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# CORRUPTION: HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS RESPOND?

## ABSTRACT

The results of the 2010 Corruption Perceptions Index of Transparency International indicate the seriousness of the worldwide corruption problem. Although recent decades have witnessed a global public awareness and an increase in attempts to eradicate corruption, it is an ongoing problem. It is evident that legislation is not an effective deterrent and it should therefore also be tackled at grass roots level by involving ordinary citizens, including Christians. On an individual level, it entails personal honesty and the living of exemplary lives. The golden rule of Jesus Christ can serve as a guiding principle for everyday life, namely do to others what you would have them do to you. On the public level, it requires the willingness to act as whistle-blowers. Christians are called and sanctioned by God to participate actively in society's transformation. They need to think ethically and to act with the proper attitude.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The media currently confronts South Africans with political catchwords and concepts which were hardly known in the past such as, for example, lifestyle audit (Joubert 2011:2; Mohamed 2011:4), money-laundering (Broughton & Jansen 2011:2; Harper 2011:1), nepotism (Horner *et al.* 2011:1; Liebenberg 2011:7), tender fraud (Moloto 2011:6; Oelofse 2011:4) and whistle-blowing (Houzet 2010:8; Steinacker 2010:7). New organisations and forums were formed to meet the challenges posed by the threat of corruption. In South Africa, the National Anti-Corruption Forum (NACF) was launched in Cape Town by the then deputy-president on 15 June 2001 (NACF 2011). The United Nations General Assembly also recognised the need of an effective international legal instrument against corruption and on 14 December 2005

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established the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNODC 2011). Transparency International (TI) was established in 1993 and leads the fight against corruption in over 90 countries worldwide and raises awareness about the devastating impact of corruption. TI works with partners in government, the private sector and civil society to develop and implement effective measures to tackle corruption. The 2010 Corruption Perceptions Index of TI shows that nearly three quarters of the 178 countries in the Index have a score below 5, where 0 is highly corrupt and 10 is highly clean. Of those countries with a score of 5 or above, only three are from the African continent. South Africa has a score of 4.5 and of the ten countries with the lowest ranking, five are from Africa with Somalia in the last place (Transparency International 2011).

There is a worldwide public awareness of corruption; there is an increase in anti-corruption laws, and there have been high-profile arrests and convictions. Regardless of the increase in the number of anti-corruption agencies and their activities, Bull and Newell (2003:244-245) are asking questions about the success and effectiveness of these initiatives by referring to the ongoing occurrence of corruption worldwide. Since it is so difficult to detect and to prove corruption, legal sanctions will probably never adequately serve as a deterrent. Opportunity, incentive and risk are three aspects of corruption which can be legally controlled, but an important fourth aspect, namely personal honesty, is extremely difficult to control. The researchers wholeheartedly agree with the authors and it is their conviction that, if this fourth aspect is not addressed, the fight against corruption is more than likely already lost.

Media reports confirm the TI results and it is undeniable that South Africans are not escaping the endemic cancer of corruption. It is rampant in the corporate world as well as on all levels of governance. This is the reality despite the fact that section 195 of the Constitution cites certain basic values and principles to regulate public administration (South Africa 1996:1331[17]). Some of these values and principles are the following:

- a high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained;
- efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted;
- public administration must be accountable, and
- public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity and fairness.

The question could be asked: How should ordinary citizens, and more particularly Christians (as 79.8% of South Africans indicated their religious affiliation in the 2001 census as Christian), react when confronted with corruption (SouthAfrica.info 2011). Theron and Lotter (2009:467, 487) show that Christians should not withdraw from the world, but should actively participate in the transformation of all areas of society. They should not keep silent about political, social and economic evils, but be prepared to shoulder the responsibility to address these problems by applying biblical, moral and ethical principles. When writing about corruption in the corporate world, Arbogast (2008:ix-x) expresses the opinion that the private ethical formation of individuals is not sufficient to handle the complex and often challenging ethical dilemmas within corporate life. What makes these ethical situations so complex is the fact that the moral issues are often blurred and loaded with personal risks. These risks more often than not discourage people who might have done the right thing under different circumstances. People therefore need specific training to resist and speak out against unethical practices – to be *resisters*.

The central theoretical argument of this article is that Christians need to be equipped to act as resisters when confronted with corruption. The researchers will follow Osmer's (2008:4) methodology. First, the phenomenon of corruption will be described. Then an attempt will be made to explain why it is occurring. Next the researchers will endeavour to formulate normative principles regarding corruption from the Word of God. Finally the researchers will suggest some pointers for Christians to follow when confronted with corruption in their everyday lives.

## 2. CORRUPTION

According to Vorster (2011:1), corruption is the misuse of a public office or a position of authority for private material or social gain at the expense of other people. Bauer (2000:218) also includes bribery (the use of a reward to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust), nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reason of prescriptive relationship rather than merit) and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private use) in the concept of corruption. Dassah (2008:37) agrees with Newell and Bull (2003:1) that corruption is not primarily confined to the developing countries where economic hardship causes correct procedures to be less rigorously implemented, but is just as common in rich countries. In the emerging economies, however, it has more devastating consequences (Webb 2005:152; Dassah 2008:37).

As stated earlier, recently there has been a worldwide increase of public awareness of corruption and the exposure thereof. The researchers are of the opinion that this may cause many South Africans, in particular white South Africans, to wrongfully believe that corruption only became a problem after the 1994 transition. It is important to note that, prior to 1994, there existed hardly any South African legislation to promote the disclosure of information (Du Plessis 1989:566-567). Webb (2005:152) states that it is only since 1994 that various statutes have been promulgated to promote access to information, *inter alia*, the *Promotion of Access to Information Act*, 2000 (Act 2 of 2000), the *Protected Disclosures Act*, 2000 (Act 26 of 2000) and the *Administrative Justice Act*, 2000 (Act 3 of 2000). These laws and technological developments have made it easier for public officials to detect corruption; information on government institutions and activities is currently more accessible. Harvey (2011:9) also mentions how the 2002 *Promotion of Access to Information Act* was a great step forward in the constitutional democracy of South Africa because it increased access to information. The proposed 2011 *Protection of State Information Bill* appears to reverse such a process, which will, according to the researchers, be a step in the wrong direction. That is perhaps the reason why there is currently such an unprecedented demonstration of opposition<sup>1</sup> across the South African society that the bill should be withdrawn (Makinana & Davis 2011:2).

South Africans should not make the mistake to believe that corruption is a post-1994 problem. The researchers started this 2012 article with quotations from newspaper articles reporting on corruption. Similarly, twenty-three years ago, Du Plessis (1989:550) started her 1989 article on corruption and government ethics by quoting some newspaper headlines concerning corruption. Bauer (2000:219-227) investigates two cases of maladministration and corruption in the pre-1994 South African government. In 1988, the Van den Heever Commission was established to investigate repeated reports of irregularities in the Department of Education and Training. Numerous cases of corruption, fraud, bribery, kickbacks, nepotism, ghosting and a general lack of accountability were made public. This involved irregularities concerning book contracts, the buying of video equipment, and youth camps run by family and friends of employees, to mention but a few. In 1991, the then State President F.W. de Klerk appointed the Pickard Commission of Inquiry to investigate the activities of the former Department of Development Aid. The commission discovered that at least R50 million had been lost in corrupt deals. They

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1 On the 17<sup>th</sup> of September 2011 more than 4000 people from various groups participated in a demonstration in front of the Parliament buildings in Cape Town (Joubert & Essop 2011:1).

found evidence of a culture of corruption and irregularities, tender fraud, favouritism, nepotism and a lack of accountability in the Department.

Since the earliest times<sup>2</sup>, corruption has been part of human existence and still influences current society significantly. To be able to respond to it in an ethical manner, people need to understand the phenomenon. In Vorster's definition of corruption, the words "for material or social gain" refer to the question *why* corruption occurs and the phrase "at the expense of others", on the other hand, refers to the *effects* of corruption. Investigating the root causes and consequences of corruption may contribute to a more effective response to corruption.

## 2.1 Root causes

In a survey done by the Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM) in April 2001 among a random sample of government officials in the Eastern Cape, the following arguments were offered as possible explanations for corruption. The way in which the officials offered these explanations could serve as justification for the existence of corruption (Allan *et al.* 2002:i, 26-28). They mentioned that officials are not well paid and consequently have no choice but to ask people for extra remuneration. They stated that these extra payments, in a certain sense, serve a good purpose, because it makes the government more efficient. The officials argued that corruption, compared to other issues facing the government, is not such a big deal. The last explanation offered is the well-known "everyone does it". In closely examining the explanations provided by government officials, the researchers wish to highlight a few dangerous ethical perceptions that need to be addressed later:

- If the employee is of the opinion that the employer is not looking sufficiently after his/her interests (inadequate salary), s/he has the *right* to do something about it.
- The end justifies the means (corruption increases efficiency).
- If one can find other "evils" worse than the one in focus, the present "evil" is more permissible and almost justified (corruption is one of the lesser evils).
- An action is justified as long as there are others who also do it.

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2 An Assyrian clay tablet, dating to approximately 2800 BC, was unearthed bearing the words "Our earth is degenerate in these latter days. There are signs that the world is speedily coming to an end. Bribery and corruption are common." (ABHOTA 2011).

When Hope (2000:19-23) and Bauer (2000:232) comment on the causes of corruption, they are referring to Africa in particular. Webb (2005:153) is referring to the developing countries in Africa. According to these researchers, the kind of government and leadership in the country can greatly influence the possibility of corruption. When there is a ruling elite who exercises all power attached to national sovereignty, the state is supreme over civil society and there is usually a lack of the rule of law and accountability. There is typically an absence of liberal democratic institutions, a free press, citizen rights and market forces. This leads to poor accountability, thus creating a fertile ground for expanding corrupt practices. The lack of citizen education, the low literacy rate and the lack of interest and knowledge in the activities of government institutions contribute to insufficient public accountability. In addition, the lack of exemplary ethical leadership facilitates corruption as people's personal and private interests take precedence over national interests. This is supported by the general sociocultural norms in Africa which cause people in general to be more loyal to their families and friends than to the state. These sociocultural norms may often necessitate the infringement of laws and regulations in order to favour family or friends (nepotism). These causes named by Hope, Bauer and Webb are crucial in the fight against corruption and need further attention, but these fall outside the parameters of this article.

## 2.2 Consequences

The words "at the expense of others" in the definition clearly addresses the consequences of corruption. When Bull and Newell (2003:242-243) refer to the effects of corruption in the political system of a country, they mention the following points: there is a financial drain on the state and this may lead to a rise in public debt and/or a growing tax burden; there are capital flight and lower levels of domestic and foreign investment, and there is a decline in trust and growing voter apathy. Hope (2000:25-2) cites further consequences of corruption: political opposition and criticism will be suppressed in order to stay in power, and administrative development and efficiency are hindered. Webb (2005:153) also refers to the weakened public service delivery, the misdirection of public resources and consequently the inhibition of growth that is necessary to alleviate poverty. In carefully studying these consequences, the researchers agree with Dassah (2008:37) that corruption has economical, political and social consequences and that no citizen can thus stand in apathy towards the occurrence of corruption.

## 2.3 Fighting corruption

In 2002, the South African government adopted the *Public Service Anti-corruption Strategy*. This strategy focuses on the crucial role of civil society; the education and training of public servants in ethical guidelines and rules of conduct; improved management policies and practices, and an increase in the institutional capacity of the courts and numerous watchdog agencies. Despite the provision of training and education programmes on ethics, the *Ethics in Practice* survey revealed that these programmes were not as effective as was hoped for. The results revealed, *inter alia*, the following:

- only 50% of the respondents indicated that their institutions have an explicit strategy focused on promoting ethical values and practice in day-to-day activities, and
- ethics training is too brief to be effective.

The role of the public to ensure accountability from political representatives and public officials cannot be denied. It happens through, for example, electoral legitimacy, the ombudsman, decentralisation and participation, the mass media and public opinion. South Africa, however, still has a long way to go in its programmes to ensure public awareness (Webb 2005:154-155, 161-162). This illustrates the point that government programmes to fight corruption are not sufficiently effective. The researchers are of the opinion that the problem should also be tackled at grass roots level by involving ordinary citizens who are willing to act as whistle-blowers.

## 2.4 Whistle-blowing

In the April 2001 survey of PSAM in the Eastern Cape, 73% of the respondents showed a willingness to report corruption, because they felt it their duty to do so. However, 64% of government officials reported that formal reporting procedures do not exist in their departments and only 42% of the respondents were confident that they would be legally protected from adverse circumstances if they report incidents of corruption (Allan *et al.* 2002:41, 44). These statistics cast a shadow over the willingness of people to report corruption. One of the “new” terms mentioned in the introduction, *whistle-blowing*, is associated very closely with the disclosure of corruption. Arbogast (2008:218) defines a whistle-blower as somebody who reports incidents of fraud, waste, abuse or criminal activity to people perceived as having the ability to take corrective action. Auriacombe (2004:656-657) gives examples of activities in everyday life which call for the whistle to be blown: an employee experiences sexual harassment; an

employee suspects that the chief accountant is committing fraud; factory workers are being pushed to cut corners with regard to health and safety, and a hospital worker is concerned that practices in his/her hospital may be putting patients at risk. From these examples, the value of employees blowing the whistle because of atrocities at the workplace is apparent, as the whistle-blower serves the interests of the public at large.

The personal risk involved in blowing the whistle is one aspect of whistle-blowing which cannot be ignored and to which the officials in the Eastern Cape also referred. Sherron Watkins, who blew the whistle at Enron (USA) in 2001 had to face the difficulties and personal risks involved with whistle-blowing. She was treated like an exile and discovered that the federal law in the USA did not protect private-sector whistle-blowers, with the result that her company could fire her and she could not contest a case of wrongful dismissal in court (Arbogast 2008:208-209). According to Auriacombe (2004:658), the *Protected Disclosures Act* No 26 of 2000 has done much to alleviate fears of whistle-blowers in South Africa. Under this Act, whistle-blowers are legally protected against retaliation by employers. The aim of whistle-blower legislation is to change the prevailing culture of silence. The *Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act* (PCCAA) of 2004 states that people have the duty to report corruption. Pragal (2006:18) differs from Auriacombe by stating that there is not sufficient legislation in South Africa to protect whistle-blowers and is therefore of the opinion that the PCCAA runs a risk of being ineffective.

A second aspect of whistle-blowing to which Auriacombe (2004:656-657) draws attention is the utmost necessity to react to the whistle when it is blown. The tragic death of eleven chemical factory workers in Lenasia in 2000 could probably have been prevented. During the investigation after the incident, it was discovered that three months prior to the incident concerned employees had written to the Department of Labour about the dangerous working conditions in the factory<sup>3</sup>. In 1984, 3 800 people died and 2 680 were left with partial disabilities in India after concerns about a gas leak; safety measures were raised by workers and a journalist, but ignored by the local authority and Union Carbide India Limited.

A whistle-blowing policy can only be effective in deterring organisational wrongdoing if all parties involved accept its use as a valid and ethical control mechanism to combat corruption and fraud (Auriacombe 2004:668).

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3 [http://www.klasslooch.com/lenasia\\_factory\\_fire\\_.htm](http://www.klasslooch.com/lenasia_factory_fire_.htm)

### 3. THE CHRISTIAN AND CORRUPTION

When a person is confronted with corruption, his/her reaction will be determined by his/her understanding of corruption. For the researchers, the Word of God should serve as the point of departure for a Christian's thinking about corruption and possible reactions towards it. The Old Testament pays particular attention to the concept of corruption with accompanying examples of people from whom Christians can learn a great deal when confronted with difficult situations. The researchers conclude this section by identifying certain normative guidelines from both the Old and the New Testament that believers can follow while living in a corrupt world.

#### 3.1 Corruption from an Old Testament perspective

In the Old Testament, the word "bribery" is regularly used to refer to corruption. In the book of Exodus, Moses gives the following instruction: "Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the righteous" (Ex 23:8). Similar content can be found in Dt 16:19. Ryken (2005:749) mentions that it is evident that there can never be true justice when bribery is involved, because it closes the eyes to the truth. The result is blind justice. To protect Israel's legal system against abuse, the judges are cautioned to provide equal justice to all by not taking bribes. Any income acquired by government officials and judges by illegal means with the purpose of influencing decisions can be considered a bribe. Taking a bribe is regarded as an offence against God, the weak, the innocent and the community (Walton & Matthews 1997:117-118, 241). It was customary to give gifts as a sign of respect, but it could easily be distorted to become bribes with the sole purpose of influencing the judicial actions (Clements 2001:75). Chianeque and Ngewa (2010:233) agree that the judges' judgment may never be influenced by bribes, friendships or personal favouritism.

In Pr 17:23, Solomon portrays the evil intent of the bribe and how it depraves justice: "a wicked man accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the course of justice" (Clifford 1999:167; Murphy & Huwiler 1999:88). There can be no uncertainty about the fact that corruption jeopardizes righteousness and justice (Nsiku 2010:811). In everyday life, the saying "you scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours" often helps to get things done. The problem is, however, that this process overrides justice. This is not acceptable, even though it may be effective. When pragmatism becomes the guide to decide whether an action is acceptable or not, judges become auctioneers who sell the "truth" to the highest bidder. The result is that helpless people become vulnerable and there is no social justice, because powerful people

lose their sense of God, and life becomes savage (Ortlund 2005:44, 72). Once the legal system only benefits people in power, leaders turn into murderers (Goldingay 2001:38).

In the book of Proverbs, Solomon reveals the underlying attitude of bribery: “a greedy man brings trouble to his family, but he who hates bribes will live” (Pr 15:27). Murphy and Huwiler (1999:77) are of the opinion that the way the proverb is constructed plainly shows that bribery and greediness go hand in hand. When Solomon is writing about bribery, he mentions the temporary short-term results of bribery which is mostly positive to the giver of the bribe, but he also mentions the long-term negative effects. In Pr 17:8, he writes that “a bribe is a charm to the one who gives it; wherever he turns, he succeeds”. The bribe is empowering the giver of the bribe and makes him/her feel important (Clifford 1999:165). However, Solomon is also very outspoken about the negative end result of bribery and corruption. He writes that considerable wealth earned in dishonesty will not last and may even be dangerous (Clifford 1999:158, 189; Habtu 2010:776). The following proverb serves as a good example: “A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapour and a deadly snare” (Pr 21:6). He mentions the end result of giving presents to the rich in order to win their favour: the giver of the bribe will become poorer, because the wealthy will take the gifts and still do as they please (Pr 22:16; Clifford 1999:199). Jeremiah describes the same result of bribery:

Like a partridge that hatches eggs it did not lay is the man who gains riches by unjust means. When his life is half gone, they will desert him, and in the end he will prove to be a fool (Jer 17:11).

Allen (2008:201) explains that there is a popular belief that this kind of bird will take the eggs from the nests of other birds. After the little ones have been hatched and reared by the partridge, they will fly back to their own kind. Jeremiah sees a parallel between what happens to the bird and money obtained in unjust ways.

### 3.2 “Resisters” in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, one reads of officials who acted so faithfully and honestly with money entrusted to them that no accounting was necessary (2Ki 12:15; 2Ki 22:7). The same testimony is given of Daniel:

The administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were

unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent (Da 6:4).

Daniel's faithfulness to God caused him to be faithful in all areas of his life. Believers should be encouraged by Daniel's example to be loyal citizens and conscientious, faithful workers (Theron & Lotter 2008a:278).

A position of power often entitles a person to enjoy certain rights and privileges. In this regard, it is interesting to examine the life of Nehemiah and how he demonstrated an alternative way of living (Ne 5:14-19). He was appointed as governor in the land of Judah, but neither he nor his fellow workers ate the food allotted to the governor. The previous governors placed heavy burdens on the people to fund their extravagant lifestyles, but in the process impoverished the already struggling people even further. Out of reverence for God, Nehemiah did not follow suit. On the contrary, he helped others. For him, reverence for God did not only have to do with public worship, but it influenced his everyday life. He had compassion for others and showed generosity and thoughtfulness by feeding others from his own salary. In this way he avoided that money becomes his god (Brown 1998:96-98).

### 3.3 Normative guidelines for Christian living in a corrupt world

God puts a high premium on honesty and truthfulness, because it will ensure a just legal system (Ex 23:1; Walton & Matthews 1997:117; Ryken 2005:746). In Lev 19:1, God's people are instructed not to steal, not to lie and not to deceive one another, because "I am the Lord". The repetition of "I YHWH" in Lev 19 stresses the point that violation of these laws may escape the eyes of human jurisdiction, but God will assuredly punish the offenders (Milgrom 2004:226). God expects from the people of Israel that integrity should mark their actions and words. This will ensure trusting and trustworthy societies where no inspectors are necessary to check on people. These societies will advance and will be cheap to run because all citizens will form part of the productive workforce (Tidball 2005:238).

As mentioned earlier, greed is often the root of corruption. Solomon counters this attitude with the following proverb: "Better a little with righteousness than much with injustice" (Pr 16:8). The most valuable possession, state Murphy and Huwiler (1999:81), is not riches, but the right relationship with God. The problem with riches is that "whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income" (Ecc 5:10). The author wishes to make it clear that money

and abundance can never satisfy. The “lover” of money will always be disillusioned because of the fact that money, wealth and possessions are short-lived (Fredericks & Estes 2010:150). In 1Jn 2:16-17, the apostle John states that everything in the world, including the cravings of the sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the world’s desires, will pass away. There is only eternal value if a person lives according to the will of God. In Paul’s words, in the letter to the Galatians, he refers to this kind of life as living by the Spirit in contrast to living according to the sinful nature (Gal 5:16-17). The Spirit of God is the solution to overcome the power of the sinful nature (De Boer 2011:351). It is important to note that idolatry and selfish ambition are characteristics of the sinful nature (Gal 5: 20). In Cl 3:5, Paul exhorts the Colossians to put to death whatever belongs to their earthly nature and refers specifically to greed, which he equates with idolatry. In Paul’s mind, there is no doubt that those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their sinful nature, live by the Spirit and are in step with the Spirit (Gal 5:24-25). The new Afrikaans translation reads as follows: “*ons lewe deur die Gees; laat die Gees nou ook ons gedrag bepaal*”. Christians should make every effort to align their lives with the Spirit, as the Spirit is the regulative principle for the believer’s conduct (Stutzman 2006:239; De Boer 2011:372).

When the crowds respond to John the Baptist’s teaching, they ask how they should live (Lk 3:10-14). He specifically addresses a group of tax collectors and soldiers. To each group he gives specific answers, but the principle of unselfishness is the common thread that runs through all his answers. John’s answer to their question is that they should demonstrate genuine love and justice and that they should be content with their wages. An attitude of contentment will protect them from falling into temptations associated with their particular professions (Harvey 2004:36; Blight 2007:127-130). In his letter to Timothy, Paul addresses the same matter (1Ti 6:6-10). He argues that people who are content with what they have are happier than those who are never satisfied. The latter may fall into all kinds of sin as a result of their constant craving for more (Andria 2010:1476). The advice from the author of the book of Hebrews is that his readers should keep their lives free from the love of money and be content with what they have, because God has promised that He will never leave nor forsake them (Hb 13:5). Thus, according to Arthur (2003:223), Christians should be the first to fight materialism and greed, because they have the One who will fight for them and God’s favour is more valuable than money in the bank. Harvey (2004:716) and Guthrie (2007:991) agree with Arthur that Christians should be content, because they have the confidence that God will provide in all their needs.

James' advice to the followers of Jesus Christ in a corrupt world is that they should rid themselves of all moral filth and evil and humbly accept the Word which is planted in them and which can save them (Jas 1:21). The believer should "strip off" the pre-Christian sinful lifestyle and put on the new way of righteous living. Their lifestyle and behaviour will hence demonstrate their obedience to the Word of God which is the new authority and guide in their lives (Moo 2000:85-88). Peter's advice to believers is that they should

be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of suffering (1 Pe 5:8-9).

Peter is referring to the individual's state of mind: spiritual soberness, clear-mindedness and self-control. When the mind is free from confusion and consuming passions, the person can be alert and watchful against moral threats and attacks of the devil. By holding fast to the gospel and the Christian community, s/he will be able to stand firm against the evil one. The individual can be encouraged by the fact that s/he is not isolated, but forms part of God's holy nation. Believers should expect resistance, because commitment to God serves as a sign of God's victory over the powers of darkness (Jobes 2005:313-314).

The apostle Peter gives more encouragement to the followers of Jesus Christ in his second letter:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires (2 Pe 1:3-4).

In this letter, word pairs such as "life" and "godliness" often stand for a single entity, in this case "a godly life". Peter argues that there is no reason why his readers cannot live godly lives, because they have received everything necessary for it. Jesus Christ's divine power will enable them to participate in the divine nature and to escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires (Davids 2006:168, 172). Jude is echoing the same message, namely that God is able to keep the believer from falling and to be presented before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy (Jude 24). Davids (2006:109) states that there is no doubt in the mind of Jude that God is able to protect his children. This theme recurs often in the

New Testament (Jn 17:11&15; 2Th 3:3; 1Pe 1:5; Rev 3:10) and serves as a great encouragement to believers.

#### 4. SOME POINTERS FOR CHRISTIANS WHEN CONFRONTING CORRUPTION

In the introduction to this article, it was shown that people all over the world are living and working in corrupt societies. It was also shown that government programmes and legislation are not always so effective in the battle against corruption. It is therefore the researchers' opinion that the problem should also be tackled at grass roots level by involving ordinary citizens, including Christians, who are willing to act as whistle-blowers. They may no longer be satisfied with the "culture of silence". Christians are called to be "reformers" who actively participate in the transformation of society. This action lies on two levels: a personal and a public level. Christians should guard against the temptation of corruption and live exemplary lives,<sup>4</sup> also there where they are alone. On the public front, Christians should be willing to blow the whistle whenever corruption is encountered in society. Action on both levels needs to be characterised by certain attitudes in order to achieve the desired result.

##### 4.1 On a personal level

The Word of God warns believers not to be arrogant and to think that they will never fall into temptation. Just to mention two passages in Scripture where Paul conveys this message unambiguously:

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted (Gal 6:1).

So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! (1Co 10:12).

The same message is conveyed in the following proverb of the Kamba people in Kenya: *one in the woodpile does not laugh at one in the fire* (Ngewa 2010:1424). Christians should be alert and guard against moral

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4 If an individual drove too fast and the traffic officer stopped him/her, the person is confronted with the temptation to quickly solve the problem by giving the officer something in the hand. It is the experience of the researchers that people who fell into this temptation, are often those who will be on a rampage over corrupt officials.

threats and attacks of the devil, but they are also encouraged to live godly lives, because Jesus Christ has empowered them and they have the promise that God is able to protect them.

A godly life will not follow automatically after conversion by merely replacing one set of values with another. The mind plays an enormous role in the process of inner change, and inner change will result in behaviour change. The apostle Paul refers to the “renewing of the mind” (Rom 12:2) and “to be made new in the attitude of the mind” (Eph 4:23). True transformation, which will result in practical Christian living and a willingness to break with the sinful world, is only possible when the Holy Spirit redirects and renews the mind (Campbell-Lane & Lotter 2007:376, 383). Paul also shows that the Christians should be willing and committed to undergo this change, that they should “offer their bodies as living sacrifices” (Rom 12:1), “to put off the old self” (Eph 4:22) and “to put on the new self” (Eph 4:24).

In the Christian’s fight against the temptation of corruption, Jesus Christ’s so-called *golden rule* is a very powerful tool. Davies and Allison (2004:685-686) strongly contend that it is not simply a conclusion of the section on social behaviour, but is in reality the climax of the Sermon on the Mount: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you” (Mt 7:12). It gives instruction and encouragement for life in this world. It is the expression of the *ultimum desideratum* or the “better righteousness”. It is the heart of the law and the guide for daily conduct and contact with others (Keener 2009:248-249).

Living according to the golden rule of Jesus Christ will expose any hint of greed and selfishness in the life of the Christian and will promote integrity and personal honesty. Nehemiah is a good example of someone who managed to apply the golden rule in his life. He also demonstrated contentment with what he had and that protected him from falling into temptations. Christians should follow suit, because God has promised that He will never leave nor forsake them. He will fight for them and will provide in all their needs. God’s favour and the right relationship with Him are more valuable than temporary earthly riches.

## 4.2 On a public level

Auriacombe (2004:661) suggests different reasons why people, in general, are willing to be whistle-blowers/resisters. Some people do it out of principle, because they believe that their personal, ethical or moral beliefs are being violated. They can be called *ethical resisters*. Others may blow the whistle because of *legal considerations*. They may be in a regulatory

function and are specifically required to obey the law, e.g. registered auditors. A third group will blow the whistle for the public good. They can be called *good citizens*. Christopher Meili, the Swiss security guard who blew the whistle in 1997 on the shredding of Swiss archive documents relating to the Holocaust banking accounts, is an example. Meili lost his job and suffered significantly as a consequence of his act. He did not do it because of any association with Holocaust victims or any Jewish connections, but out of public interest (cf. The “1939” Club 2011.).

When Jesus Christ uses the metaphor of salt and light (Mt 5:13-16), it is clear that He wants his followers to have a distinct influence on society and to fight corruption and moral decay (Theron & Lotter 2008b:301). Christians have no choice but to be whistle-blowers when justice and righteousness are being jeopardised. They must be critically and constructively involved in all spheres of life in order to make the world a better place (Theron & Lotter 2009:488). The researchers agree with Benson (2008:77) that corruption must be fought by all South Africans; otherwise it has the potential to undermine the initiatives in our country aimed at uplifting and empowering its citizens. The week of 17 to 23 October 2011 was declared the National Whistleblowing Week Campaign and all South Africans were invited to report corruption by contacting 0800-52-53-52 or to go online [www.blowthewhistle.org.za](http://www.blowthewhistle.org.za).

Arbogast (2008:6, 23) gives a few practical guidelines when a person is confronted with corruption. S/he must first clearly distinguish the ethical issue at stake. Then the person should identify the potential personal consequences if s/he should blow the whistle and consider whether alternatives are available to alleviate the risk. Thirdly, it is often helpful to suggest, as part of the process of exposure, alternative ethical actions instead of the questionable activity.

The fight against corruption should be driven by ethical thinking. The researchers want to reiterate some of the wrong thinking of officials which further corruption (cf. 2.1). Nobody has the right to take the law into his/her own hands and to “rectify” a “wrong” action (insufficient salary) by another wrong action (corruption). No wrong action can ever be justified by the popular saying: “the end justifies the means” (corruption increases efficiency). No wrong action can ever be justified by the existence of “worse evils” (corruption is one of the lesser evils). No wrong action can ever be justified by the fact that others are also doing it (everybody does it).

Ordinary citizens must fight for democracy and a free press to ensure accountability of the government. An awareness of the negative consequences of corruption, e.g. financial drain on the state; rise in public debt; growing tax burden on citizens; capital flight; lower levels of

investment; administrative development and efficiency are hindered; weak public service delivery; misdirection of public resources, and the inhibition of growth will motivate citizens to speak out against it. Then more money will be available to alleviate poverty.

### 4.3 Fighting corruption with the proper attitude

No battle can be won with the wrong attitude. The apostle Paul gives a list of Christian attitudes to guide believers in their daily lives. These attitudes should also be used in the fight against corruption: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal 5:22-23). These attitudes are not obtained by strict obedience of the Law or high moral aspirations on the part of the individual, but are the result of the decision to accept Jesus Christ as his/her Lord and Owner. From that moment onwards, there are new dynamics visible in his/her life. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the source, the norm and the power of the Christian’s moral conduct (Johnson 1999:337; Harvey 2004:607-608).

## 5. CONCLUSION

The article has shown that corruption is a worldwide phenomenon. In South Africa it is not only a post-1994 issue. Government programmes and legislation are not sufficiently effective to eradicate the problem. Ordinary citizens, including Christians, must get involved to address the problem at grass roots level. In their personal lives, they should live according to the golden rule of Jesus Christ (*do to others what you would have them do to you*) which will expose greed and selfishness in their own lives and ensure integrity and honesty. In addition, Christians should be willing to be whistle-blowers by thinking ethically and acting with the proper attitude.

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