

THE THIRD LAUSANNE CONGRESS  
SALT AND LIGHT: CHRISTIANS' ROLE IN COMBATING CORRUPTION

**Introduction**

What part does corruption play in **your** life?

That may seem a strange question to ask an audience such as this. Many may answer that, of course, as Christians, we would have nothing whatsoever to do with it. But others among us live with the dire consequences of corruption every day. Our assertion in this paper is that, whether we recognize it or not, we are all caught up in one form or another of corruption or its consequences and, as Evangelical Christians, we need to do more to prepare and engage in the fight against it.

A couple of months ago I was in Zambia with members of my family. During our stay we visited three schools. None was well-equipped. The walls were mostly bare. But I was struck by the fact that, in each one of those schools, there were at least two sets of information painted on the walls to attract the attention of pupils. One was a warning against HIV/AIDS- a simple definition of what it is and an explanation of how to avoid it. The second was a warning about corruption; this time, a simple definition followed by a basic explanation of its consequences.

As someone who has spent a significant part of his working life in Africa, I was not shocked to see these warnings but I am struck by the difference in perceptions of the impact of corruption and attitudes towards it that tend to exist in different parts of the world.

Much of Africa has, sadly, been massively afflicted by corruption over the past fifty years. Of course it existed long before then; the colonial record is far from unblemished. But its scale and effects have grown hugely and the great optimism that hailed independence in the 1960s, when I first worked in Africa as a volunteer, has all too often given way to dismay and anger as efforts to promote economic and social development have been systematically undermined by corruption which has left a tiny minority with untold, ill-gotten wealth while the great majority still endure grinding poverty. For many of our African brothers and sisters the reality and the painful effects of corruption are every-day facts of life. Some, whether Christians or not get caught up in it; some try to resist it; but none can simply afford to ignore it. No wonder the issue is high on the agenda of those schools.

The same can be said of large parts of South Asia and Latin America and parts of SE Asia and E Europe. Here too many face a daily struggle against the impact of corruption.

By contrast, many of us in the more affluent parts of the world can indulge in the mistaken belief that corruption does not really affect us. Even if we open our daily newspapers and read of the latest scandal- in the case of the UK it might be about MPs' expenses or allegations of match-fixing or obscenely high levels of remuneration for a privileged few or a case of corporate bribery- these things do not impinge on our daily lives; they do not threaten our survival and somehow we can persuade ourselves that they do not or need not concern us. We feel complacent or

arrogant and ‘pass by on the other side’, thankful perhaps that ‘we are not as those others are’ who indulge in such things.

Perhaps that is also why, if you do a simple internet search on the subjects of Christians Combating Corruption, you find that the overwhelming majority of entries relates to Africa, with contributions from Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda featuring particularly prominently. In those countries people feel the effects of corruption acutely every day. Corruption traverses ethnic, class and faith boundaries. Christians are not immune and some churches have succumbed to corrupt practices but many African Christians in positions of influence have become actively engaged in the struggle to arrest the blight of corruption. We will argue that the time has come to make this a truly global effort among evangelicals.

### **The Case for Action**

Our case rests on four key arguments:

- \*Corruption is not a localized phenomenon but a global one.
- \*It is not a victimless crime. Its impact on people and on the work of the worldwide church- both in evangelism and in social action- can be extremely damaging.
- \*The Bible offers clear teaching on the causes and consequences of corruption and on the godly alternatives, which we are called to adopt. This teaching can and should be used to inform and reinforce growing secular efforts to combat corruption.
- \***Individual Christians in government, business and academia can all play a part both individually and collectively in bolstering the struggle against corruption.**

We would like to develop each of these arguments a little more. I will take the first two and my colleague Steve Osei-Mensah will deal with points three and four as we begin the debate as to what we should be doing differently. First..

### **Corruption is a Global Phenomenon**

Whatever definition we choose to adopt- and there are many - corruption is longstanding, widespread and certainly not confined to the developing world.

A widely-used definition is that ‘corruption is the abuse of power or resources for private profit’ or, as stated in one of those Zambian schools, ‘the misuse of position or money for personal gain at others’ expense.’

The most commonly-recognized manifestations of corruption are the payment and receipt of bribes, big or small. These may vary from small payments, for example to jump a visa queue (petty corruption) to vast payments to secure huge contracts (grand corruption) But corruption takes many other forms too including fraud, extortion, the rigging of decisions and nepotism. Even within the rather narrow boundaries of what one might call ‘transactional corruption’, human sinfulness has been highly creative.

This type of corruption is readily recognizable in a biblical context, particularly in Old Testament scriptures. At its most fundamental we are taught that God does not show partiality or accept bribes (Deut 10:17-18, 2Chron.19: 7) and men should not either. (Deut 16:18-19, Prov.17: 23). At the outset of his ministry Our Lord Jesus proved his

integrity and ability to withstand temptation. Neither of the bribes He was offered, whether bread or power, could tempt Him (Matt.4:1-10).

But corruption is about more than the temptation to give and accept bribes or to engage in fraud or extortion. If one broadens the definition to encompass other features that The Bible recognises as corruption, then the list of ways in which it manifests itself, grows much, much longer. In a biblical context corruption has been endemic among humankind ever since the Fall (Gen 6:11-12; Ps 14:1-3). Our minds are prone to corrupt thoughts, ambition and greed (Titus 1:15-16); corrupt thoughts give rise to corrupt speech (Prov. 19:28; James 3:6) and corrupt actions.

Corruption is not just about specific **acts** such as bribery but about our very **mindsets** and deep-seated behaviours. Consider the teaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ that we cannot serve God and Mammon (Matt 6: 19-24). How do we cope with this injunction? It is very difficult in this materialistic world, not to try to settle for some sort of compromise with which we can make ourselves feel comfortable. (Steve and I would be among the first to need to plead guilty). Given our human nature we try to re-assure ourselves that we are leading the simple life and denying ourselves unnecessary things but as soon as we compare ourselves with the way many others live, in our own country let alone in poorer parts of the world, the discomfort crowds in; we try to justify ourselves but even on the briefest self-examination, we fail. In the way we delude ourselves about such things, we are corrupting godly values. As sinful people we are inherently corrupt.

Whilst the more blatant forms of corruption such as bribery may be most evident in poor countries where governance institutions, control systems and legal safeguards are often weaker, it is the more subtle forms of corruption - our love affair with things of this world, our inherent materialism and our willingness to compromise standards- which most afflict the wealthier parts of the world. It is not our purpose to generate a guilt trip for those whom God has blessed richly with material things but we need constantly to remind ourselves of the dangers and difficulties we shall face in 'passing through the eye of the needle' (Matt.19.24). We need to speak out and act against the greed and corruption inherent in rampant materialism. Indeed I would go so far as to say we need to question the fundamental economic model on which our 21<sup>st</sup> century society is based, whereby progress is measured and social stability bought largely by an endless pursuit of economic growth to fuel more and more consumption with little or no attention paid to global sustainability or the still-growing gap between rich and poor: and all this despite the clear knowledge that material wealth ensures neither happiness nor salvation. Our failure to recognise and act against worldliness is perhaps a sign of our own corrupt characters. As Christians we need not only to resist transactional corruption but to adjust our very mindsets and the deep-seated values to which we adhere.

Before concluding on the nature of corruption, I must return for a moment to the specific problems of bribery. I want to dispel any notion that this is a problem that is peculiar to poorer countries. The evidence contradicts this idea. Petty corruption- what Kenyans call '*kitu kidogo*'- may indeed be more prevalent in poor countries but the most destructive problem, that of large-scale or grand corruption very often involves not only a controlling local elite but also another party, perhaps a multi-

national company or group of individuals, from the richer world. Counteracting the problem requires recognition and action at both ends of these transactions.

Having demonstrated that corruption is rightly a matter of concern for us all, let us now consider its impact.

### **The Impact of Corruption Is Extremely Damaging**

Corruption is damaging to equity and fairness, to economic performance and the welfare of society. It is not a victimless crime; it is theft. It also damages the work of the church. I want to illustrate the extent of the damage and also seek some explanation as to why, given the gravity of the problem, it did not receive serious attention earlier than it did.

The economic and social impact of corruption on poorer countries is well-documented both by secular authorities and by Christian agencies. In her powerful book about the Kenyan whistle-blower John Githongo, titled 'It's Our Turn to Eat' the writer Michela Wrong gives graphic examples. The Christian NGO Tearfund has carried out useful research, which is summarized in its paper 'The Costs of Corruption'. The secular NGO Transparency International, on whose Advisory Council I serve, regularly monitors and reports on the incidence and impact of corruption. There is also a growing volume of academic literature on the subject. In the context of the fight against poverty, the most important consequences of corruption include:

- **Depriving many people of access to basic services** to which they are entitled or undermining the quality of such services, while allowing a small minority to usurp resources and grow rich, sometimes extremely rich.
- **Lack of basic fairness in decision-making** with the few who control the powers of decision-making benefiting at the cost of the many;
- **The distortion of investment and incentives** so that honest investors stay away and spending on essential services is squeezed by unnecessary expenditure often on luxury items as a result of corrupt decisions.
- **The breakdown of trust** in public services and institutions, ultimately leading to civil disorder.

The practical consequences of this include the diversion of funds away from providing water and sanitation, schools and health clinics to the population at large in favour of projects such as the procurement of defence equipment or large scale engineering projects where there is often less transparency, where decisions are controlled by the few and often shrouded in secrecy and with which inflated and corrupt payments can be more readily achieved. In some cases there has been a complete scam in which payments made for completely fictitious or non-existent items end up in foreign personal bank accounts.

In the 1960s, as Ronald Wraith and Edgar Simpson describe in an early book on the subject, corruption was already present but its incidence was often spasmodic. In some countries it later became systematic or even systemic. If this point is reached, rational decision-making becomes impossible and the normal functioning of the economy breaks down. Being able to rely on a sense of public duty for the delivery of services gives way to the need to pay bribes to secure even the most basic service and

the rule of law and judicial process break down in favour of those who can buy decisions. The gap between those few in a position of power who can exercise decisions in their own favour and the mass of the population grows ever wider and eventually social cohesion breaks down. Ethnic or tribal rivalries often fuel the tension. The poorest almost always suffer the most.

And so, fifty years or more after serious efforts to promote economic and social development got under way in most parts of the developing (or majority) world, more than 2 billion people still lack access to safe sanitation and more than 1 billion have no access to safe drinking water. Hundreds of millions of children have no prospect of attending school and tens of millions are dying each year from preventable diseases. While resource scarcity, weak governance and misguided aid policies have played their part, corruption has been a major contributory factor in this dismal catalogue.

In wealthier countries we may not suffer from deprivation as a result of the forms or consequences of corruption I have described. We take for granted our access to basic services and can rely on reasonable levels of governance, control and accountability in most aspects of our day-to-day life. But we need to be mindful of the part some of our companies have played, deliberately or unwittingly, in corrupt projects and behaviour. More fundamentally we need to consider the effects that our materialistic society and obsession with performance incentives may be having on the values and behaviour exhibited by our businesses and public institutions. Going further, we need to call into question whether our fundamental economic model with its pre-occupation with never-ending growth is either just or sustainable.

### **The Impact of Corruption on the Church**

In the face of corruption in society at large and its adverse impact on economic and social development, what can we say about its specific impact on the Christian church and its work of evangelism and social action?

At its worst, there have been clear instances of church bodies and individual Christians becoming caught up in corrupt practices. Powerful but unscrupulous pastors and other church leaders have on occasion taken advantage of weak governance to abuse their positions of power, sometimes directly aided and abetted by preaching of the distorted 'prosperity gospel' with all its materialistic undertones. Many churches rely on individual trust and do not have governance structures which provide even the most basic institutional safeguards against corruption.

On the other hand, one may argue that the incidence of corruption and the damage it causes have provided a rallying point for Christian action particularly in Africa and Latin America. Many church leaders and other courageous Christians have not just supported but have actively led action against corruption. In some cases this has had some positive results including the establishment of civil bodies to fight corruption and the appointment of church leaders to public anti-corruption bodies. In other cases there have been negative reactions from corrupt authorities. The struggle goes on.

Within the field of social action some argue that the problem of corruption has brought benefits to Christian NGOs. Over the past decade or more, in an effort to bypass corrupt governments and other public agencies, more official aid (both

bilateral and multilateral) as well as direct charitable giving has been channeled through NGOs including many Christian ones. Their work and their contribution to development have thus expanded greatly. However, this increased access to financial resources is a mixed blessing because the NGOs are still often left with the challenges of how to secure local permissions and how to carry out their work without falling victim to corrupt practices which can undermine them. It would be much better if the scourge of corruption could be lifted.

There is a more immediate danger faced by the Christian church in its social action programmes. In many countries, including many of the most economically fragile, the growth of the church in numbers has outstripped its growth in maturity. Recognition of this fact led John Stott to found the Langham Partnership. Just as Langham addresses the need for greater depth in training of teachers and preachers, so there is an urgent need for the church to strengthen its training of those engaged in governance and social action. Failure to do so would leave them ever more vulnerable to corrupt practices from within or without. Furthermore, if the church becomes more vociferous in its opposition to corruption, as I would urge it should, then we must beware of the risk of hypocrisy if our own house is not put in order first.

What of the consequences of corruption for the task of evangelism itself? I count myself among those who are reluctant to divide our task between the sharing of the gospel and showing love to our neighbour. They seem inseparable and concurrent. If we try to preach only the gospel of salvation and do not accompany that with works of love then we are falling short. And if we allow works of love to be undermined by indifference to corruption then we fall short again. Furthermore, a policy of silence or indifference towards corruption is at best hypocrisy and at worst may undermine the credibility of our efforts to preach the good news of Jesus Christ

### **Why Was the Fight Against Corruption Not an Earlier Priority?**

Given the seriousness of corruption and its destructive impacts, why was more not done sooner to address the problem either by secular bodies or by the worldwide church? I think here we need to plead guilty to a sin of omission, though I stand to be corrected by those who can point to concerted action over many years. Certainly it is striking that the Lausanne Covenant itself makes no direct mention of the issue of corruption.

Perhaps this is because, when the Lausanne Covenant was first drafted in 1974, the dreadful impact of corruption, which has since come to afflict so many developing countries, was not yet seen as serious. Certainly its corrosive and destructive effects were not yet well-documented. Other obstacles to social development such as racial discrimination and other obstacles to economic growth such as trade barriers, declining terms of trade for commodities and gross indebtedness were seen as more pressing issues. Among aid donors and major corporations there was a degree of complacency, even acceptance, that the payment of bribes was a natural, even necessary, part of doing business. And while bribery was becoming more widespread, the systemic plundering of whole national economies, which became a feature of kleptocratic leaders in countries such as DRC (under Mobutu Sese Seko), Kenya (under Moi) and Nigeria (under Abacha) in the 1980s and 90s had yet to take full effect.

It was not until the mid 1990s that active secular movements against corruption such as Transparency International were launched and the World Bank officially recognized corruption as an enemy of development only in 1994. And it took until 2007 for the World Bank to publish a book publically recognizing the role the Christian church might play in combating poverty and aiding the fight against corruption.

In several major European countries the payment of bribes was a tax-deductible expense until about a decade ago and only a few months ago in 2010, did the UK government, for example, finally pass modern and effective legislation to counter the crime of bribery. So, secular leadership on the issue was certainly slow.

Furthermore, even where there have been efforts to combat corruption these have focused on efforts to improve controls and compliance and strengthen institutions in order to reduce corrupt transactions. Comparatively little seems to have been done directly to tackle fundamental values and mindsets. It is in this arena that we as Christians can and should do more.

By the time the Manila Manifesto was written in 1989, some of the problems I have referred to were being directly recognized and addressed. The Manifesto states:

‘We affirm that good news and good works are inseparable. The proclamation of God’s kingdom necessarily demands the prophetic denunciation of all that is incompatible with it. Among the evils we deplore are institutionalized violence, political corruption, all forms of exploitation of peoples and of the earth..’

‘We deplore the failures in Christian consistency which we see in both Christians and churches: material greed, professional pride and rivalry, lack of mutual accountability.....All this is worldliness allowing the prevailing culture to subvert the church instead of the church challenging and changing the culture.’

‘We repent that the narrowness of our concerns and vision has often kept us from proclaiming the lordship of Jesus Christ over all of life, private and public, local and global.’

As Christians we are called upon to be ‘in the world’ but not ‘of the world’. We must not turn a blind eye to or condone corruption. The evidence of its corrosive effect is clear and the biblical teachings are unambiguous. Now is the time for the Lausanne Movement to build on the foundation laid in Manila and the actions which have followed in some parts of the world, to **initiate a truly global programme of action against corruption involving churches and individual Christians in all fields, whether in government, business or academia.**

### **Salt and Light: Standing up against corruption in our world**

Leading on from what Paul has said I would like to explore what it means to live as a Christian in the world and specifically what principles does God’s word offer for guidance in the complex issues surrounding corruption.

I've structured this section under the following 3 questions:

1. What Principles are organisations, regulators and governments beginning to apply?
2. What Challenges and Opportunities does the Christian face?
3. What should a Principle-based Christian response be?

### **What Principles are being used to combat corruption?**

There are seven widely-recognised principles or approaches that we see governments, regulators and organisations using to tackle these problems

- A focus on Ethical codes / policies / guidance
- Insistence on clear roles and responsibilities
- Effective Anti-corruption Training and Education
- Distinctive “Tone from the Top” – leading by example and communication
- Evidence of Discipline / Sanctions
- The core operation: Investigation / whistle blowing / controls
- Attention to Audit and Governance

Let's explore each briefly:

**Ethical codes / policies / guidance:** Regulators and Prosecutors are increasingly looking for evidence that corporations and companies have some form of ethical code of conduct – a handbook for example of how staff and employees are expected to behave. These are often followed up by detailed policies covering a range of areas where there is a significant risk of corruption

**Roles and responsibilities** – defining better what employees and agents should do, who is accountable and who is responsible. Organisations are seeking to codify who is responsible for what and aiming to ensure that corruption is minimised by adequate oversight or consultation over significant contracts and areas of business

**Training and Education:** International organisations cannot afford to assume that people's behaviour in different cultural contexts will be the same or aligned to what the company would like to see. There is need for training on the effects of corruption on economies, society and business (as Paul outlined) – so people are aware as to why combating it is so important. Within businesses and government departments, training and education on what corruption is and how to avoid it is required not once for all but on a regular basis.

**“Tone from the Top”** – leading by example and communication. The phrase “Tone from the Top” has been used frequently to denote significant board and top management input to ensure that the leading executives of a company or government department not only speak out clearly on the issue – but also are expected personally to follow the standards that they set.

**Discipline / Sanctions:** It's an old adage that "What gets measured gets done!" Progressive organisations are overhauling how they reward staff to look out for instances of corruption risk and make sure these are appropriately dealt with. Sanctions for disobeying company procedure at home or breaching international law or regulations increasingly carry personal or corporate risk of prosecution with severe penalties. Many of the laws now have extra-territorial reach.

**The core operation:** Investigation / whistle blowing / controls. Companies and Government departments are increasingly looking at how moral processes and operations may actually make corruption and corrupt intent easier to detect and prevent. Attention is also now focussing on relationships with suppliers and third parties who may otherwise have been a channel for activity the company itself frowns upon.

**Audit and Governance:** Finally companies are spending time looking to prove – sometimes with external help- that their systems and approach are being effective in combating corruption.

From a Christian standpoint these are excellent principles and we would do well to act on them and get involved with work colleagues and our wider social networks in working through what they mean in practice in the societies in which we live. But the emphasis is very much on rules and process rather than mindsets.

We should recognise that laws, institutions, rules and regulations, codes of ethics, training, whistle-blowing and all such paraphernalia provide only a framework and support. Unless fundamental human values are challenged and changed these may all be abused or circumvented. As Christians we need to model and exhibit the values of being re-born and living in the power of the Spirit (John 3:3-8)

### **What Challenges and Opportunities does the Christian face?**

As Christians we can bring a wealth of biblical substance to the struggle against corruption but we need also to be aware of some complicating issues.

#### **The Challenges**

In our contemporary society much of academia, business and government has set its face against the public profession of faith and against moral absolutes. We are called to compartmentalise our lives between public secularism and private belief. Some Christians have accepted these constraints. Our proposition is that, as evangelical Christians, we need to make a public faith-based stand against corruption and we need to re-assert the moral absolutes inherent in scripture.

We need to assert that corruption is wrong and that it is a product of human shortcomings and wilfulness to do wrong (SIN) and not simply a product of cultural relativities and differences in social behaviour caused by inequalities, which some of the leading academics assert. We need to welcome moves to introduce and apply laws which are based on high moral (and biblical) standards, recognising of course that, given humankind's sinful nature, there is a tendency to fight against absolute standards.

We should not however pretend that this is simple to achieve. Take for example the issues of cross-cultural differences. What we in one culture may see clearly as a corrupt practice may not be seen as such in another. Zealous tax-collectors may be guilty of extortion in one context (if they seek to top up their pay by charging excess tax) but simply doing their duty in another (if they are duly paid a proportion of the revenue collected). What may be deemed a bribe in one culture may be seen as no more than a generous gift in another. Helping a relative may be the cultural norm in one place and seen as nepotism in another.

We need to be willing to uphold publically what Christians stand for and we need to pray for grace to understand other cultures in an appropriate way

### **The Challenge to be and act differently as Christians**

Before we consider what we should be doing it is worth reflecting on what our Christian calling is. It is well known in business circles that no lasting change can occur in the fight against corruption without changing an organisation's culture from the very top throughout the enterprise.

The scriptures remind us that a Christian should be different **precisely because of the radical change that a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ makes in the believer's life. This becomes the basis for an ongoing transformation personally and visibly in our thinking, values, attitudes, behaviours and relationships.**

Three helpful references to this are to be found in:

**2Peter 1:1-4:** Here the Apostle Peter summarises what Christ does for the Christian

“Simon Peter a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 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

**Ephesians 4: 22-24:** Here the Apostle Paul reminds us to turn away from our former life

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness”

**Micah 6:8:** Here the prophet makes clear that developing a social conscience is not an option!

“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God”

So if Jesus is Lord in my life that should and will make a difference to the way I pray think and act concerning corruption in whatever context we encounter it.

### **The Opportunities**

In countries beset with corruption there are many brave Christians taking up these challenges. We need to mobilise international support for them.

Those in government need to take steps to ensure that, in their country, there is a robust legal and regulatory framework consistent with Christian values. Governments need to safeguard the independent powers of the judiciary, improve transparency and accountability and provide protection for the courageous whistle-blower.

Those in academia have the privilege of working with young adults including many of those most willing to stand up for change. Christian academics need to seize this opportunity to build a generation of future leaders willing to stand against corruption. In their own work Christian academics need to demonstrate the validity of the contribution of scripture in the moral debate on corruption and to confront those who argue that the fight against corruption is simply a secular matter.

Those in business need to support the practical application of the principles we have outlined and reinforce the expression of the biblical teaching underpinning them. We should apply Christian principles to all our processes from the recruitment of our people to our dealings with customers and third parties. Above all we need to express the values and nurture the mindsets that being followers of the Lord Jesus Christ demand of us.

### **What should the Principles-based Christian response be?**

As Christians we should be at the centre of efforts to combat corruption. We hold to a robust framework of moral absolutes – of right and wrong – but we recognise from the teachings of scripture that human behaviour and motivation in different political cultures and economic circumstances are complex. The fact that many governments and regulators have recently passed laws against corruption is encouraging. But laws need to be carefully and effectively drafted and enforced within the prevailing culture.

We need to remind ourselves of the purpose of the law. In the Old Testament, the Law was proclaimed to the people of Israel as setting a clear standard -what God required of his people. In the New Testament Paul makes it clear that it is not the Law that will ultimately save us however well applied (Romans 7:21-25).

Paul writes of the struggle within:

*“So I find this law at work. When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man that I am! Who will*

*rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*

Just as his reference to the Christians in Rome speaks to the need for something else to change our behaviour and actions, we need to recognise that, in this area, the Law alone merely makes clear what is wrong. It is personal and lasting change in values and behaviour at a human level which is required to make a difference!

With this in mind we would commend some Biblical principles to consider when thinking through how we better combat corruption.

**Holiness** – [Psalm 24:3+4] We should be like our creator:

*“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false”*

Holiness and justice flow from the character of God himself. *“Be holy because I the Lord your God am holy”* (Lev.19:2). We are to be those who reflect God’s holiness and justice in all our relationships within and beyond the church.

Corruption is by nature a falsehood. It denies justice. It is gaining an unfair advantage by unfair means and frequently destroys economies and lives in the process. Christians cannot please God and be involved in this process. Where corruption is a “way of life” difficult stands have to be taken on a daily basis in order to remain Holy.

Micah provides several examples of the evidence and problems of corruption (Micah 2:1,2; 3:1-3; 3:9-11; 6:11-12) and sets out very clearly what the Lord requires of us. *“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God”*

**Christ likeness** (Philippians 2:5-7) –We should live like our saviour- he set us a pattern for life and work

*“ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus; who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”*

Jesus sets us the standard. We are not to grasp at things which are not ours (see also Philippians 2:3). Our lifestyle should be that of servant-hood. This is clearly diametrically opposed to all that a corrupt inducement-centred lifestyle has to offer. Christians must take great care that they are not unwittingly complicit in someone else’s corruption, no matter how innocent the motive or scheme may at first appear. This requires constant vigilance and prayer for wisdom and discernment and the courage to take a stand.

**Integrity** (James 1:25): We should live by the power of the Holy Spirit a life that is integral to our calling, not just on Sundays but also prayerfully for the rest of the week

*“ But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does”*

James reminds his readers that we should live, by the Holy Spirit’s power as a direct reflection of the Word in scripture that we read daily. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds in this way and it should make a real difference to the way we live and what we do. This is a difference that the world will also know, although it may not always like it!

### **Salt and Light** (Matthew 5:13)

*“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men”*

Jesus reminds us that we are called to be effective witnesses where God has put us. There is surely nothing more discouraging to the cause of evangelism and the gospel than a Christian who is not living as an effective witness any longer or one who tries to compartmentalise life, keeping faith and belief private.

### **Leadership**

Through prayer in personal, social, and work contexts we need to take responsibility as leaders and lead servant-heartedly.

I particularly like the example of leadership given in the Old Testament by Daniel. In a strange land and very different culture to his own he stuck to those things that he knew would please his Lord, both in what he ate and in his practice as a high-ranking official

(Daniel 1: 8): *“But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief officials for permission not to defile himself in this way”*

(Daniel 6:3+4): *‘ Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in the 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”*

As Christians we would do well to remind ourselves regularly of Daniel’s example and to imitate his intense prayer life for wisdom in complex business, political and cultural situations to discern God’s will. Prayer has to remain a major weapon for the Christian in the struggle against corruption (Daniel 2:20-21; 1 Timothy 1:1,8).

We should pray also for the same Holy Spirit’s power to take our stand, however painful, in obedience to the Lord. Daniel’s faith was not without cost. Many whistle-blowers in today’s world also show great courage and we should pray for their fortitude.

## **Wisdom**

We increasingly need great wisdom to know how to pray, to think from a Christian standpoint, to engage with the world, consult, act with integrity and continue to learn what God requires of us in the situations and contexts we find ourselves as his witnesses.

I'm much encouraged by King Solomon's humble response at the start of his reign:

*(1 Kings 3:7+9) "Now, O Lord my God you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties..So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?"*

And the Apostle James makes it clear that we do not need to be Royal to seek Royal wisdom!

*(James 1:5) "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."*

## **Cost**

We should not expect that taking a stand will be easy or costless. For all of us it will involve counting the cost and probably doing so on our knees in prayer! If Christ himself faced opposition – we are to expect no less:

*(John 15: 20&21) "Remember the words I spoke to you: "No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me."*

## **Compassion**

This is an important and maybe rather forgotten principle. I fear that too often Christians in this space can come across as pious, proud and maybe aloof. It is well worth reminding ourselves that we too are sinners and we were once lost as well and are not by any means above temptation.

As I write this I think of one famous sportsman, a fine and committed Christian. He has gone on to glory, but it always makes me sad when, on the issue of corruption in sport, his name is often cited as an example. It is a heavy legacy to bear and not the way that I am sure he would have wanted to be remembered.

Note how Jesus was moved by compassion as he looked out at the crowd:

*(Mark 6: 34) "When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things"*

But while we must hesitate to stand in judgment and must show compassion to the poor official caught up in petty corruption, nevertheless this must never be allowed to supplant our compassion for the primary victims of corruption, the oppressed poor.

### **Conclusion: A Call for Collective Action**

We have sought in this paper to introduce what we feel a Christian's role can be in combating corruption. We believe this call to collective action against corruption resonates perfectly with the theme of this meeting 'The Whole Church taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World'.

We hope to have demonstrated that corruption is a problem besetting the whole world and that the gospel declares truth and exposes evil before God's judgment and calls for a radical change of life for those called to faith. But this change of life is not simply a matter of private belief and personal behaviour, it is a call to reach out to others and, where necessary, to be active in the 'public square' to engage with and confront the contemporary culture.

Part of this requires action by each of us individually. Part relates to our specific field of service whether in government, business, academia or the church. And part relates to how we can bring each of these together to harness the synergies of collective action.

What then can we do, as Christians from the worlds of government, business, academia and church leadership? Let the debate begin!

Paul Batchelor and Steve Osei-Mensah, Sevenoaks: October 2010

(Ver.6: 12.10.10)

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