

Christianity At Crossroad: Contemporary Challenges Facing Mainstream Church Leadership In Kenya

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Abstract—The Christian Church in Kenya is growing rapidly and researchers project that the country will in the next four decades be among the top ten countries in the world with a large congregation of Christians. This implies that Christianity will continue to flourish amidst many contemporary challenges not akin to the past. The dawn of 21st century came with it changes and challenges that have negatively affected the church, particularly the functioning of the church leadership. Even though Christians, and to a larger extent, most Kenyans, always look upon church leaders to provide guidance in both spiritual and important societal matters due to the high and esteemed standards of morals and ethics attached to their office, church leaders have now almost lost their grip of this noble responsibility hence not dependable fully. Recent incidents in the church, for example, leadership wrangles and politicization in church and outright silence in matters of advocacy among others is awakening many Kenyans as what has befallen our church leaders. Compounded with current societal complexities that exist in the Kenyan society today, and the fact that some of the problems and challenges emanate from within the church, the roles played by the church leaders remain quite ambivalent hence putting the church at crossroad. It is becoming almost difficult for church leaders to balance between their personal venture and their sacred responsibility vis-a-vis the emerging societal challenges and problems they have found themselves in. It is on this premise that this study delves into exploring and relooking into emerging contemporary challenges facing church leadership in Kenya. The study reviews how these challenges have disadvantageously placed the church at crossroads, and made the church leaders lose their boldness in championing their mandate as God's representative on earth, and as agents of change in the society.

Keywords—Christianity, Church Leadership, Crossroad.

1.0. Introduction

The Christian church was given the greatest commission to spread the message of salvation to the ends of the earth (Mathew 24:14) by Jesus Christ. It is

the agent of heaven to the world, and it is expected to speak and listen to the world without being conformed to it as it endeavours to show the world how to remain faithful to gospel calling. That is why throughout centuries, the role of the church as a transformation and change agent in the world has been emphasized (Bosch, 1999). Christians all over the world understands the transformation of society to be an integral part of church's mission and task (Pillay, 2017).

2.0. The Role of the Church as a Transformation Agent: An Historical Overview

Historically, the church has been involved in the life of humankind, in making of nationhood, building of culture, structuring of society with its functions and institutions and in shaping the form and quality of social, economic and political systems (Pillay, 2017). Churches through their church leaders are always called upon to make judgments about cultural, political and socio-economic issues that affect mankind on earth. These decisions become imperative especially when the fundamental requirements of salvation of souls requires it (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2458). Thus, in various occasions, and when need arises, the church leaders issue statements and directions on how important matters impact the common good and how they are to be ordered to God, man's ultimate end and sovereign Good (Apostolate for Family Consecration, 2018).

Since its inception, the Christian church through its leaders has continued to engage in issues that necessitated the transformation of the human community. For example, starting with the time of Christ's first advent, Jesus and the apostles functioned within the society in which they were found to bring social change among the people in the society and community they lived in. Even though the cultural, socio-economic and political factors of the day were to greatly influence their teachings and effort as they do today, in the long run, the society that was conditioned by social and group distinctions and relied on a slave economy transformed. It became an inclusive society governed by love and equality, as well as respecting the rights of every human beings (Batey, 1972).

Jesus' preaching about the 'Kingdom' made it abundantly clear that God took seriously the concerns of the society especially the poor, needy and other

vulnerable groups. This message was echoed later by the disciples especially Paul who completely overhauled the relationship between various classes of people, instilling the mentality and practice of brotherly love, unity and respect while at the same time rebuking oppressive systems in societies that were in place then (Batey, 1972).

Later in the life of the early church, even though we do not find a pattern of a fully systemized programme to transform society, there were radical changes when the church moved out beyond the Graeco-Roman frontiers (Von Harnack, 1967). Bruce Winter in his cautious but incandescent discussions of public life in the first century shows how early devoted Christians led by their ardent leaders participated in civic and community life in the Greco-Roman societies in which they lived (Winter 1994).

The early church, and by extension its leaders, taught a civic and progressive consciousness on individual rights among its members. This is to say that Christians were to practice full life in public sphere by addressing their obligations as citizens from the perspective of the Christian morals, principals and ethics (Winter, 1994). Generally, the Bible which was and is still the Christian foundation, and particularly the New Testament sees the ministry of the church as an obligation to bring change and transformation in the society (Pillay, 2002).

During the mediaeval period, the system of feudal hierarchy led to the exploitation and oppression of those lower in the hierarchy. The church then came in to retrogress this societal evil. For example, in the Catholic Church, church guilds controlled the dominant economic institutions. The church leadership regulated their members' conduct in all their activities whether individual, social, religious and economic. The church emphasized that leading an orderly life based on the teaching of the church was a salvation demanded (Hunt & Sherman, 1981). The emphasis on social care of the venerable by the rich was a paternalistic obligation. In fact, as Pillay (2017) asserts, greed, selfish acquisitiveness and the covetousness for wealth were unswervingly condemned by the Christian church as this was against the paternalist ethic.

Prior to reformation, the church had become completely secularized and the paternalistic ethic that existed in mediaeval period had faded away. Mercantilism, industrial capitalism, urbanization and expansion of trade led to weakening of and subsequent dissolving of traditional ties that held society together. Influenced by these evils, the Catholic Church slowly and steadily cultivated moral opprobrium and heaped upon their motives and activities (Hunt & Sherman, 1981). The reformation, and particularly Protestantism arose to free people from religious condemnation and society subordination. The reformers, for example, Huldrych Zwingli, John Calvin and Martin Luther emphasized that fundamental human rights of freedom, equality,

justice and brotherly love had their source in the Christian faith (Sider 1981). Thus, the changes championed by reformers not only changed the church but also the world around it. They believed that individuals cannot act justly if structures within which they live are unjust. Their views were well linked with society transformation (Bouwsmas, 1988) since they confronted social evils like financial corruption, oppression of the poor, sexual immorality and political power. They endeavored to create a better society in which everyone could live with freedom, justice, righteousness and peace, governed by God's love and brotherly care (McGrath, 2012).

To this extent, it is submissive to say that the Christian Church, since its inception, has metamorphosed from one form to another as it permeates and infiltrates through diverse cultures and geographical entities. This has brought structural and systematic changes hence contributing immensely towards transformations of our societies.

Even in the modern age, the emergence of a new paradigm shifts, for example, reformation, civilization and westernization (though perceived as having negative influence in our societies especially Africa), enabled the church to bring about broader societal transformations (Perkins, 2005). It is not gainsaying therefore that, it has been a common practice and concept of the church to bring change in times of hopelessness, difficulties and confusion in the communities

Today, as it was in the past, and more than ever, given the increasing poverty, violence and injustices among other evils in Kenya, the Christian church is called upon to embrace, engage and continue with its task of being an agent of hope bestowal through change. It has to fulfil the gospel imperative of making the world a better place for all to live with justice, peace and harmony. Even the international laws acknowledge religion in general as an agent of change in the society. For example, in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights the place of religion is defined and it puts the church's spiritual approach to fighting social evils in context (United Nations, 1948). It states:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

It is no longer a theory that there is increasing societal problems and failing government structures in the world today. This calls for deeper resurgence of the quest for the role of the church in bringing about transformative alteration in the world. An alteration that can liberate, guide and provide hope for the ailing society. It is on this premise that much emphasis continue to be placed on the church as one of the major transformative change agent and conscience left (Bosch, 1999). This call, however diminishing may

it appear at times, will always remain since the church's role is divine, and remains the best voice of reason for our societies. This assertion was echoed by National Council of Churches of Kenya Statement crafted in the annual general meeting in 1977;

"The Church being the conscience of the nation, should teach and safeguard intrinsic values of persons, knowing that all men and women are children of God. The church should endeavour to show, both in action and preaching, that it is not wealth, education or status that matter, but the individual's intrinsic value."

The foregoing discussion shows that the Christian Church has influenced foretold significant socio-economic transformation and restructuring, witnessing the spread of a new system of public and civil life that every human being may experience the God's intended Christian atmosphere. There is no denial that other factors played a role in the transformation of society. The emphasis herein is that Christianity as a religion intervened profoundly in the lives of people and brought about fundamental changes in almost all the aspects of life as the world developed.

It is thus not surprising that one of the major role of the Christian Church in this century is to rediscover its role as an agent of change and transformation. This has become a major focus of many churches and religious organizations as well as ecumenical movements, for example, the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK). Having reviewed the historical role of the church in justifying its transformation responsibility, this study now delves into the Kenyan case by exploring how existing contemporary challenges have complicated the transformation role of the church with specific emphasis on church leadership.

3.0. The Church at Crossroad: The Kenyan Case

Christianity dominates Kenyan population at about 83% (CIA World Factbook, 2019). This huge population implies that the Christian Church can play a key role in transformation of the Kenyan society. As Nkonge (2012) informs, over the years the Church has been the most trusted institution in Kenya hence an indication that she is an indispensable agent of change especially in policy making societal transformations (my emphasis).

In fact, since its inception in Kenya, the Christian Church has been deeply rooted in the community's social and economic live. Christians have also been operating as servants it trying to impact the lives of the people for the better. This is a call of fulfilling the Messianic mission on earth. As Pillay (2019) notes, the basic function of the church is to be involved in every facet of the life of the believers. Commenting on the same, Njenga (1989) argues that historically, the Church has been more and more involved in the social matters affecting the daily lives of the people

Despite the witnessed far reaching role of the church in the society, some scholars still feel that the church could have done more. For example, Okullu (1974) opines that the Christian Church in Kenya and Africa at large has not done enough in tackling social issues affecting the people. To him, the church has historically emphasized more on spiritual welfare of its members at the expense of their social needs. To me, I concur with Nkonge (2015) who feels that this is truly a debatable point. I say so because there are many activities around that the church has done to transform the society including establishment of schools, hospitals, income generating projects and care for the vulnerable through charitable gifts, to name but a few. Nevertheless, I support the view of Njonjo Mue who observes that despite the immense contribution of the church in transforming the society, the church to some degree has been somehow complaisant in confronting social injustices out rightly, and instead, chose to engage in a rather quite diplomacy with the existing powers of the times (my emphasis) (Mue, 2008).

This partly explains why achieving the desired total change and transformations has not been easy, and is becoming more difficult now due emerging complexities in our societies, may they religious or secular. Some of the changes that have taken place in the Christian church and in the societies around it especially at the dawn of 21st century onwards have left the church somehow silent on important society concerns (Atieno, 2019).

Through my ardent observation and experience, I have come to concur with other researchers (Okullu, 1974; Bunsen, 2015; Kahura, 2018; Atieon, 2019; Otieno, 2019) that there are several compounding factors that have slowly crept into the Christian church and crippled it, particularly the mainstream churches. These factors, for example, ethnicity, political mobilization, corruption, proliferation of uncontrolled churches, leadership wrangles and corruption among others, are gradually eating the once respected mainstream churches, and have greatly affected the current church leadership groups in the discharge of their sacred call.

This has subsequently hindered church leaders from achieving their core mandate that necessitates positive change in the important human spheres as well as in the society (Chacha, 2010). It is important to note that whichever the direction the church takes, church leaders play a critical role in influencing church direction as well perception and involvement of members in important life matters like economic power struggles and politics. Therefore, when things go wrong as in the Kenyan situation now, the burden is heavily loaded on the shoulders of church leaders. This burden of responsibility and the high expectation of Kenya populace on church leaders raised an important question; is the Kenyan Christian Church Leadership able to stand for the truth, face all forms social injustices head on, and provide direction to both the church and the general Kenyan population?

As Kahura (2018) observes, especially with the demise of fearless outspoken church leaders like Alexander Muge, Reverend Timothy Njoya Bishop David Gitari and Bishop Henry Okullu, who in their own limited ways sought to speak truth to power, the mainstream churches' leadership has been clipped and is a pale shadow of its former self. Even the elaborate voice of the Catholic Church leaders, which used to be relayed through powerful pastoral letters, has been inactive and ineffective for some time now.

Recently, we have only been hearing and observing abrupt rebuttals on important church and national matters (Editorial Team, 2019). Kenyans now miss that bold and unified statements, actions and demonstrations from the church leaders that used to guide the church members and the nation at large. It is long time since we heard or saw any religious entity do a conspicuous thing in the quest of social justice in Kenya. We cannot even recall when was the last time a member of the clergy came out and constitutively voiced opposition to specific instances of government corruption, extrajudicial killing, bad governance, oppression, ethnic violence or even ineptitude of the government leadership. We always hear intermittent voices which fade away soon after they come up.

In fact, owing to the issues witnessed in Kenyan Churches for the last two decades, for example, election conflicts, violence, corruption and silence on important national matters among the clergy, it appears and indeed there is a general feeling that church leaders have lost their moral responsibility; thus voice and action. Many now look behind with nostalgia to those days of bold and decisive church leaders like Reverend Timothy Njoya and Bishop Henry Okullu, to name but a few. As Opalo (2019) laments, "the generation of politically-conscious bishops and pastors who were willing to stand to dictatorship have since given way to venal praise-singers with nothing to say about corruption and bad governance".

Moreover, there is a glaring gap between the official church teaching and the actual practice of the official church leaders, and even Christians at large (Hasel & Hasel, 2019). It is important to note that what is done in practice tends to become the acceptable teaching. However, the official teaching has become more and more like rhetoric and unrealistic hence incredible among many (Otieno, 2019). Religious practice among official church leaders has not been worthwhile recently. This is because the leaders have either done sin of omission or commission in their duty call or societal challenges have weighed heavily rendering them helpless.

The aforesaid situation has left the church leadership and by extent, the church, in a precarious situation; what I refer herein is as 'church at crossroad'. It is now becoming almost predictable that the church leadership cannot stand fully for the people in fighting the oppressive systems and social injustices witnessed in the country. As Otieno (2019)

laments, there is a glaring dilemma in Christian Churches and among the church leaders on how fearlessly to take their sacred responsibility as agents of change (Opalo, 2019). This is because of their past and present complacency and collaboration with people either allegedly purported, believed or are agents of social evils in the society. The involvement of some clergy members in unchristian activities, in addition to existing and emerging challenges discussed below, further complicates their duty, hence setting the church leadership and Christian Community in dilemma.

3.1. Challenges Facing Church Leadership

As already discussed below, church leadership and the church at large is in dilemma in trying to fulfill its role as God's representative and as an agent of change in Kenya. This is partly to problems emanating from within the church and also due to external challenges. My emphasis in this papers is that there are contemporary challenges (some which have historical roots), tearing the church leadership apart, and adding injury to the already compounding leadership problem. Explored below are some of these challenges facing the church today, and particularly church leaders that have left the church and its leadership at a crossroad or rather at unpredictable sacred voyage.

3.1.1. Corruption

The fact the corruption has been a big problem to Kenyans for decades cannot be overemphasized. Corruption is essentially a cross-cutting subject matter that touches and effects on all the themes since it emanates and greatly affects leadership and accountability. The current government under the leadership of President Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta has tried to put up raft measures which have seen many government official lose their jobs due to corruption and related scandals (Cyton, 2018). There are a number of corruption cases now ongoing in court; thanks to Director of Prosecution Noordin Haji and Director of Criminal Investigation, George Kinoti and their teams. In the history of Kenya, that is, since independence, President Kenyatta's and his government in the second tenure of Jubilee Administration is the one that has tried to fight corruption (Ombuor, 2019).

For example, there has been shaking in the county governments which has led to the impeachment of Kiambu governor. The Nairobi governor has relinquished major county sectors to national government since the court has stopped him from discharging his duties from office due to corruption allegations (Otieno, J. & Kinyanjui, M. (2020). His term in office is quite precarious now with the bending cases in court. We initially thought as a people of Kenya that devolution will curtail this menace but we were wrong. Cases of loss of public funds, 'tenderpreneurs' and squandering massively from government coffers still exist, and quite numerous in the counties (Omondi, 2018). The current effort to

fight this scourge has not yielded worthwhile results indeed. In fact, conviction cases are far much minimal compared to the number of arrested and sacked persons in the name of corruption.

This is to say that with the system of devolution, Kenyans are tired corruption even the government seem to be painstakingly struggling to minimize it. Many county government leaders, synonymous with the national government, have been characterized by reduced transparency and accountability of public funds and other resources (D'Arcy & Cornell, 2016). It is common knowledge to many Kenyans now that many of our public officials are practicing all forms of corruption, may it fraud, bribery, embezzlement, cronyism, graft and extortion among others (Ombati, 2020). Ironically, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the most generous politicians and other government officials are often also the most corrupt.

Interestingly, the culture of corruption is not exclusive to the public sector. It has infiltrated churches and other religious organizations to alarming and unexplainable proportions. Therefore, corruption is rampant in the entire Kenyan environment and currently religious leaders face similar corruption pressure found in other sectors of society (Corman, 2014).

Citing Daud Kahura in his article on anonymous quote (2018), "Christianity began as a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. When it went to Athens, it became a philosophy. When it went to Rome, it become an organization. When it went to Europe, it become a culture. When it went to America, it become a business" (Anonymous), I can evidently add and say that when the same church arrived in Kenya, it became a 'Corruption Enterprise'.

As we speak now, corruption is threatening to split several Christian denominations right in the middle. Recently, there has emerged uproar, discussions and disagreements among the clergy as whether churches should accept 'harambee' contributions from politicians and other individuals deemed corrupt (Corman, 2014). Few have reservedly opposed the idea arguing that corrupt money should not be accepted. According to Opalo (2019), other who are proponents of church 'harambees' have no reservations receiving money from individuals with questionable character. To them, church needs is paramount, since to them, the end justifies the means. The demands of their members and the church in terms of social services and physical infrastructure take priority.

Due to this loophole, many individuals especially politicians and other government officials contribute huge sum of money to churches, and no question is raised on the sources of these funds (Opalo, 2019). Acceptance of donations from politicians and the use of some 'tenderpreneurs' money to win congregations is an emerging issue in Kenya. According to Rev. Canon Francis Omondi of the Catholic Church, silence is maintained but at the back of people's

minds, it is crystal clear that these are proceeds of corruption, and in some extreme cases, wealth obtained through shedding of innocent blood to cover up corruption traces. These monies are 'sanctified' in the altars meant for holy purposes (Mureithi, 2019).

Unfortunately, very few church leaders have come upfront to condemn this immoral practice. Silence is even louder even from leaders of mainstream churches that were once respected as the source of voice of reason, silence is even louder. If any action or response, it comes too late as (Marete, 2018). For example, it is until last year 2019 on the Saturday of 5th October, when the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) led a massive congregation of catholic faithful Christians at the Marian Shrine in Subukia, Nakuru County, to inaugurate an anti-corruption campaign that lasted for six months (Kweyu, 2020). This family of clergy has been around in the past years when corruption has been escalating in the country. They remained hesitant to voice their displeasure not until the menace reached alarming proportions.

As a matter of fact, a number of other church leaders even today have not found it necessary to correct these sinful and hilarious actions. They have neither reminded the so called 'generous givers' that their contributions to churches are in no way a measure of their Christian virtues, neither are they a passport to eternal ecstasy or a favour to churches and Christians (Kahura, 2018). On the contrary, they have gone an extra mile to congratulate and jubilate those contributing largesse of corruption to churches, emphasizing that they are investing in heaven by championing the course of God on earth. I wish they knew that they are cultivating long term disease in the church that will take generations to eradicate. Foreseeing the dire effect of corruption in the church, former United States of America Vice-President Joe Biden put it succinctly while speaking to the Romanian civil society, as quoted by Kweyu (2000);

"Corruption is a cancer, a cancer that eats away at a citizen's faith in democracy, diminishes the instinct for innovation and creativity; already-tight national budgets, crowding out important national investments. It wastes the talent of entire generations. It scares away investments and jobs. And most importantly it denies the people their dignity. It saps the collective strength and resolve of a nation. Corruption is just another form of tyranny"

As Opalo (2019) notes, some church leaders in this century are willing partakers and squanders of public resources. They have in several occasions accepted grabbed public land and proceeds of corruption. As if not enough, they have gone an extra mile to provide moral cover to otherwise morally-bankrupt public officials and politicians in the disguise of praying for them in public forums and churches (Corman, 2014). But the increasing effects of corruption has led to uncontrolled cry from the masses. Since a number of clergy men are partakers

of corruption, while the incorrupt are silent, they have found themselves in an ambivalent situations.

By welcoming and entertaining corrupt individuals and their proceeds of corruption in church, it now appears that church leaders are unable to take control of their own systems (Ombati, 2020). That is why corruption incidences are taking place in churches today. Men of the collar cannot now rebuke corruption in the society as well as provide the supposed moral leadership. Their morality and ethos are questionable simply because they have compromised the church ministry.

This sequence of events has left the church leadership on a precarious equilibrium and their role as men of God is definitely uncertain. Moving forward, church leaders will be required to demonstrate, through their actions, whether they are supporting corruption and siphoning of public resources; or committed to the duty and mission of their sacred call to take care of the vulnerable as the foster change in the society. Unfortunately, the government which is supposed to censure religious activities is even worse. It is the very government through its corrupt leaders which has polluted the church with corrupt monies.

Unless we get sanctified and fresh leadership in both the church and government, either by choice or revolution, to sanctify these two important institutions, then we are likely to foresee worse corruption evils in the church in future. No wonder Pope Francis during his October 2015 visit to Kenya, declared that the country is in the verge of collapse. He asserted that corruption had become a path to death since it is crippling development, leading to poverty and suffering. We should remember that history never lies, it is always correct, and surely it will judge us harshly (Opalo, 2019), for it must come to pass.

In the words of Apolo (2019), I emphasize that history will be inconsiderate and ruthless to certain clergy individuals who use the name of God and their positions to collaborate and exonerate corrupt persons stealing from Kenyan taxpayers and even from church members. I say this because Christianity by its ethics and ethos is the only sure agent with the potential to teach values and call for accountability across sectors (Nthamburi, 1989); and this responsibility weigh heavily on church leaders. Am not saying that there are no faith-inspired actors who are trying to do the right thing in shunning corruption.

Subsequently, due to presence of corrupt and unethical church leaders, there is lack of coordination or sporadic interventions to transform the culture of corruption and prevent the evil actors from taking advantage of those seeking spiritual guidance (Corman, 2014). Since it requires individual and collective moral responsibility to fight this corruption, and achieve the desired zero tolerance to the vice, I can unquestionably say that the church has an uphill task. Men of the collar having been compromised in many occasions in the past (Chacha, 2010; Mbaka & Mbugua, 2019) cannot be trusted by their

congregations. Uniting the two to form a formidable force in fighting corruption and other societal evils, to my opinion, will only be achieved by a new generation, new breed of leadership and completely new paradigm shift. The current leadership is actually at crossroad, quite indecisive and uncertain over the corruption saga because it is a participant in this menace.

3.1.2. Political Interference

Politics and political leaders play a critical role in resource management of any nation. Modern politics is actually associated with mobilization of resources (Cowan, 2010). In Kenya, politics is well known as a fountain of wealth, a key to accessing government funds for both individual and community (Oyugi, Ocholla & Kaara, 2018). In this study, am looking to politics in the wider sense, which involves everything which pertains to the social and economic orders and to the establishment of social justice, equity and transformation of society for the better (Duchrow & Jochum-Bortfeld, 2015). This is the definition of politics in which the Christian community is involved. I am not however overlooking the narrow sense of politics as the art of politician. After all, we cannot talk of politics in exclusion of politicians no matter how hard we try.

History attests the fact that any political class in evolving societies always endeavour to maintain the status quo. The upholders of status quo who are usually rich and powerful inflict misery to the vulnerable in the society through repression, discrimination and exploitation by the rich and powerful (Pillay, 2017). Since the mission of Church to society is neither to uphold the status quo, nor to topple it by violent means, ardent church leaders find themselves at loggerheads with the political class. This has posed a challenge to the church leaders in giving a deliberately chosen and lived witness of contradiction to the status quo which is in many cases unjust.

In the Kenya context, it has become extremely difficult to for the church to maintain neutrality because the distinction between politics (in wider sense) and political parties is hardly noticeable. In the Kenyan system, political parties are not guided by same fundamental principles and moral values. Subsequently, politics is there to amass wealth, champion corruption and other evils at the expense of common man (Oyugi, Ocholla & Kaara, 2018). Fundamental principles of governance and political parties enshrined in the constitution and other rules and regulations acts are espoused theoretically but in praxis, there is inaction (Muiru, 2016).

On the other hand, there is a glaring gap between the official teaching and the actual practice of the Church and its official leaders especially on secular and other non-religious but important matters; politics included (Mattera, 2019). Knowing this, politicians have become clever and they net the clergy beforehand in several ways that render them

ineffective. To a larger some extent, the clergy is responsible for this failure (Githinji, 2019). Compounded with the challenges arising from the dynamic and changing society that is undergoing metamorphosis daily, the issue of politics and its relation to church leadership becomes even more complicated. This makes it hard for church leaders to practice out there what they actually speak from altars. The social context is becoming complicated and unless the clergy weigh and understand it, then often times they will find themselves sinking into dirty games of politics.

Let me probe deeper into this issue. Because of their noble position and relationship with politicians, church leaders are constantly under close scrutiny. In the Kenyan context, a number of them have been accused of succumbing to the adoration of mammon and abandoning their role of preaching against evils in the society (Parsitau, 2019). Besides some leaders are soliciting and accepting corrupt money and other benefits from politicians (Corman, 2014). This greed has often caused infightings and conflicts as the greed leaders scramble for the corrupt proceeds and as well as positions of power so that they can control the same in future (Kahura, 2018).

This is why in some occasions, we have witnessed some clergy members follow a line which promotes or sustains an unjust social order just because they want their allegiance to be associated with certain political individuals; or because, they have shared in evil practices like corruption in the past directly or indirectly (Otwer, 2014). The nature of our Kenyan politics if not handled with care, they can put church leaders in dilemma; this has happened and still continues to replicate.

In some instances when some leaders come out to challenge certain evils done by certain prominent political individuals, the pro-party members have always come out brandishing bitter words claiming that the Church is meddling into political issues or is used by state machinery to score political agendas (Mwaura & Martinon, 2010). Handling such scenarios is unwieldy difficult since some members of the clergy find that they had already 'gone into bed' with political leaders in the past (Mbaka & Mbugua, 2019; Aluanga, 2009). For example, through receiving their moneys which is known to be proceeds of corruption as stated earlier (Marete, 2018). This makes the clergy shy away from standing out firmly and openly to condemn such contributors when they engage in evil practices.

However, if such clergy take action in such circumstances, then they take a stance that is seen as ambiguously political so as not to be seen as in complicity with structures of injustice and inequality (Githinji, 2019). This establishes a quasi-situation to church members, which is actually the cause of the numerous outbursts witnessed from many churches in Kenya today. Many clergy members who are not up-to-date have not realized that they need to think globally but act locally in addressing the contextual

problems in and out the church (Pillay, 2017). Failure to stand firm in matters touching politics, both in theory and practice, will continue to expose the church into cultivating narrow political rudiments, hence increasing the dilemma already witnessed among the clergy's relationship with politicians.

But as Apolo (2019) observe, it is the duty of the church leaders to cultivate a healthy sense of political consciousness within and without the church. Unfortunately, the Kenya Christian community and its establishments, other religious sects and faiths included, abandoned its moral, ethical and noble indispensable role as the conscience of the nation. The once ardent generation of politically-conscious church leaders who were willing to stand against social injustice, dictatorship, bad governance and politics of retrogression have left the scene (Chacha, 2010).

We now have church leaders most of whom are unprincipled but praise-singers, who as witnessed in the recent past during their tenure, have literally done nothing substantial against the evils polarizing our society (Kahura, 2018). They have failed to acknowledge the fact that their affirmation of the authority and role of the church does not undermine the value of their socio-economic and political commitments as well as their efforts to transform the world (Pillay, 2017). Failure to do this has denied them the opportunity to premise their actions and statements on principles that can guarantee them their continuing significance and right value in the society.

This explains why Church leaders in Kenya progressively have become sanctuaries for politicians to champion their political agenda, mainly of division, corruption and as a steppingstone to power ((Mbaka & Mbugua, 2019). Since 2007, church leadership in many churches have been by partisan especially during elections and in other important national matters (Mwaura & Martinon, 2010). The same trend was witnessed in 2013 and 2017 elections which clergy family entrenched itself in ethnic positions (Otwer, 2014). Politicians are exploiting this weakness to sow seed of division in order to achieve their political ambition, and the game play is becoming more dominant as we approach the 2022 elections.

One priest, as quoted by Kahura (2018), notes that the church today cannot speak in one voice and will not condemn systemic and institutionalized state evils like corruption because it is fragmented and its leadership across the board has benefitted from state's largesse. The church, which is the voice of reason for the unfortunate and vulnerable in the society, is progressively becoming the voice of politicians and ethnic division in the country (Mbaka & Mbugua, 2019).

This course has been necessitated by church leaders in the name of pastors, reverends and bishops among others who alike have rendered themselves deployable to the politicians because of

their runaway greed, political partisanship and because of their corrupt, immoral, double standards and unethical lifestyles (Kahura, 2018). Theoretically, several official statements have been issued by church synods warring the clergy against getting involved in economic and political social order for ungodly gains whatsoever.

For example, the Pope has issued several warnings about the danger of reducing the mission of the church to the economic, political, social and cultural spheres, and of the dangers of the excessive politicization church matters especially its role (Evangelii Nuntiandi, nos. 33–35). Official statements from many church admonish church leaders to leave politics to the politicians since no one has ordained them to be directors, of the temporal order. Their duty is to stand with Christians in championing principles that bring change that enhance human survival.

The point am trying to bring out in a nut shell is that, politicking of whichever nature among church leaders has led to manipulation by determined politicians. This has made churches a cell for individuals to attain their political ambitions. There is also politicking within the church where individuals use church members through manipulation to ascend to power so that they have access to church resources (Ward, 2012). In most cases this has brought division among the church members and in the long run split community apart. Since some leaders have always taken by partisan position or even associated themselves with politicians, some even going extra mile to accept their donations, they now lack moral and spiritual authority to govern and guide the church in the right course (Otieno, 2019). Failure to have moral authority to stand against the social evils taking place in Kenya especially those championed by politicians and even Christians themselves to achieve their selfish ends, church leadership is in confusion on which action to take (. Balancing between political benefits and rightful duty has left them in total dilemma.

3.1.3. Poverty

One subject that cannot be disregarded in any discourse of economic action plan and policy making as well as in matter of church growth and development is the issue of poverty. Kenya being a developing country, is still grappling with poverty, partly due to failed structural systems in the country (Odongo, 2016). The existing church systems are not inescapable too. Am not denying that there are myriad of other factors contributing to the state of poverty that we are in. My emphasis is that Kenyan bad governance is one of the main causes and this has rendered major systems and structure incapacitated (Mbithi, 2019). When poverty is as a result of structural and system failure, the consequent effect is enormous and mitigating it in such a situation is a complex attempt (Rank, Yoon & Hirschl, 2003). The Kenya situation calls for political goodwill, adequate capital, and coordination of all stakeholders and

robust policy framework that takes religious, cultural, social, economic and political factors into consideration in poverty eradication related endeavours (Nabiswa, 2015).

Many people are facing hard economic times and have been crying for their church leaders for help, moral courage, moral courage as well as guidance in Kenya (Ayiemba, Theuri & Mungai, 2015). I have travelled wide in this country Kenya, and witnessed depressing situations where people are crying, they are suffering, they are hurting and they have been rendered poor. In the grassroots, the church leaders are theoretically concerned but practically unbothered by the plight of their congregations. To them, these are mere “disconcerting noises” from their flock. They continue with their scandalous opulence and lavished lifestyles, living in mansions and driving first class cars (Kahura, 2018). For example, in the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches where prosperity gospel is the common message and teaching from pulpits, this ironical situation is dramatic.

The continued suffering of people amidst gospel ministers living luxurious lives has created a disquiet and dissenting clamor among the church members (Kahura, 2018). Eventually, if unchecked, this is likely to cause an uproar, and outright rebellion among the Christian adherents. In some instances, such rebellion has already been witnessed (Amenya, 2018). A good example in point is the recent disquiet in the NCKC and SDA church that exploded and reached the public sphere. In fact, in some members have revolted and started their own organization within the church, citing poor leadership, corruption and mismanagement of resources (Otieno, 2019; Odongo & Okech, 2019).

I had a chance to speak to some of them, and I could decipher they felt that church leaders were living ‘good life’ at the expense of poor and suffering members. These leaders seem not to care or show concern for their members. Some politicians have hijacked this opportunity allured some church leaders and members to their side by providing ‘goodies’ in the name of charitable contribution and concern for the poor (Mbaka & Mbugua, 2019).

According to Nyongesa (2010), the moral standing of the church has been left hanging on a balance as seen earlier under ‘corruption’ discourse. Voice of reason is slowly dying away. The authority of church leaders to stand up and condemn the failed system, the oppressive leadership and associated repressive practices in both the church and the state corrupt practices is no longer there. The support expected to come from church members is also dwindling away since the masses feel they belong to a ‘lesser God’ (Kahura, 2018a).

Moving forward, the church leadership will find itself completely alienated from their members. Currently, there is an uphill task for church leaders particularly those of mainstream churches to address wealth and poverty issues owing to the economic gap that exists between them and their members (World

Council of Churches, 2006). Church projects have stalled, offerings and tithes are declining and members' needs are increasing each day. The issue of self-reliance has neither been effectively addressed neither have church members been economically empowered adequately to be productive. This tells us matters of development in the church are at stake (Ondicho & Otieno, 2017). How leaders will turn around and address this issue, from my experience, will be a very demanding and painstaking expedition. Meanwhile, the dilemma still stands as helpless members are blazing their eyes to their church leaders for help.

But according to African Synod statement of 2009 and quoted by Bunson, Kenya like many other African country is rich in human and natural resources even though many people are still left to wallow in poverty and misery, wars and conflicts, crisis and chaos. Natural disasters are not the major cause of these upheavals but are largely due to decisions and activities by people who have no regard for the common good. It is disheartening to know that some church leaders have contributed to this misery. But all is not lost, the church must not despair. The blessings of God are still abundant, waiting to be prudently and justly employed for the good of her children (Bunson, 2015).

3.1.4. Proliferation of New Religious Movements

New Religious Movements (NRMs) herein in this study refers to the religious movements that arose recently in Kenya and emphasize more on spiritualism, and are owned by individuals. They are "countercultural"; that is, seen as alternatives to the mainstream Christian religions. These movements are often highly eclectic, pluralistic, and syncretistic. This implies that they freely combine doctrines and practices from diverse sources within their belief system (Otieno, 2012). Since they emphasize more on personal spiritualism as the key to achieving success in all sacred and secular things (Freeman, 2012), people have locally nicknamed them 'NRMs'. To understand how the NRMs have put the mainstream church leadership at crossroad, we need to explore briefly the nature of these churches.

Since the dawn of 21st century, the church has greatly changed and is now characterized by a spiritually charged atmosphere, a spirit born in the western world and later spread to Africa. Atieno (2019) refers to this atmosphere as one preoccupied by Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism. She further notes that the traditional church worldwide is facing a significant test in the form of the rise of Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism, besides so numerous other splinter groups. There is also a growing rise of 'charismatic pastors'. Populism has become the gospel and the traditional preaching that used to spiritually and morally uplift the congregation is slowly fading away (Ndeda, 2019).

This new religion started as a western spiritual miasma in the early years of 20th century, and it almost at the same time gained entry into Africa. However, it is not until 1970's resurgence that it became more pronounced and deeply rooted in the continent, beginning with West African countries. This is the time the entire world experienced an explosion of Pentecostalism (Anderson, 2005; Mwaura, 2005).

Kenya has not been spared either. In the last four decades, the country has witnessed the uncontrolled rise and growth of the Evangelical and Pentecostal ministries which has contributed greatly to uncontrolled proliferation of churches (Kalu, 2008; Togarasei, 2006). Many of these churches are run independently by individual persons or couples as owners. The persons claim they have a special calling to serve God hence no need of theological training or following formal order. The fact now is that they are not trained theologians and most of them have never stepped their foot in a theological or ministerial seminary (Some & Muiruri, 2008)

It is often said that 'it is only in religion, and by extension, the bible, where ignorance is allowed and even recommended.' This is contrary to the universal norm of professionalism. Common sense dictate all over world that a person practices in a profession of which he or she is not trained and qualified to. Talk of medicine, engineering, teaching, to mention but a few. The bible is composed of 66 books, and written over 1500 years by over forty authors from three continents including Asia, Africa and Europe. It is unparalleled book since its authorship, time and content cannot be compared to any other book on earth. With over 24,600 extant, it is a book that requires several prerequisites, training being one of them, before one claims authority over it (Hasel & Hasel, 2019).

How come it is only in matters of the Bible where training is ignored? Is it true that the Bible can be interpreted by the help of God's spirit, knowledge aside? It is true, that anybody can interpret the Bible for edification of the church, whether trained or not? These and more are arguments always raised by mainstream church leaders and Evangelical and Pentecostal ministers negate them in support of their biblical illiteracy. These questions still linger in the minds of serious Christian adherents. As NRMs continue to increase and cause fear among mainstream churches, Christians will continue to raise even more serious and debatable issues that might increasingly shake the intellectual and spiritual standing of our church leaders (Samora, 2007).

Mainstream churches, contrary to the 'NRMs', belief that churches contain diverse categories and classes of people, both learned and unschooled, professionals and un-professionals. To them, they ensure that their clergy members are a notch higher in knowledge since they play multiple roles that cut across various disciplines (Ithula, 2006). Mainstream churches, and especially the Catholic Church value professionalism and training so much. That is why

there is organization, accountability and responsibility towards their congregations (Kane, 2006).

This is contrary to new evangelical and Pentecostal churches. This situation has created some kind of animosity between leaders of the two groups of churches. Those from main churches feel that there is a degree of injustice done to them and the congregation by the fact that lay men and women can claim to be apostles, bishops and pastors without proper training (Nel, 2017). In the future, we are likely to see heated debates and controversy over the issue of church organization and training of spiritual leaders especial those in charge of churches in Kenya. A country like Rwanda is ahead now since it requires all gospel ministers to have a theological degree (Woods, 2018). Nevertheless, the debate is still ranging in Kenya. Unfortunately, this has led to emergence of offshoots within mainstream churches, who are inclined to similar views to those of Evangelicals and Pentecostals (Ndeda, 2019). It is my opinion that more problems are likely to emerge in the near future.

At the moment, the leaders of the 'NRMs' will continue claiming that they are rendering service to God. This is relatively correct since there are a few who are honest. But moving forward, there is a likelihood of emerging scenario where responsibility will not be there, disorganization will take centre stage leading to chaos. This is because, as one of them observes and as quoted by Corman (2014):

"Many of these evangelical pastors are careerists who run the church as personal enterprises and fiefdoms to be passed onto their wives and children – hence they are driven by a great desire not to serve as shepherds but to use their positions . as platforms for acquiring riches."

In fact, the minister further notes that other than peddling drugs, the surest way of becoming a multimillionaire in Kenya today is starting a 'spiritual church'. To cover their sinister actions and motives, they have resorted to numerous coached testimonies, fake healing, and outright extortion from many faithful adherents (Opalo, 2019).

As Atieno laments, money has become the top priority for many preachers particularly in the NRMs. A number of self-proclaimed preachers and prophets lack religious doctrine but they claim to be under the guide of the Holy Spirit to help the faithful. They have now commercialized their encounters with the very flock they are supposed to lead (Atieno, 2019). The result of this is that the long standing respect accorded to the clergy is diminishing (Odongo & Okech, 2019). Consequently, their proliferation and amassing of numerous followers is worrying the mainstream churches since they are losing members to the so called 'NRMs'.

However, we cannot deny the presupposition that the prevailing official ambivalence among leaders has contributed to exodus of members from mainstream churches to the evangelical and Pentecostal

churches. This state of affairs complicates the role of the current church leaders the more. With growing individualism, the eventual decline of collectivism in our society, and increase in societal problems like diseases, poverty and illiteracy, we expect more exodus of members from mainstream churches to the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches in pursuit of the hope of prosperity. Whether this hope is true or false, time will tell. But so far, many Christians in those NRMs are still struggling with poverty, diseases and other human problems as they do also in mainstream churches.

It is my opinion, based on the current situation of our Kenyan society, that the proliferation of 'NRMs', their lack of training and church organization, emphasis of 'false hope' amid miserly, and despise of training has and continue to welcome a number of pertinent issues. This will continue to attract many followers, continue to raise many biblical and leadership issues, increase conflicts and animosity with mainstream church leaders and finally if unchecked, increase the dilemma already witnessed in mainstream church leaders. What we are witnessing now is that church leaders are in dilemma on how to tactfully handle these issues without raising further animosity, conflict and controversy as well as exodus of church members to other churches.

3.1.5. Prosperity Gospel

The genuine gospel of Christ as taught by Christ and Paul, was initially intended as still is, call people to repentance and y faith, inherit the eternal kingdom in future (McGrath, 2012). Entangled with this message is that God is able to meet their needs, more than enough, and as a result, faithful adherents to return a portion to the course of God in form of tithes and offerings (Duchrow & Jochum-Bortfeld, 2015).

Taking advantage of the already impoverished Kenya populace, evangelicals and Pentecostals emerged with the gospel of prosperity, which is skewed interpretation of the gospels that claim God rewards Christians as their faith increases in Him (Ehioghare & Olanrewaju, 2015). They present the gospel as the panacea of material and health gains and a as a reward to Christians' faith in God (Adogame, 2010). This is to say that success is anchored on one's spirituality. I cannot call this 'faith' as they do because faith is a far complex theological term, which cannot be narrowed down to mean just a 'vehicle of prosperity'.

Closely tied with 'NRMs' is the mass acquisition of wealth through what is now commonly known as gospel of prosperity (Ehioghare & Olanrewaju, 2015). Prosperity gospel, arising from the emergence of modern Neo-Pentecostalism, has bestridden Kenya like a colossal and its influence is pervasive (Oduor, 2013). Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism's emphasis on material prosperity account for this. Owing to the fact that Kenya still struggles with the huge burden of impoverished population, many people are susceptible to any dogma which promises to change

their deplorable situation (Otieno, 2012). With its promises of enabling the poor gain wealth, get jobs, stable families and many more prosperous promises, this gospel has created a “semblance of utopian community where all are beneficiaries of the material comforts of life through faith.” (Ehioghae & Olanrewaju, 2015). In essence, while prosperity gospel feeds the greed of its peddlers it emasculates the spirituality and economical life of believers (Kalu, 2008A).

However, I cannot fail to point out that the prosperity gospel proponents took advantage of pre-existing gap in the mainstream churches to plant this seed of prosperity. The economic welfare has long been neglected by mainstream churches, not forgetting the fact that these churches have survived on tithes and offering given by their members. Had they presented the gospel properly, emphasizing the role of faith and economic toil among Christians as stewards and co-workers with God (Ondicho, 2017), and had the government played its role in baling out the populace from dire poverty of material needs through good governance, possibly the concept of prosperity gospel could not have gained success as it has done today (Gifford, 1998; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005). The reality now is that this gospel has taken root in our churches and is attracting masses, and mainstream churches are not spared (Maina, 2008; Mwaura, 2005). In fact, I have witnessed some ministers who have left or have been excommunicated from mainstream churches because of propagating this ideology of prosperity gospel.

Theological and biblical scholars now agree that there is probably no religious phenomenon today that has attracted as much controversy and varied interpretations as the prosperity gospel among Christian believers (Kahura, 2018). Ehioghae & Olanrewaju (2015) argue that the African continent is considered to be the richest hunting ground for proponents of prosperity gospel messages. Some church leaders today feel and argue that the ancient practice of selling the blessings of the church has been subsumed by the prosperity gospel pioneers in Africa.

This explains why most of these leaders in NRMs are easily compromised by politicians and other corrupt individuals (Mbaka & Mbugua, 2019). Lack of sound biblical scruples and desire for easy but massive material wealth makes them more susceptible. They are intently interested in amassing enormous wealth and living large. They have in fact become populists spiritual. They demonize every human problem and administer fake healings and miracles (Atieno, 2019). They have deliberately caused disruptions in mainstream churches by raiding their followers in broad day light with their false hopes.

By the fact that the prosperity church leaders have no sound theological grounding and training to anchor their scriptural command and understanding of biblical matters and principles (Chrispal, 2019) we expect

some already emerging challenges to escalate in the near future. This include secularization, internal and external church conflicts especially around resources, doubles standards and confusion in the running of churches (Atieno, 2019). This is inevitable as these leaders are not accountable or answerable to any church authority.

The current Christian church is now burdened with precarious issues posed by the prosperity gospel preachers, challenges never anticipated before by church fathers. As a result, it has become extremely difficult for genuine church leaders to make the people understand the actual role of the Church in society especially in matters of wealth and poverty (Kobia, 2005; Atieno, 2019). The confusion posed by proliferation of NRM churches has been complicated further by the failure of the government to pass a law to regularize churches in Kenya. Whether this failure is deliberate or a genuine move to preserve freedom of religion or optically motivated, time will unveil the motive behind. This scenario is already complicating the progress of the mainstream churches as a voice of people in the nation. Divisions have been created, some ministers excommunicated, there is mass exodus of members to NRMs and some church ministers are slowly advocating for this gospel in the mainstream churches (Okeyo, 2013). Now, there cannot be a unified voice from the Christian church on important matters that face the nation including corruption, political responsibility, ethnic violence, bad governance, education and other socio-economic issues.

3.1.6. Leadership Wrangles

Majority of the Kenyan population has oftentimes looked upon the churches and other religious organizations, for example, the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK), for direction in times of crunches and difficulties. This has been so especially when the extremes of the political class overwhelm the regular structures and institutions. The clergy family is always called upon to act as a voice of reason and a non-partisan mediator to restore order, peace and even reconciliation. To err is human and every human being is prone to blunder and fall short of certain expectations at one time or another. However, people always expect the religious leaders to be more restrained in their actions, particularly during disagreements. By so doing, they set a noble example on how the rest of the Christians should act, behave and handle disagreements and conflicts.

Contrary to the expected high moral and behavioral standards expected from church leaders, leadership wrangles have become prevalent and increasingly frequent in churches in the recent past. From the absurd antics of self-styled pastors and prophets to the verbal and physical wars in mainstream denominations, the state of the Christian church is worrying. The Kenyan church leadership is in a crisis indeed (Otieno, 2019).

In the 2019 alone, we witnessed protracted wrangles and divisions in numerous churches, for example, Methodist Church, African Independent Pentecostal Churches of Africa (AIPCA), Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church, African Inland Church (AIC), Pentecostal Church and Full Gospel Church, to name but a few (Atieno, 2019; Wangui, 2020; Editorial Team, 2019). The wrangles were so dramatic that they were even broadcasted by the voice media and published in our local newspapers. So, it is not a secret any more that church leadership in Kenya is in rubbles and characterized by wrangles.

From wrangles over leadership and money to outright defiance pitting church leaders against each other, churches are now full of rhetorical and theological drama (Atieno, 2019). These wrangles not only threaten the major churches like Methodist Church of Kenya, SDA and the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa (AIPCA) as often broadcasted; even the very new and minority churches (for example, Kenya Mennonite Church, Lyahuka Church of East Africa, Maranatha Faith Assemblies) are having internal wars on leadership related issues. The wrangles sometimes go beyond church confines and involve several denominations. We have seen in the past mainstream and evangelical churches striving to outdo each other leading to dramas playing out in public (Otieno, 2019).

The vice has not spared even the uppermost umbrella of Christian churches, that is, the NCKK. We have witnessed break out of controversies in the NCKK, a body respected and perceived to be the citadel of moral direction in the country especially during crisis and turbulent times. Particularly during elections, synonymous with many other churches, there has been sharp divisions among the interdenominational organization leadership during elections to replace outgoing officials. A case in point is the elections of Chris Kamau to replace Canon Peter Karanja as secretary last year, 2019. The controversy was too pronounced that it divided the NCKK almost in the middle (Editorial Team, 2019).

These divisions have not been on basis of elections per se as many people believe. I say this because many people have lived to believe that elections are the major cause of the divisions and wrangles around it, a belief which by extension, is held by most Kenyan citizens on conflicts and all sorts of acrimonies witnessed on our national and local political elections and nominations. This is far from the truth. There are numerous underlying factors, so deeply rooted that they only surface occasionally, when opportunity provides so like during election times (Gathuki, 2015). So deep is the division over the election matters that the leadership on numerous occasions fail to agree on even the election procedures to follow, whether documented or not.

The underlying factor as always echoed by Christian adherents is control of funds and other resources. But this is not the only and actual problem.

Our society has lost its morality and ethos. Leaders within and without the church no longer hold the standards expected of them. There are so many evils taking place in our churches and some of them are perpetuated by the church leadership (Gathuki, 2015). In the past and even present, we have witnessed numerous bad cases among the clergy including immorality, sexual assault and abuse, corruption, embezzlement of church funds, tribalism and nepotism as well as incapacitated leaders who are completely unable to lead and guide the church in the right direction. I have named just but a few. Generally, the morality of most church leaders is wanting (Otieno, 2019). This has given rise to other vices like corruption and struggle for leadership position so that selfish indulgence and acquisition of church resources can be achieved (Corman, 2014).

As said earlier, at face value, the motivation for these wrangles and disputes is the desire to control funds as often times echoed either or openly. In Kenya, political authority and any other form of power is always associated with resources (Cowan, 2010). After all, politics is all about power and control of resources. Due to politicization among Christians, leadership in churches has become political hence the struggle to control resources (Chacha, 2010). Those in power also make sure that available positions are skewed and allotted to those affiliated to them for various reasons, so that they can also reap some benefits. Such selfish ambitions have continued to fuel divisions and conflicts among Christians, church leadership and even churches.

These infightings and wrangles, whether internal or external, are unfortunate. They at times take place when churches are facing their feeblest and gloomiest moments (Samita, 2004). It is upsetting, when church leaders are themselves engaged in the same scarring disagreements that characterize the secular and political scene. During such times, Kenyans would have expected the church and other religious bodies like NCKK to be a beacon of light and strength. Genuine Christian adherents are now worried that continued and persistent wrangles may cause the Church to completely lose its moral compass.

Mainstream Church leaders in Kenya and those from other main religious organizations like NCKK must do their utmost to quickly end the current church leadership stalemate in Kenya. This will not only help evade irreparable damage to the churches, but also to help restore people's faith in the Christian church (Otieno, 2019). The humility, compassion and understanding of Jesus Christ which our church forefathers cherished is no longer lived or expressed by most contemporary church leaders.

Church leaders have fallen short of expectation and when faithful adherents try to caution them, they are seen as politicians or heretics and treated so (Chacha, 2010). That is why, as often times highlighted by the media, we have seen cases in which congregants in some churches, crash head on

with their leaders within the sacred precincts of their churches. Leadership wrangles has too often violated the sanctity of churches. Currently, churches are no longer exclusively the place where devout Christians go to commune with God. It has become a place of self-glorification and politicization. Even the most respected and established churches in Kenya like AIC and SDA, have not escaped this ignominy (Editorial Team, 2019; Otieno, 2019; Atieno, 2019). Ironically, they are now the leading in leadership wrangles.

From skirmishes over church leadership, the fight for resources and agitation for change in the church, there is now a harmonious call for the church leadership to work extra harder to salvage its name. However, as the situation stands, the church leadership is at crossroad. Divisions have torn the said leadership almost in the middle. Because of it is wrangles, besides other evils like sexual immorality, corruption, nepotism, tribalism among others, the leadership now lacks moral authority to put secular leaders on check, rebuke their fellows who commit outright wrongs in the church, correct erring Christians and even guide the nation and the church in times of crisis and difficulties.

4.0. Conclusion

This study has shown that the church throughout history has been trying to fulfill its heavenly mandate of bringing change in the world. Beginning in from the time of Jesus, the early church led by the disciples of Jesus Christ, through the mediaeval time and reformation, the church endeavored to transform the society in which it existed, alongside its core mandate of preaching the gospel. Church leadership has played a vital role in the past in trying to ensure that the church fulfils these two noble tasks. Even today, as it was in the past, and more than ever, given the increasing societal problems like poverty, oppression, violence and injustices among other evils in Kenya, the Christian church is called upon to embrace, engage and continue with its task of being an agent hope bestowal through change.

However, emerging challenges and complexities in the Kenya society has complicated the church's role in the society. This include but not limited to corruption and politics in and out of the church, poverty, proliferation of NRMs, prosperity gospel and leadership wrangles in the Church. These factors has put the church leadership at crossroad. The leadership of the church has failed to find out an effective method of handling these emerging issues amidst their sacred ministry. The involvement of some leaders in politics, wrangles, corruption and preaching of prosperity gospel amidst the glaring poverty in Kenya has further complicated the matter. Particularly the mainstream church, it is now at crossroad and its role as an agent of change, voice of God on earth and advocate of the vulnerable in the society is at stake.

The subsequent result of this dilemma that there is general lack of bold and fearless church ministers who are not afraid to speak the truth as it is and as they

understand it; to both the political leaders as well as to their flock. If history is true, then as a witness, it pities the present generation which is devoid of crucial clergymen voices like that of Anglican bishop Alexander Muge, Reverend Timothy Njoya of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), Anglican Bishop David Gitari and Bishop Henry Okullu. I wish we were still traditionalists, we could have evoked their ancestral spirits to come and rescue the Christian Church.

Despite of these shortcomings that the church is facing, the church will remain to be among institutions capable of transcending ethnic boundaries, seeking reconciliation, and developing long term solutions to the social challenges facing humanity. Church leaders, are God's representative and agents on earth. Their ruler-ship means nothing less than the integral transformation of our society and mankind in particular, liberate the vulnerable bondage populace from bondage of oppression as they manifest the fullness of God. To fulfil their mission in reigning and subduing the world for the better through determined transformations, they must wake up to their call of duty, revisit and live the lives of their church forefathers.

And unless church leaders live up to their call, the trust bestowed upon church leaders both by the people and the state might soon fade away. They must take reminiscence of their actions, correct the past mistakes, live and lead a life and duty worthy their calling and expectations. There is need to reawake the spirit of our church forefathers for the church to sail through the current turbulence of moral decadency, political upheavals, social and cultural degradation and economic regression amidst the ever growing negative influence of emerging and dynamic paradigm shifts.

We cannot ignore the fact that Kenya faces immense challenges including radical and violent extremism, endemic poverty and disease, political corruption, economic instability, ethnic conflicts, gender inequality and even ecological crises caused by globalization and indulgent exploitation of natural resources. But Kenya is also home to a young, vibrant and dedicated Christian community that is swiftly taking its place as the major religion in the country. There is need therefore to tap this opportunity, and delve into understanding the complexity of the existing challenges so as to equip the church leadership with prerequisite skills and knowledge that will enable them stand out and provide sound leadership, in their endeavours to fulfill God's call of soul winning and society change.

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