

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONSCIENCE AND THE COMMON GOOD IN SURMOUNTING CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

John Musa Aikoye Ph.D

St. Peters Catholic Church

Emododa, Ofu L.G.A., Kogi State

fraikoye@yahoo.com

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.15971.99366

&

Ebeh, John Igbogo Ph.D

Dept. of Philosophy,

Kogi State University Anyigba

ebenh.ji@ksu.edu.ng; ebenh4u@gmail.com

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.15971.99366

Abstract

The paper examines the significance of conscience and common good in surmounting the challenges of corruption in Nigeria. It begins by bringing out the central factor affecting the development of Nigeria as being the problem of corruption and how it has permeated the fabric of Nigerian society and its systems. It goes further to state that this endemic problem seems to have become second nature to the Nigerian society and seems to have killed the conscience of the average Nigerian. It goes further to argue that the only antidote to Nigerian development is the elimination of corruption which is more of a cancerous infection in Nigeria. The paper holds that Nigerians can only overcome the challenges of corruption through the formation of good conscience which in turn precipitates embracing of the principle of common good that enables Nigerians to view goods in Nigeria as common good. It is the thrust of this paper that it is in and through this process that Nigeria can achieve meaningful social and economic development. The paper is analytical in nature and discussed as follows: introduction, effect of corruption, attempts towards curbing corruption, conscience and the common good foundation, evaluation and conclusion.

Keywords: Conscience, Common Good, Corruption, Nigeria

Introduction

Chinua Achebe stated that “The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership ... The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the challenges of responsibility and of personal example which are the hallmark of true leadership.”¹ Several years have passed since Achebe made this claim and Nigeria is still considered by International standards as an underdeveloped nation.¹ Why?

¹ An example of one of such International standards has to do with human rights

Achebe acknowledged that "Nigeria has many thoughtful men and women of conscience, a large number of talented people."² If this is the case, why should leadership be a problem? There should be something fundamentally wrong that is affecting leadership. Nigeria is a very rich nation as it is one of the six largest oil producing nations in the world. Why is the country regarded as underdeveloped?

This article aims at pointing out and examining how "endemic corruption" is the crux of the matter. Musicians sing about it, many authors have written about it, religious bodies and organisations have prayed and spoken about it, the mass media report it, yet it increases daily. Different military and civilian governments have tried to stop it, their efforts proved abortive.

Corruption is a moral problem that is deep in the bone marrow of many Nigerians. The task here is to present to my readers how "Conscience and the Principle of the Common Good" will enable Nigeria to overcome corruption. We shall examine some effects of corruption in Nigeria and articulate what have been done so far to stop it. This article shall consider how proper formation of conscience will be beneficial to us in overcoming corruption. We will consider "education for all" as the relevant common good for overcoming the bane of corruption in Nigeria. And then conclude with a remark on the fundamental reason why we all need to relate well with people, the environment, God and our self as necessary reason for a corrupt free society.

The Effects of Corruption

"Corruption is a cause of great concern today, in that it is also connected to drug-trafficking, to money-laundering, to the illegal trade of arms, and to other forms of criminality".³ This explains why its impact is great in Nigeria.

In this era of globalisation, where communication and interdependence have become indispensable, whatever affects one nation affects the other; whatever happens in one community, region and continent affects the other. The impact of corruption has taken a toll on Nigeria as a nation, in Africa and the World at large. Nigerians are stigmatised globally even when they have not engaged in any corrupt practices but because the name of the country is synonymous with corruption.

Human relationships are destroyed by corruption nationally and internationally. In the country No one is sure of what is in the mind of the

² Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria*.1

³ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, "The Fight against Corruption," n. 5.

other person. The popular scam called “419” has strained relationship between people in Nigeria and globally as it has become a way of life. Truth, integrity and honesty seem to have been lost at all levels. Forging of documents and fake passports makes everyone a potential liar or scammer at Embassies or Airports. Social life has been bastardised. On the streets, in the market places and at other social grounds, thoughts of corruption bedevils daily activities to the extent that children now grow with corruption as a norm of life in Nigeria, since it is culturally regarded as “Nigerian factor”. Internationally, Nigerians do not enjoy good relationships as many are denied visas because the country’s reputation is destroyed by corruption.

Moral or ethical values are now lost. The sense of shame is lost and sin is no longer in the people’s vocabulary due to habitual corruption. When people are caught and charged for corrupt practices and it is published by the Media, one does not see any sense of remorse from those involved. There are no apologies, and moreover, they will not resign from office, until they are forced out. What one hears sometimes is even shocking. For example, relatives and friends would say, “is he or she the only one involved, why disturbing them?” There is a seeming failure to realise that the fact that others are committing anomalies does not make it a moral principle to be followed. Corruption has killed people’s conscience. Many are unable to distinguish between what is right and wrong. This is why conscience formation is highly necessary today.

On the economic front, Nigeria is one of the richest oil producing nations in the world yet it remains one of the poorest and most undeveloped nations of the world. The discovery of crude oil in the nation, instead of being a blessing, some conclude it is a curse. All attention is turned into the oil sector, such that corruption, kidnapping and terrorism are the order of the day in the oil region and many parts of the country. Nwankwo says “poverty stalks the land as a result of the unprecedented (thievery) and brigandage perpetrated by bandit leaders and their accomplices”.⁴ Here, the importance of the common good is most desired. The reason is that poverty leads to evils such as prostitution; child and women trafficking, armed robbery and drug trafficking. Above all, there is a rise in killer diseases, like Malaria and the spread of HIV/AIDS instead of being curbed, it is on the increase.

More so, corruption does not encourage foreign investors into the country. Similarly, local investors relocate to other places due to lack of transparency and the uncertainty of electricity. Unemployment is the direct consequence of the continued increase of corruption.

⁴ Nwankwo, *Nigeria: The Stolen Billions*, 143.

Politically, serious injustice is perpetrated daily in Nigeria because of corruption. St. Augustine remarked in the *City of God*, "Remove justice, and what are kingdoms but gangs of criminals on a large scale?"⁵ Pope Benedict XVI declared that, "Justice is both the aim and the intrinsic criterion of all politics. Politics is more than a mere mechanism for defining the rules of public life: its origin and its goals are found in justice who by its very nature has to do with ethics".⁶ Electoral injustice and corrupt practices have caused great harm in Nigeria; many of the elections are rigged and peoples mandate denied. Many of the law makers are occupying their seats through electoral fraud. Tribunals delay judgments unnecessarily, which confirms idiomatically, that "justice delayed is justice denied". The judiciary has failed woefully in Nigeria. According to Rose-Ackerman:

When the Judiciary is part of the corrupt system, the wealthy and the corrupt operate with impunity, confident that a well-placed pay off will deal with any legal problems. An honest and well-respected judiciary has a special role to play in resisting corrupt governments and maintaining the rule of law.⁷

The legal system has collapsed totally, there is no honest and respectable judiciary, equality, freedom and human rights which are forms of social conditions for people to participate in the common good are not guaranteed, also, human dignity and solidarity are not achieved. Corruption has maimed the political structure and the will power for people to reach their perfection no longer exists. Corruption has deadened the Leadership structure in Nigeria. There is no vision any longer and where there is no vision, people die. There is oppression and marginalisation all over. The poor, women and children, pensioners, experience oppression daily. The police intimidate and extort money from people in broad day light and nothing is done.

Almost all of government offices are occupied by hungry politicians who do nothing but to steal public money and run down the system. Perhaps the worst effect of corruption is the educational system which is dead. Schools and many of the learning institutions lack the teaching facilities. There are no enabling environments for people to learn. This has increased the level of illiteracy in the country. This is crucial since many are excluded from receiving proper education. The common good is not achieved in this area.

⁵ Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 45.

⁶ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est*, (Dublin: Veritas, 2006), n. 28.

⁷ Rose-Ackerman, *Corruption and Government: Causes, Consequences, and Reform*, 151.

The Health sector has decayed, such that no good can come out of it, because access to drugs is zero and even when available, it is either fake or expired. Consequently, poor health and low life expectancy is what is experienced by a lot of people. These are what we reap from a corrupt political system. The Corona Virus pandemic has X-rayed perfectly our health sector.

The impact of corruption is huge on religion in Nigeria. Religion, which is supposed to promote faith is highly commercialised in Nigeria due to corruption. Religion has become a business venture for money mongers. There are lots of reports about both real and fake pastors duping their congregation and running away with Church funds to other countries. There is terrible deceit in the society in the name of religion.

All of these consequences of corruption enumerated are not unnoticed in the nation. People talk, discuss and laugh over it. However, a lot has been done by some human rights activists, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Multi-National Institutions and the Nigerian government herself.

Various Attempts aimed at Curbing Corruption

There is evidence that corruption has been fought right and left from the foundation of what is today known, as Nigeria. The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) raised alarm over the existence of corruption in a lot of their communiqués over the years.

Many of the military coups in the nation were justified by accusation of corruption of the ruling military or civilian government. Decalo confirms this by stating that “of the various abuses of civilian authority, corruption has been the most commonly cited complaint of army leaders moving against their civilian counterparts in offices”⁸ So, military interventions in Nigeria are considered as a way to get rid of corruption.

The Mass Media and many human right lawyers and activist have played leading roles in creating awareness of corruption and to show the extent of damages done to the nation. The rule of law, even though it has proved ineffective in combating corruption is worth mentioning at this point. Lilian Ekeanyanwu observed that, “Nigeria has a long history of legislating against corruption, which predates Nigerian Independence”.⁹ There were criminal and penal codes before Independence, and post Independence, there were

⁸ Samuel Decalo, *Coups and Army Rule in Africa: Motivations and Constraints*, 2nd ed. (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1990), 8.

⁹Lilian Ekeanyanwu, “The Legal Frame Work on Anti-Corruption in Nigeria,” in *Corruption and Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria*, ed. Nankin Bagudu (Jos: League for Human Rights, 2004), 78.

Military decrees promulgated to checkmate ill-acquired assets by public officers. In 1975 for example, General Murtala Mohammed's regime promulgated Decree No. 38 on "Corrupt Practices" to tackle the menace of corruption.¹⁰ Despite these anti-corruption legal approaches enumerated, the law did not work because of the instability of government. It also did not work because of counter decrees and the immunity clause in the 1999 Constitution. So the rule of law has totally failed in Nigeria.

Although the law failed, different governments under whose administrations the rule of law could not work tried some anti-corruption programs such as, "War against Indiscipline", during General Mohammadu Buhari's regime (1983-1985), and General Ibrahim Babangida's "MAMSA"¹¹ agenda in (1985-1993).¹² In a couple of years back, President Olusegun Obasanjo, (1999-2007) championed the course of the anti-corruption agenda. He inaugurated the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act 2000, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC).¹³ Despite these programs, corruption persisted, because as the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria stated in their memo to President Obasanjo on February 22, 2002: "Faced with the stark realities on the ground, we note with sadness and dismay that the war against corruption seems to have lost steam because those waging it are themselves not free from corrupt practices".¹⁴

The roles of the Christian and members of other religions have helped immensely in the fight against corruption in the Nigeria. In many places, corruption is attacked first and foremost spiritually. By this, we mean, specifically through prayers. As a matter of fact, Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria in 1997 composed "Prayer against bribery and corruption in Nigeria", and encouraged all Catholic Christians to say the prayer daily. Pastors and spiritual heads of other religions also pray against corruption. Apart from the spiritual dimensions, there are awareness campaign against corruption organised through seminars, workshops and conferences by religious bodies and their NGOs.

A lot of individuals carry out several anti-corruption activities in the country. Some have refused national awards on grounds that it is coming from a

¹⁰Ibid., 79-80.

¹¹ "MAMSA" is an acronym for

¹² Ekeanyanwu, "The Legal Frame Work on Anti-Corruption in Nigeria."

¹³ Smith, *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria*, 191.

¹⁴ Schineller, ed., *The Voice of the Voiceless*, 440.

government that is corrupt, as was the case, with late Justice Gani Fawehinmi SAN, a leading human rights activist in the country. On the International scene, accounts of money launderers' especially prominent politicians and past military head of states have been frozen. Many of them were exposed and arrested, but again like Achebe observed, none has faced prosecution and gone to jail. This is why a renewed interest in the role of conscience and the principle of the common good is vital.

It must be said that corruption is a hard nut to crack in Nigeria. Nwankwo remarks that, "The corruption virus has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian society. The nation gropes in the dark tunnel of corruption blindfolded by the leaders who loot, instead of rule".¹⁵ While Smith is of the opinion that "Corruption is so entrenched in Nigeria that no one can really imagine that anticorruption efforts are anything but political-often they are perceived as outright ruses".¹⁶ The fact is that the entire panacea applied in the struggle against corruption in Nigeria has failed. To this effect, Dike averred "Since previous policies are ineffective in fighting corruption Nigeria needs new and improved medicines".¹⁷ It is at this point that the role of conscience and the principle of the common good become supreme. The Nigerian Bishops advised that,

In view of redressing the unwholesome situation, we recommend that the nation embark on a programme of rebuilding individual and collective consciences through education, both formal and informal, and through sustained public enlightenment ... Religious organisation should see it as their principal role to inculcate the fear of God and the values of honesty, hard work, accountability and concern for the common good in their members.¹⁸

Conscience and the Common Good: Foundations for Overcoming Corruption

It is pertinent to ask: where is conscience while corruption is increasing? Is it dead or erroneous? Achebe claims that, "Nigeria has many thoughtful men and women of conscience"¹⁹. We do know that conscience is part of the

¹⁵ Nwankwo, *Nigeria: The Stolen Billions*, 143.

¹⁶ Smith, *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria*, 229.

¹⁷ Dike, *Democracy and Political Life in Nigeria*, 149.

¹⁸ Schineller, ed., *The Voice of the Voiceless*, 397.

¹⁹ Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, 2.

human nature. So, is Achebe's assertion based on the assumption of the fact that conscience is part of human nature? Sometimes, we do hear people say to each other, "you have no conscience". What is the cause of such a comment?

Thomas Aquinas, a medieval philosopher and theologian, taught about two levels of conscience. Through these levels, that is, *synderesis* and *conscientia*, we are able to grasp the general knowledge of the moral principle and apply it to a particular act or situation respectively. Aquinas also teaches that errors occur at the level of *conscientia* during judgement or application. Following the thomistic idea, Nigerian women and men possess conscience, but then, how this is applied to particular situation needs to be addressed. Hence, there is urgent need for the formation of conscience

If this is well carried out, then conscience will play a great role in riding the nation of corruption. Right and wrongness of actions will be critically examined before people act. Truth will be enhanced as a major achievement and human rights including the various forms of justice will be assured. People will be able to arrive at moral decisions that will promote a morally and just community in the country. The various skills for making moral judgment will equally be grasped.

If conscience is well formed one could apply to particular acts or situations using the moral models, that is, the deontological, the teleological and the relational responsibility models. A clue is provided by Richard P. McBrien who states:

According to the deontological model (employed in the pre-Vatican two manuals of moral theology), conscience keeps before us the demands of God's law. According to the teleological model (employed by Thomas Aquinas), conscience keeps before us our ultimate end. According to the relational model, conscience keeps before us our relationships with God, neighbour, world, and self.²⁰

Charles Curran acknowledges the use of these models. He disclosed in his study of Aloysius Sabetti's Manual that "Contemporary theologians talk about three different models for moral theology- the deontological, the teleological, and the relationality-responsibility model".²¹ He believes that

²⁰ McBrien, *Catholicism*, 968.

²¹ Charles E. Curran, "The Manual and Casuistry of Aloysius Sabetti," in *The Context of Casuistry*, ed. J. Keenan and T. Shannon (Washington. D.C: Georgetown University Press, 1995), 165.

many moral theologians do not consider the models they use, but then, one or another of these models are used to understand the moral life.²²

The deontological model is well developed in the Manualists tradition. Curran believes this model is too legalistic in its approach. Since the Manualists applied this moral model, morality for them means obedience to an external authority. Most times, they identified God, as the one who commands us to obey.²³ According to Gula, "The model finds its closest analogy in the working of the law". He claims that for Niebuhr, the method fits in the understanding of "man-the-citizen", the one who comes to self-awareness in the midst of commandments and rules.²⁴ Formation of conscience in Nigeria cannot neglect this model especially as a nation where rule of law and the judiciary is failing. Conscience formation will have to involve the inculcation of the idea that law comes from God and it is his voice dwelling in our innermost heart. Nigerians need to be reminded that conscience is the sanctuary where individuals encounter God. The sense of duty to the state and fellow citizens will be reinvigorated and corruption will be a thing of the past if people are taught that Divine and Positive Laws are significant. The link between Divine and Positive Laws, Eternal and Natural laws have to be well explained to people. These laws should be explained on the necessity of formation of conscience to enable people see reasons for the establishment of laws, rules and regulations. This is what St. Paul did when he addressed the Romans in his Letter as stated:

When the Gentiles who have not the law, do by nature what the law requires, they are a law unto themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written in their hearts while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them.²⁵

Despite the legalistic tendency of this model, global social activities are all guided by the rule of law. Law and morality are therefore inseparable. The law guides a just society and it is promulgated for the purpose of the common good. In the same vein, conscience is a guide for a moral society because through it, we discern right and wrong actions by which we respect people's dignity and promote the common good of the community. In the long run, corruption will be condemned by all persons in Nigeria.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality*, 21.

²⁵ Romans 2:14-16

The teleological model is derived from the Greek word *teleo* for goal or end. The method is concerned with actions that would bring about the goal being sought. Niebuhr describes this method as “man-the-builder,” implying that people act with an end in view.²⁶ Moral action in this model is guided by its “goal or end”. The common good of everyone in Nigeria is what is advocated in this paper and the eradication of corruption is a means to achieve this “goal or end”. This is with the understanding that “common” implies “all-inclusive” as stated by the Bishops of England and Wales. So Nigerians and in fact human persons should not be excluded from their perfect end because of corruption. It is for this reason that Catholic Social Teaching emphasises that the law and authority should aim at fostering the common good. The teleological model which has its origin in Aquinas properly helps in the dictates of our conscience. An extreme form of this model, according to Gula, is developed by Joseph Fletcher in his situation ethics.²⁷

The relational-responsibility model was developed in the writings of Bernard Häring. The model “views the Christian moral life primarily in terms of the Christian’s multiple relations with God, neighbour, world, and self”.²⁸ It deals with moral situations from a relational context, hence, to determine for instance what one ought to do, one must ask first, what is happening? The model does not discard the idea of laws or consequences but uses them to grasp the meaning of relationship. The model also accounts for the complexity of human reality. Unlike the deontological model, this model does not permit imposition of external authority, or prearranged sets of rules. The method attaches importance to character formation, virtue and moral discernment.²⁹ Corruption, which is a “symptom that something is wrong in the management of the state” clearly signifies that something is wrong in our relationship with God, neighbour, environment and self. It is a sign that we have deviated from the right relationship into the wrong one.

Curran argues that human conscience employs human reason in the following ways: “a discursive deductive way, a connatural way and a discerning and prudential way”.³⁰ In his opinion, the human conscience employs reason and faith to arrive at moral decisions. He criticised the deontological model of the manuals which applied a different theory of knowledge to conscience. He

²⁶ Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality*, 21.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 303.

²⁸ McBrien, *Catholicism*, 922.

²⁹ Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality*, 304-5.

³⁰ Curran, "Conscience in the Light of the Catholic Moral Tradition," 16.

argues that, conscience for the Manualists, “meant conformity to the objective law and the moral order established by God”.³¹

Curran therefore, proposed a relational-responsibility way of understanding conscience. Curran understands the human person as one who in his or her conscience always recognises that he or she dwells in relationship. For him, the sense of otherness is very strong in every person. He claims that the human person living in a community, belonging to a religious organization and a particular environment, think in terms of relationship. To a large extent, therefore an awareness of relationship and responsibility life style in us as people created in the image and likeness of God. The formation of conscience is for the benefit of this bond or relationship. Curran suggests three steps, by which this model helps us to go about proper formation of conscience. The first is that as human beings, we have to be open to the word and call of God. The second step is that we must avoid self-centeredness. The third and last step of conscience formation in this relational-responsibility approach, “involves the need to strive to live ever more fully and deeply the Christian life with its basic orientation toward God and its appropriate virtues”.³² The relational-responsibility model helps us to reflect in terms of our connection with others and ourselves. It is not law centred or goal oriented. The education and use of conscience from this perspective will in a great way help us overcome corruption in Nigeria. Conscience in this way will dictate to us how to promote genuine relationship with God, people, environment and self in relation to the common good of the World.

The mistake that we may fall into is that if we try to apply the models in mechanical or mathematical formulae, then we would become victims of wrong application. What we have to realise is that, if the models are to aid us, they should not be applied in isolation of each other. The relational-responsibility model is built on actual relationships. According to Gula, “this method highlights moral meaning from within the relational context, and it acknowledges the person’s ability to discover that meaning”.³³ In this perspective, conscience and the common good become meaningful as concepts that will help us to overcome corruption. Corruption does not promote good relationship and it inhibits people from achieving full realisation of what they are.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

³² *Ibid.*, 21-22.

³³ Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality*, 305.

In the explanation of the Bishops of England and Wales, “Common” implies “all-inclusive”, so, the principle of the “common good”, cannot exclude or exempt any section of the population from participation in the life of the community, even at a minimal level. Understood this way, “the sum total of social conditions that enable the human person to attain perfection”, would mean those conditions that allow people to gain full realisation of what they are in the community. The conditions could be political, economical, socio-cultural and religious.

By implication from the explanation of the Bishops of England and Wales, corruption excludes and exempts people from realising their human nature. The causes and consequences enumerated in this paper, show immensely, that individuals and groups of people are denied the rights to participate in National and International life as Nigerians. As people created in the image and likeness of God, corruption should not bar people from active participation in community life.

Education is the key tool for the common good to be useful in overcoming corruption in Nigeria and globally. This is because, if people are not excluded from education, the common good is already accomplished. The Second Vatican Council Fathers, in *Gravissimum Educationis*, declared:

All people of whatever race, condition or age, in virtue of their dignity as human persons, have an inalienable right to education. This education should be suitable to the particular destiny of the individuals adapted to their ability, sex and national cultural traditions, and should be conducive to amicable relations with other nations in order to promote true unity and peace in the world.³⁴

Since, education is a right to all, those who are deprived of it are excluded from the common good. Education is the gateway to many other realities of life, so the common good demands, that everyone should have access to it. The consequence is that corruption will become difficult to spread in literate society compared to a one where majority are illiterate.

Pope Paul VI, remarked that, “basic education is the first objective for any nation seeking to develop itself. Lack of education is as serious as lack of food; the illiterate is a starved spirit. When someone learns how to read and write, he is equipped to do a job and to shoulder a profession, to develop self-confidence and realise that he can progress along with others”.³⁵ In the

³⁴ Austen Flannery, Vatican II, *Gravissimum Educationis* n.1

³⁵ Paul VI, Encyclical Letter, *Populorum Progressio*, (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2007), n.

“Memo” of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria to President Olusegun Obasanjo, they reminded him of the need for education:

We ... call on the federal government to put in place qualitative and functional education at all levels and to ensure that moral and religious education is given its proper place in our educational system. Within this context, we renew our call on government to return to the era of collaboration between the Church and State in the provision of education to the masses with public funds. This is the sense of our call to government to return mission schools forcefully taken over from us by past administrations. This would offer us the opportunity to make our contributions towards producing morally sound, intellectually competent and socially responsible citizens.³⁶

We should be enthusiastic to learn and foster education for all. Let people be eager and show interest in learning values about the moral life. This will awaken those in charge of education to work. Proper education is what is needed in Nigeria and in the entire world. The sort of teaching that will have positive impacts on people’s life and that will guarantee freedom is what should be taught in Nigerian schools.

Jon Sobrino in this direction states that, “Today, we need robust social teaching because global society is seriously ill”.³⁷ The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria will have to do more in other to educate the conscience of the people. Prophetic teaching should focus on schools and institutions of learning rather than government agencies. The educational system need to introduce conscience formation and issues which deal with the common good, such as human rights, justice, peace and development into all levels of school curriculum. It should be included in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program for adults as well. Once we are able to achieve this, then many questions will be a thing of the past.

We recommend that virtue ethics be part of what people should learn in the school. It will enhance good character especially among youths. Many people will become virtuous not because they learnt from their parent but because it is from a larger and more organised way of education. The virtues of prudence and justice have a great deal to do for us to conquer corruption. Nigeria as a multi-socio-cultural and religious country needs to teach her citizens the virtue of love. This virtue is lacking in people’s relationship. This

³⁶ Schineller, ed., *The Voice of the Voiceless*, 441.

³⁷ Jon Sobrino, "Populorum Progressio: Sowing the Seeds for Liberation Theology," in *The Development of Peoples: Challenges for Today and Tomorrow*, ed. International Jesuit Network for Development (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2007), 32.

is the way to revive patriotic spirit. Here, Benedict XVI's remark is very relevant as he said: "There is no ordering of the state so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love. Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate [the human person] as such".³⁸

Conclusion

One great fact is that the awareness of corruption in Nigeria is not strange to Nigerians and the entire world. So, what is of significance to us, is what we have done, that is, to offer suggestions on the proper ways by which we can eradicate corruption and prevent it from ruining the entire nation, Africa and the entire world down.

Henry Cardinal Newman lamented that conscience was gradually losing its significance in his era as he noted: "Conscience is a stern monitor, but in this century it has been superseded by a counterfeit, which the eighteen centuries prior to it never heard of, and could not have mistaken for it, if they had. It is the right of self-will".³⁹ Self-will is different from conscience. In as much as we advocate for the primacy and freedom of conscience we must be conscious of the danger of self-will. Many persons believe in what their conscience tells them but the concept of the common good help us to use our conscience in relation to the other person. When we are able to discern the dictates of our conscience in conformity with other people, then we are sure that we have arrived at the level of the common good. At that level, both the conscience and the common good allow us to understand that corruption is morally wrong.

We must remember that relationship grounded in responsibility is what binds people and things together. We have to do all things in love; every one of our relationship should be guided by a true love rooted in God our creator. Hence, the Latin people say: *Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est*. that is "where there is charity and love, there God is". It implies that laws must be enacted based on justice and the common good in the spirit of love. The virtue of love is fundamental for the human person because without love, moral relationships cannot be sustained. In fact, Gula believes that "The capacity to [love] is the beginning of moral awareness".⁴⁰ To have a society that is free from corruption, love must prevail. People's attitude towards the state, fellow

³⁸ Benedict XVI, DCE, n. 28.

³⁹ Newman Reader - Letter to the Duke of Norfolk - Section 5 Conscience in <http://www.newman.org/works/anglicans/volum2/gladstone/section5.html> [Accessed 08/01/2020].

⁴⁰Richard M. Gula, "Conscience," in *Christian Ethics: An Introduction*, ed. Bernard Hoose (London: Cassel, 1998), 120.

citizens, work, environment and God should be guided not just by laws but by genuine spirit of love. Conscience works only where there is love, the common good is promoted where love exists and corruption thrives where love is absent.