University of Jos Journal of Arts Education

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AS A PANACEA FOR CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

JEROME AKYASA WAZIRI

And

TIMOTHY YAKUBU BAKO
Department of Christian Religious Studies,
Kaduna State University
Kaduna

ABSTRACT

Corruption and sustainable developlnent are mutually exclusive because \\There one is found, the other must be absent. This goes to say that development denralrds a col'l'uption free society. Therefore, this paper exanrilres theological education as a panacea in the fIght against the long term enenr\ of Nigerian development – corruption. Using libratv research nrethodo tog\, the paper reveals that atlnost even'one in Nigeria is a theologian by extension and so, the fIght against corruption is to be done by everyone. The paper discloses that theological education is signifIcant because it promotes reorientation .for proper entightenntent, _for nran's bettel tlnderstanding of hi11rsel.f and God's expectations front hint , and .for decisive response in the iluprovelnent of hulnan standard in all ramifIcations. Furthermore, the paper sees corruption as a debasenlent and a deviation front the la\v and stalrdal'd of God \vIrich results in acts such as selfIShness, greedt bribeD;, fi-and, extortion, nepotisllr and .favouritisl ll. These acts are direct enellties of de\'elopnrent and nlust be elinrinated if any nreaningful developnrent is to be achieved. The paper suggests that for theological education to be e+j'ecti\'e in the fight against corruption, theologians nrust pra\? and ask God to tI-ansI-ol-m tIle hearts of Nigerians; they luust also return to the teachings of soulrd Biblical truths that bother on justice, equit) transparenc\' and fair play. HoIIesty, collrpetency a11d hard \vork must also be rewarded so as to lnoti\,ate more people to do good. Consequently, theologialrs llrust be in\'ol\,ed ill the ajl-airs of the nation by challettging those \tho are not honest and telling thelll nothing less than the trtltl1

KEYWORDS: Theological education. Corruption

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is a household name for tribalisn1, sectionalism. nepotism. bribery. extortion, embezzlement, favouritism, and fraud. It is also the greatest enem\- of sustainable development. Corruption is said to be an enemy of development because. among other things, it hinders the right persons from occupying the right positions in both public and private sectors. When the wrong people occupy the right positions at the expense of the right people, nothing good, as far as sustainable developlncnt is concerned, can be expected from such people except ablupt failure and destabilization ofthe entire system.

This paper considers theological education as a panacea to corruption in Nigeria by examining the meaning of theological education, significance of theological education in Nigeria, an overview of corruption, implications of corruption on sustainable development, and the role of theological education in curtailing corruption in Nigeria.

Theological Education

Theological education is not really a term to be defined but a conglomeration of two important terms – theology and education. Therefore, a proper understanding of the term demands a valid elaboration on the meanings of’theology' and 'education' .

Theology, from the etymological point of view, is the combination of two Greek words “theos” (God) and “logos” (discourse or reason) (Nihinlola, 2013: 1). When these words are combined, they give the sense of a “discourse or reason concerning God,” or a “thinking about God” (Nihinlola. 2013: 1). Theology could also be defined as “the systematic and rational study of religion and its influences and the nature of religious truths” (Monye, 2012:37). Although these are some of the conventional definitions of theology, Kunhiyop(2012:2), is of the opinion that the true meaning of theology lies somewhere between two extremes, intellectual and spiritual. According to him, theology “is an intellectual and spiritual search for answers to questions about divine revelation and the human condition. It studies both God’s revelation of Himself and human condition as being composed of body, mind ,Ind spirit. Then it seeks to apply the truths that emerge to men and women (Kunhiyop, 2012:2). Therefore, theology, in this work. is any discourse about God that is concerned with even'day life and the issues that affect God’s creatures as they relate with Him.

Etymologically. the word education is derived from the Latin word 'educare' meaning to 'bring up or out'; and it is also related to 'educere' – which means to 'bring out','bring forth what is within,' 'bring out lrotcntial' and 'ducere' which means 'to

lead' (Parankimalil, 2016: n.d.). Therefore, education in its broad sense means "any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of an individual". In its technical sense however, education is the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills and values from one generation to another.

Theological education can therefore be defined as the teaching of doctrinal truth of the Bible formally and informally with the goal ofhelping individuals follow Jesus in obedience (discipleship) (Monye, 2012:37). It could also mean "the process of preparing for religious vocation" (Babatunde, 2003 :51). Theological education in its broad sense aims at developing reflective Christian identity and practice, an informed and spiritually enriched access to Biblical tradition, and empowering people for participating in the mission of God in this world. It enables people to reflect critically on the relation between their own Christian identity, their church tradition and other Christian traditions, their relation to the world, and the tasks of God's mission today.

Significance of Theological Education in Nigeria

The major question here is whether theological education has any significance in Nigeria as a nation. In the words of Ferdinando (2016: n.d.), "Everybody is a theologian. We have notions about God, about the world, about human beings, about meaning and fulfilment, about death and what comes after, and so on; and they may come from all sorts ofplaces". This postulation may actually be correct because there is virtually no one on earth without a notion about God. However, the question to be asked is not whether we are theologians or not, but whether we are good theologians or poor ones. To be more exact, do our beliefs – and our lives – faithfully reflect the truth that has been spoken by the living God, or do they simply bear the imprint of the societies we live in, and of our own fallible human wisdom and pragmatism? The answer one gives to these questions determines the significance of theological education to such a person. Notwithstanding, the following are considered as some ofthe significance oftheological education:

i. Reorientation for proper enlightenment: Theological education exposes one to all that is true, appropriate and good, and thereby causes improvement over wrong manifestations or debilitating situations. In Hosea 4:6, the Bible reveals that ignorance may lead to both moral and spiritual decay and it could also lead to foolishness (1 Peter 2:15), distortion (2 Peter 3:16) and straying (Hebrews 5 :2) (Ogundipe, 2012 : 115).
ii. Reorientation for better understanding: Theological education brings about awareness while darkness vanishes in the presence of theological knowledge. Anyone that becomes theologically enlightened is expected to

grow in wisdom, knowledge and understanding. To this effect, it is wise to say that theological education is an impetus to developing potentials, abilities embedded within as well as skills to be proactive in contributing to societal development in various relationships and practices (Halcomb & Hegeman, 2008:223-240).

111. Reorientation for decisive response: The essence of theological education lies largely in reorienting people, changing their understanding, lifestyles and world views toward improving human standard in all ramifications (Ogundipe, 2012:116). Right and critical thinking among individuals or groups of persons so as to influence, impact and guide the larger society in doing all that is right and good is another benefit derivable from theological education (Thangaraj, 1999: 152). According to Lawal (2006: 12), "A critical way of analysing issues would definitely give to our students the ability to see problems and be able to find ways of solving them." This statement is true of the fact that theological education is significant in reorienting people for decisive response.

Corruption: **An Overview**

Corruption can be defined as "the act which is a deviation from the formal and acceptable rules of conduct governing the actions of people both in position of public authority and followership, influenced by greed and private motives such as wealth, power or status to the detriment of their fellow humans" (Ahuche, 2013:2). Corruption can also be defined "as making someone morally corrupt or becoming morally corrupt oneself' (Kunhiyop, 2008: 165). From the etymological point of view, corruption stemmed from the Greek wordkapeleuo and it primarily signifies "retailing, peddling, or to hucksterize". To hucksterize however means to "get base gain by dealing in anything" that is sordid and for personal advantage". This is found in II Cor, 2:17 with reference to the ministry of the gospel (Olodude, 2006:80). This Greek word has broader significance of deception for dishonest gain, and destruction by means of corruption (Unger, 1996:30).

Some common corrupt practices include, but not limited to (a) bribery which is givien money or favour to someone who is in position of trust, in order to pervert their judgment or corrupt their conduct. It is intended to make a person act illegally, unjustly or immorally (Kunhiyop, 2008: 165), (b) fraud – this refers to some kind of trickery, swindling and deceit, counterfeiting, racketeering, smuggling and forgery (Ahuche, 2013:6), (c) extortion – the act of obtaining something, such as money from an entity (whether a person, group, corporation or institution) through threats, violence or the misuse of authority" (Grenz & Smith, 2003 :38), (d) nepotism – when an office holder prefers his/her kinfolk and family members. This occurs when one is

haying

e\emptcd from the application of celtain laws or regulations or given undue preference in the allocation of scarce resources (Dike, 2016: n.d.). Nepotism is almost the same with tribalism where one gives undue preference to people from one's ethnic group, (e) favouritism – a kind of power abuse implying a highly biased distribution of state resources. This is often done to favour family, friends and relatives or anybody close and trusted (Ahuche, 2013:6), (f)embezzlement –the act of stealing or misappropriating public money placed in one's trust or under one's control (Soanes & Stevenson, 2004: n.d.), and (g) tribalism – discrimination against a citizen because ofhis place ofbirth" (Achebe, 1983 :7). Also, it could mean "giving preference to persons from one's ethnic group over others whether they are qualified or not" (Ahuche, 20 13:7). These confirm the fact that conuption is the name for a gamut of social ills.

Implications of Corruption on Sustainable Development

Sustainable development, according to Bruntland Commission report published by the UN General Assembly, is that "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations General Assembly, 1987: 43). This development encompasses all spheres of life be it religious, educational, political, or socio-economic. Thus, to achieve such kind of de\'elopnlent, corruption must be eradicated at all levels. Once corruption persists in any country at whatever level, achieving sustainable development becomes very difficult. Therefore, it is worthy to consider some of the u'ays corruption negatively affects the struggle for sustainable development. They include:

1. Religion: The effects of corruption on the Church ar, innumerable amongst which are : proliferation of denominational churches without con'esponding spiritual growth, unhealthy church politics which hinder evangelism and the move of the Holy Spirit thereby making it difficult for the worshipers to receive spiritual blessings. Church split and immorality have become the order of the day. Church cases are now being tdken to coun today. Hatred, jealousy, infighting and other vices are prevalent. Religious crises are a major contributor to the state of the nation today and this is a fallout of corruption (Ahuche, 2013 : 55).

2. Education: Today all we see in Nigeria is overemphasis on paper qualification over and above competence which in turn promotes examination malpractices, false identity of candidates, manhandling of invigilators, destruction of scripts through arson, dlteration of examination results, use ofcharnls and mystical powers, falsification ofcellincates, secret society and cult activities, sexual harassment and exploitation. incessant strike actIons by schools and a host of others (Ahuche, 2013 : 56). The

gov'ernment, teachers, students and parents are responsible for all these and the resulting effect is the production of half-baked professionals in the nation

3. Politics: Transparency, accountability and rule of la\\' (Kunhiyop1 2008: 167), are political terms absent from the Nigerian political lexicon What we have today is oppression of the weak and powerless by the rich and privileged few that have access to courts. Democracy is another thing that hds no nourishing space in Nigeria due to corruption. Election results are forged, rigged and manipulated; ballot boxes are stolen here and there and so, the mandate ofthe people are hardly given (Ahuche, 2013 : 56).

4 Socio-economy:Social ills such as poverty, oppression, suppression, war, genocide, armed robbery, human trafficking, murder, anarchy, tyranny, rebellion, greed, selfishness, injustice, indignity, inequity, rape, arson, looting, violence, human right abuses, salary slash, late payments of salaries, election rigging, etc. are all occasioned by corruption. Poor productivity and incompetency, inefficient development and maladministration, limited foreign and domestic investment and general underdevelopment are also economic implications of corruption (Kunhiyop, 2008: 167- 169).

Where the aforementioned exist, development cannot be achieved let alone sustainable development. This is based on the already established fact that corruption and development are never mutually inclusive. Thus, for any meaningful development, corruption must be tackled with evely available means.

The Role of Theological Education in Curtailing Corruption in Nigeria

Holding to the definition given to theological education in this work, one could rightly conclude that every Christian is a theologi,in and therefore, this section addresses the Christian response to corruption instead of limiting it to some individuals that have been to the seminary. If corruption must be dealt with in the nation, Christians must do a lot.

Since corluption is a sin and all sinful acts find their root in the heaR of man (Jer. 17:9), then the right thing to do is to call on God who can effect a complete change of heart through His son Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5: 17). Atowoju (2006:48-49) is of the opinion that "various measures without inner change will lead to promotion of falsehood to cover up evils by corrupt people; it forces people To wear something that does not fit them". Therefore, the first step theologians must take in fighting corluption is to pray that God will transform heaRs and to proclaim the undiluted gospel ofthe Lord Jesus Christ (Kunhiyop, 2008: 17 1).

There is also a need for theological educators to return to their Biblical roots. Does the Bible say anything on justice, equity and fair play? Since the Bible is totally against injustice, theologians must rise to do their job as the mouthpiece of God in this generation like the Biblical Isaiah, Amos, Peter, Barnabas and Paul. The Old Testament prophets condemned injustice and presented the Biblical God as a God of ,justice and this must be the message if corruption must stop in Nigeria. Today, only courageous, selfless, and fearless messengers of God, can voice out these evils to all and sundry, irrespective of class (Gwamna, 2014: 192) and this is exactly what every Christian theologian must bear in his mind.

Also, honesty, competency and hard work must be acknowledged and rewarded in churches and businesses as !his will signal to the nation the need to reward good people so as to motivate them to remain true to their belief system. The church must also embrace accountability and transparency. Church leaders and pastors must model this by being accountable to church members and transparent regarding the church finances (Kunhiyop, 2008:172- 173). In addition, all Christians must eschew evil and pay taxes and do their best to be good citizens, active in community development and also stand up for the freedom of worship and individuals' rights (Ahuche, 2013 : 125- 126).

Another aspect theologians need to look into is the area of involvement, Theological education should not just be a church thing; it should be made relevant to the society through involvement in the society. If truly we are the salt and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13 – 14), there is then need for intervention in what goes on in our society. Although we are not of the world (John 15 : 19), we cannot deny the fact that we are in the world and since we are in the world we must be agents of positive change (Lawal, 2006:9). Christians in Nigeria must make sure they influence the society positively by accepting what the Bible says they should, and rejecting what the Bible rejects.

CONCLUSION

Since corruption is spiritual debasement and deviation from the law and standard of God and since the soul of man is involved, it requires 'curative' and' vicarious' attention. Therefore, in a society such as Nigeria, theology, not punitive measures, reassurance not condemnation, restoration not despondency, re-orientation not total rejection is what is needed. Because until man is touched within, there will be **no** appreciable change without. Also, since most corrupt cases in Nigeria are linked to the love of money, the most important strategy to reduce corruption to a manageable level is for theologians to deemphasize prosperity in their preaching and emphasize the holiness of God. All Christians must return to Biblically based practical theology.

Finally, theologians must live exemplary lifestyles. They should ensure that discipline is maintained in the Church and in the seminaries and the\' should aim at raising a generation of leaders that are bold enough to declare the whole counsel of God without fear of men or prejudice (Acts 20:20). The word of truth must be handled correctly (1 Tim. 2: 15) and the truth must be told in love no matter how- bitter it is and most importantly, theologians must re-assume the role ofintercessors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper recommends as follows:

1. Theologians must deemphasize the prosperity gospel and focus on the religious principles of hard work, integrity, service, truth and accountability, which are true hallmarks of developed and developing nations
2. Theologians should acknowledge the fact that until people seek and do justice in the society, corruption cannot be tamed. Therefore, they should emphasize the need for justice; speaking boldly and fearlessly like the Old Testament prophets – especially Amos.
3. Seminaries should redesign their curriculum to include courses on civic responsibility, political participation and rules of public engagement and ensure the implication of same to the letter.

Theologians must follow the examples of Pope John Paul II in Poland and Bishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa, among others, who used their theological education positively in leading their countries towards human dignity, development and reconciliation

REFERENCES

.Xchebe, C.(1983). *The trouble \vitll Nigeria* . Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd.

Gosh Impressions.

Atowoju, A. A. (2006). Theological response to corruption in Nigeria with particular reference to governance and economy of the country. *iVan TI Conference Papers* .

Babatunde, E. A. (2003). Theological education in the seminary. *ETSI Jorlrnal*, 4. Dike. V.E.

(2016). Corruption in Nigeria: A new paradigm for effective control. Retrieved from www. AfricaEconomic Analysis.

Ferdinando. K. (2016). Theological education: Why bother? Retrieved from http:/'’wwu'.eu.aimint,org.

Grenz. S_ J. &Smith. J. T. (2003). *Extol-tion* , *Pocket dictionatr7 of ethics* . Downers Grove: IVP.

Gu'alnna. D. J. (201 *4).Pel=pecri\'es* //? *African theology* . Bukuru: Africa Christian Textbooks.

Halcomb, H.& Hegeman, J. (2008). Equipping Christian students to connect kingdom citizenship to issues in today's societies. In N. Lantinga (ed.), *Christian higher education in the global context . Granada*, *Nicaragua: Dordt* College Press.

Kunhiyop, S. W. (2008).dpIca/ 7 *Chl'is ti cllr ethics*. Ndirabo, Kenya: HippoBooks. Kunhiyop, S.

W. (2012). *African Chl'istian th eologv* . Nairobi, Kenya: HippoBooks.

La\val, J.B. (2006). Corruption and theological education: The Nigerian experience In Samuel P. Ango (Ed.). *Col-rupt toll and theological education : The Nigel'ian* experience. Ilorin: West African Association of Theological InstitutIons .

Monye, M. A. (2013). The value of theological education for excellent pastoral ministry in the church today: A catholic perspective. In S. P. Ango

Parankimalil, J. (2016). *Education.Retrieved* from http://johnparankimalil.word press.com

(Ed.).r/zeo/ogjca/ education and the challenge of excellence: 2012 conference papers, 35-51. Ilorin: West African Association of Theological Institutions.

Nihinlola, E. (2013).Theo/ogp *under the mango tree :* A *handbook of African Christian theology* . Lagos: Fine Print& Manufacturing Limited.

Ogundipe, S.O. (2013). Theological education as a tool for excellent healing. In S. P. *Ango (Ed.).r/zeo/ogjca/ education and the challenge of excellence: 2012 conference papers* , 110- 130. Ilorin: West African Association of Theological Institutions.

Olodude, S.K. (2006). Effects of corruption in Nigeria: What should be ministers' responsibilities?InS. P. Ango *(Ed.).Corruption and theological education*. *The Nigerian experience(pp.80-76)*. Ilorin: West African Association of Theological Institutions.

Soanes, C. & Stevenson, A. (2004). *Embezzlement .Concise Oxford English dictionary*, *11 th* ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Thangaraj, T. (1999). Globalization, world religions, and theological education. *Theological education*, *35(2)*.

Unger, *M.F. (1996)*. *Une expository complete dictionary ofold and new testament*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

United Nations General Assembly. (1987). *Report of* Me *world* commission on *environment and development : Our common future.Oslo*, Norway: United Nations General Assembly, Development and International Co-operation: Environment.