. Religious Perceptions of Crime

Each of Christianity and Islam, the two religions whose ministers come under scrutiny in this study has its own concept of crime. Christianity, for example teaches that crime is caused by evil in man’s heart. The fall of man brought about corruption in the heart of man, which manifested itself externally with violence, murder, theft, and all manners of criminal behaviour. The Bible says:

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. . . (Genesis 6:5)

The Bible also says:

*The godly has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among mankind; they all lie in wait for blood, and each hunts the other with a net. (Micah 7:2)*

Man therefore came to be seen as a sinful, fallen being in need of a saviour in the person of Jesus Christ. According to John 15:5, man will be able to do good only if he abides in Jesus and Jesus abides in him. 1 John 3:6 however teaches that no one who abides in Jesus sins. It says:

*No one who abides in him sins, no one who sins has either seen or known him...He who commits sin is of the devil: for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.*

The position of the Qur’an on crime is simply that of non-compliance with the dictates of God otherwise known as the *Shariah*. The *Shariah* is the technical word used to depict the “dos” and “don’ts” of God for humanity in all aspects of life including how the deceased Muslim should be buried. After listing a few of these dos and don’ts of God in verses 9-37, verse 38 of Surat al ‘Israil (Chapter 17) then concludes: “All those bad behaviours (listed above) are hateful to your Lord”.

The Qur’an however teaches that man is evil by nature. “The (human) soul is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord do bestow His mercy”, says Joseph when he survived the seduction of the wife of his boss (Qur’an 12:53). Again, the Qur’an teaches that evils committed by man are insinuated by Satan (Qur’an 2:168-9) and having been warned against

Satan (Qur'an 16:99-100), man should accept responsibility for evils committed by him (Qur'an 3:30).

A number of crimes were mentioned in both the Bible and the Qur'an. These include murder, rape, incest etc. Some of these crimes were committed by prophets of God. The Bible for example, reports David as having committed adultery and murder (2 Samuel, 11:1-27). Samson was also said to have committed adultery (Judges 16: 1-3). Both the Bible and the Qur'an, also reported Moses as killing an Egyptian (Ex. 2:15, Qur'an 28:15&33). Despite these records of all sorts of crime, even by prophets of God, both the Bible and the Qur'an still condemn these crimes, stipulating punishments for each one of them. The Bible for example says:

*For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, and not be like Cain who was of the evil one and murdered his brother* (1 John 3:11&12)

And again in 1 Peter 4:14&-19:

If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. *But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief or as a wrongdoer, or as a mischief-maker*; yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God. for the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God....Therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will do right and entrust their souls to a faithful Creator.

The Qur'an on the other hand, says:

Whatever you are given (here) is but a convenience of this life, but that which is with God is better and more lasting. (It is) for those who believe and put their trust in their Lord. *Those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds*, and when they are angry, even then forgive...and those who when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves (Qur'an 42: 36-39)

From the above, one can see that both the Bible and the Qur'an condemn crime of all sorts either in the name of sin or evil. The two Scriptures posit that though Satan may insinuate evil in man, man has equally been insulated against such insinuation. He is therefore responsible for the crimes committed by him. Opeyoye (1989) puts it succinctly thus:

*The belief as taught in the two scriptures has been that Satan makes evil suggestions to man and man is given the power to resist the evil suggestions or yield*

*to them. Consequently, he becomes responsible for his acts. The scriptures however claim that only those who really believe would be able to resist Satanic temptation* (p. 83&84)

### 3. Men of God and Crime in Nigeria

Nigerian journalists have found the involvement of men of God in crime as a veritable tool to make catchy headlines for their newspapers and magazines with a view to making high sales. It is not uncommon to read headlines like Bishop Rapes 15 Year Old Girl In Port Harcourt, 'Rev. Father In Abortion Mess', Islamic Cleric Arrested Over 3-Day Marathon Sex Deliverance (P.M News Nigeria: 4 August, 2015), Pastor, Others Hijack Truck With N25m Goods (Punch News, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015), 'Pastor', 10 others arrested for 'Kidnapping' in Ekiti, (The Nation Tuesday, July 28, 2015), Alfa kills, shares friend's body parts (Punch, February 20, 2015), NDLEA Nabs Pastor for Drug Trafficking (Punch, August, 29, 2015), Pastor stabs colleague to death in Osun (Punch Tuesday, January 21, 2014) etc. These headlines are not only embarrassing to religiously conscious persons but also degrading of the pulpit and religion. An insight into some of the stories will be necessary for understanding the issues at hand.

The Punch Newspaper of September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015 reported that the Federal Special Anti- robbery Squad, Adeniji Adele, Lagos arrested a Pastor, Peter Iyasele, and two others for allegedly hijacking a truck with N25m worth of goods in the Ijora area of Lagos. The 56year- old clergy was arrested in Igando, Lagos with the hijacked truck, which contained 25 heavy duty outdoor air conditioners, belonging to a company based in Apapa Lagos. According to Pastor Iyasele, he had a call from God, but there was no money to pursue it. So, he had to source for funds to sustain the ministry. The police estimated the market value of the heavy duty air conditioners to be about N25m.

A 37 year-old pastor, Adebambo Adetunji, was alleged to be one of the gang members who robbed motorists at the Ojota Bus stop, between April and July, 2014. Adetunji and other suspects were notorious for snatching cars and robbing victims of their valuables at gun point. Adetunji is a district pastor of a church in Ilorin, the Kwara State Capital. (Punch Metro, October24, 2014)

A 42 year-old Islamic cleric, known locally as Alfa, was arrested and charged to court for engaging a 34year-old woman in sex deliverance that lasted for three days at Ire-Akari Road in Isolo, a suburb of

Lagos, where the victim resides and where the prayer took place. The Oyo State born cleric, Jamiu Mukaila reportedly defrauded Bose Alele the sum of N350,000.00 after which he engaged her in a three-day marathon sex under the false pretence of casting evil spirit out of her. Mukaila confessed to committing the crime but said he was born into an Alfa family in Oyo State and inherited the gift of prophecy and deliverance (P.M News, 4 August, 2015).

Pastor, Babatunde Balogun, two women and 10 others were arrested for being a kidnapping syndicate. They were said to be responsible for the kidnap of Rev.Fr Emmanuel Akingbade, an Associate Professor at the Obafemi Awolowo University [OAU], Ile-Ife. *Balogun ‘gives spiritual support’ to the suspects in return for a share of ransom money* (The Nation, July 28, 2015)

Prophetess Grace Daniel Akpan was arrested at 5, High Tension street, by four lane, Edet Akpan Avenue, Uyo, for operating a baby factory under the guise of a religious organization, called Jubilant Garden Ministries. She was alleged to have camped young girls and young men for the sole purpose of raising babies for sale and human trafficking. The woman was arrested following reports of cases of child abduction in the state. Five expectant girls and four men suspected to be working at the factory were also arrested (The Nation, February 26, 2014)

Pastor Olufemi Timothy and four others were arrested for child trafficking in Ibadan by men of the the Nigerian Immigration Service. Twelve boys and four girls were allegedly being used by the accused persons in a slavery ring. (The News, February 15, 2015)

An Alfa in the Badagry area of Lagos state, Fatai Afobaje was arrested for conspiring with some security men in his area to kill his friend, Rafiu Suleiman and share his remains among themselves for ritual purposes. Afobaje and Suleiman had been friends for a long time, and the deceased had given a lot of money to the suspect (Punch, February 20, 2015)

A church founder identified simply as Pastor Adepoju, was said to have stabbed a fellow pastor, Pastor Julius Oguntoye, to death. Adepoju, who was the best man when Oguntoye was married some years back. The 48 year old Pastor was said to have been hacked to death in the presence of his six year-old son. It was said that Adepoju had accused the slain pastor of using his glory (Punch, January 21, 2014).

Prophet Femi Oseni, was alleged to have been met on the floor of the church office having sex with one of the women in the church. His 42-year-old wife, Mrs. Doris Oseni claimed to have met the Prophet in this condition and on the basis of that, sought the dissolution of their twelve year old marriage on the grounds of adultery, desertion and lack of love. The woman, who is also an evangelist in the church, said her husband’s behaviour towards her changed after seven years of their marriage with no child, adding that the defendant had been sleeping around with different women, most of whom were their church members. The woman’s report of her husband strange behaviour to his mother did not stop him from the adulterous acts. Doris also accused the husband of having a child, who she said was a product of his extra-marital affairs. However, the 45-years-old Prophet Oseni pleaded with the court not to dissolve the marriage with his wife, saying he still loved the woman, whom he described as a virtuous woman that had been taking care of him since he married her (Punch, August 19, 2015).

An Islamic cleric, Alfa Ibrahim was arrested for trading in human parts. The Alfa said he was introduced to the business four years ago but had stopped before his arrest. He said his main work was to dig graves in the cemetery and cut human head and other parts for onward supply to buyers. He said he was usually paid N3,000 per head by Tantaloun, who usually had contact with buyers. Tantaloun admitted selling dead human parts but he did not explain how they got the fresh parts with Mrs. Salami who claimed they supplied her (The News, May 26, 2014)

Pastor Akinola leader of a church at Ibereko, Badagry, Lagos was reported to have died while making love with another man’s wife. The sex romp that claimed his life is said to be a dress rehearsal to a special Valentine’s Day love session the lovebirds were planning. The deceased, who was the *baba ijo*, (head of congregation) of his church, reaped the wrath of a cheated and angry husband, who had laced his wife with “Magun”, a native sex trap. Akinola, who also worked as a Customs Officer, was described as a ‘sex addict’. He was said to be in the habit of using his wealth to woo any woman who caught his fancy. This philandering habit is said to have often caused serious alteration between him and his wife who runs a provision store in the house he built and lived in until his death. (Saturday Sun, February 14, 2009)

A Pastor was arrested over unlawful exportation of 174kg of narcotics to South Africa. The suspect, Michael Raji, was arrested following the interception

of the drug at the cargo section of the Murtala Muhammad International Airport during pre-shipment examination (Premium Times: Friday, August, 2015)

An Alfa was accused of killing his woman friend. Although the Alfa admitted the woman visited him, he denied killing her. He said: "On the evening of October 26, it is true that she visited me. We have been very good friends too. On that day, she just collapsed and became unconscious. I quickly rushed her to a nearby hospital, but I was shocked when the nurses told me she had die. I got a NAPEP tricycle and took her corpse to the Marina Bridge that same night and abandoned it there. I did not want people to trace her corpse to me. When I got home, I buried her wallet, handset, bangle and ring behind my house. I did not kill her. I am an Alfa. I do favor charms for traders. I met Raliatu in 1986. Since then, we have been family friends. She used to come to my place for consultation and I had been to her house too." (Punch Metro, November 17, 2014)

Wife of a Pastor in Lagos, Christiana accused her husband, Kayode Oladoyinbo of being a thief, stealing church fund. She wanted the court to end the 11year old marriage that has produced three children because of the shame her husband puts her through anytime he is arrested. Aside the theft accusation, Christiana also told the Ojo Customary Court, Lagos State, that her husband was cruel to her, lacked care and was fond of beating her at the slightest offence. Responding, Pastor Oladoyinbo accepted his wife's position as regards the divorce but vehemently denied stealing church funds (Saturday Tribune: August 18, 2015)

A Pastor was said to have connived with a renowned Lagos car dealer to falsify document and defrauded a new generation Bank. Pastor Babatunde Olusegun, a customer of the bank collected a vehicle loan facility which he agreed to pay in installments over a period of three years. Trouble started when Olusegun could no longer service the car loan facility and the bank requested that he returned the vehicle which he later claimed was stolen at gunpoint. Unknown to him, the vehicle has a tracking device. The police tracked the vehicle to a car mart and then invited the car dealer to the state police command. At the state police command, the car dealer revealed that it was his friend, one Mr. Taiwo that brought the vehicle to him to help him sell. Police detectives later discovered that the suspect Olusegun and Mr. Taiwo were friends. The bank had, after N1.2m equity and meeting all necessary requirements for accessing that car loan from the bank, sent Olusegun to its official

car agent to pick up a Toyota Corolla worth N3.5m. Instead of picking up a new car, Olusegun took his friend, Taiwo's car to the mart, he and the car dealer forged new documents and plate number in his name for the vehicle, to make the bank believe that he had picked up a new vehicle. He presented the falsified vehicle document bearing his name to the bank which then paid the car dealer N3.5m that was shared between the dealer and Mr. Olusegun. He later returned the vehicle car to his friend (Vanguard, August 26, 2015)

A Pastor, Mrs. Joy Tongo was charged and remanded in prison for her alleged involvement in a visa scam scandal in Lagos State. Tongo allegedly defrauded Stanley Dim under the false pretence of procuring him a Chinese visa for missionary journey. The victim said he met Tongo as the church headquarters in Yaba and she promised to link him with her partner in China for missionary journey. Tongo allegedly collected N300, 000 for the procurement of visa and other necessary documents for the trip but failed to deliver the visa on the day she promised. The travel period also elapsed and there was no alternative arrangement for the trip to China. When Dim contacted Tongo, she said the journey had been postponed and it would be for another date. After days passed and promises failed, Dim demanded for his money which Tongo refused to pay. She claimed that she had used the money to obtain forms for his travel documents (P.M. News Nigeria: August 12, 2015)

A Pastor was arrested by officials of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, NDLEA for smuggling 1.978 kilogrammes of heroin concealed in a false bottom of his luggage. Daniel Akintola, 43, was caught at the Akanu Ibiam International Airport, Enugu, on an inward flight from Entebbe, Uganda. The NDLEA said Mr. Akintola who claimed to be returning from a Pastors' conference in Uganda, wanted to abandon his luggage at the arrival hall for fear of arrest. Mr. Akintola's arrest came few weeks after the NDLEA arrested a Lagos-based pastor at the Murtala Muhammad International Airport, Lagos, for smuggling narcotics to South Africa. Akinola was reported to have said: "I am a Pastor...I attended a minister's conference in Uganda. This bag where heroin was found is my bag but I am a Pastor and not a drug trafficker". The suspect said he was asked to take the bag of ephedrine to Mozambique for a fee of \$2,500 (Premium Times: Friday, August, 2015)

An Islamic cleric, Rabiul-Quadri, was arrested for raping a 22 year old girl and collecting her nails and pubic hair under the pretence of preparing a favour charm for her. Alfa Rabiul confessed to taking

the girl's public hairs but denied having sex with her (Punch Metro, January, 8, 2015)

A Pastor in Enugu State was arrested for impregnating a female member of his ministry and went a step further to force the girl to abort the pregnancy. The Pastor had allegedly impregnated the girl, a worshipper in his church and took her to a patent medicine store. (Vanguard News: October 10, 2014)

The chairman of bishops in Rivers State, Bishop Chibuika Nwabueze, was arrested for raping a 15years old girl and sponsoring the abortion of the baby. The cleric admitted that he had a carnal knowledge of the victim but attributed the crime to a set-up by his enemies. According to him, it was after a month that the victim's laboratory tests and other hospital bills, he stressed that it was the girl's father that insisted on abortion, adding that he took her to a clinic, where it was confirmed that the victim had aborted the child (The Sun,.....)

Members of the church rejected their pastor and chased him away for allegedly impregnating his housemaid. It was learnt that the Pastor, Barkuma Andrew, was stopped from leading the church seven months ago when the housemaid, who was also a member of the church, Grace had complications after abortion the pregnancy. Andrew lives with his wife, children, wife's cousin, Favour and Grace in a three-bed roomed flat on the church premises (Punch: Monday, August 31, 2015)

Pastor Noah Ajiboye inflicted serious injury on his 17 year old stepson, Dare, for allegedly stealing a telephone handset. He tied the boy's two hands to the back and locked him up in a room without food and water for a week so that "he could learn his lesson". He then asked the boy to lie to the doctor that he had fire burns. This, he admitted, was to prevent the doctor from inviting the police if the truth was told. Ajiboye said the boy's impenitence when he was beating him made me to resort to a higher punishment. It is said that only a miracle could make the boy's hands useful again. When the police stormed Ajibola's church, they found a human skull (Saturday Sun: August 23, 2008)

Other stories of crime committed by Pastors and Alfas (i.e Christian and Muslim clerics can be found in *Saturday Sun*, August 23, 2008, *Punch Metro*, June 9, 2014 and *Daily Sun*, November, 27, 2014 among many others

#### **4. An Analytical Study of the Involvement of Men of God in Crime in Nigeria**

An analytical study of the cases of involvement men of God in crime in Nigeria listed above reveals a

number issues regarding the types of crime they get involved in, the rate of involvement from denominational and gender perspectives as well as the type of environment in which the crimes were perpetuated. One pertinent question that must be addressed first is: What makes one a Pastor/Reverend/Prophet/evangelist or an Islamic cleric/Imam/Alfa? In other words, what distinguishes these 'men of God' from other ordinary people considering the fact that they commit crimes just like any other person? In Christianity, people become ministers of God through inspiration and training. One may be called to the ministry in a way similar to the way Apostle Paul was called. Such a person sees vision about the need for him/her to serve God. The Bible says: "And one does not take the honour upon himself except he is called by God, just like Aaron" (Hebrew 5:4). In some cases, the calling may be by choice in which case he/she chooses to serve God. In such a case, he/she goes through pastoral training. He/she attends a seminary where he/she is trained and certificated. In some other churches, every member of the congregation is a potential pastor since, in the view of the church, every Christian is expected to be righteous and possess the power to pray and be answered. He/she then becomes one once he/she is given the responsibility by the leadership of the church. In any case, a pastor, Reverend, Prophet or evangelist, depending on which way a church or an individual Christian goes, is expected to serve God with all sense of responsibility.

In Islam, every believer is expected to acquire the knowledge sufficient for him/her to practise the religion. He is also taught that he/she needs no intermediary between him/her and God for prayers and supplications. So, he/she does not require the services anyone to pray for him/her or help someone pray to God, though this is not prohibited. However, some of the religion's tenets like the five canonical prayers (*As-salat*) and the festive ('*id*) prayers are to be observed in congregation to obtain maximum rewards attached to them. Even, at that, observing those prayers individually does not render them invalid. In that case, a leader from among the people, preferable the most knowledgeable one in matters of the religion, irrespective of age should be asked to lead the prayer. He is the Imam. This needs not necessarily be on permanent basis. Different persons can be appointed at different times so far they fulfill this condition, among others (Toyib, 2016). There can be up to four or five Imams in a mosque. In Muslim countries, they must receive formal training, be certificated and also licensed before they can practise. In multi-religious societies like Nigeria, however, such Imams are appointed by the

congregation. Though, they receive training but mostly in informal set ups. They require no licence to practise. Anybody considered knowledgeable enough to lead ritual prayers by a group of Muslims can be appointed an Imam. The difference between an Imam and an Alfa is that the former leads Muslims in ritual prayers while the latter only possesses adequate knowledge of the religion. He plays no significant role religiously. Invariably, therefore, an average Muslim who has sufficient knowledge of the religion as to make him/her practise the religion correctly is an Alfa. The word is a coinage of the Yoruba Muslims. A synonym of the word is *Mu'allim* (Mallam) i.e the one who knows so much about the religion of Islam as to teach others. An English generic term for this category of Muslims is the Islamic cleric. Some of the Alfas have, however, resorted to practising medicine and magic as a means of livelihood simply because they are unemployable in the contemporary multi-religious Nigerian society, especially in the south-west. In the past, they relied on charity from members of the congregation.

A critical analysis of the involvement of Christian and Muslim clerics in crime in Nigeria reveals that both Christian and Muslim clerics are involved in all sorts of crime just like any other person. An inventory of the crimes they get involved in include fraud, conspiracy, perjury, torture, fornication, adultery, incest, rape, abortion, drug peddling, kidnapping, human trafficking, robbery, murder, trade in human body parts, and money rituals among others. Sexual immorality of all sorts tops the list of crime committed by clerics from both sides. They fornicate, commit adultery and rape. These sometimes lead them to abortion in order to cover the effects of the shameful deeds. Fraud is next to sexual immorality in the hierarchy of crimes committed by these "men of God". Murder is another common crime among them. This, in most cases, is associated with conspiracy as most fraudulent acts are carried out with the support of one or two people. More often than not, it is committed for ritual purposes as human skulls and other parts of human body are found in their possession or in the premises of their worship centres. The analysis revealed that pastors in all denominations of the church are involved while the Muslim clerics, in most cases are not identified with particular mosques or Islamic organisations. This may be as a result of the fact that those Muslim clerics are individuals who practise 'medicine and magic' and most of them do so in their private residence. They are therefore, more of Alfa than Imams.

Another fact that is emerging from the study is the rate of the crime among the Christian and Muslim clerics. Although, it is said that the number of reported crime cases is not the same as the actual rate of crime, the rate appears higher among Christian clerics. This may be due to the combined factors of aggressive evangelism, prosperity message and deliverance services offered by most Pastors which often attract many to the church. Even where the victims are Christians, they still rely heavily on what the Pastor advises or instructs. This more often than not makes them vulnerable to the criminal tendencies of the so-called men of God.

Another issue is that most of these clerics confessed to committing most of the crimes particularly those relating to sexual immoralities, attributing it to the handiwork of Satan. This perhaps may be because the Nigerian laws do not criminalise them (except rape) and therefore see themselves as not being at the risk of being punished formally or legally. Even, in rape cases, the complexities of the law make it difficult to be established in the court of law. Again, the reconciliatory move by the leadership of the church concerned as well as the ineptitude of the security agents who are interested in making money out of the cases rather than pursue them in court of law will encourage out of court settlement so far the culprits agree to settle hospital bills of the victims and grease their palms. They however often deny murder cases perhaps because life is involved and family members of the victims as well as the police also hardly compromise on this. This agrees with the position of Parker (2001) who posits that all criminals do not want to be caught, and if caught, would give all it takes to avoid the stipulated punishment for the crime.

The study also reveals that both sexes are involved in these crimes. Here, men are found to be more involved than women. This may be explained by the fact that the woman is a weaker sex and therefore less prone to committing crime than men. Even at that, more women were involved from the Christian side. This may be because the religion of Islam, unlike Christianity, does not allow women to lead in spiritual matters except those that involve women alone. While there can be women pastors and evangelists, there is no room for women Imams or Alfas, at least, in this part of the world. It is instructive to note that an attempt has been made in this direction in the western world. Hence, we have more cases of Christian women ministers of God being involved in crime than Muslims.

The analysis of the cases sampled also shows that the clerics took advantage of the safe/unsafe environments such as the church offices and the private homes of the clerics to perpetuate the crimes. This is explainable within the context of the need for the Pastor to offer counseling and prayer for members of his church and the Alfa in seclusion, One can also see that most of the victims of the crimes committed by these clerics are those who trusted them, which goes to confirm the position of Potter (2001) that “most violent crimes are committed by relatives, intimate friends and acquaintances – those trusted by the victims most”.

Be that as it may, whatever title one bears, be it pastor, reverend, bishop, prophet, evangelist, Imam, Alfa or *Muallim*, people who lead others to and before God are expected to be morally upright. On the contrary, however, the moral ineptitude of Christian and Muslim clerics in Nigeria, an account of which has been given in details above, leaves one to wonder what reasons account for it. Explanations for this are sought in the Scriptures of the two religions under study. Both scriptures posit that man is evil by nature. According to Gen. 6:5, “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continually...”. In fact, according to the Bible, God was, on account of man’s wickedness and evil thought, sorry that He created man (Gen 6:8). In Mark 7:21-22, the Bible also says: “... out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness”. In a similar vein, the Qur’an teaches that, when God intended to create human beings, He notified the angels who advised against His decision. The Qur’an states their reason thus: “Will you create therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood while we do celebrate Your praises and glorify Your holy name” (Qur’an 2: 30). In Qur’an 12:53, it is also written, “the (human) soul is certainly prone to evil”. The two Scriptures also reported some prophets of God as having committed one evil/crime or the other. Both the Bible and the Qur’an reported Moses as having committed murder (Ex. 2:12; Qur’an 28:15&33). The Bible specifically talked about Abraham and Isaac as having lied (Gen. 20:2 & 26:7) while the Qur’an spoke about Khidir, a devout servant of God who was to take Moses through spiritual training as also having committed murder. Thus, because man’s heart is naturally prone to committing evil, the pastor, reverend, bishop, evangelist, Imam and Alfa, being also human are not immune against committing crimes. Hence, the

several cases of crime committed by Christian and Muslim clerics.

Another possible reason for the involvement of Christian and Muslim clerics in crime in Nigeria is, according to the two scriptures, “lust of the heart”. According to the Bible, man’s passion is at war with him. James 4:1-9 says:

*What causes war and what causes fighting among you? Is it not your passion? You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and you do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passion. Unfaithful creatures! Do you know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

The Bible also says:

*Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).*

Atere (2014) attests to this when she writes:

*It is no longer news that pastors, evangelists, prophets and prophetesses, Bible teachers, counselors and executive members of churches all over are just title carriers. Gleefully, some of them gather to discuss girlfriends and boyfriends. They are proud of having extra marital affairs and shamelessly discuss this in and out of church environments...Some churches are like social clubs. Anything goes...The Church as we have it today is full of pretenders, eye servers, revelers, schemers, seducers, adulterers, demon possessed people, destroyers of destinies, home destroyers, alcoholics, backbiters, smart robbers, satanic teachers, the list is unending (pp.45& 69)*

In a similar vein, the Qur’an says:

*The love of the desires of women and sons and hoarded treasures of gold and silver and well bred horses and cattle and tilth, is made to seem fair to men; this is the provision of the life of this world; and God is He with Whom is the good goal (of life) (Qur’an 3:14)*

Thus, the involvement of Christian and Muslim clerics in crime in Nigeria can also be explained from the perspective of the Bible and the Qur’an within the context of the insatiable human passion for worldly things. Consequently, crimes like fraud, drug peddling, robbery, sexual immorality of all sorts

among others are engaged in by these clerics to satisfy their passion.

Another reason behind the involvement of men of God in crime as found in the scriptures is the temptation by Satan. According to both scriptures, man is an object of temptation in the hand of Satan (James 4: 1-3). The Qur'an also says: "...We test you by evil and good by way of probation" (Qur'an 21:35). The Qur'an thus attributes the murder committed by Moses to the incitement of Satan (Qur'an 28:15). Jesus Christ was also said to have been tempted by Satan but he survived the temptation (Matt. 4: 1-11, Mk. 1:12 & Luke. 4:1-13). Although Jesus Christ was tempted with bread and other worldly things, the temptation of contemporary clerics can also be with anything - money, women, position etc Temptation therefore is not a sin (because it is an instrument used by God through Satan to measure faith), yielding to temptation is sin. It is on account of this that the Qur'an advises: "And (if at any time) an incitement to discord is made to you by the Evil one, seek refuge in God. He is the One who hears and knows all things" (Qur'an 4:36). In fact, both scriptures contain passages that can be read to fortify them against such evil thoughts from Satan. A number of Psalms in the Bible and some passages of the Qur'an (i.e Chapters 113 &114) are good for this. Those clerics who committed crimes, therefore fell into temptations of Satan; they failed the probation tests administered on them despite being forewarned and armed.

The Bible however, also mentions the appearance of the false prophets. In Matthew 7:15, it is written that: "Beware of false Prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (see also Matt 24:24, Mark 13:22, Luke 6:26). Jesus Christ is also reported to have said that on the day of judgment, many would call lord, lord and I would say: "I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity" (Matt 7:22&23, Matt 25:12&41, Luke 13:25-27). Thus, the involvement of clerics can be explained within the context of the appearance of false prophets. The socio-political and economic situations of the country provided a fertile land for this prophesy of Jesus Christ to thrive. The hard economic conditions in Nigeria had forced many citizens of the country who would have been law abiding to become criminals of a sort. Many graduates who went to school and did very well are unable to secure good jobs to keep body and soul together. That over eight hundred thousand people applied for the ten thousand jobs advertised by the Nigeria Police Force in early 2016 attests to the lack of jobs for suitably qualified candidates in the

country. This is aside several thousand others who are not schooled but could have been gainfully employed if the economic conditions of the country were to be favourable. For this reason, many get involved in all sorts of crime under all sorts of disguise, including being clerics to make ends meet. They rape, rob, carry drugs, and defraud people who trust them of their wealth in the name of religion. Hence, the many cases of clerics' involvement in crime. This agrees with the position of Darrow (1993) that the absence of fair conditions of life accounts for why people engage in crime.

For this same reason of hard economic conditions of the country, many Nigerians also seek spiritual solutions to their problems, real and perceived under these clerics, thereby making themselves easy prey for those clerics. They are gullible as they believe anything they are told. Even, where the clerics seem to be of a truly God's spirit, the insatiable quest for spiritual solutions to problems at all cost by the people often make the clerics to also want to play to the gallery especially with a promise of a big harvest if success was achieved.

##### **5. Towards Stopping the Involvement of Christian and Muslim Clerics in Crime in Nigeria**

For every problem, there is a solution. The solution to the involvement of Christian and Muslim clerics in crime in Nigeria, for us, is multi-dimensional. Individuals, religious leaders, security agents, and government, all have roles to play in this. Individual Christian or Muslim cleric must realize that they, either by call or by choice have become ambassadors of the respective religions that they profess. They should, therefore live up to expectations in their dealing with people. Aside the fact that every individual is accountable for his/her deeds, the clerics have double responsibilities as they will also account for the sheep/servants of God under them. So, the clerics should be watchful against satanic influence(s) on the one hand, and on the other, attach little significance to worldly materials.

There is also the need for the religious leaders to help religion take its place of pride in the society. One way of doing this is to ensure sanity within the rank and file of the congregation, be it Christian or Muslim. Whenever there is allegation of impropriety of any sort against any cleric, the leadership of the concerned church or mosque or any religious leader who is in position to play a decisive role should, rather than stand by the accused minister of God in

an unholy manner, investigate the matter and apply appropriate sanctions. The Bible says:

The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion. When a land transgresses, it has many rulers, but with a man of understanding and knowledge, its stability will long continue (Proverbs 28:1-28).

It also says:

Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but those who keep the law strive against them. Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it completely. ... (Proverbs 28:1-28)

In the Qur'an also, it is written:

*...help one another in goodness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and aggression, and be careful of (your duty to) God; surely God is severe in requiting (evil) (Qur'an 4:2).*

Thus the religious leaders must help religion grow by ensuring that criminals among the clerics are punished in accordance with Scriptural guidelines.

Another way of doing this is also for the religious leaders to, through the highest ruling body of the respective religion in the country regulate the activities of the churches and the mosques as well as those leading the people in them. This may require training, certification, admonition and sanctioning of erring ones among them. Bodies like Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) and the Nigeria Supreme Council of Nigeria (NSCIA) can collaborate with government to play this regulatory role.

The role of the security agents lies in upholding the rule of law. In most cases as noted earlier, the security agents encourage out of court settlement of criminal cases involving alleged men of God, all in the name of "touch not my anointed one" and for economic gains. While we have nothing against out of court settlement as it is a lawful practice, the non – invocation of the rule of law will encourage the perpetrators of these crimes to continue in their wicked and ungodly way of life. The Bible says: "When a ruler executes judgment, he scatters away all evils" (Proverbs 20:8) and that: "The king gives stability to the land by justice" (Proverbs 29:4). The Qur'an also says:

O you who believe! Be upright for God, bearers of witness with justice, and let not your hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably; act equitably, that is nearer to piety, and be careful of (your duty to) God; surely God is aware of what you do (Qur'an 5:8)

Although, adequate care must be taken to protect law-abiding citizens from false charges, security

agents must ensure that justice is delivered in a timely fashion. Ecclesiastes 8:11 says:

*Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil.*

Swift execution of justice is necessary to keep a culture of crime from growing generally in the country and particularly among the clerics.

The role of the government however lies in regulating religious activities in the country. This position has been articulated in an earlier attempt at addressing insecurity associated with religious activities in the country (Akanni, 2012). Nigerians are very religious people. This is manifested in a number of ways including the crime rate associated with religion. A regulation of religious activities through the creation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in the country therefore will go a long way in reducing such crimes. The Ministry will register all religious centres in the country, licensed those preach in them, issue them code of conducts and specify sanctions for misconducts.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, an attempt has been made to find explanations for the involvement of Christian and Muslim clerics in crime in Nigeria. The efforts have revealed that Christians and Muslim clerics get involved in crime for a number of reasons, chief among which are that they are human beings just like every other human person and as such are evil-minded by creation on the one hand and on the other, are not immune against the temptation of Satan whom both the Bible and the Qur'an have identified as the avowed enemy of man. Other reasons for the involvement of Christian and Muslim clerics in crime are the 'lust of the heart' of man which makes them run after worldly things, the Biblical prophecy of the false prophets and the unpalatable socio-economic situation of the country which makes the people of the country to seek spiritual solutions at any cost. An analytical study of the subject also revealed the nature of crimes committed, the rate of involvement on denominational and gender basis as well as the....Some steps to be taken to in order to put a stop to this disgraceful incident were also mentioned. Here, individual Christian and Muslim clerics, the religious leaders, the security agents and government were assigned roles in curbing the menace. In conclusion, it is the candid opinion of this writer that if all criminal offences are punished as at when due, and irrespective of status, a growing culture of crime generally in the country and particularly among the clerics would stop.

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