

**TOWARDS A JUST AND CORRUPT - FREE  
NIGERIAN SOCIETY:  
Proposing Virtues and Their Exemplars.**

A thesis submitted to the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Licentiate in Sacred Theology (S.T.L) Degree

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## **Dedication**

**I dedicate this work**

**to my parents**

**Mr. Alban Amushie and Catherine Chinyere Opara**

**Who were my first teachers.**

**and**

**to all teachers everywhere**

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I give thanks to God who is the first and highest object of my love. I experienced His power and love all through the course of my studies and the writing of this work. To Him be eternal praise and glory.

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## **Introduction**

### **Stating the Thesis**

I propose in this long essay that men and women of virtue, clergy and lay alike, who dot the Nigerian landscape, bedeviled by vices and lack of social trust, can, by their virtuous formation and lives, bring enduring change.

### **The Background to the Study**

The Nigerian nation is broken and plagued by corruption and all sorts of problems arising therefrom. “Pillaged for years by dictators”<sup>1</sup>, and though struggling to sustain its nascent democracy, the entire nation is enmeshed in a whirlpool of corruption that is difficult to overcome.<sup>2</sup> On May 29, 2015, Muhammadu Buhari was sworn in as a civilian President of Nigeria’s government, 31 years after he masterminded and led a military coup d’état that destroyed the civilian, democratic government of the second Republic and disrupted the growth of the nation’s democracy.<sup>3</sup> From 2015 to 2021, he spent a total of two hundred days away from office on medical tourism to the United Kingdom for some undisclosed ailments. The first trip was from Feb 5 – 10, 2016, about eight months after assuming office, and the second, from June 6 – 19, 2016. The third and fourth were disturbing: from January 19 – March 9, 2017, he spent 50 solid days away from office; and from May 7 – August 19, he spent 104 days. Nigerians called for his resignation, but his aides and his party defended him. It took him another 81 days to return to his office inside the

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Peel, *A Swamp Full of Dollars: Pipelines and Paramilitaries at Nigeria’s Oil Frontier* (London: I.B. Tauris), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Subcommittee on Africa, “Nigeria’s Struggle with Corruption”, Report of the Global Human Rights and International Operations of the 109th United States House of Representatives’ Committee on International Relations, S/No. 109 – 172 (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, May 18 2006), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria* (London: Greenwood Press, 1999), 12.

Presidential Villa, less than five minutes' walk from his official residence. His special assistant on Media and Publicity, Garba Shehu, lied to the nation concerning the reason for that failure to return to office. "Following the three-month period of disuse, rodents have caused a lot of damage to the furniture and the air conditioning units," he had said, explaining that "it was impossible for the President to operate from the office in that condition."<sup>4</sup>

When Nigerians were still trying to digest that shameful lie, Nigerians were hit with another ridiculous news of thirty-six million naira that got missing from the Benue State branch of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, (JAMB) which organizes unified entrance examinations for Nigerian universities. A sales clerk in the office told auditors who came to audit the office and newsmen that the money had been swallowed by a snake.<sup>5</sup> Then came the disturbing story of another N70m handed over to the Northern Senators Forum which went missing. Senator Abdullahi Adamu had stolen the money which was in his custody. Talking to newsmen about the ugly incident, Senator Shehu Sani had pejoratively said that some monkeys may have swallowed the money.<sup>6</sup> Later in June 2019, another annoying news of missing funds came. This time, a gorilla was accused of stealing \$18,000 from an office in a government owned zoo.<sup>7</sup> By lying that rats occupied the office of the president, it looked like the Presidency had set an ugly precedence which emboldened people to commit crimes and make a ridicule out of it. These few stories are just a tip of the iceberg concerning the spate of corruption happening in Nigeria every day.

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<sup>4</sup> Olalekan Adetayo, "Rats' invasion: Buhari yet to use office seven weeks after", *Punch Newspapers*, (Abuja), October 14, 2017, <https://punchng.com/rats-invasion-buhari-yet-to-use-office-seven-weeks-after/>

<sup>5</sup> Ameh Comrade Godwin, "Strange snake swallows N36 million cash in JAMB office", *Daily Post Newspapers*, February 10, 2018, <https://dailypost.ng/2018/02/10/strange-snake-swallows-n36-million-cash-jamb-office/>

<sup>6</sup> *The Vanguard Newspaper*, "Shocker! Monkeys swallow N70m belonging to Northern senators", <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/02/just-monkeys-swallow-n70m-belonging>

<sup>7</sup> Olumide Oyekunle, "Gorilla Accused of 'Swallowing' Money Worth \$18,000 From Zoo in Nigeria", *The African Exponent*, June 14, 2019, <https://www.africanexponent.com/post/10368-gorilla-swallows-money-worth-18000-from-zoo-in-nigeria>; Nsikak Nseyen, "Nigerians react to 'swallowing' of funds by snake, monkeys", *The Daily Post Newspaper*, Feb. 28, 2018, <https://dailypost.ng/2018/02/22/nigerians-react-swallowing-funds-snake-monkeys>

Corruption in Nigeria is undoubtedly an issue of deeply worrisome social concern. It has become a mountainous structure and a cancerous blight which continues to spread all over the entire gamut of the socio-political landscape of the country, leaving in its wake, damaging effects which are evidently manifest across the length and breadth of the Nigerian geographical space. In other words, Nigeria is infested with every form of corrupt practices, in public and private life. It is evident in homes, markets, hospitals, governments offices, institutions and facilities, banks, technicians' workshops and even on the streets. Every sector is affected. "It is so pervasive and affects all facets of Nigeria's social, legal, political, and economic institutions."<sup>8</sup> Cultural and religious institutions are not immune, but it is so alarming in government circles, reason why Oji and Oji think that "the really destructive type of corruption is perpetrated by the very highest in society who dictate and hold political power."<sup>9</sup>

The endemic nature of corruption in Nigeria is markedly indexed by the fact that every sector of government and of public life oozes with the revulsive odor of corruption. While accountability and integrity have become a wanted and scarce commodity; hard work and meritocracy have been traded for desperation for power and senseless acquisition of wealth through illicit means. Indiscipline, insincerity, irresponsibility, abuse of office, and wastefulness have been ingrained into a rapidly decaying political culture. News of budget paddings, unspent budgetary allocations, missing funds in millions and billions of naira, misappropriation and embezzlement of public funds have become recurrent and constant. Once in every four months, to estimate a fair average, Nigerians are greeted with similar shocking news, like those I narrated above, of huge amounts of missing money, misappropriated funds or a loan (from the world bank

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<sup>8</sup> Okechukwu Oko, *Key Problems for Democracy in Nigeria: Credible Elections, Corruptions, Security, Governance and Political Parties* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), 496.

<sup>9</sup> Kanu Oji and Valerie Oji, *Corruption in Nigeria: The fight and movement to cure the malady* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2010), 2.

or China or one European lender or another), which will in the end not be accounted for. The sibling of corruption, which is bribery seems to be a normal practice and takes place blatantly in our federal and state offices on daily basis. Speaking on the state of the nation in their 1998 second post-plenary communique, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria had this to say:

The nation is still plagued with the evil of corruption to an incredibly high degree. Recent revelations of colossal financial mismanagement and outright theft by people holding public office are but a mere suggestion of the extent to which corruption has pervaded our entire national fabric. Instances of corruption can be seen in the conduct of law enforcement agents who openly demand and receive gratification from members of the public, education authorities who compromise their positions for money, civil servants who take bribes before they perform their lawful duties, and citizens who offer bribes in order to obtain undue favors.<sup>10</sup>

There is a total breakdown of law and order and the result is confusion and anarchy. The law is broken with impunity, by our elites, politicians, agents of government and, most annoyingly, by the very law enforcement personnel who should help to enforce the law. Our current President, Muhammadu Buhari, disobeys court injunctions and some other agents of government lie to the people, publicly on TV. Courts and lawyers receive bribes and subvert justice, and the result, ironically, is that corrupt Nigerians are convicted and punished elsewhere where judges and security agents are serious with their jobs but never in Nigeria.<sup>11</sup> These corrupt persons, whom the citizens hope to see arrested, prosecuted and punished, instead run for office, manipulate our elections, sit in power over the people and continue helping themselves with state funds. The Customs and Immigration Services openly scam the populace who need their services, and sit on peoples' documents until they 'play ball', while drug law enforcement agencies allow themselves

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<sup>10</sup> Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, *A Ray of Hope*, (Ibadan: 7 – 12 September 1998), no. 8

<sup>11</sup> Princewill Nimi and Goodwin Allegra, "Nigerian senator jailed for nine years in UK organ harvesting plot", *CNN Nigeria* (Abuja), May 5, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/05/05/africa/nigeria-senator-ekweremadu-sentenced-intl>. This case of Mr. Ike and Beatrice Ekweremadu and Dr. Obinna Obeta who were sentenced to nine, six and ten years jail terms respectively, in London on Friday May 5, 2023 is the latest example.

to be compromised by drug peddlers whom they should arrest. Army and Police Chiefs misappropriate funds and budgetary allocations meant for the maintenance of officers while the men and women under their commands abuse and wound people with their guns and collect bribes on our roads and streets. After two years of the botched ENDSAARS protests, no one has been arrested or indicted for the shooting our young people.

The political class has failed the populace. The elections which bring in our governors, members of the state and federal houses of assembly, senators and the presidents every four years are terribly marred with fraudulent, sharp and violent electoral practices.<sup>12</sup> It is shameful that the nation's 'honorable' Senators and members of the Federal and state houses of assemblies make false electoral promises and pad budgets in order to enrich themselves. Over the years and under several administrations, the political players and government personnel, agents and agencies have been implicated in heavy and shameful corruption allegations, yet no one is impeached, indicted or punished. In many other ways, people in government benefit from the corruption and pay lip service to the fight against corruption.<sup>13</sup> The economy of the country continues to dip, with no commensurate and well-intentioned action plan from the administration. The wealth of the nation is mismanaged, stolen and diverted to personal interests. In the words of Chinua Achebe, "the countless billions that a generous Providence poured into our national coffers ... would have been enough to launch this nation into the middle-rank of developed nations and transform the lives of our poor and needy. But [instead they are] stolen and salted away by people in power and their accomplices..."<sup>14</sup> The consequence is that social trust, which James Keenan defines in a recent

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<sup>12</sup> John Campbell, "Electoral Violence in Nigeria", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2010. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05661>, 1, 3

<sup>13</sup> "Nigeria's Struggle with Corruption", 1

<sup>14</sup> Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (Ibadan: Heineman Press, 1983), 3.

article as “the basic resource” of public institutions,<sup>15</sup> has been destroyed completely as there is instead, an alarmingly high level of distrust, of the populace, towards the government.<sup>16</sup> “Executive excesses, especially human rights abuses and corruption undermine the legitimacy and credibility of leaders; they cause citizens to respond to democracy with torpor, skepticism, and sometimes downright indifference. Discontent with leaders is deep, wide and strong...”<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, injustice has become the daily bread of the poor. Flourishing has become a far-fetched commodity, away from the reach of the population. Indeed, our nation stinks with the foul and pungent smell of corruption!

### **The Motivation for this work**

I am motivated to do this work concerning corruption in my country Nigeria out of three reasons. The first is that Nigeria is my country. As a citizen, born and bred, raised up, educated, lived and worked in Nigeria all my life, I should be concerned, and I am really and passionately concerned that my country is degenerating to anarchy and total collapse. It is a country abundantly blessed with human and natural mineral resources as well as social cultural, religious and geo-physical abilities, capacities and potentials. Corruption has denied us as a nation to take our rightful place in the global forum. Suffering has become our bed-fellow, and I mean, man-made, humanly-induced suffering which could have been avoided if corruption had not been given a kingly position. I therefore undertake this work not to disparage my fellow citizens of Nigeria but out of a deep concern for the betterment of our nation.

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<sup>15</sup> James Keenan, "Social Trust and the Ethics of Our Institutions", in *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* (2022), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Oluwakemi Okenyodo, “Governance, Accountability, and Security in Nigeria” in *Africa Center for Strategic Studies*, (2016). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep19052>, p. 1

<sup>17</sup> Oko, *Key Problems for Democracy in Nigeria*, 36 – 37.

The second motivating factor is my own personal experiences and those of my loved ones, relatives, friends, parishioners and acquaintances; experiences of unacceptable frustrations, depressions, delays, injustices, pain, difficulties, sufferings, losses, insults, fears and threats which were due to the corruption in the land. ‘Sex - and ‘money for grades’ is common in our universities and refusal to agree to lecturers’ demands and inability to offer money or buy class handouts have caused students close to me grades, denied many admissions and even delayed the graduation of some. There are also ‘sex-for-job’ and ‘money-for-job’.<sup>18</sup> The most annoying of these terrible experiences is that as unacceptable as they are, sufferers and victims could not seek redress. I live with the memories of these experiences and stories of pain every day and have to navigate the best path of turning them around into sources of encouragement for others who share the same or similar experiences, either in Nigeria or somewhere else in our wounded world! It makes sense to me therefore to engage in the work as I hope that it will contribute to the good of our nation and to the well-being of humanity. “The man dies”, wrote Wole Soyinka, a Nigerian poet and Nobel Laureate, “in the person who keeps quiet in the face of tyranny”.<sup>19</sup>

The third is that, as a priest and theologian, who is interested in human flourishing and the progress of peoples, it is proper to my office to contribute, though infinitesimal it might be, and to lend my voice to the other voices who have been lamenting, whether we are heard or not, but I am optimistic that we will be heard. My priestly formation, academic progress and theological training are not only meant to help me teach spirituality in church on Sundays or to assist me to go to heaven; that privileged education should also benefit humanity, in any little way I can.

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<sup>18</sup> Kiki Mordi, *Sex for Grades: undercover inside Nigerian and Ghanaian universities*, Documentary by BBC Africa Eye, October 11, 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p07qtpbc>. The incidences exposed by this documentary is infinitesimal compared to the actual experiences of students. This same shameful crime also goes on in our private and public offices between chief executives and young people seeking employment.

<sup>19</sup> Wole Soyinka, *The Man Died: Prison Notes* (London: Rex Collins, 1972), 13.

## Raising Necessary Question

As I ruminate over the very bleak and seemingly unredeemable state of affairs, a lot of questions crisscross my mind. Considering the pervasive nature of the corruption in Nigeria and the seeming hopelessness, it is important to ask: is the corruption in Nigeria truly unbeatable and is the country irredeemable? Since the government pays lip service to its anti-corruption programs, is there anything the populace can do to fight it? Or should they throw in the towel? What should they do to undo corruption and establish true flourishing? What about the Church? Does the Church have any contribution to make concerning a social issue such as corruption?

I think that although corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of the nation, the practice of virtue holds the key to national transformation. It is the contention of this paper that virtues shape social interactions and institutions. Broadly speaking, virtue is an excellence, a quality which a thing possesses, and which enables it to do its work well. In relation to human beings, I can at this point simply say that human virtues are stable and good human behavioral habits and qualities which make a person excellent and successful in the achievement of set goals or ends which are also good. A broader understanding of the concept of virtues will be taken up in the chapter one. Suffice it to say however that, the approach of virtue ethics lays emphasis on character as the basis of ethical thought. It asks three basic questions, namely: *who are we? Who ought we to become? How do we get there?* It eventually forms the character of individual human persons into good moral agents. These persons make up society. By building up morally sound, good or virtuous individuals, virtue builds up a morally sound society. Since virtue ethics offers the best account of the moral life,<sup>20</sup> and provides action guidance,<sup>21</sup> I think that virtue ethics provides a moral

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<sup>20</sup> Daniel Daly, *The Structures of Virtue and Vice* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2021), 124–5.

<sup>21</sup> In his very erudite article, *Virtue Ethics and Action Guidance*, Dan Daly argues that the virtues are not only ‘traits internal to the person’, but also are ‘conceptual tools with which with which one can morally deliberate’. In other words, the virtues can provide a guide for action.

foundation for building a just, equitable Nigerian society where corruption will be minimal. There are people of virtue all over Nigeria. The Church, which has strongly taken root in the Nigerian geographical space, has raised up numerous men and women, clergy and lay alike who have received the spirit of the Gospel and been trained in virtue. The clergy who have been specially trained in virtue must lead the project of bringing transformation. As disciples of Christ, the men and women of virtue who live in Nigeria should take up the task of national transformation as a way of true Christian discipleship by insisting on the constant practice of the virtues, without compromise, in every situation. In the long history of Christianity and of the Church, they will find exemplars, men and women of virtue who courageously challenged evil, practiced mercy, inspired social justice, defended human dignity or called attention to the common good.<sup>22</sup> These exemplars challenge, but also inspire and encourage them to engage the virtues in the fight against corruption.

### **The Progression of Chapters**

I will proceed in this work in four chapters. The first will describe, with statistical and erudite evidence, the situation of corruption in Nigeria, which has destroyed social trust and has inversely brought about a horde of social problems such as bad governance, poverty, hunger, insecurity, social injustice, neglect of the common good and so on, as well as try to point out some of the factors responsible for this enduring social, cultural and political malaise.

The second chapter is the ethics chapter: I will show in that chapter that the corruption in Nigeria and efforts and approaches to curb it are socio-moral concerns and issues which merit ethical and theological investigation and the attention of ethicists and moral theologians. I will

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<sup>22</sup> In his most recent book, *A History of Catholic Theological Ethics*, James Keenan presents us with a long list of exemplars of virtue through Church history and reflects on their inspiring contributions not only to the development of Christian ethics, but also to the renewal of the Church and human society.

present in that chapter, important ethical / moral principles, namely: 1, the virtues and the virtuous examples of exemplars and 2, the principles of Catholic social doctrine. These principles will guide the rest of the work. They will be for the rest of this work of theological ethics, what moral compasses are for aircrafts and their pilots. They will act like moral lenses with which the responses of the Christian people will be examined and evaluated in the next chapter. And in the fourth chapter, recommendations will have them as their framework. I will be drawing on the works of some virtue ethicists such as Daniel Daly, James Keenan, Julia Annas. The work of Daniel Harrington and James Keenan and that of Lucas Chan on exemplars will also be useful in this chapter.

In the third, I will look at the Christian people – bishops, priests, consecrated persons and lay members of Christ's faithful – in Nigeria who are called to be the light in the darkness and have received virtuous moral training by the Gospel of Christ. By that token, they ought to be virtuous people, after the examples of their most excellent leader, Jesus Christ, the Apostles, numerous other martyrs and saints, dead and living, who constitute for them, 'a cloud of witnesses'. This chapter examines, analyses and evaluates their behaviors and responses so far in the face of corruption vis-à-vis the virtuous lives of the exemplars, and the principles of the Church's social teaching, as to find out whether they have done well or poorly; whether they deserve praises or not, and to determine if there are character traits and action areas they need to improve, in order to help change the ugly situation.

The fourth chapter will propose the way forward. It will consider particular virtues and practices which need to be cultivated and promoted. It will also discuss forms of moral communities, such as priests' movements, lay movements and so on, which will foster those virtues and practices among clergy and laity alike. I will then attempt a conclusion.

## Chapter One

### 1.0 The Situation of Corruption in Nigeria

#### 1.1 Nigeria: A Brief History

Nigeria is a country in West Africa. It sits in between the Gulf of Guinea (in the Atlantic Ocean to the South and the Sahel to the North and is bounded by Benin Republic to the West, Cameroon to the East and Chad to the North East. The country is a little more than twice the size of California and three times the size of the United Kingdom.<sup>23</sup> It covers an area of 356,669 square miles (being placed as the 31<sup>st</sup> largest country of the world) and as at July 2022, boasts of an estimated population of 218,541,000 people, 2.73% of the world's population, making it the 6<sup>th</sup> country of the world with the highest population according to United Nations projections.<sup>24</sup> It is Africa's most populous country and one of its most diverse, with over 250 ethnic groups, speaking about or above 525 dialects and English as the official language<sup>25</sup> (as well as a corrupted form of English, called PIDGIN, popular across the West African coastal nations), variety of cultural identities, different religious confessions and affiliations as well as variety of landscapes, vegetation, weather and climatic conditions and attendant agricultural activities and products.<sup>26</sup>

##### 1.1.1 Pre-colonial Nigeria

Prior to the colonial times, the area known today as Nigeria, as well as the rest of West Africa was inhabited by various ethnic nationalities and local kingdoms were already established. Languages and cultures separated them.<sup>27</sup> There was yet no countries as we have them today. Each

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<sup>23</sup> Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999), 1

<sup>24</sup> United Nations, "World Population Prospects", Feb 10, 2023, [www.population.un.org](http://www.population.un.org),

<sup>25</sup> Blench, Roger, *An Atlas of Nigerian Languages*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Kay Williamson Educational Foundation, 2012), [http://www.rogerblench.info/Language/Africa/Nigeria/Atlas\\_of\\_Nigerian\\_Languages-ed\\_III.pdf](http://www.rogerblench.info/Language/Africa/Nigeria/Atlas_of_Nigerian_Languages-ed_III.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Ida Walker, *The Evolution of Africa's Major Nations: Nigeria* (Philadelphia: Mason Crest, 2013), 11 – 17.

<sup>27</sup> Robert I. Rotberg, "Africa: Progress, Problems, and Promise" in Ida Walker, *The Evolution of Africa's Major Nations: Nigeria* (Philadelphia: Mason Crest, 2013), 8.

ethnic people had very well-organized systems of self-rule. They had their kings and local chiefs and there was order in each kingdom. They related with one another by trade and sometimes warred with each other over land. Ethnic groups with superior armies conquered others around them and made them vassals and received taxes from them.<sup>28</sup> The Dahomey Kingdom (1625 - 1894) in what is now called Benin Republic, which bounds Nigeria to the West, is one such kingdom which served as vassals to the Ile-Ife people for so many years until the Dahomey female arm of their army came to the rescue.<sup>29</sup> There was no Nigeria yet at this time.

In the north, the Hausa tribe has predominance. With their proximity to the Sahara, there were contacts with Islamists and trans-Saharan business merchants from North Africa. The region had centralized communities and governments. Well before the 15<sup>th</sup> century, sub-saharan trade merchants had already made contacts with the Hausa and Kanuri people who live in this area.<sup>30</sup> Around the 17 and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Fulani tribal people had come from Senegal, Ethiopia and Guinea and invaded the region and turned the Hausa people into vassals in their own home. These Fulani brought with them Islam and imposed it upon the people. Their modus operandi was the Islamic Jihad: forceful imposition of Islam and killing of those who refuse. Led by Usman Dan Fodio, they ran over the entire northern part, established the Caliphate (the central government, ruled by a sultan) at Sokoto and, emirates, ruled by emirs who pay allegiance to the sultan and the Caliphate, all over the north.<sup>31</sup> Till today, the Fulani have been controlling the north, ruling over the Hausa people.

The Fulani, nomadic cattle-herders from Senegal who migrated across Africa to Lake Chad in the mid-16th century CE, settled in Hausaland and brought with them ...the Islamic religion and learning. In the last quarter of the 18th century CE, the

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<sup>28</sup> Liora Bigon, "The Former Names of Lagos (Nigeria) in Historical Perspective", *Names: A Journal of Onomastics*, (2011, 59: 4, 229 – 240), 232. DOI: 10.1179/002777311X13148870565437.

<sup>29</sup> The movie (the Woman King) is an epic memoir of the victory of the female Dahomey army (the *Agojie*) which ended the feudal power of the Ile Ife kingdom.

<sup>30</sup> Falola, *The History of Nigeria*, 10

<sup>31</sup> Falola, *The History of Nigeria*, 37

Fulani abandoned their peaceful evangelism and launched a religious war in the region.... Thus, from 1804 CE, the Fulani leader Usman dan Fodio conquered all of the Hausa city-states, converting them to Islam.<sup>32</sup>

The Fulani Islamists had the grand plan to gradually penetrate further south. They successfully ran over Oyo and Ibadan empires and established an emirate at Ilorin in the western region, and were moving into the Middle belt.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, in the southern region, early explorers had stepped into the lands along the West African coastline from the Atlantic early in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, opening the doors to trade relations between Europe and the locals.<sup>34</sup> Eko (renamed by the British and now known as Lagos),<sup>35</sup> Bonny, Okrika and Igweocha (also renamed and known today as Port Harcourt)<sup>36</sup> and Calabar are some of the coastal towns through which the European traders, missionaries and colonialists accessed the region known now as Nigeria. The European merchants bought palm oil, cocoa and several other farms produces while importing their own finished products such as clothes, jewelry, knives and guns, and liquor and other alcoholic beverages. Unfortunately, they added to the erstwhile honest trade, the evil and dehumanizing trading of human beings who were turned into slaves and beasts of burden in Europe and America.<sup>37</sup>

While other colonial powers, such as the Portuguese, the French, etc., became involved in the region by way of the trading of goods and slave as early as the fifteenth century, the British joined them only in the eighteenth century, but they helped in abolishing the slave – trade by enacting laws which prohibited it, following strong condemnations of the trade by the Christian

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<sup>32</sup> Mark Cartwright, “Hausaland” in *World History Encyclopedia* (2019), <https://www.worldhistory.org/Hausaland>

<sup>33</sup> Falola, *History of Nigeria*, 37

<sup>34</sup> Bigon, *The former Names*, 233.

<sup>35</sup> Bigon, *The Former Names*, 235 – 7.

<sup>36</sup> Dimm Uche Okwukwu, “Why is Wike denying his Igbo Roots?” *Vanguard Newspapers*, Dec. 5, 2020, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/12/why-is-wike-denying-his-igbo-roots/>

<sup>37</sup> Falola, *History of Nigeria*, 31

missions.<sup>38</sup> However, the trans-Atlantic trading of commodities continued, but beyond the trade, the colonialists started establishing colonial authority over the indigenous peoples. There was a scramble for these lands spreading across the West African coast. It was the British that ultimately got control over the area that would be named Nigeria, after very fierce struggles and resistances from the local and indigenous peoples, and which cost the lives and property of numerous persons from these communities.<sup>39</sup> It was not until 1861 that they formally occupied their first Nigerian territory, Lagos.<sup>40</sup>

From Lagos, the British colonialists got control over the rest of the Southern part of the space (1861 – 1897), and later the Northern part (1900 – 1914) and established the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and Northern Nigeria Protectorate and administered them separately initially.<sup>41</sup> To the credit of the colonial administration, the original move to extend the Islamist jihad beyond the middle belt, down to the deep south ended. The colonialist government also, gradually diminished the authorities and powers of the various empires and kingdoms in the various sections of the area and strove to have a central colonial government over the two protectorates. Thus, on January 1, 1914, Frederick Lugard, who was the head of the colonial administration, signed a document amalgamating all the ethnic peoples in the two regions, thereby creating one Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria.<sup>42</sup> This amalgamation was never the collective will of the people and it did not bring, and has not, till today, brought about “a coherent integration of the country, as both the south and north continued to maintain many of their differences in aspects of governance and society.”<sup>43</sup> Of course the colonial administration both in Nigeria and “elsewhere in the British

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<sup>38</sup> Falola, *The History of Nigeria*, 44 - 45

<sup>39</sup> Falola, *The History of Nigeria*, 60 - 65

<sup>40</sup> Allan Burns, *History of Nigeria* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969), 128 - 139

<sup>41</sup> Falola, *The History of Nigeria* 53 - 60

<sup>42</sup> Burns, *History of Nigeria*, 16

<sup>43</sup> Falola, *The History of Nigeria*, 69

Empire was an autocratic government. Officials at the Colonial Office and colonial governors in the field never pretended otherwise. In fact, autocratic, bureaucratic rule was the true legacy of British colonial government in Africa."<sup>44</sup> The reason for the amalgamation was both political and economic; it was not for the good of the colonized people but to favour the British colonialists: it was undertaken in order to reduce the administrative burden on the British and allow the rich south to effectively subsidize the much less economically prosperous north.<sup>45</sup> Frederick Lugard infamously described it as a marriage between the “rich wife of substance and means” (the south) and the “poor husband” (the north), and hoped that it would lead to a happy life for both, but it has not.<sup>46</sup> For the name that would be suitable, the name - *Nigeria* (from *Niger area*) - suggested by a British journalist, Flora Shaw, who was working in the colony then, as an editor, an idea that was inspired by the river Niger, the longest river in the country, was adopted. Shaw would later become the wife of Frederick Lugard.<sup>47</sup> Forty-six years later in 1960, Nigeria became an independent state.

### **1.1.2 Post – Independence Nigeria**

From the foregoing, it is clear that the nation Nigeria, as the official political state that we know today, began from 1914, without prejudice to the fact of historical existence of numerous peoples occupying the length and breadth of that geographical space at the time. From that time, through the announcement of independence on October 1, 1960, till now, the Nigerian political landscape can be said to have gone through three different eras. The first era (the era of colonial administration and eventual hand over of power to local leaders) has been briefly described above.

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<sup>44</sup> John M. Carland, *The Colonial Office and Nigeria 1898–1914* (London: Hoover Institution Press, 1985), 1 - 2

<sup>45</sup> Carland, *The Colonial Office and Nigeria*, 79 - 84.

<sup>46</sup> Jack McCaslin, “Lord Lugard Created Nigeria 104 Years Ago”, January 2, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/lord-lugard-created-nigeria-104-years-ago>

<sup>47</sup> P. J. Crowhurst, “British Empire 1815 – 1914”, <https://www.britishempire.me.uk/flora-shaw.html>; Walker, *The Evolution*, 23

The second era (1966 – 1999) is the era of military juntas, which intermittently truncated the nascent democratic development. R. I. Rotberg observed that during this period, “oil-rich Nigeria suffered incessant periods of harsh, corrupt, autocratic military rule.”<sup>48</sup> The military first truncated the democratic process in 1966, sacking the very first indigenous civilian government of the newly created nation, to which the British colonialists handed over power before they left. From then, Nigeria experienced 5 different coups and military regimes and two elected civilian elections and governments in between. Corruption was always the argument and the reason for these military truncations. Yet, each military junta grew worse in corrupt practices and performed more woefully than the former.<sup>49</sup>

The third (1999 – date) is the current era which saw a return to democracy.<sup>50</sup> This is the era which ushered in the third democratically elected government. Since then, the democratic process has not been truncated again. What remains however is to stamp out corruption which has been polluting the electoral process which ushers in a new government every four years. Elections are usually fraught with enormous malpractices which call to question the patriotism of the agents of the electoral commission.

On October 1, 2024, Nigeria will be 119 years since it became a nation and 63 years since her independence. For these 63 years, she has got an enormous baggage of problems, among which is corruption. Not a few authors believe that the arbitrary and colonially imposed, amalgamation of culturally different, ethnic entities into a forged nation without first securing their approval and acceptance to be united is the beginning of the myriad problems in the nation and in several other nations across West Africa, and around the world. “It is no wonder that diverse peoples, forcibly

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<sup>48</sup> Rotberg, “Africa: Progress, Problems, and Promise”, 8

<sup>49</sup> Oji and Oji. *Corruption in Nigeria: The Fight and Movement to Cure the Malady*, xix.

<sup>50</sup> Oko, *Key Problems of Democracy in Nigerian*, 1- 2

united into single states, sometimes turn to separatism. Contemporary examples range from Biafra (Nigeria), to Ambazonia (Cameroon), to Somaliland (Somalia), and to Azawad (Mali).”<sup>51</sup>

## **1.2 The Nigerian Society vis-a vis the Malaise of Corruption**

Under this section, I will look at the concept of corruption in its enormity, the causes as well as the damaging effects, on the human, cultural, social, political and economic aspects of the nation and its citizens.

### **1.2.1 The Concept of Corruption**

It is exigent at this point to attempt a working definition of the term corruption. According to Simpson’s Oxford English Dictionary, the adjective “corrupt” qualifies a thing that is debased in character; infected with evil; depraved; perverted; evil; wicked. It is used of persons and actions which are perverted from uprightness and fidelity in the discharge of duty; influenced by bribery or the like; venal.<sup>52</sup> We can therefore simply define corruption as the act, conduct or habit of being corrupt, of being depraved, of being immoral, dishonest or fraudulent. This is a basic, simple, broad and unrestricted definition.

Black’s Law Dictionary defines it as “doing something with the intent to give some advantage inconsistent with official duty and the rights of others; a fiduciary or official’s use of a station of office to procure some benefit either personally or for someone else, contrary to the right of others”.<sup>53</sup> This definition perceives corruption as an activity pertaining to public service.

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<sup>51</sup> Jack McCaslin, “Lord Lugard created Nigeria 104 years ago” Council on Foreign Relations (Washington, DC. Creative Commons, 2018), <https://www.cfr.org/blog/lord-lugard-created-nigeria-104-years-ago>.

<sup>52</sup> J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner (eds.), *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 972.

<sup>53</sup> Bryan A. Garner (ed.), *Black’s Law Dictionary* (Minnesota: West Group, 2014), 348.

Transparency International (TI) also understands corruption as such and defines it as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain”.<sup>54</sup> Entrusted power is in the arena of public service.

Equally, Banerjee, Mullainathan and Hanna also interpret corruption as an activity that takes place in public service and by public servants, but they introduce another twist. On big difficulty that bordered them in their research was how to measure corruption. “Corruption, by its very nature, is illicit and secretive. How does one study something that is defined in part by the fact that individuals go to great lengths to hide it? How does one deal with the fact that attempts to measure corruption may cause the actors involved to either reduce their illicit behaviors during the periods of measurement or find new ways to obscure their behavior?”, Abhijit Banerjee et al. ask. In trying to provide a new framework for analyzing and measuring corruption in public bureaucracies, they try to bring in various shades of meanings of corruption into one brief but reasonable, very restricted and legal-based definition. According to their definition, corruption is “breaking of a rule by a bureaucrat (or an elected official) for private gain”. This definition, according to them, encompasses and recognizes all other aspects of meanings suggested by other definitions. It includes the most obvious type of corruption which is taking monetary bribe in order to bend a rule, or to give a favour or provide a service to someone who does not merit it; it also includes nepotism and truancy<sup>55</sup> and yet receiving one’s paycheck. Their interest is to have a working definition of corruption that is determined by rules or laws. Under this definition, the rules define what is corrupt. Their definition therefore emphasizes breaking formal rules (as opposed to moral or ethical ones) which “sidesteps the need to make subjective ethical judgments and thereby

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<sup>54</sup> Transparency International, “*What is Corruption*”, March 5, 2023, <https://www.transparency.org/en/what-is-corruption>.

<sup>55</sup> I looked up Google to be sure that the word *truancy*, usually applied to school children being absent from school often, can also be applied to work. One example is the definition of truancy given by *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016) as: 1. The absence of a child from school without permission. 2. The neglect of work or duty.

avoids the need to have a deeper discussion of cultural differences. The emphasis on all kinds of gain rather than just monetary, sidesteps a measurement problem: bribes by their very nature are hard to measure, whereas rule breaking is easier to measure”.<sup>56</sup>

In as much as measuring corruption is crucial for justice in every society, I do not think that we need to shed off all the ethical and moral aspects around corruption and make it a strictly legal concern. Doing so will be silencing voices and consciences who should condemn vile and vicious behaviours when they happen around us. In scenarios when national and state constitutions fail to capture certain forms of behaviours which human consciences know are corrupt, it will be difficult to oppose and stamp out such behaviors if we insist on this definition. I agree with Dada and Ekpo who contend that corruption takes different forms, degrees and particulars.<sup>57</sup>

I also do not think that corruption only happens in the public service or perpetuated only by government officials or public servants.

Corruption can happen anywhere: in business, government, the courts, the media, and in civil society, as well as across all sectors from health and education to infrastructure and sports. Corruption can involve anyone: politicians, government officials, public servants, business people or members of the public. Corruption happens in the shadows, often with the help of professional enablers such as bankers, lawyers, accountants and real estate agents, opaque financial systems and anonymous shell companies that allow corruption schemes to flourish and the corrupt to launder and hide their illicit wealth. Corruption adapts to different contexts and changing circumstances. It can evolve in response to changes in rules, legislation and even technology.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Abhijit Banerjee, Sendhil Mullainathan, and Rema Hanna, *Corruption*, NBER Working Paper No. 17968 April 2012, 5, JEL No. D02,O10,O12,O43.

<sup>57</sup> Jacob A. Dada and Mokutima E. Ekpo, “Corruption: A Threat to Democracy” in *Towards a Stable Democracy in the Millennium*, Proceedings of the 37th Annual Conference of Nigerian Association of Law Teachers, (Makurdi, 2000), 72 – 3.

<sup>58</sup> Transparency International, “*What is Corruption.*” <https://www.transparency.org/en/what-is-corruption>; <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi>

Private people can also and do engage in, foster, propagate and perpetuate corruption. Aiding and abetting others who engage in corruption engenders corruption. This is why some authors have tried to differentiate between various forms of corruption such as public corruption.

Public corruption is often defined as involving behavior on the part of public officials in the public sector, whether politicians or civil servants, in which they improperly and unlawfully enrich themselves or those associated with them, by the misuse of the public power entrusted to them; in a summary form, it is the abuse of public power or office for private gain. It includes bribery, nepotism, cronyism, patronage, fraud and theft, conflict of interests through assets, jobs and gifts; [it also includes] manipulation of information, discrimination and sexual harassment, [employment of] improper methods for nobler cause (using immoral means to achieve moral ends), waste and abuse of resources and private time misconduct. Synonyms for corruption include integrity violation and unethical behavior.<sup>59</sup>

In any case, it is important to note that public corruption is most pervasive, and most corrosive to the life and well-being of the human society. This does not in any way excuse, canonize or make light all other forms of corruption. Any society which wants to make serious progress, the minutest or infinitesimal form of corruption should be an issue of concern. In all, no form of corrupted should be tolerated, compromised, excused or left addressed or unpunished.

In this paper, corruption is used for unethical behaviours such as stealing, telling lies, misuse or embezzling of public funds, engagement in graft and padding budgetary allocations, unaccountability, taking of bribes, falsifying numbers, figures and documents, favoritism, nepotism, abuse of office, bending of legal processes and rules of proceedings, public servants demanding or taking money or favors in exchange for services; and all behaviors in private and public life which subverts justice and repudiates equity; actions and activities which break legal,

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<sup>59</sup> Cyrill Fijnant and Leo Huberts (eds.), *Corruption, Integrity and Law Enforcement* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2002), 4.

ethical and moral laws in order to accord obtain some form of personal gain or done to deny someone their due.

### **1.2.2 The Enormity of Corruption in the Land**

Talking about the myriad of problems bedeviling the nation, I argue that corruption is not just one of the problems; it is rather the fundamental problem, and the source and springboard of every other national malaise. Though the nation is still agrarian and depends heavily on crude oil revenue, she is however richly blessed with abundant deposits of “natural resources, including timber, fossil fuels (petroleum, coal, and lignite), metallic minerals (tin, columbite, tantaline, wolframite, molybdenite, lead, zinc, iron, gold), radioactive minerals (uranium, monazite, thorite, zircon) and non-metallic minerals (limestone, marble, industrial rocks and gravel, clay and shale, kaolin, and feldspar)”<sup>60</sup> most of which are yet untapped. Though agricultural activities are still crudely done, yet the nation is rich with a variety of food produce and natural medicinal resources. Cultural artefacts are numerous and human resources abundant. The population itself is a great economic capital. The abundance of water bodies (ocean, seas, rivers and tributaries), weather and climate are themselves great blessings of nature which favour fishing, animal and crop production and other economic activities. It will not be an exaggeration therefore to say that Nigeria is one of earth’s most endowed regions. The wealth of the nation is such that she is supposed to be a great economic and material resource to the entire world. With the rich wealth of the nation, the citizens of the nation are supposed to flourish and live dignified lives. Unfortunately, this richly endowed nation has, “through bad leadership and corruption, [...] squandered its wealth and the opportunity

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<sup>60</sup> Falola, *History of Nigeria*, 8

to provide better lives for its citizens”.<sup>61</sup> The rich natural, mineral, economic, agricultural, environmental and human resources have not translated into prosperity and human flourishing due to enduring and worsening corruption in our government.<sup>62</sup>

Corruption is so rampant, endemic, massive and brazenly lucrative in Nigeria. It is deeply entrenched, indescribable, annoying and shameful. It is brazenly practiced in government offices and institutions and the entire population is paying a high prize. It looks abnormal these days to find a public official who lives in integrity and shuns corrupt practices. The corrupt practices of a smaller portion of the populace bring so much opprobrium on everyone and makes it oftentimes difficult for Nigerian citizens in the diaspora to proudly identify as Nigerians.

In May 2016, exactly a year after the current president, Muhammadu Buhari became Nigeria’s president, and as Britain was preparing to host the anti-corruption summit, the then British Prime Minister, David Cameron was heard talking to the Queen of England and saying: "We've got some leaders of some fantastically corrupt countries coming to Britain... Nigeria and Afghanistan, possibly the two most corrupt countries in the world".<sup>63</sup> Though it was a most undiplomatic statement and a careless gaffe a Prime Minister could make about other countries, yet the statement is true. I do not know about Afghanistan, but Nigeria being corrupt is correct and that fact cannot be over - emphasized. Interviewed a few days after that, the current President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari did not contest the statement. Commenting on that undiplomatic quote, Reuben Abati comments:

This diplomatic gaffe rubbed many Nigerians on the wrong side, but most of the responses, colored by overtly emotional love of country and a certain defensiveness is downright hypocritical. We all know that indeed Nigeria is “fantastically

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<sup>61</sup> Oko, *Key Problems of Democracy*, 17; See also O. B. Ijewereme, “Anatomy of Corruption in the Nigerian Public Sector: Theoretical Perspectives and Some Empirical Explanations”, (2015), *SAGE Open*, 5(2).

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015581188>

<sup>62</sup> Walker, *The Evolution*, 28, 41.

<sup>63</sup> “David Cameron calls Nigeria and Afghanistan 'fantastically corrupt'”, *BBC News*, May 10, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-36260193>.

corrupt”, and that is why the most profound reaction, the most honest also, is the statement by President Muhammadu Buhari who admitted that indeed Nigerians are “fantastically corrupt” and that Cameron is right, but the clincher was the rider added by President Buhari, when he said he would not ask for an apology but he would be glad if Great Britain can release all the stolen loot in its custody.<sup>64</sup>

Buhari promised, before, during and after that interview, on several occasions to tackle the corruption. Seven years on, and less than three months to hand over after two tenures (4 years each), it is sad to note that corruption has worsened by a very high percentage. In an intelligent contribution to *Deutsche Welle Radio* titled, *Nigeria's hopeless fight against corruption*, Tobore Ovuorie, a multiple award-winning Nigerian investigative journalist and creative writer notes that seven years after President Muhammadu Buhari has been in office, with one more year (at the time the piece was written) to go, his promise to swiftly defeat corruption is clearly a mirage as Nigerians’ personal and national economies now worse off than they were in 2015.<sup>65</sup>

Nigeria was number 136 on Transparency International's 2015 corruption perception index, Afghanistan was ranked at 167, ahead of only Somalia and North Korea. Today Nigeria is at 150. The TI ranking places countries in a descending order of increasing corruption perception, meaning that less corrupt countries top the list while the more corrupt ones are placed on the lower rungs of the ladder. Below is a table of Nigeria’s annual score card in the Corruption Perception Index according to Transparency International ranking for 11 straight years, from 2012 to 2022.

Table 1.

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Score	27	25	27	26	28	27	27	26	25	24	24
Rank	139	144	136	136	136	148	144	146	149	154	150

<sup>64</sup> Reuben Abati, “We All Know ‘Nigeria is Fantastically Corrupt’”, *The Cable*, May 13, 2016, <https://www.thecable.ng/know-nigeria-fantastically-corrupt>.

<sup>65</sup> Tobore Ovuorie. “Nigeria's hopeless fight against corruption”, *Deutsche Welle*, May 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/nigerias-hopeless-fight-against-corruption/a-61946896>

Out of the 180 countries ranked each year, Nigeria has been scoring between 24/100 and 27/100,<sup>66</sup> which is an abysmally poor score. The table shows that instead of doing better in the past 8 years from 2015 till now, the country is growing worse under Buhari's watch. Emmanuel Stober remarks that the nation has not succeeded in improving its dismal scores on the corruption perception index (CPI) significantly despite being the giant of Africa.<sup>67</sup> I contend that, on ground, as experienced by the people who live in Nigeria, the situation is worse. Compared to the actual, experienced situation in the country, the corruption perception index of TI is a fair report. In 2015, one US dollar was equivalent to 190 Nigerian Naira but today, seven years after, one US dollar is about 740 Naira. Inflation is at its worst high.

### **1.2.3 The Causes of Corruption**

Exactly when and how corruption crept in to our social political life is a big question that may be difficult to answer. What is more important however is to examine the causes, the factors and the catalysts which have been promoting and feeding this cankerworm. A school of thought contends that the elementary and initial 'take-off' of corruption was initiated by the slave trade and colonialism. Slave trade opened the eyes of the indigenous peoples that even human beings could be sold for money and other material things. The slave merchants taught African people to take gifts of money and other items which were brought in from Europe and sell of their family members and other people to them in exchange. They taught our people greed and bribery.<sup>68</sup> This is where it began. Colonialism on the other hand enthroned high-handedness in government and a sense of superiority in leaders. As they tried to establish their power through indirect rule, the

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<sup>66</sup> Transparency International, "Corruption Perception Index", 2022, <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi>

<sup>67</sup> Emmanuel Olusegun Stober, "Nigeria's Corruption Score Card", *Management Dynamics in the Knowledge Economy*. Vol. 7 (2019), 2, 165 -182, DOI 10.25019/MDKE/7.2.03. ISSN 2392-8042 (online)

<sup>68</sup> Oji and Oji, *Corruption in Nigeria*, 1

colonialists also gave local rulers excessive authority and inspired them to live as masters over the people without being accountable to them.<sup>69</sup> In a public lecture, *Colonialism and Social Structure*, to the academia of the University of Ibadan Nigeria, in 1980, Professor Peter Ekeh posited that colonialism had an enduring damaging impact as a power structure which methodically destroys, reinvents, changes and replaces anything which poses a hindrance the colonial domination and exploitation agenda.<sup>70</sup>

While I recognize the impact of the colonial times, I do not in any way excuse Nigerians ourselves of blame and wrong doing. Since Independence, corruption has been on the increase. Fighting against it has been a daunting task for the various military and democratic governments we have had, despite many promises and several efforts which citizens believe are neither adequate not sincere. The first indigenous government failed to curb it. In fact, each of the various military presidents who forcefully took over power claimed their reason for doing so was because the civilian governments were corrupt. I argue that the various administrations – civilian and military – are all culpable for allowing this terrible monster to grow.

I consider four key factors as the major and primary catalysts of corruption in Nigeria:

**1. Greed, unbridled lust for money and selfishness.**<sup>71</sup> This is the excessive and unquenchable desire for material possessions, the “immoderate love of possessing”. It denotes immoderation in fulfilment of our desires and the acquisition of riches and material things.<sup>72</sup> Catholic moral theology identifies it as a monstrous vice and counted as one of the seven capital

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<sup>69</sup> Merima Ali, Odd-Helge Fjeldstad and Abdulaziz B. Shifa, *Did British colonial rule in Africa foster a legacy of corruption among local elites?* (London School of Science and Political Science, 2020), <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2020/10/28/what-is-british-colonial-rule-in-africa-foster-a-legacy-corruption-local-elites>. There are several other literatures which share the same view that corruption was imported into the new country by those who created it.

<sup>70</sup> Peter Ekeh, *Colonialism and Social Structure*, An Inaugural Lecture (University of Ibadan: 1982). [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271134410\\_Colonialism\\_and\\_Social\\_Structure\\_An\\_Inaugural\\_Lecture](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271134410_Colonialism_and_Social_Structure_An_Inaugural_Lecture).

<sup>71</sup> Oko, *Key Problems*, 508

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa – IIae, q.118, art.1, <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3118.htm>

sins, as it engenders many other sins when allowed to grow. Aquinas is of the view that it is not just a grievous sin but the most grievous of sins.<sup>73</sup>, with numerous offspring such as treachery, fraud, falsehood, perjury, restlessness, violence and insensibility to mercy.<sup>74</sup>

The insatiability with which government officials and their cronies steal and loot public treasuries in our government and other public places is shocking. On July 22, 2019, Sahara Reporters carried a story of diversion of four million naira involving 8 soldiers of the Nigerian Army officers, money meant for military equipment.<sup>75</sup> The general commanding the Sokoto division had asked some of his men to move the money to an undisclosed person in Kaduna. The soldiers diverted the money to themselves are were never seen again, while the general was summarily dismissed from the Army.<sup>76</sup> Similar headlines saturate our local media space such as these: “Army General forfeits N426.7m to FG” (2020)<sup>77</sup>; “Nigeria investigating missing funds meant for arms, NSA Monguno says” (March 2021)<sup>78</sup>; “Keyamo refutes allegations of acquiring foreign property with public funds”<sup>79</sup> - this is an unfolding story of a corrupt Minister in the current administration. Meanwhile, funds looted by the late military president, Sani Abacha, some of which have been recovered have not ben and will never be accounted for. Buhari, who self-

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<sup>73</sup> Aquinas, S. T, q. 118, art.5

<sup>74</sup> Aquinas, S. T., q. 118, art 8

<sup>75</sup> “Nigerian Army Quizzes General over missing N400 Million in botched VIP Escort”, *Sahara Reporters* (New York), July 22, 2019, <https://saharareporters.com/2019/07/22/nigerian-army-quizzes-general-over-missing-n400-million-botched-vip-escort>

<sup>76</sup> Kingsley Omonobi, “Missing Funds: Army dismisses Major General Hakeem Otiki with ‘disgrace and dishonour’”, *Vanguard Newspapers*, (Abuja), June 16, 2020, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/06/missing-funds-army-dismisses-major-general-hakeem-otiki-with-disgrace-and-dishonour/>

<sup>77</sup> Soni Daniel, “Army General forfeits N426.7m to FG”, *The Vanguard*, May 16, 2020, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/05/army-general-forfeits-n426-7m-to-fg-2/>

<sup>78</sup> Abel Ejikeme, “Nigeria Investigating ‘Missing Funds’ Meant for Arms, NSA Monguno Says”, *Arise News*, Mar 12, 2021, <https://www.arise.tv/nigeria-investigating-missing-funds-meant-for-arms-nsa-monguno-says/>

<sup>79</sup> Jimisayo Opanuga, “Keyamo refutes allegations of acquiring foreign property with public funds”, *The Guardian*, April 23, 2023, <https://guardian.ng/news/keyamo-refutes-allegations-of-acquiring-foreign-property-with-public-funds/>

acclaims to be a saint, has not cared to account for those recovered monies.<sup>80</sup> Nigeria has wasted and lost billions of monies that should have been invested into other critical areas on petrol subsidies. Our 4 well-built refineries have been left to rot. If they are functional, we would be refining our petroleum and exporting the products. In addition, numerous jobs would be created. But greed stands in the way. Politicians and their cronies in the business world who make millions through importation of refined products do not want our refineries to work.<sup>81</sup> Recently, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) requested three trillion in order to continue funding subsidy in 2022.<sup>82</sup> Why can't these trillions be invested into renovation and maintenance of those well-build refineries? And of course, Nigerians know that these trillions will end up in the pockets of a few individuals.

These are just a few examples of the many stories of shameless looting of public funds. Sometimes, thinking of all these shameful reports of widespread corruption, I feel ashamed to be a Nigerian. I conclude this section by leaving the reader with a link to an audio-visual documentary which narrates the looting habit of one of the most corrupt and dangerous men our nation has ever experience.<sup>83</sup> Our corrupt, legally porous system allowed him to be a two-time Governor of the richest state of Lagos, where his addiction to stealing was crowned. He has just been announced the winner of the presidential election of February 25, 2023, an announcement that threw a greater majority of the nation into sadness.

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<sup>80</sup> Ochogwu Sunday, "Tell Nigerians how you spent recovered loot – Stakeholders tell Buhari" *The Daily Post Newspaper*, May 27, 2021, <https://dailypost.ng/2021/05/27/tell-nigerians-how-you-spent-recovered-loot-stakeholders-tell-buhari/>

<sup>81</sup> Samson Adenekan, "Fuel Subsidy: Why are our refineries not working – Nigerian Labour Congress President" *Premium Times*, January 21, 2022, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/507015-fuel-subsidy-why-our-refineries-are-not-working-nlc-president.html>

<sup>82</sup> News Agency of Nigeria, *Analyzing the retaining, removal of Nigeria's oil subsidy*, in *Guardian Newspaper*, 6 February 2022, <https://guardian.ng/news/analysing-the-retaining-removal-of-nigerias-oil-subsidy/>

<sup>83</sup> "Unmasking the real Bola Ahmed Tinubu", *YouTube*, March 4, 2015, <https://youtu.be/LYmRKtnQjUU>

## **2. Lack of honest and competent leadership is the next on the list.**

Since independence, all administrations – civilian and military – have been riddled with corruption and each pays lip service to fight the monster. The military administrations which usurped power on the grounds that civilian governments were corrupt, became the most corrupt. Especially under Babangida and Abacha, Nigeria experienced the worst seasons of looting of public treasury, brutality and human rights abuses, entronement of bribery and the neglect of the rule of law.<sup>84</sup> Funds looted and stashed away in foreign European banks by Abacha who died in 1998 are yet to be fully recovered. Since we returned to civilian, democratic government, we are yet to see any serious effort to push back corruption. Instead, what we see are politicians who buy their way into power and once they take office, all they do is to recover the billions they spent buying and rigging elections, and stashing away public funds in preparation for the next round of elections. Budgets are padded by parliamentarians and after each fiscal year, no one hears about how budgetary allocations were spent. According to the Council on foreign relations, between 1999 and 2021, Nigeria’s local and external federal government borrowings jumped from N3.55 trillion to N26.91 trillion, an increase of 658 percent. With a total public debt stock of N41.6 trillion, Nigeria’s debt to GDP ratio currently stands at 23.27 percent. These statistics testify to the gravity of the decline of Nigeria’s economy. In July 2022, Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Zainab Ahmed, revealed that, at N1.94 trillion, the cost of debt servicing had surpassed the government’s retained revenue of N1.63 trillion, leaving it N300 billion in the hole.<sup>85</sup> Yet, the government keeps borrowings without any commitment to cut cost.

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<sup>84</sup> Oko, *Key Problems*, 510 - 515

<sup>85</sup> Ebenezer Obadare, “Massive Borrowings put Nigeria’s Future at Risk”, 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/massive-borrowing-puts-nigerias-future-risk>.

### 3. Economic adversity:

I agree with Abhijit Banerjee, Sendhil Mullainathan, and Rema Hanna<sup>86</sup> that “corruption is rampant in many poor countries”. Poverty and corruption are two intimately related Siamese twins and unfortunate bed-fellows: corrupt practices destroy the economy and render people poor. Equally, poverty can lead people into corrupt practices in order to make ends meet. According to Oko, corruption is rendered all the more intractable by the domestic economic decline in Nigeria. He argues that due to official government corruption and disrespect for the rule of law, the high living standard Nigerians had declined drastically. The country’s currency, the Naira (₦), once powerful in the world market, lost its power. As at 1971, US \$1 = one naira was equal to 0.7 dollars. Its buying power was very strong then. In 1980, the rate was US \$1 = ~₦0.233 (i.e., USD 4.3 was equivalent to ₦1) but by August 2020, \$1 could buy ₦361; December 2021, US \$1 = ₦410.11.<sup>87</sup> As at today, the official rate as fixed by the Nigerian apex bank is US \$1 to 460.53<sup>88</sup>, but in the parallel market, it is about ₦750 to the dollar.<sup>89</sup> Production and economic activities are grinding to a halt; public services are all in ruins. Given such severe economic hardship, public servants often engage in corrupt practices, not necessarily spurred by greed or avarice; they need money to meet immediate needs. Corruption therefore becomes an escape route. Unemployment, meagre salaries for the few who are employed, hunger and the inability to meet basic human needs such as food, shelter/housing, healthcare, etc. test and tempt people to steal and misappropriate public funds when given the opportunity.<sup>90</sup> Even the most virtuous religious person can be caught

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<sup>86</sup> Abhijit Banerjee, Sendhil Mullainathan, and Rema Hanna, *Corruption*, NBER Working Paper No. 17968 April 2012, JEL No. D02,O10,O12,O43

<sup>87</sup> WorldData Atlas, “Nigeria - Official exchange rate”, [https://knoema.com/atlas/Nigeria/topics/Economy/Financial-Sector-Exchange-rates/Exchange-rate;](https://knoema.com/atlas/Nigeria/topics/Economy/Financial-Sector-Exchange-rates/Exchange-rate;FX-Exchange-Rate) “FX Exchange Rate”, <https://ngn.fxexchangerate.com/usd/1980-currency-rates.html>.

<sup>88</sup> Central Bank of Nigeria, “Exchange Rate Archives”, <https://www.cbn.gov.ng/rates/ExchangeArchives.asp>

<sup>89</sup> Nigerian Naira rates, “Black Market Exchange Rates”, <https://www.ngnrates.com/black-market>

<sup>90</sup> Oko, *Key Problems for Democracy*, 518 - 521

by this temptation. This situation is common among people on the lower cadre of life. Present indices do not even promise any hope of a better future. Instead, it has been predicted that Nigeria will be the number one poverty destination in the next decade.<sup>91</sup> What is most annoying is the general sentiment among the populace that the politicians in government do not care about the plight of the masses. Often “frustrated by government’s lack of concern for their welfare, civil servants – most of whom are poorly paid – resort to any means necessary to make money. In such circumstances, neither the threat of sanctions nor moral values are effective in shaping behavior”.<sup>92</sup>

#### **4. Moral Decadence and porous Nigerian judicial system**

Sin, evil, crimes and bad behavior are not new concepts or human experiences. They are not novel creations of the sophistications of our technological era. They have been part of the human experience since humanity came to the age of consciousness of her own reality. However, our age is experiencing decline in religious faith, less attention to spirituality and decadence in morality, and one may say that the technological sophistications of our age contribute to the decline of morals on the one hand, and the increase of crime and evil on the other hand. Flamboyance and unnecessary ostentation, selfishness in the use of material things, unhealthy fad for wealth, possession and use of ill-gotten gain without qualms of conscience have geometrically escalated in our age. The arc of crime is on a dangerous rate of ascendancy on the graph of history, not only in Nigeria but everywhere in the global village. In any case, serious countries who mean business when it comes to fighting corruption try to establish a functional police architecture that can measure with the rate of crime within its borders and a judiciary that can deter criminal behavior.

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<sup>91</sup> Homi Kharas and Meagan Dooley, *The evolution of global poverty, 1990-2030*, Brookings Global Working Paper #166, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution, February 2022.

[www.brookings.edu/SustainableDevelopment](http://www.brookings.edu/SustainableDevelopment)

<sup>92</sup> Oko, *Key Problems*, 520 - 521

We have not seen that kind of seriousness in our government and the law-enforcement and judicial apparatus of our country and it is mournfully regrettable. Officers of the Nigerian Police run around politicians and wealthy persons, most of whom are made rich by corrupt practices and run around.

Pristine pre-colonial African communities had robust, closely knit systems of justice hewn around their local religious institutions. They believed in local deities, and had chief priests who heard from the gods and communicated to the people as well as kings who were chosen by the gods. They had justice systems that were close to perfect and zero intolerance for any form of inhumanity against a human being or a crime against the community. Punishments were tough and quick. Values were respected and virtue was instilled from the home. Colonialism, Christianity and westernization came, took away those closely-knit justice systems which kept local communities free from corruption. Don John O. Omale quotes the London Times of July 17, 1886, which reported Sir James Marshall's testimony about the West African pre-colonial justice system as saying:

His [Sir James Marshall] testimony as to the efficiency with which the natives administer their own laws is very striking. He has sat beside native judges, and witnessed with admiration their administration of justice. These people have their own laws and customs, which are better adapted to their condition than the complicated system of English jurisprudence. The adoption of them would, it is maintained, be more conducive to the best interests of all than the present system.<sup>93</sup>

Judith Van Allen argues that among the Igbos of Eastern Nigeria, “Western influence weakened women’s traditional autonomy and power without providing modern forms of autonomy or power in exchange.”<sup>94</sup> I testify that this observation is not only true concerning women’s autonomy and

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<sup>93</sup> Don John Omale, “Peace and Security in Africa: Revisiting endogenous restorative mechanisms?”, *Ebonyi State University Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 2, no. 1 (2022): 95 – 96, <https://ebsu-jssh.com/index.php/EBSUJSSH/article/view/60>.

<sup>94</sup> Judith Van Allen, “‘Sitting on a Man’: Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women” *Journal of West African History* 3, no. 2 (2017): 156–65, <https://doi.org/10.14321/jwestafrihist.3.2.0156>.

organization in Igboland, my tribe, but also correct about the judicial, security and governance systems of the Igbo people and by extension, other African societies, which were effective.

In the case of Nigeria, the amalgamation meant that every ethnic group had to drop their various local justice mechanisms and look up to the Western-based system of governance, policing and justice. Unfortunately, this new system of governance failed to keep everyone in check. People found out they could steal, kill, do all sorts of heinous crimes and when caught, swear in court with the Bible and Quran and tell lies, get defended by an educated lawyer and be set free, walk home and celebrate. That was impracticable, and unimaginable with the native laws and justice system. I think this is one of the factors that led to eroding of values and morals, respect for established laws and customs and increase of crime and corruption in our Nigerian society, and of course in other African nations. So, we are in a kind of confused situation: we lost and left our system which was effective and needed a replacement, in fact a system that could be better. We embraced the Western system, but never really committed to learning it properly and practicing it faithfully. The received English judicial system in use in the amalgamated entity called Nigeria has been criticized by Nigerian nationals for its process which is “lengthy, burdensome and too expensive for Nigeria’s level of economic development.”<sup>95</sup> Many citizens are unable to seek redress because of this very reason. Many are illiterate and do not even understand the process. Moreover, unlike the African systems of justice whose focus is more on the processes of achieving justice and peaceful resolutions of disputes quickly and stamping out evil from the community, this received law simply adheres to theoretical rules and sometimes, these rules are thwarted by smart lawyers to favour their clients, even when such clients are criminals.

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<sup>95</sup> Ogonnaya O. Elechi, “Doing Justice Without the State: The Afikpo (Ehugbo) – Nigeria Model”, (Doctoral Dissertation, School of Criminology, Simon Fraser University, British Columbia Canada, 1999), 53 – 4.

To worsen the situation, our courts and judges sitting in judgment in those hallowed chambers have become so corrupt that they easily and shamelessly give bizarre judgments which unsettle the populace. The common perception in Nigeria is that they have been hopelessly compromised and cannot be trusted. Salihu and Gholami observe that

Corruption in the Nigeria judiciary ... is a serious one. The common saying among many Nigerians that “why pay a lawyer when you can buy a judge or the entire/whole court” explains that most, if not all, judges and the entire system of the judiciary had become an ordinary commodity that money can buy. It has become an everyday business (justice for sale) for judicial officials to request for and take bribes for cases to be attended to or delayed, bail to be granted and obtain a faster and favorable ruling. All these violate the power and responsibilities entrusted on the institution and negate the principle of rule of law.<sup>96</sup>

The constitution has lost its respect and people no longer fear lawyers and judges as before. Only Petty thieves and the poor, who sometimes get into crimes due to situations created by government’s failure are the ones who are quickly caught by the police and expeditiously sent to prison. Others are journalists who say the truth, then activists and critics who call out the government for its crimes and demand transparency, justice and good governance as well as a ruling party’s or current government’s perceived political enemies, but corrupt members of the ruling party, relatives, friends and people from one’s ethnic group and the same religious leaning never get punished, no matter how corrupt they are and when they are punished, it is to avoid backlash from the populace. Often times such scapegoats are compensated in the secret. This has been described as the ‘politicization of corruption’ and the Buhari administration has been accused as the most notorious in perpetuating this sinister act against the Nigerian people and nation.<sup>97</sup> After stealing the country dry, politicians keep enjoying the wealth, walking the streets free and

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<sup>96</sup> Habeeb Abdulrauf Salihu and Hossein Gholami, “Corruption in the Nigeria Judicial System: An Overview”, *Journal of Financial Crime* 25, No. 3, (2018): 669-680, 673, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFC-01-2017-0005>

<sup>97</sup> Benson O. Igboin, “The Faces of Corruption in Nigeria: Towards a New Thinking in the Reverse Order”, in *Fighting Corruption in African Contexts: Our Collective Responsibility*, ed. Chris Jones, Pregala Pillay and Idayat Hassan (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), 59.

even get awards and accolades from national and international organizations. Looters and fraudsters are allowed to become our heroes.<sup>98</sup> This is one reason the younger ones no longer value virtue because they see that the corrupt are praised for being so.

#### **1.2.4 The Effects of Corruption**

Corruption has destroyed social trust in government and her institutions and has brought about a horde of social problems such as bad governance, poverty, hunger, insecurity, social injustice, neglect of the common good and so on. Corruption has destroyed the economy and has entrenched poverty. It “undermines [our] democratic institutions, retards economic development and contributes to government instability.”<sup>99</sup>

In a 2000 paper titled corruption in Nigeria, submitted to the Lancaster University Management School, Mohammed Salisu investigated the nagging issue of corruption with a view to locating the determinants and the impact of the monstrous vice of corruption. He identified three broad determinants namely: opaque government policies which open wide doors for government personnel to manipulate the system, pervasive rent-seeking behavior since the discovery of huge oil resources in the country and cultural practices which leads to what he calls ‘polite corruption’.<sup>100</sup> The paper, which boasts of abundant statistical data to prove its thesis, concluded that:

the magnitude of corruption is quite considerable, ranging from 11 per cent of GDP in the 1960s to around 60 per cent in the 1990s. This undoubtedly has had serious consequences for growth and development in Nigeria. Econometric estimates of the link between corruption and economic growth suggests that corruption has an adverse effect on the growth rate of GDP in Nigeria. This perhaps explains why Nigeria is so rich and yet so poor.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Oko, *Key Problems*, 495 - 499

<sup>99</sup> Stober, “Nigeria’s Corruption Scorecard”, 165 – 182.

<sup>100</sup> M. A. Salisu, "Corruption in Nigeria", (2000), <https://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/id/eprint/48533/1/Document.pdf>

<sup>101</sup> Salisu, 15

An international economic rating has it that of the 53 nations which make up the African union, 32 of them are among the 50 poorest nations of the world and Nigeria is the 33<sup>rd</sup> and the 49<sup>th</sup> in the world, with a GDP of \$5853 according to figures put up by the International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook for 2022.<sup>102</sup> According to the world Bank, Nigeria's Gross National Income per capita (Atlas method) as at 2021 is a paltry \$2080<sup>103</sup>. Nigeria has literally and practically become the poverty capital of the world. The middle class is no more existent in the nation. The class of the rich boasts of a small percentage of the citizens and majority of them enriched themselves through grafts and corruption practices. At the other end of the spectrum are the abused and suffering poor masses. A huge number of homes live on less than one US dollar per day and junk food has become the daily bred of the populace.

In a paper title "Corruption, National Development, The Bar and The Judiciary", presented by the former Vice President for Africa of the World Bank to the members of the Nigerian Bar Association at their 52nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Abuja, Oby Ezekwesili, declared that Nigeria lost \$400bn in oil revenue since her independence in 1960 due to endemic, progressive corruption in the government circles, while Africa lost more than \$854 billion in illicit financial outflows between 1970 and 2008, quoting a study by the World Bank and the Global Financial Integrity, respectively. She stated that while oil accounted for about 90 per cent of the value of Nigeria's exports, over 80 per cent of that money ended up in the hands of one per cent of the population, quoting a study by the World Bank.<sup>104</sup> In the words of Okechukwu Oko,

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<sup>102</sup> Luca Ventura, "Poorest Countries in the World 2022", *Global Finance*, August 5, 2022, <https://www.gfmag.com/global-data/economic-data/the-poorest-countries-in-the-world>.

<sup>103</sup> The World Bank, "World Bank Open Data", 2023

[https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD?most\\_recent\\_value\\_desc=false](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD?most_recent_value_desc=false);

"Poorest Countries in the World 2023", <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/poorest-countries-in-the-world>.

<sup>104</sup> Oby Ezekwesili, "Corruption, National Development, The Bar and The Judiciary", *Daily Post*, August 31, 2012, <https://dailypost.ng/2012/08/31/nigeria-lost-400bn-oil-revenue-corruption-since-independence-ezekwesili/>

Nigeria has been beset by bad leadership, corruption, ethnic strife, and political instability, all of which continue to expose its lack of democratic moorings...the story of post-independent has been a story of despicable oscillation between a corrupt, unstable and directionless democratic government and a kleptocratic, abusive military regime. Each democratic government persisted in the failed methods and policies of its predecessors, succumbing to the same malaise of corruption and incompetence. Each military regime proved more brutal, more abusive and definitely more corrupt than the last, and offered shambolic or glib solutions to the nation's problems. ... These governments have operated with a contemptuous disregard for citizens' rights and a disturbing indifference towards the needs and welfare of citizens, thus engendering a civil society increasingly distrustful of government.<sup>105</sup>

As at 2010, only two government parastatals offered relatively effective public services, according to a study carried out by the Nigerian Office of FES. The two pockets of effectiveness (PoE) organizations so identified are National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NAFDAC) and National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP). Arguing that “most public organizations are ineffective, weak and involved in or affected by patronage and endemic corruption” in the Nigerian social environment, Michael Roll claimed that the two identified organizations offered some form of effective public delivery and doing so had become the exception instead of the norm.<sup>106</sup>

Both local and international media are awash with the news of the rape of democracy that took place in Nigeria's presidential election on February 25, 2023. The London – based daily, Financial Times, in its March 1 editorial “Nigeria's badly flawed election”, advises that “if Bola Tinubu's victory is challenged, the courts should take a hard look”. Nineteen days after this editorial and twenty-six, after the election, the victory has been challenged in an election petition

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<sup>105</sup> Oko, *Key Problems*, 18 – 20.

<sup>106</sup> Michael Roll, “The State that Works: A ‘Pockets of Effectiveness’ Perspective on Nigeria and Beyond”, *States at Work: Dynamics of African Bureaucracies*, ed. Bierschenk, Thomas and Olivier de Sardan, Jean-Pierre (2014): 367, DOI 10.1163/9789004264960, [https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/20.500.12657/38056/1/9789004264960\\_webready\\_content\\_text.pdf](https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/20.500.12657/38056/1/9789004264960_webready_content_text.pdf)

tribunal in Abuja. The editorial reasons, and truly, that “what Nigeria needed above all was a clean election to reiterate the basic message of democracy: that a sovereign people can choose its leaders. Sadly, it did not happen.” Berating the electoral process for being poorly managed, it noted that “it failed to set the example needed for West Africa, where too many national leaders have extended term limits or resorted to seizing power at gunpoint.”<sup>107</sup>

Nigeria has a four – term for her elected officers and INEC has four good years to prepare for each round of elections. It receives huge amounts in budgetary allocations for her preparations. And months before the current elections, the commission has been proudly announcing its readiness for the elections. There was also an electoral reform signed into law in 2016. Though a greater number of the nation’s parliamentarians voted against full electronic voting system, a move that shocked Nigerians who believed the parliamentarians were afraid that technology might deny them the chance of manipulation of votes in future elections as they usually do, the electoral reform did introduce a few amendments and guidelines which gave some hope of better electoral process in Nigeria’s future elections. And so, when it was time to put into action the new electoral act, Nigerians as well as

neutral observers thought the Independent National Electoral Commission was in good shape. They had high expectations that INEC’s promise to transmit voting tallies electronically from polling stations would eliminate ballot stuffing. ... Yet INEC badly misfired. Voting started late in many districts, depriving millions of the right to vote. The system to upload results from 177,000 polling stations stuttered, causing legitimate concerns of vote tampering during long delays. Violence was troubling. Party goons invaded many polling stations in what appeared to be blatant acts of intimidation. The Financial Times witnessed armed men remove a presidential ballot box in Surulere, Lagos”.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Editorial, “Nigeria’s badly flawed elections”, *The Financial Times of London*, March 1, 2023.

<https://www.ft.com/content/ad9bbed0-a2c4-4e20-96ae-c23cd42296fe>

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

It was not only in Lagos that ballot boxes were snatched away by armed persons while the nation's security agents were either watching or accomplices, but in several other places across the country. The entire drama speaks volume about the desperation of corrupt politicians to remain in the corridors of power.

In the midst of speculations and expectations that the commission would either call of the elections entirely or cancel the polls in places where it was evident that malpractices happened, it went ahead and announced Bola Ahmed Tinubu as the winner, to the chagrin, and utter shock and disappointment of the whole nation. What was more suspicious was that the announcement was made at 4:00am when people were sleeping. Following the announcement, many have turned to the streets to protest.

It is worthy of note that the FT editorial did note that the Nigerian Army and Police are both riddled with ineptitude and corruption, and urgently need reform. Similar reports were given by other major newspapers.<sup>109</sup>

Having attempted a general overview of the state of corruption in Nigeria in this chapter, I will proceed in the next chapter by examining the responses of the Christian people (bishops, priests, consecrated persons, lay members of Christ's faithful alike) towards nation building as part of their Christian discipleship. They are called to be the light in the darkness and have received virtuous moral training by the Gospel of Christ. This chapter analyzes their responses so far to the situation of corruption in the country and what they need to do more and more in order to help change the ugly situation.

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<sup>109</sup> Both the *New York Times*, the *Economist* and The Nigerian *Guardian* describe what took place as a chaotic situation.

## Chapter Two

### 2.0 Moral / Ethical Principles

The preceding chapter introduced the reader to the endemic and intractable nature of corruption in Nigeria and its effect on the lives of the citizens, the economy and the society. I showed in that chapter that corruption has permeated every sector – private and public and is practiced, not only by people in government but by people on the streets. It has become a lifestyle and is foundational to all other problems the nation and citizens are facing. It has destroyed the economy and made life brutish, yet there is no truthful effort by the government to solve it. Despite that state of affairs, I argued that corruption in Nigeria, though stubborn and deep, can be defeated or at least minimized.

Corruption constitutes a topic of great concern across a broad spectrum of disciplines. It is a matter of deep concern for the legal profession as it is for the sociologists, psychologist, economists, political analysts, as it is also for the ethicists and the theologians. It is indeed a serious matter and topic for theological/ethical discourse. This chapter therefore, deals with relevant ethical/moral principles which will guide this thesis. This chapter is an important bridge connecting the first with the third and fourth chapters, and gives this thesis its distinctive flavor as a work of Theological Ethics. Here therefore, I will present two profound moral/ethical methods/principles which will act as moral lenses through which the Christian responses will be evaluated. These lenses will also be the standard for suggesting the way forward.

In the first section of this chapter, I will be drawing from the works of Daniel Harrington and James Keenan, *Jesus and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology*, which is part of pioneering efforts to deepen biblical ethics as well as from the classic work on biblical ethics, a first fruit from the those pioneering efforts, *The Ten*

*Commandments and the Beatitudes: Biblical Studies and Ethics for Real Life* of Lucas Chan. The erudite, peer-reviewed article of Daniel Daly, *Virtue Ethics and Action Guidance* also has a major influence on this chapter. In the second, I will draw from some of the numerous documents of the Church on her social doctrines, such as the Catechism, second Vatican council documents, the Pontifical Council on Peace and Justice's recent document, *Compendium*, etc.

## 2.1. Appeal to the Virtues and Exemplars of Virtue

Ethics has various methods or approaches such as natural law ethics, virtue ethics, deontology, responsibility ethics, feminist ethics, personalist ethics, virtue ethics, etc. They sometimes overlap with one another in their interests and scope.<sup>110</sup> I elect virtue ethics because, it provides the best account of the moral life, provides better analysis of human action, attends to moral minimums but also to moral excellence, offers action guidance and action assessment<sup>111</sup> “and deals with the character of individual and their communities, and the practices that develop those characteristics and in turn express them”.<sup>112</sup>

Broadly speaking, virtue is an excellence, a quality which a thing possesses, and which enables it to do its work well. In relation to human beings, human virtues are stable dispositions of thought, action, and feeling that enable us to think, judge, reflect, and deliberate well; they are good habits of desire that allow us to want and take our pleasure in what is truly good for us and

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<sup>110</sup> Daniel Harrington and James Keenan, *Jesus and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology*, (Lanham, Maryland: Sheed and Ward, 2002), 23.

<sup>111</sup> Daniel J. Daly, *The Structures of Virtue and Vice*, (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press), 124 – 125. In this work, Daly gives us six serious reasons why we should turn to virtue ethics.

<sup>112</sup> Lucas Chan, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes: Biblical Studies and Ethics for Real Life*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), xxi

for society.<sup>113</sup> They are qualities which make a person excellent and help to attain good ends.<sup>114</sup> Virtues are characteristic ways of behaving that make both persons and actions good, and also enable persons to fulfil the purpose of their lives.<sup>115</sup> They are good habits, or stable character traits. One-time acts do not constitute virtue. Rather, virtues are good habits formed over time through conscious, constant and consistent practice. John Rawls sees the virtues as “sentiments, . . . , related families of dispositions and propensities regulated by a higher – order desire”, and fundamental moral virtues as “strong and normally effective desires to act on the basic principles of right”.<sup>116</sup> The definition given by Daniel Daly is very important to this thesis. He defines virtue as “an operative habit that enables a person to consistently, easily, and joyfully relate well to God, herself, other persons, and the created world.”<sup>117</sup> Apart from emphasizing on the feature of consistency, this definition also brings up the issue of relationality, which is a distinguishing mark of character which virtue ethics tries to form. While consistency in the practice of virtuous acts is key to forming good character, issues of good governance, integrity, common good, solidarity, respect for the dignity of the human person are strongly connected to good human and social relationship. These are the very interests which this thesis pursues.

Virtue ethics is one of the oldest methods of moral philosophy. From the era of the ancient philosophers, through the patristic and medieval periods to the modern times, virtue ethics enjoyed great acceptance and epic development. Aquinas contributed immensely to that development in the 13<sup>th</sup> century before the appeal of virtue ethics declined. Principle- and rule-based ethics

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<sup>113</sup> Jennifer Frey, *What is Virtue and Why does it Matter?* (2021),

<https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/commentary/what-virtue-and-why-does-it-matter>

<sup>114</sup> Heather Battaly, “Introduction: Virtue and Vice”, *Metaphilosophy* 41, no. 1/2 (2010): 1–21.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24439871>.

<sup>115</sup> Daniel Harrington and James Keenan. *Jesus and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology* (Lanham, MD: Sheed & Ward, 2002), 23.

<sup>116</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 192, 436.

<sup>117</sup> Daly, *Structures of Virtue and Vice*, 133

replaced it.<sup>118</sup> In the contemporary times however, virtue ethics is witnessing a steady revival. Julia Annas observes that “in the last two decades, there has been a deep and widespread revival of interest in virtue and systems of ethics centered on virtue...”.<sup>119</sup> Influential in this arc of retrieval in contemporary times is Alasdair MacIntyre. And after him, a league of philosophers and theological ethicists have sustained the renewal of virtue ethics by engaging in the discussion of virtue ethics, leading to the emergence of various modes of virtue theories. Focus on the notion of character and the role of community and narrative in character/moral formation is one, led by the Protestant theologian Stanley Hauerwas; the other is the method of engaging virtue ethics with other theological disciplines such as biblical studies, liturgy, ascetical theology, etc. and here, Catholic theologians Spohn, Jean Porter, and Keenan have done a lot of work.<sup>120</sup> But despite the divergence in focus, all the schools of thought within virtue ethics aim at answering the overarching questions of virtue ethics, proposed by Alasdair MacIntyre: *who are we? Who ought we become? How do we get there?*<sup>121</sup>

Inspired by these foregoing efforts in the contemporary retrieval of virtue and especially by the work of the biblical scholar Daniel Harrington and James Keenan in trying to bridge the gap between biblical studies and virtue ethics, Lucas Chan has taken it further by actually drawing from two thick and prominent accounts of morality, one in the Old Testament (the ten commandments) and the other in the New Testament (the beatitudes), hermeneutical values for moral living today. He exegetes each of the ten commandments and the eight beatitudes “and through a hermeneutics of virtue ethics, interprets them for contemporary moral living”.<sup>122</sup> What

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<sup>118</sup> Chan, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes*, 9.

<sup>119</sup> Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1.

<sup>120</sup> Chan, *The Ten Commandments*, 9.

<sup>121</sup> James F. Keenan, “Proposing Cardinal Virtues”, *Theological Studies* 56, no 4, (1995): 710,

<https://doi.org/10.1177/004056399505600405>

<sup>122</sup> Chan, *The Ten Commandments*, xxi.

this means is that after trying to exegete and interpret the meanings of each of the biblical texts, he employs the virtuous commands embedded in those texts to interrogate our foundational questions of virtue ethics: *who are we? who ought we become? how do we get there?* In other words, he asks: how does the virtuous commands in the commandments and the beatitudes help us to form character or to be good? For instance: the text of Exodus 20:15, which says: you shall not steal. The first task is to understand what exactly the text commands or forbids. Though a very short rule, yet it is dense when connected with several other biblical passages which bring out the depth of the seriousness of the act. In the story of the forceful take-over of Naboth's vineyard for instance, you see how stealing gets entangled within murder, disrespect for human life, greed and other grave crimes. The next is to find out the virtuous commands embedded in this short command. Chan discovers the virtue of valuing the property and liberty of other people, which in turn opens the door to other complimentary personal virtues such justice, honesty, diligence and gratitude.<sup>123</sup> I also think that this 7th law of the decalogue teaches us self-respect and self-restraint. If I steal, and caught, I will be punished. That will be too shameful. I will bring dishonor to God, to myself, to my family, friends and those who love. I will discredit the Church and the priesthood. Therefore, I will prudently learn self-restraint and contentment. Now, using these results, I now interrogate the virtue questions: who am I? Am I a thief? Do I steal? No, I am not. I am a theologian, who teaches morals. Who ought I be? I am supposed to be a defender of the rights, dignity, liberties and property of others. I should not be messing with these? How do I get there? I now turn to the exemplars, people whose lives testify that practicing these virtuous commands is doable! This in simple terms is what Lukas Chan teaches us.

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<sup>123</sup> Chan, *The Ten Commandments*, 103 - 104

This intelligent scholarly approach led him to: 1. investigate how the virtues were practiced in the Jewish and apostolic communities respectively and 2. identify “certain moral exemplars” – persons who exceptionally practiced the virtues, starting from Jesus, the perfect model. He concluded that “by practicing the virtuous acts and by imitating these models, we can partially achieve the goal of becoming virtuous people”.<sup>124</sup> In all, Lucas Chan leaves us with what he dubs “four important goods of virtue”, namely: “practices and habits, dispositions and character, exemplars and community/communal identity, which help make virtue a fuller ethical framework”.<sup>125</sup>

Concerning practices, McIntyre’s definition is worthy of note. He understands practices as important to understanding the concept of the virtues, and as the arena in which they are exhibited.

He defines a practice as

any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.<sup>126</sup>

Going by this definition, practices therefore are those human activities which produce certain expected goods intrinsic to them, when they are undertaken consistently, conscientiously and with the objective of achieving those intrinsic goods. In other words, practices are the very regular, activities of daily life, which, done consciously and conscientiously, become like our second nature. If those constant practices are noble and good, we gradually become noble and good persons, as long as there is pretense or a calculated attempt to deceive. Daniel Daly hints at this

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<sup>124</sup> Chan, *The Ten Commandments*, xxi - ii

<sup>125</sup> Chan, *The Ten Commandments*, 10

<sup>126</sup> Alasdair McIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 187.

when he says: “Action is only one aspect of a practice. One must also have the proper intention for the habituated action to truly become a practice”.<sup>127</sup> It is difficult though to pretend for a long time.

McIntyre’s definition also recognizes the social feature or aspect of practices. It means that practices are not novel ideas of individual persons. Instead, they belong to the community and are passed on from the community to the individual. The practices of a particular group and the internal goods inherent in them become then, the highest possible standard which the individual pursues, with an eye on the goods internal to that practice. In the pursuit of those standards, the virtues are developed. In that connection, we can further understand the virtues as “qualities persons develop when they pursue a practice to the highest possible standard and with an eye on the goods internal to that practice rather than for external reward.”<sup>128</sup>

One more thing need to be mentioned about the McIntyrean reflection on practices: it is the distinction which he makes between practices and institutions and the balance which the virtues provide. Without the virtues, McIntyre argues, there is every tendency that institutions, as possessing merely extrinsic goals/goods, may likely corrupt practices.

Practices must not be confused with institutions. Chess, physics and medicine are practices; chess clubs, laboratories, universities and hospitals are institutions. Institutions are characteristically and necessarily concerned with...external goods. They are involved in acquiring money...they are structured in terms of power and status, and they distribute money, power and status as rewards...the ideals and creativity of the practice are always vulnerable to the acquisitiveness of the institution, in which the cooperative care for the common goods of the practice is always vulnerable to the competitiveness of the institution. In this context the essential function of the virtues is clear. Without them, without justice, courage and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Daly, *Structures of Virtue and Vice*, 147

<sup>128</sup> James MacAllister, “MacIntyre on practices and education”, *Propel Matters* (University of Stirling, Scotland, March 30, 2015), <https://propelmatters.stir.ac.uk/2015/03/30/macintyre-on-practices-and-education/>

<sup>129</sup> McIntyre, *After Virtue*, 194.

Politics immediately comes to my mind as another perfect example. It is a practice of the state. Elections, parties, the judiciary, executive and legislative arms of government, are institutions. Agents of government who work in these areas can be swayed by the possibility of making money in and through their work in these institutions. Without personal virtues of integrity, contentment, frugality, truthfulness, patriotism and the like, the practice of politics becomes a very dirty and dangerous game as it has become in Nigeria, in several nations in Africa and other parts of the world.

Habits are strong dispositions to act in a certain way. Though habits are acts performed over time, it does not mean that every action performed every day is a habit. Acts performed regularly over time but without full deliberation do not qualify. Instead, habits involve reason, deliberation and free choice. It involves prudential judgment. Also, the inclination or disposition to perform such acts must be strong and firm.<sup>130</sup>

Exemplars are human paradigms; whose lives stand out as models and standards of human behavior. We have exemplars among the living, people around us, who are sharing in the joys and sorrows of earthly life. We also have them among those who have left this earthly existence, such as the Christian saints and martyrs. as well among the living. Exemplars constitute an important resource and offer invaluable contribution in the development of virtue and formation of character. They “guide an agent’s acquisition and growth in virtue. ...one can derive virtues from exemplars... [They] help to cultivate virtue in three ways. First, they serve as inspirational models...; [secondly], they provide concrete examples of what a virtuous person would do in certain situations; [and thirdly], they continue to inspire persons to the heights of virtue”.<sup>131</sup> This means the lives of exemplars impress us with the knowledge that doing good, living virtuous lives

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<sup>130</sup> Daly, *Structures of Virtue and Vice*, 137 - 4

<sup>131</sup> Daly, *Structures of Virtue and Vice*, 152-3

and pursuing the highest standards is possible, even though it may be tough. In the pursuit of virtues and skills, individuals find in the lives of exemplars, practical examples as to what specific virtues and skills mean and how they operate. And when frustration, discouragement, and disillusionment come, tempting us to throw in the towel and abandon the journey of character formation, the lives of exemplars encourage us to keep the struggle. A PhD student, who is pursuing academic excellence, is likely to be discouraged along the way when faced with a mountain of research they need to accomplish. But the presence and constant encouragement of faculty members who went through similar academic rigors keep them going.

Community is crucial to virtue and virtue ethics. Community facilitates the practice of virtue, determines the understanding of particular virtues and how they are practiced in that community and is the proper place for virtue.<sup>132</sup> Respect for elders, for instance is a huge thing for all African communities. However, there are various ways to express that respect in different ethnic communities. I am Igbo. If I see an elder, I simply stay where I am, sitting, standing or even walking and greet the person. If the elder extends his hands to shake me, I give my hand. But for the Yoruba, a child needs to prostrate or show similar sign, otherwise he or she may be accused of disrespecting elders. When I arrived the US newly, I had to learn to call seniors directly by their names without adding any prefix denoting respect! Some have argued that this differentiation according to communities may lead to cultural relativism, but this may be a topic for another thesis!

For the purpose of this work, I will concentrate on exemplars. “Virtue ethics appreciates the role exemplary figures play in the development of virtue and formation of character. This appreciation is built upon the fundamental presupposition that virtue is teachable”.<sup>133</sup> In an erudite article whose goal was to show that virtue ethics provides normative action guidance, Dan Daly

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<sup>132</sup> Lucas Chan, *The Ten Commandments*, 13

<sup>133</sup> Lucas Chan, *The Ten Commandments*, 11.

identifies taking counsel with exemplars and their virtues as a valid foundational methodology of virtue ethics. He defines it as “an ethics in which action is evaluated and judged in light of the virtuous and the virtues”.<sup>134</sup> I employ this methodology in this work to evaluate the corruption, as well as the responses of Christians, in Nigeria.

### 2.1.1 The Christians of the first and second century

In his recent work, *A History of Catholic Theological Ethics*, James F. Keenan presents us with a long list of exemplars of virtue through church history in Europe and reflects on their inspiring contributions not only to the development of Christian ethics, but also to the renewal of the Church and human society. He presents, not just a historical account of the trajectory of ethics but, incidentally, a thick documentary of heroic examples of several virtues as lived out by individual Christians and groups of Christians. Beginning his historical excursus and rightly, from Jesus Christ, the exemplar *par excellence*, whose sermon on the mount constitutes the magna carta of the entire new testament and for the Christian people, Keenan reflected on the exemplary lives of the Apostles and the earliest Christian community who imitated the virtuous life of Jesus. Speaking of that first Christian community, Keenan lets us understand that they understood the moral life as “a response to the word of God; an application of the rhetoric of preaching to the ordinary life”<sup>135</sup> M. E. Marty describes the Christian movement as “the religion of an open-ended ethic of obedient response to a divine call ....”<sup>136</sup> In responding to the word of God in this way, they became for Christians and indeed all men and women who love virtue, for centuries after them, and will continue to be, great exemplars and models of virtue. By living out such virtues as mercy, compassion, hospitality, generosity, chastity, courage, justice, long-suffering and even

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<sup>134</sup> Dan Daly, “Virtue Ethics and Action Guidance,” *Theological Studies* 82, no. 4, (2021): 569, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00405639211055177>

<sup>135</sup> Keenan, *A History of Catholic Theological Ethics* (New York: Paulist Press, 2022), 39.

<sup>136</sup> Martin E. Marty, *A Short History of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 54.

martyrdom, they challenged idolatry and cruel government institutions at the time and helped to assuage the inhuman conditions suffered by people at the time such as sexual abuse of women, poverty and lack of housing especially for strangers; inspired social justice; defended human dignity and called attention to the common good.<sup>137</sup>

To be concrete, I present firstly, the example of generosity of the early Christians. Meeks notes that hospitality (*philoxenia*) was a prominent item on the list of Christian virtues among the early Christians. Through the practice of giving, the early church supported the apostles and other evangelists in their missionary journeys; assisted the needy; and richer church communities supported the poorer ones.<sup>138</sup> Through this practice, the Christian movement, spread by poor, not-very-educated, itinerant fishermen-turned preachers, without any government loan, support or subsidy (at least for the first 300 years, before Constantine came into the picture), diffused into the cities of East and Western Europe, growing more formidable by the day. Through the practice of their regular generous collections and donations, early Christians taught the whole world the power of united action.

There is also the example of some wealthy Christian widows in the early church who chose not to remarry in order to support the church with their wealth instead of bequeathing it to second husbands.<sup>139</sup> Their houses even became centers of worship. And in imitation of their mothers, their young daughters chose the life of perpetual virginity. These women and their daughter became examples and models of sacrifice, chastity, magnanimity and generosity to the entire church. Of note here are the Melanias who came to be known as desert mothers.<sup>140</sup> Religious men and women,

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<sup>137</sup> The second chapter of *A History of Catholic Theological Ethics*, inspired this idea.

<sup>138</sup> Wayne Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), 104.

<sup>139</sup> Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 104.

<sup>140</sup> Keenan, *A History*, 39 – 40.

nuns and monks in the consecrated life in the Church owe their roots to the example of these women and their daughters.<sup>141</sup> We have the examples of courage and resilience in early Christian martyrs beginning from the Apostles, and those who took after them such as Justin the martyr (100 – 165), Polycarp of Smyrna, Ignatius of Antioch. A few women among them deserve mention for such bravery: Felicitas (101 – 165), Blandina (162 – 177), Perpetua (182 – 203) and Crispina (d. 304),<sup>142</sup> Agnes (291 – 304), Cecelia (230 – 235) and Lucy (283–304), to mention but a few.

Mercy is another notable virtue whose practice distinguished the early Christians. The merciful life of Jesus, as told in the synoptic (Mark, Matthew and Luke) and Johannine gospels, was a model for the early Christians. As the Apostles took charge after His resurrection, they impressed it upon every Christian community they founded to practice mercy as a necessary virtue of the Christian life. To practice mercy in concrete terms was to welcome strangers (hospitality), feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the prisoners, care for the needy and cater for the seek.<sup>143</sup> Various letters from the apostles to the Christian communities as well as other pastoral texts of the early church (such as the Didache and the letters of church leaders such as Cyprian, Tertullian, Clement, etc.,) exhorted and encouraged Christians to practice these acts of mercy.<sup>144</sup> Hospitality was spectacularly relevant to the young Christian community since the spread of the gospel and of Christianity itself depended on teachers and evangelists who were itinerant,<sup>145</sup> at a time when transportation was slow and these itinerant preachers needed places to stay in their long journeys. At a time when numerous travelers, transients, pilgrims and new-comers overwhelmed the empire of Rome, Christian hospitality inspired pilgrimage centers and eventually hospitals to cater for

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<sup>141</sup> Arthur, Vermeersch, "Nuns," *The Catholic Encyclopedia* 11, (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11164a.htm>).

<sup>142</sup> Keenan, *A History of Catholic Theological Ethics*, 42.

<sup>143</sup> Matthew 25: 31 – 46.

<sup>144</sup> Keenan, *A history*, 42.

<sup>145</sup> Wayne Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: the first two centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 104.

those who were sick.<sup>146</sup> This was a huge contribution to the society and complemented the work of the government.

### 2.1.2 The Confraternities of the 16<sup>th</sup> century

There is another beautiful epoch in the history of Church, the history of Europe and of catholic theological ethics when virtue was, not just a menu on philosophical and theological discourses but, manifestly lived out and adequately changed the human community and the social environment. I draw once again from James Keenan's brief exposition of the Christian confraternities, associations of the laity who worked closely with the clergy and the Religious in responding to the social challenges of the time.<sup>147</sup> For these folks, holiness and the moral life was not just a matter of avoiding sins, but instead, allowing one's Christian upbringing, formation and theological knowledge to better the common good and transform society. With this outlook, they came together in various lay associations and confraternities, and, in the words of Keenan, "wed spiritual devotion with the practice of mercy". And incidentally, "they had an enormous influence on the moral formation of Roman Catholics".<sup>148</sup> Indeed, these 16<sup>th</sup> century Christians can be said to have recaptured and reinvented, in their own time, the ancient practice of the church of the first and second century. In a statement that aptly describes the legacy of these solidarities, Stark observes that "Christian values of love and charity had, from the beginning, been translated into norms of social services and community solidarity."<sup>149</sup>

The emphasis here is not on the works of mercy or the spiritual devotion they practiced, but the fact that by engaging in these virtuous activities, they influenced society by their humble,

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<sup>146</sup> Keenan, *A History*, 43.

<sup>147</sup> Keenan, *A History*, 208–214.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 74.

merciful lives; by the humanitarian works of these confraternities, terrible health issues like syphilis and leprosy were combated. Keenan informs us that some of these confraternities dedicated themselves to the care of prisoners, captives and those awaiting execution. They visited them in prison, prayed with them and even accompanied them to their execution to encourage them. This amazing work paid off as “there grew subsequently numerous critical voices that protested prison conditions and started movements of reform to correct conditions among the imprisoned in Spain, Italy, France and England”.<sup>150</sup> I suppose these confraternities did not have a lot of funds, but their faith, zeal and hard work inspired multi-billion dollars humanitarian services, projects and activities which have continued in the present time. Most of the enduring legacies of these efforts of simple, unassuming but active virtuous few, compared to the population of cities in Europe at the time, are still standing today, serving humanity in various ways.<sup>151</sup> I therefore present their example and argue that their lives of courage can be modelled to successfully fight corruption and its structures in our country today.

### **2.1.3 Mr. Peter Obi: A living Exemplar of Virtue**

On Saturday, February 25, 2023, Nigeria went to the polls to elect a new president. The last one year prior to and in the build up to the elections was an exciting time for a greater percentage of the Nigerian population. It was an exciting time because, among the politicians who vied for the enviable position of the president, one candidate – Mr. Peter Obi – who gave hope to the populace, hope of transformation, hope of a new Nigeria.<sup>152</sup> The moment he won his party’s ticket for the presidential elections, Mr. Peter Obi became the man of the moment and the cynosure

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<sup>150</sup> Keenan, A History, 213.

<sup>151</sup> Keenan, A History, 210 – 211.

<sup>152</sup> Nduka Orjinmo, “Nigeria elections 2023: Why young people are excited”, *BBC News*, (Abuja), 23 February, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64719408>

of all eyes, not only locally but globally. Born on July 19, 1961 in Onitsha, Anambra State, in the heavy rain-forest South-eastern region of Nigeria, and raised a catholic in a devout Christian family, he attended Christ the King College, Onitsha, a top Catholic high school, and the University of Nigeria Nsukka where he graduated with a B.A. (Hons) in Philosophy in 1984.<sup>153</sup> Afterwards, he entered business, beginning with helping “in his family's retail businesses before going on to make his own money, importing everything from salad cream to beauty products, and baked beans to champagne, while also owning a brewery and holding major shares in three commercial banks”.<sup>154</sup> Due to his love for education and passionate desire to improve himself, he also attended various prestigious schools in Lagos Nigeria, the UK, Switzerland and the US, for trainings in various management, professional and leadership programs.<sup>155</sup> With these trainings and certifications, he engaged the corporate business sector and rose from one portfolio to another.<sup>156</sup> He late became the governor of Anambra State.

Obi was fairly known when he was the chairman of Fidelity bank but it was actually his two-year term as the governor of Anambra State which brought him to the height of national recognition. His administration was adjudged the best within the period. This individual is changing the entire political landscape of the country for good. From my observation as an enlightened citizen who saw it all from 1999 when we returned to democratic rule till now, the first thing I saw change was the interest to get registered and have the voter’s card. From across the country, youths for the first-time became interested in the electoral process.

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<sup>153</sup> “Peter Obi,” *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter\\_Obi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Obi)

<sup>154</sup> Olivia Ndubuisi and Nduka Orjinmo, “Nigeria election 2023: Who is Peter Obi of the Labour Party?” in *BBC News*, Lagos, 23 February, 2023. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-61865502>

<sup>155</sup> Otunba Gbenga Daniel, “Peter Obi: A complete profile”, *The Vanguard Newspaper*, October 13, 2018, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/10/peter-obi-a-complete-profile/>

<sup>156</sup> Samuel Ogundipe, “It’s Official: Atiku names Peter Obi as running mate”, *Premium Times Newspaper*, October 12, 2018, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/290113-its-official-atiku-names-peter-obi-as-running-mate.html?tztc=1>

When Peter Obi emerged, a great number of Nigerians across ethnic and religious lines felt they had seen a virtuous politician who is different from the pack. Voter registration increased hugely as never seen in the past twenty years. He has kept a track record of habitual integrity, a consistent sense of responsibility, an unruffled profile of accountability, and an unbeatable, uncontroverted example of incorruptibility. “He has cultivated an image as the picture of integrity and prudence”<sup>157</sup> In every speech he made, his refrain would be: ‘go and verify.’ And till now, no one has been able to trace or link him with, any theft, malpractice, abuse of power, misuse, or diversion of funds, as is ‘normal’ for every Nigerian politician. None. The media - TV, print, and of course, social media - became awash with numerous stories of his ‘cleanliness’, but above all, the wonderful things he did in office. Those from other parties who had dismissed him with a wave of their hands began to change their views. More and more, as Mr. Peter Obi’s virtuous life and good deeds were publicized, a deeper feeling of resentment was created among the citizenry against other politicians who had been offered nothing to the common good. As said by Maureen Kabrik in an interview on Channels TV ([channelstv.com/](http://channelstv.com/)) on Sunday, February 12, “in less than eight months, he (Peter Obi) has become the conversation, ... the beautiful bride, the force”.<sup>158</sup> For Grégoire Sauvage of the French Newspaper, France24,

The rise of Peter Obi in the campaign for Nigeria's presidential election has indeed shaken up the country's politics, hitherto dominated by two major parties since the end of military rule in 1999. ... Promising a different way of doing things, [and] with speeches hailed as fresh and unifying...[Numerous Nigerians] see him as an antidote to a political class they accuse of corruption and bad governance. In this context, Obi has cultivated an image as the picture of integrity and prudence.... he has proven his integrity with effective governance of Anambra during his eight-year tenure there, which ended with huge savings in the state's coffers – a compelling argument in an economy burdened by heavy public debt.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Grégoire Sauvage, “Can Nigeria’s Peter Obi ride his newfound momentum all the way to presidency?” *France24 News*, February 20, 2023, <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20230220-can-nigeria-s-peter-obi-ride-his-newfound-momentum-all-the-way-to-presidency>

<sup>158</sup> Channels Television, “LP, PDP, And APC Spokespersons Debates Over Candidates' Manifestoes,” *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mO9dNkKh3tg>

<sup>159</sup> Sauvage, “Can Nigerian’s Peter Obi ride his newfound Momentum all the way to Presidency?”

I am one among numerous Nigerians who are surprised that we still have such a politician. We had all lost hope in our politicians, in our government, and in our electoral process, which has been seriously marred over the years, by vote buying, rigging, changing of figures, and all other forms of electoral activities that are shameful to be printed. Etaghene Edirin describes him as “a puzzle waiting to be solved, [who] has defied and deflected from the common and abhorrent appellation associated with 'the Nigerian politician’”.<sup>160</sup> I think that Mr. Peter Obi has become a great moral force, an exemplar who is calling and bringing politicians to repentance and every Nigerian to consciousness. Let me discuss a few powerful virtues which this man exudes, virtues which helped him to manage the resources of the state of Anambra as governor and to provide good governance<sup>161</sup>:

### **1. Frugality**

His frugality is spectacularly uncommon and praiseworthy, given the usual, sometimes immature way the few rich people in Nigeria flaunt and advertise their wealth and personality. A BBC team in Nigeria had observed that:

You can normally recognize a Nigerian billionaire from a mile off but Mr. Obi is thrifty and wears it as a mark of pride. He is quick to point out that he owns just two pairs of black shoes from midmarket British chain Marks and Spencer, prefers a \$200 suit from Stein Mart to a \$4,000 Tom Ford suit, and always insists on carrying his own luggage, rather than paying someone else to do it for him. Even his children are not spared his frugality. His 30-year-old son was denied a car, he said, while his other child is a happy primary school teacher - a rarity in a country where a politician's name often opens doors to more lucrative jobs.

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<sup>160</sup> Etaghene Edirin, “Nigeria: Peter Obi - The Making of an Enigma” in All Africa News, Lagos, February 14, 2010. <https://allafrica.com/stories/201002160222.html>

<sup>161</sup> Obi-Datti Family TV, “Fact Check: Peter Obi's Claims Verified”, *YouTube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-isiNapJys&t=237s>. Before the elections, these claims made in this video were actually factchecked in a town-hall meeting organized by news media houses and journalists, 2023 presidential candidates were given the platform to showcase their qualifications for the job.

Responding to the uncanny description of this former governor by some as a stingy person, Bianca Ojukwu, the widow of the late Biafran leader, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, has shared her own experience of Peter Obi's economical lifestyle, praising him and calling all to emulate him instead of accusing him of being stingy. Punch Newspapers caught the story. During his time as governor, Obi had visited this woman and her husband (who are from Anambra) in Texas and needed a formal wear to attend an event, had refused to buy a designer suit for opting rather for a \$220 suit. She said,

The suit that was a perfect match for him was a dapper Tom Ford suit with a price tag of 3,985 dollars plus tax. He did the calculations and told me 'Do you know how many students this amount of money can train in Nigeria?' "To cut the story short, he refused to pay what he termed 'that outrageous price' for the Tom Ford suit and that was how we ended up at Steinmart where he agreed to pay a more acceptable price of 220 dollars, tax inclusive, for a basic men's suit which he was happy to wear to that evening's event. "What struck me, was that as we were on the way to the airport to see him off for his return flight back to Nigeria, he reached for his pocket where he brought out an envelope of crisp hundred-dollar bills. The amount in the envelope was 3,800 dollars. "He said 'Anyanwu, this is the balance of the money I would have paid for the 'Ford' suit. If the label on the suit was 'Peter Obi', I am wondering if anybody in America will pay that amount for it. I have deducted the amount we paid for that suit we eventually bought. Please use this balance for your Charity foundation to help those in actual need. I trust you will do so'. We all laughed heartily. Vintage Peter Obi!.<sup>162</sup>

## 2. Accountability

Mr. Peter Obi is an astute manager. His unusual accountably is another virtue I need to highlight. It is an important virtue we need so much in Nigeria at this time. His time of service as the governor of the state of Anambra showcased this great virtue of his. According to a recent BBC news article, Peter Obi has been described as "a wealthy businessman with a reputation for being frugal, [who] emerged as a powerful force ahead of Nigeria's presidential election, and

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<sup>162</sup> Punch Newspapers, "Bianca Ojukwu Recounts encounter with Peter Ob's Stinginess," *Facebook.com*, June 16, 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/punchnewspaper/posts/bianca-ujukwu-recounts-encounter-with-peter-obis-stinginessbianca-ujukwu-the-wid/5610138972357552>;

energized voters with messages of prudence and accountability that are amplified by an army of social media users”.<sup>163</sup> He managed the wealth of the state responsibly. During his tenure, Anambra never borrowed money from any agency. Instead, he cut down costs, paid wages of employees and contractors promptly, whereas workers in other states were going on industrial action on account of unpaid wages. Employers and pensioners who were owed salaries and pensions before he took office all got what they were owed in no time. When he left office, no one was owed. He reduced the debt profile of the state. Instead of leaving liabilities for the state, he left a huge amount of cash and assets in savings. Under him, Anambra State became the first state in Nigeria to start sub-sovereign wealth savings, the first of its kind in sub-saharan Africa. Unlike other governors and even presidents who left huge debts, he left instead millions of dollars in savings for the state. Under him, Anambra became the least indebted and the most financially stable state in Nigeria. He never borrowed from anywhere to fund the projects – and numerous of them – of his administration. He attracted foreign investors, foreign state diplomats, international development partners such as UNDP, UNICEF, the World Bank, DFID etc to the state, which was formerly blacklisted as a dangerous state. With him in office, the state was adjudged the best in the country in development partnership and commitment to reforms for good governance. Education was taken to a great height. With him Anambra took the first position in terms of education. He returned elementary and secondary schools taken away from the churches after the civil war to their owners. However, he kept funding the schools while the churches administered them. He treated all schools – government owned and church owned – equally, equipped them with computers, and other digital equipment, provided internet access to numerous schools, and more than 700 buses to different schools and personally visited them and spoke to teachers and

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<sup>163</sup> Ndubuisi and Orjinmo, “Nigeria election 2023: Who is Peter Obi of the Labour Party?”

students routinely. Those strategies achieved a double success of renovation and revamping of the schools from their dilapidated conditions, while bringing Anambra from the 24<sup>th</sup> position to the 1<sup>st</sup> out of the 36 states of the federation in national examinations and in the West African School certificate examinations. Healthcare experienced massive turnaround. His administration partnered with the churches who owned hospitals and transformed healthcare in the state. He also built and equipped new ones. He won the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation's award for best performing governor on the eradication of polio among the states in the south eastern part of Nigeria and got for his state \$1m grant. He gave the state economy a boost, improved security and carried out several youth-oriented programmes which reduced youth unemployment and boosted job creation in the state. It is on record that he never borrowed any money, yet he never owed any one – state employees or contractors. <sup>164</sup>

### **3. Humility**

In Nigeria where people wear titles, academic degrees, honorary awards and recognitions like a badge, this man simply answers Mr. Peter Obi, despite being a papal knight, a two – time state governor and many other honors he had received. For the first time in Nigerian history, a sitting state governor visited high schools across the state and interacted with teachers as well as with the school children and left his personal phone number with each school senior prefect advising them to contact him incase they had any request to make concerning their academic progress. While fielding questions on Arise TV, Chimamanda Adichie, Nigerian-born international writer tells how that singular act melted her heart.

My support for Peter Obi is deeply rooted in real things; it is rooted in my faith in his ability. Actually, I got to know him years ago when he came to pay homage to my parents because he had heard my father was the first professor of statistics in

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<sup>164</sup> DNB Stories Africa, "List of Peter Obi's achievement in Anambra State as governor", June 14, 2022.

Nigeria and that my mother had retired as the first female registrar of the University of Nigeria. And so, this man just sort of arrived and said he just wanted to pay homage, and I was very impressed by that because he showed me how much he values education. And then, he became governor of Anambra State, and he took Anambra State to number one in education. I remember being very impressed by the story of how he had given his personal phone numbers to all of the senior prefects in secondary schools in Anambra, which I think also showed me he is interested in what ordinary people think. He does not just want to hear from the administrators; he wants to hear from them; he wants to hear from the students about what is really happening.

She also made comments which revealed Mr. Obi's courage, decisiveness and intolerance for criminal behavior:

And his focus on security, he really tackled kidnapping in Anambra, and I also remembered that he used to clash with the Anambra elites when he was tackling insecurity and kidnapping and that showed me he is quite decisive; he is just very focused on things. And that is really why I support him <sup>165</sup>

Several Nigerians have various encounters with him where his humility was showcased. Unfortunately, many of these encounters are undocumented. However, his life is like a developing. I believe that in time to come, volumes will be written about this unique Nigerian. Don Ebubeogu tells the story of an encounter with Mr. Peter Obi while he was the governor of Anambra State in this report by Ozii Baba Anieto

In a chance encounter with Mr. Peter Obi when he was still the governor of Anambra state, at Abuja airport, he was alone, carrying his luggage and queuing with other passengers to pass through security and airport authority. After exchanging pleasantries with him, and on getting back to my seat, a fellow passenger from another state asked me if Mr. Peter Obi is not faking his lifestyle. He could not understand why a sitting governor will be traveling without aides and also refused to be accorded VIP protocol like other politicians at the airport. I took my time to explain to him that the hardest thing a Nigerian "rich man" can successfully execute is to fake humility.

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<sup>165</sup> Francis Ugwu, "Why I support, admire Peter Obi – Chimamanda Adichie", April 12, 2023, <https://dailypost.ng/2023/04/12/why-i-support-admire-peter-obi-chimamanda-adichie>

The lifestyle of the elites in Nigeria is so flamboyant and arrogant and over time, it looks like the norm. One can understand why it looks like a rare sight to see, and the common people are surprised that, a sitting governor is carrying his luggage and travelling without any aide.

#### **4. Integrity**

Mr. Obi is a man of integrity. Though he neither an angel nor a saint, but from what we have seen about him, he is a man of discipline and integrity. He has not allowed himself to be tainted by the muddy waters of corruption. The BBC reported one Mr. Dayo Ekundayo, one of the prominent participants in the botched *End-SARS* protest of October 2020 as saying: "Which Nigerian politician has ever held office and has his integrity intact?"<sup>166</sup> That is indeed true. More than ten years after his time of service in Anambra, nothing in the name of corrupt practices, abuse of office or the rights of people has been traced to him. Instead his only 'sin' is that he refused to let corrupt people have their way when he was governor. He Obi ran for governor in 2003, and assumed office in March 2006 but was impeached in November the same year by the State House of Assembly, because he prevented them from stealing from the state funds by padding the state budget. Years later, sources from the Presidency confirmed the information. In fact, "it was not just the request to inflate the budget and accommodate their interests, they also gave as reason, the use of N43.2million by Mr. Peter Obi to repair the burnt Governor's House for which 298 million was already appropriated in the budget; the use of N81 million for the reconstruction of the burnt Governor's Lodge for which N486 million was also appropriated."<sup>167</sup> Being a man who strongly believes in the rule of law, he went to court again; the impeachment was overturned and he returned

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<sup>166</sup> Olivia Ndubuisi & Nduka Orjinmo, "Nigeria election 2023: Who is Peter Obi of the Labour Party?", BBC News, Lagos, February 23, 2023

<sup>167</sup> "Obi impeached for refusing to inflate Anambra budget —Presidency", Vanguard Newspapers, May 29, 2018, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/05/obi-impeached-refusing-inflate-anambra-budget-presidency/>

to office in February 2007.<sup>168</sup> It is also on record that he withdrew from the People's Democratic Party (PDP)'s party primaries because heavy bribery within the party was influencing the party primaries,<sup>169</sup> and then defected to the Labour Party, an erstwhile unpopular party which had not won any political city whatsoever and emerged its presidential flag bearer.<sup>170</sup> While other parties and their candidates were criticized for compromising voters by offering them money, he was criticized by people who have been made to think that vote buying is normal, for taking the opposite route and that inspired a cliché for his party faithful and supporters, who call themselves, *Obidients*: 'we no de give shishi', in broken English, which means, 'we don't offer bribes', 'we don't buy votes'. This is the legacy of Mr. Peter Obi.

Nigerians are joyfully amazed that such a virtuous, responsible and hardworking politician still exists in Nigeria, and I can go on and on and on and discuss other virtues which are seen in Peter Obi such as contentment, selflessness, generosity and magnanimity, as well as empathy and compassion in the face of human suffering. However, picking the threads where he manifested these virtues from several newspapers and media will need a lot of time and this is where I am constrained. I hope however, that the few I have proved are enough for presenting this figure as a living exemplar of virtue, whose virtuous life should be emulated. He is a strong testimony that Nigerians can live virtuous, instead of corrupt lives. His life also bears witness to the fact that insistence on righteous living will eventually topple evil and corruption though they are pervasive and appear insurmountable. He challenges the Church in Nigeria to bring back the fundamental

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<sup>168</sup> Sesan, "2019: Atiku picks Peter Obi as running mate" *Punch Newspaper*, October 13, 2018,

[https://punchng.com/2019-atiku-picks-peter-obi-as-running-mate/#google\\_vignette](https://punchng.com/2019-atiku-picks-peter-obi-as-running-mate/#google_vignette)

<sup>169</sup> Jackline Wangare, "Peter Obi's biography and career: his rise to fame revealed" *Legit Online Newspaper*, January 18, 2023, <https://www.legit.ng/1189429-peter-obis-biography-career.html>

<sup>170</sup> NAN, "2023: Obi picks LP presidential ticket", *The Guardian*, May 30, 2022, <https://guardian.ng/news/2023-obi-picks-lp-presidential-ticket/>

teaching of the virtues to our churches and schools and to call everyone to live them in our daily lives.

#### 2.1.4 Proposing the virtues of honesty and temperance

At this point, I want to briefly present two specific virtues, which I think are crucial for combatting corruption. I propose the virtues of honesty and temperance.

**Temperance** is one of the four cardinal virtues, together with prudence, justice, and fortitude. It is also one of the seven capital virtues and a strong virtue which counters greed/gluttony. Greed, as I noted in chapter one is the number one on the list of culprits responsible for corruption in Nigeria. It is the virtue of restraint which enables one to control oneself. It relates to justice in the sense that it helps us to be constantly mindful of others and one's surroundings. This mindfulness in turn enables the practices of abstention, moderation and delayed gratification. It relates also to prudence in the sense that it enables us to exercise proper moderation when there is a conflict between one's needs and rights, and the needs and rights of others; between self-interest and public-interest; between private and public/common good. It related with fortitude since a certain strength of character is needed for one to truly practice self-restraint.<sup>171</sup>

**Honestly/truthfulness** is the virtue which opposes falsehood. Aquinas considers honestly as an acceptable synonym to virtue.<sup>172</sup> It confers true honor and integrity to a person. Honesty is a great virtue which is so much needed in private and public life. It accords one a moral character that can be described as sincere, straightforwardness, uprightness of conduct devoid of cheating, malpractice, pretense, lying, stealing and dubiousness. This virtue is related to accountability. One

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<sup>171</sup> See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa – IIae, q. 141, art. 1 - 8

<sup>172</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa-IIae, Q. 145, art. 1

who is honest is reputable and will enjoy public trust. With such a person in the political establishment, social trust can be restored.

## 2.2 Catholic Social Teaching

The Catholic Church has over the centuries developed a thick tradition of principles for her engagement with civil society and her constant untiring advocacy for building a consistent ethic of life and just world.<sup>173</sup> This thick tradition of principles of social engagement constitutes what is known as the social doctrine or teaching of the Church. This body of the Church's teaching on social issues is a fundamental aspect of the Catholic faith; it is solidly based on the life of Jesus, his teaching, and his paschal mystery and is an essential aspect of the Church's mission *ad gentes*. It truly is a doctrine. It forms part of the body of teachings of the Catholic Church, rooted in divine revelation in Scripture. Thirdly, this body of teachings aims to improve human society by shaping our interactions and structures to be more just, human, and respectful.<sup>174</sup>

Since the time of Pope Leo XIII's ground-breaking encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 – known as the first social encyclical, the document inspiring Christian activity in the social sphere and the point of reference for this activity<sup>175</sup> – the popes and bishops of the Catholic Church have promulgated a vast body of social teaching. While the Church has always taught on the ways that the faith bears upon human activity, including in the political and economic spheres, rapid global changes in politics and economics over the long 19th century were the impetus for this new body of teaching. While over a dozen such principles (for example, the preferential option for the poor)

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<sup>173</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility* (digital edition 2020), #40, p. 24, <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf>

<sup>174</sup> Daniel Brandenburg, *Catholic Social Teaching*, April 6, 2023, <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf>

<sup>175</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004), ISBN 88-209-7716-8, #89.

may be discerned within the body of Catholic social teaching, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, a 2004 publication of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, lists four foundational and permanent principles, namely: the dignity of the human person, the common good, solidarity, and subsidiarity.<sup>176</sup> All four are related and inter-connected.<sup>177</sup> In any case, of these four, the first two are the most pivotal. I consider them most relevant for this work.

### **2.2.1 The Principle of Human Dignity**

The topic of the inviolability of the dignity of the human person is not a new idea in Catholic theological discourse. Church Magisterium recognizes it, not only as a fundamental precept of both Scripture and Tradition, but also the bedrock of all the principles of the Church's social teaching. In other words, the entirety of the Church's social teaching is grounded on the assumption that every living human person possesses an intrinsic dignity accorded to them by the creator.<sup>178</sup> This dignity precedes any activity, and it does not diminish because of bad behavior. The Church has been faithfully constant in her magisterial defense of this most basic principle and strongly believes that this principle of the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society.<sup>179</sup> It is the ground for religious freedom<sup>180</sup>, just as it the fundament for all other Catholic social teachings.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium*, #160

<sup>177</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium*, #162.

<sup>178</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1700; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of The Social Doctrine of The Church*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004), #108, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/justpeace/documents/rc\\_pc\\_justpeace\\_doc\\_20060526\\_compendio-dott-soc\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html)

<sup>179</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Life and Dignity of the Human Person*, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/life-and-dignity-of-the-human-person>

<sup>180</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Dignitatis Humanae*, December 7, 1965, #2.

<sup>181</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *The Compendium*, #160.

The Catholic position on human dignity is predicated on the enduring Christian understanding of the human person as the *imago Dei*. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that the human person is created by God, in God's image and likeness, and for God's glory. He is also redeemed by Christ, who himself is the image of the invisible God.<sup>182</sup> Recent papal and other magisterial teachings and writings since the publication of *Rerum Novarum* have continued to reiterate the church's teaching on the subject. In fact, there has been renewed interest in the topic despite that it had recently received serious backlash both by secular thinkers and even by some Catholics.<sup>183</sup> *Evangelium Vitae* teaches that the human person enjoys sublime dignity, which is a sign of an intimate bond between him and God, and a mirror of God's reflection. Humanity is the masterpiece of God's work of creation, after whose creation God rested. Though the devil meant to distort that divine image in him, he was further gifted with a wonderful Savior, who is himself the perfect image of the Godhead who restored the image of God which he carries because he is destined for a life of beatitude with God. Therefore, his dignity is inviolable.<sup>184</sup> This is a most sublime summary of this age – long teaching of the church. The radicality of this notion of the dignity of the human person is that “the divine image is present in every man.”<sup>185</sup>

This principle of the dignity of the human person has many implications. The first is the recognition of the fact that the human person is a subject of rights and duties. Rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are inalienable to the human person. The second is the recognition that each person has unique gifts and talents and can make specific contributions for the good of others and for society in general. The recognition of the freedom of the human person is another

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<sup>182</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), §§ 1700 – 1701; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, 6th edition, June 2018, p.10

<sup>183</sup> Tollefsen, Christopher, “A Catholic Perspective on Human Dignity,” *Human Dignity in Bioethics: From Worldviews to the Public Square*, edited by Dilley, S., & Palpant (New Jersey: Routledge, 2012), 49 -66. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203075005>

<sup>184</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 34 – 40; *Gaudium et Spes*, 19

<sup>185</sup> CCC 1702; see also Tollefsen, 55

crucial implication. The voice of the Church repeatedly speaks out against social conditions which threaten the dignity of the human person. Such conditions include poverty, poor health delivery, hunger, lack of education, political tyranny, etc. However, a more subtle and insidious threat to human dignity is corruption. Indeed, more often than not, it is corruption which brings up these social ill effects, which rob the human person of their dignity and instead degrades and dehumanizes them. Unemployment steals the right to participate in human work and earn for oneself and one's family or dependents good living conditions. The terrible thing about corruption is that it does not only dehumanize the victims but those in engage in it as well. When corrupt official feed off the public treasury, they are denied of the duty to work and earn and honest living, for example. They become lazy, and wasteful and are unable to learn the art of prudential management because they live on wealth they did not suffer to make.

### **2.2.2 Common Good**

The term “common good” may be a bit misleading and can be misunderstood. A literal and cursory look at the two words may lead one to think that common good means the collection or aggregate of all the material things and property of the entirety of the people in a society. Encyclopedia Britannica defines it as “that which benefits society as a whole, in contrast to the private good of individuals and sections of society.”<sup>186</sup> The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy offers a profoundly practical understanding:

In ordinary political discourse, the “common good” refers to those facilities—whether material, cultural or institutional—that the members of a community provide to all members in order to fulfill a relational obligation they all have to care for certain interests that they have in common. Some canonical examples of the common good in a modern liberal democracy include: the road system; public parks; police protection and public safety; courts and the judicial system; public

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<sup>186</sup> Simon Lee, "Common good" in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 15, 2016. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/common-good>.

schools; museums and cultural institutions; public transportation; civil liberties, such as the freedom of speech and the freedom of association; the system of property; clean air and clean water; and national defense. The term itself may refer either to the interests that members have in common or to the facilities that serve common interests. For example, people may say, “the new public library will serve the common good” or “the public library is part of the common good”.<sup>187</sup>

The concept of common good is not a novel idea or a Christian invention. It has been a consistent feature or theme in Western political and philosophical discourses since ancient times till now. The ancient thinkers laid the foundations. In considering issues pertaining to the *polis* (the city state) and having only the idea of a purely earthly *telos*, the ancient thinkers understood the common good as a social goal for the benefit of everyone in the polis, a goal which necessarily demands the collective action and active participation of everyone in the polis for its attainment,<sup>188</sup> and which must be regarded as nobler than and manifestly greater and more complete than the good of an individual. In other words, in the understanding of the ancients, the common good assumed primacy over the individual good, without prejudice to the indispensable importance of the good of an individual person or group.<sup>189</sup> This was the legacy of ancient thinkers like Plato and Aristotle.

M S Kempshall has written a book, *The Common Good in Late Medieval Political Thought* in which he tried to examine the meaning of the concept of common good in the thoughts of Thomas Aquinas and seven other influential scholastic theologians (Albertus Magnus, Henry of Ghent, Godfrey of Fontaines, Giles of Rome, James of Viterbo, John of Paris, and Remigio dei Girolani). He examined how these late medieval thinkers revived the Aristotelian notion of the common good. Their greatest contribution, however, is the recognition of the crucial relationship

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<sup>187</sup> Waheed Hussain, "The Common Good", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta (Spring 2018), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/common-good/>

<sup>188</sup> Simon Lee, "Common good," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 15, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/common-good>.

<sup>189</sup> Michael Novak, *Free Persons and the Common Good* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1989), 22

between the individual and the community, the individual good and the common good.<sup>190</sup> Building on this contribution, the Church has been constant in expounding the inherent connection between the dignity of the human person as a social being and the common good.

The Magisterium of the Church teaches that the common good is “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals to reach their fulfillment more easily and more fully.”<sup>191</sup> It concerns the enabling conditions which human beings in the society where they live need to flourish and live good and meaningful lives. It is not just about the greatest amount of happiness or good life for a few. Rather, it is about the good of the generality of people living in a society. It is an all-encompassing concept which embraces all the good values, principles, rights and duties, policies, and programs which help people in their diverse situations to live well and make progress.

Thomas Massaro makes a helpful critique of the definition of common good in *Gaudium et spes* by observing that the clause, “the sum total of conditions” is “opaque monolithic and argues that it makes the definition “unsatisfactory.”<sup>192</sup> For him, the formulation of *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* several years after Vatican II’s *Gaudium et spes*, which defines common good as “the good of all and each individual”<sup>193</sup> is better and holds the promise of safeguarding the rights of the individual. “The common good thus becomes an umbrella term for describing patterns of human agency which allow for the protection of such values as freedom, equality, rights, and justice – values which combine overlapping and sometimes competing concerns for both individual and communities.”<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Matthew S. Kempshall, *The Common Good in Late Medieval Political Thought*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 2.

<sup>191</sup> Paul VI, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes*, #26 §1; #74 §1; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), #1906; John XXIII, *Papal Encyclical on Christianity and social progress, Mater et Magistra*, May 15, 1961, #65

<sup>192</sup> Thomas Massaro, *Catholic Social Teaching and the United States Welfare Reform*, (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 11.

<sup>193</sup> John Paul II, *Papal Encyclical on the social concern of the Church, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (Dec 30, 1987), 38.

<sup>194</sup> Thomas Massaro, *Catholic Social Teaching*, 11

The Christian view of the common good is consequential upon the understanding that the human person is naturally a social being who relates and dialogues with other persons in society. They are not monads or islands who lives in isolation. “The human person needs to live in society. Society is not for him an extraneous addition but a requirement of his nature. Through the exchange with others, mutual service and dialogue with his brethren, man develops his potential; he thus responds to his vocation.”<sup>195</sup> Virtues and values such as justice, equality, equity, peace and fairness are necessary as they guarantee a level playing field where everyone, not just the political class, has opportunity to flourish and live happy lives.

I think there is a two-fold relational dynamism in operation in any society where this idea of ‘a level-playing ground’ is cultivated. The first is that between social and individual flourishing: these two are organically linked, not opposed one against the other. Only a privileged few can really flourish where corruption and its offspring – injustice, poverty, hunger, sickness and diseases, poor education and lack of social amenities, etc – are allowed to breed; the majority of the people, the masses, wallow in suffering and struggle to survive. The second is the dynamism between social flourishing and morality: when the common good is attended to, and true human flourishing is activated, it is easier for people to be good, to relate better with others, with other beings in creation and with the environment. When ordinary individuals are truly flourishing, they are even more likely to provide better and more solid contributions to the common good.

Everyone in any society shares in the obligation to contribute to and promote the common good, just as we all have the right to the benefits of the common good. In every country, the government has the bigger obligation and responsibility to preserve the common good as its

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<sup>195</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1879.

guarantor.<sup>196</sup> The government protects it from any violations and punishes anyone who violates it. Yet everyone has a duty and role to play in order to build up the common good for the benefit of all. Commitment to the common good is expected of all members of society, without exception, according to each one's possibilities. "Individuals have the potential to reshape their community [and] the development of any society depends upon the participation of its members (individuals) in building the common good".<sup>197</sup>

Concern for the common good is diametrically opposed to corruption. They are mutually exclusive. This point is grounded on the assumption that whereas genuine concern for the common good entails concern for the good and well-being of one's fellow men and women, corruption breeds on selfish and self-aggrandizing, greedy acquisition for one's personal benefit. This brings me to the remaining two principles which are crucial for building up the common good.

At the beginning of this chapter, I noted that this chapter is a bridge in the sense of connecting the foregoing with the forthcoming chapters. In it, exemplars of virtue, human dignity and common good were presented as moral prisms through which the action responses of the Christian people in chapter three will be evaluated, and as framework for the recommendations of chapter four. The chapter let us see in the exemplars, concrete life examples and specific virtues which need to be seen in the lives of the Christian people of Nigeria if they must win the fight against corruption. The principles of human dignity and common good are must ground and inform every anti-corruption effort of the Christian people. In the next chapter, we will see how much the lives of the Christian people reflect the virtues exhibited by the exemplars and how rooted their responses are in the principles of catholic social teaching.

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<sup>196</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter on the one hundredth year Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, Centesimus Annus*, (May 1, 1991), 40.

<sup>197</sup> Michael A. Onu, "Poverty as a human rights problem and the response of the church: A case study of Nigeria", (STL Thesis, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, Cambridge, MA, Spring 2007), 59.

## **Chapter Three**

### **3.0 The Actions and Responses of the Actions of the people of virtue in the Face of Corruption**

The first chapter presented a grim picture of nation of Nigeria tainted by corruption, with the author arguing that through virtuous living, Christian people can make a huge contribution toward overturning the situation. The second presented virtues and exemplary figures as well as two principles of catholic social teaching which serve to ground this entire endeavor as a social moral concern.

This chapter will consider what the actions and the responses of the Christian people (bishops, priests, consecrated persons and lay members of Christ's faithful alike) towards building a corrupt-free nation in the light of the virtues and their exemplars as well as against the principles of catholic social teaching. I argue in this chapter that the churches and the Christian people in the nation has adequate human, spiritual and material arsenal to engage and fight corruption. Moreover, it is in the nature of the Church and Christians to promote integrity, responsibility, justice and equity which serve human dignity and the common good; to oppose corruption and to entrench righteousness. I will endeavor to present in this chapter what the response of Christians has been so far in response to corruption in the land and offer an analysis using the moral lens presented in the previous chapter.

Religion teaches values. Though not a perfect system, it plays a great role in teaching morals and providing society with some kind of ethic for living. Abdulkader Al-Sheikh and Abdullah Hamadah believe that “the role of religious teachings, due to their grounding in morality, is highly effective in preventing corruption. ... Religion contributes to imparting values and virtue

within souls and discourages all kinds of deviations, including corruption”.<sup>198</sup> Peace Ngwoke, writing on the role of religion in combating corruption in Nigeria, believes that religion is a potent power against the menace, barring the extremities that are seen in the way many people practice religion in Nigeria.<sup>199</sup> Religious groups in general have a great contributions to make in taming the wild beast called corruption, in strengthening the common good and in nation – building. They all condemn corruption as an attitude which is opposed to religious faith and practice.<sup>200</sup> They all teach adherents to practice values and virtues such as fear of God, contentment, patriotism, and discipline. The Christian religion in particular has enormous charisma and spiritual as well as material and political influence which can be made to bear on anti-corruption and nation-building efforts. Being a spiritual organization, which claims righteousness as its foundation and which calls people to *metanoia*, renewal and restitution, it is expected that all Christian churches should come together, put aside their administrative and doctrinal differences and fight this common national menace to a standstill. A number of resources and resources are available to the church for fulfilling this task.

### **3.1 Some Resources Available to the Church for the Task of Combating Corruption**

The Church in Nigeria has a wealth of human and institutional resources. The first is the numerical strength at her disposal. About 70 million of Nigeria’s 140 million people are Christians. This means that roughly 50% of the population is Christian.<sup>201</sup> Muslims and traditional African

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<sup>198</sup> Abdulkader Al-Sheikh and Abdullah Hamadah, “Corruption in Syria Causes, Effects, and Anti-Corruption Strategies,” *Syrian Economic Forum*, 9 -10, [www.scholar.google.com](http://www.scholar.google.com)

<sup>199</sup> Peace Ngozi Ngwoke, “The Place of Religion in Combating Corruption in Nigeria,” *Journal of Church and State* 63, No. 3, (Summer 2021): 419–439, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/csaa058>

<sup>200</sup> Ezichi A. Ituma, Chidimma P. Ukeachusim and Leo Ilechukwu, “The Role of Religion in Combatting Corruption and Management of Religious Crisis in Nigeria,” *International Journal of Theology and Reformed Tradition* 5, (2013): 40, [www.scholar.google.com](http://www.scholar.google.com)

<sup>201</sup> Harvard Divinity School, “Christianity in Nigeria,” *Religion and Public Life*, <https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/faq/christianity-nigeria>

religionists account for the remaining 50%. Though the Nigerian population is equally divided between Christians and Muslims, it is strikingly interesting to observe that Christians have a better spread across the country. Whereas Muslims are concentrated in the Northern and Western parts of the country, Christians are spread in almost every corner of the country. The Catholic Church alone is present in every locality and has parishes and dioceses in every state of the nation. Protestants, Pentecostals and other Christian bodies have reasonable spread as well. With this reality, it is possible to build propagate Christian virtues in the Nigerian society.

Secondly, the Christian churches boast of a horde of trained and educated clergymen and lay people. Majority of her clergymen, especially in the mainline churches, have at least a degree or two in theology or philosophy or both. A good number have added professional training. There are lawyers, educators and professors, business, educational and hospital administrators, military chaplains, psychologists, engineers and accountants among them. Apart from the pastors, bishops, and those in the ordained ministry, Christian churches have raised a great multitude of men and women among the citizens. Among the laity, across denominational lines, there is a vast range of professionals and people well trained in various areas of life and spheres of human endeavor and engagement, though uneducated folks are there too. A lay catholic society like the Opus Dei alone has raised up for the Catholic Church and for the Nigerian society great professionals and entrepreneurs who can lead transformations. The duty of sanctifying the temporal order behooves on the laity and the church does do not lack laity who should carry the gospel into the streets. They have them in great number. I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that even though Islam commands denser population in the Northern part of the country, Christians have better spread, despite being systematically decimated in the North by Islamic insurgent groups, who, I guess, may be uncomfortable with that spread which is constantly increasing. The population and spread are assets which the Christian churches have. Christian zeal is usually taken for granted, but I think

it is another factor that need to be mentioned. Nigerian Christians are generously blessed with it. This zeal can be transferred to the combat against corruption.

Next is the teaching authority or office of the Church which is at once useful for spiritual formation and human development of people. This office was given by Christ when he commanded his apostles to teach the world (Matt. 28: 16 – 20) and has been sustained in the Church through apostolic succession. The Catholic has a well – documented theological discourse on this very function. It is a part of a three-fold task (*munera*) that is deeply connected to the mission of the church in the world: prophetic or teaching office (*munus propheticum or munus docendi*, sanctifying (*munus sanctificandi*) and ruling office (*munus regendi*).<sup>202</sup> This teaching duty of the Church has a lot of implications. By virtue of this office or duty, the church has the right and freedom to teach not only matters pertaining to worship and spirituality, doctrines and dogmas, faith and morals only but also things pertaining to the social order, issues of social justice and the common good. Canon 741 of the Code of Canon Law regulates as follows:

§1. The Church, to which Christ the Lord has entrusted the deposit of faith so that with the assistance of the Holy Spirit it might protect the revealed truth reverently, examine it more closely, and proclaim and expound it faithfully, has the duty and innate right, independent of any human power whatsoever, to preach the gospel to all peoples, also using the means of social communication proper to it.

§2. It belongs to the Church always and everywhere to announce moral principles, even about the social order, and to render judgment concerning any human affairs insofar as the fundamental rights of the human person or the salvation of souls requires it.

The words of this canon mention a brand of powerful tools available to the church for addressing social issues: social communication media. The church welcomes these tools<sup>203</sup>, recognizes their usefulness<sup>204</sup>, and considers it necessary to employ them in executing her magisterial mandate.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Pope Paul VI, *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium*, chapter 2 and 3

<sup>203</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Decree on the Media of Social Communications, Inter Mirifica*, 1963, 1

<sup>204</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Inter Mirifica*, 2.

<sup>205</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Inter Mirifica*, 3.

Parish communities make up another great resource for the practice of virtue. “A parish is a certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a particular church (a diocese), whose pastoral care is entrusted to a priest as its proper pastor, under the authority of the diocesan bishop.”<sup>206</sup> Catholic parishes are communities of virtue. They are hubs where virtue education/formation and the practice of virtue takes place. The canonical description of a parish above is remarkable. It identifies it as a stable community. These communities are spectacular: they gather people from various families, academic backgrounds, professions, diverse economic strengths and from various strata of society every week and unites them around a common goal – that of growing in faith and love and ultimately union with God. The stable nature of these centers of faith and love makes them even more capable of sustaining the practice of virtue. They are also hubs which can support networks of friendship, human relationship and social action towards the sanctification of the temporal order. In Nigeria, every parish boasts of various associations of the faithful. These organizations can be categorized into three, namely statutory bodies, pious associations and service groups. Statutory bodies gather people according to their age and/or marital status. In this group are such as Catholic Men Organization, Catholic Women Organization, Catholic Youth Organization, Mary League Girls and Young Catholic Students. Pious associations are groups which pay particular attention to prayer. Here we have the sacred heart society, divine mercy society, Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Legion of Mary, and prayer groups honoring various saints such as St. Jude society, St Anthony of Padua, etc. Anyone can sign up, irrespective of age, or marital status. The service groups serve the parish in various capacities, such as the church wardens, altar servers, catholic workers volunteer force, choir, confraternity of catholic doctrine, etc. Each of these associations, whether they are primarily for

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<sup>206</sup> Code of Canon Law, Can. 515 §1.

service, for the promotion of prayer or statutory meet in the parish space, at least once a week, apart from the general parish Masses and other worship events. Parishes are indeed important sociological spaces. James Cavendish describes catholic parishes as

sociological contexts in which members define and express their beliefs, values, and identities, develop friendships of mutual trust and support, engage in communal religious practices, develop civic skills, and receive inspiration and support for serving the larger society through a variety of social ministries. ...these types of communities can have a profound effect not only on the lives of their members but also on the larger society through those members. In some cases, for instance, congregations can become institutional bases for community empowerment by developing visions for a common future and structuring political participation.<sup>207</sup>

I think that parishes hold great resources for serious catholic action in anti-corruption efforts.

Furthermore, the Church also boasts of numerous schools and houses of formation. The school apostolate is another age-long avenue which the church uses in educating citizens. The church has a pedigree for running schools and educating nations and absolutely knows, according the Fathers of the second Vatican Council, how “extremely important education is in the life of man and how its influence ever grows in the social progress of this age.” The Council proposes a holistic Christian education which does not only concentrate on faith-formation and church doctrines but one which inculcates into her sons and daughters, the sense of the urgency of contributing to the common good and to nation-building.<sup>208</sup> The school remains a crucial avenue at the disposal of the church today. The missionaries used the schools successfully in colonial Nigeria to educate the nation. The civil war disrupted the good work of educating the nation which the missionaries were doing at the time. Now, more than ever before, the schools have become ever more crucial. Fortunately, Christian churches in Nigeria have numerous schools – kindergarten, elementary, and secondary schools. The government ceased many of these schools

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<sup>207</sup> James Cavendish, “Why Should Social Scientists Care about Catholic Parishes Today?” *American Catholic Studies* 129, no. 1 (2018): 4–12, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26529134>.

<sup>208</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Declaration on Christian Education, Gravissimum Educationis*, 1965

after the civil war, appropriated them and mismanaged them. A number of them have been recovered while many are yet to be recovered. In many places, new ones have been built. There are also a few institutions of higher learning owned and run by the churches and Christian bodies. These are potent and effective tools at the disposal of churches and Christians.

Finally, the social doctrine of the Church challenges Christians to oppose corruption, defend human dignity and promote the common good. In line with her social doctrine, it has been the age-long nature and practice of the Church to condemn sin, unholy, evil and corrupt behavior, systems and institutions in our societies and the world, to defend the dignity of the human person and to pursue virtue, social justice, and equity, promotion of democracy and of the common good. Mirroring this usual nature and practice of the global church, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace noted that “the local Churches are heavily involved in the formation of a civil conscience and in the education of citizens to a true democracy; Episcopal Conferences of many countries, have made interventions against corruption and on behalf of a society that is governed by law” and encourages these local churches to “cooperate in a valuable manner with international organizations in the fight against corruption.”<sup>209</sup>

### **3.2 Interrogating the Church’s Response with the Moral Lenses**

From the foregoing, and coming home to Nigeria, where corruption is endemic and terribly damaging the prospects of growth and flourishing, the overarching question becomes: how far and much has the church made use of these resources in her arsenal? What has the church and the Christian people done in response to the corruption in the country? Can one say in all fairness that

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<sup>209</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *The Fight against Corruption* (Vatican City, 2006), [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/justpeace/documents/rc\\_pc\\_justpeace\\_doc\\_20060921\\_lotta-corruzione\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060921_lotta-corruzione_en.html)

the Christian churches in Nigeria, have done much to oppose corruption? With all the human, institutional, and theological resources at their disposal, one would expect that the churches in Nigeria and her sons and daughter would be a strong force against corruption and against those who perpetrate corrupt practices. While acknowledging that Christian leaders and people in the country – collectively and individually – have made some good efforts aimed at containing corruption and building the nation, several authors have argued that these efforts are not enough; they are not commensurate with the capacious corruption in the land, and as such have not yielded optimal results.<sup>210</sup>

I think that the Church in Nigeria does not adequately employ the human capacity, the intellectual and academic prowess we possess, the facilities, structures and institutions we have. The church, to a large extent, has been unable to harness her own rich social doctrine and other resources to lay the foundation for political action.<sup>211</sup> With the power the Catholic church alone exerts in African nations, we should be a force to reckon with. But what I have personally noticed is that politicians in Nigeria are not even worried about the church. But how can they be when they have noticed that respected church leaders can also be bought over with the same stolen funds which they should condemn. I will evaluate four areas around the lives and actions of the Church and of Christians through the prism of the virtues, and their exemplars.

### **3.2.1. Witnessing as disciples of Christ**

In the first place, we are supposed to be a people of virtue. Christians are basically disciples of Jesus who are called to follow Jesus, walk in his footsteps and imitate his life. The basic call or

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<sup>210</sup> Two instances are Joseph F. Mali, *A Quiet Revolution: Some social and religious Perspectives on the Nigerian crisis* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 63, who thinks that the religious bodies, including Christians have not done much in terms of contributions for a better society; and Chikere A. Agbo, in *Catholic Church Leadership in Peace Building in Africa*, p. 142, quotes Matthew Hassan Kukah as saying that the Church in Nigeria has failed to harness her own resources for more productive political action.

<sup>211</sup> Chikere Aloysius Agbo, “Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah: Bridging the Gap between Prophetic Rhetoric and Prophetic Action”, *Catholic Church Leadership in Peace Building in Africa*, 142

vocation of Christians is to discipleship. By this I mean that Christian people are primarily and fundamentally disciples of Christ, people who follow his teaching and imitate His way of life. It belongs to Christians to replicate the virtues which we see in the life of Jesus and which are contained in his teaching. Specific virtues such as temperance, modesty, and contentment, honesty, sincerity and diligence, which we need in Nigeria today, were greatly manifest in the life of Jesus, who is our exemplar par excellence. In his public ministry, respect for human dignity was paramount as well. As disciples of Christ, do Christians in Nigeria really manifest in our daily lives these beautiful virtues in the life of Jesus? In the lives of the apostles, martyrs and saints of the first and second century, we find shining examples of truthfulness. Peter challenged Ananias and Saphira to live sincerely and failure to abide by that principle was catastrophic (Acts 5: 1 – 11). Paul challenged Peter though Peter was the head of the Apostles (Gal. 2: 11 – 14). The virtue of courage led many of the early Christians to the martyrs' stake. Coming down to the 16<sup>th</sup> century Christians who worked through the confraternities, we find virtues such as charity, fortitude and resilience at work. Their passion in taking action rather than sitting indolently and complaining the political establishment challenges our apathy to social issues and our docility in the face of corruption, bad governance and wrongdoing.

I argue here that the Church in Nigeria, of which I am part of, has not fared well enough. If these exemplars would judge us, we would score very low point. I say this because, in my opinion, we have not really stamped our feet on the ground in terms of living out the gospel messages and kingdom principles which we preach and hear daily. We are not influencing the society with the virtuous and good lives we ought to live as a people of virtue. Church leaders ought to reflect, through their personal lifestyle, the simplicity of evangelical poverty and in that way challenge the extravagant display of wealth and scandalous waste of resources by a few in a land where the greater majority have no food to eat. Unfortunately, it appears the souls of the

clergy have been taken up by the love of material things. Some church leaders live highly expensive lives, like kings and princes at the expense of the church members.<sup>212</sup> The ostentatious and flamboyant way of living that we see in the society<sup>213</sup> has been allowed to thrive in the church, among the clergy and laity, who are supposed to be examples of humble and simple lives. We have allowed ourselves to be compromised by the spirit of the world. What fascinates many clergy persons today are “cars, houses, jewelries, first class tickets, prodigal parties, empty religious rituals.” Vanity, money and arrogance have been enthroned in the sacred space.<sup>214</sup> In fact, our failure to show good example is partly responsible for the continued upsurge of corruption in our country. In this context, one can say that we have nothing to teach society.

Fund raising has become the primary agenda, building of high-rising church building has replaced the evangelization of peoples and salvation of souls. In the bid to raise funds for these gigantic projects, church leaders turn their gaze to the rich, and this opens the door to corrupt people whose sources of wealth are questionable to infiltrate the church. In recent times, there has been a disturbing trend to recognize and give awards only to the rich who can in turn express gratitude for such awards in monetary terms. In a frank critical commentary, Ugoji Egbujo observes that “recognition is reserved not for Sunday school teachers, but for multimillionaires who help the pastor travel his route of fantasy. The idea that works—donations and offerings—can atone for sins, becomes entrenched, ... a church that has discarded the bulwarks Christ built against worldliness cannot be the light of a corrupt nation”.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Gabriel Wankar, *The Dual Reality of salvation and the Church in Nigeria*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2017), 172.

<sup>213</sup> James-Michael Okpalaonwuka, *Morality and Politics in Nigeria: Moral Integration in Nigeria Politics as a way out* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997), 178.

<sup>214</sup> Ugoji Egbujo, “Corruption and the Nigerian Church,” *Vanguard Newspapers*, June 24, 2017, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/06/corruption-nigerian-church/>

<sup>215</sup> Ugoji Egbujo, “Corruption and the Nigerian Church”.

A lot number of voices have condemned this trend, even though these critical voices have not been able to stop the trend. I think that the untold hardship and economic austerity in the land is a major factor. Churches need money and also feel the pain of the economic crunch and try to find ways of getting which they need to function. This often leads many church leaders to compromise their standards and are willing to receive monetary assistance from persons whose sources of wealth in the society are unquestionable or even manifestly corrupt. There is little concern about the source of the money or gift. The clergy simply accept monetary and other material gifts and blesses the donors. This attitude emboldens evil and corrupt people in society who are willing to make such public donations as a way of seeking approval, when their corrupt behaviors should be condemned. The willingness of corrupt people to give donations and the readiness of religious institutions to accept such gifts encourages corruption. This ‘mutual culpability’ between the corrupt donors and the selfish clergy who receive gifts from corrupt donors as an effective factor which fortifies corruption. Joseph Mali contends that if the desire to donate ill-gotten wealth is met with the unwillingness to accept it, the progress of corruption will be upset. Since the givers and receivers are all guilty, the solution is neither rigorous prayers nor increased fasting, but deep conversion and transformation.<sup>216</sup>

In a moving speech presented at the Convention of Victory Life Bible Church International, Abeokuta, on Saturday, April 8, 2017, one-time president of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, said:

There is no doubt that all our institutions have been tarnished by the brush of corruption. If the Church, as an institution, does not take bribe or get involved in other obvious corrupt practices, the behaviours of some of our men of God leave much to be desired. They not only celebrate but venerate those whose sources of wealth are questionable. They accept gifts (offering) from just about anybody without asking questions. This gives the impression that anything is acceptable in the house of God. But if Jesus can chase out those buying and selling from the temple with the declaration that, “My house shall be called the house of prayer, but

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<sup>216</sup> Joseph F. Mali, *A Quiet Revolution: Some Social and Religious Perspectives on the Nigerian Crisis* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 71 – 2.

ye have made it a den of thieves” (Mat. 21: 12-13), then it is time to stand up against corruption.

Against prosperity gospel preachers and evangelicals who concentrate in preaching miracles instead of godly behavior, he had this to say:

While nobody wants the Church to preach poverty, the message of prosperity must be preached with caution and moderation... While miracles, signs and wonders are the expectations of true believers, such must be based on righteousness. To preach that one can acquire wealth without labor is not only deceitful; it is a call to corruption. It is false preaching and it is sinful. We must be careful in believing and celebrating every testimony of miraculous blessing, hence we end up being hoodwinked into celebrating corruption”.<sup>217</sup>

The virtues of temperance, contentment, moderation, self-restraint and strength of character call us to task here. The manifestation of greed and ostentatious lifestyle clearly show that we have failed to cultivate and inculcate these virtues among us.

### **3.2.2. The sanctification of the temporal order**

By answering the call to be disciples of Jesus and to follow Jesus; and being formed by his teaching and the imitation of His virtuous life, Christians have been granted the privilege of becoming God’s co-workers (I Cor. 3: 19), and one spectacular area where Christians fulfil their duties as God’s co-workers is the redemption and the sanctification of the secular and temporal order. This is an essential aspect of the mission of the Church and of Christians in the world. It is part and parcel of our Christian discipleship. This is the import of the command of Jesus to his disciples to be “the salt of the earth and the light of the world” (Matt. 5: 13 – 16). In that light, the conciliar decree on the apostolate of the laity proclaims that “Christ’s redemptive work, while essentially concerned with the salvation of men, includes also the renewal of the whole temporal

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<sup>217</sup> Olusegun Obasanjo, “The Role of the Church in the Fight against Corruption,” *Premium Times Newspaper*, April 8, 2017, <https://opinion.premiumtimesng.com/2017/04/08/the-role-of-the-church-in-the-fight-against-corruption-in-nigeria-by-olusegun-obasanjo/?tztc=1>

order. Hence the mission of the Church is not only to bring the message and grace of Christ to men but also to penetrate and perfect the temporal order with the spirit of the Gospel.”<sup>218</sup> This is the essential ingredient which is needed at this time in order to heal the nation of the malaise of corruption. Sanctification of the temporal order offers our nation a ‘sanatio in radice’ opportunity. I think it is a duty which the Church in Nigeria and her children owe the nation.

She serves as a leaven and as a kind of soul for human society.... Pursuing the saving purpose which is proper to her, the church does not only communicate divine life to men but in some way casts the reflected light of that life over the entire earth, most of all by its healing and elevating impact on the dignity of the person, by the way in which it strengthens the seams of human society and imbues the everyday activity of men with a deeper meaning and importance. Thus, through her individual matters and her whole community, the Church believes she can contribute greatly toward making the family of man and its history more human.<sup>219</sup>

Among the children and members of the Church, the laity are entrenched in various segments of the Nigerian society. They are especially suited for this task of sanctifying the temporal order.

According to *Lumen Gentium*,

the laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity. Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer.<sup>220</sup>

During his visit to Nigeria in February 1982, Pope John Paul II reminded the Nigeria Christian laity of this aspect of their Christian witnessing:

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<sup>218</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 5

<sup>219</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et spes* (1965), 40

<sup>220</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 31

As lay people, you know that your special apostolate is to bring Christian principles to bear upon the temporal order, that is to bring the spirit of Christ into such spheres of life as marriage, and the family, trade and commerce, the arts and professions, politics and governance, culture and national and international relations...From priests, you receive the word of god and sacramental strengthening. Fortified in this way, you enter into the arena of ordinary daily life and confess Christ there. In society, you are called to be a leaven for Christ: to witness to Christ in the school, in government offices, in company works, in club gatherings, in town development unions, in age-grade meeting, in the universities, in the markets, in trade unions and in politics. In all these secular spheres, you will promote justice, unity, honesty and public spiritedness. Together, you will seek Gospel-inspired and concrete answers to problems of bribery, corruption, lack of discipline, and other such evils.<sup>221</sup>

It must be said that the laity has failed to do this. Kyrian Echekwu observes that politics, one of the critical areas that need evangelization and sanctification, and morality, continue to run in mutually exclusive and parallel route, with no meeting point.<sup>222</sup> Yet Christian lay people are there in great numbers. Granted that Christians are not the only ones in government, there are nevertheless, practicing Christians who attend Mass weekly, some daily, who receive communion and participate in other sacramental and liturgical exercises of the church who are heavily involved in corruption, budget padding, and graft in government offices, in money/sex-for grade/jobs in our universities and human resource offices across the nation. A good number of governors who embezzle public funds are Christians. some of whom are friends with church leaders. Christians ought to be patriotic but this thick public virtue is largely scarce in our public life. Talking about this virtue of patriotism, Emmanuel Dim asks: “To what degree and extent do Nigerian Christians possess and express the virtue of patriotism? Can Christians who hold public offices be considered to be patriotic? Of course, these are rhetorical questions since it is rather obvious that most Nigerians, especially public office holders, are unpatriotic. The massive and senseless looting of

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<sup>221</sup> John Pau II, “Message to Nigeria: on the occasion of his visit to Nigeria”, (February 12 – 17, 1982), 26

<sup>222</sup> Kyrian Echekwu, *Nigerian Politics and Corruption: The Challenges before the Nigerian Church as a socio-moral Actor* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2017), 357.

public funds in both high and low places speaks volumes of the lack of patriotism among Nigerian public office holders.”<sup>223</sup>

The virtues of patriotism and selflessness the living exemplar of this virtue in our midst, Mr. Pete Obi, call us to task here. It is unpatriotic to embezzle and loot public funds and destroy our economy. Lack of patriotism is the reason for taking bribes and bending the law. It is a terrible ally to dishonesty; their presence portends bad news for the common good. Lack of patriotism opens the door to compromise and hinders Christians from bringing the light of Christ to illuminate the public arena.

### **3.2.3. Defense of human dignity and promotion of the common good**

Corruption is destructive. It undermines human dignity and human rights. In the face of corruption, human dignity is endangered in two ways: first, and directly, by disrobing persons of the sense of innocence and righteousness. In the place of these virtues, people become so proud and reckless in corrupt practices, without any qualms of conscience. When people are no longer ashamed of vile acts, it amounts to a total loss of the sense of their dignity as human beings created in the *imago Dei*. Secondly, somewhat indirectly, by its consequent creations, such as poverty, unemployment, hunger, frustrations and depressions, and the likes, corruption undermines the dignity of the human person. We see this play out in the numerous kidnappings of persons for ransom. Some of the kidnap kingpins are university graduates who cannot find employment. We see the abuse of human dignity in the abuse of women, who are forced to depend on men for livelihood; and children, who are sent into the streets by the parents, to hawk and get money. A huge number of those who are abused do not even know they are abused These are just a few

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<sup>223</sup> Emmanuel U. Dim, "The Citizens' Obligation Towards Nation Building: The Role of Christians." (2022): 7

examples. The important point being made here is that abuse of human dignity and rights is alarmingly high and rampant in Nigeria.<sup>224</sup>

What have the church and the Christian people done to promote and defend human rights and human dignity? Apart from theologically defining these terms and debating on them over the centuries in her books and theological discourses, has the church in Nigeria really done enough to speak out and take adequate action against abuse of human dignity? To be fair, the church in Nigeria has done fairly well in her charitable works aimed at cushioning the effects of corruption and in supporting victims of abuse of human rights and dignity.<sup>225</sup> Dioceses, Religious institutes, parishes and several other religious associations have several avenues and structures of engagement in social work. Institutions like orphanages do great work in caring for orphans. Caritas Nigeria does incredible work in assisting internally displaced camps. Various Catholic dioceses have the JDPC (which stands for Justice, Development and Peace Commission). In each diocese where it has been established, it assists the bishops in carrying activities aimed at promoting the common good and the dignity of persons. Through these commissions, various forms of aid are extended to the poorest of the poor in the remotest crannies of the country who are often abandoned by the state. The church tries to reach them. The major issue is that these commissions are constrained by paucity of funds, and can never supply all the needs of the needy in remote towns. Victor Ede and Dominic Kalu also enumerate several practical efforts and actions taken by various church bodies and organizations across Nigeria to deal with and reduce the

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<sup>224</sup> Aloysius Enemali, "The Role of the Church in promoting Human Rights in Nigeria," *Cultural and Religious Studies* 10, No. 4 (April 2022): 187- 88, doi:10.17265/2328-2177/2022.04.003

<sup>225</sup> Victor Ifeanyi Ede, "Christianity and Umanitarianism: Assessing the Contributions of Churches to Social Welfare in Nigeria," *OWIJOPPA* 4, No. 4 (2020): 105 – 113, ISSN: (ONLINE): 2630 – 7057; ISSN: (PRINT): 2630 – 7049, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344860006>. In this article, Victor Ede invokes numerous examples to argue that Christian churches have done enormous work in defending human rights and promoting human dignity through numerous humanitarian activities.

problem of child abuse in Nigeria in its variegated forms. According to them, since the advent of Christianity to Nigeria, till now, the church has been at the forefront of efforts to save children and minors from all sorts of abuse beginning from the abolition of the killing of twins, to current efforts aimed at ending child hawking, child labour, child sexual abuse, female genital mutilation, vagrancy, child battering, etc, great and laudable strides have been initiated and executed by several church and church leadership, which is highly commendable.<sup>226</sup>

In any case, a lot has been left undone and a lot still needs to be done. A. Enemali describes it “a worrisome trend and a cause for concern” the church is not doing much in terms of provide adequate information and education to her faithful concerning their rights and how they can defend those rights. More so, abuses of human dignity and rights equally happen in the various churches in Nigeria in several ways. He decries the blatant abuse of human dignity in various forms, in places of worship using the name of God.<sup>227</sup> Poor remuneration is another unfortunate aspect of disrespect for human dignity which happens right inside the Church. Church workers and employees are among the least paid workers in Nigeria and in most cases, with neither benefits nor engagement agreement. They can be hired and fired at any time by priests and other administrators without any possibility of seeking redress. There is neither sick nor leave allowance and when they retire or are retired, there is usually no retirement package or benefit and neither do they have job security. The worst is that these workers cannot unionize.<sup>228</sup> The church therefore, in the opinion of Emeka Obiezu, lacks the moral credential to condemn government policies which do not adequately address the plights of the poor.<sup>229</sup> Wankar also observes that the Church which

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<sup>226</sup> Victor Ede and Dominic Z. Kalu, “Child Abuse in Nigeria: Responses of Christian Churches and the Way Out,” *International Journal for Innovative Research in Multidisciplinary Fields*, 4, Issue 4 (2018): 46 – 53, ISSN: 2455-0620, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332371525>.

<sup>227</sup> Aloysius Enemali, “The Role of the Church in promoting Human Rights in Nigeria”, 192

<sup>228</sup> Gabriel Wankar, *The Dual Reality of Salvation and the Church in Nigeria*, 170 – 1.

<sup>229</sup> Emeka Christian Obiezu, *Towards a Politics of compassion: Socio-political dimensions of Christian responses to Suffering* (Bloomington IN: Authorhouse, 2008), 115.

decries corruption in her advocacy is not accountable. “How can the church in Nigeria call the government to accountability when only the bishop knows what income enters the diocesan coffers and nobody dares ask to see his budget?”<sup>230</sup> Wankar is not alone in making this sad observation. Ugoji Egbujo also observes that most church leaders in Nigeria avoid or outrightly refuse being financially audited. Many denominations, he said, run like sole proprietorships. “The churches are embodiments of opacity and arbitrariness, the very demons that have perpetuated corruption in the society.”<sup>231</sup>

The virtue of honesty is being undermined here. It is clear that church personnel in Nigeria live double standard lives since they do deal sincerely with their employees.

#### **3.2.4. Too much praying and talking but little action**

One thing for which the church is known is Christian prayer. The expose on the confraternities of the 16<sup>th</sup> century threw light on their understanding that both prayer and action are necessary. They would pray when it was time, but they worked hard in order to better the lives of the poor and the society. Jesus would pray on the mountains at night and worked in the day. He did not pray alone. The church in Nigeria sees it as a duty to pray for the country and the churches have been faithful in doing that. In any case, it has been observed that we tend to abdicate to prayer and to God the very actions we should take to change things in our society. We tend to believe that prayers solve all problems. Gabriel Wanda finds it ironical that though our bishops understand fully well the depth of the structural ills of the nation, yet they are not immune to this unhealthy reliance on prayer instead of galvanizing the entire church for action.<sup>232</sup> The observation below is not only apt but correct:

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<sup>230</sup> Gabriel T. Wankar, *The Dual Reality of Salvation and the Church in Nigeria*, 171

<sup>231</sup> Ugoji Egbujo, “Corruption and the Nigerian Church,” *Vanguard Newspapers*, June 24, 2017.

<sup>232</sup> Gabriel T. Wankar, *The Dual Reality of Salvation and the Church in Nigeria*, 33.

Rather than organize Nigerians to rise up against corruption, religious institutions, in keeping with the theology of grace, prefer to prescribe prayer as a remedy for national crises...[serious]societies do not overcome their ills by lengthy prayers. Change comes about through human struggles and personal sacrifice. We only have to look at India's Mahatma Gandhi, American Martin Luther King (Jnr) and South African social rights activists, Mandela and Desmond Tutu, who rose to worldwide fame as opponents of apartheid, to appreciate the necessity of human struggles for social transformation.<sup>233</sup>

Despite being an important aspect of our lives as Christians, this attitude of over-indulgence in prayer even when action is urgently needed is a lazy way of responding to critical situations. Prayer cannot replace action, which, in my opinion is so much needed in the nation right now, if corruption must be overcome.

There is also too much talking without commensurate action plan. There is little or no framework for social and political engagement and absence of program of training Orobator regrets that the entirety of the official declarations of catholic bishops of Nigeria, there is no outline of an effective program of action for dealing with the national issues such as corruption, evil governance and the like.<sup>234</sup> Elaborate and eloquent sermons alone are not enough to win the fight against corruption.

This apathy and indolence in regards to taking action is sinful on the part of the church, including bishops, priests and laity, for all of us are complicit. According to Thomas Aquinas, "omissions and commissions are found in the same species of sin."<sup>235</sup> The worst part of it is that some bishops forbid priests from speaking out against the government. In the archdiocese of Abuja

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<sup>233</sup> Joseph F. Mali, *A Quiet Revolution: Some Social and Religious Perspectives on the Nigerian Crises* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 65 – 66.

<sup>234</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, *The Church as Family: African Ecclesiology in its social context* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 2000), 87.

<sup>235</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa – IIae, 72.6

for instance, which is the seat of the national government, priests are forbidden to make any statements against the government.

I have to bring this chapter to a conclusion here. The first assignment I had in this chapter was to show that the Christian people really do have all it takes to make huge contributions in view of the fight against corruption and in nation building. It is in the first place, it is part of their calling to be disciples of Christ in as much as that call demands their contribution towards the evangelization of the temporal order. It is also proper for them to assist in nation building as citizens of the nation since a corrupt – free society will surely aid their flourishing. The second work I had to do was to show what the response of the Christian churches and peoples in Nigeria against corruption have been so far. To be clear, some good work has been done by the Christian church, but lot more serious work needs to be done.

## Chapter Four

### 4.0 Proposing the Way Forward

The first chapter presented a panoramic picture of corruption in Nigeria and its impact on the lives of individuals and the nation. The second presented the evaluating principles while the third analyzed the responses of the Christian people. This last chapter has the singular duty of offering some concrete recommendations towards combatting corruption. This is the chapter where the argument of this paper will be brought to its logical conclusion.

Writing this thesis has opened my eyes to the fact that corruption is a huge, ugly structure. It is difficult to overcome and the fight to combat is not an easy one. Numerous books and articles have been written on the subject and abundant recommendations have been made for its eradication or reduction. I have read or at least come across a huge number of literatures on this disturbing question of corruption in Nigeria.<sup>236</sup> The authors write out of deep concern for the future of our country and the well-being of the suffering masses, who deserve better lives and who would have flourished and live the better lives they deserve were it not for the huge corruption in the land. These writers have offered numerous suggestions and raised a lot of issues that need to be addressed in order to reduce, if not completely root out, corruption. Often times, the suggestions made are grounded in a false hope. What do I mean by saying that? Successive governments in Nigeria have been romancing corruption as I pointed out in the first chapter. Public and government officials make false and pretentious promises, statements and policies about fighting corruption but pay mere lip service to those promises. In reality, it appears they do not really mean to fight it, probably because they gain from the situation.<sup>237</sup> Several – military and civilian –

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<sup>236</sup> I began this work with great trepidation, being unsure about finding adequate materials. I was wrong. I was utterly surprised at the huge volumes of work done concerning the topic and related issues. That discovery brought a greater fear: as to whether my work can open a new path and bring a contribution that is fresh and original, without just repeating what others have already said.

<sup>237</sup> Kyrian Echekwu, *Nigerian Politics and Corruption*, 200 - 201

governments have instituted different panels or commissions of inquiries and peace committees for instance, but the wonderful recommendations and reports of such commissions are never applied. It is false hope therefore that anyone would hope that the same public and government officials will listen to any suggestions that can help to clean our Augean stables. The second point I want to make about these earlier works done on this issue of corruption ravaging Nigeria is that, despite the nice, reasonable recommendations made for ending corruption, only three, out of the various works I consulted, look towards virtue, and made a case for its entrenchment, its dissemination, and its integration into daily social life. One of them is a symposium paper written by Ndiwe and Onwumere who argue that literature is a powerful way of teaching children the way of virtue. Using the example of two local popular children drama books, *A Lucky Chance* and *Our Maid*, which powerfully teach the virtues of obedience, diligence, respect and hospitality, they argue that more attention should be paid to the use of children's literature in inculcating virtues in children, strongly believing that a virtue taught a child at a tender age will remain with them into adulthood.<sup>238</sup> Virtue indeed, considered as a general category, holds a great key to dislodging the edifice of corruption and establish a new era of integrity. This is what I propose in this chapter.

From the way the Nigeria nation came to be put together, ethnic peoples who are culturally diverse and originally unrelated and unconnected, but forcefully brought into a union that was foisted on them without properly and painstakingly midwifing a dialogue between them, it is obvious there was no proper moral framework put in place to guide human actions in the 'new' social community from the start. It is a huge task, and I think it is neither late nor impossible, to begin weaving the moral fabric which will serve the nation. Unlike Emile Durkheim who, arguing

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<sup>238</sup> Amadi A. Ndiwe and Veronica O. Onwumere, "The role of children's literature in enhancing societal moral order: the case of *A Lucky Chance* and *Our Maid*," *Ogu: the moral order and modern corruption: Proceedings of Whelan International Symposium*, edited by Theophilus I. Okere 2, no. 15 (Owerri: Whelan Research Academy, 2017), 6 – 15.

that Christianity was dead, called for non-religious supply of a much-needed moral education for secular society<sup>239</sup>, I, aware of the lively and vibrant nature of the Christian faith in Nigeria, call upon the Christian people to supply moral education and virtue formation which is urgently needed to heal the corrupt society from the root. This a challenge proper to the Christian people.

Corruption has become a mountainous superstructure of evil in Nigeria, and there is need to pull it down. To do this successfully, a counter-structure of righteousness and virtue need to be created. And the way to go is propagate a new season and a new generation of virtue, grounded in new convictions, principles, and attitudes. Personal virtues are crucial here. Growing and nurturing good and strong personal virtues is, in my opinion, the surest way of dismantling the superstructure of corruption. Good personal virtues can build new, desirable social structures; they must accompany structural change if we are to sustain the transformation of society.<sup>240</sup> The life of Peter Obi is a vivid example. As I noted earlier, the narrative of his virtuous management of state resources as a governor was enough to make so many people change their minds about voting in our election. The electoral body experienced an upsurge in the registration of voters. His sincerity and accountability have exposed even more the criminality of many other politicians who spent more funds but achieved much less than what he did. As against the narrative that only wealth mattered in our society, despite the source, Peter Obi has created a new ideology that acknowledges integrity as more important than wealth and riches. Another strong example is the resoluteness, firmness and courage Paul manifested when he challenged Peter for being duplicitous and prevaricating on the matter of circumcision (Gal. 2: 11 – 14). I mentioned this earlier in chapter three but only in passing. Some Judaizers had wanted to impose the Jewish customs of circumcision on the non-Jewish Christians. Peter sided this group in Antioch, and failed to defend

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<sup>239</sup> Harrington and Keenan, *Jesus and Virtue Ethics*, 42.

<sup>240</sup> Daly, *Structures of Virtue and Vice*, 46.

the gentile Christians, for fear, I guess, of criticism from the Jews. Paul had to oppose him and stood his ground in defending the Gentile Christians. If Paul had not done this, maybe that double standard would have lived with the early church and could have constituted a standard and a terrible structure of ecclesiastical *modus operandi*.

In view of the foregoing, I make three recommendations: that political leaders and public servants emulate Mr. Peter and take him as an exemplar and their model; that all who answer the name Christian in Nigeria, repent of our compromises, capitulations and unfaithfulness, and return, to the practice of the virtues, the imitation of the saints and a sincere obedience to the teachings of Jesus and God's word; that renewed efforts be made and new methods be explored towards an aggressive teaching of the virtues to young ones, in the home, in schools and churches; and that a trend which is becoming the norm in our churches, which is the recognition of wealth, be stopped and that the good, virtuous and heroic acts, sacrifices and services our individuals and groups be recognized, irrespective of their social status or the weight of their pockets.

These recommendations are based on the knowledge that the intellectual virtues are developed through education while the moral virtues are nurtured through a disciplined lifestyle and proper habits. Following Aristotle, philosophers have always thought that there is a difference between the intellectual virtues and the moral virtues. The intellectual virtues concern the use of the human rational faculty and the excellence of thinking, while moral virtues concern the perfection of relating our reason to our passions, appetites, desires, feelings, and emotions. Both are acquired by teaching and learning. However, the moral virtues can only truly be developed by habit, that is by practicing them, in such a way that they form the actor. In recent times however, there has been a debate as to whether this age-long idea of difference the two is real or putative.<sup>241</sup> My

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<sup>241</sup> Linda Zagzebski, in her *Virtues of the Mind, An Inquiry into the nature of virtue and the ethical foundations of knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), argues that they two are one. Michael S. Brady in a

concern is not the debate but the fact that learning and practice of the virtues are essential for character formation and the practice of public virtue in the Nigeria society. Knowing about virtues is not enough; what is more important is the habitual practice of the virtues. Every human person has the potential to use both their reason and will to know and then pass from knowledge to right action and to a rightly ordered and virtuous life.<sup>242</sup>

#### **4.1 A Call to uncompromising practice of the virtues and imitation of exemplars**

This first recommendation is a clarion call to all Christians, of all denominations – clergy and lay alike – to return to the practice of the virtues and to imitate the exemplars of the virtues. It is one sure way of conquering corruption. Over time, the sweeping corruption in our country has made a lot of people feel that there is no need for integrity, sincerity, and righteousness. A lot of people have lost admissions to schools, opportunities for employment, court cases, and other benefits because they either refused or were unable to bribe their way through. A 2017 European Union External Action Service (EEAS) report on *Corruption in Nigeria – Bribery: public experience and response* suggests that inability to refuse bribery may be caused by fear of negative consequences. In the executive summary of the report, the EEAS observes:

Nigerian citizens confronted with a bribe request do not always pay it. For example, 5.3 per cent of those who had contact with a public official in the 12 months prior to the survey turned down the bribery request made by a public official on at least one occasion. On the other hand, 27 per cent always paid a bribe when requested to do so. Put differently, out of every 100 people who paid a bribe every time it was requested, 20 refused to do so on at least one occasion. It should be taken into account, however, that of those 5.3 per cent, only 1.3 per cent never paid a bribe, while the remaining 4.0 per cent refused to pay a bribe at least once but paid a bribe on other occasions. Perhaps these figures are so low because more than half (56 per

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chapter entitled “Moral and Intellectual Virtues” in *The Oxford Handbook of Virtue*, edited by Sander E. Snow, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 783–799, challenges that thesis and defends the orthodox idea.

<sup>242</sup> Augustin Vondou, “Virtue Ethics for the prevention and fight against corruption in Cameroon” (STL Thesis, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, April 2015), 73.

cent) of those who refused to pay a bribe after a request by a public official suffered negative consequences as a result of that refusal.<sup>243</sup>

A related 2019 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)'s report shows that:

only one in five Nigerian citizens (19 per cent) asked to pay a bribe refused to do so. While this represents an increase in the bribery refusal rate from 2016, when it was only 16 per cent, it also implies that refusals continue to be rare and that Nigerians perceive a benefit in paying a bribe, or a risk in refusing to pay a bribe, when requested to do so. It also implies that when public officials attempt to elicit bribes, they are usually successful and do so with impunity – an outcome that may embolden such officials to make even more bribe requests.<sup>244</sup>

The truth is that most people know that giving bribes is not proper and they are not happy giving it, but often, the public officials who ask for and take bribes, make things difficult for people and put them in situations where they feel they have no option than to offer bribes. In any case, I make a case here for resistance. Resistance need not be violent. It can be polite, civil, and gentle. Insistence and united action are more important. I will explain with an example. Getting a Nigerian international passport is normally impossible for the common people, without paying a huge sum in bribe to agents of the Nigerian Immigration office. Alone, an ordinary Nigerian cannot fight this criminal behavior in the nation's immigration office. Suppose however, the entire body of Christians, under CAN agree that no Christian should give bribe and painstakingly follow up it by ensuring that anyone who is victimized for not paying extra money gets justice, the battle will certainly be won. The immigration officials will surely be forced to do the right thing. A well-orchestrated insistence on virtuous living by the Christian people can spark off a silent revolution. Extrapolating this situation to all other sectors, I believe that, if a greater number of the populace

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<sup>243</sup> The European External Action Service (EEAS), "Corruption in Nigeria – Bribery: public experience and response" (August 16, 2017): 3,

[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2017.08.16\\_survey\\_findings\\_policy\\_implications.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2017.08.16_survey_findings_policy_implications.pdf)

<sup>244</sup> Yemi Kale and Oliver Stolpe, "Corruption in Nigeria: Patterns and Trends," *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime* (December 2019): 9, 71. [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/corruption/nigeria/Corruption\\_in\\_Nigeria\\_2019\\_standard\\_res\\_11MB.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/corruption/nigeria/Corruption_in_Nigeria_2019_standard_res_11MB.pdf)

resists the corrupt officials' demands for bribes, the impunity and the boldness with which corruption is practiced will be reduced. The Christian people can begin this revolution. As I suggest the life of virtue and call all to virtue as a way to fight corruption in Nigeria, I am not oblivious of the fact that this path is not going to work either as a miracle or a magic. It is a path that is arduous, and which takes time, but surely bears good results.

We need virtue in the public arena. Public virtue, according to William Fay, is the readiness to sacrifice personal want and interest to the public good. [...] It is an internal good characteristic of a republican nation. [...] Public virtue belongs to the very soul of a republic apart from which it could not be itself. It supplies the glue that holds a republic together. A despotic government rules by fear; a monarchy governs by the aristocratic aspiration to excellence; but a republic, which cannot rely on fear or on an aristocratic code of honor, must depend upon public virtue to create a public realm, to be a *res publica*".<sup>245</sup>

Nigeria claims to be a republic, at least in principle and is addressed as such. Public virtues should be part of the life of the republic, but due to the malaise of corruption, public virtues are scarce. It becomes crucial therefore, to promote the practice of virtue in our public life. It is the contention of this thesis that the Christian people can make this contribution to the building of our nation. This is where the rhetoric of sanctification of the temporal order has to be put into action. Christians need to practice virtues in the offices, workplaces and their places of duty. I suggest here, the use of constant reminders. They may be inconsequential but can also make lasting impressions when they are constant. Various means can be used to communicate such reminders: handouts, fliers, phone messages, social media posts, etc. A pastor in one parish can chose to print a good quantity of a small handbill, with a catchy message such as "do not take or offer bribes from anyone this week" and hand it to every adult parishioner as they leave after Sunday Mass. It

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<sup>245</sup> William F. May, "Virtues in Professional life", in *Virtue: Readings in Moral Theology* #16, edited by Charles E. Curran and Lisa A. Fullam (New York: Paulist Press, 2011), 100.

sends a powerful message. This can be very useful for a parish in an urban area where many of the parishioners are public servants. Richer parishes can produce t-shirts bearing messages such as “do not ask for bribe; I won’t give it”, or “corruption is killing all of us, stop it”, and ask parishioners to wear them even to work, where there is no special dress code. Different parishes in various locations and settings will come out with several creative ideas, depending on what works for each.

The exemplars whose lives were reflected on in chapter two qualify to be called our “cloud of witnesses”, to use the biblical expression of the letter to the Hebrews 12: 1. They encourage us to walk the path of virtue. If anyone can dismiss the first century saints and martyrs and the 16<sup>th</sup> century individuals who worked through the confraternities as either extraordinary or people who lived in centuries far behind in time, the virtuous example of Peter Obi is a living story which brings inspiration. He is one of us and a person of our time. Like every other Nigerian, he was born, grew up, and was educated in Nigeria. He experienced the inadequacies rife in our polity. The only difference is that he made a decision to live with integrity and shun the life of impunity and corruption for which our politicians are known, and remained resolute in living by that decision, despite having numerous opportunities to compromise. He has become a school of virtue for everyone in our country. He appears to be saying to all of us: follow my words as well as my behavior for the two are the same.<sup>246</sup> The example of his life has revived the biblical doctrine which teaches that righteousness exalts a nation (Prov. 14: 34). I therefore present him as an exemplar, and a standard for political leaders in Nigeria and call on all political leaders in Nigeria, to emulate him. The specific virtues which he manifested as a state governor and which helped him to perform excellently in Anambra need to be emulated by other politicians. The first step to imitating him

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<sup>246</sup> Jarlath U. Opara, *Obi-Nometrics: Pulling Nigeria from the Deep* (Abuja: De Pure Lee & Due Printers, 2023), 4.

is to be humble, because pride can stand in the way. The next is to pay closer attention to his style of life and if possible, study what motivates him. Allowing him to tell his story in the midst of other politicians will be a nice way of turning his narrative into a practice. If, for instance, any of the State houses of Assembly in the county or even the senate invites him to come talk to them in one of their routine retreats. I imagine a scenario where these politicians sincerely invite him with the good intention to learn, and not just to play politics, his narrative can go a long way in influencing others in that community of politicians. Priests can also invite him to speak to them in their retreats. Various associations of Christ's faithful can do as well. Such interactions can be powerful in influencing transformation.

#### **4.2 Renewed and aggressive teaching of the virtues in the home, in schools and churches.**

Are the virtues caught or taught? Are they learnt informally by imitating people of good character and through experience or are they learnt in the classroom? "Some 2,400 years after Aristotle, fresh attempts are being made to develop character through the classroom", writes Joe Humphreys of the Irish Times. He concurs that virtue theory is indeed making a comeback in our age and informs us of current attempts in education circles "to teach character alongside literacy and numeracy in the classroom", a project being promoted beyond national borders by the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, a multi-disciplinary research center based at the University of Birmingham and funded by the John Templeton Foundation. The multi-disciplinary research center is exploring the effects of "moral education" on English schoolchildren. According to the report, about 15,000 pupils have completed the center's 'Knightly Virtues' course, which teaches medieval chivalry and extrapolate lessons for today. The center is now exporting such programs

in a bid to bring virtue on to the global curriculum. The center believes that virtue can be both "caught" and "taught"<sup>247</sup>. He quotes the Centre's director, Prof James Arthur, as saying:

On the Aristotelian conception, virtues are both "taught" and "caught", and the double benefit of deliberately teaching and learning from moral exemplars begins early on as one integral process... The only rewarding life stories are the stories of virtuous lives. Each such life is a journey fraught with dangers and mistakes, but those who grow in virtue are among the truly happy.... Parents want virtue education and children find it interesting because it meets questions they ask about why some people bully them or why certain things are important. Children are concerned about virtues like trust, honesty and justice.<sup>248</sup>

Indeed, virtue education helps individuals to develop, cultivate and nurture morally good and strong personal virtues, and produces people of excellent character who discipline themselves, people who aim at genuine goals rather than superficial and false ends. It brings about true human flourishing. Corruption poses a huge threat to the survival of Nigeria and has become one huge mountainous structure of evil and sin – personal and social – in Nigeria<sup>249</sup>

We as a Church in Nigeria need to take seriously the stories of the Apostles, the early Christians, saints and martyrs. I suggest that every parish in Nigeria run a one-hour class for children every Sunday before or after Mass, focusing on one saint or martyr. Documentaries, audio-visuals and films showcasing important values can be shown kids and young people. When I was in secondary school, a young priest who was posted to our local parish at the time organized a picnic for young adolescents. As part of the program, the film called *the fourth wise man* was shown to us on a projector. That film never left me till date. Jesus taught in Matthew's gospel that "whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers, that you do unto me". That movie made the teaching come alive to me. The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues and her programs inculcating virtue among young people can be replicated in Nigeria.

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<sup>247</sup> May, "Virtues in Professional life", 103.

<sup>248</sup> Joe Humphreys, "Unthinkable: Should virtue be taught in schools?" *Irish Times*, Apr 1, 2015, <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/unthinkable-should-virtue-be-taught-in-schools-1.2025800>

<sup>249</sup> Echekwu, *Nigerian Politics and Corruption*, 176 – 178; 306 - 7

Illiteracy and ignorance in a way, favor and aid corruption. This is because the uneducated and ignorant usually have no idea what their rights are; in addition, when people are illiterate, they are timid and lack the temerity and courage to resist the corrupt and to speak out in the face evil. In that condition, they are vulnerable to abuses and unjust treatments stemming from corruption. Though a good number of the population have some kind of formal education, yet the illiteracy level is still very high. Nearly half of the population is illiterate.<sup>250</sup> Education, therefore is so much needed in the country. Unfortunately, the Nigerian government has made little commitment to education. Budgetary allocations to the educational sector have consistently been very low.<sup>251</sup> Students stay out of school for several months due to nationwide industrial actions by their teachers and those in government carry on as if nothing was wrong.<sup>252</sup> The Church can come to the rescue in more ways that we have been used. Education must not only be the school. Diocesan facilities, and parish communities can provide wonderful spaces for teaching. I suggest that dioceses and parishes run training programs based on the virtue ethics of Aquinas and on the social teachings of the church. They can be simple, easy to access lectures and training packages. A priest from my diocese of Umuahia who trained in Australia, the Rev. Augustine Obi, recently began an initiative which he called “Heart-Build-Initiative”. This initiative is currently sponsoring a weekly program – the Missing Link – on one of the local Radio channels within the diocese. The Missing Link is targeted at winning the heart of the young people back to the church through discussion of issues which they relate with. The program has been commended for its great insights at addressing the

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<sup>250</sup> Echekwu, *Nigerian Politics and Corruption*, 400

<sup>251</sup> Fortune Eromosele, “ASUU Strike: FG’s budgetary allocation to education lowest in 2022,” *Vanguard Newspapers*, August 2, 22, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/08/asuu-strike-fgs-budgetary-allocation-to-education-lowest-in-2022>.

<sup>252</sup> Ernest C. Igwe in this article, “Damage control and the ASUU strike,” *Guardian Newspapers*, October 17, 2022 analyzes the many strike actions by Nigerian tertiary schools’ teachers and how they can be avoided in the future.

questions which the youths have. Similar programs aimed at inspiring people to live rightly without compromise despite the challenges and strong temptations can help.

The Catholic church and other Christian churches have been in the business of assisting to educate the country's population since the arrival of Christianity. Unfortunately, as I hinted in the opening chapter, the government seized most of the schools after the civil war, took over their administration and gradually ran them down. Most of these churches began afresh to build new schools and in a few states like Anambra, Imo and Abia, where some of the schools have been returned, the churches have had a hard time rebuilding both structures and character. But despite the injustice done to these schools, the churches remain great leaders in education. Catholic kindergarten, elementary and secondary schools are scattered all over the nation and have maintained their high academic and moral standards. They have always kept the trust which parents have in them when they bring their children to them. In a country where public schools have become a shadow of their past, these catholic centers of learning have continued to provide for parents and their children, places to get good education.

Being great leaders in education, I think the church should incorporate the teaching of virtue in the curriculum of schools and insist on making virtue education an integral part of the academic program, at elementary and secondary schools. Intellectual knowledge alone of the arts, social, chemical, physical and material sciences is not adequate, without a mix with the moral and ethical (I am not talking about religious or spiritual) education will be inadequate if a new generation of corrupt-free Nigeria is to emerge. The Church, with her rich social teaching, has a crucial responsibility to educate the populace concerning the necessity of moral virtues and the need to live by them in both private and public life, with the hope and goal of producing in our citizens, good moral character and the emergence of a society where justice, equality and equity,

inclusion and appreciation of our diversity, human rights and the fundamental option for the poor will be cherished and respected.

It is equally crucial to begin virtue education right from the kindergarten. Virtues learnt at a young age will hopefully develop into lifelong character and virtuous living. I agree with the CBCN that “character formation is absolutely necessary if education, at any level, is to serve as an instrument of genuine nation building”. But I do not completely agree with the next line of the statement which reads: “In our country where most people belong to one religion or the other, such character formation is impossible outside the framework of religious instruction imparted according to the recognized religious traditions to which Nigerians belong”.<sup>253</sup> Surely, church and state have a lot to do in terms of united action concerning the education of the citizens. But why we wait for the political leadership to realize its duty to support the church as she navigates the difficult path of educating the nation, the church should continue doing what it can. Moreover, ethical and character formation needs to be separated from religious and spirituality education. Virtue education in the churches for Christian believers can incorporate religious education and spirituality formation but in the secular sphere, we must subscribe to an ethical formation which pays attention to the diversity present in our country and in our world. This quotation I found in Andrew Cohen’s work is appropriate here. He begins by quoting John Rawls as saying that “citizenship need not be totalizing [and] citizens need not have any specific fundamental view of the world in order to be good citizens”. He goes on to argue that:

They can be orthodox, Jews, Quakers, Anglicans, socialists, technophobes, polygamists, or accept nearly any specific comprehensive view of the world. As long as they are receptive to reasonable arguments and are prepared to offer their own arguments to others in terms that can be understood and not found objectionable, then they can fill the role of good citizens while living according to

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<sup>253</sup> CBCN, “Memorandum to the Nigerian Military Head of State,” 1984, quoted in K. C. Echekwu, *Nigerian Politics and Corruption*, 385

whatever deep commitments they might otherwise have. They can foster a political community that endures across generations amidst diversity.<sup>254</sup>

Catholic and other Christian schools host school children from various faith backgrounds. Even Muslims send their wards to these schools across the nation. One can say therefore that these schools have the entire nation under their watch. This is a great opportunity for the Christian church. If we as a church harness it appropriately, it can be a great window of systematic transformation of the nation through the raising of a new breed, a new generation. This demands a united, systematic, systematically and strategically planned action of church leaders. Care must be taken to focus on an ethical/virtue education that will not be accused of a surreptitious way of converting a child to the particular faith which runs the particular where the child attends; a virtue education which will be open – minded and, either attentive to the diverse religious sensibilities, or blind to them, but focusing rather on raising morally good citizens who have total aversion, and zero intolerance to corruption. It is possible.

Away from the school, at national, regional, state and community levels, churches can organize regular programs, seminars, symposia, conferences, trainings and the like, aimed at exposing the depths of corruption in the land and virtue education. Using the parish community setting, concrete actions can be taken which aims at dealing with corruption. Let me here, suggest this model: that the CBCN instruct that for a period of one year, in the way the universal church dedicated a whole year to the celebration of God's mercy, St. Joseph, St Paul, St John Vianney, etc, that in every parish all over the country, a day be set aside as corruption awareness day or anti-corruption campaign day or a similar name. The priest or any other resource person will prepare a short paper that will address a specific area of corruption, or a specific virtue such as honesty,

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<sup>254</sup> Andrew I. Cohen, *Philosophy, Ethics, and Public Policy: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2015), 137.

justice or temperance, or x-ray the life of a saint such St. Thomas More, or Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassatia. It can feature a living person who is known for a particular virtue. Apart from Peter Obi, we have Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, known, tested and trusted for accountability in the public space. After the talk, there may be a workshop where such a paper will be further discussed, and questions asked. Prayers, fast, adoration may follow it. Parishes which can afford it can end with a dinner. Even though the entire day may be dedicated, but parishioners may need to come together in the church for a few hours. Those who are inhibited to join in person due to their work schedules, ill health, or any other thing, can join online or in the spirit by praying at home. This kind of united action will work like a wild-fire in reaching even the ignorant about the dangers of corrupt. It will even expose some the behaviors people exhibit sometimes without knowing they are improper behavior. This is just an example. Other things can be done, for instance, instead of merely writing communiques, the bishops can decide to end each plenary session with a day of peaceful protest around the state house of whichever state of nation is hosting them. I have no doubts that if they do, Catholics will join them en-masse and support their protest. Such regular protests from all our bishops will send shivers to politicians.

I think that all the churches in Nigeria need to be more intentional and aggressive with the fight against corruption. I am making a case here that the Christian churches in Nigeria have not done much to fight corruption. The different churches regularly organize rallies and worship conferences, financial empowerment and skills acquisition seminars, and even fund-raising. Passion for a corrupt free Nigeria should inspire them to organize such seminars, conferences and conventions specifically for pushing against corruption. Such intentional programs will bear more fruit than just mentioning corruption in communiques. This is an area where church organizations and associations of the faithful should come in. Justice and Peace commission in all the dioceses in the country can be useful in this area. They can help to organize the people for united action

against corruption. The same energy with which they organize voter education and election monitoring across the nation can also be dedicated to fight corruption. Everyone complains about it but we carry on and life goes on. A pocket of priests and bishops denounce corrupt acts in their various parishes, some of them in very remote towns and villages.

While I do not subscribe to violent riots and clashes with corrupt politicians and officials when it has not become necessary, I instead call for an organized and sustained move against corruption involving every arm of the church and every arsenal the church can boast of. Too many articles, papers, homilies/sermons, communiques, editorials and books have been written about and against corruption. It is time to apply the suggestions, recommendations and proposals narrated in them. In the face of injustice and unspeakable inhumanity meted out by Spanish *conquistadores* to the native people of the island of Hispaniola (known today as the Dominican Republic) in the West Indies, Antonio Montesino, of the Dominican Order, delivered, on December 21, 1511, a provocative sermon against the *encomienda* system, challenging his fellow Spanish colonialists to repentance. That sermon momentarily angered the majority and actually converted a few at heart, but did not break the bonds of slavery, until Bartolomé de las Casas, one of the few who were really cut at heart by that sermon, decided to act on it.<sup>255</sup> I must remark that even when he did and despite his long persevering and fortuitous fight, his effort achieved little, seemingly, in his lifetime. Yet, the freedom of the Indo-American in world history could not have been written without those sustained efforts. It is paradoxical that, despite the beautiful and provocative sermons they preach and hear on a constant basis, which indict corrupt politicians and public servants, church leaders and laity have become so docile and allow corruption to go thriving in the country. We have recited too many prayers for too long. Christian leaders and preachers have pacified the

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<sup>255</sup> James Keenan, *A History of Catholic Theological Ethics*, 215 - 236

angry citizens for too long. It is not anti-Christian for the CBCN and CAN to organize and prosecute as many times as we can, on a regular basis, peaceful protests in the major cities of the nation. This is one of the actions I think the Christian people should put their energy and resources into other than merely publishing communiques which the corrupt politicians and public office holders may not even read or take seriously when they do.

### **4.3 Recognition of the virtuous**

It is high time Christian churches in Nigeria end this terrible trend and recognize people of real virtue, even if they are poor. This will go a long way in promoting the virtues. It will motivate people to live virtuous and good moral lives. The Church should not honor people with questionable character by awarding unnecessary religious titles because they have material wealth, while neglecting the very poor among them who do great works of service to the church. As the defender of the poor, the Church should not take part in the oppression of the citizens by sharing in the ill-gotten riches of corrupt people.<sup>256</sup> Jesus our exemplar par excellence teaches us the way here. He drew attention to people whose virtuous lives would have been unnoticed because they were poor. He chose to be born into the poor family of Joseph and Mary, two wonderful people. By this divine choice, Joseph and Mary have eternally become standards of purity, of faith in God's leading, of contemplation, and of longsuffering. He drew attention to the poor and that even brought out the best in them.

The Papal Knights/Orders of Saint Gregory the Great and Saint Sylvester Pope and Martyr are high papal orders. The former was originally founded to reward meritorious civic or military service to the Papal States, but has been reformed and is currently awarded for conspicuous service to the Catholic Church, without regard to religious affiliation. These awards are typically given premised on

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<sup>256</sup> Basil A. Okonkwo, "The Role of the Church in Combatting Corruption in the Present Day Nigeria" in *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, 2022, 5769 – 580, 576.  
<https://acjoi.org/index.php/jassd/article/view/3143/3091>

recommendations from bishops or Papal nuncios for specific services rendered to the Catholic Church. Since 1994, women have been appointed as "dames" in the same classes as men. The latter is an order of merit, with recipients appointed and is typically awarded to recognize and reward members of the laity for active service in the apostolates. It may also be presented to non-Catholics.<sup>257</sup>

All those I know who have been accorded these honors by our bishops in Nigeria are all wealthy people, whose only service to the church is fat monetary donations. Some of them have wealth whose sources are questionable. I am waiting for the day when people from the lower class will be accorded these honors in appreciation of the wonderful services they render to bishops, priests, and parishes. We have them as our drivers, teachers in our elementary and secondary schools, cooks, etc. Their salaries are terribly meagre, yet they serve us joyfully, diligently and respectfully. There are others who offer their services 100% free of charge: organists, choristers and players of musical equipment (and every parish in Nigeria has at least one good choir of not less than 20 people, some of them are world class), altar servers, church wardens and all forms of volunteers. They are there all the time, working and offering their skills and services. But when it comes to the highest recognition, we remember the rich and mighty.

Recognizing virtuous and heroic behaviors whether the agents are rich or poor, other than merely promising parishioners eternal reward in heaven encourages both those honored and others to imitate them. Recognition heals the wounds in people who have been rendered invisible in the society by unjust systems. Sometimes, church administration renders invisible, their own, because they are poor. The Church (and here I mean church leaders) can begin by recognizing the mistakes the Church has made in promoting corruption, directly or indirectly as well as by recognizing the

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<sup>257</sup> Wikipedia. 2023. "Orders, decorations, and medals of the Holy See." Wikimedia Foundation. Last modified February 27, 2023. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orders,\\_decorations,\\_and\\_medals\\_of\\_the\\_Holy\\_See](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orders,_decorations,_and_medals_of_the_Holy_See).

struggles of the many poor among us who have often been neglected because they do not have material riches.<sup>258</sup>

As a way of wrapping up this chapter, I must say that in making these three recommendations, which one may consider unacceptably few for such a huge thesis, my concern was not about just making too many theoretical and abstract suggestions. Like I hinted at the beginning of this chapter, numerous suggestions have already been made in several literatures on this issue. My concern is to raise a few recommendations that are practical and reasonable; recommendations that can be worked out. From my vantage point as a priest who has lived all my life and have done pastoral ministry for fifteen years now, I think that these few recommendations are workable. The tools, structures and personnel/agents needed to put them to work are available. What are needed are the will, the coordination and the decision to begin and sustain them.

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<sup>258</sup> Axel Honneth and Avishai Margali, "Recognition", in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volumes 75 (2001): 111-139, Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4107035>

## CONCLUSION

William May tells the story of T. S. Elliot and his undergraduate student who posed a question to him after a wonderful lecture on a moral issue: “Mr. Elliot, what are we going to do about the problem you have discussed?” “You must understand”, Mr. Elliot began, “that we face two types of problems in life. In dealing with the first kind of problem, we may probably ask the question, ‘what are we going to do about it?’ But for another range of human problems, the only fitting question is not ‘what we are going to do about it?’ but ‘how does one behave toward it?’”. May concludes by saying that the first kind of problems call for pragmatic responses while the second resemble puzzles that are difficult to solve, despite all efforts. He acknowledges in the end that both kinds of moral challenge call for virtue.<sup>259</sup>

Corruption is neither an unfathomable mystery nor an unsolvable puzzle. Appeal to the virtues and calling upon the church and the Christian people to supply virtue education and virtuous examples is not an attempt to exonerate the government from its constitutional and statutory role in providing legal frameworks for countering corruption and bringing it under control. It is only an acknowledgement of the fact that we all have a role to play in working for a better country where corruption, and its effects are not allowed to subvert the right of the citizens to human flourishing.

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<sup>259</sup> William May, “Virtues in Professional Life”, 98 – 99.

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