



## Religion and the Legal Institutional Combat against Corruption in Nigeria

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**Abstract.** Religion is man's belief in the super abundant reality that controls the cosmic environs, propels humans' worship and demand appeasement for pardon and favour. Corruption is the act of corrupting or the state of being corrupt, moral perversion; depravity, and perversion of integrity. The battle between religion and corruption in Nigeria is a moral one and calls for sanity and renewing of the mind. It has eaten deep into the fabrics of the nation with adverse effect on the poor masses. The perpetrating actors of corruption are found in all sectors of our nation but copiously amongst the elite and those in leadership. The objective of this research is to view the place of religious and legal institutions in combating corruptions in Nigerian. This research utilized historical approach as well as books, journals; internet materials etc as sources. It was able to examine corruption in Nigeria, holistic definition of corruption, nature and characteristics of corruption, evil of corruption, and the causes of corruption, legal and institutional fight against corruption in Nigeria, how religion aids corruption and the role of religion in combating corruption as a social responsibility/intervention in Nigeria. It recommends that religious institution should as a matter of urgency be the watchdog and the conscience of the common man in nation with respect to combating corruption in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Religion, Legal, Institutional, corruption, Combat, Nigeria.

### 1. Introduction

In Nigeria, the issue of the upsurge of corruption is troubling and destabilizing different facets of the country. The damages it has done to the polity are astronomical. The menace of corruption leads to a slow movement of files in the offices, police extortion, toll gate and slow traffics on the highways, port congestion, queues at passport offices and gas stations, ghost worker syndrome, election irregularities among others. Even the insane people on the streets recognize the havoc caused by corruption. The funds allocated for their welfare disappear into the thin air thus, it is believed by many in the society that corruption is the bane of Nigeria. Consequently, the issue keeps reoccurring in most academic and informal discussion in Nigeria.

According to Lipset and Laiz (2000), corruption is endemic in all governments, and this is not peculiar to any continent, region and ethnic group. It cuts across faiths, religious denominations and political systems and affects both the young and old, man and woman alike. Corruption is found in democratic and dictatorial politics, feudal, capitalist and socialist economies. Religions and culture are equally bedeviled by corruption and corrupt practices did not begin today; the history is as old as the world. Extortion is a form of corruption. Tyararte (1997:11) states that "extortion is often seen as extraction from below (the police and custom officers the main culprits in Nigeria)". However, Amundsen (2015) holds that nepotism is a special form in which corruption manifest. Nepotism is a form of favoritism in which an office holder prefers his/her kinfolk and family

members. Nepotism, (which is also common in Nigeria), occurs when one is exempted from the application of certain laws or regulations or given undue preference in the allocation of scarce resources.

Ancient civilizations have traces of wide spread illegality and corruption thus, corruption has been ubiquitous in complex societies from ancient Egypt, Israel, Rome and Greece down to the present. This does not, however, mean that the magnitude of corruption is equal in every society; some countries are more corrupt than the other. Orwell (1996:109) rightly notes “all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others”.

Obasanjo (2000:33) posits:

*...corruption has been responsible for the instability of successive governments since the first republic. Every coup since then has been in the name of stamping out the disease called corruption. Unfortunately, the cure often turns out worse than the disease and Nigeria have been worse for it. Nigeria's external image took bashing as our beloved country began to feature at the top of every corruption index.*

## 2. Definition of Corruption

Perhaps, because corruption has received an extensive attention in the communities, and due to the fact that it has been over flogged in the academic circles, corruption has received varied definitions. Sen (1999:275) sees as “a perversion or a change from good to bad specifically, corruption or corrupt behavior involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit”. Lipset and Laiz (2000:112) state that corruption “is effort to secure wealth or power through illegal means, private gain at public expense; or misuse of public powers for private benefit”.

In addition, corruption is a behavior which deviates from formal duties of a public role, because of private (gains) regarding personal, close family, private clique, pecuniary or status gains. According to Nye (1967) it is a behaviour which violates rules against the exercise of certain types of (duties) for private (gains) regarding influence. Banfield (1961) holds that corruption includes such behavior as bribery (use of a reward to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust); nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reason of inscriptive relationship rather than merit); and misappropriation (illegal appropriation) of public resources for private use. To the already crowded landscape, Osoba (1996) adds that corruption is an anti-social behavior conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms and which undermine the authorities to improve the living

condition of the people. Ekiyor (2005:6) in his broad view of corruption defined it as:

*The unlawful use of official power or influence by an official of the government either to enrich himself or further his course and/or any other person at the expense of the public, in contravention of his oath of office and/or contrary to the conventions or laws that are in force*

Dalhatu (2017:133) defines corruption as “the receiving or offering of money or other gratification in order to deflect a person from honest discharge of his duties or the demanding of money or other gratification in order to perform a person’s duties”. Achike (2017:115) observed that:

*Corrupt activities are not the exclusive preserved of a particular section of the society, but rather, an ill doing that cut across all social barriers and strata; and that it is not only the politicians and executives that are corrupt in our society, but so are bureaucrats, public servants, bankers, insurance brokers, officials involved with the administration of justice in the country, law enforcement agencies, the press, religious leaders and other members of the public.*

Marx (n.d) opines that while everyone seems to rant and rage against it, corruption only gets bigger and deeper with each passing year. Corruption, or the siphoning off of public money and keeping a large part of the economy outside of public scrutiny, has been one of the most effective tools of our ruling classes to, one, reduce income distribution to the minimum necessary level, and two, keep a significant part of their capital “private”. Unless a significant transformation of social and political power is effected in our societies, it would be impossible to make a dent in corruption as it has entrenched itself as one of the most important ways in which our ruling classes effect accumulation of capital.

In the light of the above definitions, the researcher posits that corruption is the excessive greed of humans to exploit others for selfish gain using position of authority in all ramifications, which causes underdevelopment in a given society.

### 1.1 The Nature and Characteristics of Corruption

Some studies have taken a holistic (broader) approach in the decision of corruption by dividing it into many forms and sub-divisions. These are Political corruption, Bureaucratic corruption and Electoral corruption.

**Political Corruption:** This takes place at the highest level of political authority. It occurs when the politicians and political decision-makers, who are

entitled to formulate, establish and implement the laws in the name of the people, are themselves corrupt. It also takes place when policy formulation and legislation is tailored to benefit the politicians and legislators. Political corruption is sometimes seen as similar to corruption of greed as it affects the manner in which decision are made as it manipulates political institutions, rules of procedure, and distorts the institutions of government (The Encyclopedia American 2000). Of all the factors which pollute the behaviour of those whose responsibility it is to render services to the public, corruption is the most reprehensible and destructive. Aluko (2009) says government officials further still corruptly enrich themselves by converting Government money in their custody to their own use, force citizens to pay bribe money, and citizens also induce the officials with bribes to get whatever they want from Government or company offices. Though corruption is found in every society, it is very common in Nigeria especially in the sector, and no one seems to be free from it either as a doer or as a victim. Dalhatu (2017) opines that corruption has reduced politics and public governance in Nigeria to huge jokes. It has there created two extremes in the exercise of public office- one extreme is privatization of public service, where scarcely exist any demarcation between the office and the office holder. The other extreme is a culture of non-commitment to the common good, where public affair means no body's affair.

**Bureaucratic Corruption:** This occurs in the public administration or the implementation end of politics. This kind of corruption the citizens encounter daily at places like the hospitals, schools, local licensing offices, police, taking offices and so on. Bureaucratic petty corruption, which is seen as similar to corruption of need, occurs when one obtains a business from the public sector through inappropriate procedure (The Encyclopedia America 2000). Okwuchukwu and Adeyinka (2005) said that two Justices of the Court of Appeal were dismissed from the bench for corrupt practices. Also, allegation of corruption once reared its ugly head in the highest court in Nigeria (Supreme Court) in an appeal brought before the court in a case involving two car companies. Global Motors Limited and Honda Limited, where a legal practitioner, Ephraim Duru openly in court alleged corruption against the Chief Justices of Nigeria, Justice Muhammed Lawal Uwais of receiving twelve Honda cars in order to pervert the cause of justice.

Allegation of bias are always made against some judges in Nigeria in relation to pecuniary interest in the litigation. Kolawole (2008) avers that they take bribe or corrupted in any other way like business,

professional or vocational relationship with one of the parties which may result in likelihood of bias. It could arise from blood, filial or any other form of personal relationship with one of the parties.

Bureaucratic structure gave birth to extractive corruption. Critical observation reveals that the state or some state agents benefit most from extra-legal transactions in the name of the state. This kind of corruption unfolds when institutional decision-makers exploit the government power they are equipped with, to tailored and sustain their self-interest, power, status and wealth. Obasanjo (cited in Afolabi, (2007) enumerated the various forms of corruption to include fee fraud (known as 419), money laundering, unconventional and fraudulent trade practices, misappropriation or diversion of funds, kickbacks, under and over invoicing, bribery, false declarations, abuse of office, and collection of illegal tolls. Other contextual meanings include the impairment of integrity, virtue or moral principles, and an unauthorized use of resources for private gain. Agbaje (2004) by way of contextualizing corruption within the territory of public service listed such factors as pervasion of public rules and misuse of official power for selfish motive, and the frustration of electoral process to make free and fair election impossible.

**Corruption in our Electoral System:** The 2023 presidential election in Nigeria shows rigging and vote buying from the party primaries to the final concluded exercise which emerged Ahmed Bola Tinubu of the APC as winner. According to Adoyi (2023:1), "most Nigerian students expressed shock, anger and disappointment at the declaration of Tinubu as winner of the presidential election, while a few were joyous and express gratitude to INEC for a job well done". Electoral corruption includes purchases of vote with money, promises of offices or special favours coercion, intimidation and interference with freedom of election. The Encyclopedia American (2000) posits that vote are bought, people are killed or maimed in the name of election, losers end up as the winners in elections, and votes turns up in areas where vote are not cast. Nigeria is a good example where this practice is common. Corruption in office involves sale of legislative votes, administrative or judicial decision or governmental appointment. Disguised payment in the form of gifts, legal fees, employment, favors to relatives, social influences or any relationship that sacrifices the public interest and welfare, with or without the implied payment of money is usually considered corrupt. Corruption in the temple of justice is self-defeatist. Code of Conduct of Public Officers, fifth schedule (1999), Section 6(1) posits that:

A public officer shall not ask for or accept property or benefits of any kind for himself or any other person on account of anything done or omitted to be done by him in the disadvantage of the discharge of his duties.

The level of corruption as witnessed in the Nigerian judiciary in recent times is unprecedented in the annals the country especially as regard election petition cases before the court for adjudication. Kolawole (2008:144) states that “the offering and acceptance of gratification under the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Act is an offence”. Mustapha (2001:4), chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Act opines:

Gift is an offence under the anticorruption Act. If you accept gift for discharging your official duty, you think it is the African way of hospitality. But I tell you, that is not. It is corruption and both the giver and the receiver will be treated as offenders.

The year 2007 was the year of general election in Nigeria. Democracy was supposed to be at work. Nigerians were to freely elect their representatives. The elections were held but the general consensus is that the elections were not free and fair. According to Peters (2016), the elections were flawed with rigging, thuggery, inflation of votes, disqualifications of candidates few days to election and candidates that won primaries in their parties were substituted for candidates that lost during the primaries. The politicians, the political parties as well as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) the body that was constitutionally charged with the functions of organizing and supervising the election did not play the game according to the rules. INEC that supervised the 2007 election in Nigeria became incompetent, partisan, did not show any independence in the election.

### 1.3 The Cause of Corruption

The fundamental factors that engender corrupt practices in less develop nations, including Nigeria, as stated by Bryce (2015) are as follows: 1) Great inequality in distribution of wealth, 2) Political office as the primary means of gaining access to wealth, 3) Conflict between changing moral codes, 4) The weakness of social and government enforcement mechanism; and 5) The absence of a strong sense of national community. The causes of corruption in Nigeria cannot deviate significantly from the above factors however, obsession with materialism, compulsion for a short to affluence, glorification and approbation by the general public, are among the

reasons for the persistence of corruption in Nigeria. Harrison (2013:55) opines that:

*It has been noted that one of the popular but unfortunate indices of good life in Nigeria, is flamboyant affluence and conspicuous consumption, as a result of this, some people get into dubious activities including 'committing ritual murder for money making'.*

1. The lack of ethical standards throughout the agencies of government and business organizations in Nigeria is a serious draw back. Ethics is action, the way people practice their values, and it is guidance system to be used in making decisions. The issue of ethics in public sector (and private cite) encompasses a broad range, including a stress on obedience to authority, on the necessity of logic in moral reasoning, and on the necessity of putting moral justice into practice. Unfortunately, many office holders in Nigeria (appointed or elected) do not have clear conception of the ethical demand of their positions.
2. Other factors are poor reward system and greed; Nigeria’s reward system is, perhaps the poorest in the world. Nigeria is a society where national priorities are turned upside down; hard work is not rewarded, but rouges are often glorified in Nigeria. As Authur Schlesinger (cited by Howard 2015:10) posits, “our trouble with Nigeria is not that our capabilities are inadequate. It is that our priorities which mean our values are wrong”. Bad rules and ineffective taxing system, which make it difficult to track down people’s financial activities, breed corruption. Ineffective taxing system is a serious problem for Nigeria. The society should institute appropriate and effective taxing system where everyone is made to explain his or her source of income, through end-of-the-year income tax filling. Big business enterprises do not pay tax and they are mostly owned by Nigerian politicians this is unfair and a form of corruption.
3. The lukewarm attitude of those who are supposed to enforce the laws of the land (judges, police officers and public officials) could lead to people engaging in corrupt behavior, knowing fully well that they will get away with it. Some cultural and institutional factors lead to corruption. For instance, nepotism and the strength of family values are linked to the feeling of obligation. The work of Ehusani (2002) has demonstrated the relationship between culture and corruption. It implies that corruption is at times a motivated behavior responding to social pressures to violate the norms, so as to meet the set goals and objectives of a social system. Aluko (2002) states that the brazen display of wealth by public officials, which they are unable to explain the source, points to how bad corruption has reached in the society. Many of these officials before being elected or appointed into

offices had a little or modest income and properties/infrastructures but now, they are now owners of many properties around the world. This fact makes all and sundry to move into politics and public offices with the intention to misappropriate public funds. They believe that the money does not belong to anybody.

#### 1.4 Effects of Corruption in Nigeria

The fight against corruption is global and the world is watching Nigeria with keen interest. Achike (2017) holds that the fact that corruption creates a very bad image of a people cannot be disputed and as long as the trend continues, no one would like to do business with our nation. Obviously, the evils of corruption in Nigeria are as follows:

- Corruption has created unimaginable miseries, unparalleled oceans of poverty dotted with islands of scandalous wealth.
- It has destroyed basic virtues of trust on the social arena and created a vicious circle and re-invented.
- Corruption breeds inefficiency, incompetence, mediocrity and loss of self-respect.
- Corruption stunts growth and development.
- Creates political instability and lead to socio-economic ruin of a nation.
- Creates uneven distribution of wealth.
- Reduces revenue capacity earning of government.
- Promotes criminal activities.
- Promotes inflationary trends.
- Stultifies planning in budgetary and economic matters.
- It causes disrespect within the international community.
- A major cause of Human Rights abuse or violation.

### 3. Legal and Institutional Fight against Corruption in Nigeria

#### 3.1 Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and its Fight against Corruption in Nigeria

The EFCC was set up with the responsibility under Section 5, Act Cap E1 of the Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1990 thus:

- *Investigate all financial crimes including advance fee fraud, money laundering, counterfeiting, illegal charge transfers, futures market fraud, fraudulent encashment*

*of negotiable instruments, computer credit card fraud, contract scam etc.*

- *Adoption of measures to identify, trace, freeze, confiscate seize proceeds derived from terrorist activities, economic and financial crimes, related offences, or the properties the value of which corresponds to such proceeds.*

According to Bridget (2017), EFCC has carried on with the raid, arrests and prosecution of several Nigerians in the wake of the present administration. Nigeria has witnessed a tremendous increase in the activities of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), against alleged corrupt individuals in the past two years. With the coming of President Muhammadu Buhari into power with his anti-corruption crusade, EFCC has been instrumental to the arrest and prosecution of several alleged corrupt persons. Although the upbeat in the activities of the Commission has been applauded by some sections of the society, some others tagged it a reaction to the body language of Mr. President, and targeted at political enemies, due to alleged lopsidedness that characterized the arrests.

Kalu (2017) said aside EFCC, the Department of State Security Service (DSS) has also joined in the crusade to rid the country of corrupt individuals by arresting and charging several accused persons to court. The implication of this development was an increase in the number of high-profile criminal cases in various courts across the country. Unfortunately, two years down the lane, the Commission could scarcely boast of any conviction in several high-profile cases charged to court in the last two years, except that of former Governor of Adamawa State, James Bala Ngilari, who was sentenced to five years imprisonment without the option of fine on March 6, by a High Court in Yola. Ngilari was found guilty of corruption charges leveled against him by the Commission in September 2016. The Acting-Chairman of EFCC, Ibrahim Magu (2017) had described the conviction of an ex-governor for corrupt misconduct committed, while in office as a step that showed a renewed determination of the Commission to fight corruption. But considering the number of arrests made by the Commission and the sensation that accompanied their arrests and consequent arraignment, many have wondered about the delay in prosecution and low conviction of the high-profile corruption cases.

While President Buhari, in one of his outings stressed that “when cases are not concluded, the negative impression is given that crime pays”, experts maintain that unless the accused is confronted with facts,

conviction remains a mirage. It was perhaps, to facilitate prosecution and likely conviction that necessitated federal government's establishment of a 20-man National Prosecution Coordination Committee (NPCC), headed by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation (AGF), Abubakar Malami (SAN). The Committee, which was inaugurated May last year, was charged with the responsibility of ensuring effective prosecution of corruption and other high-profile criminal cases in the country. To facilitate the Committee's task, it was gathered that the Justice Ministry created 20 prosecution teams with four members each and had requested all agencies exercising Police powers to recommend five experienced investigators to support the committee's work.

A Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Ozekhome (2017:7-8) blamed both the delay in the prosecution and low rate of convictions in the high-profile corrupt cases, not only on lack of proper investigations but also on ill motives. He posits thus:

EFCC has not been able to secure more conviction because the trials are politically motivated and are done in the media without proper investigation. So, they convict people on the pages of newspapers, in the television and on the social media, and by the time they finally go to court, you discover that there is no evidence to convict the people. That is the reason their cases collapse like a pack of cards. He added that in a society where the accused is presumed innocent until found guilty by the law court, investigations ought to have been diligently carried out even before the accused is invited by the prosecuting authority for questioning. Ozekhome (2017:9)

Truth is that our criminal justice system, under Section 36 of the 1999 Constitution, provides that the innocence of the accused is presumed until found guilty. It is different from the French Model where the accused is presumed guilty until proven otherwise. Under Nigerian law, you must prove a case against an accused person beyond reasonable doubt. Any doubt is resolved in favour of an accused person because it is better for 10 gentlemen to escape justice than for one innocent soul to be unjustly convicted. So, what EFCC does is to work from the answers to the questions rather than from the questions to the answers. They first detain a person before they start investigation so as to wear out the person and make him to incriminate himself. Otherwise, why, in a sane society, would you detain a person like former governor Gabriel Suswam of Benue State for nearly three months without granting him bail? In civilized countries, you first investigate the matter thoroughly, then you pick up the suspect and ask him questions based on the

investigation and within the next 44 to 48 hours, you are charging him to court. But here, they will first detain the person before they will begin to look for evidence they will use to prosecute the accused. Such a dubious system, which is collective, especially against opponents and critics while you are shielding those in your government who have been serially accused with serious allegations, some even indicted by state judicial panels, such a system cannot work.

Ozekhome (2017) said as far as he is concerned, there is no anti-corruption war, what is happening is recovering of illicit loot from people, especially politicians and their military collaborators. That is not necessarily fighting corruption because as you are doing that, you have not put in place, structures to prevent further corruption. In fact, corruption today is stronger than it was before. It now walks on its hands, legs, heads and buttocks because it is not controlled.

Njikonye (2017:5) however stated that it would be wrong to believe that every prosecution will lead to conviction.

But I must point out that it is not mandatory for the prosecutor to secure conviction at all cost and by all means. Probably, what happens mostly is that midway into the case; it is dawn on the prosecution that there is no enough evidence to secure conviction, then, it slows down the process. But all the same, conviction is not secured by all means. The prosecution must provide evidence beyond reasonable doubts.

Nevertheless, in the year 2022, the EFCC has reported its successful prosecution and conviction of 3,785 cases. (2022 Narrative of EFCC convictions last retrieved on 1/03/23 at [www.efcc.gov.ng](http://www.efcc.gov.ng)) The EFCC despite its functions and fight against corruption has been criticized as a willing tool in the hands of the ruling party and a third arm of ruling, (Adebayo Abubaka, 2022).

Agbakoba, (2023) has expressed its disapproval of the actions of the commission as it is overstepping its scope of operations and vows to challenge its creation in a court of law.

### **3.2 The Independent and Corrupt Practice Commission Fight against Corruption**

The ICPC is mandated to investigate and prevent offences of corruption. Its duties are generally stated under section 6 of the ICPC Act 2000. The ICPC scope of operation is not limited to financial corruption; through its Sexual harassment policy has defined sexual corruption as "any unwelcomed sexual advancement, request for sexual favour, verbal, non-

verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature or any other behavior of a sexual nature that has or might reasonably be expected or perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another’.

Section 19 provides for a 5 year jail term for any public office holder who uses his office to gratify or confer any corrupt or unfair advantage to himself. In the case of ICPC v. Richard Akindede CA/AK/80c/2019, a formal lecturer of a University was convicted and sentenced to 6 years jail term for demanding and soliciting for sex, concealing evidence and falsification of age. Also, a magistrate has been convicted for demanding bribe of 100,00 naira from litigants while Mr. Amdii Monday Gideon was convicted for involvement in employment scam. The ICPC has effectively tried to curb corruption however, more is expected of it until corruption is eradicated from our society.

The Code of Conduct Bureau on Corruption

The bureau was established to reduce corruption in public life and was established in 1979. The aims and objectives of the Bureau shall be to establish and maintain a high standard of morality in the conduct of government business and to ensure that the actions and behaviour of public officers conform to the highest standards of public morality and accountability. Section 3 spells out its functions as follows:

- (a) receive assets declarations by public officers in accordance with the provisions of this Act;
- (b) examine the assets declarations and ensure that they comply with the requirements of this Act and of any law for the time being in force;
- (c) take and retain custody of such assets declarations; and
- (d) receive complaints about non-compliance with or breach of this Act and where the Bureau considers it necessary to do so, refer such complaints to the Code of Conduct Tribunal established by section 20 of this Act in accordance with the provisions of sections 20 to 25 of this Act: Provided that where the person concerned makes a written admission of such breach or non-compliance, no reference to the Tribunal shall be necessary.

The Act also applies to retired officers from the public and civil service however, section 18 of the Act provides for exemption to be made applicable to certain public officers by the President. This section makes the president to willfully and in his political might shield individual who are loyalist to him as there are no defined categorization of persons to be exempted. Nwakoby (2021) has expressed that the Act needs a reform.

#### 4. How Religion Aid Political Corruption in Nigeria

Ringkrist (2015:10) sees religion as what aids political corruption in Nigeria thus:

Nigerians are too docile, too forgiving of bad leadership. Why are they this way? Number of reasons abounds. The first one is religion. The kind of religion we have in Nigeria is one that puts you to sleep, and after that, puts you to death. It's not the kind of religion that is after social justice; it is not the kind of religion that is after the welfare of the people and the independence of their existence. Particularly guilty in this regard are the prosperity Gospels of the Pentecostal variety who hawk faith on air and convert religion into superstition. If you have no job, we are told, it must be because of your sin. Your poverty (or pauperization) is a result of the offence you have committed against God. Blissfully indemnified are the rogue-rulers whose greed has corrupted and ruined our social estate; those whose policies or lack of them have made job creation impossible by sabotaging our productive capacity? So, if you have no job, blame your sins; if you wallow in poverty, you only have yourself to blame.

In the thinking and preaching of many of these contemporary evangelists, every scoundrel in power in Nigeria is “God chosen” and must be treated as such without actually scrutinizing the person properly. Religion in Nigeria is dangerous opium; that is why her rulers are encouraging the building of traditional Shrines, churches and mosques all over the place. They shower praises on corrupt leaders to get money from them and none can tell them the truth to their faces. The pastor in prayerful supremacy, presents the relationship between the State and religion in Nigeria as cordial and that all is well.

Bryce (2015:39) states thus:

Religion has killed the rational thinking in Nigeria. I say this all the time; our country is still in a pre-scientific era. That is why things are like this. We don't think logically; that is why any ruler, an fool would seize reins and rule us because we would always find an excuse for being ruled or being led by the nose.

Nigerians do not ask questions, that is why most Imams and the pastor led them by the nose, and the politicians also complete their humiliation and disempowerment. And between the clerics and political functionaries, there is a very close liaison. Many Nigerians are not rational and interrogative people. In fact, in Nigeria today, if one is the interrogative type he/she is easily labeled and

condemned. People even wonder why one should always ask questions? For Cluta (2014:10): Some people are docile and the reason why they take all kind of cheating is that many of them envisage themselves in the position of power someday too. If I am X and the oppressor is Y and the oppressor is oppressing me stealing all the money, and making life difficult for me and my children, am not likely to attack him, I will pray to God to get my own “miracle” so that somebody, he will go and I will be in his place. No; no I am praying for him to go but for the structure to remain.

This is the social psychology of Nigerian politics and so many people don't see it as wrong. When they see it as wrong, it is because it is putting them at a disadvantage; they are not really concerned with the social order or commonwealth. This is a very important issue. But no one entered a plea for God to smash the incubus of corruption and mismanagement that has brought the country to its knees. Nigerian public leaders should ask God to grant them the courage and candor to make a public declaration of their assets as required by the constitution of the country.

#### 5. Religious Roles and Solutions in Combating Corruption in Nigerian Nation

Religious body in Nigeria have important role to play in the fight against corruption. Through their teachings they appeal to the conscience of their adherent which is capable of influencing their behavior and attitudes towards corruption. In the real sense, religion condemns corruption. Hence Adeleke (2015:89) avers that “Christians and Muslims see corruption as a sin while African traditional religion views corruption as taboo or sin against the earth goddess”. It was noted by Dike (2012:77) that “corruption whether moral or political is a sin whosoever that engages in it is under the bondage of sin. According to the Bible, covetousness and greed leads to corruption”. The above is founded on the premises that the essence of life does not depend on the abundance of what a person acquires. Greed is the corollary of corruption. When a person wants to acquire or be in possession of all things the tendency for him to become corrupt so as to succeed in acquiring all that he wants is high.

Obviously, the below stated points from religious perspectives are capable of reducing corruption in Nigeria if not eliminate it.

**Practicing the Tenets of Religion:** The tenets of faith in God by religious groups in Nigeria condemn corruption of any sort. According to Howard (2015),

corruption in Nigeria will be effectively combated when both the leaders and the adherent of religious bodies put into practice what they teach and hold as their doctrine. This involves obeying the principles of morals, respect for life, love, chasing after peace, praying, fasting for the nation and her leaders and so on. The escalation of the resilience of corruption is energized by the fact that religious people in Nigeria do not put into practice the dictates of the holy scriptures of their religion.

**God as the Right Source of Wealth:** Corruption would be reduced when it gets sucked into the people's heart that God remains the only source of right wealth. What one should have should be what God gives and not ill-gotten wealth. Supporting the above, it was noted by Ehusani (2003:210), “theological solution for corruption is for all to see God as the source of wealth”. From this view when the leaders and the led see God as the source of wealth accumulation, corruption will be reduced since God is the ultimate source of good wealth, and it requires that one would walk with God in patience. People will not be propelled out of greed to indulge in immoral act just to be enriched, the giving and taking of bribe would be drastically reduced. The leaders of the religious bodies should focus on such teachings and admonitions that would redirect the minds of their adherents and focus back to God.

**God as the Right Source of Power and Position:** One of the most stressed areas of corruption in Nigeria is high level of corruption in politics and struggle for power and positions in governance. This power-hungry people involve and indulge in all kinds of atrocities in order to get into power. Thus, in Nigeria as stated by Kenneth (2013:44):

*Most politicians and leadership contestant would not mind who they trample upon to get what they want. This high rate of corruption is manifested as people are being kidnapped and killed for rituals, public money stolen to finance rigging of election and so on.*

Religion as averred by Hassan (2010) could proffer solution by redirecting the minds of their adherents towards the understanding that the right source of power and positions comes from God. They should keep laying emphasis in their teachings and preaching that entering into power or leadership position by force, rigging, and killing and by magical means is against God and has its consequences. The nemesis of taking up power forcefully does fall on the perpetrator himself or on his children or even on his generations. When this emphasis is continually laid in the places of worship, corruption would be effectively combated. In the other hand when politicians are made to

understand that they are in power because God wants them to be there, corruption would be reduced.

**Persuading the People for Positive Change of Heart:** The Bible States “as a man thinks so he is” (Prov 23:7). Man’s action is nursed and generates from the heart. On this premise El-rufai (2003:222) noted that “no matter what has been said about corruption control, if the heart is not touched or circumcised, it will continue to be corrupt”. When peoples’ heart and mind are rightly guided, they would live on the high tendencies of proper behavior. But when their minds are misinformed or misguided, it amounts to high rate of corruption. Habit of fearing God disposes one to Godly living. Therefore, to effectively combat corruption the religious bodies in Nigeria have important role of rightly guiding, informing, teaching and rehabilitating the hearts and minds of their adherents for right conduct in the in the churches and society. Religious role also involves encouraging and persuading adherents to eschew evil and take up to the right attitude the religious adherent would only be able to hate evil when they love and fear God. Since all religions recognize God as the supreme and sovereign, they should persuade their adherents to fear him. The result of fearing God is Godly living. It is worth mentioning that it is in fearing God and godly living that corruption could be reduce in Nigeria.

**Being Content:** Greediness leads to corruption. Lack of being satisfied with what one has could make one greedy hence adopting corrupt way to keep more and more of what one desires. Lack of contentment has led to some to turn against their conscience and against the will of God. Hassan (2010) says that leaders of each religious body should emphasize the need for members to be contented with what they have. It is good to aspire to get to the next level, but in doing so, one should follow the right means.

**Being Patriotic to One’s Nation:** Loving one’s nation as postulated by Bryce (2015:54) “could make one not do things that would paint the nation black. Rebranding Nigeria, it is a concept that has been advanced. This is a call to love the nation and obey the constitution, loving and obeying the laws of the nation, would reduce corruption in Nigeria. Therefore, if the leaders and teachers of the religious bodies would teach and persuade their adherents to love this nation corruption will be reduced. Money laundry will cease.

**Punishment for Indulging in Corruption:** All religions teach that there are punishments for evil doers. Ringkvist (2015:18), wrote that:  
*Religions often teach the concept of hell, were there is eternal suffering of an unimaginable degree. It is fact*

*that religious bodies do emphasize the punishment reserved for sinners or deviants. For corruption to be effectively combated, this emphasis should be intensified as it was in the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.*

I Timothy 6:10 declares, “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”. In Matthew 26:14-16, money made Judas Iscariot to betray Christ:

*Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, what will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time, he sought opportunity to betray him*

The right moralities of some leaders have been corrupted due to excessive quest for money and materialism. According to Chukwezi (1991), the role of Christians in good governance addressed the Christians responsibility in the promotion of Nigerian nation in order to curb the corruption situation in her country. Two roles were basically appraised which include:

**The Fulfillment of Civic Duties:** There is a developing attitude by modern man to emphasize more on his family ties and struggle to acquire and maintain a means of livelihood which has led to a conspicuous lack of involvement with claims of the society as a whole. Apathy and indifference as stated by Ringkvist (2015:20) towards political matters (especially elections), are greatly noticeable, because of the failure of many governments. This is true of Nigerians today but this must not be the case. Cluta (2014) opines that the Christians in Nigeria today are called more than ever to exercise two kinds of civic duties. First, it is in the obedient to duties e.g. taxation, military services where there is one, and so on. Second, loyalty is expected of them to political leaders.

Dike (2012) declares that in the democratic system, the Christian is responsible for the common good at all levels- Federal, States and Local Government. The common good is has to do with right disposition in handling the distribution of goods and services for humanity to have a breath of fresh air rather than looting and enslaving their subjects. The common good can be achieved by exercising the “right to vote freely”, collaboration in self-government, and the exercise of the right to criticism and control (through public opinion). It is argued that it is due to frustration caused by the sad experiences of election rigging and manipulation that discourages most Nigerians from voting during elections. Some though a minority, have

collaborated actively in perpetuating, encouraging and supporting bad regimes.

**The Rejection of Interest Groups:** Here, it is referring to organizations not provided for by the constitution and whose interests are not for common good. They are strong, persuasive; they exact a lot of pressure on public opinion, government, parliaments, and so on, but all for selfish reasons. They can sponsor and influence people into power and hold them hostage, all to the detriment of the majority of the citizens. Ehusina (2002) states that Nigerian Christians must not be part and parcel of such groups that perverts the true principles of justice and fair play and institutions of the free democratic state. The Christian are reminded thus “God wants you to be good citizens, so as to silence what fools are saying in their ignorance....Have respect for everyone and love our community; fear God, honour emperor” (1 Peter 2:15-17). The morally upright is seen normally as a good citizen precisely in the nation. It is a member of the electorate and government that should show how he could contribute equitably to the common good and manifest simultaneously both civic and religious virtue. Therefore, the virtue of national justice in the allocation of resources, opportunities and burden, vigilance that will reflect concern for public welfare and well-being, constant testing of political leaders, and commitment to provide or proffer solutions to social problems and provision of welfare services, the exercise of discipline by both the political office holder and citizens; and the bribery and corruption.

## 6. Recommendations

- Since corruption has been a major threat to the nation, all culprits of corruption should be prosecuted by sentencing them to a good number of years of imprisonment and confiscate all they have on this accord.
- The administration of President Muhammadu Buhari is contending and fighting corruption at all cost but he should look among his cabinet member to probe and prosecute them for alleged corruption rather than treating them as sacred cows.

## Conclusion

The place of religious and legal institutions in Nigeria has to a reasonable extent proffered remedies on corruption in our nation. This research work has opened our eyes to the responsibilities of contending with corrupt practices by our leaders who are not favourable to the poor masses. Nigerians, have discovered that corruption is the predominant challenge of Nigeria Nation and nobody can plead not

guilty to it, both the secular and ecclesiastical system. The EFCC, ICPC, Code of Conduct Bureau has really been in a fight against corruption but still every Nigerian citizen must be in the vanguard of the struggle by providing useful information to enable the commission perform her function as required by law. However, combating this menace ravaging the society in Nigeria called corruption by the judiciary is a sine qua non as prosecutions is expected without compromise.

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