"The Richest Dust Bin in the Land": Emancipatory Dialogue on Institutionalized Corruption (IC): A Case of Botswana.

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Abstract

Moral degeneration in Botswana and the region has coincided with rapid socio-economic and political developments. In this context, it is all too easy to suggest a simple cause and effect relationship between the socio-economic and political difficulties and Institutionalized Corruption (IC). In Botswana today, Institutionalized Corruption (IC) occurs within a complex reality that involves historical processes, and the erosion of moral fibre. This paper attempts to show that Institutionalized Corruption (IC) cannot only be addressed through political and constitutional means, but also through social, moral ad theological ways. The paper argues that contextual public theological approaches shed a better light onto issues relating to institutional corruption because, Botswana is predominantly a Christian country.

Key Words: Contextual Public Theology of Liberation, Institutionalized Corruption (IC), The Richest Dust Bin, Contextual Public Theology.

Introduction

At the outset, the title of the paper warrants a commentary. The phrase "The richest dustbin in the land" comes from one of Botswana's widely read newspaper Mmegi Monitor of 15th March 2018 which carried a story that read in part, "last weekend, this dustbin had exactly P50, 000 (Fifty Thousand Pula) in hard cash stashed inside it like trash". The dustbin belonged to the Minister of Land Management, Water and Sanitation Services Hon. Prince Maele. It is at his unoccupied house at Plot 39044, Block 6, Gaborone, that, agents of the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC) said they got a tip-off about the money in the bin and moved in swiftly to raid the house on Saturday morning. (Monitor Thursday, 15 March, 2018).

I use the phrase not to suggest that there is indeed a rich dustbin, but rather as a metaphor for the scale magnitude of Institutional Corruption (IC) in Botswana. I wish to underscore the fact that when IC settles in any society, it erodes society's moral fibre to a point where corrupt leaders mishandle national resources symbolized by stashing money in a dustbin thereby making it richer than the majority of citizens. Handling money in this manner is not only illegal, but also immoral and unethical, because money is a valuable legal tender. Thus, stashing it in a dustbin is an unlawful act that can only be done by people with no ethics and morals. This raises several critical questions by those above corruption and aspire to high moral standards: "Why are our leaders corrupt?" and "Why does God allow it?". Asking such questions does not only set up the stage for dialogue on the issue of IC but also helps us produce knowledge because, posing questions always results in new knowledge. This is a dialogue on an issue relating to an oppressive act. I have called it emancipatory dialogue, because it somehow requires a liberative response. I borrow the concept of emancipatory dialogue from ancient Rome more specifically in Roman law where emancipation was an act of freeing a son from the legal authority of the father (Biesta, 2010; 41). However, as Gross (2010:10) points out, in those early days, emancipation signified integration into the current order rather than freeing oneself from it as only those who could ensure the permanence of paternal property were guaranteed emancipation. In addition, the process was closely intertwined with the unequal structures of society and the renewal of existing inequalities rather than an attempt to change them (ibid., pp. 10-11). Only later did emancipation come to mean a process of relinquishing one's authority over someone in order for the object of emancipation to become independent and free, as it is known today (Biesta, 2010:41). In this particular case IC deprives the ordinary citizens of their basic rights as the money that is meant to help them is wrongly and unlawfully diverted by the corrupt leaders. Murray and Spalding (2015:1) view corruption as a principal cause of human suffering and deprivation. The Scriptural view on man examines corrupt behaviour from the Christian religious and theological basis. Heitink (1992:111) regards Christian anthropology as a combination of Scriptural views on man, insights gained from philosophy and other scientific insights on man. I would argue that the Church through theology is the only institution with high moral standing which can regenerate and rebuild the moral fibre of Botswana society which is fragmenting (Cochrane, 1999:47-57).

Method

My interest in this paper is to unpack the relationship between "The richest dustbin on land" and the citizens of Botswana, as way of showing how contextual theology of liberation may be used to fight IC. In doing that, I make some theoretical and theological considerations which

I use as a springboard to understand how contextual theology provides a useful framework for understating how IC negatively affects the ordinary people. In putting contextual public theology of liberation in its right place and for the purpose of this paper, I introduce three basic situations necessary for this process to take off. These are part of the methods used by the poor in fighting for freedom. The main reason for using these methods is because corruption by nature is oppressive. Hopefully, all these three situations will also help put into perspective how contextual theology of liberation may be used to fight IC. The three basic situations are also important, because they help comprehend experiences and praxis of the people of Botswana

The *first situation* is serving the marginalised people. This is based on the people's context and the importance of the Bible in their lives. Here, the oppressed and the marginalised communities bring their real life problems of pain, despair and hopelessness brought about by IC in doing theology and reading the Bible. In the context of Botswana, Christians meet at parish level and the motivation is to try and understand the relevance of the word of God in their own situation. The *second situation* is the reality of the community deprived of socioeconomic benefits by the corrupt leaders and those in power, the marginalized read the Bible filled with faith in the Word of God. From here, they recreate their freedom from the Bible as tool of liberation and not oppression. The *third situation* is the Bible and its relevance. The marginalised read the Bible obediently and show a deep respect for the text. Thus, they use the Bible because it is a relevant book that creates some form of freedom (Mesters, Carlos, 1988:197-210).

These three situations characterize the use of the Bible by those experiencing pain. When their community takes shape on the basis of real life problems, the Bible comes in as an enormous reinforcement to tackle social and political issues relating to IC. These three situations can be successive stages in a single ongoing process, or they can be antagonistic situations that obstruct and exclude each other, depending on how the process is conducted. They also bring in an approach widely concerned with interpretation and debate over connections between *meaning* and *existence*. This is particularly true, because in hermeneutics it is impossible to divorce the meaning of the text from the cultural context of its interpreter. The interpreter facilitates interpretations and are themselves worked upon, (i.e. confirmed, modified, refuted, amended, etc.) in the course of the interpretation. This process is sometime described as the *hermeneutic circle* (Gadamaer, Hans. Georg. 1975:235-45).

Terminology Defined

Towards a definition of Institutional Corruption (IC)

The challenge facing corruption analysts is how to define it, because it has many meanings depending on the discipline. In an attempt to make a broad definition of Institutional Corruption(IC), I start with Heidenheimer (1970:3-64), who defines it as the "destruction or spoiling of anything, especially by disintegration or decomposition with its accompanying unwholesomeness". Institutional Corruption is also about making, or someone becoming morally corrupt, a fact or condition which results from moral decay, depravity as well as the perversion of an institution, custom, from its primary purity. Similar sentiments are expressed by Ravijan and Ramesh (2009:261-370), who postulate that corruption generates a sense of injustice and disempowerment erecting an additional barrier that widens inequality between the more and less privileged. Institutional IC in general, includes several behavioural actions, fraud (theft by misrepresentation), money laundering of corporate or private funds, and bribery (payments to benefit from an action or the prevention of private prejudice from given transaction.

Lessig (2013:4) on the other hand, defines IC as a situation where ones' influence within an economy tends to weaken the effectiveness of an institution, especially by weakening the public trust of the institution. For Lessig (2013:4), IC is an essential relative, rather than an absolute phenomenon. As such, IC is manifest when there is a systemic and strategic influence which is legal, or even currently ethical, that undermines the institution's effectiveness by diverting it from its purpose or weakening its ability to achieve its purpose, including, to the extent relevant to its purpose, weakening either the public's trust in that institution or the institution's inherent trustworthiness. Similarly sentiments are expressed by Luo argues that IC is a large part of corruption and is prevalent when there are no criteria for proven integrity and responsibility in the promotion. For him, IC results from deliberate negligence, or a lack of ethical assessment. Is it an issue of ethical shortsightedness?

Ashforth and Annand (2003:1-54) argue that organizations hold an administrative and functional structure. They emphasize that corruption should not only be regarded as a *state* of misuse, but, also as a *process*, i.e. a gradual institutionalization of misbehavior which contributes to legitimizing behavior and socializing others into it in such a way that it gradually becomes normalized, what may be called a 'culture of corruption' (Ashforth and Annand,

2003:1-54). Their view is shared by Makumbe (1999:1) and Cochrane (1999:3) who argue that global consumerism trends on the crumbling of value systems as well as moral authority within developing and developed countries as motivational factors in corruption.

Second, Hermeneutics and Interpretation - Contextual Public Theology of Liberation

A significant tradition in the social sciences concerned with interpretation is hermeneutics. Derived initially from debates in German-speaking countries over the interpretation of the Bible, this approach has become increasingly concerned with wider issues of interpretation and with philosophical debate over the connections between meaning and existence. Hermeneutics argues that it is impossible to divorce the meaning of a text from the cultural context of its interpreter. In order to interpret any text the interpreter necessarily and unavoidably brings to the text certain prior understanding or fore-understanding from his /her own culture. This conversation-like process is sometimes described as "the hermeneutic circle" (Gadamer, Hans-Georg 1975:235-45). The hermeneutic circle has fed into many theories of culture in the social sciences and humanities. One example of an approach influenced by the hermeneutic tradition can be found in the work of Contextual theologians of liberation such as Stephen B. Bevan's (1992:01).

Let us frame hermeneutics for a contextual theology of liberation which can only be meaningful if it reflects and embraces what David Ford calls "ecology of responsibility" (1999:18). In his book, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Bevan (1992:01), defines Contextual theology of liberation as a way of doing theology in which one takes into account the spirit and message of the gospel, the tradition of the church, the culture in which one is theologizing, and social change within that culture. Contextual theology of liberation helps one to reflect on the religious community, and most importantly, on the society or community within which the religious and academic community resides. Furthermore, this theology while not compromising its critical analytical and scholarly character is articulated "in the cultural ethos available" (Ford, 1999:18). This view is shared by Cox (1965:262-265) who, however, pled for theology to remain relevant and responsive to the changing forces within society as they manifest their impact on culture.

Some Causes of Institutionalized Corruption in Botswana

This section looks at some of the causes of corruption in general. In doing that, it makes note of some of the theories of IC before it makes specific references to the ones relevant to Botswana. Evans (1999:5) identifies influential current day factors such as poverty and a closed culture of government as favorable breeding ground for corruption.

Institutional Theory (IT)

Most organisations and institutions compete with other organisations for the attention of publics works. Competing organisations can have great influence on how they behave and conduct business. When one organisation is less successful than the other and does not earn profits, for example, it may influence how they end up becoming corrupt. Whereas scholars in general are agreeable that corruption clearly indicates that something worthy or good has become "tainted" or "morally debased," or made to no longer function properly, DiMaggio and Powel (1983:2), describe Institutional theory (IT) as one of the theories of IC. According to them Institutional theory (IT) is the malfeasant behaviour that could lead to the development of lack of focus. This in many instances could result in the organization being weak and unable to respond to environmental changes. DiMaggio and Powell (1983:2) further note that corrupt organizational change may result from political decisions introduced by those in authority. They explain that based on individual interests, they would accept and follow social norms unquestioningly, without any critical reflection or resistance.

Capture Theory (CT)

Capture theory confines itself to forms of subversion or control that occur only *after* a group of firms or an industry uses state funds to influence legislators to "see" things their way and set up regulations to enhance their wealth or power. Posner (1983: 11) defines it as the "subversion" of agencies by regulated firms, "turning the agency into their vassal." "Corrosive capture" consists of actions that weaken regulatory oversight and independence once entry barriers have had their effects.

Cultural Capture Theory (CCT)

Cultural capture also known as "cognitive capture" captures people's mind that shapes the assumptions, terms and accounts that all parties come to accept. It is the most powerful and least developed. Its main aim is to have regulators believe that something would benefit the majority of citizens so that the goal is to approve them as quickly as possible.

Background and Context of IC in Botswana

Having looked at various theories of IC it becomes clear that the causes and different types of IC result from lack of moral and ethical behaviour. In this section, I explore some examples IC in Botswana after a brief background of Botswana as an independent country. Botswana gained independence from Britain in 1966, and has maintained a multi-party, parliamentary democratic republican state. At independence, it was one of the poorest countries in the world. Since then, it has seen tremendous growth mainly due to the discovery of diamonds. Though Botswana has attempted to escape the "resource curse" that seems to have bedevilled many post-colonial countries, it has unfortunately been unable to deal with IC in the country. Gbadamosi (2006:4) for example, notes that "repeated corruption scandals were seen in Botswana throughout the 1980 and 90". These scandalous reports were later confirmed by the 1991 presidential commission which exposed graft to supply primary school textbooks mounting to 27 million pula (approximately US\$15 Million). Below, I discuss *nepotism and patronage conflict of interest* and *tenderspreneurship*, as some of the examples of Institutional Corruption (IC) in Botswana.

Nepotism and Patronage

Nepotism and patronage are one form of IC that has been rampant in Botswana. According to Ditlhase, (2012:3), several reports indicate that many of the appointments made by the former president of the republic, Lieutenant-General Dr. Ian Seretse Khama were based on patronage and nepotism. His view is shared by Sebubudubu (2014:3), who notes that patronage in most cases results from a network that sees relatives and friends politicians, or those close to those who are in positions of power such as the army, and key positions, in the private sector business as well as local government. In most cases the desire for this greater wealth is the chief reason for nepotism and patronage. Most of the people who do this have power and mastery because

they belong to governing class or are somehow allied with it. Sebudubudu (2014:3) notes that people also do this because they want to entrench their power.

On nepotism, Sebudubudu (2014:3) notes that Brigadier Dikgakgamatso Seretse who is a cousin to Ian Khama and held a ministerial position of Defence, Security and Justice has been alleged to award tenders to his family-owned company. Though he was accused of these corrupt practices, he was acquitted, because both he and the president are related to Rose Seretse who heads the Directorate of Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC), a body that is supposed to investigate and fight corruption. What is clear here is that we are faced with IC that directly or indirectly receives legitimacy from the established order which the ruling class is a principal participant as is the case with both Brigadier Seretse and Rose Seretse who are related to former president Ian Khama. Sebudubudu (2014:3, further notes that, other examples of nepotism and patronage are the case of Mr Mathambo, Minister of Finance and Economic Development Planning, as well as Mr Lionjanga, the Executive Chairperson of the Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Board (PPADB) and Ms Pearl Matome who was the Director of Public Service Management (DPSM). All were acquitted because they hold senior positions in government or are somehow aligned to the ruling elite. What comes out clearly from the above examples of IC is that there is lack of transparency, especially at the government and institutional level, as those in power such as the president downplay or reacting mildly to corruption charges. Little power of decision within organizations to penalize acts of corruption creates an environment conducive for perpetuating corruption.

Conflict of Interest

Whenever there is talk of conflict of interest in Botswana, it is important to identify and locate those that are involved. Pippidi, (2011:4) notes that there is blurred line between private and public interests. For him members of the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) are often the owners or directors of commercial businesses and framing enterprises doing business with government. Family members are often the ones owning companies which would win tenders from government (Sebudubudu 2014:4). In spite of these scandalous reports, some members of the BDP led government have vigorously opposed or reluctant to pass legislation that forces MPs and ministers to declare their assets and interests once they assume these positions of responsibility. The primary aim of allowing this conflict of interests by the ruling class is to accumulate wealth at the expense of the weak. In short there is laxity or no sense of service by

the leaders to act because they are conflicted. Conflict of interest leads to failure by those in power to adhere to regulations and efficient controls. Sometimes, it results from weak regulations and control mechanisms as well as slow judicial processes. Cultural environments often condone corruption, such as in defending or even admiring crooks, as in "you have to be pretty smart to evade taxes" or rationalizing false arguments with no moral basis as in "everyone does it", "take advantage while you can" and "life is short".

Tenderspreneurship

Tenderspreneurship comes from the word "Tenderpreneur", and it refers to a person in government or the private sector who obtains private or government tenders and contracts to facilitate outsourced services. Tenderpreneur is a portmanteau of "tendering" and "entrepreneur". According to Sebudubudu (2014:3), many business people doing business in Botswana are heavily dependent on government contracts and this has led to a high dependence on the state to redistribute wealth for the benefit of society, which is done through government tenders to create state infrastructure. For him, this situation makes the awarding and winning of tenders highly important and has given rise to IC that has also been enhanced by nepotism, patronage and conflict of interest. Tenderpreneurship also results from the decline of personal ethical sensitivity either due to lack of education or negative learning experiences, developed by downplaying perverse conduct in the past. This may also result from low awareness or lack of courage to denounce corrupt behavior by those who are awarding tenders. Such people lack morality, sensitivity, and ethics.

Mitigating the Negative Impact of Institutional Corruption(IC): A Contextual Public Theological Perspective

Given the impact of the dustbin story, of the there is no doubt that IC negatively affects society. Van Vuuren (2009:5) identifies the following as some of the negative results of IC in many African societies: (a) Limitation of service delivery, (b) Deeping of corruption, (c) elite networks, (d) delayed economic development, (e) unemployment, (f) destabilization of democratic institutions, (g) undermined constitutional rights, and higher crime rates. Various professionals such as political scientists, business leaders and economists have examined IC and its distinguishing aspects with a view to addressing the devastating losses to governments. All suggest a need for a holistic approach to tackling IC in these countries. Approaching IC from a theological perspective, the question to raise is, "My God, Why does this happen, why does God permit it?". This paper does not intend to answer this question, but at the same time we cannot ignore it either, because it is an existential one asked by sufferers of IC. That is, their question is, "my God, where are you, or more generally, where is God? because they seek to understand how God can permit IC that makes them suffer.

Experience of God is the Liberation from IC

To answer the above theological question and mitigate all forms of IC and thereby clean the "the richest dustbin on land", government should promulgate easy-to-understand laws that help fight corruption. For these laws to work we must first know God of liberation. Liberation is an important part of the structure of the biblical narratives that report oppressive situation. Oppression and liberation are at once correlative and also in conflict with each other. Correlative because liberation is possible only when there is oppression and, in conflict, because one is sin and the other salvation (Elsa Tamez, 1982 34-35).

The quest to see God in a situation where IC is rampant, as is in Botswana, can be and will be futile and frustrating if done from a mere academic and mental perspective. Instead, it should be a spiritual, emotional and ethical journey in life requiring submission in total humility to allow God of liberation to reveal, speak, and act in human history, even in such agonizing situations where his presence may be doubted. It is important for us to understand and consider the nature of God especially when faced with situations like IC, state capture and moral degeneration. All these social ills are oppressive and bring about suffering. In the Bible, the

historical agent of liberation is Yahweh acting through the oppressed; at the same time it is the oppressed who determine that they will no longer yield to the oppressed. We read in the Bible that liberation is always connected with the experience of God (Pablo 1975:7). Thus, the role of the God of liberation becomes timely and pertinent. The Bible is book of testimonies where God is experienced in a vital way of not making himself known in a purely intellectual manner. The creed of the Hebrews speaks primarily of the events they have lived through: events which bear witness to Yahweh as a just and liberating God (Deut. 26.6-10). Bonino (1975:23) sums the role of the God of liberation against all sorts of social ills including IC as follows:

"The World is the space given to human beings where they may be themselves. God will answer their call, share their struggles, suffer and rejoice with them. But God does not invade their space nor turn it into something to be manipulated...Jesus did come to open for them the way by which they can accomplish their human task"

The biblical view on man, forms the premise of examining corrupt behaviour. Writing from a biblical anthropology of man, Coetzee & Snell (2013) in an article entitled A Practical-Theological Perspective on Corruption: Towards a Solution-Based Approach in Practice, argue that man forms the basis of examining corrupt behaviour. Their view is shared by Van Wyk (2001:56) who argues that man is a religious being who is able to have faith and freedom and Joubert (2004:20) who notes that man is able to think, feel and exercise free will before God consisting of moral and ethical dimension. Of relevance to this paper, is their view that IC is just another form of economic injustice which results from the fall of man which makes him to sin (Genesis 3). The burning question however remains, what does the Bible say about injustices in general? The answer to this question is found in Exodus 3: 7-8, where God reveals himself to Moses saying, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out, because of their suffering. So, I have come to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and bring them down out of that land to a good and spacious land. The Bible teaches us that people's first experience with God is the experience of immense liberation and freedom (Galatians, 5:13-14). Van Pelt (1999:227) notes that the experience of God brings inwardly, their energies for living a free life from the obstructions of guilt and death. Outwardly, it brings about freedom from compulsions of economic, political, cultural repression and greed.

This is not the only example of human liberation in the Bible, because in the Old Testament God speaks out against all forms of injustices including IC, and clearly rejects the unjust ways of his fallen people. Scripture is clear on the meaning man should attach to money, as it reminds him in Matt, 6:19, not to store up treasures on earth. Among the forms of IC that the Bible condemns is *fraud* which is the common method used by oppressors to enrich themselves. Fraud takes the form of using false scales in deceitful transactions. The law of every country prohibits the use of false scales, but the oppressor breaks the law and commits the fraud. The law of the Bible also assures equity in the transaction while at the same time resisting the monopolizing of land which the book of Micah (2:2) denounces. Micah is also critical of those who grab land away from the poor. It's states that God denounces those who seize other people's land and those who take what does not belong to them, defraud people of houses and inheritances (Micah, 2:1-2). Usury is when the corrupt oppressor lends at interest because this is a way of making a very large profit (Proverb, 22: 22). With regard to illegal transactions the law "states that if you sell to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not wrong, cheat one another." (Lev, 25:14). Bribery is a form of oppression practiced by the Judges who takes sides at the expense of the poor. The book of Proverbs is clear that "Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at gate" (Proverb, 22: 22). In addition, it warns us that when the wicked rise to power, people go into hiding; but when the wicked perish, the righteous thrive (Proverbs 28:28). With regard to those who take advantage of the legal system, Deuteronomy warns that you shall not show partiality and you shall not pervert justices, you shall not show partiality and you shall not take bribes, for bribes blind the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. Justice and only justice you shall follow (Deut, 16:19-20).

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to show how contextual theology of liberation is crucial in mitigating Institutional corruption (IC) in Botswana. It has tried to show how contextual theology of liberation connects ideas of ethics, Biblical anthropology and moral issues in dealing with IC. Louw, (1997:297) shows us that once corruption becomes institutionalized and permeates the entire social structure, judges become corrupt and connive with the corrupt, and acquit the quilt for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of their right (Isaiah 5:23).

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