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## THE COLOSSIAN CODE AND NIGERIAN ANTI-CORRUPTION CRUSADE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BUDGET PADDING SAGA

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### Abstract

This paper explored the ethical motifs entrenched in the Colossian Household Code and opined that this Code provides a model for responsible living in a patriarchal society when reciprocal duties and obligations are adequately rendered. Employing exegetical and analytical methods, the paper demonstrated that the distinctive feature derived from Paul's ethical motifs embedded in this code is the beauty of unequal fingers working collaboratively for the interest, wellbeing and common good of every member of the community. While applying these ethical motifs to the budget padding saga, this paper observed that instead of working for the wellbeing and common good of Nigerian citizens as enjoined in this code some current leaders and those in privileged positions employ *collective deceit* and *connivance* to perpetrate corruption and concomitantly underdevelopment. The paper enjoined those in leadership positions as well as lawmakers to employ the eschatological dimension of the Colossian Code in governance by entrenching the culture of both immediate and future accountability of those who hold privileged positions.

**Key words:** Colossian Code, Anti-Corruption Crusade, Budget Padding, Accountability, Transparency

### Introduction

The Colossian household code (Col. 3.18-4.1) is structured in three pairs of reciprocal relationships: wife-husband, children-father, and slave-master. This code, on the one hand, enjoins the submission of wives to their husbands, obedience of children to their parents and obedience of slaves to their masters as their Christian duty. On the other hand, the code enjoins husbands to love their wives and not to be harsh with them, fathers not to infuriate their children, and masters to treat their slaves fairly. Literally speaking, this code suggests that the wife, children and slaves are subordinate members of the

Christian household, while the husband, father or master – *paterfamilias*- is the dominant member of the Christian household. The Colossian code has been criticised as unjust and therefore unfit for contemporary ethical teaching by modern and postmodern biblical critics, who subject biblical texts to modern moral judgement. This is because the text is alleged to encourage slavery and patriarchy. (Meeks, 1996; Schüssler Fiorenza, 1983)

This paper argues that the emphasis of the Colossian code lies more on the reciprocity of duties and obligations within authority relationships and not only on the duties of the subordinate members of the household and the authority of the *paterfamilias*. This will be based on the interpretation of the triple interlocking ethical motifs for the duties of the wives, children and slaves, and the obligations of the *paterfamilias*. On the bases of these ethical motifs, this paper posits that the code provides a realistic paradigm for responsible living within hierarchical social-political conditions. When viewed in this light, the distinctive feature derived from the Colossian Code, which is necessary for national development, is the beauty of unequal fingers working collaboratively for the interest, wellbeing and common good of every citizen of Nigeria.

### **Theological Framework for Pauline Ethics**

NT scholars have long argued over whether there exists any connection between Paul's ethics and his theology. Hays (1996) criticised Dibelius and Betz who argued that there is no link between Paul's theology and Paul's ethics. He suggested that Pauline theology is linked to Paul's ethics. Although Paul's letters are polemic writings addressed to specific situations, they are concerned with various ethical patters of behaviour and what should be the right Christian response. Hays argues that the central theme in Paul's message is 'Christ crucified' (1 Cor 2.1-2). Hays has explored a framework for Paul's ethical teaching in his epistles. He states that the recurrent and interlocking theological motifs for Paul's ethics are found in Paul's concept of eschatology, his understanding of redemption on the cross and his vision of a new community in Christ. This paper argues that these three patterns are reflected in the Colossian code. Eschatology is founded on the principle of accountability to a Master in heaven (3.24-25, 4.1). The notion of the cross is echoed in the command to *agape*, which is the obligation given to the *paterfamilias* (3.19). The community lies in the code's recognition of different members as responsible partners in the Christian household who are given Christian motivations for their actions (3.18-4.1).

### **The Wife-Husband Relationship (3.18-19)**

The first pair of the relationship in the Colossian code is that of the wife and the husband. The address to wives appears first, as in Eph 5.22. In the Petrine

code slaves are addressed first (1 Pet 3.1). Wives specifically are addressed without women in general unlike in 1 Cor 14.34-35 where both wives and women in general are addressed. The address suggests that single women, widowed or divorced could function as the head of their households (e.g., Lydia, Acts 16.14-15; Phoebe, Rom 16.1-2; Chloe, 1 Cor 1.11; Nympha, Col 4.15). Wives are called to be subject *hupotasomai* 'subject oneself, be subordinate to') to their husbands. This address reflects the legal status of women in Greco-Roman world of the first century. Under the Roman law, the *paterfamilias* had absolute authority over members of the family. Although there were some differences between the Greek and Jewish laws, the Mediterranean society was basically patriarchal. The exhortation here therefore conforms to the norms of the day.

Dunn (1996) distinctive Christian feature in this address is the motivation given: 'it is fitting in the Lord'. The phrase *anekai* (it is fitting) is said to represent the Stoic idea concerning one's duty as living in accordance with natural order of things; but 'in the Lord' *en kurio* introduces another perspective that reinterprets the ethic from the normal philosophy of the day into a Christian ethical motivation. The Christ centred motivation introduced here could be intended to reflect the argument presented by Paul in this epistle, that in Christ is the full expression of creative wisdom (1.15-20; 2.3). The statement also reflects Paul's exhortation for his recipients to be rooted in Christ according to the traditions they have received (2.6-7). Dunn suggested two ways in which the phrase 'it is fitting in the Lord' could be understood. On the one hand, it could be a confirmation that the husband as the head of the household is 'fitting' in the community of those who proclaim Jesus as Lord. On the other hand, it could be a measure of the degree of subjection, which the woman should take. If we take the second interpretation, it means that the wives are exhorted to obey their husbands in things that are reconcilable to their faith. This implies that the wives are not asked to obey their husbands unquestioningly, but to ensure that what their husbands want them to do are not contrary to Christian ethics. By this interpretation the Lord becomes both a motivation and a standard to measure the level of their obedience. It should be noted that the text calls on the wife to be submissive and not to be subjugated to the husband. It is a free giving over of self to the husband, a kind of relationship whereby the wife in absolute trust offers her life in relationship to her husband.

Following the exhortation to the wife to be submissive is the reciprocal obligation of the husband. The husband is exhorted to love his wife. Dunn observes that the ideal of the husband showing deep affection to his wife did not originate with Christianity. But the distinctive Christian character of the love mentioned here comes with the verb *agapao*, which Paul uses in his

epistles when expressing the sacrificial giving of himself by Christ on the cross (e.g., Rom 8.37; Gal 2.20; Eph 2.4, 5.2, 25; Col 1.4, 3.14). We could say that the role of Πγάπρω, in this exhortation covers the motivation given to the wife in verse 18 i.e., 'it is fitting in the Lord'. The writer of Ephesians explores further this love theme by giving an account of Christ's love for the church as a model for the husband's love for his wife (5.25-30). Though this theology does not change the subordinate role of the wife, it is a strong ethic that could check the abuse of power by the *paterfamilias*. The *paterfamilias* is reminded that he is accountable for the authority he commands as the head of the household. The discussion here therefore is focused more on the obligations and responsibilities of the husband to his wife rather than on his authority and rights to subordinate his wife.

The husband is further exhorted not to be harsh with his wife. The verb *pikrao* occurs only here in Pauline letters. The verb is derived from *pikros* whose original meaning is 'pointed, sharp.' The verb gives the sense of 'sharp, bitter' to the taste (Ruth 1.13, 20; Eph 4.31; Heb 12.15; Jas 3.11). Being *pikros* (i.e. bitter, harsh) is normally associated with oppressive overlordship. Against the translations of this passage as 'do not be harsh with them' (RSV, NEB/REB, NIV, GNB), Dunn has suggested that the passive voice used here arguably might imply that it was the husbands who actually experienced the bitterness. He states that husbands could have been driven to a bitter feeling when they could not win the love and admiration of their wives by exercising their authority. (Dunn, 1996:247-249) What this implies is that the *paterfamilias* does not achieve good marital relationship through the exercise of authority over his wife, it is rather enhanced by the mutual love of one to the other.

What does it mean to love and not to be embittered towards someone? The text re-echoes 3.12-14 where such virtues as compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, and forgiveness are put together as bonded by love. It also echoes Paul's superlative hymn in 1 Cor 13.

Love is patient and kind, love envies no one; is never boastful; never conceited, never rude; love is never selfish, never quick to take offence. Love keeps no score of wrongs, takes no pleasure in the sins of others, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, its endurance. Love will never come to an end... (4-8).

In this passage Paul presents the meaning of the love (*agape*), which the husband is called upon to practice towards his wife. The love advocated here

is rooted in the redemptive self-giving sacrifice of Jesus. What the *paterfamilias* is called to do is to follow the pattern of Christ's self-sacrifice in his relationship to his wife. This ameliorates the legal demands of patriarchy in the Greco-Roman world. By introducing the ethic of *agape* amongst Christians, Paul stands against inappropriate use of authority by the *paterfamilias* in subjugating their wives. Schrage (1988:254) has pointed out that the text suggests a way through which love could enter into the secular society through family relationships amongst Christians. Marriage needed to be subjected to the law of love.

Arguably therefore, the husband is called to self-sacrifice. If we link this concept of love (*agape*) to the Ephesians passage (5.25-33), the implication is that the husband is called to express the kind of love that Christ has for the church. This is a big responsibility. To live the life of love could only be achieved by focussing on heavenly things (3.1-4) and living virtuously (3.5-17). The command calls for fidelity of the husband towards his wife and *vice versa* (3.5-6). It calls for mutual submission and mutual forgiveness (3.6-7, 13-14).

Theissen (1975) has identified the importance of this ethic in the mission of the early church. He pointed out that through this ethos, the problem of social differences was ameliorated among Christians in the Greco-Roman world by emphasis on obligation, respect and love. The structure of the society required from its members high levels of solidarity and brotherliness as well strict conformity to the social strata. Through love-patriarchalism, Christians were able to assimilate members of different social classes.

Members of the upper classes could find a fertile field of activity, so that ancient Christianity never lacked ... But the lower strata were also at home here. They found a fundamental equality of status before God, solidarity and help in the concrete problems of life, not least of all from those Christians who enjoyed a higher station in life. Christian brotherhood probably would have been more radically carried out within social homogeneous groups. That is much easier, however, than realising a measure of brotherhood within communities which are sharply stratified socially. It was here that primitive Christianity's love-patriarchalism offered a realistic solution. (p.108-110)

Theissen sees the command of love as a 'realistic solution' to the problem of inequality in a society that is heterogeneous in status. This solution was aimed at breaking down the barriers of inequality. It integrated people of different

social classes to form one body of equal value in God within the Roman Empire. It is in this regard that we need to understand and appreciate the baptismal confession (Gal 3.26-28). Both Jew and Greek, male and female, slave and free are integrated as one 'in Christ'. The ethic changed the pattern of struggle for equal rights or exercise of authority upon subordinate members by members of various social groups to the moral sense of responsibility centred on respect, concern and fairness. The *paterfamilias* is called to match the privilege of his wife's submission with his obligation of love and concern for her. The wife on the other hand shifted from seeing the husband as an authoritarian overlord who craves for her submission to a responsible household head, to whom she should submit as part of her duty 'in the Lord'. It is an ethic of duties, obligations and privileges. Wives owe the duty of submission to their husbands. Husbands in turn owe the obligation of *agape* to the wives. *Agape* becomes the privilege of the wife from the husband while submission becomes the privilege of the husband from the wife. When these duties and obligations are adequately maintained, stability is ensured in the household. Although this ethic does not remove the patriarchal nature of the household, it ameliorates the authority of the *paterfamilias* and provides a Christian standard for the wives' submission.

### **The Child-Father Relationship (3.20-21)**

The child under the Roman law of the first century, quite unlike the child in UK and America today, had no legal rights. He/she was virtually a property to his/her father, who had the legal right to decide his/her fate. The formalities for adoption were basically the same as that of the conveyance of property. The underage child had similar status as the slave. This could be seen in the parallel between 3.20 and 3.22 where the instructions to children and slaves are basically the same – both groups are exhorted to obedience. The extent of power, which a father exerts on his child, is far greater than that of the mother. The mother was the main influence on the male child till he was seven, and afterwards the father had the responsibility to bring him up and discipline him. They are under his *patria potestas*. (Dunn, 1996:249-50) MacDonal, (2000) has noted extent of authority a father could exercise on his child in the first century is expressed in the writing of Dio Halicarnassus concerning the fatherhood of Romans:

The law-giver of the Romans gave virtually full power to the father over his son, whether he thought proper to imprison him, to scourge him, to put him in chains, and keep him at work in the fields, or to put him to death; and this even though the son were already engaged in public affairs, though he were numbered among the highest magistrates,

and though he was celebrated for his zeal for the commonwealth. (*Rom. Ant. 2.26.4*). (p.155-156)

The children, on the one hand, are exhorted to obey (*hupokouete*) their parents. This admonition echoes the fifth commandment (Ex 20.12 Deut 5.16), which is a virtue commonly repeated in various Jewish writings (e.g., Sir 3.1-16; 7. 27-28; Tob 4.3-4; *Aristeas* 228; *Jubilees* 7.20; Philo, *De posteritate Caini* 181; *De ebrietate* 17). The command to obedience of the child and the stress on the father's right to punish defiance is common in both Jewish and Hellenistic philosophies. The Jewish law directed the stoning of a stubborn disobedient son (Lev. 20.9; Deut. 21.18-21; Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2.206 etc.). The extent of the obedience is absolute –*kata panta*. The reason given for this is 'for it is pleasing (*euarestos*) in the Lord.' *Euarestos* is a conventional Jewish as well as Hellenistic virtue which is Christianised by adding *en kurio* (in the Lord). The fathers, on the other hand, are given a corresponding responsibility not to provoke (*eretizo*), their children. The word connotes irritate, embitter, exasperate, drive to resentment. The ethic is not uniquely Christian; there are similar admonitions in the first century ethical philosophies, yet it is significant that the emphasis is not on the father's authority to discipline the child, the emphasis is on his obligations. (Schrage, 1988:255)

The text suggests that the chief concern was to avoid frustration of the children in their growth as Christians. The text is focused on how the fathers could help their children to grow in their faith without discouraging them. A similar passage in Ephesians suggests that the fathers have the responsibility of bringing up the children with Christian principles (6.4). The father's responsibility therefore includes making the child rooted and built up in the Lord (2.6-7). Through adequate training, the children would not follow the human regulations in ascetic living or special festivals (2.16-23). The children will learn to focus on heavenly things rather than on earthly things (3.1-4). They are equipped to live morally having put off the old nature (3.5-7). The exhortation of fathers not to provoke (*eretizo*) their children (3.20) but rather to instruct their children in the Lord (3.21) could be seen as a missionary approach of Christianisation through the household. It follows the pattern of responsibility given to Jewish parents concerning bringing up their children in the fear of the Lord (Deut 6.6-9). Arguably, the ethic was a guard against child abuse. The Christian father is not allowed to use his authority in abusing his child, as was the case with many fathers in our period.

### **The Slave-Master Relationship (3.22-4.1)**

This forms the third pair of the household relationships covered in the Colossian code. The slaves are addressed in the same way that the children are

addressed (3.20); this portrays the similarity of their legal status to that of the children in Roman antiquity, which I have pointed out earlier. It is a fact that most families in the Greco-Roman empire had slaves. Dunn had noted that an average household could have two or three slaves (Dunn, 1996:252). The address to slaves reveals that slaves were counted as part of the Christian household in the Roman Empire. The address to masters (4.1) reveals that the Colossian churches had both masters and slaves (3.11); there were perhaps more slaves than the masters. It is presumed that in some cases both the *paterfamilias* with their slaves are members of the same house church (e.g. Philemon). It is therefore significant to note that whereas only masters are advised on how to manage their slaves in contemporary discussions about slaves, Paul addresses the slaves directly as responsible individuals. The fact that the early church had as one membership both masters and slaves who were to understand themselves as equals before God (3.11) is significant.

In four verses the slaves are addressed concerning their duties towards their masters (22-25). This might indicate that the slaves in Pauline churches outnumber the masters in those churches (1 Cor 1.26) rather than an emphasis on the duties of the slaves as proposed by some scholars. The slaves are admonished to obey their masters in every thing (*kata panta*). The masters are qualified 'according to the flesh' (*kata sarka*) which points to the fact that the slaves have another Master with whom they could enjoy another relationship as their *kurios*. The slaves are called upon to show integrity in their duty to their masters by carrying out their roles with sincerity of heart (*haploteti kardias*). This reflects whole-heartedness and willingness to perform those roles as a Christian duty. They were to perform their duty 'fearing the Lord'. The masters are equally reminded of their responsibility towards their slaves, this appears in one verse. That the admonition to masters appears in one verse against the instruction of slaves, which appeared in four verses might lead to the conclusion that the emphasis is on the duties of the slaves. But this might also mean that there were more slaves in the house church than masters, rather than an emphasis on their duties. We ought to note that this is the third time the *paterfamilias* is being addressed in the same passage; he has been addressed first as husband, second as father and now as master. He is admonished to treat his slaves fairly. This ethical exhortation reflects the Jewish tradition of treating people of lower status justly (Ex 20.10; Lev 25.43, 53; Sir 4.30). The word employed for fairness *ten isoteta* implies equality in Greek law. Standhartinger (2000) has remarked that *isotes* does not merely mean what is reasonable but also equality between two groups of varying status in antiquity. Philo used *isotes* to describe the kind of equality practised by the Essenes who rejected the differences between slaves and free persons:

Not a single slave is to be found among them, but all are free (*eleuteros*), exchanging services with each other, and they denounce the owners of slaves, not merely for their injustice in outraging the law of equality (*isotes*), but also for their impiety in annulling the state of Nature, who mother-like has born and reared all men alike...(p. 128)

Unlike the use of *isotes* by the Qumran Essenes as a call for emancipation of slaves and complete withdrawal from the world, Paul did not apply it directly here as a call for emancipation of slaves or complete withdrawal from the world. He rather calls on masters not to abuse their authority. Paul chose another approach in his warning against unfair slave-master relationships. He reminded the masters that they too have a Master in heaven as well as the slaves. For the slaves this is encouraging, knowing that the authority of their earthly master is not infinite. They have another Master who will exercise authority and judgement over their earthly masters. The earthly masters would be judged and rewarded for the misuse of their authority against their slaves (3.24-4.1). For the masters, however, this is a threatening verse, a check on the exercise of their authority. I submit therefore, that the judgement by another Master in heaven to the earthly masters ameliorates the import of the length of the admonition to the slaves. The significance is that the code challenges the master's exercise of his authority with a Master in heaven. The *paterfamilias* is here reminded of his responsibility for the third time to the members of his household. On the bases of the above exegeses on wife-husband, child-father and slave-master relationships, I opine that, in contrast to the suggestions of many interpreters, that the emphasis of the code does not lie only on the duties of the submissive members of the household, or on the authority of the *paterfamilias*. The emphasis lies on the adequate reciprocity of duties and obligations of both the subordinate and dominant members of the household.

### **Paul's Triple-Interlocking Ethical Motifs: Eschatology, Community and Cross**

The notion of eschatology echoes in the admonition to the slaves and masters. On the one hand, the slaves are promised an inheritance as a reward from the Lord for sincere commitment in their duties to their masters. The duties, which they perform to their masters, are to be taken as a Christian duty. It is a service for the Lord. There will be punishment for those who do wrong (3.23-25). On the other hand, the masters are challenged to fair know that they have a Master in heaven. This notion of future reward and judgement reflects 3.6. It calls for the sincerity of the slave in fulfilling his/her roles in accordance with the ethics of those who are reconciled to God and therefore have received new hope (2.21-23). It also calls for the accountability of the master on how he uses his authority. The notion of eschatology provides the framework that

checks the actions of Christians in their relationship with one another. Christians are not free to live as they wished or to use their authority as they wanted. Christians are accountable to the Lord for their duties and responsibilities. This notion portrays equality before the Lord who will judge all people without favouritism.

The Colossian code reflects that Paul understands the Christian body as a community that takes the pattern of the cross. The code presents the household as the microcosm of the *ekklesia*, just as the household is the basic unit of the city-state in Aristotelian philosophy. The code shows a practical guide to relationships among household members for proper management of the household and by extension the *ekklesia*. The *ekklesia* is built up when every member fulfils his/her duty and obligation within the smaller community. Since the church is formed in a patriarchal society, there is the need for it to structure its life and mission within the framework of the society, yet maintaining its distinction as a separate community. This was necessary for the existence and mission of the church within the *Sitz im Leben* of the society as well as maintaining the ideals of redemption in Christ through the cross, which marks it out as a distinct community.

The community is further portrayed through the inclusiveness, which the church emphasized. Both wives-husbands, children-fathers, slaves-masters are addressed as responsible members of the household whose roles need be seen as a Christian duty. This is expressed in the motivations given - 'it is fitting in the Lord', 'acceptable duty in the Lord' and 'fearing the Lord'. Gal 3.26-28, and Col 3.11 need to be understood in the light of this inclusiveness. This inclusiveness is expressed in the epistle within the framework of the distinctiveness of the church. The Colossians are addressed as saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ (2.2). Paul gives thanks to God for their faith and love for all the saints (1.3-8), he prays that they will be filled with the knowledge of God's will in order to leave a life pleasing and worthy of the Lord who has redeemed them to be a distinct people (1.9-15). The Christ hymn (1.15-20) presents Christ as the central motivation in the community; the recurring theme is reconciliation through death on the cross, which forms the centre of the gospel. The response to the gospel by the Colossians makes them a distinct community for God in Christ (1.21-23). Paul's response to the gospel motivates him to be committed to both the gospel and the Colossians (1.24-2.5).

Furthermore, as a distinct community, the Colossians are called to be rooted and built up in Christ (2.6-7). They are already set free from human regulations and thus should not be bounded by deceptive philosophies, which depend on human traditions (2.8-23). Rather as a distinct community, they are

called to focus on the death, resurrection and exaltation of Christ as they think of heavenly things (3.1-4). Their focus on heavenly things should be marked by ethical living (3.1-4.6). The household code expresses concern for the weaker members of the community by the *paterfamilias* whose position in the community has afforded him the privilege of power and authority. While those with lesser authority are exhorted to fulfil their duties, those with greater authority are called to live responsibly by fulfilling their obligation. The strong is to care for the weak in the society as part of their obligation, while the weak is to offer their duties to the society. These ensure stability because the society needs the solidarity of its members for proper functioning.

The Colossian code portrays the paradigm of the cross; life in the household is to be lived in the pattern of the cross. Jesus' death on the cross reflects a paradigm for faithfulness to God in the world. The magnitude of Christ's accomplishment on the cross is rehearsed (2.8-15); forgiveness of trespasses, restitution of all legal demands, and victory over principalities and powers were all achieved on the cross through the suffering and self-giving of Christ. Thus the cross calls for self-sacrifice, being like Christ in his self-giving. The word that reminds us of the cross in the code is the charge given to husbands. A husband is exhorted to love his wife. The verb *agapao* which Paul uses in his epistles when expressing the sacrificial giving of himself by Christ on the cross (e.g., Rom 8.37; Gal 2.20; Eph 2.4, 5.2, 25; Col 1.4; 3.14) reflects that the obligation of the *paterfamilias* takes the paradigm of the cross. NT writers employ this pattern to call those who possess privileges to use them responsibly for the sake of the weak (Mk 10. 42-45; Rom 15.1-3; 1 Cor 8.1-1.1). The command of love is central in the ethical demands for those within the Colossian community; they are above all things to put on love, which binds everything in perfect harmony (3.13-14).

### **The Colossian Code and Nigerian Anti-Corruption Crusade**

One central idea derived from the Colossian ethics in the concept of unequal fingers working together for the wellbeing of all within the family with sincerity and transparency. Slaves are enjoined to be sincere and not to play eye service. Masters are enjoined to be fair, knowing that although the slaves are not able to bring them to book, there is a bigger Master in heaven whom they are accountable to. This calls for both commitment and transparency in political, social and economic activities in the nation. Since the family is a microcosm of any community or nation this concept could be perceived within the context of national development and wellbeing. When viewed in this light, the distinctive feature derived from Paul's ethical motifs embedded in this code is the beauty of unequal fingers working collaboratively for the interest, wellbeing and common good of every member of the community. This beauty is achieved when reciprocal duties and obligations are adequately rendered.

The issue of sincerity and transparency have been echoed loud and clear in Nigeria by various leaders past and present. The current head of state, Muhamadu Buhari together with many other leaders at various levels have pointed out that lack of fairness, transparency and sincerity in handling public affairs has led to underdevelopment in the country. They have described Nigeria's woes to be rooted in corruption, hence, the need for anti-corruption crusade by all and sundry in the country. For example, the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami, has attributed current political, social and economic problems in Nigeria to corruption (Malami, 2016). Malami, while delivering the key note address at the National Open Government Partnership (OGP) retreat in Kaduna, said that corruption remained Nigeria's biggest impediment to attaining sustainable development. He stated as follows:

... the Federal Government is committed to driving out the culture of corruption in the country by making governance more open, accountable and responsive to citizens. ...the government would strengthen anti-corruption institutions, and the capacity of Nigerians to expose corrupt practices in all spheres of life. ...the government would implement programmes aimed at exposing and punishing corrupt public officials and providing support to victims of corruption. ...Nigeria joined the open governance partnership in July 2016 as part of its commitment to deepen institutional and policy reforms for good governance. ...the partnership was a multi-stakeholder initiative focused on improving transparency, accountability, citizens participation, and responsiveness to citizens through technology and innovation. (Malami 2016)

The words of Malami show that corruption thrives in any government where fairness, sincerity and transparency is not upheld. In such situations there could be high level mismanagement, embezzlement of public funds as well as victimization of those who are given little privileges and positions in the society. If the Colossian code had the audacity to enjoin masters to be fair and accountable to their slaves and household members in a society where masters enjoyed autocratic power, it should have far reaching significance in a democratic society where every member of the society is assumed to have some rights, privileges and responsibilities.

During his speech to mark the democracy day and one year in office, President Muhamadu Buhari reiterated his resolve to make anti-corruption

crusade the mantle of his administration. He pointed out that this crusade is yielding some results. Buhari stated as follows:

From day one, we purposely set out to correct our condition, to change Nigeria. ... EFCC was given the freedom to pursue corrupt officials and the judiciary was alerted on what Nigerians expect of them in the fight against corruption. ... We then identified forty-three thousand ghost workers through the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information system. That represents pay packets totalling N4.2 billion stolen every month. In addition, we will save Twenty-Three Billion Naira per annum from official travelling and sitting allowances alone. ... We are also engaged in making recoveries of stolen assets some of which are in different jurisdictions. ... When forfeiture formalities are completed these monies will be credited to the treasury and be openly and transparently used in funding developmental projects and the public will be informed (Buhari, 2016)

The above statement reveals some of the dangers of lack of transparency and accountability to any given society. Huge sums of money were paid to non existing workers to the tune of N4.2 billion a month. One wonders whether regular audit of both personnel and income and expenses were never carried out on the ministries and parastatals involved in the ghost workers saga. Transparency and accountability should reveal the accounts of the non-existing workers' salaries with a view to recovering them. The revelations show that many of those entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing these ministries and parastatals were not transparent in their dealings with public funds. Otherwise such amount of money could not be paid into wrong hands on a monthly basis without someone raising an eyebrow or blowing a whistle. It appears that there was systemic connivance which enabled such high level corruption to thrive for many months and years.

The above analysis makes this paper take the stand that systemic corruption encouraged high level embezzlement of public assets and funds by different people who held different privileged offices. Such embezzlement means that those funds were not utilised in achieving the purpose for which they were mapped out. On the other hand, it is possible that some purposes were projected in order to embezzle these funds. These attitudes show that the ethic of the Colossian code was not headed. If those who enjoyed the privileges that made it possible for them to embezzle funds followed the Colossian ethic, they would have been restrained by the eschatological dimension of this ethic

which cautions that the master has a master in heaven. This implies a superior master to the master.

In a democratic setting, the eschatological dimension of the Colossian code evokes adequate use of the rule of law in ensuring that both the underprivileged and privileged are made accountable for their choices and actions. In the Colossian code, the fear of a master in heaven who is greater than the earthly master brought fear and sense of duty and accountability on the earthly master. The reasons for these are the fact that the heavenly master is perceived to be strong and impartial. He gives the right recompense to both the slave and the master irrespective of their race, age or status.

The rule of law should serve as a greater master in a democratic setting. Buhari acknowledges this in his speech when he said: ‘... EFCC was given the freedom to pursue corrupt officials and the judiciary was alerted on what Nigerians expect of them in the fight against corruption.’ While advocating the Colossian ethics for anti-corruption crusade in Nigeria, this paper cautions that the rule of law which plays the role of the superior master of the master must exercise absolute impartial authority in delivering recompense to members of the society. It is only this way that it can evoke the necessary fear and respect as well as trust from members of the society.

When anti-corruption crusade takes the pattern enshrined in the Colossian code the result will be an enhanced welfare of members of the society who possess little privilege. Such will no longer be trampled upon by those who possess more privileges but will rather be given the opportunity to achieve fully their God given potentials, which will enhance both their lives and the lives of members of their communities, state and nation. This idea is equally echoed in Buhari’s statement as part of his reason for the anti-corruptions crusade:

For too long, ours has been a society that neglects the poor and victimizes the weak. A society that promotes profit and growth over development and freedom. A society that fails to recognize that, to quote the distinguished economist Amartya Sen " poverty is not just lack of money. It is not having the capability to realize one's full potential as a human being." (Buhari, 2016)

### **Implications for the Budget Padding Saga**

This paper has argued that an application of the eschatological dimension of the Colossian code could be employed as a strong tool for fighting corruption in the Nigerian society. Such application requires some credible, responsible

and transparent law makers. Nigeria has two high law making bodies: the house of representatives and the senate. These bodies need to be seen as transparent, accountable and responsible in order to command the trust and respect of the society.

The 2016 budget padding saga has given some insight into the possibility of connivance within the House of Representatives to perpetrate the tradition of lack of transparency within the lower chamber of the legislative arm of the government. If this trend is not appropriately handled and dealt with, it could rekindle and fire on the mistrust among the citizens as to whether the Nigerian government is really serious about dealing with the issue of systemic corruption in Nigerian polity.

Abdulumumin Jibrin began stirring what experts now described as one of Africa's biggest parliamentary scandals in recent memory on July 21, a day after he was eased out as chairman of the powerful committee. In spite of pressures mounted on him to back down on his claims on budget padding Jibrin remained resolute in his quest to end the massive corruption in the House (Ogundipe, 2016). Giving reasons why he had to wait so long before speaking out, he said:

Those who keep saying why now should realize that for every situation like this to occur, there must be a trigger, however, it looks! I woke up mid night yesterday (Wednesday) to pray and suddenly realized I have become an accidental activist. This is noble and there is no going back!

I am a product of the establishment but something in me has never been comfortable. I'm so glad that by September 9, my 40th birthday, everybody would have known where I stand for the rest of my life; rural agriculture and fight against corruption, especially in the NASS. (Daniel and Agbakwuru, 2016)

Jibrin said that his aim is to create the awareness that will lead to stemming down systemic corruption that has been condoned in the NASS under different administrations. His idea is to do a clean-up, flush out corruption and corrupt members of NASS so that in 2019 only corrupt-free people who want to serve will come in. He states: 'God Almighty knows I am not perfect but as I approach 40 years in September, I have always wondered what is it that I can live and die for.' (Ogundipe, 2016)

Jibrin's revelations rekindled the memory of long standing accusation against the NASS by Former President Olusegun Obasanjo who accused the NASS of being a 'habitation of thieves.' (Ahirika, 2014). Following this whistle blowing, many civil society groups called for the resignation and prosecution of those in the NASS who were indicted by this report. One of such call was contained in an open letter written to Mr. Dogara by Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project, a transparency and accountability think-tank, calling on him and other House principal officers named in the scandal to recuse themselves from office pending the outcome of investigation.

Mr. Dogara, his deputy, Yusuf Lasun, House Whip, Alhassan Doguwa, and Minority Leader, Leo Ogor, have faced criticism for allegedly padding the 2016 Appropriation Bill with up to N40 billion earmarked for themselves (Ogundipe, 2016). Part of SERAP's letter states as follows:

Following confirmation received by SERAP from the EFCC that it has taken up and looking into SERAP's petition to the body on the allegations that the leadership of the House of Representatives padded the 2016 budget to the tune of N481 billion, SERAP is now writing to request you to immediately step aside from your position as Speaker of the House of Representatives pending the out outcome of the investigation. (Ogundipe, 2016)

While different reactions trailed the budget padding saga, former military head of state, Yakubu Gowon, dissociated his administration from such systemic corruption and called for investigation and prosecution of the culprits . He urged government not to allow anyone found guilty of budget padding to go scot free to serve as deterrent to others . His words: "If that is true. If anybody is doing that, the person should be checked and stopped to ensure that such does not occur in the future". "We didn't do it during my time." (Olarinoye, 2016)

Jibrin's actions infuriated many members of the House of Reps and he was charged to the ethics committee. The NASS ethics committee recommended his suspension which was carried out by the speaker of the house, Yakubu Dogara, the principal person accused for budget padding. Reviewing the development, the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights, CDHR, has alleged that the leadership of the House of Representatives suspended Abdulmumuni Jibrin as a ploy to sweep his allegations of corruption in the House under the carpet . The CDHR , in a statement issued by its National Publicity Secretary, Rasheed Raji-Ropo stated:

"CDHR is deeply concerned with the failure of the House to investigate allegations of 'budget padding' raised by Honourable Jibrin, while the motion on abuse of members' privileges was raised, debated and referred to ethics and privileges committee of the House for investigation, later resulting in the suspension of Jibrin from the green chamber for 180 days and sealing off his office ." The group said the development was a national embarrassment that has exposed the incompetence of the leadership and members. (Kayode-Adedeji, 2016)

While Jibrin serves his suspension and continue to make further revelations against the leadership and some members of the house of representatives, majority of Nigerian citizens call for transparency on the activities of the House of representatives. Jibrin's statement: "I am a product of the establishment but something in me has never been comfortable' could imply that the practice of budget padding has been condoned by the NASS over the years. This theory is embedded in the fact that apart from Gowon, no other past head of state has refuted that it was not practised during their time. Instead, the issue was used to consolidate Obasanjo's castigation of the NASS as a den of thieves.

If the above observations are true, this paper opines that the budget padding saga is a window into some ways transparency is discouraged in the national polity by the law makers. Budget is meant to capture all expenditures. Budget is done in the overall interest of the people. Where it becomes an avenue for those in privileged position to pursue their selfish ambitions, then it will not help in the eradication of corruption in Nigeria. How long the practice has been going on does not make it right. Those who are really serious about fighting corruption through transparency should be willing to abandon practices that do not encourage transparency. If the Law Makers cannot embrace sincerity, transparency and fair play, then they cannot make laws that will engender probity because those who live in glass houses should not throw stones. The implications of the Colossian code for the budget padding saga is that the House of Representatives need to embrace transparency, integrity and fair play in the discharge of their duties.

The above discuss on Nigerian anti-corruption crusade and the budget padding saga within the House of Representatives evoke the ethical motifs of the Colossian code. The emphasis of the Code, as noted earlier is on reciprocity of duties and responsibilities in the light of Paul's ethical motifs: eschatology, community and the cross. It is eschatological in the sense that it focuses on the heavenly Master as a motivation for the sincerity of the slaves, and a model

for fairness and accountability for their actions by the masters. The heavenly Master is also ‘the Lord’ who is the paradigm and motivation for the submission of wives and the obedience of the children and slaves. The community aspect lies in the mutual relationships within a household between its members. Its stability demands the solidarity of all its members. This solidarity is maintained through the adequate discharge of duties and obligations of one to the other and *viceversa*. This is necessary for its proper functioning. This should reflect the relationship that should be found in the society since the family is the microcosm of the wider society. The cross is to be found in the *agape*, which is the model and resource for the *paterfamilias*’ obligation to his wife. The *paterfamilias* is called to follow the pattern of Christ in his relationships to his family members. The submission and the *agape* call for mutual surrendering of one to the other in absolute trust. Both the duties and obligations become the privilege of the one and the other. Each has a privilege to claim from the other as well as a duty or obligation to render to the other.

Taking the above discourse further, there is need to stress that eschatology is about giving account to a Master in heaven, which the earthly master is required to consider in his dealing with his subordinates. That he has a Master in heaven implies that the master himself is also a subordinate to a superior Master. When this notion is applied to Nigerian national framework, one can identify those in privileged position of leadership as the masters; those in subordinate positions could be identified as the servants. The complexity of this typology is noted here in the sense that positions of authority and subordination is a complex web in Nigerian national polity in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. People in various authority/leadership positions have subordinates and at the same time are subordinate to others whom they are accountable to. But our concern in the whole complex web of relationships is that, on the one hand, those in subordinate positions are required to give their service to the state with diligence and sincerity of heart. On the other hand, those in more privileged positions of authority are not only required to treat their subordinates fairly, but also to perform their obligations responsibly by rendering adequate account of their activities within the provisions of the law. Therefore, a bigger *master* for those entrusted with positions of authority could be the rule of law. With this understanding, there should be clear principles guiding those in authority. Those who abuse power or do not give good account of their use of power need to be appraised adequately and punished appropriately, while those who use authority responsibly and give good accountability should be commended and rewarded by the nation.

**Recommendations: The Way Forward:**

Following the above discussions, these recommendations are made:

. The eschatological motif of the household code needs to be employed to foster the culture of probity and accountability in Nigerian society

- . Nigerian citizens need to perceive themselves as a family that requires the solidarity of one another in order to foster the wellbeing of every member of the society
- . Anti-corruption crusade need to be strengthened by ensuring that all ministries and parastatals uphold the culture of transparency and accountability in their distribution of state and federal resources
- . Strong laws should guide top office holders on maintain the right conduct in order to ensure that they do not abuse the privileges their positions offer them
- . The budget padding saga should not be swept under the carpet but should be thoroughly investigated with a view of stamping out any systemic corruption that has become a tradition in the NASS
- . Members of the NASS should be transparent in their dealings as well as live exemplary lives

### **Conclusion**

The Colossian Code provides a model for responsible living in a patriarchal society when reciprocal duties and obligations are adequately rendered. The family as well as the society need the solidarity of its entire members. Each is called to perform his/her duties and obligations to the others adequately in order to maintain the wellbeing and common good of all members. Those who possess power are to use it well in protecting the weak, following the path of adequate accountability. Corruption thrives where accountability is lacking. To fight corruption, Law Makers need to be at the forefront of calling on all to embrace adequate accountability. In the face of the budget padding saga, which points to lack transparency and accountability within the legislative chamber of the nation, there is need to restore confidence in the populace by ensuring that the House of Representatives pursue actions that demonstrate that they are both transparent and accountable. When this is done properly, it will engender the culture of accountability, which concomitantly, will enhance the anti-corruption crusade and promote development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigerian society.

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