Corruption an impediment
to economic reconstruction and recovery
A glocal missional approach

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Abstract

During the COVID-19 pandemic, South Africans were shocked by reports about the high levels of corruption in the procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) by trusted government officials. These reports are evidence of the break in trust in the social contract between government and citizens, a severe indictment of their dignity, safety and security. Corruption is a glocal problem that impedes service delivery and perpetuates poverty, inequality, injustice and unfairness. It is not just prevalent in the local context of Africa, but also in the global context and demands a glocal response. Research indicates that religion prohibits corruption, but does not serve as a barrier to preventing it. The question posed by critical African scholars is why religious morality does not stop corruption and what can be done to fight this scourge. The call for a glocal missional approach to address societal challenges can help address the glocal corruption problem. The study is conducted in the form of comparative literature analysis. Through the lens of postcolonial and decolonial discourse, it is established that corruption is not limited to 'developing' countries but is fuelled by greed and lust, which contribute to the 'thingification' of citizens. A glocal missional approach demands an interdisciplinary focus that values the social contract between government and citizens; promotes a human rights-based approach that respects citizens' basic human rights; and develops agents of social transformation that combat endemic corruption and prevent the 'thingification' of citizens.

Key words: Corruption, Social Contract, Glocal, Missional, Thingification, Human Rights, Religion, Morality, Social Transformation

1. Introduction

South Africans were shocked by reports about the high levels of corruption in the procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE)[2] during the fight against COVID-19. Haffajee (2020) reports that four PPE schemes involving various patronage networks overcharged State departments to an amount of about R1 billion. These reports were an indictment of respect for the dignity, safety and security of South

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2   Friedman (2021) reports how angered and shocked South Africans were at the news that well-connected people had enriched themselves at the expense of efforts to contain COVID-19.

Africans, especially the impact of the pandemic on the health and safety of the most vulnerable citizens and the health workers at the frontlines of the fight against it.

The article follows a comparative literature analysis. In such an approach, the findings from the critical review of the literature form the basis of the whole argument and flow of the paper (Nel, 2015). Coetzer and Snell (2013:44) propose a multidisciplinary strategic approach to address corruption due to its multi-dimensional nature. Corruption cannot be investigated from a single moral approach, but needs perspectives of business and corporate ethics; social and personal ethics; and cultural and religious ethics (Wijaya, 2014:227). Venturing forth in the risky waters of interdisciplinary dialogue not only requires contextual or historical, but a focus on the real-life scientist or theologian (Conradie, 2015:375). I am a South African Classical Pentecostal conversationist who engages with a social ill like corruption, which Baron (2017) calls a theological-ethical missiological issue. Deeply aware of the economic, political and ethical implications, I am engaging with these disciplines to make sense of corruption in our glocal context (Conradie, 2015). Serfontein (2019) argues for the importance of interdisciplinary points of connection over a wide range of explanatory frameworks, with focal points not limited to one set of explanations of religion and morality. I contend that all contributions from the disciplines are limited, but I will venture into the stormy waters of interdisciplinarity with 'bold humility'.

Through the lens of postcolonial and decolonial discourse, the article critically analyses the notion that countries in the global South, particularly African countries, are more prone to corruption. The notion is not only untrue, but also full of prejudice and bias towards people and governments from the global South. The fact that corruption is not just prevalent in the local context of Africa, but in the global context demands a glocal response.

2. Corruption – A glocal problem

A global phenomenon happens in all parts of the world or affects all aspects, while a glocal phenomenon reflects or characterises both local and global considerations. Robertson (1995) coined the term 'glocalisation', meaning the simultaneity or co-presence of both universalising and particularising tendencies. Glocalisation is a combination of the words 'globalization' and 'localization', referring to a product or service that is developed and distributed globally, but is also adjusted to accommodate the user or consumer in a local market (Scott, 2020:1). Glocalised products are of much greater interest to the end-user of the product because they are more specific to individuals, their context and their needs (Scott, 2020:1). Corruption is a glocal phenomenon because it has both local and international implications. Enste and Heldman (2017:3) state that corruption is the main threat in many

countries worldwide, and no country is immune to it. International collaboration is needed to combat corruption because it is strongly related to inequality and growth. Therefore, a glocal problem also demands a glocal response. This article aims to investigate further what a glocal religious response to corruption entails and its implications for the church as a moral and mission agent.

3. A glocal missional approach

Berentsen (2011:vii) regards 'glocal' as a meaningful ecclesiological term because it demonstrates the New Testament insight that the church is both universal (as the universal body of Christ) and local (as the church in Corinth, Philippi or Jerusalem), which makes it not far-fetched to talk about the church as glocal. Engelsviken (2011:52) agrees that God's sending of the church into the world (*mission Dei*) affects all other aspects and activities of the missional church, which have implications for both the local and global church. Engelsviken (2011:68) states that the church of the 21st century should self-consciously be what it already is, namely a glocal church, having a double vision of being both globally and locally relevant. In light of such a perspective of the church as glocal, a glocal phenomenon like corruption begs for a glocal response from the church.

Niemandt (2012:6) views a critical constructive dialogue between the realities of the global and local context as important for missional ecclesiology. In the convergence of local and global missions, the ministries of all initiators and participants from different contexts are recognised and valued (George, 2013:294). Dean (2013:278) argues for mutuality in missions that bring equality between global and local partners in mission, leading to mutual transformation. A glocal African theology provides a 'homegrown', holistic, African interpretation of the times that affect the praxis of the Church (Henry, 2016:6). Van Aarde (2017) relates a glocal missional approach to the priesthood of believers, whereby the laity and the clergy become witnesses for and of the kingdom of God in the glocal context, a globalised world in which the local and global meet and affect each other. De Wet and Pieterse (2016:39) submit that Christians should be equipped to join the wave of the *missio Dei* for involvement in ecumenical efforts and create awareness of their rights as citizens and action in social movements. Part of that is to see anti-corruption as integral to the *missio Dei* mandate sent by God into the world.

4. Corruption – A global problem

Mubangizi and Sewpersadh (2017:67) opine that corruption has varying definitions, carrying many different and complex interpretations. The term 'corruption' comes from the Latin term *corruptio,* which means a depraved condition, state of decay or bribery, and is associated with moral decadence. A popular definition

by the World Bank defines corruption as the abuse of public office for private gain. Corruption can be defined as the use of entrusted power for private gain (Shadabi, 2013:1). Enste and Heldman (2017:5) argue for a definition that also includes corruption by private companies, taking into account that corruption exists in different guises, such as bribery, trafficking, embezzlement and patronage. There are two variants of corruption, namely the bottom-up form, which is when low-level officials collect bribes that they share with their inferiors to avoid being fired or prosecuted. Top-down corruption works the other way round, but both are based on the same reason: superiors fear that subordinates will denounce them and thus depend on co-operation from subordinates if contracts are decided at the top level (Enste & Heldman, 2017:5).

Corruption is seen by some as "grease in the wheel", meaning that it is an opportunity to allocate scarce resources to the companies with the highest willingness to pay; managers can avoid queuing and pay speed money to cut down in time on bureaucratic processes, and avoid useless regulations and ineffective laws (Enste & Heldman, 2017:23). Wijaya (2014:224) states that strong resistance to corruption is not always a national consensus because corruption apologists argue that corruption may be needed to grease the wheel in a situation where bureaucracy and regulations are inefficient and outdated.

Enste and Helman (2017:223) reject the view of corruption as "grease in the wheel", but rather see it as "sand in the wheel", because bribed officials can delay processes to illicit more bribes, and with the necessary power and influence, they will rather create more regulations to extort more money. Wijaya (2014:225) agrees that it increases the inefficiency of State bureaucracies and destroys the moral dimension of business because it betrays commercial and contractual values.

It is almost impossible to measure absolute levels of corruption because they are mostly hidden from the public; therefore, scholars base their analysis on survey data, as provided by the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), which is published by Transparency International annually (Enste & Heldman, 2017:6). Enste and Heldman (2017:9) report that empirical data present an ambiguity with regard to the size of governments and its effect of corruption. They submit that larger governments have more people with corrupt behaviours, but are more effective in fighting corruption due to a bigger budget for law enforcement. Countries with high democracy levels have lower corruption levels because they are monitored by the media and free elections. Enste and Heldman (2017:16) report that a free press is often the essential trait of a non-corrupt society; more access to it reduces corruption.

Research indicates that countries with new democracies do not yet have the means to control this activity, proving that democracy reduces corruption, but only if institutions are fully evolved and functional (Enste & Heldman, 2017:12). It is

evident from the findings that a minimum of 10 years and a maximum of 45 years' uninterrupted democracy are needed to reduce corruption. Unfortunately, due to the impact of corruption on service delivery, South Africa cannot wait another 20 years to have corruption reduced; it destroys our future envisioned in the National Development Plan.

Countries scoring high on the trust level have lower corruption because trust encourages co-operation between all members of society, improves the economy and reduces corruption (Enste & Heldman, 2017:18).

5. Local – A South African fight against corruption

The classic view that less-developed countries are more susceptible to corruption is no longer acceptable because it is a phenomenon that is present in all countries worldwide (Enste & Heldman, 2017:4). The high levels of corruption in South Africa are an old problem that is rooted in the South African past.[3] However, it is not limited to South Africa or 'developing countries' in the global South, it is a global problem.

De Wet (2015:3) identifies the cultural argument to explain the high occurrence of corruption in Africa as polarising because it offers two opposing views. The one view identified as the 'Continuists' claims that corrupt behaviour is endogenous by nature and deeply rooted in African culture. This view further maintains that the modern State is subject to a corruptive influence like traditional culture, contrasting the first-world mentality of honesty and decency with the third-world opposite. The other view represented by the 'Rapturists' claims the exteriority of corrupt behaviour introduced through the modern State and its colonial way of doing things in Africa. Traditional culture becomes subject to corruption by introducing the modern State, a foreign element caused by the self-enriching behaviour of the privileged. De Wet (2015:3) argues against an either/or point of departure in the debate because it can lead to blaming shifting, but further argues that the intricate network of co-producing factors should be taken into account. These views become evident in some recent perspectives on the influence of the colonial past on current attitudes to corruption in South Africa.

Friedman (2021) argues that corruption is an issue rooted in our political past of 350 years and is deeply embedded in the colonial rule by the Dutch and British. He states that corruption has been a constant feature of South African political life and is deeply embedded within; it will take a concerted effort and years to defeat

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3   It started with Jan van Riebeeck, who was sent to South Africa by the Dutch East India Company after he had been found guilty of corruption. During British rule, Cecil John Rhodes was forced to resign after he had given a contract to a friend illegally, while Paul Kruger's Transvaal Republic was riddled with nepotism and economic favours.

it (Friedman, 2020). Mubangizi (2020) agrees with Friedman about the impact of the past on the present and that most South African corruption is political by nature amidst solid legal frameworks that exist globally and locally. The problem is not that South Africa does not have enough legal instruments, but there is a lack of political will to hold those at the helm of government responsible for corruption.

Mubangizi and Sewpersadh (2017:66) posit that corruption impairs the ability of governments to fulfil their obligations and ensure accountability to implement human rights and, more specifically, the socio-economic right of citizens to have access to service delivery. The ability of corruption to impede service delivery perpetuates inequality, injustice and unfairness. Songwe (2018:5) agrees that corruption impedes the economic performance of countries to such an extent that it becomes impossible to achieve their development plans. Mubangizi and Sewpersadh (2017:66) propose a human rights-based approach that empowers ordinary citizens to demand transparency, accountability and responsibility from elected representatives and public officials.

Theron (2013) argues that institutions like the media, civil society, the Public Protector's office, etc., in South Africa strengthen the fight against corruption. Vorster (2012:140) reports that a free press, independent courts of law, and ethical behaviour by politicians and the government are helpful in the fight against corruption. Civil society has become more conscious about corruption and is making huge noises about it, making it seem like the situation is getting worse in South Africa (Haffajee, 2020). However, there is real exposure to corruption, and watchdogs are now more pertinent. Mubangizi (2020) also ascribes the exposure of corruption to civil society and, more specifically, Corruption Watch and the National Anti-Corruption Forum. He proposes that their efforts should also include challenging corrupt officials and institutions and identifying corruption-prone government areas.

6. Corruption impedes economic reconstruction and recovery

When the COVID-19 pandemic reached the shores of South Africa in March 2020, it reached an economy that had suffered two consecutive recessions and widened inequality. Deepened poverty for South Africans who lost their jobs, were without income for many months and went hungry daily (The South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan, 2020). However, this adversity also presents an opportunity for South Africa to reshape its economic landscape. In the words of President Cyril Ramaphosa, "We are determined not merely to return our economy to where it was before the corona virus, but to forge a new economy in a new global reality".

The South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (2020:26) stipulates that one of the enablers of the reconstruction and recovery of the economy

will be the mobilisation of resources and the fight against corruption. The Plan (2020:30) states that corruption negatively impacted the ability and capability of the State to deliver services; eroded public trust; and undermined the capacity of the State to support growth and development. A commitment to zero tolerance of corruption and strengthening of law enforcement capacity are offered to deal with it in the public and private sectors. Corruption can thus be regarded as an impediment to the economic reconstruction and recovery of South Africa. It impedes service delivery and perpetuates poverty, inequality, injustice and unfairness.

Jere (2018:1) reports that corruption is seen as the principal cause of human suffering and deprivation. It is found everywhere and flourishes in society in different forms, a primary impediment to socio-economic growth. Mubanqizi (2020) agrees that corruption diverts funds into private pockets, which impedes service delivery and perpetuates poverty, inequality, injustice and unfairness. It has a negative effect on growth, direct foreign investment, and innovation, deteriorates institutions and erodes public trust in governments.

7. Corruption dehumanises and thingifies people

Lucas (2020:113) regards the Seven Deadly Sins (SDS), which comprise pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and sloth, as religious, philosophical and cultural ideas that occupy a common understanding of the worst human behaviours. The SDS is a useful construct to comprehend what drives greedy and harmful conduct, especially between lawyers and clients. Lucas (2020:113) contends that "this construct will equip lawyers to travel a virtuous path that leads away from ethical misconduct and its catastrophic consequences to clients".

Kotze (2020:1) deals with another of the SDS, namely pride, critically analysing the sin of pride and the notion of "playing God". Kotze (2020:9) puts forward the Christian doctrine of sin as a resource that provides theological content to address issues in the public arena. When we recognise sin as vulnerability, we realise that we are affected by others and that the vulnerable are recognised, taken into account, cared for, respected, loved and protected, thus addressing our ethical obligation to one another. Kotze (2020:10) submits that "by underscoring the importance of vulnerability, we are also reminded of (other) social, economic, and structural vulnerabilities …".

8. Postcolonial and decolonial discourse

Behind colonisation, which Fanon describes as the thingification of people, lies the sin of greed. Harms-Smith (2020:3) studied the work of three anti-colonial theorists who developed paradigms and worldviews and theoretical perspectives to understand individual and societal change, forming the basis of knowledge and

practice. These three, Franz Fanon, Stephen Bantu Biko and Paulo Freire, contributed to transformative discourse. Their understanding of colonisation as dehumanisation or thingification is of concern for our conversation. Harms-Smith (2020:7) quotes Fanon, who equalises colonisation with 'thingification', or Freire's words, as the dehumanisation of people. It is achieved through the disabling psychosocial effects that result from the negation of being, culture and personality. Fanon saw the cure for the colonised to be the cultivation of a decolonial attitude, which is epistemological, ethical, political and aesthetic (Harms-Smith, 2020:8). Seroto (2018) states that the colonisation of imagination and mind, hidden in discourse and institutions, is the worst form, which leads to, among others, the dehumanisation or thingification of people.

Limki (2014) agrees that decoloniality is the abolition of coloniality, which tells us that to be human is to master or exercise dominion over everything that is not human; this is the meaning of thingification – to turn life and the world into objects; bringing certainty, predictability, order and utility to everything around us – including ourselves. Coloniality thus brings differentiation or separability, which leads to the separation of mind and body; human, plant and animal beings; between bodies and forms of living, categorising them as different races and gender; giving them knowability and order, making them predictable and usable (Limki, 2014).

Coloniality creates a wounding situation for all that live on earth; therefore, this wound be experienced differently based on race, sex, gender, ability and class (Limki, 2014). Seroto (2018) claims that the colonisation of imagination and mind, hidden in discourse and institutions, are the worst form, leading to the dehumanisation or thingification of people. Corruption dehumanises people, and wounds them in ways that perpetuate the various forms of discrimination that intersect with race, gender, class and age. Calls for a return to pre-colonial values like ubuntu are made with a rejection of Western individualism and materialism (Swartz, 2006:555).

9. Ubuntu – Restoring human dignity

Molefe (2022:56) regards ubuntu as a coherent axiological system that has informed African thought and practice for centuries. He deploys ubuntu ethics as an axiological basis to judge what counts as a good society and to evaluate the State and its duties to citizens. Molefe (2022:56) argues that ubuntu as a moral, political system embodies ethics of dignity when it imagines a good society as one that respects the dignity of its citizens, which entails regarding them as inviolable, empowering them and creating conditions of social, political and economic existence for them. Molefe (2022:59) uses human dignity as a macro-ethical concept because it deals with social institutions and, thus, the entire arrangement of society. It sets a very high protective parameter around beings of dignity. It regards their

status of dignity as inalienable and inviolable, to be treated with the utmost respect and not to be harmed.

Molefe (2022:60) posits that the State must recognise and protect human inviolability from being undermined in their status as a person, thus being stripped of one's humanity or dehumanised. The positive role for the State, as imagined in ubuntu ethics, is to remove the dehumanising human conditions. Molefe (2022:60) ascribes to the State in his moral, political view the duty to advance the interests of the vulnerable in society like children, minority groups, disabled persons, women, foreigners, etc. The State's role is also to create conditions conducive to human flourishing, enabling the development and expression of human capabilities. Molefe (2022:61) further elaborates that the State should create and expand social opportunity structures for all human beings in a society that are captured in ubuntu ethics as the common good – meeting people's basic human needs for them to have a satisfactory human existence.

The notion of human dignity also implies social egalitarianism, which means that each person counts equally and deserves equal moral regard. Accordingly, the State has a duty to protect all citizens equally from harm and to create flourishing conditions for all, recognising the human dignity of all citizens. Banda (2019:1) agrees that ubuntu should be embraced as part of the African worldview of human flourishing, enabling African human agency and a holistic engagement with Africa's socio-economic and political context.

10. Religious morality combats corruption – Is it possible at all?

Research indicates that religion prohibits corruption, but does not serve as a barrier to preventing individuals from taking bribes. This explains why corruption reaches endemic proportions in Africa, which is regarded as a religious continent. Therefore, the question posed by critical African scholars about why religious morality does not stop corruption and what can be done to fight this scourge that prevents the economic reconstruction and recovery of the country is urgent and necessary.

Agbiji and Swart (2015:1) express concerns about the enormity of corruption in African society, which raises serious questions about the kind of religious morality in a predominantly religious continent. Religion is classified as a cultural factor that affects all human behaviour and actions (Shadabi, 2013:1). Studies indicate certain paradoxes regarding the effect of religion on corruption. The impact of religion on corruption is well investigated, but the results are not similar. Some find that religion is an important factor in corruption, while others find that this is not the case (Shadabi, 2013:1). Enste and Heldman (2017:18) report that religious diversity negatively influences corruption. Shadabi (2013:3) seeks to address two questions in her study; firstly, whether religion is a good factor for forecasting social

behaviour, and if it is an acceptable variable for cultural factors, especially in social norms that can influence corruption. Secondly, whether Islam and Christianity, the most widely spread religions in the world, have any significant effect on corruption. She finds that religions like Islam and Christianity prohibit corruption as a negative phenomenon. The overall conclusion from the research is that religions do not influence corruption because it does not serve as a barrier to people from taking bribes (Shadabi, 2013:14). Government-imposed religion does not have an impact on corruption, and corruption and its controls are not the results of any religion, even if the religion does not create social norms.

De Wet (2015:3) regards a religious and, in particular, a theological perspective on these tension or problem fields like corruption as crucial for the future role of religious communities towards stabilising and developing the South African democracy. Christian communities should realise in a secularised society that their belief in unchanging truth does not diminish their impact, but is key to the potential strength and growth they can offer in an age of alienation and change (De Wet, 2015:8). Some of the key theological factors that the Christian faith community should consider is finding a credible voice in a unified presence; anchor action in civil society in non-compromising and non-self-asserting Christian identity and transformative spiritual vitality; directing the prophetic voice in a sensitive dialogical way; and navigating the private-public dichotomy in a way that is committed to the renewal of society (De Wet, 2015:8-10).

11. A glocal missional approach – An opportunity to address ethical challenges

Niemandt (2012:1) views missional ecclesiology as one of the significant trends in mission studies because it seeks to understand and define the church from a missional point of view, as a community of witnesses, called into being and equipped by God and sent into the world to testify and participate in Christ's work. Hooker (2008:2) defines the term 'missional ecclesiology' by explaining that "ecclesiology is the discussion of what the Church is called to be and do-its nature, its purpose, its hopes, its structure and practices". He continues to define 'missional' as "more than a list of projects or priorities for a congregation…but about the *missio Dei* – God's eternal movement into the world, God's self-sending" for the sake of the world". Hooker (2008:3) quotes David Bosch that "mission is not primarily an activity of the Church, but an attribute of God". Kruger (2016:222) regards the *missio Dei* as the breaking through of God into the world, which brings a responsibility for Christians to join this mission to address the problematic praxis of corruption. *Missio Dei* denotes that God is involved in the world and that it is not just for personal salvation, but also for God's kingdom values of justice, peace and freedom

that renew humanity. This includes both proclamations of the kingdom and living according to the values of the kingdom of God.

Niemandt (2012:6) quotes Hendriks (2004) that a critical constructive dialogue or correlation between the interpretation of the realities of the global and local context and their faith resources is important for missional ecclesiology. This finds expression in the integral relation between *ethics and mission*, whereby God's mission demands obedience, which has ethical implications for Jesus' followers. The laity and their task of the priesthood of believers are to participate in God's glocal dimension of the *missio Dei,* participating and fulfilling the Great Commission by going next door (Van Aarde, 2017:5).

Niemandt (2012:8) views missional ethics as the missionary dimensions of the life of the people of God and the ethical features of the mission. Integrating Christian ethics and Christian mission implies that Christians as covenant people are the light of the world through their good lives; learn obedience and teach it to the nations; and love one another to show whom they belong. To place this more in context with our topic of discussion, Niemandt (2012:8) states that churches face an urgent ethical challenge to build an economic system that lessens, rather than increases the gap between the rich and the poor; creating a more just and sustainable world, which it is at the heart of the gospel for today.

Breed (2016:163) provides some ethical guidelines that can be helpful to Christian leaders in their fight against corruption, namely security in the reign of God over everything; the comfort of God and the love from other disciples; the act of forgiveness in order for the undeserving to be cleansed; relational unity with God and one another; ethical conduct that flows from the experience of the joy in unity with the Father and the Son; and the gathering of all things under the reign of Christ, fulfilling Gods eternal plan (*missio Dei*).

George (2013:287) argues that the *missio Dei* – God's mission – is local, cosmic and ecumenical. Although missions begin locally, each Christian and congregation are a primary agent in God's mission through evangelism, compassion and social justice practises. Participation in local or global mission is part of the bigger picture of *missio Dei.* George (2013:291) points out that the unity of God's mission should be seen in totality, whereby salvation addresses the whole person and seeks fullness in all areas of life. It requires ecumenical partnerships that serve the *missio Dei* as multi-denominational and multi-national partners.

From the structure of Ephesians 1:1-23, George (2013:294) derives that mission is local, global and cosmic. In the convergence of local and global missions, the value of all ministries in all places and the fullness of all initiators and participants are recognised and valued. This has implications for the relationship between churches in the global North (give up power and learn to serve, listen and follow)

and the global South (find empowerment to engage and lead in collaborative mission). This idea is supported by Ward (2017:582) that a decolonisation of theology should take place that is lay-led, biblically based and contextual. As an African theology, the academy and the educational systems should humble themselves to listen, learn and become informed.

Dean (2013:278) argues for mutuality in missions whereby the power and control of the West are challenged in global ministry, achieving a kingdom-benefiting relationship based on a biblical perspective rather than money and power. Mutuality in missions implies that we are mutually engaged in missions that bring about mutual transformation through the partnership. Mission is no longer in some distant land, but in the backyard, your neighbourhood, city and country – the world is at our doorstep (George, 2013:296).

The idea of the missional church as the priesthood of believers empowers the congregation to function missionally as an incarnational presence in the community. The laity and their task of the priesthood of believers are to participate in God's glocal dimension of the *missio Dei* by participating and fulfilling the Great Commission by going next door (Van Aarde, 2017:5). While ecumenical bodies are struggling higher up to make sense of the church's public role, Ward (2015:581) believes that the theological is lived out among ordinary Christians. That is where the hope of the church lies with the majority of lay Christians who live faithfully in the complex pluralities of everyday life. In the missional model, the function of the gifts is to equip the laity so that they can fulfil their calling both within and outside the church. Van Aarde (2017:7) states that a church that serves only its own is an exclusive community and has become detached from its role and involvement in society.

The *missio Dei* should obey the *missio Christi*, who invites his followers to be his witnesses to the world. Kaoma (2014:117) further states that the intergenerational responsibility of handing over the gospel to future generations stems from the obedience to the mission of Christ (*missio Christi*). Mission takes place anywhere, and participating in it entails making disciples from all kinds of people, including the poor, wealthy, marginalised, powerful, disabled, young and old (Kaoma, 2014:119).

Henry (2016:6) pleads for a glocal African theology which he regards as the only hope to provide a 'homegrown' holistic, African interpretation of the times that affect the church's praxis. He quotes Muzorewa that we need a framework within which people may understand and actively respond to political, social and religious issues that are not isolated from global trends and Christianity. Henry (2016:6) argues that uncovering an African worldview and life can lead to critical reflection, movement, continuity and discontinuity. Kalu et al., (2010:79) calls this process 'globecalisation' a gestation, mediation and transformation of global (religious and social) forces in the local context of Africa, leaving Pentecostals vulnerable.

12. The Church – Agent of social transformation

The church is a vehicle of cohesion, healing, reconciliation and societal transformation (Hendriks, 2004). Osmer (2008:189) calls the congregation a contrast society or an alternative community that "… is not to reduplicate the hierarchies of power and social status found in the surrounding culture because its oneness comes from Christ". The church becomes a contrast to society and a catalyst for social transformation. As a sub-system of society, the church has the mandate to confront world systems for the betterment of the church and society as a whole (Jere, 2019:3). As an alternative community under the Lordship of Christ, life for the church is directed towards socio-political transformation and the renewal of society (Vorster, 2016:152).

As the model of Christ in transforming and renewing people's hearts, Christians, as the salt and light in the world, should participate in fostering accountability and eradicating corruption. They should act as resisters to corruption (Jere, 2018:3). Jere (2018:3) addresses the role of the church in combating corruption and proposes a *kenosis* approach as a theological framework that provides a lens and a model for the church to work at the transformation of hearts that produce reformed systems. Jere (2018:4) derives theoretical principles from this model, which include servanthood in self-emptying, humility, obedience and sacrifice in the public space, and self-limitation and volunteering. Denton (2016:52) agrees that:

> [A] holistic understanding of Christian leadership encompasses the communication of biblical principles of servant leadership and committing in a united ecumenical voice to equip Christians to counteract corruption.

Vorster (2012:134) states that corruption endangers the social fibre and inhibits moral renewal; promotes a general lack of trust in institutions and leadership; and perpetuates a culture of corruption that permeates all spheres of life. Christian ethics provide moral directives that churches can utilise to create an environment without corruption and raise ethical leadership. Vorster (2012:137) states that a robust legal culture and uncompromised religions can reduce corruption. Research indicates that greed; lack of moral values; insufficient legal mechanisms; lack of legal culture; unskilled and poorly trained officials; lack of control over capital flow in social security; poverty; and the absence of an adequate moral fibre in society are some of the main causes of corruption in the public sector (Vorster, 2012:138).

Churches can play a role to combat corruption and need to have a proper understanding of the causes of corruption and the underlying attitudes of officials, dealing with the moral issues as a moral agent. Vorster (2012:140) proposes three strategies the church can follow to combat corruption, namely awareness raising

of corruption as a social problem; the underlying attitude of self-interest; and the call for social justice. Churches can thus be a contrast or alternative community, the salt that stops the moral decay of corruption and the light that shines in a dark time where economic justice is still not part of restorative justice.

The criticism levelled at politicians and those in government is justified, but what do we make of the research that indicates most of the members of parliament belong to religious communities, predominantly Christian faith communities? It proves what the research findings state about the lack of religious morality amidst the prevalence of religion in society. Churches have an opportunity to turn members into moral change agents who acknowledge their own vulnerability of pride, greed and lust, but are obedient to the demand of faithfulness to the Lordship of Christ and obedience to the Word of God.

Vorster (2016:113) views churches involved at the grassroots level of society as moral opinion makers in communities, thus best placed to raise (an ethical) awareness of corruption and its effect on society. They are by nature moral agents and can develop an anti-corruption moral ethos that sheds light on dealing with self-interest. De Klerk (2016:207) states that Christians are called to influence society to combat corruption; a transformed life as an example for society; obedience to the governing authorities; love that does not harm the neighbour; and uses a strong, united, ecumenical and prophetic voice to point out corruption and gives ethical direction to a more just society.

Nel (2020:1) looks at the phenomenon of corruption through a Pentecostal lens and agrees that believers should become more involved in anti-corruption activities. He rightly uses the metaphor of the ostrich that hides its head in the sand to describe the attitude of Pentecostals towards 'worldly' issues. He argues that corruption threatens the economic survival of the poor, who are threatened the most by the mismanagement of the State Treasury, depending on the State for their livelihood through the grant system, especially unemployed youth (Nel, 2020:2). Corruption inhibits growth that is necessary to alleviate poverty and economic inequality. The long-term effects include limited services, deepening corrupt elite networks, delayed economic development, growth in unemployment, destabilising democratic institutions, undermining of constitutional rights, high crime rates, and the development of a criminal culture among politicians (Nel, 2020:3).

Nel (2020:7) states that:

> Churches can use their prophetic calling through teaching and preaching to enhance alertness that corruption is wrong and that greed, nepotism, favouritism, and careerism represent behaviour that is totally destructive and morally indefensible.

Pentecostals should use the basic values and principles that regulate public service, like a high standard of professional ethics; efficient, economical and effective use of resources must be promoted; accountability of public administrators; representative of all South Africans; and staff management practices that are based on ability, objectivity and fairness (Nel, 2020:8). Civil society should keep the public sector accountable for its ethical practices, and churches should gain knowledge to enable their members to become involved in the prevention of corruption.

As grassroots organisations in communities, churches can act as moral opinion makers. Churches should promote a whistle-blowing culture where members report any form of wrongdoing in the public and private sectors. Churches should also encourage members to be aware of the temptations of personal enrichment by acting in corrupt ways rather than living out their testimonies faithfully. They should have a renewed mind that is based on a set of ethical values. "Social behaviour is determined for Christians by the golden rule, to do to others as they would have them do to them … serve as the guide for daily life and contact with others" (Nel, 2020:8). Christian believers should expose greed and selfishness and promote integrity and personal honesty.

Nel (2020) points out that Pentecostal believers should be more aware of greed and the temptation of personal enrichment. The commercialisation of religion and, more specifically, the portrayal of the 'prosperity gospel' has almost become synonymous with African Pentecostalism. The argument goes that Pentecostals preach against corruption, but harbour corruption through some of their ecclesial practices. Dairo (2020:241) argues that the church is not supposed to be mentioned at all with corruption but that 'sacred corruption' has now become more associated with Neo-Pentecostal churches in the Nigerian context and other contexts in Africa. Andrew (2021:9) reports how the commercialisation of religion and the abuse of people's trust by Pentecostal and Charismatic churches led to investigations by the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission) in South Africa. Magezi and Banda (2017) report how the reliance on Pentecostal prophets in Zimbabwe supports the abuse of the economic depravity of people and creates false hope in spiritual leaders at the expense of belief in Christ.

Dairo (2020:242) elaborates that 'sacred corruption' is not something new in the history of the church and that the church and religious organisations are not completely free from corruption. Andrew (2021:13) agrees that the commercialisation of religion is not a recent phenomenon, because already in the Middle Ages and during the Reformation, corrupt practices were criticised in the church. Dairo (2020: 42) recalls how religious leaders from the Bible called attention to corruption in religious practises and institutions like Isaiah (1:2-31), and Amos (5:21-

24), who berated the rabbinical establishment for failing to live up to the ideals of the Torah; Jesus who accused the rabbinical establishment of following certain ceremonial parts of the Torah and neglected justice, mercy and faithfulness; Martin Luther who accused the Catholic Church of widespread corruption in selling indulgences. Reporting on the excess abuses by churches and leaders from his Nigerian context, Dairo (2020:244) proposes that leaders should overcome arrogance, self-gratification and indifference towards others and the planet. In addition, they should eliminate insecurities such as self-protective withdrawal, despair, fear and unwillingness to take a stand that compromises their ethical principles.

Andrew (2021:12) provides two distinct views of the commercialisation of religion. On the one hand, the prosperity gospel is accepted in some circles as an opportunity to transform people's livelihoods; encourages a sense of agency; and bring the belief that they are worthy and can improve their lives positively. On the other hand, the prosperity gospel easily becomes a practice that benefits a few and leads to the abuse of followers, as pointed out above. Andrew (2021:15) proposes that Pentecostals should find a more balanced perspective of the commercialisation of religion, mitigating the threats and taking advantage of opportunities to serve the *missio Dei* – God's mission in the world. This mission finds expression in the confession of the Early Church – to believe in the Holy Church and the intention of the early Pentecostals to restore the apostolic faith of New Testament Christianity. Christian believers today, and more specifically Pentecostals, can embrace the holiness of the church as both a gift from God and a task to embody holiness in their lifestyles and ecclesial practices. Dairo (2020:242) agrees that the holiness people display on the outside must be a product of holiness that comes from within, which is a sign of 'Calvaric repentance', and the visible church is not excused from that truth.

In one of the sections above, it was argued that missional ecclesiology views the church as a contrast and alternative community, but Igboin (2020) warns against forming a 'Pentecostal' alternative State that supports public and private corruption. Igboin (2020:2) argues that citizens who are members of Pentecostal Churches tend to show a lack of demand for accountability from their leaders, which supports corrupt practices in society and the church. African Pentecostalism functions like an alternative State in the context of Nigeria. As an alternative State, it promises liberation from socio-economic suffering and the general insecurity of citizens who are members of these Pentecostal churches. It is an alternative to the world system, contrasting itself as different from other social institutions. The three issues that the State (in Nigeria and other African countries) are unable to address, namely socio-economic, security and legitimacy issues, are the very impetus for the flourishing of Pentecostalism (Igboin, 2020:12). Pentecostal commitment

has shifted from 'otherworldly' to 'this-worldly', and it leads to the atonement of messages on being born again, sanctification, eternity with God and responsible Christian living. Igboin (2020:17) argues that the neglect of accountability has led to the exploitation of the followership by leadership.

Kgatle (2016:69) calls for radical discipleship that expands one's space of life unconditionally to embrace the other or the poor that is grounded in the theory of radical interactionality – the intersection of common humanity that finds their origin in God and grounded in solidarity with the poor and commitment to justice. It is also based on interdependence – an interconnectedness that calls for solidarity and collectivity in the fight against exploitation. Through relationality, the dignity and equality of all humans are recognised and fought for in critical solidarity for the common good and collective wholeness of everyone (ubuntu). The church sent by God into the world becomes an agent of transformation in all these spheres, and every member is a moral agent who forms part of the priesthood of believers that live God's mission in their respective spheres.

Corrupt practices that dehumanise people should be called out for what it is, a sin against God and my neighbour. Christian believers are called to love their neighbour as they love themselves; what I do against my neighbour, I am doing against myself. Therefore, they should end corrupt practices within their own circles, address corruption in public and private spheres in order to contribute to the economic reconstruction and recovery of South Africa – for the sake of the neighbour, especially the most vulnerable amongst us. This can be done within the framework of the law, with government and glocal corruption-busting organisations. Part of our mandate to be the salt and the light of the earth is to stop the decay of corruption through our preaching and live as true followers of the *missio Dei* – sent by God as a priesthood of believers, not serving our own interests at the expense of others, but to embody ubuntu in what we say and do in the glocal context.

13. Conclusion

Corruption is a glocal phenomenon, having global and local considerations and a more devastating effect on the most vulnerable groups in society. South Africa was gravely impacted economically by the pandemic and experienced a widening inequality and deepening poverty, according to the South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (RSA, 2020). The initiatives directed at the revival of the economy and securing a better life for all are threatened by corruption that further dehumanises poor and disadvantaged South Africans and thus leads to the 'thingification' of the most vulnerable in society.

Africa is regarded as a religious continent, but religious morality does not seem to end the scourge of corruption in public and private institutions. This is not just

a crisis in South Africa or developing countries, but countries from all over the world experience corruption. Several institutions and organisations like the media, judiciary, civil society and government fight this scourge. A glocal missional approach can contribute to the rejection of all forms of corruption that dehumanise people and, most specifically, the most vulnerable and marginalised citizens can be critical towards the notion that corruption is only endemic to the global South and, more specifically, the African context; and turn members into agents of social transformation.

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