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**CORRUPTION-FREE CHURCHES:  
THEOLOGICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL STEPS**

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Corruption is “the abuse of entrusted power for personal gain.”<sup>1</sup> This globally used definition shows that the core of corruption is the abuse of public or private power which is entrusted by a community or an individual to an individual or a community. If a teacher, a public official, a policeman, a parliamentarian, a medical doctor, an entrepreneur or a pastor abuses his/her professional position to get a personal financial or non-financial advantage, it is internationally defined as corruption. An endless number of books, articles and case studies on corruption on all continents exist, mainly on the private and the public sector. Relatively few exist on corruption in religious organizations. But in a corrupt environment, it is not surprising that religious organizations are also affected, especially related to the abuse of resources of the institution. Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jews organizations are affected as Christian Churches. Many cases of corruption and of instruments against corruption in Churches are reported from all continents. Many are collected in my book.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is the most broadly accepted definition of corruption from the global anti-corruption coalition Transparency International: *The Anti-Corruption Plain Language Guide*, Berlin: Transparency International, July 2009, [www.transparency.org/publications/publications/other/plain\\_language\\_guide](http://www.transparency.org/publications/publications/other/plain_language_guide) (accessed 20 Feb. 2012).

<sup>2</sup> *Corruption-Free Churches are Possible. Experiences, Values and Solutions*, Globethics.net Focus 2, Geneva: Globethics.net 2010, 38-41, 65-124. Download for free from the online library [www.globethics.net](http://www.globethics.net).

Corruption-free Churches are possible!<sup>3</sup> Yes, corruption is unfortunately more widespread in Churches (as well as religious institutions of other world religions) as many believe. And yes, there are manifold theological, spiritual and managerial instruments and practical examples to overcome corruption and more than many know. But the first question is, why it is of special significance to overcome corruption in religious institutions. Four sectors of society are essential in overcoming corruption: the judiciary institutions (courts), the educational institutions, the media and the religious institutions. If these sectors are affected by corruption, it is more severe than for others because trust in these institutions is basic for the development of a society: trust in impartial and just court decisions, trust in the truth of media information, trust in an honest education based on performance and trust in the values promoted by religious institutions.

But overcoming corruption in Churches is not only important for this sociological and developmental reason, but is rooted in the centre of the Gospel: Transparency, honesty, fairness, servant leadership, accountable use of entrusted resources, good stewardship, love of the other, caring for the weaker and responsible sharing and control of power are the ethical consequence of the faith in Jesus Christ as the liberator from sin. If these values are violated by corrupt practices, the Gospel itself and its credibility is at stake.

### **1. Christian Accountability during the first Christian Collection for Jerusalem**

Inspired by the life of Jesus and his ethics of sharing, the first Christians shared sorrows and joy, fears and prayer – and their material goods. They had “everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need” (Acts 2:45). The more the Christian first communities, also called “first parishes,” became larger, the more difficult it was to implement this early small scale “Christian communism” and monastic communion. Soon, some did not fully trust the brothers and sisters and wanted additional material security. When followers Ananias and Saphira sold their land property, they shared only part of the benefit with the community and kept a part as their private “insurance,” in case the community would break down or not work (Acts 5:2). The story shows that sharing and transparency was a challenge for the Church since its very beginning. But the notion of fair sharing goods

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<sup>3</sup> A good part of this article is based on and can be found in various chapters of the book of the author (footnote 2).

remained a core notion of Christian existence and remains until today. The early Christians were hit by the wealth-poverty gap: around the year 50, only two decades after the death of Jesus, the “parish” in Jerusalem was heavily affected by a hunger crisis (Acts 11:28; 21:10). The middle class Christians in the rich and prosperous famous towns of Antioch and Corinth started around the year 52 the first large fundraising campaigns to support the brothers and sisters in need. Paul himself was the head of the campaign (Acts 11:29; 2 Cor 8 and 9). We could call him the founder of the first Christian aid agency. He organized the (hopefully secure) transfer of the funds from Antioch to Jerusalem with Barnabas (Acts 11:29) and from Corinth to Jerusalem with Titus, his manager and director of finance (2 Cor 8:16ff). Interestingly for our topic of corruption, Paul established a transparent way of handling funds, with ‘double signature’ and control in order to avoid any mistrust and irregularity: Titus “was chosen by the Churches to accompany us as we carry the offering which we administer in order to honour the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men” (2Cor 8:19-21).

Today, when some bishops and Church leaders resist to be controlled, claiming that they are only responsible to God and to no human institution, then they clearly deny the Gospel and the truth of the early Christians like Paul. Transparency, accountability and mutual control in managing all kind of resources have been a core value and praxis of Christians since the first years of Christianity. Responsible leadership includes the control of power and especially the control of entrusted resources.<sup>4</sup> The early Christians established mechanisms of equality and solidarity between the hungry Christians in Jerusalem and the relatively wealthy Christians in Antioch and Corinth: “At the present time, your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality” (2 Cor 8:14. The Greek word *isotetos* for equality means a fair balance in order to overcome inequalities).

Let us now look at various cultural and theological factors which are used to justify corruption and need to be addressed in order to overcome it.

## 2. Stewards of Entrusted Property

One cultural reason for and justification of corruption is the understanding of property. What is the cultural role of the

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<sup>4</sup> *Corruption-Free Churches are Possible.*

understanding of property, of 'mine' and 'yours', of private and public? *Hypothesis: the confrontation of cultures emphasising collective property with those emphasising private property leads to value differences and grey zones that can be abused by people in power for personal interests. In order to reduce corruption, the financial pressure from the broader family has to be reduced.*

The distinction between 'mine' and 'yours', and public and private, differs in different cultures. In many cultures, property such as land belongs to the community,<sup>5</sup> whereas the global dominant economic model is based on the Western model of private property. The majority of societies today support the clear distinction between private and public and between individuals and community, between 'me' and 'you', with an emphasis on private property and individual rights as expressed in the UN Human Rights declaration. In less individualistic, more community-oriented societies, the distinction between individual property and community-owned property is less sharp. But even then, it is not yet a justification of corruption in terms of abuse of entrusted power, since in both cultural types bribes are seen as an abuse of power. Collective property belongs to the community, and the king or leader of the community has to care for a just and equal access to these resources. If he/she abuses this entrusted power for personal gain, he/she is sanctioned by the community.

But does community orientation not justify the redirection of funds to a community? No, it has still to be called misappropriation and a form of corruption even if funds do not go to individual pockets, but to a clan, a family or a community of a Church for which they were not earmarked. It is still a violation of the border between public and private: funds designated for a broader, 'public' community are used for 'private' interests, even if this is not an individual, but a collective private entity.

This leads to a delicate reason for corruption: many people actively look for or passively accept bribes because of their obligations to the broader family or clan. In many societies, the salary is not seen as a private property, but an obligation to the broader family community. The pressure on people with a good education and a job from the broader family to support not only brothers and sisters, but even cousins, uncles and aunts, is often immense. This leads to corruption even among

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<sup>5</sup> Individual and collective property rights are also reflected in the difference between the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, emphasizing individual rights, and the African Banjul Charter of Human Rights and Rights of the people of 1981, emphasizing collective rights.

pastors or bishops who cannot resist this pressure. A young professor of ethics in Cameroon, not to be named but known to the author, confessed in a dialogue with the author that he can only be corruption-free because he resists meeting all these expectations of the broader family which is not easy and needs careful awareness building.

It contradicts Christian family ethics if a pastor with a lousy salary is pushed by the broader family to be involved in illegal and immoral corrupt practices in order to support more than the closest family members. This ethical behaviour has to go hand in hand with the development of insurances and social security systems. In order to decrease the pressure from family members, pension funds and health and accident insurances are very important. Microcredit and micro-insurances are important contributions to reduce such petty corruption.

### **3. Influence of Church Sociology and Church Finances**

What is the influence of Church size, Church-state relations, legal structures, and financial sources of income on corruption in Churches? *Hypothesis: The size of a Church is not decisive for corruption. In a constitutional state, the partnership between Church and state (with public supervision of Church finances) and internal controls and sanctions decrease the danger of corruption. Churches with Church tax revenues tend to be less corrupt than Churches mainly depending on voluntary donations.*

A sociological and legal Church typology can distinguish Churches by factors such as size, legal status, membership, income sources or historical origin. Some distinctions, without any pretence to completeness:<sup>6</sup> a) *majority Churches* are those with a majority of the population as members and normally with substantial political influence; b) *minority Churches* represent often a very small percentage of the population and are therefore more vulnerable and with less political influence; c) *state Churches* are strongly linked with the state, under public law, normally with the right to collect Church taxes or receiving substantial financial support by the state; d) *free Churches* are organised as associations, without Church tax and income mainly from voluntary donations; e) *Churches sometimes combine* elements of state Churches and of free Churches; f) *migrant Churches* are mainly composed of members with specific migrant background from a country, language or ethnic group; g) *family Churches*, especially with a Pentecostal background, are initiated by individuals and often run like a family enterprise; h) *mission Churches* were founded by mission societies and are today often mainstream

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<sup>6</sup> See more details in Stückelberger, Christoph: *Vermittlung und Parteinahme. Der Vermittlungsauftrag der Kirchen in gesellschaftlichen Konflikten*, Zürich 1986, chapter 2.

Churches; i) *independent Churches* have been founded by local people independent from overseas missionaries.

These different types of Churches have very different levels of financial transparency. As a general rule it can be expected that Churches with close relations to the state have more transparency and much less corruption (under the condition that the state is a state of law and not itself corrupt) and if there is corruption, it is more likely that it becomes public. Free Churches, migrant Churches and family Churches on the other hand often have much less financial transparency and therefore a greater potential for corruption even though it may not become public.

In addition, it can be expected that Churches in societies with a high level of corruption (according to the Corruption Perception Index, CPI)<sup>7</sup> are themselves more affected by corruption – even though within these societies there are substantial differences between different Churches and confessions!

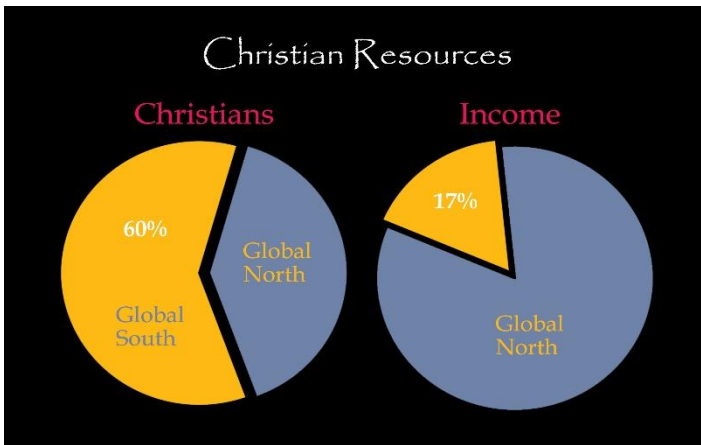
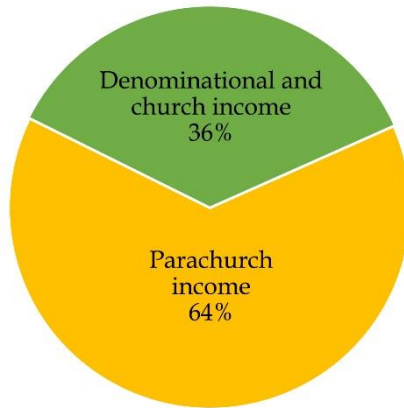
One might be inclined to argue that corruption is higher in Churches where income and wealth is lower. But the wealth of Christians, as shown in the graph below,<sup>8</sup> is not an indicator for the level of corruption of a Church. Some Churches in India or Brazil are more corrupt than Churches in some African countries even though they are wealthier.



<sup>7</sup> See chapter 2.4.1.

<sup>8</sup> Johnson, Todd M./ Ross, Kenneth R. (eds.), *Atlas of Global Christianity*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, 297.

Corruption often happens not with the main Church funds, but with the para-Church funds of Church-run projects, Church foundations, schools, or emergency aid. Two-thirds of all Church income comes from such para-Church funds as the following graph<sup>9</sup> shows.



Is corruption encouraged by low salaries of pastors and other Church employees? In the public sector, a connection between petty corruption and low salaries cannot be denied. Corruptive payments as part of the salary of civil servants, e.g. of police and customs officers or teachers in developing countries, reflect the extremely bad financial situation of such civil servants. There is a marked connection between the high level of corruption of a particular

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, Todd M./ Ross, Kenneth R. (eds.), *Atlas of Global Christianity*, 296.

country and its low wage and salary level.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, it is necessary to clearly separate bribes from elements of pay as well as from tips and gifts. In Churches, most known cases of financial corruption are not petty corruption of Church employees, but corruption of Church leaders when they buy votes to be (re)elected or when they misappropriate funds. Non-financial corruption in the form of sexual abuse is – in most of the cases – also independent of low salaries.

#### 4. Denominational Ecclesiologies and Leadership Models

What is the influence of theology and more specifically of ecclesiology and leadership models on corruption in Churches? What are the reasons for confessional differences? *Hypothesis: As a tendency, Protestant Churches are less corrupt than Catholic, Orthodox and some Pentecostal Churches. The ecclesiology and leadership model has a substantial impact on corruption: In Churches with more hierarchical leadership and less democratic control, the danger of abuse of power by corruption is greater.*

The yearly Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of Transparency International has shown for many years that predominantly Protestant countries lead the list of corruption-resistant countries.<sup>11</sup> In CPI 2009, the top ten are: New Zealand, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, Finland, the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, Iceland and Singapore (as a special case). In Europe, North European Protestant countries are perceived as less corrupt than South European Catholic countries such as France (rank 24), Spain (32), Portugal (35) and Italy (63). Eastern European Orthodox countries are ranked still lower: Bulgaria (71), Rumania (71), Serbia (83), Armenia (120) and Russia (146).<sup>12</sup>

Sociological studies explain the differences between religions and confessions, where hierarchical religions and societies tend to be more corrupt than democratic ones. Traditional societies and religions based on families and tribes are more influenced by corruption, nepotism and favouritism than secular societies. The European Business Ethics Network Germany, during its Annual

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<sup>10</sup> Rijckehem, C. van/ Weder, B., "Corruption and the Rate of Temptation: Do Low Wages in the Civil Service Cause Corruption?" *Working Paper 97/73*, Washington DC: International Monetary Fund, 1997.

<sup>11</sup> Von Alemann, Ulrich, "Konfession und Korruption. Protestanten an die Macht!" *Der Überblick. Zeitschrift für ökumenische Begegnung und internationale Zusammenarbeit* 42, 2 (2006) 13f.

<sup>12</sup> See [www.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/cpi/2009/cpi\\_2009\\_table](http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2009/cpi_2009_table) (accessed 24 January 2010).



Conference 2010 on “Religion as Disturbance and Resource of Business”<sup>13</sup> looked at the empirical relations between religion and corruption. The economist Johann Graf Lambsdorff, one of the developers of the TI Corruption Perception Index, analysed an international Gallup poll of countries and came to the conclusion:

Protestants are less corrupt than Catholics, as international literature confirms. But there are no relevant confessional differences on the question, whether bribes are unacceptable ... One reason on the collective level is that Protestants could build corruption-resistant institutions that are active when individuals would otherwise give in to temptation... Wealthy people bribe as much as poor people, and also the level of education has no influence on the frequency of bribing.<sup>14</sup>

Sociological and economic explanations are important, but not sufficient.

Theological explanations have to analyse faith-based reasons such as double morality which is easier justified in Catholic ethics and behaviour than in Protestant. The tradition of indulgence where a partial remission of punishment can be bought, favours corrupt practices. Of major influence is the ecclesiological justification of the Church structure. On the other hand, such explanations are often too simple, because confessions and religions are influenced by a mixture of many different theological, economic, cultural and political factors. Within the Protestant confessional families, my own observations based on cooperation with many Churches and Church leaders on all continents show the following picture: representatives of Methodist and Reformed Churches have been most involved in anti-corruption efforts within their Church and society, followed by Lutherans and Anglicans. This corresponds with the hypothesis on hierarchy and with the importance of ethics for Christian faith in the respective confessions. On the Catholic side, there are outstanding individual bishops and strong Church statements on corruption in society, but much less visible efforts on fighting corruption within the Church. In particular, the Vatican is again and again attacked for non-transparent power structures including corruption (see chapter 3.1.9 of the book).

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<sup>13</sup> Deutsches Netzwerk Wirtschaftsethik (DNWE), *Religion. Störfaktor und Ressource der Wirtschaft*, conference programme, [www.dnwe.de/tl\\_files/Dateien/JT2010\\_Programm.pdf](http://www.dnwe.de/tl_files/Dateien/JT2010_Programm.pdf) (accessed 5 August 2010)

<sup>14</sup> DNWE, *Sind Religiöse Menschen weniger korrupt? Ein Interview mit Prof Johann Graf Lambsdorff*, [www.dnwe.de/news-gastkommentar/items/sind-religioese-menschen-weniger-korrupt-ein-interview-mit-prof-johann-graf-lambsdorff.html](http://www.dnwe.de/news-gastkommentar/items/sind-religioese-menschen-weniger-korrupt-ein-interview-mit-prof-johann-graf-lambsdorff.html) (accessed 5 August 2010)

These confessional observations and reflections should not be abused for confessional arrogance; rather, they should help in finding deeper theological and ecclesiological roots of corruption in order to overcome corrupt practices in a spirit of ecumenical sharing and mutual support!

### **5. Diaconal Partnerships: Different Accountability Models**

What is the influence of Church development, especially of mission Churches, and the understanding of partnership on corruption in Churches? *Hypothesis: the transition from mission Churches to independent Churches led to specific challenges of these newly independent Churches by inherited Church property and partnership concepts with mission societies.*

The decolonisation since the 1950s and the first UN decade for development starting in 1960 led to the independence of former mission Churches from the mission societies and the creation of new Churches in newly independent former colonies. The process started in the late 1950s (Bad Herrenalb Conference, 1956). An important milestone was the international mission conference in *Bangkok 1973*, which was the most critical conference judging missionary work and leading to the call for a moratorium of all financial support and personnel from the North in order to push financial and spiritual self-reliance of the new Churches. This was never implemented, but a new understanding of partnership and mutual sharing was developed. The conference of the World Council of Churches (WCC) on "Ecumenical Sharing" in *El Escorial 1987* called for new partnership relations between Churches worldwide, with four main pillars: *Koinonia* (community) as sharing in mutual partnership: material and spiritual resources should be shared between Churches which all are equal partners; *Kenosis* (voluntary renunciation of power) as the Christian way of exercising power according to Christ: renunciation of institutional and material power (e.g. land); *Option for the poor* as the liberating social involvement of the Churches: empowerment of the poorer (Churches) to fully participate in decision-making; the *unity of mission and development*, of proclamation and service.

El Escorial shows: 'Power, transparency and ecumenical sharing'<sup>15</sup> have been key issues in Church relations during the last fifty years. Domination from the North was replaced by the call for independence, linked with refusal of control. Partnership was seen as

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Matthey, Jacques, "Macht, Transparenz und ökumenischesTeilen," keynote speech at the EMW Conference, 2-3 March 2010, Hamburg, manuscript.

sharing in mutual trust. Control by donor agencies was often interpreted as lack of trust and therefore refused by Churches in the Global South. Strong Regional Ecumenical Organisations (REOs) were built in the 1960s, such as the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), Council of Churches in Asia (CCA) and Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI). A promising vision of partnership was developed and also implemented by transforming former mission societies into global mission councils with full equal voting rights of all partners independent of their financial capacities (CEVAA, UEM, mission 21, CWM). But sometimes weak project control opened ways for abuse of power. As a result, ecumenical development agencies since the 1990s more and more refused to channel their development funds through partner Churches and preferred to cooperate with secular NGOs with greater transparency. Theologies of obedience to Church leaders as God's representatives hindered and still hinder many lay people to question non-transparent financial behaviour of Church leaders. These factors contribute to corrupt practices through structures of authority, obedience and an abused understanding of partnership as trust without control. Mission history may contribute to the fact that some Churches from the Global North still hesitate to criticise too openly their partner Churches in the Global South. And if they mention the necessity to overcome corruption, partner Churches in the South refuse the critiques of former dominating partners.

But this attitude is now changing. A new generation of responsible leaders in the South supports strong anti-corruption measures. Some call on their Northern partners to adopt more rigorous policies and to suspend or stop the financial support of corrupt partners in the South, because continuing the cooperation would be considered a legitimisation of corruption. Northern partners overcome their hesitation and support joint efforts. The mission societies as well as Christian development agencies hesitated in the 1990s to pick up the hot issue of corruption in Churches. But some of them made substantial efforts, especially since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (e.g. German mission societies from 2002), and many of them are now actively involved in the issue even if some resistance and hesitations continue.

## **6. Prosperity Gospel: Theology of Bribing God and Modern Simony**

The prosperity gospel is one of the key theological elements for current corruption in the Churches. It was first introduced in the 1960s by US Pentecostal evangelists in Oklahoma such as Oral Roberts, T.L. Osborn, Pat Robertson and Jim Bakker. It then spread

around the world especially to Latin America, Africa and Asia, where the Yoido Full Gospel Church of Paul Yonggi Cho of South Korea influenced many Churches in South Korea, Indonesia,<sup>16</sup> China, India and other countries. The prosperity gospel is one of the fastest growing Christian movements in the world, especially among poor people. It is based on the promise of material prosperity and wealth for those who accept Christian faith and donate to the pastor of the Church. These Pentecostal Church leaders live a lavish lifestyle with luxurious cars, residencies, five-star hotels for their evangelisation and promises for the poor.

The prosperity gospel is a form of religious lottery or gambling. In theological terms, it has to be called *a heresy and sin* because it makes believers believe that salvation and God's Holy Spirit can be bought with human efforts and money and that material wealth is the reward of God to his believers. Why is it heresy? Because it denies that salvation is a gift only by God's grace and his free will. God's free will cannot be bribed with money and human efforts! God's Spirit and spiritual functions such as serving as a pastor cannot be bought! The prosperity gospel is *a modern form of simony*, as mentioned above: it is the attempt to buy God's Spirit and spiritual power and functions.

Gnana Robinson, a famous Indian theologian and ethicist, and former president of three of the best Protestant theological seminaries in India, said: 'The prosperity gospel is being preached from the pulpits with the message focused on "if you give to God, God will repay you threefold, fourfold and hundredfold with his blessings." A theology of "Bribing God" starts from here... Our struggle for eradicating corruption in Churches should begin with a radical re-thinking on our conception of God... The same should also be said of our understanding of Christ. The way Christ is worshipped in Churches in Asia raises the question - which Christ are we really worshipping? Are we really worshipping the Jesus of the New Testament, the son of a carpenter, the ridiculed, mocked-at, spat-upon, thorn-crowned and crucified Jesus, who rose from the dead? The false teachings of the preachers of the prosperity cult has given us "another Jesus", as St Paul feared (cf. 2 Cor. 11:4), with a golden crown on head and with the earth-globe on one hand and the sceptre of power on the other.

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<sup>16</sup> E.g. Indonesian Bethany Church (IBC), analysed by Wijaya, Yahya, "The Economic Ethics of Christian and Islamic Fundamentalism", in Stückelberger, Christoph/ Hadsell, Heidi, ed., *Overcoming Fundamentalism. Ethical Responses from Five Continents*, Globethics.net Series No. 2, Geneva: Globethics.net, 2009, 131-150 (138f.), download for free from [www.globethics.net/web/guest/library](http://www.globethics.net/web/guest/library).

Like God, this image has been developed in Churches since the Constantine era. Christ is also presented as an all power glorious King, who is ready to bless all those who please him through offerings and praises... Dealing with transparency, accountability and corruption should therefore begin with a thorough rethinking on our understanding of Faith, God and Christ – starting with the Faith and Order Department of the World Council of Churches. The Faith and Order Department of the WCC and its counterparts in all Churches should take this up seriously. A true believer in the New Testament Jesus cannot indulge in corrupt activities.’<sup>17</sup>

### **7. Solutions: 35 Practical Recommendations for Corruption-Free Churches**

What can be done to overcome corruption in religious institutions such as Christian Churches? The first step is to overcome fatalism. Fatalism which says “corrupt practices exist in all societies and is as old as humanity and we have to live with it” is sin. Sin is the attitude not to count on God’s action but to look only at human possibilities and failures. Fatalism denies the liberating and renewing power of God’s Spirit. The second step is to dismantle justifications. Material, political or theological justifications of corruption saying “we have to pay bribes to fulfil our mission as Church” or “we cannot dismiss our bishop because he was appointed by God” deny again God’s Spirit of justice and transparency. Overcoming corruption therefore starts with a spiritual renewal.

But in addition, many concrete theological and institutional steps can be undertaken. 35 practical recommendations are summarized below. Each of them is explained and developed in my book on corruption free Churches where background, explanations and justification for each of the recommendations can be found.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Robinson, Gnana, “Transparency and Accountability in Ecumenical Relations. Discussions in Indian/Asian Contexts,” paper presented at the EMW/MA Conference, Hamburg, June 2009. *Peoples Reporter (India)* 22, 10 Sept 2009, 17, and 23, 10 Oct 2009, 3 and 7. See also Robinson, Gnana, *My God and my People*, Madras: CLS, 1999; Robinson, Gnana, *Dialogue with People of Other Faiths/Which Christ Do We Serve?*, Kanyakumari, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Stueckelberger, Christoph, *Corruption-Free Churches are Possible. Experiences, Values and Solutions*, Globethics.net Focus 2, Geneva: Globethics.net 2010, 163-192. Download for free from the online library [www.globethics.net](http://www.globethics.net).

### 7.1 Overcoming Corruption by Theology, Ecclesiology, Ethics

1. *Reflect on and renew the theological basis for overcoming corruption, especially in view of the doctrine of the triune God, in ecumenical perspectives.*
2. *Reflect on and renew the ecclesiological basis for overcoming corruption, especially with the doctrine of Church leadership as service and good stewardship, in ecumenical perspectives*
3. *Refuse and publicly dismantle heretical theologies such as the prosperity gospel, which promotes corruption with its theology and leadership models.*
4. *Reflect on and renew the ethical basis for overcoming corruption in all fields of ethics, especially professional ethics, business ethics, political ethics, environmental ethics and sexual ethics.*
5. *Promote interreligious dialogue and studies of common ethical principles and practices of overcoming corruption within and across religions and philosophical traditions.*

### 7.2 Overcoming Corruption by Leadership and Governance

6. *Promote a Code of Responsible Leadership for leaders and people in governing bodies of Churches and Church-related institutions.*
7. *Decide on minimum standards for candidates for elections of positions in Churches and Church-related institutions, including an anti-corruption clause prohibiting candidates from buying votes and declaring assets.*
8. *Adapt salaries in Churches and Church-related institutions for all employees, but especially those in leadership positions, in order to pay fair, decent wages – which means sufficient for a modest life in dignity.*
9. *Introduce peer review mechanisms between Churches to strengthen mutual accountability and the community of Churches.*
10. *Review and revise rules on expenses and compensation and their implementation under the aspect of good management of limited resources, transparency and overcoming corruption.*
11. *Protect whistleblowers who give hints on fraud and corrupt practices in Churches and Church-related institutions.*
12. *Establish an annual transparency and anti-corruption report in Churches and Church-related institutions, as a section of the annual report.*
13. *Declare Churches and Church-related institutions corruption-free zones with appropriate monitoring mechanisms.*

### 7.3 Overcoming Corruption by Stewardship of Resources and Projects

14. *Manage real estate property (land and buildings) of Churches and Church-related institutions in an efficient, transparent and corruption-free*

*way in planning, open tender procedures, market prices and control mechanisms.*

*15. Launch a Christian International Real Estate Programme (CIREP), as a partnership between Churches and related institutions from the Global South and ecumenical partner agencies from the Global North.*

*16. Develop and carefully control the pension funds of Churches and Church-related institutions and promote their ethical investment.*

*17. Implement independent, credible and published financial audits and performance audits of Churches and Church-related institutions.*

*18. Appoint and utilize the human resources of Churches and Church-related institutions in the best possible way, avoiding waste of qualified people through power games as a form of grey corruption.*

*19. Promote the sustainable use of natural resources, such as soil, water, forests and non-renewable energy, as good stewards.*

*20. Increase donor coordination, with financial transparency between donors and partners, with comparable reporting and anti-corruption standards and with integrated database systems.*

#### **7.4 Overcoming Corruption by Preaching, Teaching, Educating**

*21. Increased spiritual efforts to overcome corruption through worship, with preaching, praying and singing – and walking the talk – remain decisive for credibility.*

*22. Include compulsory courses on professional ethics, Church governance, responsible leadership and financial management in curricula of theological education. Conduct organisational ethics training for people in Church leadership positions.*

*23. Promote anti-corruption education on all levels from Sunday school to popular civic education.*

#### **7.5 Overcoming Corruption by Gender Equity and Women's Empowerment**

*24. Promote women in leadership positions and in financial responsibilities in Churches and Church-related institutions for anti-corruption efforts.*

*25. Promote Women's ordination in all (Protestant) Churches.*

*26. Empower women and Christian women's organizations with the right to own real estate (land, buildings), managed in their own responsibility, and promote women in the control functions of Church-related real estate.*

*27. Fight sexual harassment and sexual abuse in Churches and Church-related institutions with educational efforts, codes of ethics, reporting, legal mechanisms and sanctions, and offering counselling and workgroups on various levels.*

28. *Become sensitized and try to cease concubine relations of people employed by or having governing responsibilities in the Church or Church-related institutions since they are a possible root for corruption.*

#### 7.6 Overcoming Corruption by Sanctions and Courts

29. *Strengthen sanction mechanisms in existing and new codes for transparency and against corruption and in other administrative mechanisms.*

30. *Bring cases of corruption in Church and Church-related institutions where necessary to court. Campaign as Churches for corruption-free judiciary systems in different countries.*

#### 7.7 Overcoming Corruption by Media, Campaigns, Databases, Networks, Programmes

31. *Guarantee the independence of Christian and secular media and journalists in reporting the positive and negative facts about corruption and Churches.*

32. *Strengthen Christian movements for transparent and corruption-free Churches from below.*

33. *Establish an international ecumenical Corruption-Free Churches Resource Centre (CCRC) for Churches and Church-related institutions, with an ecumenical database, available resources, a helpdesk and training.*

34. *Build a network or networks of transparent and corruption-free Churches and related institutions for exchange, research and mutual encouragement.*

35. *Decide and implement programmes for transparent and corruption-free Churches on national, regional, international and denominational levels.*