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KELVIN ONONGHA

CORRUPTION, CULTURE, AND CONVERSION: THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN CORRECTING A GLOBAL CONCERN

Introduction

One of the most challenging issues confronting contemporary society is the problem of corruption. This global malaise cuts across race, gender, age, culture, religion, and geography. The World Bank estimates that every year over \$1 trillion exchanges hands as bribes—a significant amount when placed alongside the total world economy of \$30 trillion recorded between 2001 and 2002 (Goel & Nelson, 2010, p. 433). The World Bank itself does not appear to be untainted with the miasma of corruption. It has in its 32 years given away \$3.5 trillion. While not much has come out of these loans due to corruption, if the World Bank itself were to be investigated, it would very likely be shut down for corruption (Winter, 2009, p. 10).

So prevalent is the scope and spread of this scourge that it is now considered a norm rather than an exception, and even has special regional jargon to name it: in the Middle East, it is *baksheesh*; in Latin America, *mondida*; in Italy, *speed money*; in West Africa, *dash*; and in Russia, *blat* (White, 2010, p. 39). Corruption has left a sordid trail all through human history, from the ancient kingdoms of Egypt to Israel, Rome, Greece, and the present period (Lipset & Lenz, 2000, p. 112). Although long held to be a cultural, moral, and historical problem, in the 1990s corruption also became regarded as a political and institutional problem (Andvig, Fjeldstad, Amunsten, Sisener, & Soreide, 2010, p. 60). This paper, while broadly examining the scope of global corruption,

Kelvin Onongha is a professor of practical theology at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS), in the Philippines. He has doctoral degrees in global mission leadership and in missiology from Andrews University.

will focus especially on the African context. I will draw heavily on my familiarity with the Nigerian setting in order to derive lessons applicable to other regions of the world.

Definition

Many definitions for corruption can be found in various literature on the subject today. A very simple definition of corruption is “the misuse of office for personal gain” (Kiltgaard, Abaroa, Parris, & Lindsay, 1999, p. 2). Floristeanu (2010) gives a broader definition of corruption as “the abusive use of power with the purpose of satisfying personal or group interests” (p. 252). De Graaf (2007) has defined it as “the behavior of public individuals which deviates from accepted norms in order to serve private ends” (p. 43). These different definitions help to capture the complexity of this broad subject.

Nature of Corruption

Corruption is a pernicious, ubiquitous problem that has plagued every culture, government, and establishment, to the extent that it is believed no system has ever been able to eliminate its existence (Genovese, 2010, p. 2). All aspects of human life have been affected by the cancer of corruption, yet its complexity in nature renders it extremely difficult to isolate and identify a comprehensive set of causes for its existence.

Corruption manifests itself in various ways depending upon culture and context. For instance, in Africa it may entail diversion of public funds for the purpose of infrastructural development into personal accounts, while in America it takes the form of reduced competition in politics and the economy (Johnston, 2010, p. 13). Distinction can also be made between the various natures of corruption: manipulative corruption, which excludes those who could have benefitted from a process through some form of duplicity; discriminatory corruption, “duplicitous exclusion from conditions of equal influence and respect”; and privative corruption, “duplicitous exclusion of citizens from rights and privileges generally available throughout society” (Parrish, 2010, pp. 76, 80, 84).

Forms of Corruption

Depending on the region and cultural context, corruption assumes hybrid forms. Some of the most commonly identifiable forms of official corruption as listed by Gerald Caiden (2001) are treason/subversion, kleptocracy, misappropriation, abuse and misuse of power, deceit and fraud, perversion of justice, nonperformance of duties, bribery and graft

(extortion), tampering with elections, misuse of inside knowledge and confidential information, unauthorized sale of public assets/trusts, tax evasion, influence-peddling, acceptance of improper gifts and entertainments, protecting maladministration, black market operations, misuse of official seals/supplies, and illegal surveillance (Caiden, 2001, p. 17).

It is important to state that the factors responsible for corruption should not be mixed up with its sources and causes. Among the sources identified for corruption are psychological, ideological, external, economic, political, socio-cultural, and technological (De Graaf, 2007, p. 42).

Often regarded as a problem endemic to developing economies or countries from the majority world, recent reports indicate that corruption cannot be stereotyped—its footprints are evident in Europe and North America, too. For instance, just over a decade ago, international business magazine *The Economist* featured an article titled “Is Europe Corrupt?” In it the author detailed various levels of corrupt practices from Italy, Turkey, Spain, Belgium, Britain, and even from Germany and Sweden—northern European Protestant countries that have stricter laws and are traditionally considered to be squeamish about such issues (*The Economist*, 2013).

There are several factors obviously responsible for corruption. However, culture and context appear to be determinative in what exactly constitutes corruption, for it has been observed that “what may seem like corruption in one culture might count simply as a responsible family loyalty in another” (*The Economist*, 2012).

Perspectives on Corruption

Leaders can better understand the breadth and depth of the corruption problem if they examine causes and indicators of corruption, as well as gender and cultural implications of corruption. A summary of how the social sciences view corruption is also helpful. Finally, an example is given of how corruption plays out in a specific cultural context, that of Nigeria.

Causes of Corruption

There is unanimity in the belief that at the heart of the issue of corruption is the nature and selfishness of the human heart. In other words, the root of the problem with corruption is attributable to defective human character and condition (Caiden, 2001, p. 23). Farrar-Myers (2010) quotes James Madison:

If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is no doubt the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions. (p. 305)

It is because the political process involves leadership by imperfect persons and with imperfect systems that governance is often riddled with corruption.

Evidently, the causes for corruption vary between lower income countries and those of the Western nations, due to factors such as poverty, poor governmental infrastructure, and inadequate legal framework. The major causes for corruption, according to the social sciences, are as follows:

- Public Choice Theory (Rational Choice)—a public official makes a rational choice to be corrupt because advantages outweigh disadvantages.
- Bad Apple Theories—the root cause of corruption is found in defective human character and a disposition to criminal activity.
- Organizational Culture Theories—failure in government machinery leads people to corrupt behavior; that is, group dynamics influences corrupt behavior.
- Clashing Moral Values Theories—values and norms of society influence people, thereby making them corrupt.
- The Ethos of Public Administration Theories—lack of attention to integrity issues rather than “effectiveness” can lead to corruption.
- Correlation Theories—several collective factors (individual, social, political, organizational) contribute to corruption (De Graaf, 2007, pp. 45-60).

Indicators of Corruption

A number of methods have been developed in recent years that serve as indices for measuring the levels of corruption in a society. These relative measurements seek to demonstrate the extent and gravity of corruption on a comparative scale for the entire world. The most renowned indicator that draws the attention of governments and agencies around the world is the Corruption Perception Index (CPI). CPI, which ranks countries and territories based on how corrupt they are perceived to be, is the most widely used corruption index worldwide. Data collected from institutions that deal with governance and business climate are ana-

lyzed and released by Transparency International (2012). Because the CPI has its own limitations, Transparency International produces other indices that provide various analysis of corruption. These include Global Corruption Barometer (GCB), Bribe Payers Index (BPI), Global Corruption Report (GCR), National Integrity Systems Assessments (NIS), and Transparency in Corporate Reporting (TRAC). The top seven most transparent countries in 2012 were Denmark (1), Finland (1), New Zealand (1), Sweden (4), Singapore (5), Switzerland (6), Australia (7), and Norway (7). Meanwhile, the seven least transparent (most corrupt) nations were Turkmenistan (170), Uzbekistan (170), Myanmar (172), Sudan (173), Afghanistan (174), North Korea (174), and Somalia (174) (Transparency International, 2012).

Gender and Corruption

Does gender make any difference in the issue of corruption? As an attempt to reduce corruption in Mexico, women were recently hired to replace the predominantly male force in that country (Lombrozo, 2013). Empowerment of women, a study indicates, plays a significant role in reducing corruption in society (Stuckelberger, 2010, p. 19). However, a study conducted more recently reveals that “the relationship between gender and corruption differs by institutional context,” that is to say, where corruption is stigmatized, women will be less tolerant of it “because gender discrimination makes violating institutional norms a more violent prospect for women than for men” (Esarey & Chirillo, 2013, p. 26). The researchers concede, however, that although women are not necessarily more intrinsically honest than men, they are more trustworthy (Esarey & Chirillo, 2013, p. 2).

Culture and Corruption

Corruption is sometimes considered to be a cultural phenomenon related to certain variables, such as limited radius of identification and trust, limited sense of community, and an ethical code that is pliable (Harrison, 2000, p. 304). In this context, culture may be defined as “community-specific ideas about what is true, good, beautiful, and efficient,” which are socially inherited and customary, and constitutive of different ways of life (Shweder, 2000, p. 163).

The question has also been asked, “Why are certain countries more corrupt than others?” Some persons posit that certain cultures have a greater proclivity for corrupt practices than others. Regional trends in the corruption discourse seem to endorse such a view. Gerald Caiden

(2001) offers a broad picture of corruption by regions (pp. 26-30):

- Western Europe claims to have superior standards of behavior, and to have mastered corruption so that it is more an exception than a norm. There is a high degree of honesty in this region, and there's intolerance for official misconduct.
- Australasia has also maintained a low tolerance for corruption. However, as with Western Europe, in recent years there has been a decline.
- In North America, scandals occur frequently in public life even though the constitution defines limitations on corruption, while a vigilant mass media and pressure groups help keep corruption in check.
- Southern Europe has endured scarce resources, poverty and autocracy, but also endures endemic corruption. Goods and services are generally in poor conditions. In spite of public outcry, self-enrichment is still a way of life.
- Latin America and the Caribbean are not completely corrupt, for there are regions where religious outrage, democratization, and middle class professionalism have helped to check capital flight and widespread corruption. The gap between the rich and poor is wide, while the privileged elites exploit the masses that have few rights.
- Corruption in sub-Saharan Africa, which used to be blamed on colonialism (as was the case in Latin America and the Caribbean), can be attributed to dictators who treat the wealth of their countries as their private possessions.
- The Middle East has a system of corruption that permeates all aspects of society, even though the extent varies from one country to the next. Patron-client relationships, which are common in this context, promote favoritism, nepotism, and patronage.
- In Asia, patterns of corruption vary from one country to another. For instance, while in India efforts to contain corruption have failed miserably, in other countries, such as Singapore and Japan, the situation is a sharp contrast.
- Despite the communist background that would seem to keep down corruption, Eastern European countries are characterized by low productivity, mass apathy, and high levels of cheating. Several other vices and corrupt practices are also known to transpire in underground official exchanges. Public apathy, pilferage, and waste can be witnessed with public property.

A quantitative study by Lipset and Lenz (2000) showed the correlation between "corruption and social diversity, ethno-linguistic fractionalization, and the proportions of a country's population adhering to dif-

ferent religious traditions” (p. 116). It is apparent that Protestantism significantly affected British colonial history, infusing a lasting emphasis on procedure rather than authority which has contributed to its low levels of national corruption (Lipset & Lenz, 2000, p. 116). Other studies indicate that strong family values between family members produce intense feelings of obligation, which in turn results in high levels of corruption; particular cases in question were southern Italy and Sicily (Lipset & Lenz, 2000, p. 116).

Social Sciences and Corruption

Like a hydra-headed monster, corruption assumes various complex forms and has a diverse array of causes. In the social sciences there are diverse views of the origin and remedy for corruption. Economists regard corruption in terms of institutional theories, which intersect with per capita income, education, and roles of institutions that restrict market and hinder competition. Political scientists consider corruption as stemming from how power is handled or distributed among the legislative majority and from the freedom of the press, while human capital theorists view corruption as emanating from factors affecting human development and education (Seleim & Bontis, 2009, p. 167). From an anthropological perspective, the borderline for defining corruption is considered too narrow and largely concerned with illegality of practices. Anthropologists argue for a more open approach that sees the issues from the actors’ own viewpoints, and through their cultural lenses, since the borderline for acceptable behavior is not universal (Andvig et al., 2000, p. 79). A major argument of anthropologists is that what may be considered as bribery in communal or group-oriented contexts could be explained as legitimate favors rendered within the close circles of one’s personal network in order to maintain good relations (Andvig et al., 2000, p. 77-78).

Corruption in Nigeria: An Example

Corruption in Nigeria has a long history that dates back to colonialism and the events that transpired before and during the country’s independence. Early generations speak wistfully of a time when communal values such as shame and honor regulated morality and effectively controlled group behavior. In those days, sellers placed their produce along the way, with the monetary value placed under one of the yams, to indicate the price of each. Prospective buyers would then pick the desired quantity and leave the money there for the absent trader. Although the amalgamation by the British in 1914 of disparate and unequally yoked

regions laid the foundation for political agitation and ethnic issues, the handing over of power to the northern region rather than to the more progressive western and eastern sections eventually led to civil war barely seven years after independence. Following independence, successive military regimes have used the barrel of the gun to rape the country of its wealth and to institutionalize corruption. By 1985 systematic corruption had become entrenched, forming the bedrock of the country's political culture (Olowu, 2001, p. 110). Proceeds from crude oil during military regimes were in many cases not accounted for, and under the guise of privatization, government parastatals were sold to cronies, while inflated contracts were awarded to non-performing friends and relatives. State violence in the form of political assassinations flourished (Olowu, 2001, p. 112). It was in this climate that drug trafficking bloomed, while fraud and scam syndicates that have since given the country international notoriety emerged (Olowu, 2001, p. 112).

The blind side of corruption often ignored by the international press is the role that external agencies have played in helping corruption thrive, thereby bleeding the country of its human and natural resources—reminiscent of the slave trade. For instance, CNN reports that in Nigeria, over the last 50 years, an estimated \$400 billion has been lost to corruption in the natural resources sector. Two of its largest customers are Chevron and Shell oil companies (Hart, 2013).

Corruption and Christianity

While corruption and Christianity would seem to be mutually exclusive, there is no denying that corruption has infiltrated the Christian world. Evidence of this is available not only across Christian churches and organizations today, but even in the earliest reaches of the biblical record.

Corruption and Scripture

In Scripture, the problem of corruption can be traced back to the entrance of sin into the Creator's perfect world (Gen. 3). Prior to this time, every aspect of the creation worked in perfect harmony according to God's plan. One of the first uses of the word "corruption" in Scripture can be found in the account of life on earth before the deluge during the days of Noah. At that time, when God looked down on the earth, all He saw everywhere was corruption (Gen. 6:8). Sin corrupts. At the root of the problem of corruption is sin, which leads to corruption.

Acknowledging sin's pervasive and damaging nature, Moses was

instructed to select as judges over the nation of Israel men of integrity and sound judgment (Exod. 18:21). These were to be people who feared God, were trustworthy, and shunned dishonest gain (or bribes); such were to be leaders over the nation. Likewise in the New Testament, those who qualified to hold positions of trust in the Church were to be persons with irreproachable character, who conducted their affairs with integrity, and who were without avarice (1 Tim. 3; Tit. 3). While it is true that biblical history reveals the existence of corrupt leaders who led God's people, such as Eli's sons (1 Sam. 2:12-17), the Scriptures regard corruption as an aberration rather than the convention. As long as leaders and followers chose to walk in the counsel of the Bible, they would avoid the pitfall of corruption—this was the message of the book of Proverbs (Prov. 11:1; 13:11; 15:27; 20:10, 17).

While the social sciences recognize that sin is intrinsic to the nature of human beings and affects their behavior and conduct, they proffer remedies that are external—legal, structural, and preventive. The Scriptures, in contrast, regard the issue of corruption as derived from an internal cause—sin—and propose a solution that is relational and transformative.

Corruption and the Church

Although the church is meant to be God's representative on earth, its history, regrettably, has not been entirely free from corruption. Each time leaders have focused more on earthly things than on God, the result has always been tragic. Debauchery and depravity of the vilest forms plagued the medieval church every time it was closely allied to the state or drew its authority from humans rather than God. During such dark periods of ecclesiastical history, revival would begin at the fringes, led by men and women who drew inspiration from the Word of God and were empowered by prayer. Indeed, ecclesiastical corruption formed the background for the Protestant reformation spearheaded by Martin Luther (Robert, 2009, p. 33).

The Protestant work ethic is considered to be the primary reason Western nations today are industrialized and have low levels of corruption. This strong religious component, which has become a cultural element for Western nations, is a by-product of the Reformation era. The aforementioned British high estimation for procedure more than authority is understandable, seeing that the country was the birthplace of Methodism, a denomination that emerged with a high regard for procedure.

Protestant missions were also instrumental in eliminating the once-lucrative trans-Atlantic slave trade by replacing it with other forms of

commerce and establishing technical and industrial schools where skills and techniques could be learned to provide a livelihood. Unfortunately, one of the unintended consequences of Christian missions was secularization and consumerism (Bonk, 1991, p. 27). The result of this, coupled with the debilitating effects of colonialism, laid the foundation for the large-scale corruption that followed countries that gained their independence from the colonialists.

Because of the debilitating effects of corruption (such as poverty and theft of the funds that could be used in plague prevention and famine relief), churches need to be at the forefront of advocating against corruption and developing models and structures to combat it (Stuckelberger, 2010, p. 7).

Corruption and the Adventist Church

For a number of reasons, it is difficult to engage in discourse about corruption in the Adventist Church. A primary reason that allegations of corruption may be difficult to find in Adventism is evident in the history of the church. Born out of apocalyptic roots, the principal message of the church was a call to come out of Babylon (Rev. 18), in effect fleeing corruption. Furthermore, the strong emphasis on commandment-keeping resulted in a certain breed of persons who were more heavenly-minded in outlook than they were concerned with acquiring or keeping the things of the world. The strong Methodist influences on a number of Adventism's pioneers, such as Ellen White, also led to a church with great respect for policy and procedure—factors which preclude corruption. Although several generations later the apocalyptic fervor has waned, leaving the church more institutional than missional, its ever-growing policies and handbooks help to steer the ship safely away from the icebergs of corrupt practices. Additionally, a culture of silence ensures that even when things go wrong, “the name of the church” is always protected.

Nevertheless, applying Caiden's (2001) list of the various categories of corruption, it is evident that the church is not unsullied. A few of the aspects where some leaders in the church have been found to have transgressed are misappropriation, use and abuse of power, tampering with election processes, protecting maladministration, improper gifts and entertainment, and non-performance of duties (Caiden, 2001, p. 22). All too often at constituency sessions, where leaders are elected or retained in office, corrupt behavior is one of such charges that are bandied around as reasons why some individuals should leave office. Such charges usually are investigated and acted upon immediately.

Because trust is the church's greatest currency, she needs to have zero tolerance for corruption. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Cultural mores sometimes induce, condone, and protect certain practices, and allow for their perpetuation. For instance, cultural respect for age and office often promotes the misuse and abuse of power. Also, the African penchant for hospitality can encourage receiving improper gifts and entertainment.

Another corrupt practice that can result from a culture of respect is misappropriation. For example, African chiefs have imperial authority, and are unquestionable. It would therefore require an extremely courageous and daunting stand to correct a leader who takes a path unsupported by Scripture or policy. Similarly, because African societies have strong communal networks, it is not uncommon for offices, posts, and elections to be determined not by competence but by connections. Consequently, leadership may fall guilty of protecting maladministration when the person in question has close ties with management.

A characteristic feature of the African worldview is pragmatism. Such an orientation makes people open to finding whatever works and whatever answers they can find when in crisis. Leaders who are more interested in solutions than in procedures or protocols may have an inclination to the corrupt practice of misappropriation.

In spite of a predilection to submit to cultural values and take the church on a downward pathway to institutional corruption, there is good news. Regular institutional audits keep leadership in check as compliance with existing policies is checked against actions taken and expenses incurred by leadership. Additionally, constituency sessions give occasion for the stewardship of leaders to be evaluated by the members.

The Only Real Remedy

The flurry of studies on the subject of corruption which began in the 1990s has provided great insight into the nature and extent of this pervasive problem, and has also produced recommendations for resolving this plague. The social sciences highlight the legal framework and structures that need to be established in order to create an environment that is more conducive to a free market economy and a government with legitimacy and transparency, one that serves the needs of its citizens. However, because corruption has its roots in the heart and nature of human beings, and because laws cannot change the heart, a more comprehensive remedy will be required to bring this cancer into remission. Also, because culture and worldview have been demonstrated to influ-

ence the incidence and inclination to corruption, its solution must also entail conversion at the worldview level. The church therefore has a major role to perform in discipling, through the use of Scripture, to lead to conversion. Among the principles that need to be taught, demonstrated, and illustrated are lessons in genuine conversion, contentment, the significance of the Cross, the reality of the Second Coming, and the need to champion an anti-corruption cause.

Conversion

It cannot be disputed that sub-Saharan Africa has witnessed the most dramatic growth of Christianity since the mid-twentieth century, more than any other region in the world (Robert, 2009, p. 74). Nevertheless, it is a region afflicted by perhaps the most malignant version of the corruption cancer. What this implies is that greater emphasis needs to be placed by the church on the issue of genuine conversion. Christian history demonstrates that genuinely converted persons have the power to transform their societies (Latourette, 1975, pp. 958-960).

The church must renew its call for people to come to God in repentance. This is a part of its prophetic duties to the society (Hayward & Lagenwalter, 2010, p. 361). A call to repentance is a call for change—unlike a revolution that in time wears out and leaves the human predicament largely unchanged—that will result in transformation (Bonk, 1991, p. 122). Christians today need that call to move in a different direction, to march to a different drumbeat, and to turn from the pathway of corruption which leads to perdition.

Contentment

Contemporary living glorifies and celebrates consumerism and materialism. Mission theologian Jonathan Bonk (1991) asserts that all but one of the deadly sins, sloth, have been transformed into positive virtues in our present day world (p. 80). “You deserve it” is the new message advertising agencies pass across with the invention and marketing of each new luxury product. Unmitigated greed drives the desire to acquire more stuff, no matter how irrelevant it may become shortly after. Never before has it been more necessary for the church to teach the lesson of contentment—which is the biblical panacea for the avarice that induces corruption. Contentment is the key that frees the Christian from the slavery of greed. Because goods and material possessions never satisfy, the church needs to herald the Bible’s message that godliness with contentment results in great gain (1 Tim. 6:6-10).

The Cross

Central to Apostolic and biblical teaching is the message of the Cross of Christ. The message of Christ to all who would be His disciples is that they must take up their crosses and follow Him. When fresh emphasis is placed upon the significance of the Cross of Christ to Christian conduct and behavior, radical changes can be expected in the lives of believers. Corruption can only thrive when behavior and practice is not brought under the shadow of the Cross. The cross is a call to submission, even a call to death. The Cross was the pathway chosen by Christ in response to the temptation of corruption, when the Devil insinuated that all Jesus had to do was pay a simple price—worship him—and the earth and all its glories would be given to Him (Matt. 4:8-11). It was the corruption of Judas, one of the disciples of Christ, and of Herod, who sought the favor of the Jewish leaders, that led Christ to the agony of the Cross. Therefore, Christians throughout the ages and in every culture must resist corruption by living in the shadow of the Cross, for the Cross of Christ was the divine solution to the corruption and evil of sin.

Centering on Earth's Climax

The prophets of God spoke of the Day of the Lord as an apocalyptic event that would bring an end to human government and establish the reign of God on the earth (Isa. 2; Dan. 7). In the New Testament, the kingdom of God was inaugurated by Christ, and awaits its final consummation (Luke 17:20-22; 2 Pet. 3). In both contexts, the vanity and futility of human greed and lust for power and property will be regarded as futile. Ill-gotten wealth and hoarded treasures will be useless (Isa. 2:20-21). The revival movement chronicled in early Adventist history, as in other historical revival movements that have emphasized the Second Coming of Christ, resulted in virtuous living and renunciation of immoral and corrupt ways. Presently, even the scientists are warning of the impending destruction of the earth and of a looming global environmental crisis. Churches need to add their voices to the fray, to warn of the imminence of earth's climactic events, and to call people to prepare for meeting with their God. Such a message will of necessity eschew corruption.

Championing Anti-corruption Causes

Protestantism, with its emphasis on Bible study, led to the emergence of organizations established to contend with various social issues like poverty, slavery, intemperance, and illiteracy. Curiously, today it is non-Christian bodies that are more vocal and visible in responding to the

multitudinous vices of contemporary society. But against an issue such as corruption, there are limitations to what non-Christian establishments can achieve—since human nature lies at the heart of the issue. The Scriptures, however, reveal that advocacy has a rich biblical tradition (Stockwell, 2002, p. 173). Churches therefore can make a difference regarding the issue of corruption. Seventh-day Adventists, who believe in the imminence of Christ's return and who strongly emphasize biblical stewardship and living for eternity, can make a greater impact than non-Christian organizations. Unfortunately, like some other Christian organizations, Adventists have preferred to stay out of the limelight, remaining in the shadows. The absence of a theology of advocacy may be responsible for withdrawal and misgivings towards public advocacy against corruption. It is no wonder, then, that the church no longer plays an influential role in many communities.

In order to commence the task of developing a needed theology of advocacy for churches, insights drawn from the experience of Methodists on this subject may prove helpful. Three particular insights stand out: (1) An Arminian view of salvation suggests that the church has a responsibility to do all that it can to save people, since human freewill is not incompatible with God's sovereignty. (2) Commitment for souls cannot be divorced from concern for their social and economic welfare. (3) Social and political action reveals optimism that human actions in association with divine grace can achieve success—in order words, a public church with a social mission and a corporate vision will lead to action (Clough, 2004, p. 46-47).

Recommendations

In conclusion, I wish to make the following recommendations regarding the role of the church in responding to corruption in the church and society:

1. Biblical principles need to be vigorously taught to members and leaders to help guard against the temptation of covetousness and greed that engender corruption.
2. Cultural influences that predispose people to corrupt practices should be identified and engaged biblically. Christians need to be taught to recognize that their new identity in the body of Christ demands stronger allegiance than their communal and cultural norms.
3. The silence of the church in the face of a detrimental and deadly predicament such as corruption could infer tacit approval. Therefore, the church needs to actively assume its prophetic role as the conscience of

nations and the mouthpiece of God. In speaking up against the vices of its day and working to do its part legislatively, as has been done in Christian history, the church will regain respect and wield a greater influence for good among the youth of the church and contemporary society.

4. A theology for advocacy, involving the collaboration of church theologians and missiologists, is needed to develop guidelines and limitations for engaging in social justice.

5. Recognizing the powerful role narratives and stories play in worldview transformation, the church should commission skits, documentaries, and other visual media to highlight the problem and respond to the challenge of corruption.

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