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**COMBATING CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA:  
THE PENTECOSTAL  
PERSPECTIVE**

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**by**

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# COMBATING CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: THE PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, several scholars, development workers, activists, politicians, international organizations, public affairs commentators and the general public have given attention to the problem of corruption and its attendant effects on society. The problem is not new to humankind even though it has reached unprecedented proportions in recent years. It is as old as society itself and cuts across nations, cultures, races and classes of people. It has been argued that one of the major obstacles to the development of poor countries is corruption. Corruption is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges of our time, a challenge that is not only leading to impoverishment and loss of lives but also threatening the stability of society. In an opinion poll conducted by the Guardian Newspapers, Nigerians picked corruption, unemployment and bad leadership as the worst problems hindering the country's development. 761 respondents or 70 percent of the respondents out of the total sample of 1,080 people picked corruption as one of the worst problems hindering the nation's advancement. Corruption in Nigeria is widespread. According to the Executive Director, Office of Drugs and Crime at the United Nations, Dr. Antonio Maria Costa, about US \$400 billion was stolen from Nigeria and stashed away in foreign banks by past corrupt leaders before the return to democratic rule in 1999. But according to the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, as at 2008, Nigeria's previous leaders stole about 64 trillion naira (about US \$507 billion) from public coffers. When benchmarked against the 2008 proposed budget of N2.456 trillion naira, this translates to twenty-six years budget. In 2021, YIAGA disclosed that Nigeria has lost \$582 billion to corruption since independence in 1960.

Over the years, there has been a lot of focus on how to mitigate the impact of corruption. Strategies, programmes and agencies have been put in place to address the problem of corruption. But the challenge remains. In recent past, Pentecostal Christians in Nigeria have been engaging to combat corruption. In this paper, we examine the Pentecostal perspective to combating corruption in Nigeria. But first, we examine the problem of corruption in Nigeria and what has been done to combat corruption and the challenges.

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## 2. THE PROBLEM OF CORRUPTION

### (a) Definitional issues

Corruption even though a global problem, lacks a universally accepted definition. The Oxford Dictionary of Current English defines corruption as an act of dishonesty especially using bribery or an immoral or wicked act. This definition focuses essentially on the moral aspects of corruption. Similarly, the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary sees corruption as dishonest or illegal behaviour especially of people in authority. This definition looks at both the moral and legal aspects. But according to Nye,

corruption is a deviation from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary exercise of certain types of private regarding influence. This includes such behaviour as bribery (use of reward to pervert the judgment of a person in position of trust); nepotism (appointment by reason of ascriptive relationship rather than merit); and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private regarding uses).

The definition by Nye sees corruption as a deviant behaviour. This presupposes that the normal behaviour will be anti-corruption. This definition will be very difficult to operationalise where corruption is widespread and regarded as the norm by the majority of the people. Similarly, Samuel P. Huntington defined corruption as behaviour of public officials which deviates from accepted norms in order to serve private end.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank define corruption as "the abuse of public office." According to the World Bank, corruption is ...the abuse of public office through the instrumentality of private agents who actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit. Beyond bribery, public office can also be abused for personal benefit through patronage and nepotism, for example the theft of state assets or the diversion of state revenues.

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This is a very wide-ranging definition which delineates some of the acts of corruption. Otite defines corruption as the perversion of integrity or state of affairs through bribery, favour or moral depravity. This is a broader definition which looks at the moral aspect as well as the distortion or twisting of procedures. The Transparency International defines corruption as behaviour on the part of officials in the public sector, whether politicians or civil servants, in which they improperly and unlawfully enrich themselves, or those close to them, by the misuse of public power entrusted to them. Although the definition of the Transparency International is very descriptive, it focuses only on the public sector. But there is corruption in private sector with negative consequences for the whole of society. The Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences defines corruption as the misuse of public power for private profit. Like the definition by Transparency International, this one also focuses on the public sector. The Corrupt Practices and other related offences Act, 2000 defines corruption to include bribery, fraud and other related offences like gratification. The Act gave a very wide definition of gratification to mean among other things the offer or promise or receipt or demand of money, donation, gift, loan, fee, reward, valuable security, property or interest in property with the intent to influence such a person in the performance or non-performance of his/her duties. Although the definition of corruption by the Act is vague, it gives a wide ranging definition of gratification.

From the above definitions, three things come out clearly. First is that corruption is a dishonest act, wicked and bad. As a result, it will be expected that good people will not be involved in it. Secondly, corruption is seen as immoral and antithetical to the positive virtues of society. This implies that there should be social disapproval of anyone who engages in corrupt practices. Thirdly, corruption involves an abuse or misuse of position and authority. Any of such abuse is expected to be met with sanction.

### **(b) Categorization of Corruption**

Corruption can be categorized from different perspectives. Corruption can be classified according to how it is carried out in relation to established rules in administration. There are two types of corruption in this regard. The first is done “according to the rule” where an official receives private gain for doing

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what he/she is paid to do. The second is done “against the rule” where an official is paid bribe to give services that he/she is prohibited from providing.

Corruption can also be classified according to the scale i. e. petty or survival corruption and grand corruption. Petty or survival corruption is practiced by civil servants who may be grossly underpaid and depend on small rents from the public to feed their families and pay school fees. The grand corruption is practiced by high public officials and it often involves large sums of money.

Corruption has also been classified based on the spheres or arena of special activities where it takes place. Using this criterion, Otite classified corruption into five groups: Political corruption, Economic Corruption, Bureaucratic corruption, judicial corruption and moral corruption. Political corruption is manifested in activities connected with election and succession, and the manipulation of people and institutions in order to retain power and office. Economic corruption occurs when business people use corrupt means to pervert the normal institutional regulations, hasten or shorten procedures and get undue advantage or value for goods and services. Bureaucratic corruption involves buying favours from bureaucrats who formulate and administer government economic and political policies including foreign exchange, privatization exercises, import licenses, taxes etc. Judicial corruption occurs when law enforcement agencies and the courts pervert the administration of justice. Moral corruption occurs when people engage in practices that are morally reprehensible.

### (c) Causes of Corruption

There are different perspectives on what causes corruption in society. Some scholars have argued that poverty is at the root cause of corruption and that without poverty, there would be no corruption. Most people would agree that poverty definitely contributes to corruption. In many poor countries, the wages of public and private sector workers is not sufficient for them to survive. Many people therefore engage in petty corruption to make ends meet. But poverty can definitely not be the only explanation. If poverty is the only cause, it will be difficult to explain why rich people and rich countries engage in corruptible transactions. It has been documented that:

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Recent World Bank estimates of the wealth which corrupt African leaders have stashed away in European banks stands at several billion US dollars. None of these leaders can be described as victims of poverty. Yet, by plundering national treasuries, these African leaders have unquestionably deepened the poverty of their people.

There is also the suggestion that corruption is part of the culture of many developing countries. This line of argument is mostly pushed by Eurocentric scholars. They argue that:

What is regarded as corruption in Africa is a myth because it is expected that a beneficiary should show appreciation for a favour granted him/her. If a government official offers one a job or contract, the beneficiary would be obliged to show appreciation either in kind or cash to the government official just as he would do to a village chief if granted a land to cultivate crops or build a house. Corruption is a myth because 'one's culture's bribery is another's mutual goodwill.'

But this position that corruption is part of African culture has been criticized by many African scholars, activists and politicians. It is clear to any African that the traditional African society frowns at corruption or stealing of anything that does not legally belong to you and there are strong community sanctions for such behaviour. As Maduagwu has argued,

It is mere trivialization of the serious issue of corruption in the modern society for any one to suggest that corruption or embezzlement of public funds or extortion of money (bribes) from people looking for jobs or contracts or other benefits from government, could be equated to the customary requirement of bringing presents to the chief for permission to cultivate a land and such things.

President Olusegun Obasanjo also attacked the notion that corruption is part of African culture when he stated that:

I shudder at how an integral part of our culture could be taken



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as the basis for rationalizing otherwise despicable behaviour. In the African concept of appreciation and hospitality, the gift is usually a token. It is not demanded. The value is usually in the spirit rather than in the material worth. It is usually done in the open, and never in secret. Where it is excessive, it becomes an embarrassment and it is returned. If anything, corruption has perverted and destroyed this aspect of our culture.

Furthermore, every society has ways of showing appreciation which is quite different from corruption as we have defined above. In Europe and America, the giving of tips to bar attendants is an accepted way of showing appreciation akin to appreciation shown to a chief who gives permission for land to be cultivated.

Related to the myth of culture is the argument that in Africa, there is allegiance to the extended family and community. As a result, when one climbs up the social and political ladder, he/she is expected to be under pressure to give gifts, money, job and contracts to people of his/her community. Therefore, when people bow to these pressures, they slip into corruption. It must however be noted that in any society, there are different kinds of pressures. Succumbing to negative pressures in any society cannot be accepted as the norm.

Another argument that has been advanced by Marxist scholars is that corruption is the method that the capitalist class that emerged from colonialism uses to accumulate wealth. They argue that inflation of contacts, over-invoicing, collection of kickbacks and buying off of public enterprises at give away prices are primitive means of accumulation of capital that the emergent bourgeoisie in post colonial countries utilize.

Finally, some scholars have attributed corruption in the African continent to the legacy of colonialism. They argue that the colonial state lacked transparency and accountability to the African people. If there was any iota of accountability, it was to the metropolis in London, Paris, Lisbon or elsewhere but definitely not to African people and institutions. This is why the after

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independence, the post colonial state and government are alien to the African. We have argued elsewhere that the colonized people saw government as oppressive and alien; and this is why in most African languages, government work is described as white person's job. In our view, corruption is a problem with multifactorial cause. It is caused by a complex of factors and relations ranging from poverty to greed and primitive accumulation conditioned by colonial heritage.

### **(d) Manifestation and acts of corruption**

Corruption manifests itself in various ways. According to the Political Bureau established in Nigeria in 1987, the manifestations of corruption include:

...the inflation of government contracts in return for kickbacks; frauds and falsification of accounts in the public service; examination malpractices in our educational institutions including universities; the taking of bribes and perversion of justice among the police, the judiciary and other organs for administering justice; and various heinous crimes against the State in the business and industrial sectors of our economy, in collusion with multinational companies such as over-invoicing of goods, foreign exchange swindling, hoarding, and smuggling.

The African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption and Related Offences lists acts of corruption to include:

- a. The solicitation or acceptance, directly or indirectly, by a public official or any other person, of any goods of monetary, or other benefit, such as a gift, favour, promise or advantage for himself or herself or for another person or entity, in exchange for any act or omission in the performance of his or her public functions;
- b. The offering or granting, directly or indirectly, to a public official or any other person of any goods of monetary value, or other benefit, such as a gift, favour, promise or advantage for himself or herself or for any person or entity, in exchange for any act or omission in the performance of his or her public functions;
- c. The offering or granting, directly or indirectly, to a public official or any

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- other person for the purpose of illicitly obtaining benefits for himself or herself or for a third party;
- d. The diversion by a public official or any other person, for purposes unrelated to those for which they were intended, for his own or her own benefit or that of a third party, of any property belonging to the State or its agencies, to an independent agency, or to an individual, that such official has received by virtue of his or her position;
  - e. The offering or giving, promising, solicitation or acceptance, directly or indirectly, of any undue advantage to or by any person who directs or works for, in any capacity, a private sector entity, for himself or herself or for anyone else, for him or her to act or refrain from acting, in breach of his or her duties;
  - f. The offering, giving, solicitation or acceptance directly or indirectly, or promising of any undue advantage to or by any person who asserts or confirms that he or she is able to exert any improper influence over the decision making of any person performing functions in the public or private sector in consideration thereof, whether the undue advantage is for himself or herself or for anyone else, as well as the request, receipt or the acceptance of the offer or the promise of such an advantage, in consideration of that influence, whether or not the influence is exerted or whether or not the supposed influence leads to the intended result;
  - g. Illicit enrichment
  - h. The use or concealment of proceeds derived from any of the acts referred to in this article; and
  - i. Participation as a principal, co-principal, agent, instigator, accomplice or accessory after the fact, or in any other manner in the commission or attempted commission of, in any collaboration or conspiracy to commit, any of the acts referred to in this article.

The Corrupt Practices and other related offences Act 2000 lists offences which are punishable by the Act to include among other things gratification by an official, corrupt offers to public officers, corrupt demand by persons, fraudulent acquisition of property, fraudulent receipt of property, making false statement or return, gratification by and through agents, bribery of

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public officer and using position for gratification.

### (e) Cost and Consequences of Corruption

Corruption has a lot of negative impact on every sphere of societal development: social, economic and political. As Ikubaje has argued, corruption is a global phenomenon and its effects on individual, institutions, countries and global development has made it an issue of universal concern. According to the Lima declaration, the impact of corruption include the erosion of the moral fabric of society, violation of the social and economic rights of the poor and vulnerable, undermining of democracy, subversion of the rule of law, retardation of development and denial of society particularly the poor of the benefits of free and open competition.

Bello-Imam has outlined the negative consequences of corruption to include:

- i. Retardation of Economic Growth: Corruption lowers investment and retards economic growth.
- ii. Misallocation of Talent: Where rent seeking proves more lucrative than productive work, talent will be misallocated. People will be lured to rent seeking rather than productive work.
- iii. Limitation of Aid Flows: Where corruption is rampant, donor agencies are unwilling to put in their money.
- iv. Loss of Tax Revenue: Revenue is lost through tax evasion or claiming improper tax exemptions.
- v. Adverse Budgetary Consequences: When corruption is rampant budgeted amounts will not deliver the required services.
- vi. Negative Impact on Quality of Infrastructure and Public Services: When public contracts are procured through a corrupt system, it results in lower quality of infrastructure and public services.
- vii. Negative Composition of Government Expenditure: Corruption often tempts government officials to choose government projects less on the basis of public welfare than on the opportunity they provide for extorting bribes. Under such a situation, large projects, whose exact value and benefit are difficult to monitor usually present lucrative opportunities for corruption while returns on teachers' salaries and textbooks could be zero for the same set of officials.

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As the Chairman of Transparency International, Peter Eigen correctly noted, “corruption doesn't just line the pockets of political and business elites; it leaves ordinary people without essential services such as life saving medicines and deprives them of access to sanitation and housing. In short, corruption costs lives.”

### 3. COMBATING COPRRUPTION IN NIGERIA

In the recent past, there has been a renewed effort to wage war against corruption all over the world. In fact, the war has taken international, regional and national dimensions. In September, 1997, citizens from 93 countries gathered in Lima, Peru at the 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference against corruption and adopted what is now known as Lima declaration against corruption. Similarly, in November, 1997, civil society organizations (CSOs) meeting under the auspices of the Global Coalition for Africa in Maputo, Mozambique declared corruption as “a crime against humanity.” One month later the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention was adopted. In 2003, the UN Convention on Corruption was adopted. The same year, the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption and Related offences was adopted in July at the second ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union.

In the past one and a half decade, nearly all African governments have some policies and strategies in place to fight corruption. They have clear institutional frameworks to fight corruption. Dr. Specioza Wandira Kazibwe outlined the framework in Uganda as follows:

In Uganda, a number of institutions to fight corruption have been in place for a long time, but the country is still bedeviled with corruption. This has led into a deeply held perception in the general populace that the government has almost lost the battle against corruption.

The institutions charged with the task of fighting corruption are the Presidency, the people of Uganda, the parliament, and the judiciary. In addition, there exist constitutional agencies specifically charged with this task. These are the

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Inspector General of Government (IGG), the Auditor General (AG), the Department of Public Prosecutions. The office of the Vice-President co-ordinates these agencies as well as all anti-corruption activities and integrity building activities in the country. An anti-corruption unit was established within the office of the Vice President, to assist the Vice-President with these tasks.

The constitution also guarantees the autonomy of the IGP, DPP and Auditor General. It provides for a Leadership Code of Conduct and punitive measures. In addition to the Constitution, there are other laws in place to combat corruption. These include the Prevention of Corruption Act, the Penal code and its amendments and the Local government Act. Other measures to combat corruption have also been taken by the National Resistance Movement Government. These include: The Economic reform and Liberalisation, the Civil Service Reform, Decentralization and the improvement of remuneration of judicial officers, top civil servants and political leaders.

The war against corruption in Nigeria dates to a very long time. Every community in Nigeria has mechanisms for dealing with corruption with appropriate sanctions for corruption. The fight in the public sector came to the limelight in 1966 when the military identified corruption of the politicians as one of the reasons for taking over. Experience later showed that the military is probably more corrupt than civilian politicians. The military ruled Nigeria from 1966-1979 and handed over power to Alhaji Shehu Shagari administration in 1979. But barely four years later, the Shagari administration was overthrown by the Buhari/Idiagbon regime. The Buhari/Idiagbon regime launched a war against corruption, tried and jailed many politicians and dismissed many civil servants. But when the Ibrahim Babangida regime overthrew the Buhari regime, it released many of the politicians that were jailed by the Buhari regime and reduced the sentences of others. In fact, it has been argued that “Babangida's government was unique in its unconcern about corruption

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within its ranks and among public servants generally; it was as if the Government existed so that corruption might thrive.” There is no doubt that Scholars are in agreement that corruption reached unprecedented levels in incidence and magnitude during General Ibrahim Babangida regime. It is ironic that the regime also had its own reorientation and anti-corruption programme christened MAMSER. By the time President Olusegun Obasanjo came back to power as a civilian President in 1999, corruption has reached unprecedented proportion that it formed a major portion of his inaugural speech.

In Nigeria, there are a number of legislations in addition to specific programmes such as ethical revolution of Shehu Shagari administration, War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC) of Buhari/Idiagbon regime and MAMSER of the Babangida regime. The legislations include:

- The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999
- The Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act
- The Bank and Other Financial Institutions Act No 25 of 1991
- Failed Bank Act No 16 of 1996
- The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency Act
- Money Laundering Act No 3 of 1995
- The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act of 2000
- The Economic and Financial Crimes Act 2004
- The Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence unit
- The Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) Act
- Foreign Exchange Miscellaneous Provisions Act No. 17 of 1995

When President Olusegun Obasanjo was sworn in May 1999, he made it clear in his inaugural speech that fight against corruption will be one of his major programmes. In his speeches and carriage, he has continued to sing the anti-corruption song. One of the first bills initiated by the executive was the one on anti-corruption. The bill has been passed into law as the Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Act, 2000. In 2002, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was established. The former President's anti-corruption campaign has received a lot of criticism. Some argue that it was a one-man

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campaign, which was bound to fail. Others contend that the president was not sincere with the anti-corruption crusade. According to the former Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriation, Alh. Idris Abubakar, “the president knows quite a number of corrupt officials in the three arms of government. But rather than prosecute them, he is using the dossier collected on them to blackmail them to support his government.” Some critics have also argued that the former president's campaign lacks seriousness. According to Scrutiny, there are six questions that should test the seriousness of any anti-corruption crusade. These are: Is it systematic? Is it comprehensive? Is it consistent? Does it have focus? Is it well publicised? Does it carry people along? The Obasanjo’s crusade is said to have failed the entire test except the one on publicity. Scrutiny concludes that the president is merely using the anti-corruption crusade “as a platform for public posturing, some sort of grandstanding.” Consequently, it has been documented that Nigerians are yet to feel the impact of the anti-corruption crusade of President Olusegun Administration.

Over the years, scholars, activists and international organizations have identified elements which when present can assist in winning the war against corruption. These elements include:

- a. Legislative Framework for transparent and accountable government and for fighting corruption including Freedom of Information Act (FOI Act), Budget law, Fiscal responsibility law, Whistle blowers Act e.t.c.
- b. Political will and commitment to fight corruption
- c. Comprehensive strategy that is systematic, comprehensive, consistent, focused, publicized, non-selective and non-partisan
- d. Protection of Whistle blowers
- e. Political Reform to curb political corruption
- f. Reform of substantive programmes and administrative procedures
- g. Mobilisation for social re-orientation with participation of civil society and faith based organisations
- h. Effective parliamentary oversight through the Public Accounts Committee



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- i. Independent media
- j. Adequate remuneration for workers to reflect the responsibilities of their post and a living wage
- k. Code of ethics for Political office holders, business people and CSOs
- l. Independent institutions
- m. Movement for Anti-corruption

It is important to point out that corruption is as old as society itself and cuts across nations, cultures, races and classes of people. It is necessary to understand the explanations for the causes of corruption in order to be able to design a mechanism to fight corruption. Several explanations have been given to explain the causes of corruption:

1. **Robert Klitgaard formula:**  $\text{Corruption} = (\text{Monopoly} + \text{Discretion}) - (\text{Accountability} + \text{Integrity} + \text{Transparency})$ . This formula indicates that wherever there is monopoly and discretion combined with lack of accountability, integrity and transparency, corruption will thrive.
2. **People engage in corruption when the benefit exceeds the utility** they can get by using their time differently and there is little or no risk of detection and penalty.
3. **The Fraud Triangle explanation:** An individual becomes corrupt when there is perceived pressure combined with opportunity to commit corruptible transaction and the perpetrator can justify it.



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From the above, it is clear that the causes of corruption is multifactorial. Therefore, fighting corruption has to be comprehensive ranging from prevention, education and enforcement (sanction):

- a. **Addressing corruption:** A framework for addressing corruption is to tackle the issues in the triangle namely pressure, opportunity and rationalisation.
  1. **Addressing Motivation:** The need for implementation of code of ethics, punish those who do wrong, good conditions of service and good environment of work.
  2. **Addressing Opportunity:** To create systems, mechanisms and procedure that make corruptible transactions difficult. This will include financial guidelines, internal controls, due process and whistle blowers. All these help to increase the capability of the organisation to prevent corruption.
  3. **Addressing rationalisation:** through education and re-orientation.
- b. **Instituting an Integrity System:** Integrity plan is meant to address the causes of corruption and put in place a system that can reduce or minimize corruption through prevention, detection and sanction. The starting point in instituting an integrity system is to conduct a corruption risk assessment. Corruption risk assessment will identify key corruption and fraud related risks in the institution. It will identify the political factors influencing integrity; the economic factors influencing integrity; the social factors affecting integrity; the technological factors affecting integrity and the legal factors influencing integrity in the institution. Based on the assessment, recommendations will be made to improve integrity of the institution.
- c. **Enforcement of anti-corruption legislation and punishing those involved in corruptible transactions.**

As the DfID Nigeria new approach has indicated, there is the need for **sanctions** through better enforcement of laws; better **systems** that close spaces for corruption and for **society** to change its expectations and attitudes towards corruption.

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### 4. CHALLENGES OF COMBATING CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

The war against corruption is being lost in many countries including Nigeria as a result of several challenges. First, most countries do not utilize universally accepted and time-tested strategies. In most cases, the policies and strategies utilized in fighting corruption are not holistic and comprehensive containing the elements mentioned in the section above. In most countries, there are elaborate legislative framework and policies for fighting corruption. Perhaps, what is missing is a freedom of Information regime and protection of whistle blowers. But political will and commitment of a critical mass of people (both leaders and followers) is lacking.

Secondly, there is a disconnect between the utterances of the warriors of the fight and their conduct. For instance, the former Inspector General of the Nigeria Police Force Mr. Tafa Balogun, posing as an anti-corruption crusader once emphasized that:

The evil that corruption has brought to the Nigerian society is very much. Corruption has become a culture in our society today. That is why we have to fight against it so that we would be able to improve our image. We intend to commence an in-house cleaning in the Nigeria Police Force.

Barely two years later, Mr. Tafa Balogun was accused of corruptly enriching himself to the tune of over N13 billion, and was removed from office and convicted. For any crusade to succeed, the leaders of the crusade must match their actions with their words.

Thirdly, for any war to be won, soldiers are required. In many African countries, those who should be playing the role of soldiers for the war (the judiciary, legal enforcement institutions, police and other such official legal bodies) are the biggest part of the problem of corruption rather than the solution. Therefore, wining the war against corruption will require struggle for societal transformation. We have argued elsewhere that for change to occur in any society requires the presence of objective and subjective conditions. Objective conditions exist when situations are evidently abnormal with huge contradictions which can only be resolved by change. The subjective

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conditions are the organizational preparations required to bring about change. In our view, the objective condition for a full scale war on corruption is ripe in Nigeria. The level of corruption in the country is unacceptable. Nigeria was consistently rated by Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index as the most corrupt country in 2000, the second most corrupt country in 2001, 2002 and 2003 and the third most corrupt country in the world in 2004. Although there is slight improvement in the rating, Nigeria is still among the most corrupt countries in the world. The country cannot continue in the way it is presently being corruptly run without fatal economic, social and political consequences. Unfortunately, the subjective conditions for winning the war are absent. There is no virile political party or movement that is committed to the war against corruption. There are no well organized democratic and popular organizations that are committed to anti-corruption crusade. Although, there are individuals and organizations committed to fighting corruption including a coalition of CSOs known as Zero Corruption Coalition (ZCC), the organizational support, followership and doggedness required for sustainability and great impact is lacking. The challenge is to build the organizations especially with dynamic and visionary leadership as well as a committed followership that is dedicated to fighting corruption. For the war to be won, such organizations must engage in concrete anti-corruption programmes beyond the mere holding of workshops. As TI has argued,

Containing corruption in a sustainable way will not be achieved through one-off seminars and workshops. Mere talk-shops are not going to change anything. Still less is going to be achieved through partnerships between agencies and governments alone. Almost invariably, these are seen as self-serving party exercises, conducted by and for the benefit of those (rightly or wrongly) already viewed as deeply implicated in the processes we are working to contain. Unless civil society is a fully independent partner and fully supportive of the processes under way, these exercises and action plans will lack legitimacy and they risk being little more than flannel.

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Concrete programming against corruption will involve advocacy for effective regime for the anti-corruption crusade, actual monitoring of public and corporate finance, exposure of corruptible transactions, enforcement of anti-corruption laws, whistle blowing and advocacy.

Moreover, the fight must address the international dimensions including the complicity of developed countries. It has been documented that one of America's oldest banks, Riggs, was brought down because it held the bank accounts of Augusto Pinochet, and the oil revenues of Equatorial Guinea which was controlled exclusively by President Obiang. Despite this, the United States turns a blind eye to the corruption of and human rights abuses that typify Obiang's rule. Similarly, the British Government regards itself as a world leader in the fight against corruption, as evidenced by establishing the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI). However, it has seriously undermined its own credibility in this regard, and in turn the international case, by its calling off of a police investigation into allegedly corrupt arms deal between BAE systems and Saudi Arabia, which sends a clear signal that Britain will tolerate corruption for political reasons.

Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the fight against corruption in many African countries is not located within the broader paradigm of fighting for the transformation of society in a way that will deal with the multi-factorial causes of corruption.

Therefore, policy options and strategies for winning the war against corruption must address these issues. The strategy must be comprehensive and holistic. Government should not be fighting corruption and at the same time engaging in political corruption (through election rigging) or implementing policies that would exacerbate corruption. For instance, as we have argued earlier, when the salaries of workers cannot sustain them, there is the tendency to engage in petty corruption. If government is fighting corruption and at the same time implements unbridled neo-liberal policies that further impoverish the people, then the fight against corruption cannot be won. Government cannot pay police officers wages that can hardly pay for increased transportation cost (as a result of increase in petroleum price) and

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expect them to be honest in the discharge of their duties. In the same vein, if government is engaging in political corruption through rigging of elections, imposition of party officials, brazen distribution of political patronage and selective prosecution of corrupt officials, then the war cannot be won. Furthermore, when government officials spend money recklessly in the midst of poverty, it is difficult to deal with corruption. For instance, the hotel bill of the former Managing Director of NNPC(Mr. Gaius Obaseki) was alleged to be at the rate of N155,000.00 per night which come to about N4.7million in a month and N56.6million per annum.

Finally, the fight against corruption should be a part of the fight to transform society. It should be a fight for humanity. It should be a fight that will challenge power relations, institutions, mechanisms and systems that promote corruption. It should be a fight against political corruption and a fight for empowerment of citizens to enlist them in the war against corruption. It should be a fight against a system of mediocrity that produces emergency millionaires from being commissioned agents, currency speculators and contactors. It should be a fight for value re-orientation where Nigerian citizens will begin to see government as their own and not alien and when they will begin to protect government property as they currently protect community property. Fighting corruption should neither be an isolated event nor should it be an end in itself. It must be part and parcel of transforming society and enthroning a just, equitable, efficient and fair system in the world.

The Buhari administration started well in combating corruption by setting the tone at the top. It set up a Presidential Committee on anti-corruption headed by a renown legal icon, Prof Itse Sagay. In the years 2015-2019, there is a remarkable record of convictions, asset recovery and forfeitures. EFCC secured 943 convictions including two former governors who are members of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC). In addition, EFCC recovered billions of naira, foreign currencies and properties including \$8.4 million and N2.4 billion from Mrs. Patience Jonathan; six choice properties and \$1 million from Alex Badeh, former Chief of Defence Staff. But as we have consistently argued, the fight against corruption must go beyond sanction to include concrete strategies to improve the system and ensure that society abhors corruption.

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Unfortunately, towards the end of its administration, the Buhari administration has destroyed all its gains with increasing poor rating by Transparency International and granting pardon to former Governors Joshua Dariye of Plateau State and Jolly Nyame of Taraba State in April, 2022.

### 5. THE PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVE

The Pentecostal group is a part of the Christian movement. Christianity is over 2,000 years and has a rich history. In the first three centuries, church growth was accelerated by the persecution of the church. In the fourth century, Christianity became the official Roman religion.<sup>i</sup> In the seventh century, Islam was founded. By the tenth century, 50 percent of former Christian areas were under Islam. By the 14<sup>th</sup> century, John Wycliffe translated the Bible into English and emphasized the sole authority of the scriptures and the priesthood of all believers. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the years of reformation promoted by Martin Luther King and others emphasized justification by faith and priesthood of all believers. The protestant reformation was anchored on three key issues:

1. The sole authority of the scriptures,
2. Justification by faith and
3. Priesthood of all believers.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the emphasis was on revival, missions, and holiness. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the emphasis was on Pentecostalism- Holy Ghost baptism and empowerment. With the rise of Pentecostalism, there was emphasis on material prosperity, loyalty to the nation state and individualism and social dimension of the church decreased immensely. This has led to the public perception today that is a challenge to all true Pentecostals. This public perception has led to the non-recognition of Pentecostal Charismatic social contribution of goods and services valued at more than 2.3 billion US dollars and with more than 250 million people in over 100 countries since 1980.<sup>i</sup> The perception is that Pentecostals are only interested in prosperity and not concerned about social issues in society.

The Pentecostal Movement is characterised by emphasis on baptism of the Holy Spirit and the manifestation of the gifts of the spirit. Christian Historians have characterised the Pentecostal movement into three waves<sup>iv</sup>:

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1. First wave beginning in 1901 with a rediscovery of and a new experience of the supernatural with a powerful and energising ministry of the Holy spirit.
2. Second wave starting in the mainline churches in 1960 with Christians affiliated to non-Pentecostal denominations (Anglicans, Protestants, Catholic, Orthodox) experiencing baptism in the Holy Spirit.
3. Third wave beginning in 1980 with evangelicals and other Christians receiving baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Scholars have pointed out that between Pentecost in Acts Chapter 2 in AD 100 and 1901 when the first wave started is 1,800 years. Some have argued that the 1,800-year period can be regarded as spiritually dead. But others point out that there was a range of spirit activity during this period ranging from hundreds of cases of prophesy to discernment of spirits and divine healing.<sup>v</sup>

The Pentecostal movement has grown from a handful of believers in the early twentieth century to a global movement now numbering over 600 million people, and those who embrace the Holy Spirit and His gifts are now the fastest growing religious group in the world. It is continuing to grow especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Today, the countries with the highest number of Pentecostals is in the global south as can be seen from the table below:

| Country             | Pentecostals 1910 | Country      | Pentecostals 2010 |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| South Africa        | 989,000           | China        | 95,316,000        |
| Nigeria             | 111,000           | Brazil       | 82,000,000        |
| USA                 | 53,400            | USA          | 76,000,000        |
| Germany             | 22,000            | Nigeria      | 43,920,000        |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 11,800            | India        | 30,000,000        |
| China               | 2,100             | Philippines  | 27,000,000        |
| India               | 2,000             | South Africa | 22,150,000        |
| France              | 1,000             | D.R. Congo   | 21,000,000        |
| Canada              | 1,000             | Mexico       | 14,800,000        |
| North Korea         | 1,000             | Colombia     | 14,507,000        |

Source: World Christian Database, Brill, June 2009 (Cited in Synan, V (Ed) (2011), Spirit Empowered Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

As shown in the table above, the highest number of Pentecostals are in the global South. Therefore, changes to the content and practice of Pentecostalism can come from the global south. Nigeria occupies a special place in the scheme of things.



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Perspective is very important in the way things are done and it can affect the development of organisations and nations. Perspective is a way of thinking or the angle or direction in which a person looks at an object or phenomenon. Perspectives can be influenced by ideology, belief, experience, profession or training. Pentecostal perspective is the way Pentecostals look at things.

The Pentecostal Perspective of the Church is anchored on three grounds:

a. **BASED ON THE SCRIPTURES:** The Pentecostal perspective on corruption is anchored on the scriptures. As our research has shown, the Bible is an anti-corruption manual written to guide the people of God to know what values God has intended for them to subscribe to and live by. The Ten Commandments constitute the supreme laws against harmful and corrupt activities. There are One Hundred and Fifteen scripture verses that expressly speak about bribery and corruption. Examples include:

**Genesis 6:5:** And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

**Genesis 6:11-12:** Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways.

**Exodus 18:21:** Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:

**Exodus 20:15:** Thou shalt not steal

**Exodus 32:7:** And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.

**Deuteronomy 31:29:** For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because you will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the works of your hands.

**Isaiah 1:4:** Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward

**1 Corinthians 5:11:** But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if

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any man that is called brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, no, not, to eat

**1 Tim 6:10:** For the love of money is the root of all evils.....

Therefore for a Pentecostal and indeed any Christian, the book of James Chapter Four, verse seven defines corruption which is also equated to sin: ***“So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” (James 4:17).*** For a Pentecostal Christian, Corruption is said to have occurred when a Christian that holds a position of trust (or is a beneficiary of that office knows what is good for improving transparency and accountability but does not do it.

b. **ENERGISED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT:** Holy Ghost Baptism is a defining characteristic of Pentecostalism. If there is genuine conversion and Baptism of the Holy Spirit, the Pentecostal will easily discern the right thing to do at all times through the leading of the Holy Spirit.

c. **NEED FOR ACTION:** The Bible is very clear that faith without works is dead (James 2:26). Pentecostals need to take action to combat corruption from Pentecostal Perspective. The actions needed are in the following areas:

i. **Discipleship:** The discipleship process for new believers and training for mature believers and Ministers should be such that Pentecostals are prepared and trained to reject corruption and live holy lives.

ii. **Accountability Mechanism:** Pentecostals need to put in place mechanism to ensure accountability in church systems and ensure integrity of the process.

iii. **Income Generation:** Pentecostals need to train their members on income generation avenues and entrepreneurship so that they are not wholly dependent on tithes and offerings.

iv. **Sermon on Corruption:** The word purifies. Pentecostal Leaders need to preach and teach on corruption using the scriptures as guide.

v. **Social arm of the Church:** Pentecostals need to create the social arm for the church to delineate and popularize the social teachings of the Church. This is well developed in Catholic Church. The Social Teachings of the Catholic Church cover issues of Life of Dignity and Human person; call to Family, Community and Participation; Preferential option for the poor (In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition instructs us to put the needs of poor and vulnerable people first); the Dignity of work and the

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rights of workers (Economy must serve people) and Solidarity. The Pentecostal Church need to develop the social teaching of the Pentecostal Church.

It is the Pentecostal Perspective that informed the conceptualisation of the SHUN Corruption project. The SHUN Corruption project was conceived by Palace of PRIESTS ASSEMBLY (PPA) to mobilise Christians especially Pentecostals to join the fight against corruption in Nigeria. The approach used is to employ a faith-based approach to combating corruption and mobilising Christians to identify, shun and speak up against corruption in their various spheres of influence. The project adopts the Holy Bible as a central text and empowered beneficiaries to:

- SHUN Corruption
- SPEAK UP and
- STAND UP (take action) against corruption.

### 6. THE WAY FORWARD

The problem of corruption is as old as society itself and cuts across nations, cultures, races and classes of people. It is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges of our times leading to underdevelopment and poor service delivery. Corruption has a lot of negative consequences on every sphere of societal development whether social, economic or political. Corruption not only leads to poor service delivery but loss of lives.

Corruption is pervasive in Nigeria with serious negative consequences. Despite the plethora of legislations and agencies fighting corruption in the country, corruption has remained widespread and pervasive because of failure to utilize universally accepted and tested strategies; disconnect between posturing of leaders and their conduct; lack of concrete sustainable anti-corruption programming and failure to locate the anti-corruption struggle within a broader struggle to transform society.

Pentecostal Christians have a perspective on corruption anchored on the scriptures; energized by the Holy Ghost and the need for action. It is this Pentecostal Perspective that has informed the conceptualization of the SHUN

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CORRUPTION project. It is recommended that Pentecostals should use the scriptures to fight against corruption while being energized by the Holy Spirit to discern corruptible transactions. Pentecostal Church leaders should disciple believers to reject corruption; put in place mechanism for accountability; train members to generate income; preach against corruption and create social arm for the church to fight corruption.

# COMBATING CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: THE PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVE

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>6</sup> Huntington, S. P. (1968), Political Order in Changing Societies. New Haven, Yale University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Akanbi, M. (2002), "Corruption as an Obstacle to Good governance in Nigeria." In The Nigerian Bar Journal. Vol. 1, No. 3 Pp 19-26

<sup>8</sup> World Bank: Helping Countries Combat Corruption, Washington DC, USA. Quoted in Bello-Imam, I. B. (2005), The War Against Corruption in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects. Ibadan, College Press and Publishers Ltd

<sup>9</sup> Otite, O. (1986), "Sociological Study of Corruption" in Odekunle, F. (Ed), Nigeria: Corruption in Development. Ibadan University Press

<sup>10</sup> Pope, J. (1996), National Integrity Systems: The TI Source Book. Berlin, Germany, Transparency International

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<sup>12</sup> The Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act 2000

<sup>13</sup> Pope, Op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

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