

# Corruption as the *Kairos* of Democracy:<sup>1</sup> A Historico-Theological Reflection on Political Corruption<sup>2</sup> in a Democratic South Africa

McGlory Speckman

## ABSTRACT

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This article argues that rampant corruption which has culminated in the Judicial Commission on Allegations of State Capture, and its subsequent four-part report in South Africa, is the *kairos* of the democratic South Africa. Precedents of what may be interpreted as *kairoi* in the Bible and in contemporary history, suggest that a *kairos* is neither a scheduled nor seasonal event but occurs as a divine visitation in a distress situation, a response to which determines what happens thereafter. Hence the need for precision in responding to the rumblings around it. Following a tracing of biblical and historical precedents and a discussion of the contemporary South African situation of corruption, the article confirms the *kairos* hypothesis, then calls on South Africa to return to the original shared vision of the common good in a democratic country while taking advantage of the opportunity.

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- 1 This article is dedicated to the memory of Fr Albert Nolan (R.I.P. 17:10:2022), an optimist and theologian who was sincerely committed to God and his country. He had a unique approach to life. For example, if he were to be confronted with a choice between asking: “what is wrong with our country?” and “why do things seem to be falling apart?” he would choose neither, preferring to pursue the question: “what has become different from when we first inaugurated our democracy?” I hope that this article does in some ways emulate that approach.
- 2 We distinguish between political corruption which has wide social ramifications and private acts of corruption. Both are important; Speckman “Destroying the City, Burning the fields: Towards a New Testament Concept and Definition of Corruption. *Pharos Theological Journal*, 103 no. 2 (2022b). Open Access. <https://www.pharosjot.com> (Forthcoming, November 2022) but our focus in this article is on the former. Acts of corruption which affect what elsewhere (ditto) I refer to as the “common good” constitute political corruption and they invariably appear to result in *kairoi*; See De Gruchy, JW, “*Kairos* Moments and Prophetic Witness: Towards a prophetic Ecclesiology”, *Hervormde Teologiese Studies*, 72 no. 4(2016). <https://doi.org/10.401021/hts.v72i4.344> (Accessed on 12/08/2022). In an earlier essay, I define corruption as “abuse of officially managed state resources for personal gain where state resources refer to assets that are owned by everyone belonging to a state”; Speckman, M, “Killing the *Mgodoyi* Syndrome: An African Reading of the Ananias and Sapphira episode in Acts 5:1-11” (2022a), forthcoming in *Festschrift for JA Draper*.