



## **A Corrupt Member in the Cabinet of Jesus Christ: John 12:3-8 In Light of Effective Management of Corruption in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Corruption, which refers to a virus capable of destroying an organised system, is identified in the cabinet of Jesus Christ and the Nigerian system of government. The sacred texts, including John 12:3-8, portray Judas Iscariot as the corrupt member of the apostolic band of Jesus. Also, Nigeria's system of government has been bedevilled with corrupt political leadership. Previous studies have discussed the life and career of Judas Iscariot, the disciples of Jesus and Jesus himself, and corruption in Nigeria, with little attention paid to Jesus' expertise in managing the corrupt members of his cabinet and its relevance to effective political leadership in Nigeria. This paper, therefore, examines Jesus' managerial skills towards the corrupt member of his cabinet in John 12:3-8, with a view to establishing the relevance of Jesus' managerial skills to Nigerian political leadership. While Samuel Abogunrin's approach to the Decolonisation of New Testament Interpretation in Africa was adopted, the interpretive design was used. Sources are analysed exegetically. The findings of this study have implications for an effective system of governance in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Jesus' managerial skills, Judas Iscariot in John's Gospel, Management of a corrupt member, Nigerians' battle against corruption

### **Introduction**

Jesus chose Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης as a potential follower and disciple, and admonished him repeatedly to be a "little Jesus." Christ's foreknowledge of Ἰούδας does not imply fore-ordination that he must inexorably become the corrupt member of his cabinet. However, the selected biblical text, John 12:3-8, portrays the identified characteristics of the corrupt member in the apostolic band, Ἰούδας, as follows: love of money; jealousy of the other disciples; fear of the inevitable outcome of Jesus Christ's ministry, which

made him turn state's evidence to save his skin; an enthusiastic intention to force Christ's hand and make him declare himself as Messiah; and a bitter and revengeful spirit, which arose when his worldly hopes were crushed and this disappointment resulted in hate. Oh corruption, steals, kills, and destroys!

The pervasiveness of corruption is, perhaps, why it is the most discussed issue anywhere Nigerians are gathered. Whether at bus stops, in offices, churches, mosques, hospitals, or in political or social meetings, Nigerians of every ilk have become experts in dissecting how Nigerian leaders have failed to tackle corruption and its attendant consequences. In all the informal and formal discussions (workshops and seminars), it is almost always agreed that corruption is wreaking havoc on the country but not all are agreed on how best to reduce the problem as many Nigerians are only waiting for the right time, the right opportunity to indulge in corrupt acts as those who engage in it get away with it.<sup>1</sup>

The questions arising from the above submission are as follows: How did the study of John 12:3-8 help to understand the corrupt member in Jesus' cabinet and his corrupt practices? To what extent have Nigerian agencies to fight against corruption succeeded? What are the possible consequences corruption had on the corrupt members of Jesus' cabinet, corrupt Nigerian leaders and the entire Nigeria? In what ways can Jesus' managerial skills towards the corrupt member in his cabinet as reported in John 12:3-8 serve as a catalyst to halting corrupt practices in Nigeria's system of governance? In attempting to proffer solutions to these questions, the paper adopts Samuel Abogunrin's approach to the Decolonisation of New Testament Interpretation in Africa, which posits that biblical interpretation must be

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Okecha says, while a few of The friends and relatives of the new government-appointed or elected officer would pray for his success in office and ask him to toe the line of righteousness, the majority of them would unashamedly say openly or privately to him some things including, "This is your chance to become rich; make the best of this God-given opportunity; *God don butter your bread-o*, so, make it fast; if you do *oyibo* for this job, *na you go suffer*; grab anything that comes your way, opportunity comes but once; don't be like John XYZ, the *mugu*, who has nothing to show for all his years as Permanent Secretary; make hay while the sun shines; and *Na where man de work, naim ide chop.*" *Newswatch* (October 4, 2010): 55.



relevant and meaningful in the context of Africa.<sup>2</sup> The interpretive design is used. Remarkably, not every Nigerian is corrupt, a good number of Nigerians are an embodiment of probity: they are among the clergy and journalists, in the military, judiciary, civil service, academia, trade unions, and business houses, among others. Nigerian leaders include leaders in the sacred order (religious and traditional leaderships) and secular leaders (political, institutional, management, professional, youth and community leadership, among others). This paper dwells on political leadership in Nigeria.

### **The Corrupt Member in the Cabinet of Jesus: A Background**

In the synoptic lists of the Twelve whom Jesus called to be with him, the name Ἰούδας constantly appears last (Mark 3:14) with a habitual description that brands him an infamous stigma (Mark 3:19; Matthew 10:4; Luke 6:16). These synoptic texts and John 12:4 apply the Greek ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης to his name.<sup>3</sup> Other Johannine textual traditions confirm the derivation of ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης from Hebrew ἰσqrīyot, “a man of Keriot.”<sup>4</sup> Ἰούδας was the Treasurer (John 13:29) and a thief (John 12:6) in the apostolic band.<sup>5</sup> Also, he was the traitor (John 13:2, 27) who delivered Jesus up to his enemies privately/secretly by craft (Mark 14:1-2; Luke 22:6) in the Upper Room (Mark 14:17) to collect money<sup>6</sup>. These traits of Ἰούδας portray him as a corrupt member of the cabinet of Jesus Christ. Despite the later days of Ἰούδας are beset with much difficulty of his pathetic remorse, apostle Ἰούδας had become an apostate and had gone to the destiny reserved for a corrupt person.

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel O. Abogunrin, “Decolonizing New Testament Interpretation in Africa”, in Samuel O. Abogunrin (ed.), *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa*, Ibadan, Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (2005), 267.

<sup>3</sup> The name Ἰούδας appears eight times in John’s Gospel: as Ἰούδας (John 13:29, 18:2, 3, and 5); as Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης in John 12:4; as Ἰούδαν Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτου in John 6:71 and John 13:26; and in John 13:2, as Ἰούδας Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτου, ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης, where ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης agrees with Ἰούδας.

<sup>4</sup> Kerioth is located in Moab (Jeremiah 48:24, 41; Amos 2:2) but there is another possible identification, Kerioth-Hezron (Joshua 15:25) which is 19 Km South of Hebron.

<sup>5</sup> Ἰούδας was called a thief because he probably pilfered the money which was entrusted to him (John 12:6).

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 27:29 supplies the detail of the amount, which may have been a part payment of the agreed sum that the priests promised Ἰούδας.

What then is corruption? While the Greek term διαφθορά connected with διαφθείρω refers to corruption as the physical effects of merely gratifying the natural desires and ministering to one's own needs or lusts, Ngige<sup>7</sup> reportedly views corruption as “anything that does not come in its pure form” basically comes in two forms – administrative (favouritism, nepotism, tribalism, sexual harassment) and financial (bribery, extortion). Nigerian leaders have indulged in these acts with impunity at all levels – federal, state and local governments. The story of corruption dates back to the time of Nigeria's independence in 1960. At that time, it was like a mustard seed but has, today, grown into a very big tree with deep tap roots, branches and leaves.

The main reason leaders in Nigeria have not been able to tackle corruption is that a major percentage of them do not understand what public service is. They don't also understand that leadership is all about serving the public than asking what is there for you. Hence, they are brazenly corrupt. And once leaders are corrupt, they will find it difficult to fight corruption.”<sup>8</sup> Also, the inability of the judiciary to effectively convict those brought to trial for corruption and jail them. While during the military rule, some of the leaders convicted of corruption only received a slap on the wrist as punishment and were asked to go and sin no more, in the civilian regime the leaders steal more than they needed and when the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) or the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) starts chasing them, they will have enough to bribe them to get them off their neck. Agboluaje further perceives another cause of corruption in Nigeria as “The exclusion of the best brains in Nigerian politics through high-cost nomination forms will place Nigeria's future in the hands of looters... it is a strategy of handing over the country to those individuals who have looted the country in the past. If this practice goes unchallenged, Nigerians are in for not just another regime of poor governance but that of extreme corruption and looting.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Chigbo Maureen, “Corruption: The Dream that Crashed”, in *Newswatch*, (October 4, 2010): 14-15.

<sup>8</sup> Maureen, “Corruption: The Dream that Crashed”, 17.

<sup>9</sup> Rotimi Agboluaje, “Nigeria Being Handed Over to Generation of Looters—ASUU”, in *The Guardian*, Vol.38, No.15, 872 (June 12, 2022): 5.



## Exegesis of John 12:3-8

### JOHN 12 VERSES

### BIBLEWORKS GREEK LXX

### REVISED STANDARD VERSION

- 3 Ἡ οὖν Μαριάμ λαβοῦσα λίτραν μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς πολυτίμου ἤλειπεν τοὺς πόδας τοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ ἐξέμαξεν ταῖς θριξίν αὐτῆς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ· ἡ δὲ οἰκία ἐπληρώθη ἐκ τῆς ὀσμῆς τοῦ μύρου.
- 4 λέγει δὲ Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης εἷς [ἐκ] τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ, ὁ μέλλων αὐτὸν παραδιδόναι·
- 5 διὰ τί τοῦτο τὸ μύρον οὐκ ἐπράθη τριακοσίων δηναρίων καὶ ἐδόθη πτωχοῖς;
- 6 εἶπεν δὲ τοῦτο οὐχ ὅτι περὶ τῶν πτωχῶν ἔμελεν αὐτῷ, ἀλλ' ὅτι κλέπτης ἦν καὶ τὸ γλωσσόκομον ἔχων τὰ βαλλόμενα ἐβάσταζεν.
- 7 εἶπεν οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἄφες αὐτήν, ἵνα εἰς τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ ἐνταφιασμοῦ μου τηρήσῃ αὐτό·
- 8 τοὺς πτωχοὺς γὰρ πάντοτε ἔχετε μεθ' ἑαυτῶν, ἐμὲ δὲ οὐ πάντοτε ἔχετε.
- Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment.
- But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was to betray him), said,
- "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"
- This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it.
- Jesus said, "Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial.
- The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."

Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9 probably account for the same event. While Matthew and Mark reported that Mary anointed Jesus' body for burial, John records the anointing of the feet, because of the feet-washing incident narrated in John 13. This feet-washing was corroborated by Luke

7:38. Despite some similarities between the narratives in John and Luke, there are sufficient differences to make it unlikely that the two incidents are the same. While Luke describes Mary of Bethany as a sinful woman who is deeply penitent, John pictures Mary of Magdala as a woman deeply devoted to Jesus. Likewise, Lightfoot<sup>10</sup> upholds that Mary Magdalene was the woman who anointed Jesus' feet. In both Lucan and Johannine accounts, the woman wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair. A woman appearing in the presence of men with her hair untied would have been against Jewish convention, but love was stronger than convention in Mary's case. Mary was moved by deepest feelings of loyalty in being willing to brave the inevitable social disapproval. The effect on the atmosphere was immediate and pervasive as the whole house was filled with the fragrance of Mary's deed, both physically and emotionally. John's reportage of the odour filling the house indicates that he was an eyewitness to this event.<sup>11</sup>

The term βαστάζω (take away) can have the sense of “steal.”<sup>12</sup> ἐβάσταζεν is a verb indicative imperfect active 3rd person singular from βαστάζω, is often referred to something is picked up or carried from another place with attendant significance (John 10:31). βαστάζω plays a role when Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης takes the travel money (John 12:6). Its other usages identified in the New Testament were (1) Mary Magdalene presumed the body of Jesus has been taken away (John 20:15; cf. verses 2, 13); (2) the Jews brought along stones to stone Jesus (John 10:31); (3) the disciples were commanded to carry with them neither purse nor bag nor sandals (Luke 10:4); (4) Paul bears the stigmata of Jesus on himself (Galatians 6:17).

κλέπτης, noun nominative masculine singular common from κλέπτω, connotes “a thief.” The verb κλέπτω, which denotes “steal” and is derived from the noun κλέπτης, is employed in Mark 10:19 and Romans 13:19 with emphasis on the Decalogue, μὴ κλέψῃς “do not steal.” But John 10:10a expatiates the hallmarks of κλέπτης as follows: ὁ κλέπτης οὐκ ἔρχεται εἰ

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Unabridged Commentary on the Bible*, Vol. 5, Matthew – John, Louisville: GLH Publishing, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Donald Guthrie, “John”, in Donald A. Carson et al (eds.), *New Bible Commentary*, Downers Grove, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press (2004), 1051.

<sup>12</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic (2007), 363.



μη ἵνα κλέψῃ καὶ θύσῃ καὶ ἀπολέσῃ, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.” No wonder the verbs βαστάζω, κλέπτω and θύω are associates. The verb θύω, which connotes “slaughter, murder,” appears more frequently in the LXX (140 times) as the translation of the Hebrew *zābah*, “slaughter, or sacrifice”. This pattern of translation has its basis in the synthesis of two originally independent types of sacrifices, *zēbah* and *šēlāmîm*, which had long taken place and it is connected with the sacrificial meal. However, in the New Testament, θύω has a non-religious meaning (Matthew 22:4; Luke 15: 23, 27, 30; Acts 10:13 and 11:7) and in John 10:10a is referred to as κλέπτω. This perhaps explains whenever a sacrifice pleasing to God is spoken of θύω was never used but δίδωμι, προσφέρω and ἀναφέρω.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, the verb φθείρω, which connotes to destroy by means of corruption and/or bringing into a worse state, is connected to φθορά, signifying “a bringing or being brought into an inferior condition, or a destruction, or corruption.” The term corruption, which probably originates from the translation of φθορά, is used for the physical effects of merely gratifying the material desires and ministering to one’s own needs or lusts (Galatians 6:8) to the flesh in contrast to the spirit. In this sense, corruption is antithetical to eternal life. Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης’s complaint against the expensive waste is in tandem with φθορά because he is κλέπτης.<sup>14</sup> Ἰούδας was stricken not only with the deadly sins of greed and covetousness but also, with dishonesty. The pint of pure nard, which probably was a liquid perfume, would have been a very expensive amount of ointment, as is clear from Ἰούδας’ estimate that it amounted to a year’s wages.

While the synoptic writers refer to the indignation of the twelve disciples of Jesus at the wasteful extravagance of Mary’s action, John focuses on the ringleader of the discontent, Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης. Ἰούδας’ objection centred on the great value of the perfume: “a year’s wages,” that is, “three hundred denarii”. One denarius was the daily remuneration of a common

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<sup>13</sup> Hartwig Tyen, “θύω”, in Horst Blaz and Gerhard Schneider (eds.), 161-163, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol.2, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company (2000), 161.

<sup>14</sup> The occurrence of μέλω in John 12:6, which indicates that Ἰούδας does not care for the poor, echoes the behaviour of the hireling in John 10:13 who does not care for the sheep. Ἰούδας is, therefore, described as one of Jesus’ disciples, a κλέπτης, as well as a μέλω.

labourer (Matthew 20:2). Three hundred denarii are, therefore, roughly equivalent to a year's wages, since no money was earned on Sabbaths and other holy days. The perfume was outrageously expensive because it was imported from northern India. Its great value may indicate that Mary and her family heirloom that had been passed down to Mary. Though having the appearance of piety, Ἰούδας' objection turns out to be purely self-serving because he has deeper and darker motives. Hendriksen says, "Judas is the type of man who has money on his mind all the while. He views everything from the aspect of pecuniary value."<sup>15</sup>

The identification of Ἰούδας as Σίμωνος (A K X Δ Θ Π Ψ 065 *f*<sup>13</sup> 28 Byz) or as Σίμων (1195 1242\* 1344 2148 *al*) is a scribal accretion derived from John 6:71. These same witnesses also smooth the sequence by placing the name after the indefinite εἷς ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ / and before ὁ μέλλων αὐτὸν παραδιδόναι .... It was thought best to retain the words εἷς ἐκ, an expression that occurs in eleven other passages in the Fourth Gospel, but because of the absence of ἐκ in such early and noteworthy witnesses as  $\mathfrak{B}^{66,75}$ <sup>vid</sup> B L W33, to enclose it within square brackets.<sup>16</sup>

As the Treasurer of the disciple band, the money kept with Ἰούδας is expected to help meet the needs of Jesus and his disciples as well as provide alms for the poor. The funds would have been replenished by followers of Jesus, such as the women mentioned in Luke 8:2-3 who supported his ministry. Ἰούδας was not above helping himself from the revenues in his charge. The value of this perfume would certainly have given him rich pickings. John implies that this pilfering had already become a settled trait in Ἰούδας and perhaps throws some light on his betrayal of Jesus, which, when all is done, was for a significant monetary prize. Avarice had already, apparently, invaded his soul. Before ever there was a betrayal of Jesus' person there was a betrayal of Jesus' trust. Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης woefully and wickedly betrayed the trust of his colleagues and above all that of Jesus.

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<sup>15</sup> William Hendriksen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Banner of Truth (1959), 177.

<sup>16</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition, D-Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft (2002), 201.



Besides the abovementioned portrayals of Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης from the Christian tradition, the pseudepigrapha Gnostics Gospel of Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης<sup>17</sup> perceives him as follows: Ἰούδας had a glimpse of the truth and Jesus revealed the most sacred information to him. As a sign of kindness to Jesus, Ἰούδας rendered the most sacred service unto Jesus by handing him over to the authorities who needed the closest person to Jesus to hand him over. As the only disciple who understood Jesus did his will<sup>18</sup> and committed suicide after he helped Jesus to reach heaven and became a star in the sky.<sup>19</sup> Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης was the greatest of all the disciples because he helped Jesus to fulfil the climax of his mission on earth and this act of his generosity provided salvation to the whole human race. Unfortunately, the Christian Gospel writers invented such a supposedly villain character to Ἰούδας.<sup>20</sup> In the same vein, some Nigerian leaders who were found culpable were celebrated and given national honours. The Nigerian government has not thought it wise not to associate with ex-convicts who were once powerful in the society or to withdraw national honours given to them.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Corrupt Member in the Cabinet of Jesus and his Managerial Skills in John 12:3-8**

The corrupt member, Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης belongs to the apostolic band of Jesus Christ; and the selected biblical text, John 12:3-8, explicates some managerial skills adopted by Jesus that were adjudged effective in managing him. These skills were attitude, leadership by example, and paying less attention to the advice and office of the Treasurer/Director of Finance.

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<sup>17</sup> Irenaeus classified Gnostics' Gospel of Judas Iscariot as a heretical book that was written around 180 A.D. and was brought to the attention of the international community in 2006. It was written by Cainites who venerated the biblical character of Cain who killed Abel his brother. This same author also described God as evil.

<sup>18</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot*, New York, Oxford University Press (2006), 171.

<sup>19</sup> Richard B. SORENSEN, Historical Dossiers for Unholy Grail, Accessed April 13, 2022, [https://academia.edu<Book One Historical Dossiers>\\_www.richardsorensen.com](https://academia.edu<Book One Historical Dossiers>_www.richardsorensen.com)

<sup>20</sup> Sorensen, Historical Dossiers for Unholy Grail, Accessed April 13, 2022, [https://academia.edu<Book One Historical Dossiers>\\_www.richardsorensen.com](https://academia.edu<Book One Historical Dossiers>_www.richardsorensen.com)

<sup>21</sup> According to Chigbo Maureen, Patricia Ete, a Former Speaker of the House of Representatives was disgraced from office on allegations of corruption but was later given national honour. Also, Tafa Balogun, Inspector General of Police was convicted and jailed for stealing money meant for police.

**Attitude** – While Ἰουδαῖς condemned Mary of Bethany for a huge wastage of the expensive ointment valued for a year’s wages, Jesus’ excellent attitude came to bear in this statement, “Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial” (John 12:7). Sewapo interprets this Jesus’ response as “a personal piety, an inner attitude of conforming to what is felt to be pleasing to God.”<sup>22</sup> No wonder Harrell<sup>23</sup> says that attitude is everything: attitude is a powerful tool for positive action and is inherently interwoven into everything humans do; it is the most priceless possession that is not purchasable but individuals must develop. Jesus had a good attitude towards his disciples; he did not capitalize on the minor, but he rather placed serious emphasis on the utmost goal which is the kingdom of God. His excellent attitude was further displayed when he fed the 4,000 and 5,000 people, excluding women and children, first with the Word of God (spiritual meal) and thereafter the physical meal (Matthew 14:21; 15:38). When a leader has a good attitude and a sensitive and sensible body language like Jesus Christ who attracted the crowd during his earthly ministry, there will be orderliness in the society. Jesus’ attitude here contrasts with Nigerian leaders who, according to Okecha, are in a rat race for the acquisition of houses (in and outside Nigeria), choice parcels of land, posh cars, business houses and shares in blue-chip companies. Their lifestyle spells ostentation; they carry on as if the dividends of democracy are for only themselves and members of their nuclear family.<sup>24</sup> If Nigerian leaders can place the greatest value on Nigeria and the citizens then, the issue of corruption will be reduced to the barest minimum.

**Leadership by example** – John 12:8 emphasises that Jesus did not keep/handle money directly during his earthly ministry. Jesus stayed away from everything that could supposedly corrupt him, especially handling money directly, but sought the kingdom of God. No one could accuse him of mismanagement of funds and it became easier for him to manage the corrupt member of his cabinet, particularly Ἰουδαῖς ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης. Jesus led the apostolic band in a clean sheet and it was very difficult for anyone to

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<sup>22</sup>Honor Sewapo, “An African’s Perspective on Leadership in the Book of Titus”, in *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (December 2015): 13.

<sup>23</sup> Keith HARRELL, *Attitude is Everything – 10 Life-Changing Steps to Turning Attitude into Action*, New York, HarperCollins Publishers Inc. (2005), viii.

<sup>24</sup> Steve Okecha, “Epilogue: Leadership”, in *Newswatch*, (October 4, 2010): 57.



accuse him of any evil. Is this not the type of leadership Nigerians are aspiring to have: the leader whose modesty, humility and selflessness must constitute his visible traits; the leader who must live and die for the downtrodden? If Nigerian leaders are also sincere in the anti-corruption campaign, they must lead by example.

***Paying less attention to the advice and office of the Treasurer/Director of Finance*** – John 12: 4-6 says that 'Ιούδας raised the voice of criticism against the action of Mary who anointed Jesus' feet with the precious ointment. 'Ιούδας reacted in that way not because he wanted the most expensive perfume to be sold for three hundred denarii and given the money to the poor as a palliative, but because he was a thief and wanted more money to be raised into the money box under his care for him to habitually take away a huge amount of money from the treasury at will. Jesus understood the motif behind 'Ιούδας' reaction and inherent evil desire and resolved not to give 'Ιούδας the undue recognition he was begging for. Besides Johannine accounts on Jesus paying less attention to the advice of the Treasurer/Director of Finance, Matthew 15:32-37 and Mark 8:3-9 narrate how Jesus demonstrated this unique skill in the feeding of the four thousand men, excluding women and children: when Jesus thought of feeding the multitude of people that were with him for three days because they ran out of food and were hungry, 'Ιούδας ὁ 'Ισκαριώτης would have laughed at Jesus or wondered where he wanted him to get such amount of money to feed such a huge crowd. Again, common sense would suggest that Jesus would raise sufficient funds to either buy food for all of them or employ a caterer who would prepare food for them. In that way, an opportunity would have been given to the Treasurer, 'Ιούδας ὁ 'Ισκαριώτης, to advise Jesus on the financial situation. But Jesus ignored the office of 'Ιούδας ὁ 'Ισκαριώτης, he asked his disciples the number of loaves of bread they had and he multiplied seven loaves of bread and a few fishes which were donated by the disciples. Furthermore, Jesus' triumphal entry event indicated that Jesus needed a donkey to ride on into Jerusalem. One would either think of Jesus buying a donkey or renting it. And if this was the option of Jesus, the Treasurer of the cabinet would be required for professional advice for disbursement. Instead, Jesus used his authority to demand the usage of a donkey; and he told his disciples if you are challenged just tell whosoever that the Lord needs it. The donkey was brought to Jesus for his triumphal entry into

Jerusalem. The office of Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης was equally ignored and rendered less important again (Mark 11:1-11; Matthew 21:1-11). Similarly, when the disciples were sent out on a mission, Jesus did not ask the Treasurer, Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης, to disburse a certain amount of money to each of the disciples for the journey. But Jesus told his disciples not to worry about those things for whatever they needed would be divinely provided at the right time. In this scenario, Jesus paid less attention to the office of the Treasurer/Director of Finance, Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης (Matthew 10:5-15). From the abovementioned narratives, Jesus provided cash, food and means of transportation without necessarily asking for money from the money box Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης was keeping, but Jesus paid less attention to the corrupt Treasurer/Director of Finance. Perhaps this was with a view to either halting Ἰούδας' corrupt practices or giving him opportunities to leave the cabinet unceremoniously (John 6:67).<sup>25</sup> Jesus' strategy here underscores that leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers, whose collective goal is to effect real changes (to pay less attention to the tempter) that reflect their shared purposes of dreams. Nigerian leaders should borrow a leaf from this Jesus' strategy and pay less attention to the temptation of amassing wealth at the expense of other Nigerian citizens.

### **Corruption in Nigeria and its Managerial Strategies**

From the year 1960 when Nigerian gained its independence to 2022, the programmes and agencies established to fight corruption were as follows: War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC); Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC); Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC); Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI); Public Complaint Commission (PCC); Office of the Auditor-General of the Federation (OAGF); and Technical Unit on Governance and Anti- Corruption Reforms (TUGAR).

The most popular of them all, EFCC was instituted in response to pressure from the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF), which named Nigeria as one of 23 countries non-cooperative in the international

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<sup>25</sup> Paul Yeulett, *Jesus and His Enemies*, New Jersey, P & R Publishing (2013), 152.



community's efforts to fight money laundering.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, a one-time chairman of a ruling political party announced during the party's public election campaign that those who joined that ruling party would have their sins forgiven. Hence some politicians with corrupt cases considered this public declaration a welcome idea and joined the ruling party to escape prosecution.<sup>27</sup> If the defection of such corrupt political leaders has automatically stalled the prosecution of their corrupt cases, to what extent is the self-acclaimed anti-corruption campaign of that regime effective? Again, the Nigerian leaders deploy double standards with these programmes and agencies to wage war against corruption, thereby frustrating their opposition political parties and going after mostly perceived enemies of their respective tenures in the office while their cronies were left alone. In what ways would the double standards practice of the Nigerian leaders halt corrupt practices in the system?

### **Consequences of Corrupt Practices**

The selected biblical text, John 12:3-8, reveals that Ἰούδας was never Christ's man in his behaviour. He fell from apostleship but never had a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ. His highest title for Christ was ῥαββί, "Rabbi,"<sup>28</sup> but never κύριος, "Lord."<sup>29</sup> Ἰούδας lives on the stage of the Scripture as an awful warning to the corrupt and uncommitted follower of Jesus who was in his company but did not share his spirit (Romans 8:9b). He leaves the Gospel story "a doomed, damned and corrupt man."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Olusegun Adeniyi, *Power, Politics & Death – A front-row account of Nigeria under the late President Yar' Adua*, Lagos, Kachifo Limited (2011), 17-18. The US had threatened that if Ribadu, the Chairman of EFCC, was arrested, or if there was any evidence of reprisal, vengeance or any form of malicious action against him from former victims of his anti-corruption activities whilst in office, the US would regard such as "a deliberate attempt to victimize and crucify Ribadu for his successful anti-corruption war while in office" and would react with measures it deemed appropriate.

<sup>27</sup> Sahara reporters 16th September 2021. <https://saharareporters.com>

<sup>28</sup> ῥαββί is a form of address, then an honorary title for outstanding teachers of the law (Matthew 23:7; 26:25)

<sup>29</sup> κύριος has full control of something (Matthew 9:38; Mark 2:28).

<sup>30</sup> Ralph P. Martin, "Judas Iscariot", in I. Howard Marshall et al (eds.), 624-626, *New Bible Dictionary*, Third Edition, Downers Grove, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press (2007), 625.

Similarly, Nigerian leaders were to be Nigerian knights in shining armour leading by example. But the story that unfolded when they were in, and after they left power, sadly, however, spoke volumes of how they failed to tackle corruption which is today ruining every aspect of national life, socio-political, economic, education, judiciary, culture and religion.

On the one hand, the inability of Nigerian leaders to tackle corruption led to the demise of the first and the second republics when some military boys staged the first coup in the country. Ironically even when the military overthrew its fellow military regimes, corruption was always cited as the reason.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, the Nigerian government's failure to bring corrupt leaders to book has continued to erase the confidence and trust of Nigerians and perpetuate the fallacy that corruption pays in the public and private sectors of the country. On this, Mike Obadan reportedly avers, “grand corruption in Nigeria is rampant in the public sector but executed with the active connivance of the private sector.”<sup>32</sup> Other than direct stealing from the treasury, major forms of corruption are perpetrated through private sector companies and organisations. For instance, some public officials even form their own private companies or fronts with which they corner inflated contracts from their ministries, agencies and parastatals. Furthermore, Abel Inyaregh deduce that corruption has inflicted poverty and hardships on the Nigerians<sup>33</sup>. Again Inyaregh opines that the insensitive renunciation of peoples’ liberty, the tyrannical and inattentive character of the political administrators have eventually filtered out to all fronts

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<sup>31</sup>Dike Onwuamaeze reportedly said that Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu the coup leader that truncated the first republic in 1996 says, “Our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand 10 per cent; those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as ministers or VIPs at least, the tribalists, the nepotists, those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles, those that have corrupted our society and put the Nigerian political calendar back by their words and deeds.”

<sup>32</sup> Maureen, “Corruption: The Dream that Crashed”, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Abel Aor Inyaregh elaborated that poverty has been devastating in Nigerian society. Poverty and ignorance are the two major reasons that dragged people into contemporary slavery, reluctantly or un-reluctantly. Unemployment and corruption are other causes of modern slavery. Due to the corruption and mismanagement of the government in Nigeria, many people do not succeed to get a decent job which affords their families with necessities (“Slavery in The Pauline Epistle to Philemon: Theological, Social, and Economic Implications for Nigerian Context”, [*Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies, (IJOURELS)*] Vol.11 No.2, 2021, 19).



of leadership in Nigeria<sup>34</sup>. The devastating enslavement spread in Nigeria is already escalating beyond normal and calls for the immediate attention of all the obligatory stakeholders who are concerned about getting rid of the cruelty<sup>35</sup>. Public resources that would have otherwise been channelled to develop infrastructure, provide social services, promote human development and alleviate various forms of poverty, are outrightly stolen or corruptly diverted to causes other than the public cause by those entrusted with those resources. For instance, money meant for the provision of electricity has been stolen and the nation is experiencing an epileptic power supply. In addition, jobs that could be executed with hundreds of millions of naira are done in Nigeria with billions of Naira, resulting in the situation where huge spending yields very limited results. Should it not be said that Nigeria has now degenerated in recent times, cascading from grace to grass?

### **Conclusion**

The paper brings to the fore attitude, leadership by example and paying less attention to the advice and office of the Treasurer/Director of Finance were Jesus' excellent managerial skills deployed against the corrupt member in his cabinet, Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης. Paradoxically, the various agencies established in Nigeria to fight corruption have not yielded the expected results. Inept leadership has failed woefully to tackle corruption, and Nigerians have equally failed to hold their leaders accountable due to the pervasiveness of corruption. As the theory of the trickle-down effect of corruption goes, so long as leaders keep giving a little of their loot of public treasury to their relations, protégés, wards, subordinates, and communities, no one will mind so much about them stealing.

Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης, the Treasurer of the apostolic band of Jesus leaves the Gospel story as a doomed, damned, corrupt man and a suicide. Nigerian leaders who are amassing wealth at the expense of other Nigerian citizens will end up as footnotes of history – where history pours its bile on focusless and visionless leaders and demagogues. Nigerian leaders should borrow a leaf from Jesus' managerial skills towards the corrupt member in his cabinet as enshrined in John 12:3-8, the paper recommends.

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<sup>34</sup> Inyaregh, 24.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

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**Note:** This paper was published in the memory of late Dr Honore Maupego Sewapo, whose stay with us in the Faculty was too short to know him enough. May he continue to rest in the bosom of our Lord in Jesus' name – by *Editor in Chief & Dean, Faculty of Arts on behalf of the Faculty of Arts, NOUN.*