
THE BIBLICAL LAW: A PANACEA TO REDUCE CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Corruption is dishonest, illegal, immoral behaviour. It is a spiritual debasement and deviation from the law and standard of God. It is an aftermath of an action conceived and fathomed in the mind of man and carried out. Nigeria as a nation has a lot of corrupt leaders and need to be rescued from this deadly vice. Our political leaders have destroyed our economics and made many people impoverish. Many of our people have lost their traditional values. Corruption has enslaved us. The question what is the remedy for this ugly situation? This paper examines the meaning and causes of corruption in Nigeria. It will examine biblical law as a model to reduce corruption in Nigeria and gives some recommendations.

Keywords: Corruption, Biblical Law, Ten Commandments, Model, Panacea. etc.

INTRODUCTION

Adegbasan (4) opines that every religion has its own laws, which guide its adherents behaviour and mode of life. For instance Islam has the sharia law, African Traditional Religion has its own laws called "taboo" and Christianity has its own laws that spelt out how the members should conduct themselves in the community in which they called to serve as a light, among those laws are the Old Testament law captioned the Mosaic law, that is the ten commandments and other laws or traditions of the church. Hence every religion has its own injunctions which are expected to be observed by every member of that religion. However, some believers of these religions found ways of side-tracking these injunctions stated in their sacred books. For instance Christians are now emphasizing the dispensation of grace. A recent discovery has shown that biblical laws have a concept of human right in modern sense. The biblical laws clearly spelt out the mind of God about the nation of Israel. It is a moral resource, but not in terms of the particular reconstruction of the popular morality of ancient Israel. Rather, the Old Testament in its present canonical form is a broad witness to the total character, activity and the will of God for his chosen people. Douglas (49) says, "the rule that stealing is wrong can be learned from a number of sources but the commandment not to steal is powerful because God endorses this as an ethical principle."

Therefore, it seems this ancient document about the ancient world has its intrinsic value in the modern world, most especially if we explore into the issue of corruption which is the basic problem. This paper makes an attempt to explore the Old Testament law for the control and ameliorating corruption in Nigeria to innocuous level. Biblical law is encouraging Christian's holiness and moral reawakening. This is necessary at this time, where the moral condom is weak, the cultural mould is in descript, the leadership is corrupt, the church has entered into the world and the world is in the church. Therefore, it is time to see biblical law as a religious and ecclesiastical apparatus to wipe the slate

clean, to instil fear of God, to recompense morality, etc. The theology of the biblical law centres on the attributes of God such as holiness, perfection, righteousness, faithfulness, etc therefore, the theology of social, economic, political situation of Israel centred on this law. The Old Testament law is fundamental tenets of the Jewish religious identity is on the axiomatic testimony of the Mosaic Law. Thus, Christians should embrace the Mosaic Law inaugurated as divine rule which was revealed through Moses at Mount Sinai. This will help humanity in politics, social, ethnic and cultic institutions as this shall speak to corrupt practice in every sphere of life. Therefore, this paper makes an attempt to articulate the relevance of the Old Testament law for the contemporary Christians ethics in Nigeria and Africa at large.

WHAT IS CORRUPTION?

Blacks' Law Dictionary (1990) defines corruption as "an act done with intent to give advantage inconsistent with official duty and rights of others." The act of an official or judicial person who unlawfully or wrongly uses his station or character to procure some benefits for himself or for others contrary to duty or rights of others - Section 2 of anti-corruption law of the federal Republic of Nigeria (2000), says corruption includes "bribery, fraud and other related offences". Therefore, corruption is a wide concept which can be simply defined as the absence of integrity. Integrity is so crucial for the survival and progress of any society that is made one of the cardinal points of national ethics. Thus, national ethics should include discipline, integrity, and dignity of labour, social justice, religious tolerance, self-reliance and patriotism. Hence, Merriam- Webster Collegiate Dictionary (260), defines corruption simply as "impairment of integrity, virtue or moral principles. Or an inducement to wrong by improper or unlawful means. It is a departure from original or from what is pure or correct." However, J. Douglas, (33) says corruption is "a spiritual debasement and deviation from the law and that standard of God." It is an action that emanates from within. Therefore, what we see or hear or know as corruption is the aftermath of an action conceived and fathomed in the mind of man and carried out by him. Thus, it is aberration and anti-social disposition. Therefore, one sees the origin of corruption from our definition in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve broke the rules and regulations of God, so corruption is as old as man. With the development of disobedience of Adam and Eve to the clear standard of God, many corrupt practices started to follow which prompted Gods' judgement and all corrupt ancient peoples were destroyed. Sodom and Gomorrah demonstrated another account of mass corruption and people were massively destroyed by God. God then initiated the first constitution (that is the issuance of the Decalogue), for the guidance of man. Hence, the coming of Christ in the New Testament was a further effort to implement Gods' will on earth and to cleanse the world from corruption. Norman (183) says that the occurrence of serious instances of corruption from the prologue of the New Testament to the ancient mediaeval modern history of civilization discloses rampant and persistent co-existence of good and evil, integrity and corruption in the history of nations, empires, the church and dynasties. This unbroken record has persisted in modern civilization up till day. What must be the causes of this evil deed?.

CAUSES OF CORRUPTION

Gabriel (33) observes that in a recent survey, the movement for New Nigeria listed inter alia a fundamental flawed structure of the Nigerian Republic absence of functioning governmental system, over concentration of resources at the centre, inadequate enforcement of the existing laws, absence of rule of law, a culture of preferential treatment, nepotism and tribalism in the administration of justice, and the running of government and conduct of business, political instability and frequent military intervention in government, late or non-payment of salaries and retirement benefits to public officers, high level of poverty and unemployment as causes of corruption. However, Okegbule,(2004,) says the causes of corruption in Nigeria is the "Nigerian factors". Thus "Nigerian factor" basically means attitudes of Nigerians toward issues. It refers to peculiar characteristics identifiable as Nigerian which strives to ensure that things and issues are handled in negative ways. The Nigerian factor as a concept means unhealthy and unsavoury conducts as corruption, dishonest, fraud, favouritism, ethnicity, and tribalism. Jibril (, 2003,)), agrees that these vices have unfortunately come to mean the "Nigerian factor." He adds that although corruption and dishonesty are universal tendencies that have always existed in every land and clime, what gives causes for worry is the degree at which they are practiced by Nigerians and our openness and indiscretion in doing so.

THE NIGERIA SITUATION

According to Sule, Kano corruption in Nigeria is not a series of accidental occurrences resulting from defective individual character; it is not the characteristic of any ethnic, cultural or religious group. Since 1960, corruption has been an essential tool in the hands of the ruling class in Nigeria for accumulation of wealth and for the seizure and sustenance of political power. This statement has informed us that corruption has been in Nigeria since 1960, our year of political independence. It also says that corruption is not a problem of any particular ethnic cultural, or religious group, but that of all our rulers the public officers who through the instrument of corruption accumulate wealth and impoverish the rest in order to sustain power and control over them. Hence, corruption is in every area of life in Nigeria. Therefore, corruption is in judiciary, economic, education and church. Basically, we know that corruption is a world wide vice, but its distribution, and methodology vary with different countries. Akanbi, (63) says in Nigeria, corruption has become the option of the masses; it has gone to the level that almost every Nigerian believes that without it one cannot survive. In spite of the abundance of human and material resources and the multi-religious movements and characters, Nigeria is grouped among the poorest and most corrupt people in the world. Thus Transparency International index "has rated Nigeria society as the second most corrupt country in the world"

The level of corruption in Nigeria is quite alarming and worrisome. It is found among political leaders; even the lower echelours of the civil service and administration, sanitary inspector, produce inspector, tax collector, police, court messenger, clerk, clergy etc are involved in corrupt practices. These agents extract bribe for their services and use their uniforms a symbol of authority to instil fear and ensure compliance. The question is where are our clergies? (Prophets, reverends, priests, pastors, etc). In the judiciary, Yishau, (2)

states that the rate of injustice is so alarming, that one is not certain that justice will be meted to him when his right is being trampled under foot. Sometimes, people are being detained by the police today for no just cause. It is easy to talk about people standing trial for five years and even above. One begins to wonder where the justice the judiciary is called to maintain really is. Corruption in Nigeria is no longer news. Gary (3) asserts that in 1993, when General Obasanjo joined with others launched transparency international, he noted that "the average African is not by nature more corrupt than the Europe or any one else. But others have institutions, law conventions and practices, which effectively discourage and punish corruption." Yishua, (8-13) says in Nigeria "all the institutions like the law court, educational institutions, social institutions and the church have become amazingly impotent against the tide of corruption threatening to drown the nation." He further says that:

Corruption is an old enterprise in Nigeria." From Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe in July 1956 to chief Obafemi Awolowo June 1962 and then General Abdusalam who almost emptied the treasury before handed over. It opines that "the pattern of official corruption has been the same only the actors have been changing."

In the educational sector, corruption has also flourished. The intellectuals who should have been able to bring the society out of this mess and give it a sense of direction have fallen short; our high institutions are no longer centres for moral and intellectual excellence, but centres for secret cult's oppression, rampant certificate racketeering, massive examination malpractices and a lot of other ills. We hear of people buying or forging certificates, and using the same to secure employment. This is why we have many first-class certificates, but who cannot confidently teach students in the secondary schools. Injustice and corruption have major concerns to that entire wish Nigeria well. Admission into higher institutions is said to be first based on merit, but only few candidates are admitted through this process. The other selection which is called supplementary admission is mostly based on who you know and the tribal relationship with the vice Chancellor and other top officials of the school and bribery. The so called "quota system" is also being used as a means of enhancing tribal sentiment in the country. This has increased the rate of tribalism and nepotism.

The church in Nigeria is flourishing in terms of increasing in number every day; yet, its impact is not being felt. Gary (3) says that there is something very paradoxical about Christianity in Nigeria today. In one sense, Christianity has been more alive and more powerful than ever before. Over the years, we have seen hundreds and even thousands of prominent persons in the society coming out to openly identify with Christianity and giving testimonies of miraculous healing and revelations. In nutshell, at time Nigeria has become perhaps the most fervently and Christian religious country on the continent, it has also gradual become the most morally and ethically corrupt nation on the continent. Religiously, factor closely linked to corruption are false prophets and doctrines. Today in Nigeria the church is filled with different false prophets and strange doctrines. Gary (3) asserts that:

The scriptural Christianity that we inherited from our father has been bastardised and turned into cheap, confessional, sugar coated Christianity. Nowadays in Nigeria, it is

almost impossible to decipher between genuine and pseudo Christianity. Scriptural value systems are being replaced with empty and shallow religion. This is why although the rate of church multiplication or proliferation has increase yet; the degree of wickedness is also increasing everyday

The Prosperity syndrome lays emphasizes on the basic fact that God does bless his children. Therefore, when people work hard and make use of the opportunity they are likely to prosper financially, all things be equal. However, the prosperity to money has eaten deep in Nigeria. Almost everywhere in the country, people have been taught to see material prosperity as a yardstick for measuring spirituality. Material prosperity has been taught to be possible through just giving to the church or even to the preacher; it is no more to hear people talk about the church as a vibrant business enterprise. Material respect is now based in the cars, in most cases on the type of car one rides and the type of house one lives in. The effect of this is that Christians who do not have financial prosperity see themselves as misfit among others. So most people now want to be rich at all cost. This is why there are many cases of church people getting involved in massive fraud and ritual murder. Some churches have changed their ushers over and over again, because of stealing church offerings. Many pastors and elders/ leaders of churches cannot allow external auditors to come and audit their church account, because of various forms of misappropriations of fund. The spiritual awakening which emanated from our university campuses in Nigeria in the 1970s was a strong springboard for the Pentecostal movement. Gary (14) says that this dynamic spiritual move was woefully cut short by the in-roads of what we now label as the prosperity gospel. He laments with sadness that the so-called "419" has slain its hundreds in Nigeria than the prosperity gospel has slain its ten thousand. The prosperity syndrome is what has made those who preach about Christian character and holiness to become unpopular, while the prosperity preacher takes the popular scene. This had led to respect of money which is tantamount to idolatry, the question is where do we go to? Where are our pastors, reverends etc? The only true and basic way to go to is to learn from the Old Testament laws for our references to our survival as a nation and from the wicked vice, corruption which has engulfed Nigeria.

THE WAY FORWARD: THE OLD TESTAMENT LAWS AND CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA.

One of the means for Nigeria survival in both spiritual and political situation is to turn to and observes the Old Testament law. Christians should observe and do all that is written in the Bible. God says to Joshua, "whoever rebels against your commandments and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage." (Joshua, 1:18). Rolf, (196-8) puts it as consequently observance of the Mosaic Law is a fundamental development and it will serve as a regulatory measure to validate societal morality". It was also observes by North that, it was now the acknowledgement. And observance of the law by the individual which constituted the community for whoever undertook to keep the law joined the community. Thus, the Mosaic Law is the Law that bound community together, any one that does not have this knowledge will be out-razed. Von Rad (214) says that the biblical law is a divine precept given to Israel, is theologically witness to the cosmos. Old Testament contains extensive

legislation and other material devoted to the regulations of Israelites relationship to God through cultic practices. Von Rad continued that Israel was to be a holy people set apart for God. Its ethics seem from one perspective can be described as its efforts to keep the law, to become holy in imitation of Gods' holiness, (Lev.19:2)

Roland (177),upholds that thus the Old Testament biblical jurisprudence is based on the assumption that man is under obligation to carry out the revealed will of God in living a holy life respecting the rights of God and man, more so when he believes that was made in the image of God. Lasebikan, (42-53) says the law therefore, is the character of the covenant with God, a body of teachings directed to Israel. It enjoins severe penalties for all crimes against God and for crimes which tarnish the holiness of the chosen people. The biblical law is dealing with religious and civil obligations under two texts: you shall love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength (Deut. 4:6) and love your neighbour as yourself (Lev.19:18). The love without dissimulation, preventing his hurt, and procuring his goods to the utmost power. Thus the encouragement and exhortation to neighbourliness warranted to the order of Leviticus 19:35-36:

You shall do no wrong in judgement, in measures of length, or quantity, you shall have a just balance, just weight, a just ephah, and a just hen. Iam the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. And you shall observe all my statutes and my entire ordinance and do them," (Lev.19:35-36).

Goldsmith, (84) upholds that the basis of this passage is justice and the justice of holiness of God. He dwell in the land in the midst of the people of Israel, any injustice is the defilement of the land, therefore, offended the absolute holiness of God. Therefore, just weight, just decision, just judgement, just distribution of wealth, social amenities etc., is required of any follower of God. The welfare of a nation depends largely on a just legal system. Thus, the concern of God to give them this law centred on the Israel's' national life which should be based on justice and equity through an incorrupt judiciary. The Christian Council Association, Lagos Chamber of all Churches recently observed that the Ten Commandments in the Bible are no longer bidding the Christians today. According to Ayoola (2010):

The Ten Commandments which is one of the key statements of the Holy Bible has been abolished that even the best people sometimes suffer in our churches today. The Church leaders are now using prosperity to preach, building cathedral castles with over flowing population in the church which is not the answer to the sinful acts that the Church goer engage themselves. The Church leaders should pray for the Holy Spirit to lead them in their part of the Lord to continue doing his will especially in Nigeria. (54).

Thus, the biblical or Old Testament laws are relevant and applicable today in our modern society. They are not outdated laws. They are still relevant in our situation. We are recommending total obedience to the Old Testament laws for freedom from moral laxity and corruption. These laws declared the broad principles of Gods' moral law, social legislation and religious legislation. This basic institution ordained by God is necessarily

good for his people. Therefore, the biblical law is a divine rule. Walderner (106) says the biblical law is a divine law which has remedy to corruption prevailing our society. It is that, that to be written in our hearts and to become a standard, values and principles to be pursued to attain justice, fairplay, good conduct, and consciousness. Ronald, Bruce and Harrison (359) uphold that biblical Law is more than a record of human law. It is an expression of what God requires of his people. It rests on the external moral principles that are consistent with the very nature of God Himself. Therefore, biblical law is the summary of moral law. As such it sets forth fundamental and universal moral principles. This will then promote peaceful co-existence, security of lives and properties.

This was what biblical Ezra and Nehemiah in the Old Testament did call Israelites to embrace and obey the law of God. There is the need to have people who are ready to face the challenges with the biblical laws as it is applicable to every circumstance. Therefore, the time has come for the church of God in Nigeria and in Africa to draw contextual and ecclesiastical resources from the biblical laws. If we explore the biblical laws to our social, political, economic, humanitarian, problems including religious tragedies, there will be a suitable and conducive environment for every Nigerian.

Christians should face the reality that biblical instruction is a paradigm for Christian teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness. Paul says

All scriptures are inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."(2 Tim.3:16-17).

Hence, the biblical law provides the motivational and enduring basis for spiritual and morality growth. The Bible is the authoritative source of information, inspiration and guidance for Christians in their relationship with God and man in the human context. Thus, total observance of the biblical law will go along way to eradicate or reduce corruption to an innocuous level in Nigeria. The perspective of Christians toward the biblical law is that this law has reached terminus as our master and Lord Jesus said. "

The law of Moses had its fulfilment in him." "Think not that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them."(Matt. 5:17).

Our lords' audience found it difficult to reconcile his insistence that not even the smallest letter of the law would disappear till all had been fulfilled. Jesus effected a transition from legalism to spiritualism. But he sets aside the moral law as Mathew chapter 5 stipulates, there was clear rejection of the extras that the Pharisees and their followers had added to the law. Romans 10:4 say "Christ is the end of the Law, so that there may be righteousness for every one who believes." There is the need to know that there is clarity in the role of the law and Christ indwelt faith. To realize the inward morality which Jesus is expected of all Christians, it is necessary to incline to the biblical law of God.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The focus of the Old Testament prophets was practical in that they were charged with the responsibility of calling the people to individual and corporate repentance and drawing the

nation of Israel back to the principle of divine law. The prophets showed that the prophetic voice was an important voice that should not be ignored. This is a lesson for Nigerians today. The preachers are the mouthpiece of God like the Old Testament prophets irrespective of their accusations they can overcome their consistency and faith in the lord who sent them. Therefore, the preacher is Gods' mouthpiece to challenge all in the society and not to compromise the truth like it is being done in Nigeria today. He should seek to understand the truth from the scripture, meditate in it, thereby allowing the spirit of God to illuminates his mind.

- i. Nigeria preachers and Christians should do like the Old Testament prophets. Nigeria is seen as a corrupt nation today but with a ministry of genuine preachers we can bring about a change. God is waiting for us to make a change.
- ii. A total attitudinal change is suggested, because it has been discovered that corruption is a problem of Nigerian factor" so, a call for a total change in our attitudes.
- iii. Public officers should be educated on shameful death. They should be made to appreciate the shame in dying rich; it is the case in some civilized societies.
- iv. People should be educated on their constitutional rights. Our constitution is rich in ideal which are not known to the people. It is therefore, suggested that Nigerians should be exposed to these constitutional ideals as part of social studies right from primary school to the tertiary level

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