

INTEGRATING CHRISTIAN MORAL THEOLOGY INTO UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BABCOCK AND BINGHAM UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the integration of Christian moral theology into the governance of Babcock and Bingham Universities, focusing on how theological principles influence ethical behavior, conflict resolution, and institutional administration. The research aims to identify factors responsible for ethical lapses, sources of moral conflict, and strategies for promoting Christian values within university governance. Using a qualitative research design, data were gathered from 370 respondents comprising students, lecturers, and non-academic staff through structured questionnaires. The findings reveal that inadequate adherence to Biblical standards (59%) and economic challenges (55%) are the leading causes of ethical lapses and internal conflicts. Instances of cheating and other unethical practices (65%) demonstrate moderate non-compliance with Christian moral principles in institutional governance. However, a significant majority of respondents (96.8%) strongly agreed that full compliance with Biblical standards could substantially reduce ethical failures and improve the moral climate of the universities. The study further emphasizes that effective governance in Christian universities depends not only on policies but also on the personal integrity and moral modeling of administrators and faculty members. It concludes that aligning decision-making processes, administrative practices, and interpersonal relationships with the tenets of Christian moral theology is essential for maintaining ethical sustainability. Consequently, consistent moral instruction, faith-based mentoring, and transparent leadership are recommended as key strategies for reinforcing Christian ethics and ensuring that the governance of faith-based universities reflects their foundational religious values.

Keywords: Christian moral theology, university governance, ethical conduct, faith-based institutions, Biblical standards, Babcock University, Bingham University.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary times, universities are not only centers of learning but also moral communities expected to shape ethical consciousness and social responsibility. However, the growing influence of secular ideologies, technological advancement, and materialistic pursuits has made it increasingly difficult for faith-based universities to uphold their founding moral and theological principles. Donahue (1996) rightly noted that the world is experiencing a "giant moral leap" that compels institutions to rethink their values in light of global change. For Christian universities like Babcock and Bingham, the challenge is how to preserve the integrity of their Christian identity while effectively managing academic, administrative, and social expectations in a pluralistic society.

Christian moral theology provides a framework through which these universities can integrate faith and reason in governance. It emphasizes moral reasoning, divine command, and ethical accountability in leadership and decision-making. However, the extent to which these principles are reflected in the operations of faith-based institutions remains debatable. Many Christian universities risk drifting into administrative patterns that mirror secular models, weakening the moral vision that distinguishes them from other institutions.

The moral and spiritual health of an institution often reflects the depth of its theological foundations. MacIntyre (2001) described morals as "specific beliefs and behaviors derived from doing ethics," implying that institutional practices flow from underlying moral convictions. For Babcock and Bingham Universities, applying Christian moral theology in governance means ensuring that policies,

disciplinary measures, staff-student relationships, and leadership models reflect biblical ethics and theological understanding.

Therefore, examining how Babcock and Bingham Universities integrate Christian moral theology into governance provides insight into the sustainability of moral integrity in faith-based education. It also contributes to understanding how Christian institutions can adapt to modern realities without compromising their spiritual foundations.

Statement of the Problem

Despite their establishment on firm Christian foundations, many faith-based universities face growing challenges in aligning their governance structures with the moral theology that defines their identity. Instances of moral compromise, ethical lapses, and administrative conflicts within Christian institutions reveal a weakening commitment to theological principles in decision-making and institutional conduct. The case of a lecturer caught aiding a student during an examination, which escalated into a disciplinary and ethical conflict, illustrates how moral failures within academic settings erode the integrity of Christian education.

These challenges raise questions about how effectively institutions like Babcock and Bingham Universities embody the principles of Christian moral theology in their operations. When governance loses touch with its spiritual foundation, it diminishes institutional credibility and weakens its moral example to society. This study therefore seeks to examine how these universities can integrate Christian moral theology into their governance systems to ensure that their administrative, academic, and moral practices reflect the ethical and spiritual ideals upon which they were founded.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

- i. To investigate how Babcock and Bingham Universities can effectively operate in accordance with the Christian moral theology on which they were founded
- ii. To examine how Christian moral theology can guide governance, leadership, and policy implementation in faith-based universities.
- iii. To determine how human reasoning and divine principles can be applied to maintain moral and ethical integrity in the administration of Christian universities.

Research Questions

- i. What factors contribute to Christian ethics not being adequately followed in the day-to-day operations of Babcock and Bingham Universities?
- ii. What are the causes of complaints, conflicts, and grumbles among students, lecturers, and non-academic staff in these universities?
- iii. To what level are Christian moral principles strictly adhered to in the governance and administration of Babcock and Bingham Universities?
- iv. What measures can be implemented to minimize ethical lapses and conflicts, ensuring that the universities operate in alignment with Christian moral theology?

Literature Review

The Origin of Moral Theology

Moral theology, as a distinct field of study, traces its roots to the Patristic period, when early Church Fathers sought to apply Christian teachings to the conduct of everyday life. During this era, scholars such as Augustine of Hippo emphasized the integration of faith, reason, and virtue, laying the foundation for understanding moral obligations within a Christian framework (MacIntyre, 2001). The development of moral theology continued through the medieval period with thinkers like Thomas Aquinas, who systematically connected divine law, human reason, and ethical action, providing guidance for personal and institutional behavior (Aquinas, 1947). By the modern era, moral theology had evolved into a discipline that informs not only personal morality but also organizational and

institutional ethics, offering a framework for governance grounded in Christian principles (Donahue, 1996).

In the context of faith-based universities like Babcock and Bingham, moral theology provides both the philosophical and theological basis for institutional decision-making. It guides leaders in aligning administrative policies, academic conduct, and staff-student relationships with the ethical standards expected of Christian institutions (Groome, 2011). By tracing its origins from the Patristic era to contemporary applications, moral theology demonstrates a continuous relevance for ensuring that Christian universities operate with integrity, accountability, and adherence to their foundational spiritual values (MacIntyre, 2001; Donahue, 1996).

Morality in Christian universities is rooted in God and the principles of Christian moral theology, which provide a universal standard for ethical conduct within academic and administrative settings. Theological understanding guides leaders, lecturers, and students in aligning their behavior with divine expectations, ensuring that governance and institutional practices reflect God's will. Moral codes in this context are interpreted through the lens of Christian teaching, shaping policies, decision-making, and the overall conduct of university members.

In faith-based universities such as Babcock and Bingham, moral behavior is inseparable from institutional and academic life. Adherence to Christian ethics is not only a personal spiritual commitment but also a foundation for effective governance, harmonious relationships, and conflict resolution. By integrating moral theology into institutional operations, these universities ensure that ethical principles are consistently applied, reinforcing both spiritual integrity and organizational effectiveness.

Brief History of Babcock University and Bingham University

Babcock University was established on September 17, 1959, originally as the Adventist College of West Africa (ACWA) by the Seventh-day Adventist Church to train church workers across West Africa (Babcock University, 2023). It later became the Adventist Seminary of West Africa (ASWA) in 1975, affiliating with Andrews University, USA, to offer undergraduate degrees. Full university status was granted in 1999 when it received its certificate of registration from the National Universities Commission, formally inaugurating the institution on June 17, 1999 (Babcock University, 2023). Located in Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Babcock University has since grown into a comprehensive university with multiple schools and a medical college, maintaining a strong emphasis on integrating Christian moral principles with academic excellence.

Bingham University was founded by the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) and licensed by the National Universities Commission on January 5, 2005 (Bingham University, 2023). Named after the missionary Roland Victor Bingham, the university is located in Karu, Nasarawa State, near Abuja, and began academic activities in the 2005/2006 session (Wikipedia, 2023). Bingham University was established to provide quality tertiary education grounded in Christian values, focusing on the integration of moral theology, ethical leadership, and good governance, making it a relevant case for examining the implementation of Christian moral principles in university administration.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design to provide an in-depth understanding of how Babcock and Bingham Universities integrate Christian moral theology into governance and administration. The qualitative approach allows for detailed exploration of experiences, perceptions, and practices of students, lecturers, and non-academic staff regarding the application of Christian ethics in institutional operations. The findings will offer insights into the effectiveness of moral theology in shaping policies, leadership decisions, and ethical behavior within these faith-based universities.

The study is centered on Babcock University, Ogun State, and Bingham University, Karu, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. These universities were chosen as case studies because they were established on Christian moral foundations, yet challenges in the consistent application of Christian ethics have

been observed in administrative and academic practices. The area of study aims to explore how Christian moral theology can guide governance, minimize conflicts, and enhance ethical conduct among students, lecturers, and non-academic staff.

The targeted population comprises students, lecturers, and non-academic staff of Babcock and Bingham Universities. The total population of both universities is estimated at over 700,000, including all categories of university members. The respondents for this study are specifically those directly involved in the daily academic and administrative processes to provide relevant insight into the role of Christian moral theology in governance.

From the total population, a sample of 370 respondents was selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure proportional representation of each group. Each university contributed approximately 135 respondents, consisting of 35 lecturers, 60 students, and 40 non-academic staff. This sample serves as a representative cross-section of the population to provide generalizable insights into the application of Christian moral theology in governance.

Data were collected using an open-ended questionnaire designed to capture perceptions and experiences regarding the integration of Christian moral theology in university operations. The 370 respondents completed the questionnaires, which were collected within one week for review and analysis.

Data analysis employed nominal tabular and percentage methods to summarize responses. Responses were organized into tables, and percentages were calculated to interpret the findings. The analysis considered:

- Number of respondents who completed the questionnaire
- Total number of respondents representing the population
- Percentage calculations using the formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{Number of respondents}}{\text{Total number of respondents}} \times 100$$

RESULTS

Objective 1: What factors contribute to Christian ethics not being adequately followed in the day-to-day operations of Babcock and Bingham Universities?

Table 1 – Inadequate submission to Biblical standards promotes lack of Christian morality

Question	Option	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Inadequate submission to Biblical standards promotes lack of Christian morality in this University	Agree	220	59
	Disagree	140	39
	Undecided	10	2
Total		370	100

The majority (59%) agreed that failing to adhere to Biblical standards is a key factor behind ethical lapses, highlighting a critical influence on university governance.

Objective 2: What are the causes of complaints, conflicts, and grumbles among students, lecturers, and non-academic staff in these universities?

Table 2 – Economic challenges and worldly cares cause lack of Christian morality

Question	Option	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Economic challenges and worldly cares cause lack of Christian morality in the University	Agree	205	55
	Disagree	135	36
	Undecided	30	9
Total		370	100

55% of respondents agreed that economic pressures and worldly concerns contribute to conflicts and complaints, confirming these as major underlying causes.

Research Question 3: To what level are Christian moral principles strictly adhered to in the governance and administration of Babcock and Bingham Universities?

Table 3 Lack of Christian moral theology promotes cheating and unethical behavior

Question	Option	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Lack of Christian Moral Theology is demonstrated during exams (cheating)	Agree	242	65
	Disagree	89	24.5
	Undecided	39	10.5
Total		370	100

65% agreed that ethical principles are not strictly adhered to, as shown by cheating, indicating moderate non-compliance with Christian moral governance.

Research Question 4: What measures can be implemented to minimize ethical lapses and conflicts, ensuring that the universities operate in alignment with Christian moral theology?

Table 4 Following biblical standards as a solution to moral lapses

Question	Option	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Following biblical standards for Christian morality will reduce lack of Christian moral theology	Agree	358	96.8
	Disagree	11	2.9
	Undecided	1	0.3
Total		370	100

Nearly all respondents (96.8%) agreed that adherence to biblical standards would effectively minimize ethical lapses, highlighting it as a key strategy for improvement.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the factors affecting Christian ethics and governance in Babcock and Bingham Universities, as well as potential strategies for improvement. For Objective 1, 59% of respondents agreed that inadequate submission to Biblical standards contributes to ethical lapses within the universities. This indicates that failure to align daily

operations with Biblical principles is a major factor undermining Christian ethics in governance. This finding aligns with the work of Tiplady (2013), who observed that adherence to religious and moral standards is critical in shaping ethical organizational culture, and with Sider (2005), who emphasizes that institutional commitment to scriptural principles directly affects ethical compliance among staff and students.

Regarding Objective 2, 55% of respondents identified economic challenges and worldly cares as causes of complaints, conflicts, and grievances among students, lecturers, and non-academic staff. This suggests that material pressures and external concerns significantly influence ethical behavior and interpersonal relations in university settings. Similar conclusions were drawn by Kidder (2005), who noted that situational pressures such as financial or personal stress can erode ethical decision-making, and by Rest (1986), who emphasized the impact of contextual and environmental factors on moral conduct.

For Objective 3, 65% of respondents indicated that lack of Christian moral theology is evident during examination periods through cheating and other unethical practices. This demonstrates that adherence to Christian moral principles in governance and administration is only moderate, with visible ethical lapses among students. This finding corroborates studies by Shapiro et al. (2015) and Lunenburg (2010), which highlight that ethical teachings alone are insufficient unless consistently reinforced through institutional culture and practice.

Finally, for Objective 4, an overwhelming 96.8% of respondents agreed that following Biblical standards would reduce ethical lapses, positioning adherence to scripture as a highly effective strategy for promoting moral conduct. This is consistent with Ream (2010), who found that institutionalizing spiritual and moral guidance significantly strengthens ethical behavior, and with Narvaez (2010), who argues that structured moral frameworks create predictable pathways for ethical decision-making and compliance.

Overall, the study demonstrates that both structural adherence to Biblical principles and attention to contextual pressures are essential for improving Christian ethics in university governance, while active engagement in moral education and modeling by staff remains critical for sustaining ethical practices.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the governance of Babcock and Bingham Universities is influenced by a combination of inadequate adherence to Biblical standards, economic pressures, and personal character flaws, which together compromise ethical behavior and institutional integrity. While moderate compliance with Christian moral principles is observed, visible lapses such as cheating indicate gaps in practical implementation. Adherence to Biblical standards emerges as a highly effective strategy to promote ethical governance. The findings underscore the necessity of integrating Christian moral theology into all aspects of university administration, ensuring that policies, leadership practices, and interpersonal relations reflect the ethical and spiritual foundation upon which these universities were established.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Faith-based universities should institutionalize regular moral and spiritual orientation programs for students, lecturers, and staff to reinforce adherence to Biblical standards.
2. Leadership should model Christian moral values in daily operations to bridge the gap between teaching and practice.
3. Mechanisms for ethical oversight and accountability should be strengthened, particularly in academic assessments and administrative decision-making.
4. Universities should address economic pressures and worldly concerns affecting staff and students, as these are significant contributors to ethical lapses and conflicts.

5. Structured seminars, workshops, and counseling programs should be implemented to enhance ethical awareness, promote submission to divine principles, and foster a moral organizational culture.

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