

Islam, the ‘Ulama and the Fight Against Corruption in Nigeria

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Abstract

For nearly four decades now, corruption has been identified as a major impediment to Nigeria’s development with the country being rated at different times among the most corrupt countries in the world. Corrupt practices appear in nearly all facets of the country’s life, although in leadership and governance, it has largely remained the worst. This paper discusses the role of Muslim religious leaders, particularly scholars (ulama) in combating the menace of corruption in Nigeria. After analysing the concept of corruption and its dimensions and impact on the Nigerian economy, and the Islamic normative teachings against corruption, the paper argues that given its divine origin and unique merits, the Islamic approach to combating corruption needs to be given attention as Nigeria seeks to rid itself of corruption. It recommends, inter alia, that anti-corruption agencies should maintain continuous interaction with religious leaders so they can understand the dynamics of corruption in the country and, hence, contribute more effectively in counselling the public against it through their pulpits.

Introduction

In His divine wisdom, Allah has made human beings to be “social animals” whose lives are necessarily linked to one another. No human being can live in isolation of other humans. For his survival, man has some indispensable needs that include social, physiological and economic, which cannot be fulfilled without relying on fellow human beings at different times, circumstances and levels. This natural reality necessitates a continuous interaction between people. But their efforts towards attaining their diverse needs, objectives and interests are always influenced by their tendency of inclining towards greed, selfishness and ceaseless accumulation of influence and affluence. All these make human societies through history to be characterised by dishonesty, corruption and competition for power. For human interactions to

be healthy, therefore, societies need to be organized along some ethics and laws that will always checkmate their excesses and create equilibrium, balance and social justice which will create for them the necessary atmosphere for achieving their individual and collective objectives without denying others the right to actualize their dreams and fulfil their interests. This quest for societal balance and equilibrium explains the essence for which Allah sent messengers and revealed scriptures. In this regard, the Qur'an expresses the fact that justice is one of the universal objectives for which all messengers were sent, all scriptures revealed and all religious injunctions prescribed:

Indeed We have sent our Messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the scriptures and the Balance (justice) that mankind may keep up justice. And We brought forth iron wherein is mighty power, as well as many benefits for mankind, that Allah may test who it is that will help Him (His religion) and His Messengers in the unseen. Verily, Allah is All-Strong, All-Mighty. (57:25)

The above verse, as explained by the expert commentators of the Qur'an, describe three things as blessings from Allah to humanity; the Book, the Balance, and iron which together represent the pillars that hold society together. While revelation serves as the source of guidance that distinguishes the good from evil, justice ensures for everyone his right, whereas the Law serves as a sanction to those who do wrong¹.

It is a cardinal essence and objective of Islam and its law, therefore, to eradicate all forms of injustice and corruption from the society and replace them with social justice, equity and fairness in all human dealings. Islam has particularly emphasized that in all social and economic interactions, all forms of cheating, fraud and corruption must be obliterated from the society and that the resources and wealth that have been sufficiently provided by God for the benefit of humanity must always not be cornered by a privileged few in the society by denying others the access and ability to also enjoy those resources. In their discourses on the objectives of Shari'ah, jurists, scholars and Islamic economists have pointed out that justice is among the fundamental objectives that the entire message of Islam is predicated upon, just as it is one of the cardinal principles upon which all social and economic transactions are built.

¹ See *The Holy Qur'an English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*, King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex Dahiru Inuwa IBRAHIM PhD, Abdullahi Abubakar LAMIDO, Islam, the 'Ulama and the Fight Against Corruption in Nigeria, pp. 91 - 105

Corruption, being a major cancer that destroys societies and creates a situation of social imbalance, spiritual infirmity, economic hardship and political instability, has been singled out by the Qur'an and Sunnah with condemnation. Throughout the history of Islam, Muslim jurists and scholars have paid special attention to addressing the menace of corruption, and have developed a considerable amount of literature regarding its meaning, causes, effects and solutions.

One of the Nigerian paradoxes is the prevalence of massive corruption amidst intense religiosity. It is largely held that despite the high level of commitment of the citizens towards religious teachings, and in spite of the emphasis of religions on morality, selflessness and self restraint, the country, paradoxically, records a high level of corruption at different levels and in diverse forms and dimensions. Various efforts and programmes have been initiated towards combating corruption, and a number of agencies established, yet, the challenges seem to be insurmountable. An aspect that is less explored in the fight against corruption, however, is the role of religion and religious leaders in this direction. In fact, Egbewole and Imam (2015), observed that even from academic researches, the phenomenon of corruption has not received much attention "especially from Islamic perspective". Therefore, as the country continues to advance new approaches toward ridding itself of corruption, it becomes imperative that efforts are made to explore the role of religion and religious scholars in combating corruption, and offering specific recommendations on how they can participate in the jihad against corruption. This is the main objective of this paper.

Conceptualizing Corruption

The term corruption, like many other concepts in the social sciences, does not have a universally accepted definition, although a number of scholars have offered a number of definitions that capture most of its scope and dimensions. It is believed that corruption is the "abuse of public office for private gain" (Ribadu, 2005). Corruption connotes immorality, dishonesty and lack of transparency in handling matters, especially by people in authority (Oseni, 2015). Jega (2005) cites Stapenhurst and Kpundeh (1999) who opine that corruption is, "in its simplest terms, the abuse of power, most often for personal gain or for the benefit of a group to which one owes allegiance. It can be motivated by greed, by the desire to retain or increase one's power." Although these definitions tell much about corruption, they however,

restrict its scope only to the public sphere to the exclusion of the private sector. A more encompassing definition therefore is that corruption is the “misuse of private or public funds/office/power/position for private benefit.” Usman (1980) sees corruption as “deliberate violation, for gainful ends, of standards of conduct legally, or, even ethically, established in private and public affairs”. Vito Tanzi presents what Begovic (2005) describes as the “most promising answer” to the question of what corruption is by stating thus: “Corruption is the intentional non-compliance with the arm’s-length principle aimed at deriving some advantage for oneself or for related individuals from this behavior.” This definition contains, according to Begovic, some essential elements: that in any economic decision that involves more than one party, there should not be any place for personal or other relations; and that for a well-working economy, all economic agents should be treated equally. In addition to these, there are two additional conditions that have to be fulfilled before a phenomenon can be described as corruption. These are that it has to be deliberate or “intentional” and that “there must be some advantage for the individual who commits a violation of the arm’s-length principle”.

From the above definitions, it is clear that as a socio-economic and political ill, corruption is multidimensional. It is of different forms, and can affect a society in different ways. Corruption can be governmental and non-governmental, public or private, individual or collective, major or minor, micro or macro. Also, corruption can be perpetrated to achieve political, economic or even religious interests. Although a number of analyses on corruption reduce the focus to only corruption in governance and leadership positions, corruption perpetrated outside the corridors of power can be as cancerous to a country’s economy and polity as public corruption, or sometimes even worse.

The problem with corruption is that it stops all the machinery of governance from working. The resources set aside for the provision of basic infrastructure such as education, health, road networks, security and all other amenities are siphoned by the corrupt elements thereby denying the vast population the benefit of enjoying the riches of their country. The result of this manifests in high level of ignorance and poverty which will continue to plunge the nation into all forms of evils as well as social, economic and political ills.

The effects of corruption are felt in every sector of the economy. It negatively affects not only the masses but even those in the position of leadership. Its effects are felt in the short run, but

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more devastatingly in the long, often after a number of generations. After reviewing various studies on the effects of corruption by various scholars, Mabolaji (2012), presents some of the effects of corruption as reducing private investment and economic growth; worsening the incidence of poverty and widening income inequality gap; leading to inefficient allocation of resources and creating wastage in the economy; distorting the political process and adversely influencing political outcomes; diminishing productivity over time; inequitable distribution of social services; creation of an artificial need for external assistance; deepening ethnic divisions and conflicts; leading to the decay of infrastructures, worsening the debt situation in many countries and lowering popular participation in politics.

For the purpose of this paper, however, the analysis focuses more on the role Islamic scholars should play in tackling corruption in public service and leadership. Based on the definitions above, we will, therefore, define corruption as the deliberate use of public privilege to directly or indirectly enrich oneself or one's relatives through the diversion and looting of public resources.

Governance and Corruption in Nigeria

Nigeria would have been rated among the most prosperous nations in the world if endowment of resources is what makes countries developed and prosper, Nigeria is blessed with well over 400 different resources, each of which is enough to take it to the level of development if well harnessed, developed and effectively utilised. In spite of all these resources, however, majority of Nigerians are suffering from abject poverty, squalor and different forms of deprivation. In fact, it has become a silent consensus among Nigerians, both the educated and the uneducated, that the "trouble with Nigeria" is certainly not the absence of resources and opportunities for development; it is rather the inability of Nigerians- through their leadership mechanisms- to use the country's resources for the good of the majority citizens. Various theories have been developed as to what actually constitutes "the trouble with Nigeria", the most popular of these theories in both academic and political circles being perhaps the "Achebean formulation"² which suggests that "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership" and that "the Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the

² This term was used by Jega (2005), in reference to Achebe's thesis on *The Trouble with Nigeria*.

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hallmarks of true leadership.” Despite the popularity of this perspective, others have rather argued that corruption, not leadership, is the greatest problem in Nigeria. Ribadu (2005) for instance, argues that the trouble with Nigeria is actually not leadership but corruption. Ribadu’s position is supported by Orji’s assertion that corruption remains the single most serious social problem in Nigeria which has plagued many social groups in the country just as it has caused serious economic injuries to the nation. Jega (2005), however, argues in line with Achebe, stressing that the problem with Nigeria is “decisively that of leadership” and that corruption has only become a feature of the Nigerian society as a result of the failure or “poverty” of leadership.

But what appears very clearly is that even Achebe, who believed that leadership is the major problem of Nigeria could not but accept the fact that corruption is the greatest disease that has made Nigerian leadership ineffective and problematic. In fact, since 1983, Achebe has argued that corruption in Nigeria has surpassed the alarming point and reached the “fatal stage” while Shehu (2010), maintains that corruption has almost been institutionalized in the country. According to Achebe, “corruption in Nigeria has *passed* the alarming and *entered* the fatal stage; and Nigeria will die if we keep pretending that she is only slightly indisposed.” In the final analysis, therefore, if the major problem of Nigeria is in leadership, then the major problem of Nigerian leadership has been corruption.

Analysing the extent of corruption and social injustice perpetrated at various levels of governance in Nigeria, Shehu (2010) argues that:

In the political sphere, social injustice and corruption are being perpetrated in the most atrocious ways. Military dictatorship and monumental plunder and thievery for nearly three decades have not only retarded the country’s development but have indeed destroyed its infrastructures and reduced it to a situation worse than that of a country devastated by war. This is further worsened by the inequities and vanities of the visionless, greedy and miscreant politicians of the last three republics respectively. Their political treachery, thuggery and brigandage...have stripped leadership (governance) of all its purpose and meaning.

Corruption in the country takes various forms, including political corruption, bureaucratic corruption, electoral corruption, embezzlement and bribery (Ribadu, 2005; Egbewole and Imam, 2015). It is perpetrated in high degrees in all the three arms of government; the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. A trend that has largely become a characteristic of the country's polity especially since the return to democracy in 1999 is the connivance between the three arms of government in jointly contracting high level fraudulent dealings and looting of the treasury of the Nigerian public.

Nigeria has to be rated recurrently among the most corrupt nations in the world because of the rate at which corruption and looting are committed in this country, While in other parts of the world, including developing economies, democracy has provided the opportunity to reduce corruption, the case seems to be different in Nigeria. In fact, it is apparent that some of the greatest "dividends" of democracy in Nigeria are "heightened abuse of power and conversion of public resources into private use, and spiralling corruption" (Jega 2005). There is no sector of the Nigerian national life which is not infected with the contagious virus of corruption. Corruption has found roots not only in the public sector; it is visually present in the private sector in no lesser level. It is perpetrated by the leaders and the led, the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated. Corruption has become both classless and genderless. What is even more worrisome is that corruption has found accommodation even in the "house of God", being carried out by some "men of God", who see religion as a vehicle to enrich themselves. Even some of the institutions established to fight corruption have been accused of having been infested by the corruption disease.

The Islamic Teachings against Corruption

The Islamic law or Shari'ah is not a body of laws governing the spiritual life of man alone, or solely concerned about the court and how to render punishment to the erring or sinning members of the society. It is not a "system" *per se* which was codified by a clique of some intellectuals or thinkers to govern the "religious" life of the people of a particular time, or tribe, or of a certain period in history. The Islamic Shari'ah does not have any geographical or historical restriction. It simply is a comprehensive and universal scheme of life packaged by the Creator of man to serve as a divine manual that is perfectly capable of leading man in his mundane and spiritual lives. Islam as a comprehensive way of life has provided practical

answers to all questions of man, including the spiritual, political, social, psychological, physiological, technological and economic ones. It is based on this that Islam provides sufficient guidance regarding how to tackle the menace of corruption in society.

Islam's position about corruption is that of a complete condemnation. It prohibits all forms of corruption irrespective of the magnitude or the person who commits it.

The Qur'an for instance warns Muslims against eating up of the property of one another in vanity, or giving bribery to the ruler or judge, and describes doing so as "eating up the property of others sinfully" (2:188). In addition to the unequivocal condemnation of all forms of fraud and corruption, the Qur'an explains in details how Messengers of Allah were directly involved in the fight against corruption. An example is Prophet Shu'aib whose story is related in Qur'an 7:85 thus:

"And to (the people of) Madyan (We sent) their brother Shu'ayb. He said, "O my people, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him. There has come to you clear evidence from your Lord. So fulfil the measure and weight and do not deprive people of their due and cause not corruption upon the earth after its reformation. That is better for you, if you should be believers".

Commenting on the above verse, Ibn Kathir (1991) suggests that all forms of betrayal of trust, oppression, corruption and fraud are categorically prohibited and condemned by Islam. The verse shows how Prophet Shu'aib became bold and unequivocal in his call against all forms of corruption, irrespective of the magnitude and the persons involved. He condemned public corruption just as he also fought "independent corrupt practices and other related matters". This explains how broad Islam's approach to the fight against corruption is.

It is in line with this that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) makes it clear that corruption and all acts connected to it such as stealing and bribery are all prohibited and can lead people to hell fire. He took time to explain to his companions in details the acts that constitute fraud and corruption. He warned them against indulging in any corrupt practice, stressing that whosoever partakes in corruption is not part of his community. Once he warned Hakim bin Hizam against the collection of gifts unnecessarily. Whenever any corruption related case was reported to him he would take it with all the seriousness it deserved, giving it

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proper attention until it was resolved. For instance, after the demise of Kirkirah who was in charge of the personal effects of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the Prophet declared that he was in the hellfire due to a cloak that he had stolen (Bukhari). A lady from the Banu Makhzum tribe committed theft, and because of her lofty position in the community, some people requested one of the Prophet's beloved men to intercede on her behalf so he would give a waiver against her punishment as based on the Qur'anic injunction, her hand would have to be amputated. As the companion approached the Prophet (peace be upon him) and placed before him the request, the Prophet angrily responded repeatedly "Are you coming to intercede on a punishment of the punishments prescribed by Allah? By the One in Whose hands is my life, if Fatimah the daughter of Muhammad were to commit theft, I would amputate her hand."

In another case, the Prophet (peace be upon him) appointed Ibn Lutbiyyah, a man from the tribe of Azd as *zakah* collector. As he finished his assignment he returned and presented to the Prophet (peace be upon him) the proceeds and said "This is for you (meaning the *zakah* proceeds collected) and this was given to me as a gift". Immediately the Prophet (peace be upon him) climbed the pulpit and, after praising Allah, said "I employed a man and he returns and claims that this is for you and this is a gift given to me? Why would he not stay in the house of his father or mother and see if such gift would be presented to him or not? By Allah in Whose hand is Muhammad's life, if any of you took anything wrongfully, he would bring it, carrying it (on his back) on the Day of Resurrection..." He then raised his hands and said two times "O Allah I have conveyed your commandments" (Reported by Muslim) Commenting on this Hadith, Yusuf (1999), submits that the Hadith implies that all presents and gifts presented to the government employees due to their official position constitute bribery and are, therefore, prohibited.

The above teachings and guidance of the Prophet (peace be upon him), made remarkable impact on the conducts of his companions who, having internalised such teachings, followed the path of intolerance towards corruption and greed. They demonstrated the best examples in terms of shunning all corrupt tendencies and living a life of contentment, selflessness, transparency and accountability even after the demise of the Prophet. Hence, the leadership of 'Abubakar, Umar, Uthman and 'Ali came to be epitomised by the peak of justice, selfless

service and zero tolerance to corruption as well as entrenching a system that perfectly checkmated all affairs of governance such that there was an effective implementation of punishment against all acts related to corruption. Al-Shaukany (n-d) reports that one of the companions by the name Abdullahi bin Rawaha was sent by the Prophet (peace be upon him) to the people of Khaibar to make judgement on the issue of their farm produce based on their agreement with the Prophet (peace be upon him). They wanted to bribe him so that he would make the judgement in their favour, but, guided by the Prophet's Hadith where he is reported to have said, "Allah has cursed both the giver and taker of bribery", he refused to collect the gift and insisted on being fair and just in his judgement. Al-Dhahaby, (2005) Sa'id bin 'Amir al-Jumahy (a companion of the prophet (peace be upon him) who was appointed as the executive governor of Sham, and even with the numerous opportunities for looting the public treasury, he avoided the resources of the public, but he developed ways of relying on his legitimate income.³

As Shehu (2010) explains, Islam condemns all forms of corruption and fraud including but not limited to international, intergroup and partnership levels; corruption and fraud in business transaction (trade and commerce)- which includes corruption and fraud in measuring a commodity or setting up a scale as well as in the sale of essential commodities and foodstuff and; corruption and fraud in public responsibility and leadership which includes looting the public treasury or trust, receiving of bribe or any form of gratification, undue favouritism and unfair treatment of subjects or clients and blocking people's rights and needs.

Regarding the prohibition of all forms of corruption in public responsibility, Caliph Muhammad Bello says:

A ruler is forbidden to touch property acquired unjustly, such as through bribe obtained for appointing a judge or any other officer. The use of such property is unanimously regarded as illegal. It corrupts the religion and opens the doors wide to abuses and oppression of the poor. For the officials may feel that since money is obtained from them as a

³ - Azzahaby, (2001), op cit.

reward for appointing them to office, they in turn must recover it from the common people.

Another thing agreed upon as being illegal, is the collection of bribes on behalf of the leader or other officials like the judges and other employees...It is illegal to accept gifts from the common people. For such action is the door leading to all types of calamities. When a gift finds its way to a man of authority, justice and goodness will find its way out of him; and what he does is to purchase for himself a place in hell (Bobbyi, 2011).

The ‘*Ulama* and the Fight against Corruption

The Qur’an (4:59) addresses leaders as ‘*ulu al-amr* (people of authority). These ‘*ulu al-amr* are of two classes; the Islamic scholars and those in the position of leadership/power. When talking about religious leaders therefore, we may be talking about these two groups. In the Nigerian context, when religious leaders are referred to in reference to Muslims, reference is usually made to the Islamic scholars and the traditional rulers, who are the custodians of the Sokoto Caliphal leadership positions. In this work, we are only highlighting a few of the major roles of Islamic scholars (‘*ulama*’) in curbing/combating corruption in Nigeria.

The ‘*ulama*, according to Prophet Muhammad (SAW), are the heirs of the Prophets. Therefore, if, as the Qur’an makes it clear, the Prophets and Messengers were sent to establish the absolute Oneness of Allah; to emancipate humanity from the service of fellow creatures to the service of the Almighty Creator and to fight all forms of injustice and corruption; then the job of the ‘*ulama*’ is also to do the same. If the primary guiding principle of the Messengers was the consciousness of Allah, then the ‘*ulama*’ are also expected to internalize God-consciousness and to coach people on same. Being the men of knowledge and piety, the custodians of revelation and the promoters of guidance and virtues in the society after the messengers, it becomes obvious then that the ‘*ulama* occupy a strategically lofty position in the house of Islam. Islam has raised the ranks of the scholars and regarded them as people of exalted worth. The Qur’an declares that Allah has promised to exalt in degree those who believe and those who have been granted knowledge (58:11) and that true piety and God-consciousness is the preserve of the ‘*ulama*’ (35:28). With this therefore, they are expected to

take the lead in promoting uprightness and virtues and engender general progress in the society in a manner that pleases the Almighty.

The main preoccupation of the pious *'ulama'* is that of commanding all that is good and prohibiting all forms of evil. They are required to explain the truth, stand for just and speak against injustice and corruption. The Qur'an warns them against concealing the truth and attaches a severe punishment to it; "Verily, those who conceal what Allah has sent down of the Book, and purchase a small gain therewith (of worldly things), they eat into their bellies nothing but fire. Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor purify them, and theirs will be a painful torment" (2:174).

It is the responsibility of the *'ulama'* to ensure that all forms of corruption are reduced to the barest minimum in the society by first showing example by shunning away all forms of corrupt tendencies. To do that, they are expected to first try to be economically self-reliant so that they cannot be tempted by juicy gifts of the corrupt persons and leaders, and be silenced from conveying the truth.

Religious leaders should develop the courage to preach against corruption at all levels. Specifically, they should condemn all forms of corruption perpetrated by those in authority and dissociate themselves with all people who have chosen to follow the path of corruption. The Qur'an has constantly insisted that to remove all forms of evils and corruption from the society, is primarily the responsibility of the men of God. Allah (SWT) says: "**Why do the rabbis and religious scholars not forbid them from saying what is sinful and devouring what is unlawful? How wretched is what they have been practicing**" (Qur'an 5:63). Abdullah bin Masud (RA) explains that "**what is unlawful**" means any form of bribe, disobedience, mischief and all other unlawful or illegal sources of income. (Al-Shanqity, 2005)

In another verse, Allah (SWT) says: "**It is not for a human that Allah should give him the Scripture and authority and power and then he would say to the people, "Be servants to me rather than Allah", but [instead, he should say], Be pious scholars of the Lord because of what you have taught of the Scripture and because of what you have studied**" (Qur'an 3:79). The above verse is still confirming that the most fundamental responsibility of

Ulama is to invite people to the oneness of Allah and abide by all His rules and regulations. The verse also made it clear that at all times it is the responsibility of religious leaders and scholars in particular, to correct the ills of the society, combat all forms of corruption and draw people to the path of justice, fairness and God-consciousness in all their dealings. The Qur'an says in reference to the evil acts of the Jews: **“And you see many of them hastening into sin and aggression and the devouring of (what is) unlawful. How wretched is what they have been doing.”**(5:62). In another verse Allah described them thus **“(They like to) listen to falsehood, to devour anything forbidden.....”** (5:42).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has analysed the problem of corruption in Nigeria and highlighted the roles that can be played by Islamic scholars in curbing it. The paper stressed the fact that corruption is deep rooted and multidimensional in Nigeria, cutting across the public and the private sectors. The paper has also highlighted the stand of Islam against corruption in all its ramifications. The Islamic approach to entrenching a corruption-free society lies first in Islam's emphasis on God-consciousness and spirituality which is rooted in the belief that man as a creature of God shall account for all his deeds in the next world, and that any good deed no matter how minute, will be rewarded, just as any evil, especially one that involves the betrayal of trust and consuming other people's resources unjustifiably, will be punished in the most chastising way. Human beings are reminded that the life of this world has a purpose which is to serve Allah and become a source of mercy and benefit, not to other creatures as a preparation for the everlasting life.

The problem with the Nigerian development is not the lack of resources but the inability of the country's leadership at various levels to effectively utilize its resources for the betterment of the mass of its population. It is therefore important that a positive approach be adopted in the bid to chase corruption out of the Nigerian society and take it to the next level in terms of growth and prosperity. At the centre of the fight against corruption lies the imperative of ensuring justice, equity and fair play especially by those who control public positions, whether elective or appointive. No amount of efforts can lead to the eradication of corruption in the society if those who hold positions of authority do not imbibe a no-tolerance attitude to corruption and corrupt attitudes. With justice, accountability and transparency, the society can

be ensured of peaceful and conducive investment atmosphere for conducting a rewarding life and that will in turn have positive impact on the general living standards of the populace through the provision of affordable goods and services, employment opportunities among others. However, the job of refining the economy and polity and divorcing them from corruption can best be actualised when all the important segment of the population are engaged in the anti-corruption project. And, religious scholars are key in this regard as they command the respect and listenership of most of the country's population.

The fight against corruption from the religious point-of-view needs to be rooted in the minds of Nigerians from their youthful age. It is the contention of these authors that without God-consciousness, corruption cannot be eliminated. Hence, the teaching of religion should be made compulsory for all students in all public and private educational institutions from the primary to at least secondary schools level. The syllabus of religion at all levels of education should be reviewed and aspects of the negative consequences of corruption and how to avoid corrupt practices at individual and collective levels should be incorporated such that students will come out with not only the dislike of corruption but also the readiness to contribute to its eradication from the society.

There is need for constant interaction between the religious leaders and the anti-corruption agencies in Nigeria through workshops and training programmes, so that they would understand not only the extent and practical consequences of corruption in the country, but also its dynamics, dimensions and the factors hindering the fight against it. This will further enrich them with practical knowledge with which to develop sermons and other spiritual training packages with which to continue counselling the public against its evils in this world and in the afterlife. Understanding the factors that promote corruption is key to the contribution of the religious leaders in their efforts to assist the fight against it.

The *'ulama* are role models in terms of doing good and promoting it, and avoiding evil and forbidding it. It is, therefore, the duty of the *'ulama* to first internalise the teachings of the scripture by shunning evil and corrupt practices, and then constantly educating people about the evils of corruption and its unpalatable consequences in this world and in the afterlife. Their role is not restricted to teaching devotional aspects of religion alone, it involves directing the society towards social stability, economic prosperity, political maturity and general

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advancement and development. They should use their sermons and public preaching in both their worship places and the media in this direction.

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