

Religious Functionalism: An Influential Tool for Harnessing Corruption in Ghana



Pauleson A. Utsu¹ 

¹ Department of Philosophy, Spiritan University College Kumasi-Ghana.

ABSTRACT

One of the most influential and ever-expanding dimensions of almost every African society is religion. Every function political, legal, or economic, is intertwined with the ingredients of religion. In Ghana, it is socially, politically, and legally offensive to separate religion from communal exhibitions and, restrict it from individual performance. Amid the widely spread commitment to different religions by public officials, the reality of corruption alongside its destructive nature still infringes on the public administrative efficiency in Ghana. With regards to this submission, one question worth asking is, can religion, owing to its measurability, be operable in curbing corruption in a notoriously religious and corruption-spotted country like Ghana? In finding a response to this question, this paper argued that religious functionalism can be used as a practical tool in the fight against corruption in Ghana. Religious functionalism in its definitional postulation refers to activities that promote social integration, adhesive group formation, and social control that foster a moral framework that contributes to the development of a society. To achieve its objective and arrive at workable recommendations, the paper relied on library materials—drawing contents from the research papers relating to the subject matter. The paper recommended that in order to fight corruption in Ghana the functional dimensions of Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion should be emphasized. Specifically, the adherents of these religions owe a responsibility to their religious moral frameworks. If the Ghanaian society is ‘notoriously’ religious, it follows that religious functionalism is indispensable in the fight against corruption.

Keywords: Functionalism, Corruption, Religion, Development.

Correspondence

Pauleson A. Utsu

Email: pauleson92@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Ghana is “notoriously” religious, with every facet been permeated by religion, especially the two imported religions—Christianity and Islam. Almost every activity of the public sector is adorned with religious activities. An example can be said of the national declaration of fasting by President Nana Akufo-Addo to all religious adherents for God to intervene in the fight against the coronavirus, on the 25th of March 2020. This is to show how religious the country is, even in the face of a terrible pandemic. Despite the religiosity of the Ghanaian society, cases of corrupt practices have not left the doorsteps of the public offices. The reports of Transparency International indicate that, “Ghana’s corruption index stands at 78/180.” Even though practical measures have been put in place to tackle cases of corruption, the sting of corruption still swings within the periphery of the public offices.

It is presented by Index Mundi that 71.2% of Ghanaians are Christians, 11.4% Muslims, 5.2%

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Traditionalist, and 0.8% other religions and 5.2 no religion.¹ One point worth noting is that, the statistical presentation showed beyond any shadow of a doubt that there are about 88.6% religious adherents in Ghana, virtually all public sector offices in the country are occupied by them. Religious practices, in their functional dimension foster morally upright values that speak against championing corrupt practices and social vices. Accordingly, occupants of public sector offices are the practitioners of one of the above-mentioned religions, and their religious values are expected to be demonstrated.

The political independence of African States has suffered civil wars, inter-nations conflicts, state division and more profusely corrupt practices. In the search for factors of underdevelopment in the political, social, and economic arena of Ghana, corruption has not gone unlisted among the prima factors.

The reports of Transparency International indicate that, “Ghana’s corruption index stands at 78/180.”² While the yardsticks for measurement remains questionable, however, it implies that Ghana ranks 78 out of 180 countries on the 2018 global corruption index. Even though there are claims of improvement from previous figures, the traces of corruption still swag within the public and private sectors.

Kwame Gyekye refers to public sector corruption as being synonymous with “political corruption”. He defined “political corruption as the illegal, unethical, and unauthorized exploitation of one’s political or official position for personal gain or advantage”.³ Furthermore, he is of the view that the term ‘*political*’ in terms of ‘political corruption’ signifies corruption in official, public or governmental establishments.⁴ This is why greater attention will be given to the public or government sector than the private sector in this paper.

In a country where religion is widely spread, the functional dimensions of religion can be emphasised to fight against corruption and corrupt practices. In this paper, religious functionalism would refer to all morally upright values that speak against corrupt practices and social vices. It would also refer to other activities that promote social integration, adhesive group formation and social control that foster a moral framework that contributes to the development of a society.

The objective of this article is to emphasize the effectiveness of religious functionalism as an effective tool in curbing corruption in Ghana. The first part of the paper will offer a description of corruption and highlight some activities that promote corruption in Ghana. The second part presents the role of religious functionalism in ensuring fewer corrupt activities in the public sectors of Ghana.

Descriptive consideration of corruption

According to Osei-Tutu, Badu and Owusu–Manu, corruption is described as one of the challenging hindrances and obstacles to economic and social progress in less developed countries.⁵ The reality of this phenomenon is widespread in less developed countries often with feeble democratic organizations; bureaucratic red tape and puny legislative and judicial systems.⁶ For better comprehension, it proves worthy to take into consideration the etymological form of corruption.

In Latin the word *corrumpere* means to mar, to bribe, destroy, spoil or damage. These words best describe the consequences of corruption and not its definition. This is because the behavioural pattern of corruption makes it difficult to define, preferably, it is easier and better described. The easiest way to explain the reality of corruption in any society or system is perhaps to study and analyse the degrees of manifestation and recurrences. According to the World Bank,⁷ corruption refers to private wealth seeking behaviour by officials representing the state and the public authority whilst in the private sector, corruption is prevalent in situations in which people in positions of trust have a monopoly to use their discretion in executing their roles with less accountability to their superiors or stakeholders to the extent of abusing the monopoly for their

¹ Index Mundi. “Ghana Religions”, (2018, 01, 25). Accessed 10 13, 2020, <https://www.indexmundi.com/ghana/religions.html>

² Moses A.K. Gyasi, “Transparency International” 03/06/2018. Accessed on May 20,2020, www.transparency.org

³ Kwame Gyekye, *Modernity and Traditions :Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 193.

⁴ Gyekye. *Modernity and Traditions :Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, 192.

⁵ E. Osei-Tutu, E. Badu & D. Owusu-Manu. “Exploring Corruption Practices In Public Procurement Of Infrastructural Projects In Ghana.”*International Journal of Management project in Business* 2 (3), (2010): 236-256, accessed 06 23, 2020, <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/17538371011036563/full/html>

⁶ U. Myint. “Corruption: Causes, Consequences And Cures.” *Asia-Pacific Development Journal* 7 (2), (200): 33-57, accessed 06,26, 2020, <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/apdj-7-2-2-Myint.pdf>.

⁷ World Bank. “Helping Countries Combat Corruption: The Role of the World” 2019. . Accessed 06,20, 2020. <http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/anticorrupt/corruptn/corrptn>.

private gains.⁸

Corruption in Ghana

Corruption in Ghana is deemed to be an endemic problem which pervades all spheres and sectors of the economy particularly the Police Service (92%), the political parties (76%), the Judiciary (71%), and the public officials and civil service (59%).⁹ In Ghana as in other developing African Countries, several factors account for the prevalence of corruption. Some of the causes in Ghana are:

A) *Lack of trust in public offices and political systems*

Mistrust breeds corruption especially at the lower levels since the exhibition of unethical acts by top bureaucratic and political elites has a rippling effect on subordinates and civic behavior.¹⁰ It feeds individual participation in corruption. This point is also advanced in another level that the lack of confidence in government actually favours corruption insofar as it transforms citizens into clients and bribers who look for private protection to gain access to decision-makers.¹¹

B) *Low salaries and lack of incentives mechanisms*

In a survey conducted by the Centre for Democratic Governance (CDG) in 2000, corruption in Ghana was connected to the low income earned by salaried workers and the deficiency of effective incentives mechanisms. Gyekye supports this by asserting:

...the poor economic circumstances of a country may be noted as a causal factor in the incidence of political corruption. Such economic circumstances may lead to inflation and the erosion of salaries and may in turn depress the material or financial circumstances of public officials (as well as), making it impossible to make ends meet and ordinary life bearable.¹²

Conversely, Foltz and Opoku-Agyemang disagreed by saying that low salaries and incentives cannot be a factor leading to corruption. They cited an example of the increment of the police officers' salaries in the year 2010 based on the Single Spine Pay Policy, (SSPP) which did not lessen petty corruption by the police officers on the roads.¹³

C) *Political party financing*

In most circumstances, access to state resources and policy making-process made available to the ruling party may create a fertile ground for party corruption. The opposition parties usually opine that the state resources are used to finance the activities of the ruling party. This is particularly prevalent where legislation does not limit party financing and policymaking. Joseph Ayee supported this claim when he said,

In Ghana, the political parties Act, (Act 574, 2000) leaves political party financing completely unregulated with the exception of banning non-citizens, foreign donations, in cash or in-kind, to parties; regulating private and corporate funding of political parties and campaigns is very weak and therefore a key opportunity for corruption.¹⁴

What promotes corruption In Ghana?

While corruption swings within the peripheries of political and social systems, there are other agents or human activities that promote corruption in Ghana that are worth considering. Some of them are a) *partisan politics*:

⁸ I. Amundsen, "Political corruption: An introduction to the issues." *Michelsen Institute Development Studies and Human Rights* 34,(1999) Accessed 06/03/2020, www.cmi.com.

⁹ Lionel Osse and Newton Norviewu. 'Ghanaians perceive increase in corruption level, give government low marks on fighting graft', *Afrobarometer Dispatch*, 333 (2019). Accessed: 05,08,2020. https://media.africaportal.org/documents/ab_r8_dispatchno333_ghanaians_see_increasing_corruption_give_govt_poor_marks.pdf.

¹⁰ Stephen D. Morris & Joseph L. Klesner. *Corruption and Trust: Theoretical Considerations and Evidence From Mexico*, *Comparative Political Studies* 10, (43), (2010). Accessed 05 23, 2020. [cps.sagepub.com/content/43/10/1258.refs.html](https://www.cps.sagepub.com/content/43/10/1258.refs.html).

¹¹ Susan J. Pharr & Robert D. Putnam. *Disaffected Democracies: What's troubling the trilateral countries?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

¹² Kwame Gyekye, *Philosophy, Culture and Vision: African Perspectives* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2013), 89.

¹³ J.D. Foltz & K.A. Opoku-Agyemang. *Do Higher Salaries Lower Petty Corruption? A Policy Experiment On West Africa's Highways*. International Growth Centre.(IGC) (London, 2015), 49. Accessed on: 08/10/2020 www.gov.uk/research-for-development-outputs/do-higher-salaries-lower-petty-corruption-a-policy-experiment-on-west-africa-s-highways

¹⁴ Joseph A.R. Ayee. *The Roots Of Corruption: The Ghanaian Enquiry Revisited*. (Cape Coast: The Institute of Economic Affairs in Ghana, 2016) 27.

political leaders are not willing to combat the phenomenon of corruption because of the involvement of their party members in corruption. One of the most prominent manifestations of corruption is the exploitation of the position of some figures such as ministers, Members of Parliament and consultants for concessions, most notably those related to infrastructural projects and commercial companies that are authorised to import materials of large consumption or to be able to obtain commissions in exchange for facilitating access to these benefits. In Ghana, one may say, the government wastes public money through tax exemptions for individuals or companies in order to appease some party members or to achieve mutual interests or for bribes, which deprives the state treasury of financial resources that should be used to solve many other problems. *b) income inequality*: the increase in inequality between the rich class and the poor, create a forum for the rich class to use buttonhole or bribery to effect law-executing processes and to buy favourable interpretations of the law. More so, the rich class is likely to use corruption as an acceptable way of preserving their social positions. *c) poor monitoring in the public sector*: many projects have been completed by some contractors that ended up not serving their intended purposes. The road from Ejisu town to Abankoro in the Ejisu Municipality of the Ashanti Region is one of such projects. It was constructed in 2017 but did not last for a year. This is one example of projects that were poorly implemented, yet, went unchecked.

Defining Religion

Religion, in its etymological affiliation from Latin origins such as *Ligare* means to bind, *Relegere* means to unite, *Religio* means a relationship.¹⁵ Hence, religion can be seen as an established relationship between two persons; humans and their object of worship. This object of worship varies from person to person and from society to society.

Religion is one of the most influential dimensions of most people. Most emotions, feelings, thoughts and actions are guided or controlled by religious beliefs, values, principles and dogmas. In Ghana, it is difficult to separate religion from Ghanaian societal beliefs and practices.

Religion means different things to different people. This implicitly suggests that, there are different perspectives concerning religion. In order to bring out the functional dimensions of religion, the functionalist view on religion will be discussed from a sociological perspective. It's worth noting that it is based on the functionalist perspective on religion that the utilisation of religion as a tool for curbing corruption in Ghana will draw its inspirations.

Sociological look on Religion

A sociological consideration of religion depends on several theoretical postulations. There is the conflict theory which views religion as a tool of mass manipulation and exploitation. One of the pioneers of this theory is Karl Marx. He champions the popular ideation "religion is the opium of the masses". Another contemporary pioneer is Christopher Hitchens who said: "religion is the "placebo" of the masses".¹⁶ While these pioneers propounded the negative aspect of religion on one spectrum, on the other spectrum lies the functionalist theory. Functionalists argue that religion serves enormous functions in the society. Religion depends on society for its existence, value, and significance, and vice versa. Inferring this perspective, religious functionalism serves several purposes, like; offering answers to spiritual mysteries, providing emotional comfort, and creating a place for social interaction, social control,¹⁷ and adhesive groups formation. Emile Durkheim is seen as one of the proponents of this theory. In his two pennyworths, he writes, "a religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden-beliefs and practices which unite in one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them."¹⁸

Accordingly, the three fundamental elements to every religion are; sacred objects, a set of beliefs and practices, and the existence of a moral community. Of these three elements, perhaps the most important would be the notion of the sacred, which is the focal point around which religions revolve.¹⁹ Durkheim also stated that religion is the most fundamental social institution, with almost all other social institutions, at some point

¹⁵ Joseph Omoreghbe, *A Philosophical Look At Religion*. (Lagos: Joja Press, 1993). 12.

¹⁶ Christopher Hitchens. *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. (New York: Twelve Hachette Book Group, 2009), 18.

¹⁷ Sociology, Lumen. *Lumen Learning*, 2010. Accessed 06/28/ 2021. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com>

¹⁸ Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Trans. by Karen Fields. (New York: Free Press, 1995), 11.

¹⁹ Paul Carls. Émile Durkheim (1858—1917), *IEP*. 7 (3), (2006). Accessed on: 08,26,2020, <https://iep.utm.edu/durkheim/>

in human history, being born from it. More so, the force of religion has influenced societal change, especially in the aspect of moral values.

In the light of the functionalist postulation of religion, few aspects of religious functionalism can be drawn out:

Social control: one major function of religion is its ability to control societal affairs, thereby defining the moral framework that its practitioners supposedly follow. Ethical and moral beliefs guide and influence the behaviour and conduct of the general society. The fear of eternal damnation and sanctioning sometimes compels people to submit to the dictates of religion.

An integrating force: According to Durkheim, religion offers the solidification and preservation of society through cohesive and unifying rituals or worship. One basic factor for this postulation is that, how can human societies of diverse people and cultures be held together? This is why he regards religion as one of the strongest forces capable of binding peoples, groups and societies together irrespective of their differences.²⁰ For instance, in Ghana, Catholics are united in their Eucharistic activities, Muslims in their prayers during Fridays likewise the traditionalists during the ritual performance at the shrines.

Harnessing Corruption Through Religious Functionalism

The fight against corruption has been attempted by different people using different approaches. There have been global awareness and progress in attempts to eliminate corruption, however, it is an ongoing problem.²¹ Recognizing the widespread nature of the problem and its impacts on the Ghanaian society, measures to combat and alleviate the problem have also emerged over the years. Some strategies have been put in place by the National Anti-Corruption Action Plan (NACAP). There is no doubt that these strategies and other international anti-corruption bodies have in some ways helped in dealing with the challenges of corruption. As earlier stated, religion is one of the most influential dimensions of the Ghanaian society. If this is the case, religious functionalism should be used in harnessing corrupt practices in Ghana.

The Role of the Church in Curbing Corruption.

In the fight against corruption, the Christian church in Ghana is an effective tool. The centre of faith and ethical conduct is based on the biblical teachings of the Christian church. Examples can be cited of scriptural texts that profusely condemn the act of corruption. The word “Bribery” in the Old Testament refers to corruption.²² Moses said to the people “Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe makes people blind to what is right and ruins the cause of those who are innocent” (Exodus 23,8). (Ex 23,8). In the book of Proverbs 15:27, Solomon said, “those who are greedy for unjust gain make trouble for their household, but those who hate bribes will live.” Christian adherents are therefore expected to eschew corrupt activities. Christians who participate actively in societal transformation, do so at the individual level by their exemplary lifestyles or at the public level by blowing the whistle.

In harnessing corruption in Ghana, religious leaders play a key role. Tove Degnbol,²³ submitted that “religious leaders have the influence and moral authority to conscientize the public from participating in corrupt actions.” Degnbol further posits that religious leaders are very much respected by the public, hence their impact in harnessing corruption will help accomplish the task of reducing corruption. Therefore, religious leaders’ involvement in the combat against corruption would be an effective tool. More so, support should be given to “religious leaders to educate the general public on the damage caused by paying bribes, taking bribes, and to emphasize the essence of reporting corrupt actions.”²⁴ In relation to the submission of Degnbol, engaging religious leaders will yield an efficacious attitudinal change among their members. Since religious leaders have a position of communicating the messages against corruption in the right direction to their congregants or adherents.

²⁰ Carls. Émile Durkheim (1858—1917).

²¹ M.P. Theron & G.A. Lotter, “Corruption: How should Christian Respond ?” *Acta Theologica* 32(1), (2012): 96-117
doi: [10.4314/actat.v32i1.6](https://doi.org/10.4314/actat.v32i1.6)

²² Theron & Lotter, *Corruption: How should Christian Respond*, 116

²³ Tove Degnbol. “Religious leaders have the mandate to stop corruption, *Ghana Integrity Initiative*, 2018, 10,03. Accessed on: 18/06/2020, <https://www.tighana.org/media/news/gii-in-the-media/religious-leaders-have-the-mandate-to-stop-corruption-danish-ambassador/>

²⁴ Degnbol. *Religious leaders have the mandate to stop corruption.*

The youth in the Christian Churches are not left out in curbing corruption in Ghana. Therefore, the church has the responsibility of encouraging the youth of the church to shun corruption in all parts of their societal disposition. And to conscientize them with sound moral values and produce future leaders who would not siphon national reserves and deprive the ordinary Ghanaian of their basic needs.²⁵

The mainstream churches in Ghana have contributed to the development of the country through education. As a result of this, there are standard schools run by the churches. In Ghana, one can talk of Methodist, Catholic, Anglican Schools and others. Apart from educating their students with religious and scientific knowledge, the churches should emphasize and treat corruption as a major topic in moral related subjects. This will create awareness in the students from the cradle about the effects of corruption and corrupt practices in Ghana.

The Role of Islam in Fighting Corruption.

The Qur'an explicitly refutes corruption. The case of bribing the Judges of the Ghanaian Judicial Service for instance is rebprobated in the Qur'an. (Qu'ran 2,189; 5,9). The traditional practices stated a clear-cut distinction between gifts (*hiba, hadiya*) and bribes (*raswa*).²⁶ "Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of the evil deeds which men's hands have done" (30/42). "But seek with what Allah has given you the Home of Hereafter; and not neglect your share of this world, and do good as Allah has done good to you, and do not seek corruption on earth. Allah does not love those who do mischief" (28/78). The quotations from the Qur'an show that corruption is condemned as a severe threat to proper social, economic, and ecological balance. Muhammed Arafa, has stated that one strategic apparatus that the Islamic religion can use to eradicate corruption in Ghana to the barest minimum requires education.²⁷

I. Zafar & K.L.Mervyn have also stated that "moral conduct is an expression of societal values and notions of social justice."²⁸ This supposes that, the genesis of curbing corruption rests in reforming social values, and basing them on appropriate perceptions of social justice, and associating them with a broader worldview. This is the foundation of the Islamic moral education program."²⁹ This suggests that searching and making faith solid can not only be done by worship and reflection but also by other rational actions that are undertaken in life. In more practical terms, Islamic education should aim at instilling in believers the kind of knowledge that accentuates principles and values that are capable of promoting justice, transparency and accountability. Muslims at all levels of their societal deposition should be conscientious about the repercussion of corruption.

The Role of The Traditional Religion in Fighting Corruption

Before the arrival of the two foreign religions (Christianity and Islam) in Ghana, African Traditional religion was a major religion that played an important role in the lives of most indigenous Ghanaians. The norms and conventional code of conduct were intertwined with religious beliefs. When John S. Mbiti, proclaim Africans as notoriously religious, it refers to how the phenomenon of religion (Africa Religion) is so inextricably bound up with the lives and practices of Africans.³⁰

In contemporary Ghanaian society, African Traditional Religion still plays a vital role in the lives of most Ghanaians, especially those in the public sector. According to Leonard C. Ilechukwu, "our people practice Christian religion, yet they are more intimate and more acquainted with the practices of African Traditional Religion."³¹ This could be due to the profound commitment to African religion. It is worth noting that it is most times difficult to separate customary practices from religious beliefs and practices as in the case

²⁵ Daniel Y. Sarfo, 'Fight Menace Of Corruption'. (2018, 08 04). Accessed on: 07/27/2021 ghananewsagency.org

²⁶ Christoph Stckelberger, "Continue Fighting Corruption: Experiences And Tasks Of Churches And Development Agencies", *Etico*, 2003, 02,06. Accessed on: 08/13/2020, <https://etico.iiep.unesco.org/en/resource/continue-fighting-corruption-experiences-and-tasks-churches-and-development-agencies>

²⁷ Muhammed A. Arafa. *Digital Common Laws*, 2012, 02 04. Accessed on: 08/08/2020, [Http://www.digitalcommons.laws.egg.edu/annlsurvey](http://www.digitalcommons.laws.egg.edu/annlsurvey)

²⁸ I. Zafar & K.L. Mervyn. "Governance and corruption: can islamic societies and the west learn from each other?" *America Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* , 19(2), (2002): 12-13.

²⁹ Zafar & Mervyn. "Governance and corruption: can islamic societies and the west learn from each other?"

³⁰ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy* (Nairobi, East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 1969)

³¹ Leonard C. Ilechukwu, 'Adoption of African Traditional Religious Practices in combating Corruption in Nigerian Education System.' *Journal of Education and Practice* 5(5), (2014): 99-100.

of Christianity and Islam. In like manner, there is no offense when religious Africans knit their traditional beliefs and religious beliefs with other religions.

In practical parlance, most of the people who practice the Christian religion fear deities, gods, idols and respect them more than Christ. They most times perceive Christ and God so merciful, and slow in giving answers to their intentions or requests. On the other hand, deities are seen to be merciless, render instant justice to offenders and offer answers to prayers. More so, when land disputes occur in a community, most people use the deities to settle the dispute through oath-taking in the name of a popular deity. Some people keep the insignia, wand or object of a deity in their houses, farmlands, economic trees, cars, farm animals, etc in order to protect them from thieves and vandals. In cases of the ceremonies of enstooling a chief, title-taking rituals and libation are often performed. It is believed that if people act against the customs by being involved in any form of bribery, the gods will mete out the necessary punishments. It is evident that moral practices grounded in the traditional religion, foster good conduct and appropriate behaviors. Hence, it is in favor of this background that the role of the traditional religious practice will be effective in the fight against corruption in Ghana.

Redacting from the recommendations given by Ilechukwu, the following traditional practices should be fostered and carried out by all religious traditional adherents in combating corruption:

1. The money and property meant for the government should be put under the custodian of a powerful and fearful deity.
2. Swearing of an oath of office should involve a wand or any object of a powerful deity.
3. Workers in all public sectors after employment should take an oath in the shrine of a powerful deity that they should not involve themselves in any malpractice.
4. Security personnel should swear an oath before employment, to a deity that they will not aid and abate clients and services that are engaged in any form of illegality.

A Critical Evaluation

Is religion a mere formality of affairs which requires no imperative motive to ensure the realization of authenticity and truth? What is the use of religion if it cannot be used to resolve or manage most societal problems? For what sake do people subscribe or profess to religion? To what extent do the values of religion affect the actions of practitioners in Ghana. Some of these basic questions continue to linger in the minds of many who see people parade themselves during religious activities or occasions yet the menial obligations that are expected of them are left unattended. Religion unreservedly is a moral imperative whose teachings are supposed to be guiding principles for the cultural, socio-political and the entire life of believers. The proclamation of Africans as religious is as a result of their commitment to their religious beliefs and practices. In like manner, Ghanaians who practice Christianity, Islam or African Traditional Religion are expected to demonstrate religious morality in their various public duties and responsibilities.

The problem of corruption is first, a moral defect of the moral agents, and secondly, a conscious act performed by the moral agent. Hence, the resolution of this defect requires a conscious internalization of values that promotes integrity and transparency. These values are deeply rooted in practicing religions in Ghana.

In this view, Gyekye asserted that, the fight against corruption requires a commitment to moral revolution. The kind of revolution which demands positive attitudinal changes and responses of individuals towards certain norms, values, and principles in the society. It involves the adoption of new attitudinal or orientational paradigms with respect to the existing morals. It also involves making a new and positive commitment to known and accepted moral rules and principles; because corruption is invariably the result of the public official to carry out the moral rules of which he is certainly aware.³² In the light of Gyekye's assertion, the fight against corruption demands making a new positive commitment to 'accepted rules and principles'. If this is the case, it follows that the accepted moral principles or teachings against bribery and corrupt practices stated by Christian, Islamic and Traditional religions should be promoted by all adherents in all public offices in order to curb the malaise of corruption in Ghana.

³² Gyekye, *Modernity and Traditions :Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, 196.

CONCLUSION

Despite the criticisms labelled against religion as a tool of social exploitation, this paper intended to bring to light the functional aspects of religions to be considered as tools to harness corruption in Ghana. The paper emphasized the utilization of religious values from Christian, Islamic and African Religions as the solution to the longstanding societal problem called corruption. To establish a foundation for this postulation, a descriptive consideration of corruption was made, the promoters of corruption were also observed. The functionalist view on religion was discussed, drawing reference from Emile Durkheim's perspective on religious functionalism. It was established that religion is one of the most influential dimensions of a society and the Ghanaian society is no exception. Accordingly, the roles of Christian, Islamic and African Religions in harnessing corruption were discussed and it was further established that Religion remains a vital force in the lives and affairs of Ghanaians. Since this is the case, it is high time for religious practitioners in all public offices to showcase their religious moral principles in the fight against corruption in Ghana.

ABOUT AUTHOR

Pauleson A. Utsu is a graduate student of Philosophy from Spiritan University which is affiliated to Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Ghana. He owns a BA in Philosophy and Social Sciences, and Religious Studies. He has published a book on 'Africa's Underdevelopment: whom to Blame,' and other research papers. His research interests are: African Studies, Development, and Philosophy of Religion.

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