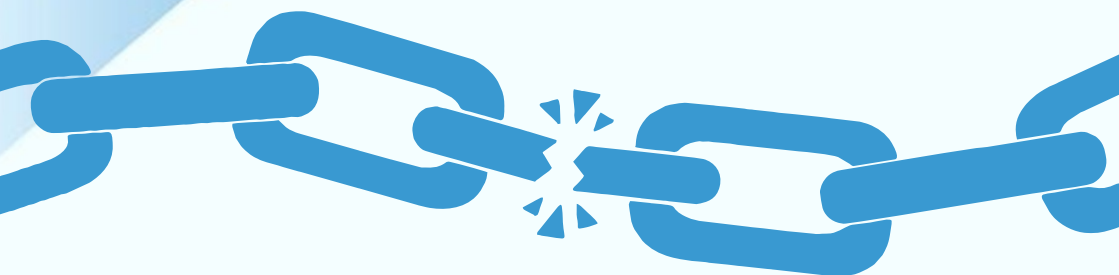


ADVOCACY BRIEF



DISMANTLING THE CHAINS OF CORRUPTION

*By His Royal Majesty, the
Och-idoma the 5th, Agaba'idu Pastor (Dr)
Elaigwu Odogbo John Obagaji*



PRIESTS PEACE
& JUSTICE
INITIATIVE [PPJ]

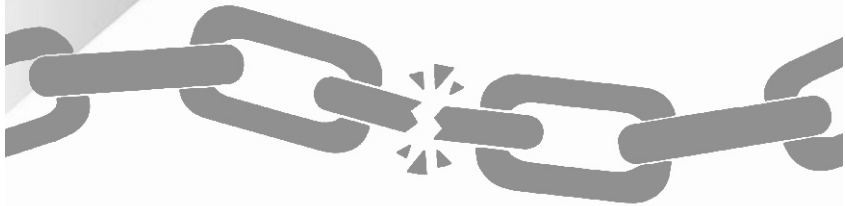
The Social Arm of Palace of Priests Assembly PPA

SUPPORTED BY:

MacArthur
Foundation

PPJ ISSUE SERIES NO.....

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INTRODUCTION

The war against corruption requires multi-faceted strategies bringing together all players including Religious Communities, Government institutions, the Private Sector, Non-Governmental Organizations, the Media and most importantly the general public. Whereas the EFCC and ICPC are the lead agencies in the fight against corruption in Nigeria, the efforts of other actors is also critical in breaking the chains of corruption. We should all acknowledge that corruption is a vice which continues to shatter the moral fabric of the Nation and must be fought using all means available including the Word of God.

Religious Communities represent the moral pillar of society looked up to for guidance and direction on matters ethics and integrity.

2. UNDERSTANDING ETHICS AND INTEGRITY: THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT

2.1 Ethics and Integrity

Ethics refers to a prescribed standard of right and wrong or good and evil. Closely related to ethics is the concept of morality which is the lived standard of right and wrong, good and evil. Christians derive their ethical standards directly from Exodus 20:3-17; Deuteronomy 5: 6-21 where God gives unto man the Ten Commandments which are also referred to as the Moral Law. Matthew 22:36-39 states, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and

with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is unto it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself

Integrity is about doing the right thing; it's having a pure heart and allowing the inner beauty to control the outward actions. This requires us to walk the talk. Jesus rebukes us not to be like whitewashed tombs (Matthew 23:15). Our Lord Jesus Christ calls us to be as perfect as our Father in Heaven (Matthew 5:48)

2.2 Christian Values and Moral Standards

Christian values and moral standards are based on Biblical standards of ethics and integrity such as love, peace, meekness and self-control as cited by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23. If we are to attain ethics and integrity in our society, there is need to observe these values and standards and emulate role models of Holiness in the Bible, Jesus Christ being the perfect example. Among the patriarchs of the Bible, Job stands out as a perfect and upright man who fears God and shuns evil by upholding integrity even at his own disadvantage (Job 2:3, 9).

2.3 Benefits of Upholding Integrity

Both temporal and eternal tokens await those who uphold integrity in their daily chores (Matthew 19:27-29). Some of the benefits of upholding integrity are as follows:
Those who uphold integrity gain trust from the people around them.

They develop confidence in their understanding since their conscience tells them that their actions are right irrespective of other people's opinion.

Those who uphold integrity will be blessed by God according to Romans 2:6

One who upholds Integrity will be viewed as a role model in society and will be entrusted with greater responsibility as seen in the life of Joseph in Genesis 39.

God's favour will be upon such like people (Proverbs 22:1)

The offspring of people who uphold integrity will be blessed by God

Communities and the nation at large will prosper socially and economically because of leaders who uphold integrity (Proverbs 29:2)

2.4 Biblical Examples of Gains Resulting from Upright Life

God granted favor to Joseph because he was a man of integrity and he became the second ruler in the whole land of Egypt (Genesis 39:2-4, 41:39-41).

Because of Daniel's integrity, the King promoted him to be in charge of a whole Kingdom (Daniel 6:3).

Christ walked in high standards of ethical behavior and this resulted in God the Father exalting Him and giving Him a name that is above every other name (Philippians 2:8-11)

3. CORRUPTION AS REVEALED IN THE BIBLE

3.1 Biblical definition of Corruption

According to Scripture, corruption is a state of spiritual decadence and moral depravity arising from disobedience to the laws of God (1 John 3:4). This disobedience severs the relationship between man and God (Romans 3:23). However, God through Jesus Christ seeks to restore man to Him (1 John 3:8) and as Christians we are persuaded that morality can only fully be restored through Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). Today, those who disobey the laws of God are said to be engaging in corruption.

Corruption is seem to be (a) dishonest or illegal behavior especially by powerful people (such as government officials or police officers) : DEPRAVITY b : inducement to wrong by improper or unlawful means (such as bribery)

We can also define corruption as **the abuse of entrusted power for private gain**. Corruption erodes trust, weakens democracy, hampers economic development and further exacerbates inequality, poverty, social division and the environmental crisis.

3.2 The genesis of corruption

Corruption is a manifestation of sin. The author and originator of sin is the devil (Isaiah 14:12-14; Revelation 12:7-9; Ezekiel 28:1-19). Corruption was first manifested in this world when Adam disobeyed the command of God by

yielding into the temptation of the devil and thereby eating of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19).

3.3 The Bible Condemns Corruption

No man or nation should be corrupt. God persuades the wicked to turn away from their evil ways, stop conforming to worldliness but be transformed in their hearts (Romans 12:1-2). Apostle Paul refuses to condone corruption because he wanted to do the will of God. He doubtlessly remembered the specific instruction found in the Law of Moses:

“who treats none with partiality nor accepts a bribe” (Deuteronomy 10:17; 16:19). King David likewise understood that Jehovah hates corruption, and he requested that God

should not count him among the sinners, “whose right hand is full of bribery” (Psalms 26:10).

Those who sincerely worship God have additional reasons for rejecting corruption. “By justice a king gives a country stability,” wrote Solomon, “but one who is greedy for bribes tears it down” (Proverbs 29:4). When leaders practice justice there is stability, whereas corruption impoverishes a country.

Corruption has devastated our society just as it corroded Israel and Rome. The Prophet Micah warned the inhabitants of Jerusalem of corruption and in their disobedience to the warnings, Jerusalem was destroyed and abandoned (Micah

3:9, 11, 12). God wants each and every one of us to replace greed with unselfshness and corruption with righteousness for He is forgiving (Isaiah 55:7).

3.4 Biblical Counsels on how to resist corruption

Man is a masterpiece of divine work conceived in the mind of God and exists for the purpose of giving glory to God (Genesis 1:26-28). If people do not know why they exist then they can fall for anything. Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:22-25 and Colossians 3:10 reminds us that we are created to reflect true holiness, righteousness, and faithfulness and he urges us to abandon our former ways and conform our personality according to God's will. Paul continues by saying, "Wherefore, now that you have put away falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, because we are members belonging to one another. Let the stealer steal no more, but rather let him do hard work, doing with his hands what is good work, that he may have something to distribute to someone in need" (Verse 25, 28).

"The Book of Exodus summarizes ways of resisting corruption as follows (Exodus 23:1 - 9);

- Do not spread false reports
- Do not help a guilty person by being malicious witness
- Do not follow evil doers
- Do not pervert justice by giving false testimony
- . Do not show favouritism to a poor person in a lawsuit
- Return that which does not belong to you

Do not deny justice to the poor in a lawsuit

Do not falsely charge the innocent or honest person to death, for 'I will not acquit the guilty'

Do not oppress the foreigner; 'you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners'

Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the word of the innocent (2 Kings 5: 15 - 16; 21- 27, Exodus 23:8)

In public service delivery, public servants should not accept kickbacks or rewards or gift in favour of services rendered but instead should be content with a job well done

Do not collect any monies or tax other than what is required by the law (Luke 3: 12 - 14)

Do not extort money or coerce or force someone to pay against the law

Do not accuse people falsely

Be content with your pay

Public servants who are corrupt will be ashamed and disgraced, but those who are just and declare their transgression shall be rewarded (Micah 3:7 - 8)"

4. CAUSES OF CORRUPTION

4.1 Disobedience to God's Law

Disobedience to God and His Law comes from infidelity or the breaking altogether of the covenant between God and man. This is manifested in bribery, fraud, injustice, covetousness and dishonesty. Just like the greatest sin of the

Jews was to reject Christ, the greatest sin today is the rejection of God's Law. Apostle John states that he who lives in love, God lives in him (I John 4:16) and if we love and serve others as did Jesus, we fulfill the covenant between God and mankind (Romans 13:10; Colossians 3:14).

4.2 Deceitfulness

Prophet Jeremiah attributes deceit to the fallen nature of

man by stating that the heart of man is deceitful above all things (Jeremiah 17:9). Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:33 links deceitfulness with corruption. Corruption through deceit denies mankind entry into the Kingdom of Heaven as John states in (Revelation 21:27). Property that is obtained by deceit does not carry the sanction of God and must lead to suffering as exemplified in the life of Jacob, Isaac's second child.

4.3 Wickedness

Wickedness is moral decadence emanating from sin. In the antediluvian world, God S.A.W that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and every imagination of his thoughts were evil continually (Genesis 6:5) and so He brought the Flood. The wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah is another example of a corrupt generation (Genesis 19). In the book of Ecclesiastes 7:29, we read that God made man upright but he has become wicked by seeking out many inventions.

4.4 Greed

Greed refers to selfish desire. It manifests through insatiable appetite for things. The devil has succeeded to entangle many people through their uncontrolled appetite for food or for bodily desires: he tempted Adam (Gen 3), Daniel (Daniel 1:8), and Jesus (Matthew 4) through suggestion to give in to the power of appetite. God nevertheless expects us to be content and exercise self-control in every aspect of life. In

Proverbs 6: 22-25, we read 'a greedy person provokes conflict but whoever trust in the Lord will prosper' and that 'a greedy man is in a hurry for wealth, he doesn't know that poverty will come to him'.

4.5 Abuse of power

Abuse of public office has become a monster that all of us must endeavor to conquer irrespective of our religious, political and ethnic backgrounds. The story of Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kings 21: 1 - 16) tells us that Ahab abused the power entrusted to him in the following manner; Cheating someone off their property

- Use power or position to partake that which belongs to someone else or poor person
- Giving false reports or claims to accuse an innocent person
- Accusing the innocent by using malicious witnesses
- Falsely charging the innocent person to death
- Benefitting from proceeds of illegal gain

It is indicated in Proverbs 29:2 that when the righteous are in authority people rejoice, and when the wicked are in authority people mourn. People who abuse the authority given them so that they enrich themselves will lead others into corruption.

4.6 Compromise

The Bible records in 1 Corinthians 15: 33 that evil company corrupts good character. The society of persons that one chooses to entertain will influence towards evil if the friends are evil. Usually, corrupt individuals suggest evil to their friends who because of lack of principle, yield and become accomplices in corrupt deeds. This is the case that occurred with our first parents when Adam accepted to be an accomplice with Eve in partaking of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3: 12, 17) for fear of losing their friendship. In Psalms 1: 1 we are admonished not to be accomplices with wicked people wherever they walk, stand or sit. This also warns us against celebrating people who wield power and fame through wickedness and corruption.

4.7 FALSE TEACHINGS

The letter of Apostle Paul to the Romans urges us to watch out for those who cause dissensions and obstacles contrary to the pure and everlasting doctrine of God. He admonishes his audience to avoid such heretics, for they do not serve the Lord Jesus but their own appetites. They deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting with smooth talk and flattering words (Romans 16:17-18). False teachings distort the truth and lead

God's children into corruption (2 Peter 2:2; 2 Corinthians 11:3-4; Galatians 1:9).

5. DIMENSIONS AND MANIFESTATIONS OF CORRUPTION

The dimensions of corruption are the lenses through which we attempt to analyze and appreciate its different forms by which it manifests itself. It can be said to be the Biblical perspective through which we categorize the different manifestations of corruption in our society.

5.1 Moral Dimension

The story of the children of Israel shows how they forsook God by making and worshipping idols made of gold and silver (Exodus 32:1-3). In our churches and communities today, we have deviated from the original will of God by creating for ourselves idols and symbols as gods contrary to the second Commandment. The worship of material wealth in form of power, possessions, gadgets, money, people and symbols has become synonymous with our religion today. Jesus Christ was angered in Matthew 21:12-13 when the temple was turned into a market place by money lovers. The letter of Paul to the Church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 10:14 - 17 presents how he urges them to free from all Idolatry.

Because of corruption among Christians in the church in Rome, Paul in Romans 2:24 remarks that the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through them. He further

urges them in Romans 16:17-18 to watch out for those who cause dissensions and obstacles contrary to the doctrine they have learned; to avoid them, for such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites: they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting congregants with smooth talk and flattering words. Apostle Peter also foretells of the last days when many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality and because of these teachers, the way of truth will be slandered (2 Peter 2:2).

Christians are warned not to let their pure and undivided devotion to Christ be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent. They should not happily put up with whatever anyone tells them, even if others preach a different Jesus or a different kind of Spirit or a different kind of gospel (2 Corinthians 11:3-4). Malachi 3:9-10 also reminds unfaithful Christians that they are cursed with a curse, if they have robbed God by failing to bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in His house.

5.2 Psychological Dimension

Psychological dimension manifests itself through indoctrination. Indoctrination is seen as the act of imparting facts as truth without imparting the ability to critically consider those facts which results in brainwashing. This is exemplified in cults and occults that demand blind obedience. Colossians 2:8 warns us: "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, the elemental spirits of the world, and

not according to Christ.”

5.3 Social Dimensions

Social dimensions refer to our day to day interactions. Negative ethnicity is defining social relations in Nigeria. This is in contrast to what the Bible teaches: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

Christians are prohibited to engage in certain enterprises: “None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute, and none of the sons of Israel shall be a cult prostitute.

You shall not bring the fee of a prostitute or the wages of a dog into the house of the Lord your God in payment for any vow, for both of these are an abomination to the Lord your God.” (Deuteronomy 23:17-18).

5.4 Political Dimension

We have become accustomed to “see no evil, hear no evil”. We shy from the truth and adore the unjust. 2 Timothy 4:2 urges us to speak in season, out of season, rebuke, reprove and be the conscience of society.

We draw our authority from Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15-16. We must be the voice of the voiceless as required in Proverbs 31:8-9. As Christians we need to ask ourselves what authority guides us, for the laws of God are explicit and therefore understanding them gives us power to relate with God and man. In Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6 -21; and

John 13:34, God gives us the blueprint to living a life of righteousness.

Our worldly laws have often led us to fall short of God's expectation. We make laws and assume God's command which drives us to act in manner that offends God.

5.5 Economic Dimension

Economic dimension is about creation and utilization of resources for the benefit of mankind. This has however been exploited by others who go against God's intentions of his gifts to us. Some of the texts that rebuke corruption in the economic sense are listed below:

Isaiah 61:8 "For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them."

Isaiah 58:3 "Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers."

Amos 5:11-12 "Therefore because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him, you have built houses of hewn stone but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine.....For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate."

The church has workers in its hospitals, schools and in other social enterprises but they mostly pay poverty wages to their employees.

5.6 Environmental Dimension

When He created the world, God set aside a unique place, the Garden of Eden in which Adam was placed (Gen. 2:8-15). God instructed Adam to cultivate and guard the Garden. (Gen. 2:15). Since the fall of man there has been uncontrolled human interference in God's perfect creation. The exploitation of natural resources and pollution of the environment has caused many people to fear that we face serious threats to human life (Romans 8:22).

5.7 Legal Dimension

The legal dimension entails the law making processes and the application of the laws. The lack of adherence and fidelity to the law is a manifestation of corruption. Some relevant texts are:

Isaiah 10:1-2 “Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless.”

Matthew 23:4-5 “For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men.”

Matthew 23:15 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”

In Acts 5:29, Peter and the other apostles boldly state that they ought to obey God rather than men. Christians must obey God's voice at all times including in situations when men have made corrupt laws which are in direct conflict with the laws of God.

6. CONSEQUENCES OF CORRUPTION

Corruption is evil and those who engage in it attract suffering to themselves, their families, the society and the larger nation. Above all, there is judgment that awaits the corrupt individuals at the end of the world (2 Corinthians 5:10).

6.1 Consequences of corruption to the individual

It brings shame and regret (Genesis 40:21-22, 45:3)

- A life of guilt and shying away from people
- Corruption condemns one to a life of bondage and slavery (2 Peter 2:19)
- As one is motivated by greed, one will reap the product of greed which is misery (Galatians 6:8)
- Disqualification from inheriting the kingdom of God
- Rejection

6.2 Consequences of Corruption to the family

Exposing your family to shame (Romans 6:23)

- The family will be cursed up to the third and fourth generation (Exodus 20:5)
- Separation in the family when one member is arrested or convicted of a crime
- Jealousy and hatred as was witnessed in the family of Jacob (Genesis 37)

6.3 Consequences of corruption to the society

- Corruption brings divisions and unfairness among members of the society
- Insecurity and life of fear among residents
- Unnecessary competition for power or supremacy
- Bad reputation and disrespect
- Perpetual erosion of morals and values through generations
- Human suffering

6.4 Consequences of corruption to the nation

- Impunity in government and other sectors
- Slow or no development
- High cost of living among the ordinary citizenry
- Skewed allocation of resources
- Hatred and bitterness towards the corrupt individuals

6.5 Judgment that awaits corrupt people

- Banishment (Proverbs 14:32)
- Rejection by God the Creator as it were in the case of King Saul (1 Samuel 15:23)
- Physical and spiritual death which may lead to eternal separation from God (Acts 5:1-11)

7. CHRISTIANS' STRATEGIES IN FIGHTING CORRUPTION

7.1 Entrenching ethics and integrity among Christians

It is the noble duty of religious leaders to provide guidance to the believers on living a life of integrity. Leaders can employ the following strategies in mainstreaming integrity among their congregations;

- Being transparent and accountable to the congregation (1 Samuel 12: 2-3)
- Organizing accountability forums where duty-bearers explain progress reports to the right owners.
- Follow the rule of law and constitutionalism where all appear to be equal before the law. Culprits must be punished because punishment is part and parcel of administration of justice.
- Establishment of vetting for those aspiring to be in leadership positions by a multi-sectoral Committee.
- Signing of integrity commitment accords as the basis of the social contract.

Making use of the recall clause in the Constitution Article 104 and ensure social contracts of leaders that have failed are terminated.

7.2 The suitability of the church in fighting corruption

The church has the moral obligation of combating corruption and is best suited in nurturing a Nation that upholds values and good ethical practices. The existence of sound

leadership, structures, and the delivery mechanisms to mobilize the faithful to positively and meaningfully participate in corruption preventive measures is reinforced by the following privileges of the church;

- Most Nigerian are Christians Christianity condemns all evil; and corruption is one of them.
- The church is legitimately recognized in the society
- They have the largest constituent
- They are God's stewards in handling such vices
- They have the capacity to use their already established structures
- They have a bigger platform to influence the process of change
- Their owned media houses provide a strategic platform for information dissemination.

7.3 Role of the church in fighting corruption

Preaching to their members to instill good values and morals

- Not participating in corruption
- Exposing forms of corruption in the society
- Condemning corruption in the society fearing God and keeping His commandments (Proverbs 9:10, Joshua 1:8; Ecclesiastes 12:13)
- Practicing what their leaders teach them from the word of God
- Innovate methods/platforms employed for fighting corruption
- Having Bible studies in homes, churches and Christian institutions

7.4 Role of the clergy in fighting corruption

- Come up with sermons that address corruption
- They are God's custodians on earth to shape the moral well-being of faithful
- They are gatekeepers and opinion shapers
- They act as facilitators in influencing process of change.
- Actively using their existing platforms to advocate for change of mindset and sound ethical practice and standards

7.5 Overcoming challenges of corruption in Christian institutions

- Putting up structures/systems that prevent members from being corrupt
- Create awareness on corruption
- Leading by example
- Deliver targeted messages teaching on corruption to our constituents
- Actively engage with the legislative arm of the Government to pass laws that will facilitate the fight against corruption.
- Instill good morals among the congregants
- Demand accountability from state and non-state institutions
- Inculcate role modeling and the leadership Styles
- Structured departments with accountable leadership for effective information and monitoring of progress
- Help the congregants understand the Biblical foundations that speak against corruption.

- Instill Biblical value systems which will reshape their world view
- Leaders to be role models at all levels and mentor the young generation.
- Walk with congregants to practice ethical living
- Build functioning partnerships in increasing the skills of congregants to strongly stand against corruption

7.6 How the church can partner with the State in fighting corruption

- Availing platforms where the State and the church come together to fight corruption.
- Exposing the corrupt by blowing the whistle.
- Church being on the forefront in conducting social audits and public participation.
- Resolve not to defend suspects within their own congregations.
- Coming together and have joint statements against an identified corruption issue.
- Enabling the government to use their facilities.
- Engaging in government sponsored activities.
- Involving government officials to be part of FBO's initiative and vice versa
- Government availing resources both financial and in-kind to facilitate FBO's to implement their activities

7.7 Collaboration of Christian communities in fighting corruption

- Develop and disseminate joint media messages
- Develop and disseminate joint position papers, policy briefs and Press Releases.
- Mutual co-existence and softening hard line stand to harmonize ideas.
- Empowerment of local interfaith networks to effectively play a meaningful role in the fight against corruption.
- Pull resources together to a common basket to fund grass root network activities
- Develop a common monitoring framework and tools to track results.

Excerpt



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