ANTI-CORRUPTION CRUSADE IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

By

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ABSTRACT

Corruption is a global phenomenon. It is not an exclusive preserve of any nation or race of the world as it transcends across national boundaries. The incidence and the magnitude of corruption vary in human society. The Nigeria phenomenon has persisted enormously and manifested in various dimensions, nature and magnitude since independence in 1960 and continued to be unabated despite the various anti-corruption regimes established by the Federal Government to fight the monster in the country. It is quite sad that the return to democratic rule in 1999 has not really address the corruption but worsening the situation. This situation in Nigeria cannot be won alone by laws or prosecutions of the perpetrators by the federal government and its anti-corruption agencies. This paper examines roles of the faith-based organizations like the church on corruption. The paper relied on primary and secondary sources of data collection. The findings showed that when the church employs the spiritual warfare to complement the physical anti-corruption war of the federal government through the activities of the anti-corruption agencies, it would go a long way to halt and abate the corruption that has become a way to life in Nigeria, and results in superlative socio-economic growth and development in the country. The study pointed it out that in the successful crusade against corruption, the church itself would need to first do a serious soul-searching purging of acts of complicity in corruption within the institution. It is only by this direction that the church has the power of attorney and moral authority to create desired impact in anti-corruption crusade in Nigeria.

Keywords: Church, corruption, anti-corruption, crusade, ICPC, EFCC.

Introduction

Corruption is a universal phenomenon, which has been an existing among society since time immemorial. History is filled with instances of corruption. The stories of Cain and Abel, and Jacob and Esau in the Bible are lessons in corruption. The level of corruption in our society is no longer news. It is a vice that has eaten deep into the fabric of our society. Admittedly, corrupt behavour remains an institutional problem and it has been recognized as a major obstacle to the construction of sustainable democratic society. The monster corruption is very widespread in and it manifests itself in virtually all aspects of national life. Studies reveal that corruption reigns supreme everywhere in Nigeria, particularly among the echelon in the society, be it in government, in politics, in commerce and trade, in industry and in religious circles (Shehu, 2016). Corruption is

a universal phenomenon, which has been among societies since the time immemorial, as history of each society is filled with instances of corruption. Thus, corruption has been and remained a global problem, and not the exclusive problem of any nation. But in the case of Nigeria, the phenomenon has persisted and grown enormously in variety, magnitude and brazenness. Unfortunately, a return to democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999 has not really helped to address the growing menace of corruption in the country.

According to Audu (2008), the menace of corruption has scored and flourished despite the rhetoric to fight corruption in the Fourth Republic, and has continued to be the bane of democratic stability and survival in Nigeria since 1999. The implication of this sad development is that neither the military juntas nor the flowing agbada politicians are saints or angels, as the successive military and civilian leader in the country at one time or the other in the history of Nigeria presided over corrupt administrations in the country.

The international organization ranked Nigeria as 54 most corrupt nations in 1996, 85 in 1998, 99 in 1999 respectively (Agba, 2005). The Transparency International (TI) in its ranking of the level of corruption in 2014 and 2015 respectively placed Nigeria in 136 out of 175 and 136 out of 168 countries surveyed (Transparency International, 2014 and 2015 Rankings) for corruption (Shehu, 2016). Admittedly, successive administrations in Nigeria recognized the menace of corruption and its negative impact on socio-economic development in the country, hence each of them initiated anti-corruption policy to combat it. Examples of such government efforts were the 1977 Jaji Declaration, Ethical Revolution of 1981 and 1983; the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) of 1984; the Mass Mobilization for Social Justice And Economic Revival (MASER) in 1987; the National Orientation Agency (NOA) in 1993 (NOA, 1994). But instead of the corruption to be abated, it continued to pose resistance to government efforts to combat it. Studies reveals that but all proved to be futile efforts. The prevailing intractable problem of corruption which has taken over every sector in Nigeria, with devastating and alarming effect on the socio-economic and political development in the country despite the existence of the anti-corruption agencies that were mandated to combat corruption and its evils. Thus, the poor or low impact or inadequacy of the anti-corruption agencies to eradicate or reduce the menace of corruption in Nigeria establishes a gap and also necessitates the conduct of this study the role of church on corruption in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study employed qualitative research strategy. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) served as the primary data and were employed to gather information from relevant stakeholders in some Churches such as Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), world-wide, Anglican Dioceses, Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Baptist Church, and Gospel Faith Mission International. A total of five (5) KIIs were conducted with the relevant stakeholders and religious leaders. These categories of people were selected through the use of purposive sampling and were asked questions relating to

corruption in the church. The secondary data such as books, and other relevant materials were used to support the primary data in the study. The primary data were analyzed by using the narrative analysis strategy and secondary data were content analyzed.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Consequentialism or Teleological Ethics to examine the roles of church on anti-corruption crusade in Nigeria. The Consequentialist or Consequentialism Theories believe that it is ethical for any person, group or organization to determine the moral responsibility of one's actions by weighing the consequences of such actions, that is, the cost-benefit of one's actions(s). Mill, (1961) coined his philosophy from essay of Elizabeth Anscombe (1919–2001); published in 1958, Modern Moral Philosophy.

Linking the consequentialism theories to this study, one discovers that the churches in Nigeria are non-challant, or care-less in the promotion of the common good, welfare and happiness of their members or followers, as a result of corrupt practices in many of the developmental projects they constructed. What manifests in many of these projects is ethical egoism or what one can call agent-focused consequentialism. That is, they are more concerned with their own general welfare or their own needs, which is corruption of the ethics and values of the church, and a fight against corruption is a moral or ethical matter. For instance, the church in Nigeria milked their members through various financial donations and contributions to build or establish formal education in form of building basic, secondary and tertiary education on the pretence that their members are going to be the beneficiaries, that is, that the consequences are for their finances into such projects on the pretence of the church leaders that education would be offered to their children at affordable costs.

Conceptual Discourse

The framework of this study is major concepts that form the cornerstone of the topic: Corruption, Church and Anti-corruption crusade. The definition exploration on the concepts is briefly attempted in the study to capture the focus of the research.

Concept of Church

The root word of the concept church according to Wellington (1984) is from the Greek language or word, ekklesia which is derived from the verb ekkaleo. The compound ek means "out", and kaleo means "to call or summon", while the ekklesia means the "called out". In the New Testament, the church refers to assembly or group of people who believe in Jesus Christ as their savior and Lord. The church came into existence soon after the ascension of Jesus Christ on the Seventh Sunday (40 days) after the death of Jesus Christ, when about 3000 Jewish people repented and were baptized (Acts 2 of the Holy Bible). Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, while the church is the body of Christ here on earth.

A church building or church house often simply called a church is a building used for

Christian religious activities or for Christian worship or services. On his own, Strong (1890), described church as the militant body of living Christian believers, regarded as striving to combat corruption on earth, as corruption represents darkness or cloud while the church symbolizes moral light and salt of the earth. The concept church is a religious community, family or group, organized body of the people of Christ, haven their legitimate religious leaders. It is a religious body, spiritually organised force.

Concept of Corruption

The concept of corruption is a familiar one, but it is a large vocabulary that defies precise definition. It is a term that has been conceptualized in numerous ways by various scholars without universally acceptable conceptualization. Corruption is a focal matrix expressive of a number of pervasive misdeeds. Therefore, any attempt to precisely define it excludes some concept practices because of its multifarious and multifaceted nature. However, for the purpose of conceptualization in this study, attempt will be made to review a few relevant definitions from the texts.

In the words of Khan (1996), corruption is an act which deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of private regarding motives such as wealth, power or status. Similarly, Yaru (2009) describes corruption along the same line with Khan, as he viewed corruption as any act of conduct by public officials, whether openly or secretly, which side steps normal or laid down procedure perfected for either personal gains or objective, that conflict with those of the state. Indeed, these two definitions clearly indicate that corruption is an act which violates laid down or formal rules because of private interest or motive of officials in position of public authority.

Olasupo (2009), describes corruption as an act involving the giving and taking of bribe, or illegal acquisition of wealth using the resources of a public office, including the exercise of discretion. In this regard, it is those who have business to do with government who are compelled somehow to provide inducement to public officials to make do what they had to do or grant underserved favour. It is, therefore, defined as officials taking advantage of their offices to acquire wealth or other personal benefit. The perception of Gboyega about corruption is similar to that of McMillan. McMillan (1969) defines corruption in the following ways:

A public official is corrupt if he accepts money or money's worth for doing something that he is under a duty to do anyway or that he is under a duty not to do or exercise a legitimate discretion for improper reasons.

Otite (1986) sees corruption the act as perversion of integrity or state of affair through bribery, favour or moral depravity. According to Otite, the act involves the injection of additional but improper transaction aimed at changing the normal course of events and altering judgments and position of trust. He explains further that corruption consists of 'doers and receivers' use of informal, extra-legal or illegal act to facilitate matter. The term 'corruption' is seen in broad perspective of three categories

(Olopoenia, 1998). His argument goes thus:

Theoretically, the literature distinguishes among political, bureaucratic and economic corruption; practically however, these three typologies are no more than different perceptions of the same monster. But all these manifestations are manifested by the desire to use the instrumentality of office for private gains for the benefit of the official, his relations, ethnic groups or friends at the expense of the general good.

However, Nwabueze (2002) adopted a sociological approach in his own contribution to the raging discourse on the conceptualization of corruption. He conceptualized corruption to be a form of social deviance in some cases, of criminal deviances, the result of failure or lack of will to respect the norms of social interactions. It is an extralegal or normative approach to gaining access. It is a form of mal-adaptation involving the acceptance of society's culture goals and the rejection of the socially approved means of attaining the goals. It is an indictment on the ineffectiveness of society's socialization function; a sign of some defects in the development of citizens' personality system. It indicates the existence of weakness in agencies of social control which should punish rather than reward the perpetuator of corruption.

From the foregoing analysis, it is obvious that corruption is inextricably tied to politics. Though, it is not limited to politics and state institutions. But if corruption is defined from the point of view of Harold Lasswell as the tradition of "who gets what, when and how" and perhaps how much, it will be concluded that corruption has a dangerous link to politics. This is because in Nigeria, the scramble over resources otherwise known as 'national cake' has encouraged and permitted every act of corruption in the country. Today, it is not only the kelptomanic elites that are involved in corruption, the working class in Nigeria are also engaging seriously in the act of corruption as way of securing their own share of 'national cake'.

Similarly, Keeper (2012), attributed corruption to inequality in the distribution of wealth, political office conflict between changing moral codes, the weakness of social and governmental enforcement mechanism, absence of a strong sense of national community, obsession with materialism and compulsion for a short-cut to affluence, glorification and approbation for ill-gotten wealth by the Nigerian public. Accordingly, Onoja (2000), (Lipset and Lenz, 2000); and (Agbo, 2008) affirms that the effect of corruption has caused incalculable damages to the social and political development Sub-African nations. Specifically, poverty and income inequalities, unemployment poor and infrastructures, poor output, poor investment

To buttress the perspective on endemic corruption as stated above, the Transparency International (TI) in its Report 2020 revealed that Nigeria has further slipped down in the global rating, scoring 26 out of 100 points in the corruption indexes which ranked Nigeria 146 out of 180 countries analyzed. In reactions to this poor ranking of

Nigeria despite the anti-corruption war of the federal government, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) commented that the damning Report on Nigeria by the TI was a vindication of its stand that corruption had worsened under President Muhammadu Buhari and the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC).

The APC government boasted of zero-tolerance for corruption, however, the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) lamented that the Nigeria's ranking which was an indication that the fight against corruption in the country has not improved but even gotten worse. By the TI ranking of the 2019 Report, Nigeria now ranked as fourth most corrupt country in the nineteen (19) countries in the West Africa region and one of the leading most corrupt countries of the world.

Conversely, President Muhammadu Buhari was awarded "Anti-corruption Champion" in Africa by the African Union (AU). But the Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the government anti-corruption agency reacted to the Tl's Report by regarding it as baseless, illogical, appalling, bogus, ambiguous and unacceptable. That the year 2019 was the very year the EFCC secured unprecedented record of 1,268 convictions including former governor and a serving senator, currently serving various jail terms. In reaction to the EFCC remarks, the SERAP asserted that though the TI might not perfect, that the Report still a good reflection of corruption in Nigeria, as devastating effects of corruption are virtually in all sectors providing essential public services are too glaring (Guardian; Saturday, January 25, 2020)

Anti-Corruption Crusade

With the devastating effects and alarming havoc of corruption on the socio-economic and political development in Nigeria, it means any nation that is not fighting corruption is making itself vulnerable to forces that it cannot control, which thus makes the anticorruption machinery a necessity. The advent of the Obasanjo administration brought with it a renewed impetus in the national strive towards a corruption-free society. In his inaugural speech, he made the crusade against corruption a government policy statement, when he declared that:

The impact of corruption is so rampant and has earned Nigeria a bad image at home and abroad. Besides, it has distorted and retrogressed development. Corruption; the greatest bane of our society today; will be tackled head on at all levels (Robert, 2003)

To match his words with action, President OlusegunObasanjo submitted to the National Assembly anti-corruption draft Bills on combating corruption in Nigeria. This Bill sought not only to punish offenders for acts of corruption but also create anti-corruption commissions with sweeping powers. This led to the establishment of two anti-corruption agencies: Independent Corrupt Practices And Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in year 2000, and the Economic And Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in year 2004.

The two agencies were set up at different periods of time because of their mandates. The ICPC mandate is narrower in scope compare with the EFCC. For instance, the ICPC never has the mandate to run after money looters of public funds like the EFCC. However, the two anti-corruption agencies were set up to redeem the corruption image labeled Nigeria by the international community as a result of the endemic corruption in the country, which is the single biggest problem in Nigeria. The efforts of the federal government to establish anti-corruption agencies are not working as expected to combat corruption in the country because of lack of commitment or lack of political will to enforce anti-corruption laws (Bello-Imam, 2005; Awopeju, 2020).

Anti-corruption crusade or war in Nigeria is the federal government policy, project or programmes aims at making Nigeria a corruption – free society. It is a social engineering in which public enlightenment; orientation and mass mobilization are carried out among Nigerian populace to effect positive behavior change towards Nigeria project. The purpose of the crusade is to ensure discipline, morality, rebirth, regeneration, patriotism among the citizens, and where violations are observed; sanctions are employed against such individuals, group or institution prosecuting them in the courts of law. The anti-corruption crusade is also a prevention mechanism against corruptive tendencies. The major anti-corruption crusade organs of the federal government are the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC).

The Church and Anti-Corruption Crusade

Amidst the various efforts of the successive governments to curb corruption in Nigeria, there have been churches in existence. The tenets of church have not condoned corruption; yet, the vice has become endemic inspite of the large followership the church enjoyed in the country. The apathy of the leaders of the church in the country underscores the dept at which the corruption has eaten up national values. In fact, the activities and business adventures of the church and the involvement of its members in unethical or unbiblical practices as well as the opulent living of its leaders have shown total disregard to the church tenets and practices as obtainable in the early church. The church that remains the custodian of honesty, probity, discipline and morality has today being patronized by politicians and rich people whose sources of wealth is questionable, and is awarded prominent positions in their places of worship. Some of these church leaders are in the pay roll of some notable politicians and government functionaries so as to campaign for their political parties and candidates in their church to vote for them on election days. Besides; it is also a well-known fact that corruption thrives in the church today. (Martins, 2016)

The church in Nigeria has a long and honourable record. The contribution which the church has made to the progress and welfare of the Nigerian people is uncalculated. It is sufficient to say that many of the Nigerian leaders today are products of the church schools. (Akinlawon, 2010) Although, the role of the church in national development may be changing, the need for the church's help and guidance is no less. Today, the opportunity to be of service to the people of Nigeria must seem too many,

even greater than before. The role of the church is to point out the alarming short-comings of the society such as corruption in particular, other social and moral problems facing this country, Nigeria. These social evils are so rampant in the society even with unmitigated intensity and greater horror than ever before that they can be regarded as the order of the day. But the greatest pity of it all is that we find christians, or rather people who bear christian names, involved in these various crimes. This gingered the people to turn round and point accusing fingers at the church, saying that the societal social vices are so alarming because the churches are keeping silent, and not speaking or preaching boldly against them. (Akinlawon, 2010)

Contrary to the assumption above, the church is definitely preaching against and attacking these social vices but the fact is that those who are involved in corruptive deeds are mere hearers of the words, and not doers. No lay preacher of the words of God can ask the people to be stealing, though the church may have its own shortcomings, the fault is on the untamable and unregenerated spirit and hardened hearts of men and women in the modern Nigeria. Hence, according to Clinnard and Abbot (1973), opined that a society tends to be exposed to corruption as it enters the critical phase of modernization. And one typical feature of modernization, according to the scholar, is materialism and the craze for wealth by both the rich and the poor, the highly and lowly, which aided corruption to be pervasive on every society today. For instance, in Nigeria of today, a major criterionfor measuring success tends to be material, and as the competition for material possession continues to intensify, it leaves a track of social and moral dislocation (Onwvieme, 1986). This implies that corruption has indeed gone beyond official circles as everywhere in Nigeria today has been invaded by the corruption bug.

The churches over the globe have played a crucial role in preventing or combating corruption. The church institution believes that corruption is "a state of spiritual decay and moral dishonesty, arising from the effects of sin which expresses itself in disobedience towards God". The fight against corruption has therefore, become a sing-song for the church all over the world, and Nigeria inclusive. Specifically, schools in Africa, has included moral lessons and Christian religions studies in the educational institutions, where the fight against corruption has been made a regular lesson, with the motto "catch them young". (Hastings, 1967).

There is no doubt that the church has a very powerful influence on human society, as adherents do adhere strictly to the tenets of that faith. It is this hold on its members or faithful that Nigerian government needs to exploit in its on-going anti-corruption war. For instance, in the anti-corruption war by the successive governments in Nigeria, no notable or prominent church leader has ever been arrested, prosecuted and put in jail on the basis of corruption (Adeleye, 1999). This is the evidence that the church does have a lot of impact and influence on society, and it is this infallibility of the church that should be exploited by the government and used in the war against corruption in the country, where the Christian population is over half of the country population, according to 2006 population census.

Every church has engaged in Radio/Television broadcast, for preaching against social ills in the societies in which corruption is a major one. This is in line with the directive of Pope Francis to the church when he asserted "corruption is not countered with silence, we must speak about it, denounce its evils and try to understand it so as to show our resolve to make mercy reign over meanness, beauty or nothingness". There have been regular retreats, conferences, crusades, publication like newsletters, flyers, stickers and posters etc which the church employed to speak against corruption and urge the followers to denounce it in all its forms which have been so far effective. (Akinlawon, 2010)

In Nigeria, there have been occasional anti-corruption programmes or fora organized by the anti-corruption agencies in which the church leaders were invited as speakers in the fight against corruption, calling Nigerian citizens to refrain from engaging in corrupt practices. The basic for the increasing involvement of the church in anti-corruption war and the need for the government to incorporate the church and the anti-corruption agencies into a strong coalition against corruption generally stems from the fact that righteousness, honesty, holiness, truth, probity, transparency etc from the basic tenets and beliefs of the church, the opportunity which the federal government can use to involve the church in the fight against corruption.

Findings

In the Key Informant Interviews sessions held with the stakeholders of the church, it shows that church plays significant roles in combating corruption. In a session held with a Pastor of the CAC he posits that:

Churches like ours always let the congregation to know that anything that is evil relates with corruption. If you look at Galatians 5: 19, everything relating to corruption is there. Therefore, the church serves as an instrument of driving the minds of people away from Satan. Because all these things called corruption come from minds.

In a similar way, an Elder conducted KII in the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) with said:

I think corruption in the church
sense of it deals with unholy
things. Churches are making people to have a
rethink of any

evil they are about to commit. I think that is the role they play in checking corruption.

Similarly, other KIIs conducted with the stakeholders of these churches see "corruption as ungodliness and the church serves as a veritable instrument (fighting) of making people to fear God and not to commit corruption". In a KII session conducted with one of the authorities of The Gospel Faith Mission International in Osogbo, he looks inwardly and avers:

To curb corruption in the church, discipline is always entrenched. No matter how big you are, you are disciplined if you find yourself in committing corruption in the church. Therefore, churches are making people to look unto God and stop soiling their hands in sins

In other words, the church that holds up to prospects of a heavenly bliss and preaches faith in the resurrection of the dead is no doubt has that wherewithal in the concurrent resurrection of regenerating people or effecting positive change behavior in people to take ownership of anti-corruption crusade in the nation. The fall of many empires and nations in the remote past usually happened when they were at the height of glory of wealth, and influence because they forgot all about God and His moral laws (Knudson, 1980). The church role in similar situation in Nigeria today is imperative to call Nigeria to national repentance, that is, national rebirth, through which God can bring back the country to a time of refreshing than one can contemplate. Unfortunately, the church in Nigeria is in a mix-up.

Complicity of the Church Today

Succinctly put, has the modern day church found culpable of corruption tendencies? Is today's church obedient to Christ? Or has she not put Christ aside to fashion out her own ways? Isthe church disciplined? — is she not engaged in various types of vices, corruption, offences, etc. busy with denominations or sects of religion.

In the contemporary Nigeria, most people can no longer seek refuge in the church because there is no difference between the world and the church. The church has more fashion than passion, more pathetic than prophetic, and more superficial than supernatural. The Church ministered by the Apostles was a suffering Church, today, we have a self-sufficient Church — a comfort zone. The New Testament Church was identified with persecution, prisons and poverty, today's church are identified with prosperity, popularity and personalities. She lacks apostolic power because she lacks apostolic purity. Where is the emphasis on heart purity these days? She has adulterated gospel being preached by adulterers and some of these claim to be filled with the Holy Spirit. They were just 120 men and women in the upper room in the Bible and without electronic media, gospel printing houses, Bible schools, etc. they turned the world upside down (Acts of Apostle). So, where is the Church in today's dispensation?

The examination of the socio-economic and political situations in Nigeria today, no matter how cursory, reveals how imperative it is for the church to redouble and strengthen her services to the Nigerian nation. The church should rise up to make their contribution to the national development. The church should spare no effort to witness to the people of its insight to the problems and concerns of the state and its government. The church has a significant and unique service to perform as WATCHMAN on behalf of God, pointing to wrong policies and evil practices in government and calling the nation to observe the ways of righteousness that can exalt it.

Today, the Nigerian masses which include members of the church are deeply affected by the economic hardship in the country perpetrated by corruption of the principalities and powers in government, and their cronies in the society. The problem of corruption which beset the nation in all walks of life including the church is all too indicative of a materialistic philosophy of our leaders. To be wasteful of our commonwealth, that is, our resources, is to be sinful against God.

According to Karl Marx (1978)a German Philosopher, "Religion is the sign of the oppressed, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people". This belief has proven to be the truth over the years as early Church missionaries would come from their own countries sacrificing all because of the people, especially education. But this is not so among the current league of Nigerian churches which established schools like primary, secondary and universities, forcing their congregations to pay excessively for what ordinarily the early church would have given almost free. The implication of this is that Nigerian churches are not really concerned about how their members get the moneys or would get the moneys. This situation has been responsible for the involvement of many members of the church in corrupt practices that are not befitting God.

Thus, when the Nigerian churches decided to be establishing private universities in Nigeria, many members were happy that the education would be offered to them at affordable price or school fees, but it was rather disappointing and sad that they are business ventures, or for commercial purposes. For examples, Madonna University by the Catholic Church, the Ajayi Crowder University by the Supra Diocesan Board of the Church, Covenant University of the Winner Chapel, Redeemer University of Redeemed Christian Church of God, Joseph Ayo Babalola University of Christ Apostolic Church, Crawford University of the Apostolic Church Mission, Badcock University of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, The Mountain Top University of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, Bingham University by ECWA, hoping when they were established they would serve the interest of the masses of the churches by charging affordable tuition fees. The tuition fee each school charges at inception range from N450,000 to over 1 million naira depending on the academic course of the students. The schools were established by the offerings of the church members, who are now left in the cold, and their children roaming about on the roads and streets of Nigeria. The institutions are now being patronized by the children of politicians and other corrupt Nigerians, which purpose is not propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ like the early church in Nigeria (Martins, 2016). Not surprising, Nigerian government is thinking to levy churches in the country alleging that they are business ventures. In the efforts of many parents to send their children to the institutions, many have involved themselves in corrupt tendencies and sharp practices as the church has become haven for corrupt individuals whose monies are used to sustain them.

It is pertinent to point out that the church leaders have suddenly become appendages of the ruling class using their vantage position to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor members of their congregation who often see them as next to God. They

don't see and treat sin as sin as witnessed by the early church. It is not Biblical for the church of God in persons of our Bishops, Reverends, and Pastors to join principalities and powers in a gathering every 2nd of January for new year to pray for Nigeria, States and Governments without using the opportunity of such occasion to preach and pray against the shortcomings of the governments and social vices in the society. Instead of using such gatherings to preach raw gospel of Christ to the organizers and remind them that Nigerians or people of God are really suffering, that poverty is hitting hard on them, but always offer the prayers of hypocrisy of the Pharisees by thanking God for their lives, commend and praise them and also beg God to protect and be with them. The church leaders would not do less or far because majority of them are Nicodemus.

In other words, the truth is that the church, especially, the church leaders are feeding from these corrupt criminals through generous donations to the church projects, tithes, special routine generous gifts to the church leaders in kind and cash, especially material gifts like flashy cars and cloths to them and their wives, or asking them for help to complete their personal building in their villages or choice of their cities. For instance, how many of the church leaders use the occasions when these principalities and powers come to their churches for say Special Services like the Independence Anniversary, Armed Forces Remembrance Day, State Creation Anniversary, One Hundred Days in office, or Annual Service of Mr. President or Mr. Governor in Office or the Annual New Year Joint Inter-denomination Service, using such occasions to boldly preach the raw truth of the words of God to them. Instead, they use the occasions to preach soft and selective messages to get generous donations or offerings from them. No wonder, as if Apostle Peter has Nigerian Church in mind when he lamented that "for the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God (1 Peter 4v17)".

With more and more churches spread all over Nigeria on daily basis while company warehouses and private buildings are being converted to prayer Houses or Churches, and the nation's sports stadia all over the country are used more for church crusades than for sporting events, and many faithful in large number than before on religious pilgrimage to Jerusalem, (taking pride in being called Jerusalem Pilgrim (JP)), one would have expected to see a very high degree of social morality in Nigeria, since Christianity promotes truth, justice, honesty, probity, transparency etc. But this is not the case with Nigeria. There is an embarrassing contradiction between the huge ethical demands and the phenomenon of corruption, greed and graft that have earned the country the unenviable status of one of the most corrupt country in the world, according to the Transparency International Annual Corruption Perception Index (2000). In fact, many of seemingly pious Christians including the church ministers of God have no qualms of conscience in such fraudulent activities as evading tax, and vehicle particulars by buying stickers with the word "Clergy" on their cars.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the forgoing, the study concludes that no matter how hard the anti-corruption

regimes or agencies try, and the successive governments in power put up laudable and lofty policies and programmes to eradicate corruption in the country, they will be in futility if Nigeria and Nigerians do not turn to the living God Almighty. It is high time the governments at the three ties of government involved the church in their anti-corruption to provide a ready-made platform for preaching the gospel of anti-corruption crusade and other related discipline problems. The church must go to the basics and self-cleansing, soul-searching etc. The church can only fight corruption with the sword of the Spirit etc. Considering the spiritual bereavement of Nigeria, its religious shallowness or famine of the words of God etc, the study recommend that the church, in connection with the stakeholders should support the anti-corruption war of the government. Nigeria needs church to spearhead a moral revolution, national rebirth and ethical re-orientation for the nation and its people. Pointedly, the church must be in the forefront in the national rebirth programmes, moral renaissance etc.

In a sum, Nigerians are urged by the admonition in **Philippians 4:4** that: Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

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