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Politics and Apostolic Ministry

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Introduction

The essence of politics is a search for the common good. For this search, politics exercises the power of force, determining limits to individual interests, in favor of the collective well-being. For that reason politics is in permanent tension with individual liberties and with sectorial interests. The art of politics, in a democratic framework, grants freedom to citizens, allowing them to establish their own limits, both individually and collectively. The exacerbation of individual freedoms in our postmodern society is produced at the sacrifice of the collective well-being, and therefore increases political apathy in society.

Current society questions politics, its actors and everything related to it. Since politics with its institutions sees as its principal end the provision of security¹, and the existing political institutions are impotent to offer security, guarantees and protection, a generalized disinterest in politics prevails.

More than forty years ago Sigmund Freud wrote *Malaise dans culture*. There he suggests that "culture" is an exchange, in which a treasured value is sacrificed for something equally imperative and dear to the heart. According to him, the greatest gift of culture is the security it offers. In other words, culture delivers from fear or, at least, causes the fears to be less intense and unbearable. However, culture imposes restrictions on individual freedom. This loss, according to the creator of psychoanalysis is the cause of neurosis and psychic imbalance.²

His namesake Zygmunt Bauman, in his book *Posmodernity and its Discontents*, suggests that, if Freud had written his work in our times, he probably would have been obliged to reverse his diagnostic: today it is security that is sacrificed, day after day, on the altar of individual freedom that is in constant expansion. In searching for anything with which we identify greater freedom of individual choice and expression, we have lost a good part of that security offered us by modern culture and, even more, the security it promised to give us. Worse yet, we have almost ceased to hear the promises that we can recover it³. Bauman himself warns that when Freud spoke of security, he did so in much broader terms than those which it normally indicates. The German term *Sicherheit* includes the concepts of security, certainty and protection. Security, or the feeling that something we have achieved will continue to be within our reach, [makes us feel] that the world is stable and worthy of confidence, in the same way as do its canons of justice. Certainty, that is, to perceive the difference between what is reasonable and what is not, between what is correct and incorrect, and everything that is needed to make proper decisions, of which we expect to not have to repent, gives us a sense of foresight. Protection is the feeling that if we behave correctly, no extreme danger will threaten our life, our possessions or our home.⁴

This increase of individual freedom is at the cost of security and the common good. But the question is: If freedom has already been obtained, how is it possible that the human ability to imagine a better world and do something to improve it has not been perceived as part of that victory? What kind of freedom have we achieved if it only serves to discourage

¹ 1 Timothy 2.1-2; Romans 13.

² Freud, Sigmund. *El malestar en la cultura (1930 [1929])*. Buenos Aires & Madrid: Amorrortu editores, 1998.

³ Bauman, Zygmunt *Posmodernity and its Discontents*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997.

⁴ Bauman, Zygmunt. *En busca de la Política*. (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2009), p. 25.

imagination and make us more tolerant of the impotence of free persons toward matters that have to do with all of them?"⁵

We live in an age that is post-ideological and post-utopian. This provokes in society a notable prejudice, because among other things it causes us to live without serious collective projection. It leads us to cease worrying about a coherent vision of a good society and causes to exchange the effort to seek a common good for the freedom of pursuing individual satisfaction.

This disdain for politics leads people to a kind of resignation and the idea that there is little we can change. More than that, it is not worthwhile to get together to think of a better world and to do something to bring it about. And since the idea of accepting the *status quo* can be done in solitude, why do we need politics?

The increase of individual liberty coincides with the increase of collective impotence, and the growing corruption of those involved in the political sphere. Thus there is little we can do to translate private concerns into public issues and, inversely, to discern in private concerns the issues of public concern. People get the feeling that their worries are not worthy of consideration. The bridges between that which is private and that which is public have come tumbling down.

Contributing significantly to this perception is the profound feeling of deception and suspicion toward politicians. This was the sense expressed by the Franco-Greek philosopher and psychoanalyst Cornelius Castoriadis: "Politicians are impotent... They no longer have a program. Their only objective is to continue in power".⁶ Allow me to put a little humor⁷ into this unfortunate perception:



Translation:

—After looking at the candidates for 2007, we quickly decided to launch an emergency highway plan...

—What does that have to do with the candidates?

—They're constantly crashing into each other, swerving about, driving without lights, without turn indicators, and their proposals don't lead us anywhere.

—What's left to the voters?... Can we get an insurance policy against all risks?

However, if we desire a more peaceful society, equitable and just, we need to reinstate the importance of politics, understood as human activity that guides the action of the State for the benefit of society. And since politics is a process oriented ideologically toward decision making to achieve collective objectives, as Christians we must do so from the perspective of the kingdom of God.

⁵ Idem, p. 9. All the argument of this book is based on the idea that individual liberty can only be the product of a collective work (achieved and guaranteed collectively). Today we are moving toward privatization of the means to assure/guarantee individual freedom. Bauman sustains that if that is the therapy for our current problems, it is condemned to produce iatrogenic infirmities that are more sinister and atrocious (massive poverty, social redundancy and generalized fear are among the more prominent).

⁶ Castoriadis, Cornelius. *La insignificancia y la imaginación [Insignificance and imagination]: Diálogos con [Dialogs with] Daniel Mermet, Octavo Paz, A.* Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 2002.

⁷ Nik - Política. Los mejores chistes del año [Politics: the best jokes of the year], *Diario La Nación*, domingo 21 de enero del 2007.

Parallel to this generalized apathy toward politics, it is interesting to take note of an awakening interest in politics among evangelicals. This combination of social apathy and evangelical awakening presents the sphere of politics both as a great opportunity for the church to extend its redemptive mission into this area, as well as a great temptation to the church to be seduced by power and lose its prophetic voice and activity. This renewed awareness of a political conscience by evangelicals has not always been accompanied by a practice consciously based on that vision of the kingdom of God. Therefore we believe it is convenient to deal with the subject in this encounter on the Kingdom and Society and, and because it is an apostolic consultation, to do so by laying out an agenda principally for this ministry.

I. Twelve historical positions on the relationship between the Christian and politics:

1. *Political power is an expression of the demonic.* This is the position of extreme separatist groups, and of dispensationalists that, among other things, believe that the demonic rules the world in the present dispensation, and any relation of the church with political power results in a type of prostitution and claudication before the powers of this world.
2. *The church as a substitute and compensatory society.* This vision causes believers to separate from the world and to enclose themselves in the church. It is what a Chilean sociologist and analyst of classical pentecostalism called the "refuge of the masses". Morality is absolutely individualistic, and there is an obvious myopia of all that is social. The only possibility of concern with the world has to do with the fear of "being contaminated". Thus the totalitarian claim of many churches on the believer's time: they must move from work to the temple or cell-group and from there to their home, with no possibility of participation in the community.
3. *Social indifference based on a welfare ethic.* In this there is a bondage of the church to cultural values that have nothing to do with the religious aspect, and that are perceived as objectives of the mission: an exclusive inner sense of individualistic well-being, the gospel of prosperity, the affirmation of self. Everything is absolutely separated from any preoccupation with that which is social. An anti-contextual gospel, principally North American in color, has strengthened this vision of indifference to the real problems of our Latin American continent.
4. *Political and cultural capitulation.* The church united to the state or the current government; churches sustained by the state, national churches, church-states. At the cultural level, the assimilation is also quite risky. In spite of their numerical force, the evangelicals in Latin America have shown an anemic and impotent attitude in molding the national life in each country. Instead of influence on society to change it, the church has reflected or legitimized the cultural values of our society.
5. *Apolitics.* This perspective separates religion and public life into stationary categories. The slogans are: "We do not mix religion and politics" and "If we change men's hearts, society will change". The mission of the church is limited exclusively to the salvation of souls. This has been the classical position of the majority of evangelical and pentecostal churches. There are two problems with this. For twenty-one centuries the church has been changing men's hearts, but society keeps getting worse. It is obvious that the mission needs to be broader. The second problem is that in reality the a-political stance is an ingenuous posture. For the lack of participation is a political position that reinforces the *status quo*. Bertolt Brecht said: "The worst illiterate is a political illiterate, the one who does not see, nor speak, nor participates in political occurrences. He does not understand that the cost of life, the price of beans, or fish, or flour, or the rent, shoes or prescription drugs depends on political decisions. The political illiterate is so good that he is proud and swells out his chest, saying that he hates politics. He does not understand, as an imbecile, that from his ignorance the prostitute is born, the minor is abandoned, the same as the thief and the worst bandit, the corrupt politician and the lacky of national and multi-national businesses".

6. *The moral protest.* In some countries, evangelicals have united to object to questions of public morals, mostly related to sexual sins (pornography, abortion, prostitution, homosexuality). This is one step further on the scale of social participation. And although there are very worthy examples, at the political level we are still in a reactionary participation and a negative approach.
7. *Social assistance.* This has to do with ministries of mercy that assist those on the margin, the disabled, poor, refugees, victims of hunger, etc. This level of participation continues to be reactionary, although here it has a more positive character. As with all assistance, it does not end up transforming the reality.
8. *Movements of social reformation.* Here we reach a level of greater participation. This is not only assistance, but also projects of transformation of unjust social realities, and of promotion of individuals, families and communities to more worthy possibilities of life.
9. *Liberation theologies.* This liberation is of a political nature because it is accompanied by the awareness of nature as ultimately political; that is to say, the slavery against which it struggles is suprasectorial and global. The mission of the church consists in liberation from the unjust structures of society. Individual salvation occupies a secondary place and, in many cases, is forgotten. Included here are the theologians of Latin American liberation; the new African thinkers of popular theology, the black theology and liberation theology; as well as those who have maintained and promoted dialogue with Marxist intellectuals.
10. *Politics as part of the church's sphere of action.* In Latin America, evangelicals moved from the political margin to open participation in the decade of the 90s. The church was seeking power to transform the social reality. In recent decades more and more evangelicals have gotten involved in various political parties in their respective countries. In Peru the evangelicals and the Cambio 90 party carried Alberto Fujimori to the highest level of the magistrature. In 1998 in El Salvador three evangelical candidates competed for the presidency in three different parties. Something similar has occurred in Venezuela, Bolivia and Brazil. In Guatemala, the change in this direction has been abrupt⁸. Thus, throughout our continent, from condemnation and open rejection of politics, evangelicals have assumed their place as part of the sphere of action. This awakening emerged within a context of the overthrow of governments, belligerent conflict between the guerrilla and the army, severe socio-economic problems in the country and an incipient democratic transition.
11. *Evangelical political parties.* In Argentina there have been various attempts at the formation of evangelical political parties. In 1991 the Movimiento Cristiano Independiente [Independent Christian Movement] was created. After participating in three elections without achieving official political positions, the MCI lost its corporate authorization. Its failure, according to the sociologist Hilario Wynarczyk, provides several lessons. One of them is that the majority of evangelicals do not vote according to their religion but according to their sense of social pertinence⁹. A more recent attempt has been the Frente de la Gente [The People's Front], backed by the Federación de Iglesias e Instituciones Cristianas y Evangélicas (FIICE) [Federation of churches and Christian and Evangelical institutions]. This attempt, as others in Latin America, are seeking a space for recognition and benefits within society, more than a vocation of service and transformation.¹⁰

⁸ It's worthwhile to understand the process in Guatemala, with two evangelical presidents and many other believers who acceded to power. For this I recommend the analysis done by Israel Ortiz, "Los evangélicos y la política: Una revisión del camino" [Evangelicals and politics: Review of the pathway], <http://www.seteca-maestria.org/articulos/Kairos35-Ortiz.pdf>

⁹ Wynarczyk, Hilario. *Evangélicos, sociedad y estado. Los que salieron del templo.* En: http://www.cristianet.com/frame_completa.php?subaction=showfull&id=1257333730&archive=&start_from=&ucat=11

¹⁰ Pastor Pablo Laborde, president of the (FIICE) justified the creation of this party, saying: "We needed the force of representation to face the national government. In the municipalities we found little response and we had problems with some politicians who used the pastors. Through a sufficiently large organization (in Argentina, calculations suggest there are more than six million faithful Christians), we have the ability to initiate things directly with the

In Guatemala, the closest experience in time, is that of Pastor Harold Caballeros and his movement VIVA (VISión con VALores [Vision with Values]). However, his candidacy has divided the waters between evangelicals, and he has not been able to garner the evangelical support. Evidently, this situation has been repeated throughout the continent, resulting in an uncharted position, historically speaking¹¹.

The church is not absent from the problems and the duties of society; rather it is a protagonist of social change. Yet as a body, in a collective sense, I consider that we should not involve ourselves in any political party, nor form a new one. For the church that commits itself in terms of a specific political persuasion, loses its prophetic voice. The church should retain the freedom to evaluate and to speak of a power that it does not possess, of an influence, prestige and of honors, yet remain unaffected thereby. Moreover, the church belongs to all. Political parties are only a section of society. The nation does not need the backing of a sectorial group; nor does the church need a party. In this sense, caution needs to be used concerning those who pretend to use their faith to support a determined political posture. Every Christian has the freedom to favor a specific political or economic system, but not to affirm that such a choice is necessarily Christian.

12. *Incarnation and service.* To conceive of our mission as an incarnation avoids the excesses of extreme positions between a supposed "social gospel" and a "personal gospel". With incarnation, on the one hand, we face the need to take seriously the temporal structures. On the other hand, the attitude of incarnation does not presuppose any influence that seeks to direct society in order to build a new Christian order, but rather simply the disposition to serve among human beings.

ministries". <http://mujercristianaylatina.wordpress.com/2008/10/14/presentaron-un-partido-politico-evangelico-sus-alcances-y-objetivos/>

¹¹ Jean Pierre Bastian outlines some of the political movements and parties related to the evangelicals in Latin America. Bolivia: Movimiento Reformista Independiente, 1994. Brazil: Alianza Renovadora Boliviana (ARBOL), 1992. Colombia: Servicio e integridad, 1995. Chile: Organización Renovadora Auténtica, 1995. Guatemala: Bancada Evangélica, 1986. Mexico: Movimiento Evangélico Progresista, 1990. Nicaragua: Primer encuentro nacional político evangélico, 1991. Peru: Alianza Nacional Cristiana, 1980. Venezuela: Partido Nacional Cristiano, 1989. Salvador: Movimiento Unión Cristiana, 1990. Salvador: C4-Compromiso Cívico Cristiano, 1990; Partido Central Auténtico Nacionalista, 1987; Alianza Cristiana Internacional de, 1993; Partidos y Movimientos Políticos, 1992; Grupo Lerdo de Tejada, 1996; Frente de la Reforma Nacional, 1992; Partido de Justicia Nacional, 1992; Movimiento Político Cristiano, 1996; Camino Cristiano Nicaraguense, 1980; Frente Evangélico, 1985; Movimiento Acción Renovadora, 1990; Unión Renovadora de Evangélicos Peruanos, 1994; Presencia Cristiana, 1987; Organización Renovadora Auténtica, 1993; Movimiento de Solidaridad Nacional, 1993; Movimiento Unidad. See: Bastian, Jean Pierre. Los nuevos partidos políticos confesionales y su relación con el Estado en América Latina [The new confessional political parties and their relation to the State in Latin America], <http://naya.org.ar/congresos/contenido/49CAI/Bastian.htm>.

II. Ten theological foundations for the political responsibility of a Christian:

1. *Appreciation of the world.* God's sovereignty is over all of creation. The world is the object of God's creation in the beginning and of his re-creation at the end. God has not abdicated his throne. There is no other space where the kingdom of God can be manifested than the world.
2. The dynamic presence of the *Kingdom of God* in all aspects of historical reality. This provokes Christian commitment, not in spite of our faith, but rather *because of our faith*.
3. A positive recognition of the world does not impede our appreciating also *the presence of evil*. Ours is not a closed universe, but rather the arena in which the kingdom of God is engaging in spiritual battles against spiritual powers that enslave men. People are victims of an order that transcends them and imposes upon them a lifestyle that is counterproductive, since through this lifestyle the relative becomes absolute and the absolute becomes relative. The church should not become adjusted to the norms of the world nor confuse it with society. This situation will surely bring about confrontations between the church and the world, in the measure that the church fulfills her mission.
4. The *redemptive mission* of the gospel of the kingdom not only affects the individual, but also the social, economic, cultural and political spheres in which the gospel unfolds.
5. The *priesthood of all believers* is based on the sacred character of all aspects of human life within the ultimate perspective of God's kingdom, including the political.
6. The Christian has the *the vocation to be responsible* for what happens in society. He should not act as an individual isolated from the rest, but as a member of a community of persons who are concerned for the common good of society.
7. The primary objective of government, and therefore that of the Christian politician, is that of achieving *justice and equity*.
8. The church and its *call*. As a body in a city or nation *it is not called* to elaborate specific partisan political proposals, nor to identify itself with any system of social organization, nor to form political parties. The church is in fact *called* to collaborate with the human struggle to overcome oppression, misery, ignorance, etc. Therefore, the church has a prophetic role that calls it to denounce unjust systems and to collaborate in the construction of a more just and fraternal society.
9. The church should occupy its *prophetic role* before the authorities, to denounce personal and social sins and to proclaim the values of God's kingdom and his proposal for reconciliation.
10. The church should occupy its place in the heavenly spheres exercising its spiritual authority over the reality through its *intercessory and governmental task*, in prayer for the nation and its authorities.
11. The church, as the light of the world, should fulfill its *didactic task* in two directions. Toward society, teaching the principles and values of God's kingdom, in such a way that makes clear what is good and what is bad. And toward its members, so as to raise up leaders in the different vocations, among them, the political.
12. The church works, not only assisting the most needy, but also promoting *peace and justice* in society, through concrete proposals that promote those who have been left behind, and that help in the transformation of sinful social structures and in the construction of a more just and fraternal society.

III. Seven values that determine the active political participation of a Christian and what he seeks through his political action¹²:

1. *Value of the person:* The human being is the supreme and ultimate reality in the framework of the temporal order. His full existence is the supreme goal of every aspiration and social organization. He should never be considered as a means or as a secondary value. The integral development of the person should be an assured reality for every human being without distinction of sex, age, race, creed, ideology, nationality or social condition. The objective of all political action should be to make it possible for every man, woman and child to enjoy a full humanity.
2. *Value of the truth:* The practice of the truth is fundamental for all human relations and, in consequence, for all social sharing of life and space. Without the rule of truth, social life becomes chaotic and anarchical.
3. *Value of integrity:* Only the full experience of solid moral integrity nourished by the truth can guarantee order, liberty and justice. The truth, as a disciplined attitude toward reality, should be the source and the goal of all political action oriented toward a plentiful human life. At the same time, truth is the means by which the full realization of human life can be achieved. This is what politics proposes to achieve by its action.
4. *Value of freedom:* Freedom is impossible without the practice of truth and integrity. It is the inalienable right of every human being and the greatest value of his existence as such. It is the ability of every human being to live and act fully as a person without arbitrary impositions. This right extends up to the point at which his peers also have the right to be full and complete persons. Every program of political action should be careful to recognize the freedom of every human being to achieve his full realization as a person, and should facilitate all possible opportunities and stimuli for that realization.
5. *Value of justice:* Justice is impossible if truth, integrity and freedom are frustrated. Justice determines that the value of freedom is not exercised at the sacrifice of the common good. In a proper legal system, justice is the application of law to the end that each person might achieve the realization of his rights and assure the fulfillment of his duties in society. In order for these goals to be accomplished, the administration of justice should be impartial, equitable, accessible, independent, rapid and efficient. Justice will prevail where every human being finds in the juridical order a resource where he is protected from abuse and where he can defend himself against assault upon his rights. A just political action is that which assures that justice is within the reach of everyone, especially the poor and those at the margin of society. It should, moreover, be motivated by an elevated social sense that assures the elimination of abhorrent inequalities in the enjoyment of goods and services that offend the person in his dignity as a creature made in God's image.
6. *Value of peace:* Social peace is the daughter of truth, integrity, freedom and justice. As such, it is the result of the reconciliation of disparate elements of society, without requiring that these renounce their identity nor that their heterogeneous nature be eliminated. Peace is only real and durable when it emerges from pluralism in which unity is verified in diversity. Responsible political action will seek to develop pluralism which, through the variety of its many shades, serves to enrich the social body and offer to all the opportunity to make their particular contribution for the common good.
7. *Value of solidarity:* Solidarity is the concrete expression of the fraternal will of human beings that live under the order of truth, freedom, justice and peace. The feeling of mutual dependence for the purpose of achieving the common good is basic for the establishment of a just social order. No one can be completely happy if others are not happy. A political action of solidarity will be that which understands how to combine the ability and the action of the various constituent elements of society, so that everyone has the possibility of their fullest realization as persons.

IV. Ten requisites for those who are called into politics:

¹² See the nine principles of the Declaration of Jarabacoa, Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana, Jarabacoa 1983.

Beyond the fact that the church cannot participate as a collective group in partisan politics, it should recognize those members that have a call from God to develop their vocation of service and transformation in the political sphere. Politics is not foreign to our commitment to the kingdom of God. Thus we should foment, support, pray and anoint those who have a vocation for political leadership. Thus, the Christian with such a vocation should become involved politically, not in spite of his faith, but rather because of his faith. This means that, based on his commitment to follow Christ as Lord, he understands that his responsibility is to be salt to preserve, light to illumine, a city set on a hill that guides, a mustard seed that grows, not by human resources, but by God's power, leaven that penetrates the dough. Yet that vocation has requisites:

1. *Leaders who are servants*: Politics, just as any other sphere of leadership in society, should be perceived as a service. The goal is not to have power, but the opportunity to serve others, especially those who are most needy. Traditional politics is a means to serve oneself through other people, but politics from a Christian perspective is a means to serve others, not to be served. The objective of a Christian is not to achieve power with a view to consolidating his own projects and perspectives, but rather to occupy a position of service oriented toward the common good. Unfortunately, in Latin America the experience of evangelical politicians has not been, generally speaking, very different from that of other politicians. With severity, Mardoqueo Carranza Monterrosa questions: "What is the purpose of the participation of evangelical Christians in politics if it sinks our people in misery and poverty, if only religious benefits are sought, if it is no more than manifestations of our presence on the margin for years, turning our participation into revenge, social-climbing and opportunism, and does not respond to a call for service, a prophetic call?"¹³ Jesus instructed his disciples in saying: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt. 20.25–28).

2. *Leaders of integrity*: We are all very familiar with the generalized state of corruption in our country. We are also aware of the discreditation of those in leadership. There has been a rather significant mutation in what it means to be a politician. As Araceli Bellota said, for today's leaders, being successful is to fill their pockets with money.

Unfortunately, in countries where many evangelical politicians have achieved power, whether executive or legislative, such as Brazil, the impression that people have is that they are just as corrupt as those who are not evangelical.

Integrity is also required in the way in which we achieve power, for as Martin Luther King said, the ends pre-exist in the means. The kingdom of God is not a question of moving up the stairs. In God's kingdom it is he who raises us up. Our brothers called into politics need to be clear about this. The difference must be obvious.

"Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them. I will make you a wall to this people, a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you to rescue and save you," declares the Lord. "I will save you from the hands of the wicked and redeem you from the grasp of the cruel." (Jeremiah 15.19b-21).

Joseph did not try to "climb the stairs". On the contrary, his stairway was descending. First, he was the preferred son. Then a slave. He did not seek accommodation with Potiphar's wife. So he descended to become an imprisoned slave. From slave to prisoner to forgotten. But God raised him up and placed him in the second place in the world empire. Daniel did not climb the stairs. God raised him up for he chose to not contaminate himself like the governors and satraps of the Medes. Esther did not climb the

¹³ Mardoqueo Carranza Monterrosa, "El Salvador: Ingreso a un mundo desconocido" [El Salvador: Insertion in an unknown world], in *De la marginación al compromiso: Los evangélicos y la política en América Latina* [From the sidelines to commitment: Evangelicals and politics in Latin America], ed. René Padilla (Buenos Aires: Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana, 1991), p. 57.

stairs. God raised her up. And she became queen. David did not climb the stairs. He was anointed by God and resisted the stair-climbing that would have meant turning against Saul. Absalom wanted to climb the stairs and he wound up hanging from a tree. Clean hands are not only a requisite to worship the Lord; they are for every moment of our life. We need to see God raise up today men like Mordecai that do not perceive power as an end but as a means. And not as a means to fill their pockets, but to serve for the good of all. It was said of Mordecai: "Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews" (Esther 10.3).

3. *Leaders who are capable:* Good intentions are not enough. We must have the ability to be in authority. The fact that we are Christians does not qualify us automatically as good leaders. We must pay the price of preparing ourselves and acquiring the ability to face the complexity of problems that burden our society. Improvised leaders can become the cause of painful frustrations and even shame and discredit for God's cause. Martin Luther said that he would prefer to be governed by a competent Turk than by an incompetent Christian. The fact that many in the current class of leaders are not only corrupt, but also inept, is not an excuse for us. On the contrary, it should impel us to be different, to be better. James Granfell considers that the participation of evangelicals in the government has not provided the expected fruits, and the perspective for the future is not very promising¹⁴. Therefore it is essential that those who have a vocation for leadership become capable, seek excellence and earn their place by experience.

4. *Leaders with a redemptive mission:* Nowadays politics is considered as a search for, and the obtaining of power. Ultimately, what is sought is to have and to exercise power. This idea belongs to unredeemed nature. But according to the vision of God's kingdom, politics is a sphere in which the redemptive power of the gospel can be expressed. A minority mentality can cause us to fall into the attractive temptation of seeking power in order to feel important. We must guard ourselves from this danger today. In all the youth congresses there is talk of a generation of conquest, conquering the nation, etc. And I understand quite well the motivation of those who put forward these slogans. The idea is to awaken the youth to assume a proactive attitude toward society so that they can visualize their place of influence in society. I understand that the motivation is correct. But we must be careful with our choice of words, because words carry ideas, a world view, and they serve to structure reality. A proper hermeneutics is indispensable; we must have a correct reading of two things. In the first place, of the Bible. And an essential principle for interpretation of the Bible is that the Old Testament be read in the light of the New. "Conquest" is not a New Testament category; it is from the Old Testament. The category of the New Covenant is "redemption". God does not call us to conquer the spheres of society, but to redeem those spheres. Everything should be interpreted in light of the cross, and the nucleus of the cross of Calvary is redemption. But we must also do a correct reading of history and of current events. During five centuries in Latin America we have experienced a church that conquered, but did not redeem the spheres of reality¹⁵. And in our reading of the present we see the current evangelical church, with numerical power, which begins to have political influence in some countries, yet is still not transformed.

5. *Leaders with emotional intelligence:* One of the fundamental characteristics of this intelligence is the ability to form teams and work in teams. We like to lead, we have difficulty being co-leaders, and an impressive resistance to being led by others. But in politics it is indispensable to form teams that reach the levels of influence, not as isolated individuals, but as teams. One person alone can change nothing. There must be teamwork. When Daniel had the opportunity to reach the palace, he had formed a team with his four friends. Teams are formed long before ascending to power.

¹⁴ James Granfell, "The Participation of Protestants in Politics in Guatemala", Master's thesis, Oxford University, England, 1994/1995.

¹⁵ Carlos Mraida, "Reino, Iglesia y Sociedad: Tres estilos ¿diferentes?" [Kingdom, church and society: Three different styles?], Meeting of Apostolic Fellowship International, Santiago de Chile, 2008, p. 16.

6. *Leaders who bring transformation:* The believer who has received from God a vocation to reach places of influence in politics, in government, must understand that it is not just to do more of the same, but to be an agent for transformation of the reality. The evaluation of a Christian politician is in terms of the changes he was able to produce in the [social] reality. To do so he must have a project for his country, his city, his neighborhood. When Joseph had the opportunity to enter the public function, he had a project. We should ask of believers who manifest a political vocation, that they present their projects for transformation. And analyze them, examine their foundations, their presuppositions.

7. *Leaders who work for the common good:* Today democracies in the world are a caricature. They are electoral democracies, but not institutional. Does the political ideology of those believers called to this sphere of society, coincide with the good of all people? That is to say, in a world where the inequality gap is so broad, does the ideology of our brothers called to the world of politics, place a priority on the well-being of the poorest? Because if that is not the case, we need to help them to change their ideology. As Israel Ortiz has well said, political parties require absolute loyalty to their programs and ideologies. But the Christian politician responds to a higher loyalty, that of God and his Word, and therefore, the country's interests and the commitment to truth and justice should be above all political postures¹⁶. We should remember Martin Luther, who said: "Faith does not offer to the Christian a program or an ideology, but a reason for the heart and the mind to participate, a central concern and a norm with which to evaluate every political program, ideology, structure or action: the well-being of our neighbor"¹⁷. God has a commitment to justice, to the poor, to the oppressed. Those who are in power already have their own well-being. It is not a question of confronting, but of seeking equality. The Scandinavian countries, with societies founded on principles of the Reformation have a [salary] gap of 23, according to the Gini index, between those who earn the most and those who earn the least, but Guatemala, one of the countries with the greatest percentage of evangelicals, but with a "Catholic political and social culture", has a gap of 55,¹⁸

8. *Leaders who are strong:* To be the kind of leader God wants, one has to be strong. Strong means consistent, not changeable. Strong means to be able to support the pressures and overcome. Strong means to swim against the current. Victor Arroyo, Peruvian evangelical senator, affirms that "the danger for evangelicals is to fall into political naivete, trying to act in the socio-political scene without sufficient understanding of the reality in which they find themselves"¹⁹. Christians immersed in politics must have an awareness of this world of corruption, intrigue and suspicion and be prepared to confront it. Strong means to be persevering. Strong is to persist in spite of everything. Strong means to not surrender to corruption. To be strong is to avoid being molded or change your color, or to accommodate yourself. The believer's position, before God's throne will not vary an inch because he accommodates to someone. To be strong is to understand that he will have to face opposition. But that God will raise him up as he did with Nehemiah, a strong man. When enemy leaders attacked him and pressured him to abandon his cause and close himself in the temple like a cave, he said: "**Should a man like me run away? Or should one like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go**" (Nehemiah 6.11). For Nehemiah understood that he was in a war. Therefore, to complete the mission of rebuilding the walls of his city, he had the people to apply one hand to their work and wield a sword in the other. Anyone called to this vocation should know how to engage in spiritual warfare, because this sphere is under the control of principalities and powers.

9. *Leaders who are maleable:* They are subject to someone. First of all, to their pastor, and to the apostolic ministry in the city. Christian politicians must give an account to someone, to be responsible, allow a regular auditing of their functions. That will help them

¹⁶ Op. Cit. p. 9.

¹⁷ Martín Lutero, La libertad cristiana [Christian liberty] (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1983) p. 33.

¹⁸ http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/eco_dis_of_fam_inc_gin_ind-distribution-family-income-gini-index

¹⁹ Elsa Romanenghi de Powell, "Participación de los evangélicos en la política latinoamericana" [Participation of evangelicals in Latin American politics], Boletín teológico 44 (diciembre 1991): 233.

to maintain integrity, humility, authority because they are under authority. They are subject to God in the first place. Between the call and the realization there is time. That time is used by God to work on their character, to work on their tolerance of frustration, to work on their patience. On their ability.

10. *Leaders who are anointed:* The transformation of our society will not occur because of human resources. God raised up Zerubbabel and Joshua for the restoration of Jerusalem for the text says that they were “anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth” (Zechariah 4.14). Joshua was the high priest and had to be anointed. But just as anointed as he, was Zerubbabel, the governor. The changes that are needed are not achieved with volunteerism. God said to Zerubbabel: “Not by power nor by might, but by my Spirit”. We need to raise up leaders filled with the Holy Spirit, filled with the “spirit of wisdom and revelation”, to transform our reality.

V. **Fifteen challenges for an apostolic agenda:**

1. *Theological challenge:* Apostolic ministries should contribute to an elaboration of a theology of politics and power. The declaration of Osijek concerning “Freedom and justice in the relationships between Church and State” underscores the fact that a political theology should respond to the following questions: What is the purpose of government? What is the role of force in government and how should it be used? What moral values should be legislated and what should not, and what are the criteria to distinguish them? How is power employed and controlled? Is there a transcendent norm beyond the State? Then it adds, “Without a political theology that responds to these questions, political participation will be superficial, often incorrectly oriented and counterproductive”²⁰.

2. *Recruiting challenge:* The apostles in each city should bring together professionals from the different disciplines, to organize disciplinary and inter-disciplinary forums, in which they discuss the various spheres of influence in society, and the problems, and elaborate projects for transforming the reality.

3. *Teaching challenge:* The apostles should be responsible for the formation of a new leadership class for their city and nation, activating the resources of teaching ministries within the body of Christ. The formation of this kind of leader can hardly come from the pastors. It must come from the apostles: **And they persevered in the teaching of the apostles** (Acts 2.42). The lack of political groups with the proper political formation is a matter of serious concern from the perspective of a Christian world vision. The apostles and teachers need to help these leaders of society to reread their disciplines, and the social problems, from the point of view of God’s kingdom. If such is not the case, we will have evangelical governors and legislators who in their political activity set forward the secular viewpoint received in the university and in the political parties, not the viewpoint of the kingdom. The same is true for judges, economists, educators, social communicators, artists, athletes. This apostolic teaching is not limited to future leaders, although that is a priority, but also to the current leaders, even when they are not evangelical, since the teaching ministry of the church is not directed just inwardly, but also to all of society.

4. *Pastoral challenge:* As a rule, pastors are not prepared to shepherd persons of influence in society. They do not understand that their ministries do not develop within the ecclesial program. They find it hard to understand their struggles and temptations. They are not trained to provide them the needed preparation. This means that in some cases a gap is produced between pastoral ministry and those who are called to exercise influence in society. In other cases, the idea arises that such a person has a spiritual and ministerial life

²⁰ Alianza Internacional de Teólogos Evangélicos de la Misión, “Cuarta Conferencia Internacional” (Osijek, Yugoslavia: abril de 1991), párrafo 6, cit. por Ortiz, op.cit., p. 22.

when he teaches in Sunday School or in a cell group, but that his job from Monday to Friday in his sphere of influence is outside his ministry. The matter becomes more serious if the pastor's theological tendency coincides with some of those expressed above, and results in a negative approach to politics. For this reason the apostles must assume a pastoral responsibility over those who are called to the political sphere, while teaching the pastors how to handle it.

5. *Service challenge*: The formation of new groups of leaders cannot be only theoretical. Apostolic coordination is required for pilot projects in the transformation of smaller specific realities, such as responding to a particular need in a determined neighborhood of the city. This could serve as a transformation action of service by the church to the community as well as training for those called to the political sphere. Our people need to experience in their life that politics is a means to serve people, transforming their reality, and not a means to be served. Such things will not be learned in political parties. In the congregation, the emphasis is often limited to evangelism or to assistance to the needy. But an apostolic vision can implement this.

6. *Episcopal challenge*: This has to do with a close supervision of the candidates for places and positions in the government, in a programmatic sense. This means that the evangelical candidates should elaborate work projects, presentation of ideas and programmatic content, and not simply be concerned with image, charisma, the search for support from evangelical voters. This also includes pastoral accompaniment with auditing of those who reach the levels of power, to watch over their life, and to correct them.

7. *Prophetic challenge*: Problems take the church by surprise and often overcome it. Politics do not escape this tendency. The participation of evangelicals in politics in general came about as a result of fortuitous situations. Apostolic ministry needs to activate the ministries of revelation so as to trigger an anticipatory and preventive action.

8. *Pontifical challenge*: As expressed in the introduction, the increase of individual freedom coincides with the increase of collective impotence, while the bridges between public life and private life are dismantled. Apostolic ministries face the challenge of being pontifical, that is to say, bridge-builders,²¹ that translate the needs of the people into public issues and, inversely, to discern in the private concerns matters of public concern.

9. *Strategic challenge*: It is necessary for apostolic ministries to influence and even coordinate the elaboration and presentation of national projects and state politics, that can be carried beyond the periodic changes in governments, and that can be effective answers to the real needs of society. Today we need to articulate an economic and social program, but fundamentally a political project in the broadest sense. What kind of society do we want to have?

10. *Paradigmatic challenge*: One of the distinctive characteristics of apostolic ministry is its ability to visualize the reality of God's kingdom in a city, nation or region. The kingdom of God, in its manifestations, instrumentation and its protagonists, reaches beyond the sphere of the church. Therefore, the apostle has the ability to perceive actions, manifestations, carried out by actors and organizations that are not evangelical, that with his participation establish some aspect of the kingdom of God in a city or have the potential to do so. And then the apostle can and should guide an extra-ecclesial and intersectorial process that promotes peace and justice in a city or nation. For too long the church has positioned itself in inaction. When faced with difficult problems it assumes an attitude of

²¹ The term, from Latin, and in reference to elevated political personalities of the [Roman Empire](#), is made up of the words *pons*, "bridge" + *facere*, "build or make", with a genuine sense of "builder of bridges".

reaction. It needs to move into the modality of proaction. And to enter into a greater level, that of interaction, with other organizations, confessions and persons that work for the common good.

11. *Ecclesial challenge*: The perfecting of the saints continues to be a pending assignment for apostolic ministry and for the other ministries of Ephesians 4, in order for the church to become an alternative community and one that alters the community. Unfortunately, many of the social evils and sins that we see in our nations, are also found in the church. That means that the church cannot present itself as an alternative, and therefore loses its power to alter, to transform the reality.

12. *Basal challenge*: This challenge consists in progressing in the unity of the church in each city. Without this practical and missionary corporate articulation, it will be impossible for the church to have a redemptive effect on the different spheres of influence in society, to provoke a true awakening with social transformation.

13. *Plural challenge*: To assume a ministry with such challenges and demands, it is necessary to move beyond the vision of an apostle to the vision of an apostolic team. Such a team is articulated under the presence of an apostle, but requires the active participation of other brothers. The presbytery of the city, integrated by the pastors of the city, with prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral and teaching gifts, is essential. But also needed to integrate this apostolic team are believers coming from a variety of disciplines, with different callings, but with theological preparation.

14. *Spiritual challenge*: To lead a process of transformation of the reality requires an awareness of our weakness and of our need for a powerful action of the Holy Spirit. A renewed dependence on prayer and fasting, to be led by him, because we are finding our way as we move along.

15. *Challenge of faith*: We live in a society that believes that what can be changed in the matters affecting our social reality or in the way they are managed, is very little. We also sense the resignation that often characterizes the church and its leaders. In the midst of this reality, it is necessary to raise an apostolic voice that enables the church to definitively renounce such conformity and resignation as regards the *status quo*, an apostolic voice and action that triggers faith, impelling us to believe that even when darkness covers the earth and the nations, the Lord will arise over his people, and his glory will be seen upon the church. And nations will walk in that light, and kings in the splendor of its appearance.

While pessimism is the mark of our society, we have hope. Not optimism, which is a psychological condition. Rather it is hope, which is theological, that is to say, it is supported by the powerful and saving acts of God in history. "Hope is that anchor that is thrown upon the shores of the fulness of times, and we grab the rope of that anchor to avoid becoming desoriented in the midst of the diverse desperate, pessimistic and simply neutral proposals that life places in the heart, but which do not satisfy in the depth of our being, leaving us sad as someone who is wandering aimlessly"²². That hope is based on the certainty that heaven governs the earth: ***Blessed be God's name from age to age, because power and wisdom belong to him. He changes the times and the ages; he brings down kings, and raises up kings; he gives wisdom to the sages, and knowledge to the understanding. He reveals what is profound and hidden; he knows what is in the darkness, and with him dwells the light... Now has come salvation, power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ... The kingdoms of the world***

²² Jorge H. Bergoglio, homily on occasion of the mass celebrated for the victims of the earthquake in Haiti, <http://www.arzbaires.org.ar/Homilias2010.htm>.

have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever.²³

²³ Daniel 2.20-22; Revelation 12.10 and 11.15.