

When state corruption becomes a ‘Sunday School Picnic’¹

A response to media reports on corruption.

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Abstract

This contribution is part of a festschrift in honour of emeritus professor, Nico Adam Botha, who laboured tirelessly for the concretisation of justice to all citizens in the boundaries of South Africa and beyond. His academic treatise offers volumes to matters of justice/injustice, in most cases particularly related to those with economic power, abusing the resources that cripple the economy and result in the most vulnerable (the poorest of the poor!) suffering. This contribution also reflects critically on the unequal representation of media reports on government corruption, as opposed to corruption in corporate South Africa. Moreover, it transposes beyond such media reporting. The author argues in this contribution that the academic corpus of Nico Botha provides a theoretical framework that can be used as a diagnostic analysis and probe, but also to re-imagine the causes and eradication of corruption in South Africa.

Keywords: corruption, South Africa, media reporting, Nico Botha, justice

1. Introduction

I fondly reminisce about my academic career path that began quite interestingly and incidentally in 2014 through a personal encounter with Professor Nico Botha. It occurred precisely because of my office being adjacent to his. Nonetheless, it was also during a poignant moment in his life and that of his family, when they went through a calamity of coming to terms with their only daughter fighting for her life in a Pretoria hospital. I was, therefore, relatively early in my academic career when exposed to contextual challenges that even academics have to face.

It was only much later that I became acquainted and aware of his academic niche: fighting (writing) for justice. I became part of the life of an academic

¹ The reference to ‘Sunday School Picnic’ serves in this article as a metaphor to refer to the extent in which the corruption in the state can become, when compared with corruption in the private and corporate sectors in South African society.

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(Nico Botha) to whom it was not solely about writing on issues of justice but in his own praxis – demonstrating to be in solidarity with the desperate plight of the marginalised. I met an academic giant that reflects a deep spiritual, moral character and a deep-seated belief that God is actively involved in the affairs of the “least of them all”. The relationship between the two of us grew fondly as my term in office (2014-2017) on the Executive committee of the South African Missiological Society (SAMS) coincided with his, in his capacity as General Secretary (GS).

Botha’s approach as the GS of SAMS can be captured in words such as inclusion and justice. He passionately and relentlessly laboured towards the active participation and contribution of all members of SAMS across the cosmetic boundaries of race, ethnicity, and gender, while without prejudice affirmed and applauded emerging academics in the field of missiology that made their debut at the annual conferences. He courageously embodied justice without fear or favour.

Botha’s (2013) vexing concern has always been – even in a post-apartheid South Africa – the alarming betrayal of the poor and that those at the helm of political power have (again!) left them to suffer in abject poverty; to live with the “crumbs from the master’s table”. Botha has never been apologetic about his relentless courage as a black student at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) that ferociously stood up against the injustice committed by the apartheid government in the 1980s. He continues (in post-apartheid South Africa) in the same fashion than before because he tenaciously believes that although the government has undergone a cosmetic facelift, the unbearable and dire conditions of the poor have not dramatically changed. Botha refers in his article in *Beeld*³ to the powerful black ‘elite’ as the ones that accumulate wealth with other white powerful business people, while the majority of the nation has to live in dire circumstances.⁴

Botha (2013) engages the burning issue of poverty in South Africa, through a critical diagnostic analysis on the extent to which the interests of the wealthy could place the poor in a direr situation. Botha regards such a probe (as mentioned above) as a salient matter, that if not adequately addressed will be an injustice to the poorest of the poor as they will be tied to a system that is designed to fail them dimly. Botha refers to the effect of the bigger systems in South Africa and their plausible effects when he responds to the matter of restitution in terms of the atrocities committed to the victims of apartheid:

³ This is an Afrikaans regional newspaper in Gauteng.

⁴ He states “Daar het die afgelope 25 jaar ‘n sterk en magtige elitistiese groep uit die swart bevolking – weliswaar kleinerig, maar ontsettend invloedryk- ontstaan. Saam met ‘n aantal wit korporatiewe magtiges doen hulle net wat hulle wil in hierdie land, terwyl die res van die bevolking magteloo toekyk”.

The following questions must be posed: Does the concept [restitution] not focus on a very narrow sense of justice that is legalistic, ignoring the bigger justice/injustice picture? Does the notion of restitution not come out of a mentality that supports the status quo? Is restitution not inadvertently and unintentionally perhaps, arising too from a protectionist tendency, i.e. to protect the interests of the wealthy as much as possible? A further question is: whether restitution will be aimed at tackling the underlying system which has given rise to the huge discrepancies between the rich and the poor, however complex and difficult that may be, or will it degenerate into yet another delusion?

Botha’s diagnostical interrogation into the discourse of restitution in South Africa has relevance and is appropriate in terms of a critical discussion on the endemic corruption in South Africa, particularly as its core issues focus on justice and injustice.

The rubric ‘Sunday School Picnic’ crystallised during personal conversations with Nico Botha in the corridors of the Samuel Pauw building at the University of South Africa (UNISA). The phrase at many times echoed when South Africans were challenged on a weekly basis with the newspaper headlines “State Capture” particularly during the controversial tenure of former President Jacob Zuma (2014-2017). Botha then recurrently contended: “corporate corruption will make government corruption look like a Sunday School Picnic!” What did he mean by this? Is the way that the media reports, presents and articulates corruption in South African media still only the tip of a metaphorical iceberg? This will be unpacked in this contribution when focusing on how government corruption was presented in weekly newspaper reports in 2016 (when he uttered those words) and offers an analysis of his theological corpus and in a hypothetical manner demonstrates how his corpus on justice/injustice in South Africa can be used to address endemic corruption.

The article commences with a succinct discussion on what constitutes corruption, particularly from a legislative and Christian-theological framework. The issue of corruption, as a theological-ethical and missiological issue,⁵ will therefore be addressed through an engagement with the academic corpus of Nico Botha – specifically his notion on justice that will ultimately serve, for this contribution, as a theoretical framework to address media reports on corruption. Media reports on corruption in South Africa will thus be discussed. However, subsequently, the focus will transpose beyond the media’s reporting on corruption to answer the question: Do media reports effectively address corruption in South Africa, particularly in view of the contribution of the theological-missiological corpus of Nico Botha?

⁵ See the missiological contribution of Daryl Balia (2002), “Fighting corruption: A challenge to Mission”. In M. Karecki (ed.). *The making of an African person. Essays in honour of Willem Saayman*. Pretoria: SAMS.

2. Corruption: Definition and Causes

In the quest for a workable definition of corruption, Caiden and Caiden (2001:186) offer a breakdown of individual and systemic corruption. Individual corruption occurs when a particular individual “strays from a prevailing norm of official public behavior”. Systematic corruption, on the other hand, denotes “a situation where wrongdoing has become the norm and the standard accepted behaviour necessary to accomplish organisational goals according to notions of public responsibility, and trust has become the exception of the rule”. Furthermore, systemic corruption occurs when “the administrative system itself transposes the expected purposes of the organisation, forces participants to follow what otherwise would be termed unacceptable ways, and actually punishes those who resist” (Caiden & Caiden, 2001:186). The Commission for Africa (2005:68) refer to systemic corruption when they describe corruption as “... a systemic challenge facing many African leaders”.

Despite all the contributions and discussions from scholars on the definition of corruption, it is appropriate to focus on what constitutes corruption in South Africa. In this regard, the South African legislation serves as an imperative parameter. The Prevention and Combatting of Corrupt Activities Act (PRECCA) (No. 12 of 2004) captures what constitutes corruption and articulates the action(s) that will follow in terms of prosecution with a court of law in South Africa. It states that corruption occurs when: a person (A) gives (or offers to give) someone who is in a position of power (B) something to employ their power, illegally and unfairly, for the advantage of A (or someone not directly involved). Furthermore, corruption manifests when there is an abuse of a position of authority.

According to this Act, the following elements constitute corruption:

- When someone gives (or offering to give) / or when someone receives (or agreeing to receive);
- Someone in a position of power;
- Using power illegally or unfairly;
- Gratification (which includes money, a donation, a fee, a reward, a status, property, the avoidance of loss, the discharge of a loan, a privilege, and a discount).

Furthermore, the Act states that both parties will be guilty of the act, unless the person that is on the receiving end refuses to take part and will then be innocent. Corruption also prevails in instances where a person solicits a bribe. Such a person will be guilty, even if he or she turns the offer down.

This Act does not necessarily involve money-exchanging hands. Gifts, entertainment, property, employment, influence of a vote, discounts, or release from a loan are also viewed as gratification (Corruption Watch, 2016).

Moreover, Section 4 to 16 of the Act specifies certain offences based on Corruption Watch (2016). These are listed below:

- Offences involving contracts: it is a crime for anyone to accept gratification to influence those who get a contract;
- Offences involving a public official: if anyone in the private sector offers a public official any gratification to give them a benefit, they will be guilty of corruption;
- Offences that involve members of legislative bodies: it is an offence to offer any member of a legislative authority any gratification to act in an illegal or biased manner;
- Offences relating to judicial officers: it is an offence to offer a magistrate or judge any gratification, including money, to decide a case in a certain way. It is also an offence for a judicial officer to accept any gratification to violate any duty or abuse his/her position of authority;
- Offences that involve tenders: it is an offence to offer or accept gratification in order to influence the award of a tender;
- Crimes that involve corruption regarding foreign officials: it is an offence for any business to attempt to unduly influence an official in a foreign country;
- Offences by any party to an employment relationship: PRECCA makes it an offence for any party in an employment relationship to give or receive any unauthorised gratification in respect of that party doing any act in the scope of the party’s employment relationship.

Corruption Watch (2016) refers to other crimes covered by the Act:

- Someone charged with a crime offering money or favours to the police or prosecutor to drop the case;
- Someone interfering with an investigation into corruption;
- Someone assisting a person involved in corruption, either during the act itself, or afterwards.

The government should be applauded for ensuring that good legislation has been put in place to annihilate corrupt practices as well as to keep those guilty accountable for their actions. However, it is striking that there is no reference to issues that would abolish the role of the ‘capitalists’, although it is indirectly implied by the legislation. However, PRECCA refers to both parties’ guilt that would implicate the one on the “receiving end” and those that initiate the act of corruption. This is sufficient as it addresses all role players in an act of corruption. In this manner, justice will be enacted across the lines of race, economic sector (public and private/corporate), gender, ethnicity and political alliances.

3. Combat corruption in South Africa

There are two contributions from a Christian theological perspective that address the combatting corruption. Vorster (2012:133-147), in an article entitled “Managing Corruption in South Africa: The Ethical Responsibility of Churches” argues that

the church can perform a pivotal role in the curbing of corruption through raising ethical awareness. He argues that the church should “enhance the deeper meaning of self-interest, honesty, fairness, responsibility, compassion, love and accountability”. The church⁶ should promote a life and attitude of servanthood and stewardship as reflected through the human conduct of Christ and should continuously call for social justice, through reminding the prosperity-driven society about the plight of the poor.

Two other Christian theologians, Theron and Lotter (2012), respond to the Christian discourse on corruption and in their discussion, enumerate at least two levels in which Christians can perform a participative role in fighting corruption. They argue that the South African legislation, such as PRECCA (Act No. 12 of 2004), is inadequate to serve as a deterrent for corruption. However, in addition to such legislation, Christians can respond to this scourge through intentional resistance on a personal and public level.

In their contribution, they argue that Christians should resist corruption on a personal level through practicing the common “golden rule” (Matthew 7:12) which infers that a person should not do to others, which he/she does not want to be done to him. The authors argue that this will indeed “promote integrity and personal honesty” as well as expose any hint of greed and selfishness. On a public level, Christians should be resisters, corruption fighters, and abstain from moral decay. They should be the salt and light in society. They use these biblical metaphors (salt and light) to argue in more practical and legal terms that Christians should actively be involved in the public sphere as whistleblowers.

4. Corruption and Justice

This contribution incorporates the notion of justice when it engages Botha’s academic corpus on justice in relation to the endemic corruption in South Africa. Botha (2011) describes Christianity as “one that generates a ‘culture’ of justice, equality, and loving service”. It is therefore of paramount importance to recognise corruption as an ethical-missiological issue. It raises questions such as: what is wrong with corruption? It also raises Christian-theological questions such as: is corruption a sin? Furthermore, sociologically, are the structures of society to be blamed for the state of corruption in South Africa? This contribution will interrogate the latter when it focuses on whether it is his/her wrongdoing (sin?) exclusively, that of society, or are the two (personal and societal origin) mutually exclusive? It is in this context that this contribution focuses on the discourse of justice, as articulated in the academic corpus of Botha to address rampant corruption in South Africa.

⁶ This has reference to the local congregation.

5. A discussion on the 2018 media reporting on corruption

In an attempt to discuss media reporting on corruption, Baron’s (2018) research provides a window to critically evaluate media reports on corruption in South Africa.

In 2018,⁷ Baron produced his research findings on four weekly South African newspaper⁸ reports on corruption. Baron uses the model of Douglas Lawrie (2005:125-139) to conduct a rhetorical analysis on the said newspapers and the published cases on corruption. In his research, Baron (2018) examines and analyses how the selected newspapers reported on corruption cases. His findings present the most reported corruption cases, which include the following:

- The reported corruption when upgrades were carried out at President Jacob Zuma’s private residence at Nkandla;
- The reported corruption of the Guptas’ unethical relationships with public officials and state-owned enterprises;
- The reported corruption at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC);
- The reported corruption at the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA).

The research indicated that for the 2016 calendar year; Sunday Times had 107 reports, Mail and Guardian had 99 reports, *Rapport* had 69 reports, and The Sunday Independent had 67 reports. All 342 reports were on government corruption.

It is striking that Sunday Times had at least 33 front-page reports on government corruption in 2016. This demonstrates that the cases on government corruption were given priority throughout the year. There are also other significant results relating to the quantitative data. For example, the corruption cases focused primarily on the alleged corruption of President Jacob Zuma than on reporting the corruption relating to parastatals such as the SABC and PRASA.

Furthermore, the results of the study confirm that the newspapers have used myriad rhetorical strategies to make its readers aware of corruption through its regular reporting. The newspapers have become a potent instrument in terms of the formation of moral citizens. For instance, it articulates a “corruption-free” vision for South Africa, which serves as an important condition for moral formation.⁹ Moreover, the research demonstrates that the media focused its reporting on the kind of virtues required to build a moral society. These are some of the positive remarks on the role of newspapers in the fight against corruption.

Nonetheless, the results further demonstrate the perpetual focus of the newspapers on the “public” figures and their role in corruption. In fact, in terms of moral formation theories, role models are needed for moral formation. The question

⁷ <https://etd.uwc.ac.za/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11394/5722/Baron%20reli.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

⁸ The newspapers were Mail and Guardian, Sunday Times, The Sunday Independent and Rapport.

⁹ Ernst Conradie (2006) lists some conditions for moral formation in his book “Morality as a way of Life”.

that remains is: what kind of “models” are to be presented in the public domain? Moreover, to what kind of behaviour do they “inspire” and “motivate” their followers? These are perhaps a few of the pertinent questions to be posed when the outcomes of the research reflect that the newspaper primarily reported and isolated the wrongdoing of the former President, Jacob Zuma. Will this not be tantamount to sensational reporting than to be constructive in a sense that it also presents reports on the corrupt acts in a careful, though critical, nuanced manner to the public?

On the other hand, it is quite significant to observe the liberty and freedom of expression that the media is afforded to be able to confront issues of corruption that could plunge the country into an extreme economic abyss. Thus, print media should be lauded for acting as a “watchdog of society”.¹⁰ Although the researcher gathered all corruption cases from the outset, it was interesting to consider that the most reported cases, particularly those featured on the front pages of newspapers, were about government corruption. There were also instances that one or two cases reported on issues of corruption outside of government, however, such cases would be assigned a small corner or written in small headlines on a particular newspaper. Such cases (corporate and private sector) were not in bold, spacious, inflated, intriguing ways as in the case of government corruption and presidential, government (or those linked to government parastatals) figures, events or cases. The outcomes of the research demonstrated that most of the other corporate and private cases of corruption (excluding government corruption) did not feature on the front pages but were towards the back of the newspapers when eventually reported on. The newspapers’ focus and reporting were specifically during the period that the research was conducted not much related to corruption in the corporate sectors that perpetuated individual and institutional corruption, but rather isolating particular individuals that would be blamed for the state of corruption and the consequences (primarily reported in the newspapers as economical) of such action(s) on the country.

Through the four newspaper’s reporting, it is evident that newspapers did not provide sufficient evidence to show their interest in cases unrelated to government corruption during 2016 but reflects particular interest in the president’s involvement in cases of corruption. Moreover, they do not report too rigorously on other instances and forms of corruption, particularly corporate, and private sector corruption.

¹⁰ Wasserman (2013:18) argues that the role of the media, especially from a South African context, should still be to act as a ‘watchdog’. He believes that the same role that the media played during the years under the Apartheid government should not change. The print media should act as a watchdog even under the democratic dispensation. He raises concerns especially over the Broadcasting and Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA) that in most instances remains uncritical towards the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa.

6. Botha’s academic corpus on issues of justice in South Africa

Botha (2008) seems to be concerned about the economic future of the poor. He engages the situation of the poor from a missiological perspective, from the margins. In fact, he pre-occupies himself with the visible improvement of the poor, which is evident in his discussion on the yearning for reconciliation in South Africa. Botha (2008) argues that it is futile to seek for justice in South Africa if there is not a visible improvement in terms of the day-to-day lives of the poor. Therefore, he subsequently argues that as astounding as it might have been that former statesman, Nelson Mandela, managed a kind of reconciliation in South Africa that subverted violence, it poignantly “does not deliver to the poor” and also not “enough visible improvement in the situation of the poor”.¹¹

The notion of justice in relationships re-occurs multiple times in Botha’s corpus. This raises particular questions in terms of the kind of relationship that currently exists between the “powerful” and the “vulnerable”, between the government as well as the private sector (corporate), as opposed to the poor in South Africa. Sampie Terreblance (2003; 2012)¹² wrote extensively about inequality in South Africa. Therefore, one can pose the question rightfully: is it not this kind of unequal economic relationship that renders the poor to suffer at the expense of the corporate and the rich sectors in our society? Botha contests in his academic corpus such a brutal economic system, in fact, any system and sector that would aggravate the socio-economic conditions of the poor.

It is also apparent in the corpus of Botha that justice for the poor would translate into greater transparency in terms of the injustice(s) committed against them. This is well articulated in the manner that Botha (2008) responds to the vicious atrocities that have been committed to apartheid victims. He does not hesitate to call for a “full-disclosure” by the perpetrators in terms of the events that transpired during apartheid. He addresses this when he responds to the ‘reconciliation’ event between Adriaan Vlok and Frank Chikane. The issue of accountability is an integral part of ‘reconciliation’ and therefore Botha argues that perpetrators cannot seek it in the absence of forgiveness. Botha addresses the issue of reconciliation with humility, honesty, and with the necessary courage – ensuring that full accountability is taken by the perpetrators in a context where too many cases where heinous crimes have been committed have “silently” been “swept under the carpet” in the “spirit of reconciliation”. Botha remains critical of the past (apartheid) government, its foot soldiers and its (state) apparatus (often including me-

¹¹ Botha addresses this when he discusses the Mandela paradigm in the context of national reconciliation in South Africa.

¹² Terreblance, S. 2012. *Lost in Transformation: South Africa’s search for a new future*. Johannesburg: KWW Review Publishing Company. Terreblance, S. 2003. *A history of inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

dia institutions). Therefore, Botha argues throughout his treatise that justice and reconciliation can only begin to have an effect once the wounds inflicted on innocent victims have been exposed and the perpetrator(s) have been brought to book.

Botha is also clear in terms of who should be held accountable for marginalisation, oppression, and exploitation of the poor and the vulnerable in society. It is not only an individual that should be held accountable for matters of injustice but also, an evil system, a structural system, and the various sectors (corporate and public) of society. In terms of the research findings, it seems the media has been successful in isolating certain individuals (government officials) and exposing their corrupt acts and practices (Baron, 2018). This should be applauded – corrupt individuals should be held accountable for their acts. Nonetheless, they were unsuccessful in exposing the erosive system. In terms of the current corruption, the corporate sector in many instances empowers the corrupt individuals to continue with business as usual.¹³

The reference to transparency in the cause for justice becomes personal when Botha and Maruping (2013) address their denomination, namely; the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) that they belong to, but in fact point fingers to themselves concerning issues of economic justice. This is apparent in Botha's arguments that he and his colleague level against the praxis of URCSA towards the poor. Botha and his colleague relentlessly engage even their church on issues of economic justice. In principle, it seems they do not spare a single individual. Botha (in Botha & Maruping, 2013) reflects his grave disappointment on the manner in which a document on "economic justice" (Accra declaration¹⁴) seems to be treated by a Reformed Church such as URCSA, irrespective of what the semantics or other technical issues that they might consider as an impediment towards embracing such a document. They prophetically ask: "... isn't the content of both Belhar [confession] and Accra (declaration) theologically so important that, whichever term is used, the call to obedience in matters of justice remains unavoidable, and therefore failure to respond would mean jeopardising the very integrity of the gospel?"

It is quite significant to observe that this is the same denomination that both Botha and Maruping belong to as members but also as clergy. Speaking to their own constituency, which requires, at times, great courage, Botha and Maruping underscore

¹³ Botha states in his newspaper article in *Beeld* (13 April 2018), "Die droom van Luther King en misken tog ook van Madikizela Mandela en in die lig van die tydsgewrig, ook Chris Hanu oor 'n ander soort samelewing waar mense nie beoordeel word in terme van haartekstuur of velkleur nie, kan slegs bewaarheid word as nie-rassigheid vanuit 'n sterk klasse-perspektief benader word. En daarom is dit belangrik om aan die droom te bly vashou. Die droom stel dinge radikaal anders voor. Die droom gee aanleiding tot 'n herbeskrywing van die werklikheid. Die droom maak die maghebbers senuweeagtig, omdat hulle weet as mense, wit en swart genoeg moet bymekaar skraap om die droom ook tot verweesenliking te bring, hulle magsposisies dan nie meer so veilig sou wees nie".

¹⁴ https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/declaration_accra.2018-05-03.pdf.

the prophetic role that the church must perform in terms of matters of the injustice leveled against the poor. The prophetic act to call the church to radical discipleship demonstrates the manner in which institutions that should provide moral leadership should be held accountable and not be handled as "Holy Cows"! It should be also well into the scope of this paper to assume that to "Hang out" their own church - "...to dry", the two colleagues equally held themselves morally accountable for what unfolds in the country concerning economic injustice to the poor!

The corpus of Botha reveals his skepticism and frustration when issues of justice (e.g. corruption, reconciliation) do not decisively deal with the 'motives' and 'agendas' of those accountable for crimes, human rights violations. It is therefore striking that in one of his contributions, Botha (2008) refers to certain reconciliation efforts that are at times based on the "motive of benefiting". Therefore, he vehemently questions such 'benevolent' acts, causing the perpetrators to receive a greater reward and applause. He argues that this indeed has a counter effect: it shifts the attention of the most atrocious deeds of victims to showing gratitude towards the perpetrator (as if the perpetrator is doing society a favour!). Botha (2008:659) states; "At worst reconciliation has become a very lucrative enterprise, so it appears, for those who have benefitted greatly since 1994, either in terms of political or economic power. It highlights the fact that the focus on the 'reparation' made by the perpetrator does not always mean justice for the victims – it can often translate into a 'pat on the shoulder' of the perpetrator for his/her benevolence, which was not in the first place the issue and the rationale behind the act. Therefore, Botha's argument is that any act or effort to assist the poor should be an act of genuine concern and assistance without any reservation. This would directly address the motive of the media in often seeking 'sensationalism', which would sell stories, but would not be a genuine act of justice (even when the content of its report focuses on issues of justice).

Botha (2013) frames the notion of justice for the poor quite distinct in comparison with other discourses on 'justice' in terms of his academic corpus, but also quite unambiguously and blunt, and in very simplistic terms, he frames what justice to the poor constitutes: "bread for the hungry" (Botha, 2013). This is what makes Botha's academic corpus significant but also distinct from some other academic engagements with issues of justice. He therefore does not allow fictitious conversations on justice to further complicate matters, but at times makes it explicitly concrete and practical to become less evasive to evaporate without tangible differences felt by the most vulnerable in society. The conceptualisation of justice as 'bread for the hungry' is rhetorical in the sense that it requires for serious accountability and responsibility of the economic elite; those in the 'Saxonwold's', "Trump Towers in New York", and those fueling the neoliberal system that permits the poorest of the poor to suffer.¹⁵

¹⁵ Hope (2000:17) also makes a link between corruption and poverty in Africa: The pandemic of corrup-

Botha (2013) attributes South Africa's economic recession as a result of the country's involvement in global markets. Botha and Maruping (2013) argue that the issue is not about either/or but that both documents (Belhar Confession and Accra Declaration) are needed and should be embraced. While the Confession of Belhar (1986) is strongly worded in terms of God's justice that particularly refers to justice for the poor, the Accra declaration positions the issues of injustice within the global arena and argues that economic injustice continues because of its inter-relatedness and involvement of South Africa within the global markets. The economic deals, contracts and treaties with other countries, as well as their negative growth, will directly impact the survival of South Africans. The recent global recession (2008-2009) and its impact on the South African economy is a good example. Botha and Maruping (2013) state:

Accra shows that the injustices and ecological destruction are informed by the policy of unlimited growth, the drive for profit of the transitional corporations, plundering of the earth and severe damage to the environment. The system giving rise to such developments is identified as neoliberal economic globalization, with its unrestrained competition, consumerism, unlimited economic growth and accumulation of wealth.

Botha and Maruping (2013) frame economic justice in terms of the structures that perpetuate and sustain the injustices and inequality in South Africa. In fact, when analysing the Kairos document in terms of its value for the justice/injustice discourse they argue that the document does not only place the responsibility of injustice squarely on the shoulders of individuals but equally places demands on the "structures of society". They add (2013:np):

A simple appeal to the conscience and goodwill of those responsible for the injustice and reliance on individual conversions as a response to the 'moralising demands to change the structures of society' would, therefore, not suffice. The heart of the problem, according to the Kairos document, lays the tendency to appeal to the top, rather than to the suffering and the oppressed.

Botha and Maruping (2013) accuse both the government and the private sector – they strongly believe that both sectors benefit out of the neoliberal capitalist system. Botha (2013) poses the question: "Can those in government or in the private sector who have benefitted greatly from the neoliberal system be expected to dismantle that very same system?" In another article, it become apparent that Botha's (2011)

tion in Africa, and its extremely negative impact on socioeconomic development and the fight against poverty in the region have become a matter of global concern; a number of international organisations are now focusing their attention on the root causes and consequences, as well as on action to control this cancer in society.

interests lie with the "imperialistic tendencies". Therefore, in one of his academic contributions he juxtaposes issues of justice and self-enrichment against "God's love, service, and justice".

Botha (Botha & Maruping, 2013) urges the oppressed, and the poor to stand up for themselves and not wait for "the powerful" to come to terms with their own responsibility in the matter. This is seen recently with the #Fall movements that there is a new black solidarity¹⁶ emerging, that takes responsibility for their own freedom and not waiting for politicians to decide their fate. It is therefore significant that Botha's response (in Botha and Maruping (2013) was made before the #Fall movements sent shock waves throughout the country (in terms of their frustration due to the slow turning of the wheels of economic transformation).

7. What does Botha's treatise offer in terms of media reporting on corruption in South Africa?

This section brings in conversation the media reports on corruption with Nico Botha's academic corpus, specifically his corpus on issues of justice, to be able to address the endemic corruption in South Africa. The focus in this section would be to answer the question: Do media reports effectively fight corruption in South Africa, particularly in view of the contribution on justice as it finds expression and is articulated in the theological-missiological corpus of Nico Botha?

Botha's insistence on open, transparent relationships can be taken further in the current relationships that exist between those that have access to the "wealth" and those that live with the "crumbs". It is not fair in terms of transparency that the media would claim 'balance' of stories and still perpetuate 'injustice' through reporting in a manner that only exposes the Sunday School!¹⁷ and leaves the corporate sector unscathed. It is apparent in Botha's treatise that transparency should be more than a "Batho Pele principle"¹⁸ but a lifestyle. It should be more than a slogan or a cheap form of rhetoric but a value that undergirds all actions, at all levels and by all people in South Africa. Corruption is perpetuating precisely because of the lack of transparency to create a just(ice) and equal economic relationship.

¹⁶ See also the discussion of Achille Mbembe (2007), "Biko's Testament of Hope", In C. Van Wyk, C. We Write What We Like. Celebrating Steve Biko. Johannesburg: WITS University Press

¹⁷ The reference to 'Sunday School Picnic' serves in this article as a metaphor to refer to the extent in which the corruption in the state can become, when compared with corruption in South Africa's private and corporate sectors.

¹⁸ The Batho Pele ("People First") principles are aligned to the South African Constitution. Government officials must follow the "Batho Pele" principles that require public servants to be polite, open and transparent and to deliver good service to the public. See full details at <http://localgovernmentaction.org/dedi6.cpt3.host-h.net/content/batho-pele-principles>.

Botha compels society to be critical of the ostensibly most genuine acts of the government. One might argue that Botha is utterly cynical, however being a former “comrade” in the apartheid struggle, he did exactly what he argues when he was marginalised and oppressed under the apartheid government. This is not far removed from what Nelson Mandela contends in his first speech to a democratic South Africa: “If the ANC does to you what the apartheid government did to you, then you must do to the ANC what you did to the apartheid government”.¹⁹ Power abuses are one of the impetus and reasons for the flourishing of corruption. It often stifles economic transformation and the spirit of criticism, which is necessary to unearth and subsequently address corruption.

Self-introspection, reflection on one’s own praxis and action, is important for addressing corruption. This is what is paramount through the way in which Botha and Maruping, in a 2013 publication, call their own church to account. It is the prideful and the justifiable act of corrupt individuals that cause millions of South Africans, particularly the poor, to be in a dire financial and economical abyss.

Botha argues that the church should be in the forefront on issues of justice, particularly economic justice, as this would affect the integrity of the gospel. He did not pay lip service, but as a theologian in the trenches of the struggle for economic and political liberation under the apartheid government, and as a student at UWC, he continuously raises to the irritation of many issues of injustice. Therefore, doing theology means to fight for justice.

Botha (2013) was never advocating for a reversal of wealth (to be in the hands of blacks), but always that justice would ideally mean: “bread for the hungry”. Therefore, he was never concerned about who would be at the helm of political power, but that such individuals and parties would ensure justice for all – that would in simplistic terms mean: “bread for all”. Therefore, his academic corpus concerns those that would have the economic means of liberating the poor but rather crippling them even more through their economic activities.

Botha’s (2008) concern with the poor and the economic disparity between them and the affluent (unjust relationship) prompts a question on the manner in which corruption fuels the socio-economic inequalities. This is indeed what Botha is eluding to in his treatise – whosoever loots from the poor is perpetuating the “unjust relationship”. This would therefore include the government officials that are at times involved in corrupt relationships with the “wealthy” in the corporate sectors and that often settle the bills of government officials, political parties, etc.

¹⁹ Mangosuthu Buthelezi’s response to the ANC of Mandela: <https://www.msn.com/en-za/news/politics/buthelezi-its-time-to-clean-house-at-the-highest-levels/ar-AAAXLXG>.

It is therefore quite apparent that Botha’s mission praxis is one that takes the ‘margin’ serious. His missiological praxis is that of identifying, being in solidarity with the poor and the marginalised, and to irritatingly raise a theological red flag in dealing with the issues of the oppressed. Further, ensuring through his own mission praxis that these issues have been resolved. Therefore, when the ‘culprits’ (business and corporate sectors), not only the ‘Sunday School’ (state institutions), are seldom held accountable for their role by the mainstream media, for a missiologist like Botha, this was a grave injustice.

8. Conclusion

The problem is not the reporting on corruption but the manner in which it is presented to society that troubled a missiologist like Botha. The contention of this paper is to demonstrate that the media’s reporting on corruption should purport to include all economic role players and its contributions to the state of corruption in South Africa. In this regard, the academic corpus of Botha assists us fairly well. The paper contends that the work of Nico Botha addresses corruption, when it deals with the notion of justice in “relationships” and of what nature such a relationship might constitute. Nico Botha provides us with a new way of imagining justice that would serve as conceptual tools for those that want to address corruption – which includes the media. God’s mission on earth always includes the well-being of the inhabited world. When someone suffers through corruption, it becomes the responsibility of God’s agents to address the issue. Therefore, the apparatus (media) that fuels injustice to continue through their role in the representation of corruption should be held accountable. Botha has showed in most instances through his treatise to keep tabs on all those that trouble the well-being of God’s creation.

Botha transposes the matter of corruption beyond the paradigm of government abuse in South Africa. His writings compel us to focus on the “interest of the wealthy” and the “neoliberal agenda” as a basis for understanding the systemic nature thereof in eroding the moral fibre of the South African society. He argues that the aforementioned interests of the wealthy will unmask the important role players that operate behind the scenes and who are often too easily acquitted. Certain government officials are affluent, of course, but are state officials not the fronting of a funded capitalised system at the detriment of the poor?²⁰ Therefore, Botha calls for a critical analysis in terms of the systems, and people that keep the ‘corrupt’ system well-oiled.

²⁰ Botha states “Hoe word die sameswering tussen die politieke swaargewigte en die korporatiewe elite aan bande gelê? Is baie van die politici nie maar net surrogate van diegene wat oor die werkkilke mag beskik in die land nie? En daarom, as dit so is dat daar “onidentifiseerbare gesiglose” figure in die land is of in die buiteland aan wie die land eintlik behoort, vir wie stem ‘n mens dan?”

9. References

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