






# Christian Teaching on Corruption: A Response of the Church to the Upsurge of Corruption in Ghana

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## ABSTRACT

Corruption has been a major deterrent to the socioeconomic development of Ghana. Several anti-corruption measures have been initiated by the government to curb the menace from the time of the country's independence till date. However, incremental surveys conducted and ratings on corruption in the last decade show a continuous escalation of the canker in the nation. Considering the high percentage of the Christian population (71.3%) in Ghana, the Christian Church becomes a key stakeholder in the affairs of the country. Therefore, the study examined the Biblical teachings on the act of corruption and the response of the Church to the problem in the quest of the nation to win the battle against corruption. From the study, it was discovered that the Bible frowns on the givers and receivers in the act of corruption and further cautions that corruption brings calamity to society, especially in the administration of justice. Similarly, the Church in Ghana has condemned the involvement of citizens in the act of corruption. Christian leaders have further proposed the need for the State to establish anti-corruption policies and prosecute persons found guilty of the act. However, the key role that the Church is playing in this quest is still not clear. The study, therefore, recommended the need for the various Christian denominations to intensify their teachings on issues of morality. The paper contributes to the discussion on maintaining ethical and moral values in the Church and Society.

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## INTRODUCTION

Corruption has been one of the most persistent and major issues of discourse in Ghana over the last decade as its present rising level has put niggling tentacles in every sector of the country's economy. Aside from the state losing large sums of money, Ghanaian citizens are feeling the impact of the menace mainly in their worsening living conditions, the poor delivery of services across the sectors which sometimes leads to loss of lives, and the weakening of numerous state institutions. In the 2015 corruption survey by the Institute of Economic Affairs, 72.1% of respondents rated the country as very high in corruption and 19.5% considered corruption to be high. Only 4.1% of respondents rated

corruption as low.<sup>1</sup> The findings are a reflection of the Afrobarometer report (2015) which states that 64% of citizens of Ghana believe corruption has increased in the country.<sup>2</sup> At the institutional level, respondents of the IEA survey rated the Ghana Police Service as the most corrupt institution in Ghana (28.6%). It was followed by magistrates and judges (18.4%), tax officials (14%), the office of the President (12.9%) and the Immigration Service (12.8%).<sup>3</sup> In similar surveys conducted by other Think Tanks and Afrobarometer, the Ghana Police Service was rated as the institution with the highest rate of corruption. Therefore, the findings of the IEA were unsurprising. Chene and Ayee classified the corruption at the Police service into three forms; Street level extortion and bribery, criminal corruption and bureaucratic corruption.<sup>4</sup> Street-level corruption is corrupt activities from the day-to-day interaction with the public, which created the perception of the Ghana Police Service as the most corrupt institution.<sup>5</sup> The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Corruption in Ghana, 2022 survey report shows that one out of four persons who had contact with public officials in the year 2021 paid a bribe or has been asked to pay a bribe but refused. The statistics indicate that the prevalence of bribery in Ghana in the same year was 26.7%.<sup>6</sup> The sight of such statistical data is spiteful for a developing nation beleaguered with a lack of basic human needs and amenities. The statistics become more malicious considering the fact that 71.3% of the Ghanaian population are Christians.

The phenomenon has led some Ghanaian citizens to question the measures taken by the Church in the nation's quest to overcome the menace of corruption. Major arguments by these group of citizens against the laidback posture of the church in the fight against corruption include the assertion that churches keep on springing in every corner of the country, yet, moral decadence seems to be on the surge; and the notion that majority of people engaged in corrupt acts are Christians and are members of various churches. Others also raised concerns about the silence of the church, the clergy and other Christian organisations (such as the Christian Council, the Catholic Bishops Conference, etc) in condemning the allegations of corruption against public officers and political officials, especially during the reign of the Akuffo Addo led government. Unpredictably, there have been various allegations of corruption against some members of the clergy in the country. The church which is expected to be an agent of morality is hauled into the muck of corruption in Ghana. These accusations against the Church raise the concern about what Christianity teaches its adherents on corruption.

It is therefore prudent to examine the teachings of Christianity on the theme of corruption. Hence, the present article examines the Biblical teachings on corruption and the response of the Ghanaian church to the canker, by investigating various scholarly views on the Biblical position on the menace. The response of the Ghanaian Church to the problem of corruption in the country was mined from communiqués of Christian organisations and opinions of prominent members of the clergy in the country. It begins with the Old and New Testament perspectives on corruption, the response of the Church, and proposed recommendations to guide the Church in its contribution to the fight against corruption.

### **Biblical Perspective of Corruption**

Christianity is underpinned by a cluster of beliefs drawn from Scripture and tradition. However, Christians universally accept the Bible as the fundamental source of morality. The Christian scriptures are regarded as an authority that reveals the moral positions of God. Therefore, for Christians to abide

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<sup>1</sup> Institute of Economic Affairs (Ghana) and Joseph Atsu Ayee, "The Roots of Corruption: The Ghanaian Enquiry Revisited" (2016), 39. Accessed from <http://www.ieagh.org/> on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Afrobarometer, "Ghana Headed in Wrong Direction- 82% of Citizens Say", accessed from <http://sankofafm.com/6853-2/> on 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Institute of Economic Affairs (Ghana) and Ayee, "The Roots of Corruption", 54.

<sup>4</sup> M. Chene, "Anti-Corruption and Police Reform", U4 Expert Answer Anti-Corruption Resource Center, accessed from [www.u4.no](http://www.u4.no) on 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2022; Joseph Atsu Ayee, "Reducing Police Corruption and Promoting Professionalism through Reforms", in Kempe Hope (ed.), *Police Corruption and Reforms in Africa* (London/New York: CRC Press, 2016)

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Atsu Ayee, "Reducing Police Corruption and Promoting Professionalism through Reforms", *South African Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 18, No. 3 67-384.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Corruption in Ghana: People's Experiences and Views (2022)", accessed from [https://www.unodc.org/documents/corruption/Publications/2022/GHANA\\_-\\_Corruption\\_survey\\_report\\_-\\_20.07.2022.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/corruption/Publications/2022/GHANA_-_Corruption_survey_report_-_20.07.2022.pdf) on 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2022.

by the command of God, it is important to know the precise claim of the scriptures on various moral issues for appropriate application by contemporary society. Considering the present phenomenon under study as a moral discourse, it is prudent to examine the Biblical view of corruption from the Old and New Testaments perspectives.

### **Old Testament (OT) Teachings on Corruption**

The OT traced the problem of corruption to the entrance of sin into the perfect world created by God (Gen. 3). Prior to the entry of corruption, all creation worked in impeccable harmony and according to the purported plan of God. The word ‘corruption’ was first mentioned in the description of life on Earth before the deluge during the era of Noah.

In the OT corruption is depicted by the word *mishchath* (מִשְׁחָת) which means moral depravity and disfigurement of the face. *Mishchath* (מִשְׁחָת) appeared twice in the OT – in Leviticus 22:25 which states “Nor from a foreigner's hand shall you offer any of these as the bread of your God, because their corruption is in them, and defects are in them. They shall not be accepted on your behalf” and also in Isaiah 52:14: “Just as many were astonished at you, so His visage was marred (corrupt) more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.” Aside from these texts, the OT does not directly deal with corruption in the context of the present discourse.

However, the words ‘bribery’ and extortion are regularly used in the OT to refer to corruption. In Exodus 23:8, Moses gave the instruction: “And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.” Deuteronomy 16:19 presents a similar context where bribery is regarded as a transgression against God, the innocent, the weak and the entire society. The word ‘bribery’ or ‘bribe’ has been used more than twenty-five times in the OT and various Hebrew words are used to refer to bribery.<sup>7</sup> For instance, *mattanah* derived from *natan* (meaning ‘to give’) which usually translates as “gift” has been exceptionally used in Proverbs 15:27 (“He who is greedy for unjust gain makes trouble for his household, but he who hates bribes will live”) and Ecclesiastes 7:7 (“Surely oppression makes the wise man foolish, and a bribe corrupts the mind”) in the context of bribe.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, *terumah* which usually means “various offerings designated for the officiating priest”<sup>9</sup> is translated in the context of bribe in Proverbs 29:4 (“The king establishes the land by justice, But he who receives bribes overthrows it”). According to Paul Hiebert and Francis Hiebert, *Shillum*, depicts the “concept of peace being restored through payment,”<sup>10</sup> and it is translated as ‘bribe’ in Micah 7:3 where it expresses the notion of peace between an official or judge and a rich man with whom a deal is struck.<sup>11</sup> The word *kopher* which is mostly translated as ‘ransom’ is also used for bribery in the OT. However, it is translated as ‘bribe’ in Amos 5:12 and 1 Samuel 12:3. *Kopher* is perceived to originate from the root meaning ‘hide’, ‘to cover’, ‘pacify’ and ‘cover over’. Thus the ancient Israelites perceived bribes as a way of ‘pacifying another.’<sup>12</sup>

Despite the words used in depicting bribery in the OT, the word *Shochad* is referenced as the primary Hebrew word for ‘bribe’. Though it is usually translated as ‘bribe’, it has been translated as either ‘reward, present or gift’ in few times (1 Kgs 15:19; 2Kgs 16:8; Prov. 6:35; and Isa. 45:13), but in all these texts the idea of bribery is rendered.<sup>13</sup> According to Alatas, the precise origin of the word seems unknown, yet the OT applied it twice in its verb form and twenty-one times in its noun form. In all instances of the OT, *shochad* is connoted with negativity, except in Proverbs 17:8 which emphasised the influence of bribes to obtain results without describing it as being good or bad. In all other texts, *shochad* is either directly or indirectly condemned or forbidden.<sup>14</sup> Since the OT persistently condemned or prohibited *shochad*, determining what constitutes a bribe and what was offered as a

<sup>7</sup> A. Hanke, “Bribery”, in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, (1975): 653.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce Nicholas, *Contextualization: A Theology of the Gospel and Culture* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVasty Press, 1979), 22.

<sup>9</sup> Syed H. Alatas, *The Problem of Corruption* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1986), 102.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Hiebert and Francis Hiebert, *Case Studies in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 133-135.

<sup>11</sup> Hiebert and Hiebert, *Case Studies in Missions*, 133-135.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1980), 120.

<sup>13</sup> Alatas, *The Problem of Corruption*, 122.

<sup>14</sup> Alatas, *The Problem of Corruption*, 122.

bribe among the ancient Jews could best be ascertained from the passages that used the word. However, only two texts specified what was offered as a bribe (1 Kgs. 15:18-20 and 2 Kgs 16:8). In both texts gold and silver were offered. The other texts did not state what was offered. However, since a bribe is a sort of gift which the receiver values, it may be in the form of money, possessions, service, or a favour done for the receiver.

### **What Consists Bribery in the OT**

- i. According to Tyson, bribery in the OT includes any gift offered to an administrator of justice which adversely influences the administration of justice (2 Chr. 19:7; Isa. 1:23; Mic. 3:11).<sup>15</sup> Deuteronomy 16:19 emphasised: “You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality; and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous.” The passage gives a clear description of the purpose of the payment of bribes. It also replicates what is meant by bribery in contemporary times.
- ii. Deuteronomy 10:17 (“For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who is not partial and takes no bribe”) indicates that bribery in some way could also consist of a gift an individual offers to God to get God to be partial to him/her.
- iii. Bribery also involves gifts given by a ruler to another ruler for the receiver of the gift to do something against a third party (1 Kgs. 15:18-20; 2 Kgs 16:8).
- iv. It further consists of a gift offered by an adulterer to the offended husband to appease his jealousy for the offence (Prov. 6:35).
- v. Isaiah 45:13 also describes a bribe as a gift offered to a ruler or person in authority to release captives.

In terms of extortion, the Hebrew word *mutz* which means extortioner, found in Isaiah 16:4 is considered as the first word that relates to extortion. Francis Brown contends that another Hebrew word that translates as extortion is *ashaq*. It literally means ‘to oppress’ or ‘extort’. It is also linked to trampling, crushing and burdening of those in lower positions or an act of abuse of power.<sup>16</sup> The OT explicitly identifies extortion as a sin (Lev. 6:2-4; Isa. 30:12-13). Israel was warned in stern terminology against extortion. Ezekiel 18:18 says: “As for his father, because he practised extortion, robbed his brother, and did what is not good among his people, behold, he shall die for his iniquity.” The text shows that extortion is not only a sin against persons extorted but also a sin against God.

### **New Testament (NT) Teaching on Corruption**

Similar to the teaching of the OT, the NT condemns the act of corruption by disapproving the act of bribery and extortion. The Greek word *diaphthora* (διαφθορά) is translated as ‘corruption’ in the NT. Διαφθορά is mentioned in Acts 2:27, 31; 13:34-37 and Galatians 6:8. However, in these scriptures *diaphthora* (διαφθορά) is used in the context of ‘decay’ or ‘ruin and most often used in the NT in reference to what happens to the flesh than institutional corruption (as used in Galatians 6:8: “for he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life”). It does not suggest that the NT is silent on institutional corruption. Just like the OT, the NT emphasises bribery and extortion when dealing with the issue of corruption.

Noonan argued that one significant challenge of the NT teaching of corruption is that authors of the Books in the NT for the most part were not having encounters with people in authority, hence, they had less to say about abuse of power than expected.<sup>17</sup> However, it does not take away the fact that Jesus’ view on corruption was in any way different from that of the OT. The first instance where the act of abuse of power was condemned in the NT could probably be John the Baptist’s criticism of Herod Antipas and his wife. An encounter which directly led to the death of John the Baptist (Matt.

<sup>15</sup> John Tyson, *Bribery in Ancient Israel* (Mason, OH: South Western Cengage Learning, 2019), 132.

<sup>16</sup> Francis Brown, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix Containing Biblical Aramaic*, with the Cooperation of S.R. Driver and Charles Briggs (Lafayette, Ind.: Associated Publishers and Authors Inc., 1978), 568.

<sup>17</sup> John Noonan, *Bribes* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1994), 66.

14:3-4; Mk. 6:17-18; Lk. 3:19-20). Although Antipas and Herodias' acts may not be related to financial corruption, their actions were connected to the corruption of power. John's criticism was said to be the fact that Antipas married his brother's wife. In the view of Noonan, Antipas's actions were not worse than the acts of Herod the Great who had many children with different women. Antipas and Philip (also known as Herod II) were two such children. Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus IV one of the sons of Herod the Great. It means Herodias was not only the wife of Antipas' brother, but she was also the daughter of another brother.<sup>18</sup> The power held by the family of Herod has undeniably corrupted their lifestyle with toxicity, which was not only criticised by John the Baptist.<sup>19</sup> The NT does not limit corruption to only financial gains but includes the abuse of power for other self-satisfaction. Additionally, John the Baptist condemned the act of extortion and admonished the tax collectors who approached him to desist from such an act. Luke 3:12-14 writes:

Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

John the Baptist's response was a brazen demonstration of God's repugnance to corruption in the NT. The first account of financial corruption (bribery) in the NT was the thirty pieces of silver Judas received to betray Jesus (Matt. 26:14-16; Mk. 14:10; Luke 22:3-5). Judas requested the bribe by asking the chief priests what they could offer in exchange for his assistance to help them arrest Jesus privately. A request that pleased the chief priests because Judas being a member of Jesus' disciples could choose the opportune time for Jesus to be arrested. The payment Judas received could be considered a variance bribe because it led to the breaking of a moral norm. That is, a friend must not betray an innocent friend for money. Luke 22:3 echoed that Judas' action was influenced by Satan. The involvement of Satan was a clear indication that the actions of Judas were wrong. Although the amount received by Judas was relatively minute, it resulted in a serious injustice. Upon realizing the calamity he had caused, he was filled with remorse, returned the bribe and hanged himself (Matt. 27:3-5).

Matthew 28:11-15 also reported another clear incidence of corruption (bribery) in the NT, which occurred when the soldiers assigned to guard the tomb of Jesus reported the event of His resurrection to the Jewish Chief priests. The elders and the chief priest offered money to the guards to give a false account of what occurred. In this instance, the givers of the bribe were top-ranked political and religious Jews and the receivers were low-ranked Roman soldiers who may be relatively poor. The agenda of this bribe was for the dissemination of false testimony to discredit the resurrection incident. It suggests that in the NT corruption could influence an individual or persons to give false testimonies, a phenomenon that could mislead society and also promote social injustice.

The Book of Acts also recorded an incidence of bribery during the period of the early church. Simon the sorcerer who practised magic in Samaria and bewitched the Samaritans with his magic arts as they thought he possessed the power of God (Acts 8:9-11). After he heard the preaching of Philip and saw the miracles performed by Philip, he accepted the Christian faith and got baptized (Acts 8:13). After Peter and John laid their hands and imparted the Holy Spirit on some of the Samaritan believers, he offered them money for the ability to also bestow the Holy Spirit on whomever he wished. Though Simon's action may not be breaking a norm, his offer of money to the Apostles could be classified as a variance bribe. He was wrong to offer money for something that could not be obtained with money. The Apostles rejected his offer and condemned his thoughts behind the offer. The Holy Spirit and His gifts could not be bought with money (Acts 8:20). Simon was admonished to repent of such wickedness (Acts 8:22). The chastisement of Simon by Peter was highly significant because the OT's condemnation of bribe primarily focused on the receiver. In this instance, it was the receiver who was condemning the giver. The phenomenon of people paying money to obtain power is a common

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<sup>18</sup> Noonan, *Bribes*, 76.

<sup>19</sup> Noonan, *Bribes*, 76.

situation in Ghana. In some cases, such people abuse power when they attain the position of authority they bought. Such an act is vehemently condemned by the NT.

Luke's narrative also recorded another corrupt circumstance involving the unjust judge denying justice to a widow. Noonan contends the unjust judge in the account postponed his function waiting for the widow to offer payment before hearing her case.<sup>20</sup> Though the judge was unjust and apparently did not receive an access payment, the widow was persistent. Her persistence paid off and justice was given to her as she desired. In the narrative there was no offer and acceptance of a bribe, however, the NT indicates that corruption could also lead to a delay in the administration of justice.

The perspective of the NT on corruption affirms the OT censure of corrupt activities. It shows the Bible generally frowns on the givers and receivers in the act of corruption and further illustrates that corruption could escalate from a minimal level to an immense level which could bring calamity to society, especially in the administration of justice.

### **The Response of the Ghanaian Church to Corruption**

The church as an institution was established to serve as the provider of solutions to various moral issues (including corruption) in society, Yet the Church in Ghana is not exempted from corruption and its effects. In the attempt to respond to the challenge of corruption in Ghana, the church expresses its displeasure through communiqués, public forums (discourse), resolutions, and sermons. The Chairman of the Church of Pentecost, Apostle Eric Kwabena Nyamekye charged the church to rise against corruption as he opines the church holds the solution to the canker. In his view, God knew men were corrupt and that was the reason Jesus projected Christians as the salt of the earth, therefore if one says an unbeliever is corrupt "you have not said anything because he's just being himself".<sup>21</sup> In such regard, Apostle Nyamekye considers unbelievers to be naturally corrupt. However, he sees it as a shame for the issue of corruption to be discussed in a country with more than 70% of its population being Christians. This phenomenon he believes could be caused by a lack of understanding of Christianity and Christians not being the real salt and light of the world.<sup>22</sup> He further mentioned that the church must rise and play its role in the bid of the government to eradicate corruption. The role of the church is pivotal because most politicians are members of the church.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, he recommended the need for the church to go back to righteousness, a measure he believed could heal the land (Ghana) from corruption, as the answer to corruption is in the hands of the church.<sup>24</sup>

Rev Prof. Emmanuel Martey (former moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana) shared his view on the issue of corruption and the church in Ghana. According to him, the culture of exchange of gifts rendered as appreciation for services has been wrongly inculcated in corporate institutions, a situation that has led to increasing corruption, a situation that he believes has become a messy scourge and only Ghanaians could clean such a mess.<sup>25</sup> In his opinion corruption is obstinate in Ghanaian society because of the "lack of prophetic voice coming from Christian churches and other religious organisations against the menace". He adds by emphasizing corruption as a major threat to the church and a setback to evangelism.<sup>26</sup> However, Rev. Martey explained that the Christian church since its inception has established practical measures for ethical behaviour in society. Yet the problem of corruption in Ghana keeps worsening despite more than 70% of the population being Christians. Rev. Martey ironically disclosed that though the menace of corruption has become a crisis to morality, most Christian leaders are unable to condemn and publicly speak against it, regardless of the fact it goes

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<sup>20</sup> Noonan, *Bribes*, 76.

<sup>21</sup> Apostle Eric Kwabena Nyamekye made these assertions on GTV's "What is Next", hosted by Dr. Kwabena Opuni Frimpong. Cited from, Ghanaweb, "The Church is the Solution to Corruption- COP Chairman" (4<sup>th</sup> March, 2020), accessed from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/The-church-is-the-solution-to-corruption-COP-chairman-885361> on 12th January, 2023.

<sup>22</sup> Ghanaweb, "The Church is the Solution to Corruption- COP Chairman."

<sup>23</sup> Ghanaweb, "The Church is the Solution to Corruption- COP Chairman."

<sup>24</sup> Ghanaweb, "The Church is the Solution to Corruption- COP Chairman."

<sup>25</sup> Christian Council of Ghana, "Institutional Corruption in Ghana: The Realities, Causes and Effects- Re. Prof. Martey", accessed from <http://www.christiancouncilofghana.org/NewsPages/institutional-corruption-in-ghana-the-realities-causes-and-effects-rev-prof-martey.php> on 2nd January, 2023.

<sup>26</sup> Christian Council of Ghana, "Institutional Corruption in Ghana."

contrary to the Word of God.<sup>27</sup> He further stated that Christian leaders cannot speak against corrupt political and government officials because they are not much different from themselves (the Christian leaders), hence, the church has lost its prophetic voices.<sup>28</sup> Rev. Martey enlisted various reasons for the prophetic silence of the church on the issue of corruption in Ghana. These include: Some leaders of the Church are afraid of insults, unwise acceptance of gifts, Church leaders seeking political access and influence, ethnic affiliation and clergies limiting their faith to only spiritual things and avoiding social issues.<sup>29</sup> Rev. Martey concluded by mentioning that the constitution of the country has not helped in the fight against corruption, neither the Ghanaian culture nor the church. Hence the country will remain in the grips and darkness of corruption and the society only needs the eyes of trust and dedication to see the mess and the will to arise from this muddled menace. Surprisingly, Rev. Martey who seemed vocal on issues of corruption during the Mahama-led government (2012-2016) has become silent during the Nana Akuffo Addo-led government. Some citizens accused him of being hypocritical and selective in his criticism. However, he emphasised he uses text messages among other channels to speak to people on matters of national interest.<sup>30</sup>

In a sermon, Archbishop Charles Agyin-Asare (General Overseer of Perez Chapel International) advocated for the government to initiate sound economic policies to fight against the prevalence of corruption in Ghana.<sup>31</sup> He further encouraged citizens to actively get involved in the anti-corruption fight. Archbishop Agyin-Asare admonished Christians in the country to make themselves available for God to use them as “ambassadors of truth and development for the country and not an embodiment of falsehood.”<sup>32</sup> He emphasised it is the only way Christians could lead the fight against corruption and the tendency to be corrupt.

Ps. Dr. Mensah Otobil (General Overseer of ICGC) has contended that the failure of the country to eradicate corruption is due to failure in the application of the law. He explained that the laws of the nation are too relaxed to win the fight against corruption. In his view, the government has a major role in ensuring that anti-corruption laws are enforced in various institutions and imposed as retributory measures to curb corruption.<sup>33</sup> Dr. Otobil however, did not indicate the role of the church in solving the problem of corruption. He made this assertion at a forum organised by IMANI Center for Policy and Education. Nonetheless, Rev. Emmanuel Barrigah (General Secretary of the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council) urged the clergy to use their pulpit to intensify the message against corruption and other social vices.<sup>34</sup> However, he criticised the government for not doing enough to prosecute persons found guilty of corruption, a situation he believes has motivated others to engage in the act of corruption. He suggested that eradicating corruption in Ghana demands the need for the clergy to speak to the hearts of the people, especially those in authority.<sup>35</sup>

The Ghana Catholic Bishops and the Christian Council of Ghana issued a joint communiqué on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2018, emphasising spirituality as the remedy to overcome corruption in the country. According to the communiqué, people despise the positive influence of the Gospel due to the intense corruption in a Christian community like Ghana and the menace discredits the Word of God. They

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<sup>27</sup> Christian Council of Ghana, “Institutional Corruption in Ghana.”

<sup>28</sup> Christian Council of Ghana, “Institutional Corruption in Ghana.”

<sup>29</sup> Christian Council of Ghana, “Institutional Corruption in Ghana.”

<sup>30</sup> Christian Council of Ghana, “Institutional Corruption in Ghana.”

<sup>31</sup> Peace FM Online, “Give Us Better Economic Policies, Agyin Asare to Akuffo-Addo”, accessed from <https://www.peacefmonline.com/pages/politics/politics/201612/300762.php?page=2&storyid=100&> on 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2023.

<sup>32</sup> Ghana News Agency, “Fight Against Corruption- WMCI”, accessed from <https://www.modernghana.com/news/142338/1/fight-against-corruption-wmci.html> on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2023.

<sup>33</sup> Ghana Web, “Ghana’s Laws Must Bite to Defeat Corruption- Otobil”, accessed from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Ghana-s-laws-must-bite-to-defeat-corruption-Otobil-334691> on 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2023.

<sup>34</sup> Atinka Online, “Use Your Pulpit to Preach Against Corruption- GPCC General Secretary to Preachers”, accessed from <https://www.atinkaonline.com/fm/use-your-pulpit-to-preach-against-corruption-gpcc-general-secretary-to-preachers/> on 10<sup>th</sup> January, 2023.

<sup>35</sup> Atinka Online, “Use Your Pulpit to Preach Against Corruption- GPCC General Secretary to Preachers.”

urged the Christian community to play the role of salt of the earth and light of the world.<sup>36</sup> The Ghana Catholic Bishops and the Christian Council of Ghana further mentioned that Christianity is losing its expectation as the salt of the earth and the light of the world in the country. They linked the situation to the selfish and corrupt practices of some Christians occupying leadership positions in the public and private sectors.<sup>37</sup> Christians were, therefore, implored to desist from such practices and serve God faithfully as they impact the lives of individuals outside Christendom.<sup>38</sup> The communiqué also encouraged citizens especially Christians to adhere to the character of hard work, honesty, contentment and patience as they engage in their day-to-day activities. It beseeched Christians to have faith in Jesus Christ alone as the provider of their needs, even in moments of difficulty which drives the tendency to engage in a corrupt act.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the joint communiqué highlights the need for believers especially those in authority to study the Christian scriptures and strengthen their prayer life to have an intimate relationship with God and live a life of selflessness.

The various responses from the church give the indication the church has accepted the assertion that corruption is prevalent in Ghana, a country with a majority of its population being Christians. In addition, the church has agreed to the fact that Christians are massively involved in various acts of corruption. The church associates the phenomenon with inadequate preaching or teaching on issues relating to corruption and greed. However, the church seems to mete out significant blame to the government, for its inability to establish policies to prevent and curtail corruption, a situation they believed had contributed to the intense corruption in the country. The church in Ghana has outlined various measures to be taken by the government to win the battle against corruption, which include initiating anti-corruption policies and prosecution of persons found guilty of corruption according to the laws of Ghana. Fascinatingly, the various responses by the clergy did not specify structured measures taken by their churches to prevent or curb the canker of corruption in the country aside from prayer and spirituality. It could suggest that Christian churches in Ghana may not have a physically structured road map to aid the country in attaining its anti-corruption agenda.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The phenomenon calls for a universal anti-corruption structure for all Christian denominations and organisations for the handling of issues and allegations of corruption among leaders and members of the Christian faith. Also, there is a need for the reassessment of how society and the Church perceive wealth. Questionable riches among members of the Church must be questioned.

## CONCLUSION

The teachings of the Bible on corruption are expected to frighten Christians who intend to engage in the act and also eliminate the menace from contemporary society, yet corruption persists and Ghana with more than 70% of its population being Christians and classified among the worse corrupt countries in the world. It projects the image that corruption has struck the moral foundation of the Ghanaian Church and the members grossly engaged in corrupt activities. This is an indication that the Christian church in Ghana is struggling to make a meaningful impact in a way that could purge corruption in the society. The paper has made a contribution in the discipline of Church and Society.

The phenomenon brings to bear various unanswered questions. Is the church in Ghana failing to fulfil its call of making disciples for Christ? Are the teachings and sermons of the church not yielding the expected results? Is the Christian church presenting the right Gospel to its adherents? Are Christians not frightened to disobey the divine command of God? Providing answers to these questions could serve as a road map to eliminate the massive corruption from the Ghanaian society.

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<sup>36</sup> Catholic Archdiocese of Accra, "2018 Joint Communiqué of Ghana Catholic Bishops and Christian Council of Ghana", accessed from [www.accracatholic.org/2018-joint-communique-of-ghana-catholic-bishops-and-christian-council-of-ghana/](http://www.accracatholic.org/2018-joint-communique-of-ghana-catholic-bishops-and-christian-council-of-ghana/) on 10<sup>th</sup> January, 2023.

<sup>37</sup> Catholic Archdiocese of Accra, "2018 Joint Communiqué of Ghana Catholic Bishops and Christian Council of Ghana."

<sup>38</sup> Catholic Archdiocese of Accra, "2018 Joint Communiqué of Ghana Catholic Bishops and Christian Council of Ghana."

<sup>39</sup> Catholic Archdiocese of Accra, "2018 Joint Communiqué of Ghana Catholic Bishops and Christian Council of Ghana."

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