



# SACRIFICE

IN

# RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS



*Essays in Honour of*  
VEN. PROF. J. OMOSADE AWOLALU

**EDITORS**

DEJI AYGBOYIN  
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# SACRIFICE IN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF VEN. PROFESSOR J. OMOSADE AWOLALU

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## CHAPTER 14

# Ethics of Self- Sacrifice as an Antidote to Political Corruption in the Contemporary Nigeria

*Oke Olusegun Peter*



### Abstract

*Sacrifice as a concept is multifaceted in nature and efforts have been made at different quarters to underscore its importance. Many scholars have examined the concept from different dimensions. However, an area which seems to have been largely ignored over the years is the ethical dimension of self-sacrifice as an antidote to political corruption in Nigeria, given the high level of moral laxity and unbridled corrupt practices that have become the bane of political office holders in Nigeria. In Nigeria, corruption, self-centeredness, nepotism and winner-takes-it-all syndromes have taken the centre-stage of the national life. The effects of these practices have made development in every sector of the nation a mirage as a result of the unpatriotic attitudes of political leaders in the country, which calls for concerted efforts of all and sundry. This paper, therefore, is a clarion call on political leaders and their followers to make self-sacrifice a top priority in order to save the country from the political comatose and developmental kwashiorkor it has been experiencing over the years.*

### Introduction

Issues on sacrifice as a concept have been discussed at different fora over the years by scholars from various fields of human endeavour. Though the word “sacrifice” itself is ambiguous in meaning, it means many things to many people. Regardless of people’s interpretation of the word, however, it is all about giving something to appease or to get something back in return. The idea of sacrifice was not some thing that first

originated in the Bible-it was familiar throughout the ancient world. Polytheists in the Ancient Near East believed that by making idols, they were making a bodily form for their gods to inhabit, and when they put the gods in temples, they were giving them a home to live in.<sup>1</sup> By furnishing the god's home lavishly and bringing food and other items as sacrifices, the god could be petitioned for favour. The overall idea of sacrifice, therefore, was that they were intended for drawing near to God. God wanted to dwell among His people, but because He is utterly holy, great effort had to be made to approach Him in purity.<sup>2</sup> But, unfortunately, the idea of sacrifice has been misinterpreted today. People do not want to sacrifice anything without having the assurance of getting back what they have sacrificed or even more. This is the case among the political office holders in Nigeria who see the office they occupy as an opportunity to siphon the treasure of the nation rather than self-sacrifice. The only 'sacrifice' they can render the people is the looting of the treasury and extortion with impunity due to their unbridled freedom to embezzle. What a sacrifice!

### Understanding Sacrifice as a Concept

As mentioned earlier, sacrifice is ambiguous in meaning. In fact, various definitions of it have been offered from different perspectives. One of such definitions sees sacrifice as a ritual act in which an offering is made to the object of worship or religious veneration. The offering may be in plant, animal or even human form. Sacrifice as a practice is intended to honour or appease a deity and make holy the offering. Another way of explaining sacrifice is the one given by Awolalu when he explains that parents can sacrifice certain pleasures and comforts in order to pay their children's school fees. Some teachers also sacrifice their time to coach pupils after school hours in order that such pupils would do well in their examinations. This, some of them do without requesting any remuneration. Even during the civil war, the military government made an appeal to Nigerians to make 'sacrifice' by way of donating generously to the 'Armed Forces Comfort Fund.' From the instances cited above, it is clear that something precious is given away.<sup>3</sup> This may be in form of time, comfort, money and so on.

It should be made known also that when one offers sacrifices, it takes something precious out of one to achieve a definite purpose. An important part of sacrifice is its costliness to the worshipper. As King David said, "I will not sacrifice to the Lord my burnt offering that cost me nothing" (2 Sam.24:24). Jesus also pointed this out when he said that the widow's mite was worth far more to God than the larger offerings of the wealthy donors, because her gift was a real sacrifice of all that she had to live on. As Jesus himself says, "The son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."<sup>4</sup> Yet, he made many other sacrifices that we do not consider.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lds.org/manual/gospel-principle/chapter-6-sacrifice>. Retrieved on the 17th February, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.opc.org/cce/livingsacrifice.html>. Retrieved on the 21st February, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> J. O. Awolalu. (1979) *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites*. United Kingdom: Longman.

<sup>4</sup> Sacrifice. <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txs/sacrufuce.html>. Retrieved on the 5th March, 2016.

Perhaps the greatest one is that He neither got married nor had children. This was for a total dedication to the work of His father.

Also in Islam, self-sacrifice is sacrificing willingly the things one owns and gives importance to and preserving for the sake of the cause by withstanding every kind of difficulties. It is abnegating from his benefits, the merits he believes in for humanity in order to achieve the pleasure of Allah. Human soul is selfish. He cares for his own desires and benefits first. Making sacrifices in order to achieve Allah's pleasure by quitting the egoism of the soul is one of the greatest characters among the values of the humanity.<sup>5</sup> Those who spend freely whether in prosperity or in adversity; who restrain anger and pardon (all) men; for Allah loves those who do good (Quran 3:134). How many of the political leaders today hold political posts for the interest of the people around them? The clamour for juicy posts is now a virtue that people pursue vigorously. For instance, someone can make a sacrifice of his life; another one can sacrifice his opportunities, knowledge, grade and rank; while another one sacrifices his time, love and compassion; and another one sacrifices his worship and prayer.<sup>6</sup> Treating people very hospitably and lovely, complimenting them, being easy-going and agreeable, living ethically and virtuously, quitting conceit and egoism, being respectful to other people are examples of self- sacrifice we can make.

The situation among political leaders in the nation is likened to the position of Machiavelli who tells us that the essential thing is to grab power by all means, fair or foul, and having been able to grab it, all means (fair or foul) must be used to retain it. What this means is that when one gets power, one must simply ignore morality and use immoral means, provided that one succeeds. According to him, political leaders need not be religious or compassionate; but, they must pretend to be all these and make use of pretense to achieve their aim. This is the type of sacrifice that has become the hallmark of political leaders today. Their campaigns and manifestoes are full of promises of self-sacrifices to better the lots of the people, thereby translating to the overall development of the nation at large.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, however, the struggle at the hallowed chambers is about who gets what, throwing of chairs and lockers in order to get juicy posts for themselves or their party members, forgetting those who voted them into power by making them to continue to wallow in abject poverty.

Since self-sacrifice in the real sense of the word is nothing to our leaders and followers alike, what we have now are a bunch of treasury looters who feed on their ill-gotten money at the detriment of millions of Nigerians who could not afford a three-square meal in a day.<sup>8</sup> Surprisingly, they have all promised their fatherland to sacrifice

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<sup>5</sup> "Self-sacrifice". [www.questiononIslam.com](http://www.questiononIslam.com). Accessed on the 23rd March, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> The Glorious Quran.

<sup>7</sup> J. I. Omoregbe, (1993). *Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Study*. Ikeja: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Limited. 128.

<sup>8</sup> H. Adisa. (2003). "Corruption and Nigeria Government". *Online Nigeria Daily News*. Retrieved from [www.onlinenigeria.com](http://www.onlinenigeria.com) on 14th April, 2016.

and commit everything they have to raise the standard of living of Nigerians. No wonder most Nigerians are suffering and smiling while the commonwealth of the people is being siphoned by the few.

Many a politic'ian thinks he can bribe God, having embezzled money meant for the public. That is, after their 'meritorious' service of looting the treasury, they organise thanksgiving service as a form of service to give to God part of the money looted, when the Bible expressly says that 'No sinner will go unpunished.' Another disturbing fact is the way many of the religious leaders also embrace them and sing their praises. They do this in most cases because of 'brown envelope' or as a result of fear of being attacked. This goes with the common adage in Yoruba which says, *Won ti je dodo, won ko lee so ododo mo'* meaning, "They have eaten fried plantain, so to speak the truth is very difficult for them." To avoid suffering from fallacy of over-generalization, we affirm that there are still few of them who still hold on tenaciously to the tenets of their faiths. But, what is their percentage<sup>9</sup>? The number of places of worship in Nigeria today does not translate to living a virtuous life. It is as a result of the failure on the part of leaders at the corridors of power that the citizens consider it unreasonable and unnecessary to make any sacrifice in form of loyalty to the country a priority.

### Ethical Issues in Self-Sacrifice

For a clear understanding of this concept, there is need to develop a synergy between ethics and self-sacrifice. However, it is important to give a brief explanation of the word "ethics" before establishing the connectivity between the two. In simple language, the term "ethics" connotes the morality underlying our actions.<sup>10</sup> Since no one lives in isolation, any action performed by an individual has either a detrimental or beneficial effect on others around him. Activities such as helping the poor and the needy as well as the concept of giving are all sacrifices. They are sacrifices because they involve denying oneself of certain comfort for others to live a meaningful life. Sacrifice is all about love to one's neighbour and nation. This is clearly stated in Mark 12:33 where the Bible specifically mentions the true sacrifice which is to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbour as oneself. These are considered more preferable to all whole burnt offerings and sacrifice.<sup>11</sup>

The passage above shows to us clearly how to love others around us. But, unfortunately, this type of love does not exist today in our society. What we have is nothing but eye service of an unimaginable proportion. Most Nigerians think of

<sup>9</sup> O. O. Familusi, & O. P. Oke, (2013). "Revival of Religious Moral Values as Panacea for Insecurity in Nigeria". *Insights: Journal of Religious Studies*.

<sup>10</sup> J. K. Ayantayo (2009). *Fundamentals of Religious Ethics*. Ibadan: End-Time Publishing House Limited.

<sup>11</sup> The Holy Bible, King James Version.

themselves first before thinking of what they can do to assist others. The common saying now is "I Before Others." Political office holders make various vain promises to the electorates and on getting to power they do otherwise. Sacrifice as exemplified in the passages of the Holy Bible is being abused in every sector of our society. The real sacrifice of loyalty, commitment, love, altruism and soon have been replaced with corrupt practices all over. Nobody is ready to do anything that will affect him negatively any longer. The virtues of solidarity, fellow feeling, united fronts, mutual assistance and reciprocity are gradually going into extinction.

### **Manifestation of Political Corruption in Nigeria**

It is no longer news that Nigeria is one of the world's most endowed nations with abundant human and natural resources. There is practically every vital mineral deposit in all states of the federation, but, it remains underdeveloped because of the menace of corruption. The effect of corruption on the nation's democratic process is myriad.<sup>12</sup> It is a known fact that corruption has been threatening the democratic foundation of Nigeria since independence in 1960. Different opinions, strategies, programmes and soon have been proffered and implemented by governmental organisations to no avail. Therefore, corruption has become the biggest challenge militating against Nigeria's democratization march, which has always shown its effects on Nigeria's past and present fragile and fledgling democracy.<sup>13</sup> In Nigeria, corruption has assumed a notorious dimension and has become the "common cold" in the social ailments afflicting the state and its development. It is in the light of this that we need to explore these myriads of problems engendered by corruption.

Before we go into details about political corruption, there is the need to take a little journey into what we mean by corruption. The concept of corruption has been viewed from different perspectives; however, it can be defined as the acquisition of that which one (as a member of the society, not public office holders alone) is not entitled to.<sup>14</sup> *Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines corruption as a dishonest, illegal or immoral behaviour, especially from someone with power. From the social perspective, the analysis of corruption is premised on the fact that it is a social problem embedded within the social structure of the society. Corruption is viewed as a violation of moral code or normative standard within the society. It is an anti-social behaviour conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms, and which undermine the

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<sup>12</sup>Oke, O. P. & O. M. Adebisi, (2011)."Abating Corruption for Good Governance: The Role of Religious Leaders". A. B. Sunday (ed.) *Corruption, Democracy and good governance in Nigeria*. Saki: General Studies Department, Saki Campus.

<sup>13</sup> M. O. Oladeji, & A. S. Oladeji (2011). "Corruption in Nigeria: Causes, Consequences and Cure". (ed.)A.B. Sunday In *Corruption, Democracy and Good Governance in Nigeria*. Saki: General Studies Department, Saki Campus.

<sup>14</sup> A. T. Othman. (2007). "*Know About Corruption*". Kaduna. Ta'alim Limited. Longman Dictionary.[????]

authorities to improve the living conditions of the people.<sup>15</sup> The political perspective on the nature of corruption focuses on the concomitant effects of the failure of the State to fulfill the expectations and aspirations of the masses.<sup>16</sup> It has also been defined as a departure from what is legally, ethically and morally right, lack of integrity or honesty and the use of a position of trust for dishonesty, gain and moral perversion. It centres on the inability of the state to transform input into expected output, thereby failing to meet the rising expectations and aspirations of the people<sup>17</sup>.

Corruption is multi-dimensional and it appears in various forms. The following sub-divisions can be identified: Political Corruption (grand), Bureaucratic Corruption (petty) Electoral Corruption, and Financial Corruption. We need to state categorically in this work that political corruption is the father of them all.<sup>18</sup> As it appears to be the fountain, the source and the unmovable mover of other forms of corruption, once it is allowed to flourish, there will be extreme difficulty in tackling other manifestations of corruption.<sup>19</sup>

Political corruption, otherwise known as grand corruption, encompasses the use of office power and government resources for sordid and disrepute private gain. It takes place at the highest levels of political authority. It occurs when the politicians and political decision-makers, who are responsible for formulating, establishing, and implementing the laws on behalf of the people, are themselves corrupt.<sup>20</sup> It also takes place when policy formulation and legislation is tailored to benefit politicians. Political corruption is sometimes seen as corruption of greed. It affects the manner in which decisions are made, as it manipulates political institutions. Political corruption has with it many lieutenants. That is, it could take the form of favouritism which is the abuse of power to better a few that are loyal to the perpetrator. Another one is nepotism, which also means the use of office to favour his kinfolks and family members.<sup>21</sup> These are the banes of Nigeria's political history since independence.

Mainly, what breeds corruption in Nigeria today is because people are rated based on material acquisition. The oil boom of 1956 brought great wealth which was grossly mismanaged by successive governments. The First Republic, between 1960 and 1966, found itself in the web of political corruption ranging from electoral malpractices to

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<sup>15</sup> J. S. Nye. (1967). "Corruption and National Development": A Case [Cost?] Benefit Analysis. *The American Political Science Review*. pg. 417.

<sup>16</sup> R. A. Olopoenia. (1998). *Political Economy of Corruption and Under-Development*. Ibadan: Vantage Publishers Limited.

<sup>17</sup> S. Huntington, (1968). *Modernization and Corruption: Political Order in Changing Societies*. Yale: New Haven.

<sup>18</sup> Wikipedia (2009). "Political Corruption in Nigeria." Wikipedia Foundation Inc. Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political\\_Corruption\\_in\\_Nigeria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_Corruption_in_Nigeria) on 12/2/2016.

<sup>19</sup> *The Encyclopedia Americana* 1999.

<sup>20</sup> Y. N. Omonu. (2008). "Taming the Tide of Corruption in Nigeria. Saki: Real Success Consult.

<sup>21</sup> V. E. Dike. (2005). "Corruption in Nigeria: A Paradigm for effective Control." *African Economic Analysis*.

violence, intimidation, kick backs in government, fraud, bribery, stealing and misappropriation of public funds. This is why Michael Crowther said:

*By the end of 1965, the politicians had earned almost universal contempt for their corruption. There is lack of real concern for those they ruled and who had elected them.*

The year between 1966 and 1975 witnessed the leadership of General Aguiyi Ironsi who set up a commission of inquiry to probe into the affairs of the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) and National Electric Power Authority (NEPA). But, as a result of widespread corruption, the administration was short-lived. In 1966, General Yakubu Gowon came on board, he acted on the report of the commission of inquiry on misuse of power, favouritism and embezzlement of funds by public officers. Decree 5 was used then to seize the properties corruptly acquired. But he could not also do much to address the menace of corruption.<sup>22</sup> In 1979, General Obasanjo took over power from him but nothing changed as corrupt practices remained unabated.

In the Second Republic of 1979-1983, Alhaji Shehu Shagari lamented:

*What worries me more than anything among problems is the moral decadence, bribery, corruption, lack of dedication to duty and dishonesty.*<sup>23</sup>

He launched what is called Ethical Revolution but despite his efforts, his administration was enmeshed in corruption, lack of accountability, fraud, kickbacks and so on. His administration witnessed the burning of public buildings to cover up fraud and stolen public funds. Government owed salary for eight to ten months as it is being experienced by many civil servants in almost all the states in the federation presently. His government was toppled in 1983.<sup>24</sup> The military coup of 1983 brought in General Muhammadu Buhari, and having noticed the high level of corruption especially by the successive governments, General Buhari commented:

*It is important to reiterate that this administration will not tolerate fraud, corruption, squander mania, abuse of office or graft that characterized the administration of the past four years.*<sup>25</sup>

And in order to match his words with action, he introduced 'War Against Indiscipline (WAI).' With its introduction, many state governors were arrested and prosecuted; many were imprisoned for life. Though, his government had lofty ideas to

<sup>22</sup> [www.Africaeconomicanalysis.Org/article](http://www.Africaeconomicanalysis.Org/article). Retrieved on 12th February, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/corruption\\_in\\_Nigeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/corruption_in_Nigeria). Retrieved on 17th August, 2016.

<sup>24</sup> [En.wikipedia.org/wiki/corruption](http://En.wikipedia.org/wiki/corruption). Retrieved on 17th March, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> The first speech of Muhammadu Buhari as the Military Head of State in Nigeria. [www.premiumtimesng.com,183841](http://www.premiumtimesng.com,183841), from the archives. Retrieved on 23rd March, 2016.

move the country to greater heights, he was toppled in 1985. The coming to power of President Ibrahim Babangida between 1985 and 1993 witnessed monumental corrupt practices. He promised to operate an open door policy and respect for human rights. He released all the corrupt people jailed by Buhari. In his government, corruption and extravagance became the order of the day.<sup>26</sup> He introduced the inglorious Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) but these were not reflected in the activities of government. His eight and a half years rule were characterised by settlements, kickbacks, and looting of the treasury, among others. He stepped aside in 1993 for an interim government after he annulled the June 12 presidential election, popularly known to have been won by Moshood Kasimawo Olawale Abiola (MKO Abiola).

The general public had believed that the coming to power of General Sanni Abacha would bring relief to Nigerians in the area of economy. But, his government, which came to power in October 1993 could not provide answers to the cases of corruption just like his predecessors. It was reported that 2-3 billion dollars was stolen by Abacha and his immediate family alone between 1993 and 1998. A lot of funds were siphoned through doggy contracts and most directly from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). General Abdusalami Abubakar took over power after the sudden demise of Abacha in June 1998. Efforts made by Abdusalami Abubakar to recover stolen funds yielded fruits as about 770 million dollars stolen was recovered.<sup>27</sup> Properties acquired by Abacha were seized and many others were auctioned. Chief Obasanjo took over power from General Abubakar in 1999 and all contracts awarded and appointments made by the previous government were revoked. Christopher Kolade cancelled about 1,684 contracts valued at 1.08 billion dollars. To deal with corruption, his government sent an anti-corruption bill to the National Assembly in June 1999. The bill was signed into law on June 13, 2000. This led to the establishment of Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) in 2002 to tackle corruption. The operation of the commission was greeted with criticisms of unimaginable proportion, as his government and the commissions were accused of being selective in their arrest and prosecution. The EFCC became a dog that could bark but cannot bite.<sup>28</sup>

During the short tenure of President Umaru Yar'adua, between 2007 and 2010, he first admitted the flaws in the elections that brought him to power and promised to set up a panel to study what happened so Nigerians could reform its electoral system. He promised a generational shift that would herald new governance from those born after independence. He outlined what he referred to as four areas of national consensus-deepening democracy and the rule of law, a private sector-driven economy, zero tolerance for corruption and restructuring government for efficiency. The government of Yar'adua was not able to do much to fight corruption due to sickness which eventually

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<sup>26</sup> [www.iproject.com.ng/.../project.topics](http://www.iproject.com.ng/.../project.topics). Retrieved 4th February, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> [Serialsjournal.com/.1390385477](http://Serialsjournal.com/.1390385477). Retrieved on 2nd February, 2016.

<sup>28</sup> [Ideas.repecc.org/a/ids/ijcrac/v5y201](http://Ideas.repecc.org/a/ids/ijcrac/v5y201). Retrieved on 16th February, 2016

### *Ethics of Self- Sacrifice as an Antidote to Political Corruption in the Contemporary Nigeria*

resulted in his death. The mantle of leadership fell on Goodluck Ebele Jonathan who was the Vice President to late President Yar'adua.

On his assumption of duty, he did not change the structure laid down by his predecessor. But, when he won the election after the expiration of the aborted tenure of his boss, Ya'radua, he surrounded himself with sycophants and political jobbers. Corruption became widespread that life became very difficult for ordinary Nigerians to live. In fact, it got to a level that Nigerians said the man had lost the control of governance.<sup>29</sup> Few of the political corruption cases under his government are: The N195 billion Maina Pension scam, Kerosene fuel subsidy scam, N6 billion fuel subsidy scam, N123 billion fraud where the former Auditor General of the Federation was indicted, N32.8 billion Police Pension fraud, Stella Oduah Car Purchase scandal (N255 million bullet proof car scandal in the Aviation Industry, NNPC's missing \$20 billion not making way to the treasury, \$15 million Private Jet Arms scandal, crude oil theft scandal, Mohammed Abacha's N446 billion case, N7 billion bribe to Christian religious leaders and so on. In fact, the list is endless.

In 2015, the government of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan handed over to Mohammadu Buhari with his change agenda. The slogan "change" shows that all is not well with Nigeria as a country and this he made known to all Nigerians in his maiden speech. He knew that for the country to move forward, there was the need to step on toes. He said, "if we don't kill corruption, corruption will kill us as a nation". The first step he took was the recovery of looted funds by past political office holders. He made the EFCC to work and this has been yielding positive results: some of the looted funds have been recovered while many others in corrupt practices have been charged to court. Among these are Chief Olisah Metuh, the National Publicity Secretary of PDP; Alexander Badeh, and Dasuki, the former security adviser to the government with \$2.1 billion money meant for the purchase of arms for the Nigerian Military which was shared among his political friends. The import of our historical journey on the winding political terrain in Nigeria is to show us that all has not been well from the beginning. As the menace of corruption was in the beginning of the nation, so it is now, but with the efforts of the present government, we hope it will not be so forever. Political corruption has eaten deep to the bone marrow of every sector in the nation. It is now crystal clear, therefore, that the real problem is the lack of self-sacrifice on the part of those at the corridors of power. Their self-centeredness has made the country to remain underdeveloped despite the abundance of human and natural resources found in virtually every local government in the country.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> [www.liste.org/--/8494](http://www.liste.org/--/8494). Retrieved. 10th March, 2016.

<sup>30</sup> [www.idersciencesonline.com./dol/abs/](http://www.idersciencesonline.com./dol/abs/). Retrieved on 12th April, 2016.

## Ethics of Self-Sacrifice and Political Corruption in Nigeria

In the contemporary society, the word “sacrifice” has been abused to the extent that its real meaning has been bastardized. Self-sacrifice as an ethical virtue holds that the moral value of an individual’s actions depends solely on its impact on other individuals, regardless of the consequences on the individual itself.<sup>31</sup> The efforts of the current administration in Nigeria have shown that it really wants change. However, the change we are talking about is ubiquitous in any society that strives to fulfill human needs. It takes a committed people to accomplish a propitious change in a society. The changes we have experienced in the past have not been for the benefits of the common man. Only those in the corridors of power have gained from those with multiplicity of riches, while the ordinary citizens have been wallowing penury. In other words, the masses have been preoccupied with the struggle for daily survival since independence. The recent revelation by Mr. Femi Falana (SAN) lays credence to the fact that those in the corridors of power have siphoned the commonwealth of the nation. He said this in his letter to the Minister of Finance that Nigeria needs not borrow 2 billion dollars from China when the politicians and political office holders have stolen about 200 billion dollars.<sup>32</sup> This revelation is a pointer to the fact that they have not imbibed the virtue of self-sacrifice.

Nigeria is awash with influential men who do not have great ideas. People merely occupy positions of authority but are bereft of big dreams and visions of greatness for the nation. They are irredeemably unwilling to sacrifice self for the country and truly commit to serve the people. Corruption in Nigeria is systemic and needs to be dealt with systematically.<sup>33</sup> The nation therefore needs people with a renewal of minds who are ready to sacrifice self, not gluttons. Of course, both political leaders and the citizens should know that the greatest challenge Nigeria is facing presently is political corruption. Therefore, the fight against it must be at once, thorough and intense. We must be ready to sacrifice ourselves for the growth of the nation.

On the need to sacrifice self for the nation, President Buhari decried the level of stealing of public funds that took place under former President Goodluck Jonathan, saying:

*It was regrettable that monies meant for arms and equipment of public schools could be stolen by politicians without any thought of the consequences to the larger society. What the country needs is a moral elite, a leadership that is ready to make the sacrifice of self and interest for the good of the people<sup>34</sup>.*

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<sup>31</sup> Lotterman, [initials?] (2002) “*Bad Rules Breed Corruption*” Pioneer Press .

<sup>32</sup> This statement was contained in a letter written to the Minister of Finance. Mrs. Kemi Adeosun on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April, 2016. Published in *The Punch* of 11th April, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Nigerian Leaders’ Burden of Guilt. *The Guardian* 9th April, 2016.

<sup>34</sup> Alifa, Daniel & Olaniyi, Segun. “Nigeria Needs More Elite, Ready for Self Sacrifice by Mohammodu Buhari. *The Guardian* 26th January, 2016.

From the excerpt above, it is clear that the present administration is aware of the enormity of the political corruption that has taken the centre-stage of our political history. But, we also have to say here that it is not only those at the corridors of power that are corrupt. The menace of corruption is written everywhere in the country: the police, customs, higher institutions of learning, the health sector, to mention but a few. There is urgent need for a holistic approach to address the problem, if the current administration will succeed in their efforts at stemming the tide. This is because this is a country where the poor become poorer and corrupt as a result of the fact that life has been difficult for them to sustain with their legitimate earnings. The middle class which has always been the harbinger of growth, integrity and societal cleansing is confused and diminishing daily and is not sure whether to join the thieving rich or the suffering and corrupt poor.<sup>35</sup>

There is no doubt that the country is blessed with intellectuals in every field of human endeavour such as theology, law, medicine, natural sciences and engineering. Nigeria is endowed with enormous potentials and opportunities that could make it really great and offer her citizens a comfortable living. But, the reverse is the case. The former President of the United States of America (USA), Bill Clinton, once described Nigeria as a rich nation, but that the citizens are poor. The views of scholars who have lamented on the state of the nation is apposite to our discussion here. One of such is Abogunrin who lamented that:

*...Our major ethical problems include tribalism, armed robbery and pen robbery and corruption, greed and dishonesty, indolence and murder,.... The prodigal display of ill-gotten wealth by emergency contractors and politicians, retired civil servants and military officers had increased the thirst of most Nigerians for the Naira. It is now common to spray in dollars or pound sterling in order to really prove that one has made it.<sup>36</sup>*

This view of Abogunrin is corroborated by Lasebikan when he said;

*.... people holding the government coffers build for themselves both winter and summer houses....bullet proof cars and private jet....The rich extorts the poor....There is cheating in business, injustice in law courts, hypocrisy of allsorts, falsehood and lying...This period in Nigerian history is just as bad as the day of Amos in the Bible.<sup>37</sup>*

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<sup>35</sup> B. O. Olabode, and O. P. Oke. (2011). "Corruption and Religious Values: An Exploration into the Manipulation of Religion as Agent of Corruption". In A.B. Sunday (ed.). *Corruption, Democracy and Good Governance in Nigeria*. Saki: General Studies Department, Saki Campus.

<sup>36</sup> S. O. Abounrin. (1986). "Religion and Ethics." In S. O. Abogunrin (ed.) *Religion and Ethics in Nigeria*. Ibadan Religious Studies Series. Ibadan. Daystar Press. [pages?]

<sup>37</sup> G. L. Lasebikan (1986). "Ethical Revolution: The Prophetic Model". In S. O. Abogunrin (ed.) *Religion and Ethics in Nigeria*. Ibadan Religious Studies Series. Ibadan. Daystar Press.

The underlying factor in the quotations above is the prevalence of corruption. Every sector has virtually collapsed. This occurred due to the absence of committed and selfless people, as well as those who are ready to do sacrifice for the betterment of their people.<sup>38</sup> The wealth of the nation is not well distributed as evident in the marginalization of some groups; and in the monetization of political posts, which has led to a concentration of national or state resources in the hands of few individuals, who squander them at the expense of the poor. It is very expensive to maintain political functionaries who are only interested in how to amass wealth.<sup>39</sup>

To achieve the desired change as being championed by the current administration in Nigeria, both people at the corridors of power and the followers alike must imbibe the spirit of honesty, sincerity and self-sacrifice. It is only through this that Nigeria can raise her head high among the comity of nations.

### Concluding Remarks

It is expedient at this juncture to examine categories of people in Nigeria who have really sacrificed their time, family and comfort due to the nature of their jobs. For instance, at every election, electorates sacrifice their time and energy to cast vote for their candidates. While many would stay in the sun, others would wait for days at the collation centres to make sure that their votes were counted. Also, security personnel in order to guide against the breakdown of law and order, sacrifice the exercise of their franchise for the nation. On many occasions some of these security men lost their lives in the process of protecting the masses. The reporters also are not left out, they make sure they report activities going on at various polling booths, both at the local government and state levels to the people. As a result of this, they could not cast their votes. It is a kind of sacrifice. The staff of Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC), in order to ensure free and fair elections, had many sleepless nights in distributing and monitoring election materials together with the ad-hoc staff recruited for the purpose. Many of these ad-hoc staff had lost their lives in their strive to see a better Nigeria, most especially the National Youth Service Corps members. The recent one occurred in Rivers State where Mr. Okonta was hit by a strayed bullet during a senatorial re-run election in the state. It was the sacrifice made by all stakeholders during the just concluded election that led to the success and the eventual emergence of Mohammadu Buhari as the president. Everybody needed change and they worked assiduously to achieve it. This was attested to by both local and foreign election observers and the media.

Politicians at the party level should also make sacrifice in the process of picking candidates that will be their flag bearers. Time has come when our politicians should not pick moneybag politicians who are ready to spend money to buy their votes. Rather, they

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<sup>38</sup> S. O. Abogunrin, (1999). "Religion and Democracy in Nigeria". *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* .xxx1/1-2, June & Dec [pages?].

<sup>39</sup> O. O. Familusi & O. P. Oke (2011) "A Christian Dimension to Poverty Discourse in Nigeria". In *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*,. XLIII/2.[pages?].

should look for candidates who may not have money to spend but have genuine interest of the people and who are ready to join hands towards the development of the nation. The political office holders should also take their jobs seriously by sacrificing their time, energy, knowledge and all resources at their disposal to develop the country. This is why the pronouncements made by both the Minister of Health and the Minister of Communication, Professor Isaac Adewole and Barrister Adebayo Shittu, respectively, are highly commendable as they said they were ready to work without collecting salary. This is indeed a sacrifice. This shows that there are individuals who are really ready to sacrifice what they have to move the nation forward. The statement credited to J. F. Kennedy, "Think of what you can do for your country, and not what your country can do for you" should be the guiding principle for all our political office holders in the country. This is self-sacrifice. Therefore, having identified the areas and individuals who had sacrificed their time, energy and resources for the development of their fatherland, we still believe that more can still be done by political office holders and the general public in the area of self-sacrifice in order for the country to get to her promised land. The Nigerian project is our collective project and we must join hands to make it a succeed.

### **Recommendation and Conclusion**

This paper has examined the high level of political corruption in Nigeria and has shown that the major cause of this menace is the absence of virtue of self-sacrifice on the part of politicians and political office holders in the country. It, therefore, recommends a total revival of the virtue of self-sacrifice at every level of existence to political office holders in the country so as to curb the menace of political corruption which has become a household name in Nigeria.

To deal with the problem of political corruption adequately and honestly, there is the need for the religious leaders, in collaboration with the government of the day, to keep members under a close watch, since many of these political office holders are members of one religious organisation or the other.

Moreover, exposing corrupt people and making them to face the consequences of their actions will make the citizens see the seriousness on the part of government in its fight against corruption and build a sense of confidence in the members of the public. This is why the efforts so far made by the current administration under President Buhari is highly commendable.

The National Orientation Agency (NOA) must be empowered to wake up from their slumber in educating the people generally so as to enlighten them about the ethical values that must be imbibed by all politicians in particular and everybody at large. This could be done through public enlightenment, seminars, conferences, and symposia

Most importantly, integrity must not be sacrificed on the altar of materialism. Though, this has been the bane of our politicians. But, this should not be allowed to continue, if we really want a change in the country.

Civic as a subject must be re-introduced in schools curriculum, most especially at the primary school level. If this is done, it will help in no small measure in inculcating the spirit of self-sacrifice, patriotism, honesty and so on.

This paper has endeavoured to discuss the importance of self-sacrifice to our political office holders and it has also suggested that for Nigeria to be free indeed from the menace of corruption, which has led the country to take a back row in the comity of nations, the government at all levels must hold the bull by the horn in addressing the myriad of problems facing the country, especially in the area of political corruption. If the recommendations offered above to every stakeholder are adequately followed, the prevalence of corruption in the country will be highly minimized, if not totally eradicated.

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