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THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL

INTRODUCTION

It is worth taking note of the numerical growth of evangelicals over the past six decades in many countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. It is also encouraging to see in the same period of history a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in almost all countries of the world. In addition, there exists in the church in all nations a greater openness to the Holy Spirit's activity, a fresh expression in praise and worship, and everywhere people are talking of discipleship, the unity of the church, and of the integral mission of the church in the world. We thank God for all of these realities.

But far from giving place to a deceptive triumphalism, with serenity and objectivity we should take another look at our weak points, with a desire to overcome them. Statistics on church growth only take into account numbers, not the quality of evangelical believers. Today we see everywhere a kind of fever over *quantity*, but not over *unity*, and even less concerning *quality*.

We need to review some basic matters. Could it be that our objective is only to seek in the nations of the world an evangelical majority? What about the quality of life? Why is there so much mediocrity in the character and conduct of many Christians? What about moral and social changes that the gospel should produce in the nations? Where are the men and women who are being transformed into the image of Christ? Why is the church's influence in society so small?

We need to review these matters seriously and in depth, to evaluate our reality and, in the end, to become in our generation the salt of the earth and the light of the world, just as our Lord declared.

***First part:* THE MEANING OF TRANSFORMATION**

1. THE CONDITION OF SOCIETY

God created human beings in his image and likeness (Genesis 1.26-27), which means with his own moral and spiritual virtues. But sin deformed God's image in human beings.

Current society has a life style quite opposed to God's character.

- God is LOVE, abundant and generous. He gives in abundance what he has. But in society, selfishness, individualism, materialism and greed prevail.
- God is HOLY, holy beyond measure. There is not in him the slightest shadow of sin. Yet in humanity we find sin, moral filth, licentious sex, prostitution, adultery, lying, deception, corruption, bribery.

- God is JUST, righteous. Yet in society we see an abundance of injustice, robbery, graft, corruption, bribery, unjust laws, unjust judgments, racial discrimination. There is an unjust distribution of riches at all levels: personal, business, national and international. There is exploitation of the labor force, family violence, abuse of authority.
- God is LIGHT, he is TRUTH. Yet men are liars, deceivers, hypocritical, false.
- God is PEACE. Yet human history is characterized by fighting, violence, wars, hate, crimes, aggression, insolence, disorder.
- God is FAITHFUL; he fulfills his covenant. Yet there is much infidelity among the people: adultery, divorce, irresponsibility, laziness, failure to meet commitments in our work, fraud, lying.
- God is MERCIFUL. Yet few people are concerned today about the condition of those who suffer, of the poor and those who live on the margin of society. Everyone seems to be living for himself.

Few persons give evidence in their behavior of character virtues, such as honesty, kindness, faithfulness, humility, meekness, holiness in sexual conduct, integrity and honor in financial matters, generosity, patience, brotherly love, solidarity, respect for parents, diligence, perseverance, willingness to serve, contentment, self discipline.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE GOSPEL

- God's objective is not only the salvation of the soul, but the person's transformation into God's image (Romans 8.29; 2 Corinthians 3.18; Colossians 3.10).

- The goal of the Christian disciple is not simply to reach heaven, but to become like Jesus, and to live as he did here on Earth (1 John 2.6).

- God did not choose us from before the foundation of the world, so that we could be saved, but rather so that we would be holy in all our behavior (Ephesians 1.4; 1 Peter 1.15-16).

- We were called, not only to be children of God, but also to be perfect, as he is perfect (Matthew 5:48; Colossians 1:28). *Perfect*, from the Greek *teleios*, means complete, mature, built up in all aspects of character and conduct.

- It is not enough to be born again; we should grow and mature until we reach the measure of the stature of Christ (Ephesians 4:13-15).

The individual's transformation into God's image is the principal factor – not the only one – in the transformation of families and of society in general.

[I say "not the only one", for in addition to the redemption of the individual, redemption is also needed from the sinful aspects of the distinct cultures and, above all, the transformation of societal, political and economic structures, through laws and more just systems in accord with the principles of the kingdom of God. But since my subject is the transformation of the individual, I will continue with that subject]...

3. TRANSFORMATION IN PRACTICAL TERMS MEANS...

- Families that live in peace and harmony.
- Wise and kind husbands.
- Submissive wives, with a kind and peaceful character.
- Children who are respectful and obedient. Boys and girls that enter marriage as chaste and virgin.
- Older people who are respected and venerated by the younger generation.
- Children raised in the love and fear of God.
- Virtuous women, happy and full of good deeds.

- Disciples who are learning to be humble, patient, kind, generous, sincere, honest.
- Disciples whose life style is to love, forgive, serve, confess their sins, obey, pay their taxes.
- Workers who are responsible, efficient, diligent, faithful, trustworthy, productive, obedient and respectful of those in authority.
- Business owners and professionals that love their workers and employees as they love themselves and, consequently, use their intellectual abilities and economic resources to help in their integral development. Far from exploiting them in their work, they dignify them with the best wages possible, support their development and the general well-being of the families: home, health, education, economic and spiritual progress.
- Men and women who give evidence of the character of Christ: love for their neighbors, help for the needy; they weep with those who weep, rejoice with those who rejoice, return good for evil, support injustice with peace and joy, give thanks to God in all things, overcome temptation, live in the joy of the Lord, pray without ceasing, give testimony concerning Jesus, make disciples, give their money to serve their brothers and, above all, love God with all their being.
- And if a child of God occupies a place that is important or secondary, whether in a public or private institution, in a commercial business or of any other kind, whether as president of the nation or as doorkeeper in a small school; because of his character as a Christian disciple, he will exercise that function with absolute integrity, honesty, faithfulness and responsibility; without giving or receiving bribes, without lies or deception, without seeking personal advantage or favoritism; with total impartiality and equity. Moreover, he will understand that his job, whatever it is, is only a place of service for the good of his peers.

4. BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF TRANSFORMED PERSONS

- Zaccheus: From the role of public servant who was corrupt and a thief, he became an honorable man who restored what he stole. Instead of continuing to be greedy and selfish, he became generous, giving away half of his goods to the poor (Luke 19.1-10).
- Mary Magdalene: From being a troubled woman with seven demons, she became a holy person who served Jesus with all her possessions (Luke 8.1-3).
- The Gadarene: From being a ferocious man with a legion of demons, who lived among the tombstones, and was able to break loose from fetters and chains, he became a man completely free and tranquil, properly clothed and with good judgment, causing all the inhabitants of Decapolis to give witness of *what great things Jesus had done for him* (Mark 5.1-20).
- The Twelve Apostles: From being carnal men who argued over which of them would be the greatest, from ambitious persons like James and John who asked for thrones in glory on both sides of Jesus, they were transformed by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost into spiritual persons and humble servants of the Lord.
- Barnabas and many others: They sold their properties and goods and placed them at the apostles' feet for distribution among the needy (Acts 4.34-37).
- Onesimus: From being a worthless slave who was lazy and a thief, he was converted and discipled by Paul in a Roman prison. He was then of considerable worth to Philemon, and useful for the ministry as a colleague of the apostle Paul (Epistle of Philemon).

There are thousands and even millions more throughout history, most of them anonymous to us, but well known to God. Hallelujah!

Second part: RESOURCES NECESSARY FOR TRANSFORMATION

1. THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

For years we have preached that the requisite to be saved is *to accept Jesus Christ as your only Savior*. Of course, Christ IS the only Savior; the Bible teaches with great clarity that apart from him there is no salvation (Acts 4.12). That is not being questioned, but rather, what is the requirement for a sinner to be saved?

Although it may seem surprising, there is not a single verse in the Scriptures that affirms that Jesus Christ saves me when I recognize him as my Savior. In Romans 10.8-9 the apostle Paul declares: *"This is the Word of faith which we preach: that if you confess with your mouth the Lord (KYRIOS) Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, **YOU WILL BE SAVED**".*

This is not the only verse, for a careful study throughout the New Testament shows us that the CONDITION necessary to be saved is to recognize Jesus Christ as KYRIOS. *Kyrios* is the Greek word translated "Lord" in the New Testament.

- Peter at Pentecost concludes his sermon by saying: *"God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both KYRIOS and Christ"* (Acts 2.36).
- Paul said to the jailer in Philippi: *"Believe on the KYRIOS Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, both you and your household"* (Acts 16.31).
- In 2 Corinthians 4.5, the apostle says: *"We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ the KYRIOS"*.

The term "KYRIOS", in reference to Christ, appears in the New Testament more than 610 times, whereas the term "SOTER" = SAVIOR, is only found 16 times in reference to Christ.

The apostles did not mutilate the gospel by presenting Jesus Christ only as Savior. The apostolic *Kerigma* presents him as the Son of God who died, rose again and is the Lord. In order to be saved, the sinner must believe and recognize him as LORD, with all that the word implies.

To accept Christ merely as Savior would involve the intention to receive forgiveness, salvation, peace, happiness and eternal life without any real submission to his lordship; and this does not coincide with the teaching of the New Testament. Christ saves me and gives me all the benefits of salvation when I bow my knees to him and recognize him as Lord. This marks the end to my rebellion and the acceptance of his government and authority over me. It means the total surrender of all that I am and have, including my family, my home, my possessions, my money, my time, my plans, EVERYTHING, absolutely everything.

To accept Jesus Christ as Lord is to recognize him as my owner, my "boss", the final authority over my life. It is to recognize him as God and Savior. In order for Christ to become my Savior, I must recognize him as my Lord. This is the essence of the gospel of the kingdom of God.

To recognize Christ as Lord is not only the indispensable condition for conversion; it is also the necessary requisite for the formation and transformation of each new disciple.

2. REPENTANCE, LIBERATION, WATER BAPTISM

AND BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

The apostles led to repentance those who wanted to follow Christ (Acts 2.38), as well as to confession of their sins, a renunciation of all the works of darkness (Acts 19.18), and to baptism in water and in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2.38-39; 8.12-17; 9.17-18; 10.43-48; 19.1-6).

It is very important that everyone who begins the Christian life is led to experience a profound repentance, freedom from every work of the devil; that he be baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit in order to initiate his Christian life free from all bondage and filled with the transforming power of God.

3. DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them [and]... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28.19-20).

A proper functioning discipleship must involve three elements: A disciple, a discipler and a teaching program (doctrine or *didaché*).

What is a disciple?

A disciple is a person who has acknowledged Jesus as his Lord. In the past, he lived according to his own criteria and did what he wanted to do, but now he is subject to Christ's authority and, therefore, to all his teaching. When he was baptized, his former life was buried in the death of Christ, and he was raised with him to live a new life. Baptism is the precise step that defines him as a disciple. This is why Jesus said: "Make disciples...baptizing them..."

In a practical sense, a disciple is a student, one who is learning, someone who manifests a meek and humble disposition when faced with instructions from the Word of God. A disciple receives the teaching with faith and meekness. He accepts correction, he imitates the best example and desires to make progress. He has one objective in life: to be like his Master, both in conduct and in character.

What is a discipler?

This is a more mature disciple who assumes the responsibility to care for, instruct, teach, pray with and help a new disciple in his growth and formation. A disciple may have one or more disciples under his responsibility and care. His principal task is to teach each one Jesus' doctrine, which in Greek is called '*didache*'.

What is the *didaché*?

This Greek term is translated in various versions as "doctrine" or "teaching". It is used 30 times in the New Testament. It is derived from the verb '*didasko*', translated 'teach'. This verb is used 101 times in the NT. The *didache* consists of commands that reveal God's will (Mat 7.28; Mr 12.38; Acts 2.42).

Features of the *didache*:

- It consists mainly of teaching, instructions and clear commands that reveal God's will for our lives. Example: "*Love your neighbor as yourself*".
- It is simple and clear. Ex.: "*Children, obey your parents*".
- The tone is usually imperative. It is a command from the Lord and requires obedience.
- It teaches us to live according to God's will in all aspects of our life: Family, work, sex, money, worship, service, vocabulary, relations with others...

- It is a well-defined and complete body of teaching. Most of the *didache* can be found in ten chapters of the NT: Matthew 5, 6 and 7; Ephesians 4, 5 and 6; Romans 12, 13, 14 and 15.
- The objective of the *didache* is to make us like Jesus.
- It is God's word; therefore, it is unchangeable. Its content cannot be modified. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away..."
- It is universal; its commands reveal God's will for all men in all times. Matt 28.19-20.
- We need to know it, obey it and teach it to others.
- To obey the *didache*, we must do so in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ezek 36.26-27).

4. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

This factor is decisive in the transformation of our character and life style.

➤ **Assume your responsibility**

Man was created in God's image. This means that he is different from animals. God gave to man responsibility that is moral, related to his work, his family, and in social and spiritual matters. Every person is responsible before God and must respond to him for his deeds, attitudes, words, conduct, thoughts, sentiments, desires and intentions.

John Stott tells us: "Our responsibility before God is an inalienable aspect of our human dignity. Its final expression will be evident on the day of judgment".

Emil Brunner affirms: "Responsibility is not an attribute; it is the substance of human existence. It contains everything... it is what distinguishes humans from all other creatures.

God required Adam, Eve, Cain, Saul, David, Ananias and Saphira, and Saul of Tarsus to give an account to him. And one day, we shall all have to give account to him of our entire life.

Satan's activities, the weakness of our flesh, the evil of other persons, the pressures of the world, or even adverse circumstances, do not exempt us of our responsibility before God. Through Jesus Christ, God has provided us with everything we need to be "more than conquerors" over Satan, sin, the flesh and the world, even in the most adverse circumstances.

It would be foolish to deny the influence that our genetic inheritance and our training have on our behavior. They influence, but they do not determine our conduct. The determining factor of our behavior and our life is a matter of personal responsibility.

How is it that Abel and Cain, with the same genetic inheritance and the same training, were so different? Why was Jacob different from Esau? Why was David so different from his brothers?

Yes. Through the abundant provision of God's grace we can be different, we can change. We can be transformed. Our character can be refined, our conduct can improve. We can be holy, humble, meek, kind, willing to serve; we can be like Jesus.

➤ **Persevere in self discipline** (1 Corinthians 9.24-27)

Actions that are repeated over a period of time become habits. There are habits that involve ethical/moral characteristics which make up the various features of our character. This means that our conduct is shaping our character, and then character in turn determines our conduct.

- If we live according to the flesh, carnal attitudes become a part of our lives. For example: anger, lying, complaining, lust, greed and resentment.
- But if we live in the Spirit, we will put to death the works of the flesh, and the virtues of Christ will be evident in us: kindness, service to others, humility, truthfulness, forgiveness, etc.

When something is done once, twice, ten, twenty or a hundred times... habits are formed, which become specific traits of our character. In this discipline of the Spirit, the qualities of Christ's virtues will become the **virtues of our own character**. That is why it is important to live in the Spirit twenty-four hours of the day (Gal. 2.20).

➤ **Guard your heart**

In biblical language, our heart is the center of our being, our innermost self. That is where we define what we are. Prov 4.23; Acts 8.21; Mat 15.19.

We should guard, or keep, our hearts concerning:

- The thoughts of our heart, Heb. 4.12
- The intentions of our heart, 1 Cor. 4.5
- The desires of our heart, Mat. 5.28
- The decisions of our heart, Daniel 1.8; Acts 5.4
- The deception of our heart, Jer. 17.9
- The motivation of our heart, Mat 6.1-6, 1 Cor 13.3

We should always keep our hearts sincere and clean, Heb.10.22

➤ **Cultivate intimate fellowship with God**

We need to cultivate fellowship with God that is intimate, personal and secret, Mat 6.6. Here we should submit ourselves to the deeper work of the Word and of the Spirit to accept reproof, correction, sanctification and transformation. Heb 4.12; 2 Tim.3.16; 2 Cor 3.18; Rom 12.1-2.

Our greatest desire should be to "KNOW" the Son of God, the perfect man, Eph 4.13. This does not refer to intellectual knowledge (the Greek concept), but rather experimental and total (the Hebrew concept), until we become completely one with him.

5. NEED FOR A CORRECT ATTITUDE CONCERNING SUFFERING

Suffering is an important resource that God uses to transform us. Gold can only be purified inwardly by fire. There are aspects of our character that only the fire of pain can sanctify.

Jesus did not promise his disciples a life without pain. What he did promise us is peace and victory in the midst of afflictions (John 16.33).

Today it seems that many of the world's values have become symbols of success in the Christian life: money, fame, popularity, prosperity, numbers, people, power... How little is said concerning the cross, suffering, discipline, sacrifice, being despised!

For me, one of the most difficult verses to understand in the New Testament is Hebrews 5.8: "*Though he was a Son, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered*". If the Son of God had to suffer to learn obedience, how much more should we!

In the face of suffering, we can take one of three attitudes:

- 1- Rebellion and bitterness.
- 2- Resignation without understanding the purpose, as with Job's experience at the beginning.
- 3- Acceptance as God's perfect plan for our purification, sanctification and transformation, until we are conformed to Christ's image, Rom 8.28-29.

Suffering helps us to become humble, patient, compassionate, merciful, obedient, dependent upon God, that is, to be like Jesus; for it continues to produce in us a more excellent and eternal weight of glory (2 Cor 4.17).

6. NEED TO LIVE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

The twelve apostles had the best discipler and received all the *didache*, yet all that, although indispensable, was not enough. They had to be filled with the great and superabundant power of God in order to be transformed. Why?

The inherent weakness of our human nature

The Bible calls this condition "being in the flesh". It is the natural state of man following the fall: weak, sinful and incapable of pleasing God. In the "best case scenario", I try to do God's will with my own resources, only to fail time and again. Paul said: "*The good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil that I will not to do, that I practice...*" (Rom 7.14-25).

And in the "worst case scenario", I drop all restraints and yield to the potential evil that is in me (Gal 5.19-21).

The law of God

God's law is good and holy. It requires of us to do God's will, but it does not enable us to fulfill it.

The complete work of redemption

On the cross Christ not only bore our sins; he included us in the process. "*Our old man was crucified with him*" (Rom. 6.6). His death is our death, and his resurrection our resurrection.

But that objective reality becomes subjective and experiential reality through the work of the Holy Spirit in us (Rom 8.2).

The work of the Spirit

- Christ not only sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts; rather, through the Holy Spirit, he comes to live in us (John 14.18).
- Due to the indwelling of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to have the Spirit is to have Christ in us (John 14.10-11; 1 John 3.24).
- The Spirit communicates to us the efficacy of Christ's death and victory over our flesh, with the power of his resurrection (Gal 2.20).
- The Holy Spirit's function is to transmit to us Christ's life, Christ's glory, his moral virtues, his love, his humility, his peace, his meekness, his holiness. Referring to the Holy Spirit, Jesus said: "*He will take what is mine and show it to you*" (John 16.14).
- The Spirit's function is to form Christ Jesus in us; to transform us from glory to glory in his image (2 Cor 3.18).

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: he condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8.3-4).

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation... that you may know... what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places... (Ephesians 1:17-20).

The great resource of every disciple of Christ is to live full of the Spirit twenty-four hours of every day, living by faith, filled with the glory of Christ, and walking according to his glorious power that is in us. Amen and Hallelujah!

THE KINGDOM OF GOD, THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

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- Gen 1.27-28 God handed over the government of the earth to a viceroy (representative of the King): Adam.
Gen 3 He failed because he surrendered to Satan.
Sinful humanity then rebelled against God.
- Psa 2.1-3 Psalm 2 describes the nations and those who govern as uniting against the Lord and his Anointed One (Christ)
- Psa 2.4-5 God laughs at them, and then speaks to them in his fury.
- Sal. 2.5-8 According to this messianic Psalm, interpreted by Paul in the synagogue in Pisidian
Acts 13.32-34 Antioch, the Father, on the day of Christ's resurrection, says to him: *"You are my Son, today I have become your Father; ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession"*.
The Son, always obedient to the Father, requests the nations as his inheritance.
- Phil 2.9-11 The Father exalts him to the highest place,
Eph 1.20-22 above all power and dominion,
Matt 28.18 and gives him all authority in heaven and earth.
Psa 110.1 And then, seating him on the throne to his right, he says to him: *Sit on my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.*
Acts 2.34-35

OUR MISSION IS SIMILAR TO THAT OF CHRIST

Jesus also said to his disciples that in their mission in the earth they were to follow his example:

- John 20.21 - *"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you"*.
Jn 8.12 / Matt 5.14 - *"I am the light of the world" - "You are the light of the world"*
Matt 20.25-28 - *"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"*.
Isa. 53.7 / - *"He was led like a lamb to the slaughter" - "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves"*.
Matt 10.16
John 18.36 - *"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place"*.
Eph 6.12 - *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"*.

WHAT THE LORD SAID THAT WE ARE

- Matt 5.13-14 - The salt of the earth and the light of the world.
- Matt 5.16 - A city set on a hill that cannot be hidden; so that men who see our good words might glorify God.
- 1 Tim 3.15 - The church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

WHAT THE LORD EXPLICITLY COMMANDED US TO DO

- Matt 6.10 - Pray each day that his kingdom come, and his will be done in the earth as it is done in heaven.
- Matt 22.37-39 - Love God with all our being, and our neighbor as ourselves.
- Matt 28.20 - As his disciples we are to keep all his commandments. We should put into practice everything he taught us in the Sermon on the Mount (“Didache of the kingdom”).
- Matt 7.24 - Mar 16.15-16 - Go into all the world and preach the gospel to everyone; make disciples of all people of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to keep all his commandments.
- John 17.21-23 - He prayed that we might be one, so that the world might believe...
 - Pray for all men and for those in eminence.

WHAT THE LORD PROMISED TO DO IN THE WORLD IN THE FINAL DAYS

- Joel 2.28-32 - Pour out his Spirit upon all flesh with great signs.
- Eph 4.11-16 - Raise up apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, until the church reach its fullness in unity, holiness and quantity.
 - Eph 2.7 - Reveal in the coming ages the abundant riches of his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
- Matt 24.14 - Worldwide evangelization with the gospel of the kingdom prior to his coming...
- Hab 2.14 - Fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory.
- Rom 11.15 y 25-26 - A worldwide revival through the conversion of Israel.
- Heb 12.26-28 - The shaking and removal of all things moveable in earth and heaven, so that that which is immovable might remain: the kingdom of God.

OBSERVATION

- John 6.15 - At no time do we observe in Christ’s mission any attempt to be a political ruler. When others wanted to make him king, he refused and fled.
 - At no time did he give a single explicit commandment to his disciples that they as the church should seek to conquer the nations in a political career or by their own might. (Although I understand that any particular disciple in his condition as a citizen could become politically involved – in the best sense of the word – and occupy a function of government in the world.)

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE CHURCH

We should never confuse the kingdom of God with the church.
The church is under the kingdom of God, but it is not the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is his government, his reign.
In himself God has all knowledge and power; the church does not.
God is perfect, absolute and infallible; not the church.
The church is made up of men with flaws and imperfections, in the process of being perfected.

Matt 18.15-18 Jesus Christ delegated many things to his disciples, even the responsibility to excommunicate a member of the church who does not repent of his sin; but he never delegated to anyone the function of being head of the church, or the Lord or history. The one who continues to be seated on the throne is the Lamb, and not the church. He is alive and continues to be the only head of the church and Lord of the universe.

Rom 13.1-7 God has the authority to raise up and put down kings; not the church.

Psa 24.1 God is the owner of the earth and its fullness; not the church.

THE CONQUEST OF THE NATIONS

Though he was a king, Jesus Christ became a slave. Though he owned the universe he became poor. Though he was God, he emptied himself. He came to serve, to love, to forgive and to give his life. Though he was omnipotent he became weak, vulnerable, meek. He allowed himself to be killed. He came to show that the cross is the pathway to universal conquest; that evil is to be conquered with good, hate with love. He came to teach us that the meek will inherit the earth. The Father is pleased to give the kingdom to those who are poor in spirit; to show to children the mysteries of the kingdom.

Jesus showed to the church of all ages that in order to effectively fulfill his mission in the earth, she should follow the model of Servant, in the spirit of the Lamb.

THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST CENTURIES

This is the path the church followed during the first three centuries of her history. It was a persecuted church, with hundreds of thousands of martyrs; a poor church, yet powerful in God. A church that grew and grew, and nothing and no one could detain its growth.

They were not evangelicals nor Roman catholics, but true disciples. Under persecution, only the authentic Christians prevailed.

With the conversion of Constantine (in the year 311) the church experimented, apparently, her greatest victory, and at the same time, the beginning of her greatest deterioration.

The great emperor of Rome, in his desire to help the church, did what he never should have done:

- He imposed Christianity as the official religion of the empire.
- He transformed the pagan temples into Christian temples.
- He imposed by decree that every Roman citizen should be baptized and become Christian.
- He dignified the bishops to the hierarchy of princes.

Although this appeared to be a great advance of the church in history, it became its greatest loss. The church lost her simplicity, humility, her dependence on God and, consequently, her spirituality.

The worldly values and hierarchies were progressively installed in the church: power, honor, fame, money, convenience, dominion... Some leaders of the church sincerely believed that the kingdoms of this world had become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ...

Evidently, the church, accustomed to over 280 years of being poor and persecuted, was not prepared to reign. Instead of a lamb, it became a lion, and later began to eat up the other animals in the forest.

THE CHURCH IN OUR DAYS:

“Those who ignore their history are condemned to repeat the same errors”

It would seem that the Catholic Church understands history better than the evangelical church. It would seem that they have learned from the errors of the past, and today they have a clearer posture concerning the church and society than many evangelicals.

Traditional and historical evangelicals have been rather active at the level of theological reflection on social and political subjects, although due to their limited spiritual vitality and slight numerical growth they have not been able to make a significant contribution in a practical sense.

The churches that have a dispensationalist or fundamentalist orientation have not developed a missiological proposal for social transformation due to their eschatological focus, (I would also call it an “escapological” focus).

Many of the neo-Pentecostal or charismatic churches under the influence of materialism and prosperity theology, have incorporated the world’s values: fame, power, money, luxury, success, numbers, status, position, a sumptuous and grandiose approach. In countries where the number of evangelicals has grown considerably, there are pastors who present themselves as candidates for the presidency of the nation, or other important roles without previously developing a socio-economic proposal in accord with the values of the kingdom of God. And in the cases where they reach the seat of power, they use the formulas that have already been shown to be a failure, whether they are of capitalistic or socialistic tendencies.

Second part: THE CHALLENGE AHEAD OF US

I suggest that, in addition to all that has been said in this apostolic consultation, we need to advance along two lines of action:

- 1) Integral and diligent obedience to the GREAT COMMISSION
- 2) ‘Ora et Labora’, i.e., Pray and work: Pray the Lord’s Prayer each day and begin – from this point forward - an INTELLECTUAL PROJECT UNDER THE LORD’S INSPIRATION in collaboration with PROJECTS FOR THE SOCIETY AND THE NATION MORE IN ACCORD WITH THE VALUES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

1 – THE GREAT COMMISSION

Matt 28:18-20

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

This was the specific command that Jesus gave to his disciples before ascending into heaven. These simple Galileans, men without much education, after being filled with the Holy Spirit, launched into this task in the midst of a world completely adverse, as regards the iron dominion of Rome, Greek philosophy, paganism, mythology and idolatry.

However, after some 250 years there were in the Roman empire vast regions in which more than half the population were followers of Jesus^{*}, to the point that the Roman emperor himself, Constantine, in the year 312 was converted and established Christianity as the official religion of the empire. We do not know whether his conversion was genuine or strategic in order to assure his remaining in power in an empire in which the number of Christians was growing greatly. Only God knows.

Returning to our central point, we ask: How did those disciples of the Lord accomplish such growth in the midst of such adverse conditions? They did not have the advantages we have today: printing press, radio, TV, automobiles, airplanes, telephones, cellular phones, computers, Internet, etc.

What did they have? **THEY HAD THE POWER OF AN ABSOLUTE CONVICTION.** They were totally convinced that **JESUS WAS THE ONLY AND THE COMPLETE SOLUTION FOR ALL MEN IN ALL NATIONS.** Empowered by that conviction, with determination and faith they launched into the task of making disciples of all nations.

Do we have the same conviction? In order to strengthen our faith and our conviction I ask the following question: **What would our country be like if all the inhabitants, from the president of the nation to the last inhabitant, should all live according to God’s will?**

I have asked the same question in different parts of the world and in the most diverse auditoriums, and the answer is always the same: **“IT WOULD BE A PARADISE.”**

^{*} *Armenian history registers that of the twelve apostles, those who reached that country with the gospel were Thaddeus and Bartholomew. Armenia was a pagan nation. By the end of the third century, more than half the population of Armenia were disciples of Christ, and under great persecution. In the year 301 the king of Armenia, Dertad II, became a Christian and established Christianity as the state religion. (Armenians boast that theirs was the first nation that accepted Christianity as their national religion).*

Could this not be the proposal that Jesus made when he taught us to pray: *“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”*?

The watchword

It is basic that we give much attention to the watchword of Jesus. He did not say: ‘Go and have meetings, campaigns, encounters, temples, not even cell groups. He said: “GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES”. There is nothing wrong with having meetings, campaigns, cell groups, or building temples... We do all that and will continue to do so; they are good and useful, but we need to understand that such things are not the essence of our MISSION; for we can have meetings, campaigns, temples and cell groups... WITHOUT MAKING TRUE DISCIPLES TO JESUS CHRIST.

The solution for the nations is not to make them evangelicals, but disciples. That is the essence of the great commission.

How does Jesus define a disciple?

Luke 14.26, 27, 33

1. V.26: *“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters —yes, even his own life— he cannot be my disciple”*.

Disciple is a person in whose life Jesus takes first place.

2. V.27: *“And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple”*. For Jesus, the cross means being obedient to death.

Disciple is a person willing to obey the Lord, even to the point of death.

3. V.33: *“Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple”*.

Disciple is a person who recognizes that all he has belongs to Christ: His life, his time, his body, his family, his home, his money, his goods and property, his projects, his abilities, everything.

In a practical sense, what is a disciple?

Today, a child who goes to school is called a student; in ancient times he was called a disciple. A student is one who learns. Usually, students are children. A child is docile, like soft clay; he is teachable, he can be corrected. He has the virtue of learning. He is a disciple.

What should a disciple of Jesus learn?

He should learn to live according to God’s will. This is the greatest need in today’s society. People do not know how to live. And there are no schools that teach people to live, much less to live according to God’s will. Families have failed in this basic responsibility. The Catholic church failed. Evangelicals are also failing.

JESUS CHRIST says: *“Come to me... take my yoke... learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”* (Matthew 11.28-30).

Clearly, a student, a disciple, is teachable, is meek and humble, willing to be corrected.

This is what Jesus commanded us to do in the great commission: Make disciples, baptizing them, and then teaching the disciples to keep all of the Lord's commandments and thus live according to God's will in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We have the solution. The unique and total solution for all of mankind. The world is ours, because it belongs to the Lord. All have failed, and will fail again. All the ideologies, all religions, even the evangelicals, as long as they dedicate themselves to just have meetings. In this crucial hour of history, God tells us: **GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS... I AM WITH YOU.**

2 – 'ORA ET LABORA' (Pray and work):

Pray the Lord's Prayer every day, in which we say: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. At the same time let us initiate – from now on - an **INTELLECTUAL WORK UNDER THE LORD'S INSPIRATION** in the preparation of **PROJECTS FOR THE SOCIETY AND THE NATION THAT ARE MORE IN LINE WITH THE VALUES OF GOD'S KINGDOM.**

REFLECTION:

How should we act in a country if we are a small minority? (For instance, Belgium: 0,6% evangelicals – not disciples)

- We should understand the value of a mustard seed (Matt 13.31-32).
- We should be leaven (Matt 13.33).

We should determine as our objective that all evangelicals and Catholics become disciples of Jesus.

Carlos Mraida told us that we can also read history **FROM THE FUTURE TOWARD THE PAST:**

- How should we act in a country where 30% of the inhabitants are disciples?
- How should we act if we reach 70% disciples?
- How would the labor laws, tax laws, civil and penal laws, economic norms look?
- What would the constitution be like?
- What would be the economic system?
- How would the riches be distributed? How about the involvement in the international order, the health system, local and national security? Would it be proper to impose the moral norms of the kingdom upon those who are not disciples?

In light of the current vacuum and crisis, in order to experience a true transformation of society, three things are required of those who govern:

1. Integrity >< Corruption
2. Capability, professionalism >< Ineptitude
3. A socio-economic system more in line with the principles and values of the kingdom of God.

We need to create groups for reflection and work to elaborate proposals in the following categories:

- **PROJECT FOR SOCIETY**
- **PROJECT FOR THE NATION**

- PROJECT FOR GOVERNMENT: EXECUTIVE, LEGISLATIVE AND JUDICIAL
- PROJECT FOR MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY
- PROJECT FOR WORK
- PROJECT FOR EDUCATION
- PROJECT FOR HEALTH
- PROJECT FOR HUMAN FORMATION: VALUES, CHARACTER, MORAL AND ETHICAL
- PROJECT FOR MACROECONOMICS
- PROJECT FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE
- PROJECT FOR SAVINGS
- PROJECT FOR RETIREMENT
- PROJECT FOR HUMAN ENRICHMENT
- PROJECT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR ECOLOGICAL CARE AND DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS
- PROJECT FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
- PROJECT FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION
- PROJECTS FOR HONORABLE LIVING QUARTERS
- PROJECT FOR CITIZEN'S AND NATIONAL SECURITY
- ETCÉTERA...

...while we continue to pray each day: *“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*

An example in the history of social transformation was the result of revival in England through the ministry of John Wesley.

Jorge Himitian

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND ECONOMICS

INTRODUCTION

Jesus taught us to pray every day to our Father in heaven and to request of him, among other things: “*Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*”.

And before returning to heaven, he declared: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...”

The following is a question that I have asked in many places in the world, and in the most diverse environments: What would this country, or any country in the world, look like if all its inhabitants – both government and people – lived according to God’s will? How would it be if everyone loved his neighbor just as he loves himself?

And the answer given me is the same everywhere: “It would be a Paradise”.

If we apply the same principle to the subject assigned me – *The Kingdom of God and Economics* – the question could be presented as follows:

What would the economic system of a country look like if all its inhabitants were Jesus’ disciples? What would the political system look like? How about the laws? How would commerce function, finances, the courts, the health system, education? Would there be work for everyone? Would there be rich and poor? Would there be a fair distribution of the land, of the natural resources, of the profits? Would everyone have access to a decent home, good food and a good education?

What value is it to ask of ourselves this kind of question, based on a UTOPIAN supposition?

Let’s get away from the utopian figure by modifying the question a little: If in a certain country Christians were in the majority, or even a significant minority, what socio-economic system would we propose? For which laws would we vote?

UTOPIA, IDEOLOGY AND FAITH

1. Utopia serves us as an instrument of critique to discern the current reality of our society: its ideologies, its various political systems, its laws, its life style, in light of the values of the kingdom of God. Those values help us to avoid being seduced or deceived by a human ideology.
2. The purpose of an ideology is to provide a coherent unity of concepts, knowledge, values, beliefs. It presupposes a definition of that which is real, yet it is often an involuntary falsification of the reality, for it hides everything that works against the interests of a certain group. Its purpose is to achieve social consensus under the hegemony of a dominant group, or of groups that seek to take the place of the dominant group. The particular interests of a specific sector are presented as if they were of interest to all. In

this sense, the ideology serves as a process of simulation and deceit, often in an unconscious way. Those who defend a specific ideology at the conscious level are generally convinced that their vision of things is the truth.*

3. Our starting point as Christians is completely different: FAITH. Faith is an encounter with the absolute in Jesus Christ. Its foundation is God's revelation. Faith is to know and experience the truth as God has revealed it, for he is the only one who knows all things with absolute integrity. Faith judges all ideologies and is not wedded to any of them. To judge does not necessarily mean to reject, but to discern between the good and the bad of each ideology, its errors and successes, its truths and its falsehoods. Faith is to know all things from the point of view of God's knowledge.*

* [Concepts extracted in part from the book, FE CRISTIANA Y COMPROMISO SOCIAL – CELAM II Parte, 2.4]

4. Even if we consider the kingdom of God as a utopia for that part of society that has not yet acknowledged Jesus as Lord, such is not the case for those who have already become a part of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ (Col 1.13), for as his disciples we have the duty to not be conformed to this world, but to be transformed through the renewing of our understanding, so that we live in this world in line with the values of God's kingdom, in order to be salt in the earth and light in the world. Our life style should be light that reprimands the injustices that are committed in our society, both personal and structural. To the measure in which we, as the church, incarnate Jesus' teachings we will manifest in the world an alternative social model: a community that lives according to the values of God's kingdom, "*a city that is set on a hill*" (Mat 5.15).

SOCIETY'S CURRENT SITUATION

I do not need to provide a full description, for we are all witnesses, or we have been made aware through the media, of what occurs around us, both in our region or in the rest of the world.

Every day we observe with a sense of pain and impotence the social reality of our times. The world's riches have grown in recent decades, but so has the level of poverty, hunger, malnutrition, misery, and consequent sicknesses. In my country, Argentina, the level of the GNP between 2004 and 2008 has grown at 8 to 9 % each year, yet, paradoxically, the percentage of those who live in poverty and indigence has increased considerably. Where has that increase of riches gone? Each year the gap is greater between rich and poor. How many families there are in the world who live in inhuman conditions, while others experience a scandalous waste in opulence and consumer goods, that deeply offends those who are excluded from such '*blessings*'.

This situation generates in some hate and resentment against society; and in others, sadness and bitterness. Many feel they have been left out, miserable, degraded, excluded from enjoying the minimum conditions of a better life. All of this makes for a boiling caldron in which many young people choose drugs, gangs, delinquency, libertine sex, crime, social explosions, terrorism and other social evils.

THE CAUSES

(Here three are mentioned. Certainly there are many more.)

1. Personal sin

This is evident in public servants, the government, business, and individuals

- Corruption, bribery.
- Lack of character virtues

- Selfishness, individualism, greed. *“For the love of money is the root of all evil”* (1Tim 6.10).

2. Structural injustice

- An economic system that benefits the few instead of seeking the common good.
- Laws that favor an unjust distribution of riches (Psa 94.20; Hab 2.6-12). This is increasing the gap between rich and poor.
- Capital is given the privilege over work. Part of the profit should be distributed among the workers who produce it.
- Work exploitation. Indecent salaries. Informal work. Exploitation of undocumented immigrants.

3. Generational heritage

This is the transmission from one generation to another of habits, attitudes and a negative mentality.

- Mentality of misery, failure, fatalism.
- Sentiment of being a victim and not assuming responsibility
- Habits of laziness and abandon
- Diabolical falsehoods in the mind
- Hopelessness, without a project for life

ALTERNATIVES

1. Passivity

With the idea that our true home is heaven while the earth belongs to the devil, many Christians have chosen the path of no involvement in political and socio-economic matters. But we need to be aware that maintaining “political neutrality” could signify a political posture: the maintenance of the “status quo”, that is, the current system.

2. Resignation

With the advance of evil and injustice, others feel their impotence and simply resign themselves. They seek to evangelize and save whoever they can from this perverse generation.

3. Struggle, using human means

In order to modify the injustice in society, some choose to get involved in political, social and even revolutionary movements.

4. Assume our responsibility to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world

(Matt 5.12-13). The leaven of God’s kingdom that will transform the entire meal (Matt 13.33).

For this purpose we have four very powerful weapons to use against the darkness:

- Prayer and spiritual warfare
- The Word of God, accompanied by signs, wonders and miracles.
- Make disciples, in quantity, quality and unity.
- Serve society with holiness, love and generosity.
- Be factors of transformation in society (salt and light).

PRINCIPLES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD OVER THE ECONOMY

Following are several fundamental truths from the Word of God that we should keep in mind in the determination of any ECONOMIC PROJECT, based on a Christian worldview.

1. In his character as creator and sustainer of the universe, God is the only legitimate owner of all that exists. The earth, the fields, animals, grains, petroleum, minerals, metals, seas, creatures of the sea; everything that is produced by the earth, everything that exists on the planet, absolutely everything, belongs to God. The psalmist declares with absolute clarity: *“The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein”* (Psalm 24.1). God said: *“The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is mine”* (Lev 25.23).
2. With generosity, God has given the earth to all men, for the good of all humanity (Psa 115.16). As human beings, we are simply administrators of that which belongs to God. The concept of private property is a relative concept. In an absolute sense, we are administrators, not owners of the goods with which God has entrusted us. One day we must present ourselves before the Owner to give account of our stewardship.
3. Many of the goods that God created are potential riches. Therefore, God ordered men to work six days of each week in order to transform those natural resources into useful goods to be consumed for our own well-being and that of humanity in general (Gen 2.15; Ex 20.9-11). For that reason, it is quite fair to say that anyone who does not want to work forfeits the right to use and consume that which was produced (2 Thess 3.10-12).
4. Human beings multiplied; nations emerged with their respective governments. It is the responsibility of the state to establish just laws to guarantee a more equitable distribution of the riches and an equitable access to the natural resources that are on the planet (Rom 13.1-7).
5. God created man in his own image and likeness. Every person has more value than all the material world. Every man is worth the same as every other man. To value and love our neighbor is the basis of all social intercourse. Our neighbor is a subject, not an object. In the exploitation of labor, the owner uses the worker as an object, like a tool, for his own enrichment; he transforms the subject into an object, the human person into a “thing”.
Every socio-economic proposal that springs from a Christian worldview should keep in mind that the greatest commandment of Jesus with reference to human relations is: *“Love your neighbor as yourself”*. When applied to the economy, this means equality and justice. Equality of rights and duties; equality of opportunity, of privileges and responsibilities, and a just distribution of the riches (2 Cor 8.13-15; 9.9-10).

PROPOSALS

1. We need to remove the first cause that produces social injustice, which is personal sin.

The following is a transcription from an unknown author:

The difference between rich and poor countries does not depend on the country’s age. This can be verified because countries like India and Egypt, that have existed for more than 2000 years, are poor countries. On the other hand, Canada and New Zealand, which 150 years ago were little known, today are developed and wealthy countries.

Neither does the difference between poor and rich countries depend on the natural resources that are available. Japan occupies a small territory, 80% mountainous,

inadequate for agriculture and cattle raising, yet it is the second largest world economy. The country is like an immense floating factory that imports raw material from around the world and exports manufactured products.

Another example is Switzerland, that does not raise chocolate, but has the best chocolate in the world. In its small territory animals are bred and plants are cultivated during only four months of the year. Yet they manufacture milk products of the best quality. It is a small country that has an image of security, order and work, which has caused it to become the strong box of the world.

Executives of rich countries who have relations with their peers from poor countries point out that there is no significant intellectual difference. The race and the color of the skin is also unimportant. Immigrants labeled as lazy in their countries of origin are the productive force of the rich countries of Europe.

Then, what is the difference?

The difference is the attitude of the people which has been formed throughout many years by the education and the culture.

When we analyze the behavior of the people in rich and developed countries we see that the great majority observe the following life principles:

- 1. Ethical conduct, as a basic principle*
- 2. Integrity*
- 3. Responsibility*
- 4. Respect for laws and regulations*
- 5. Respect for the rights of fellow citizens*
- 6. Desire to work*
- 7. Efforts expended to save and to invest*
- 8. Desire for improvement*
- 9. Punctuality*

In the poor countries, only a small minority follow these basic principles in their daily life. We are not poor because we lack natural resources or because nature was cruel to us. We are poor because we lack the will power to embrace and to teach these principles which make the rich and developed societies function properly.

This description is masterful and an excellent guide to follow in shaping the character, attitudes and habits of people. But I want us to take note of something important. Among the virtues mentioned, the greatest of all of Jesus' commandments, with reference to human relations, has been omitted: "*Love your neighbor as yourself*".

Example. It is true, as a famous Argentine journalist, Mariano Grondona, has said, that the countries in the northern part of Europe, as a result of the Reformation, have been able to forge a society with those nine marvelous principles, which are biblical principles. It is also true that those values have been foundational for the economic growth and progress of those European countries, as well as in other nations, such as the United States of America. However, it is important to point out that the Reformation, together with those values did not sufficiently emphasize love for our neighbor, service, generosity, the need to hold loosely to material riches, love even for our enemies and help for the poor, which are the central subjects, and perhaps the main ones, of Jesus' teaching. In consequence, the nine values mentioned, emphasized by the Protestant Reformation were mixed with selfishness and greed, that is native to the human heart, producing a mix of economic prosperity and individualism. Later, when economic progress was intensified with the industrial revolution, the social inequalities increased greatly. Materialism also developed, with emphasis on the

consumption of goods, and the concentration of riches in the hands of a few. At the present time, the developed nations, most of which have Christian roots, do not perceive their sin nor their lack of involvement in the presence of hunger, malnutrition, weaponry and the “scandal of destructive disparities”, as the Pope recently said.

We thank God that today, the church is beginning to rediscover the gospel of the kingdom, the validity of the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord’s imperative mandate to love our neighbor as ourselves and the responsibility to be factors of transformation in society. Today we have a better understanding that we cannot be Christians and greedy at the same time, and that a disciple is one who recognizes that he is only a steward, not the owner of what he possesses, and that his life, his possessions, his time and his abilities are at the Lord’s disposition and also at his neighbor’s disposition.

The ones who have the greatest resources and must remove the first cause of social injustice are ourselves, the children of God. For through the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, radical conversion, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, discipleship, prayer, the Word of God and the power gifts that God has given us, we can, through Christ, achieve the transformation of individuals. And that individual transformation is the basic condition for the transformation of society.

However, even though that is indispensable, it is not sufficient; we must also remove the second cause.

2. We must remove the second cause, which is structural injustice, and build a new economic and social model more in accord with the principles of God’s kingdom

- It is not my responsibility to present a project for society; I am not an economist. But I suggest that apostles and prophets bring together Christian economists, business people, politicians and professionals, who are totally committed to the kingdom of God, and assign them the task of working toward the preparation of a SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROJECT more in accord with the values of the kingdom of God. We need to approach this task with visión, faith, prayer, patience, perseverance, study and, above all, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- Faced with the current vacuum and crisis, and in favor of a true transformation of society, we must require of those in government and public officials:
 - Integrity instead of Corruption
 - Fitness, aptitude and professional conduct instead of Ineptitude
 - A socio-economic proposal inspired by the principles of the kingdom.It is the responsibility of the church to provide to society men and women who are holy, who live with integrity, the disposition to serve, humility, generosity and at the same time, professional preparation of the highest level, ready to occupy responsibilities in the public or private sphere.
- I refer to business people and professionals, who are creative and successful, committed completely to the kingdom, ready to place their abilities and their resources for the creation of businesses, whose primary objective is not for gain but to help their neighbor; business people who will devote themselves to create job resources with decent salaries, which, in addition, distribute part of the profits among the workers who produce those riches.

3. We need to remove the third cause, which is the transmission of one generation to another of habits, attitudes and a mentality of failure, and produce a new mentality of faith, hope and victory.

- For one of the poorest sectors of society, the problem is not merely socio-economic; it is much deeper than that. Satan has been able to build in their minds, their sentiments and attitudes, a strong fortress, a structural falsehood. The Word of God is powerful enough to destroy those fortresses and to build in their minds proper sentiments and attitudes that conform to God's truth. It would be good to help them get a better job and home, but the solution requires a much deeper action: radical discipleship, that will produce three results in the disciple's life:
- A new mentality

We have learned that '*repentance*' – in Greek, '*metanoia*' – means a '*change of thought patterns*'. These people need a new vision of themselves. Every person needs to know, to believe and be able to declare:

 - I am a creature of God; I am unique in the universe.
 - I was created by God and for God.
 - God loves me very much. God knows me personally, and he loves me since before the foundation of the world.
 - God has a marvelous plan for my life.
 - God loved me so much that to save me he sent his Son...
 - God has a better life for me.
 - God is going to make me a conqueror.
 - God is my Father, I am his child. The eternal and all-powerful God, creator and owner of the universe is my father!
- A new attitude: RESPONSIBILITY
 - God wants to restore in me his image and likeness.
 - I am a person responsible for my actions, my words, my behavior.
 - I am responsible to make improvements, to grow and to progress.
 - My future does not depend on good fortune, nor on other people; it depends on me, in my relationship to the Lord.
 - I assume my responsibility to build a better future, a better quality of life, with God's help and that of my brothers and sisters, but I am the one who is most responsible.
 - I am not a victim of others nor of my circumstances; I am responsible to overcome, and to progress.
 - I renounce the possibility of giving up and every feeling that I am a victim of society. I reject all bitterness and resentment.
 - Even when the external conditions are difficult and unfavorable, I will put forth effort, struggle, and win in the Lord's name.
 - To do this I need to learn, I need to be taught; I am a disciple of Jesus Christ and of my older brothers in the Lord.
- New habits through personal and profound discipleship:
 - Hygiene, cleanliness, order, esthetics, cosmetics, hairdo, etc.
 - Decisions concerning my clothing, decorum, elegance, good taste, etc.
 - Order, cleanliness and care of the home, of the furniture, clothing, shoes, utensils, home appliances, etc.
 - How to do work in the home
 - Purchases: what to buy, where, how, when, priorities, etc.
 - Work skills: learn skills for work, whether a man or a woman.

- Work with diligence, responsibility, dedication, sacrifice, desire to work, satisfaction, progress, preparation and improvement of skills
- Administration
- Savings (even if minimal)
- Training and education of children
- Studies, learning skills, especially in the case of children.
- Help build their future: plans, program, living quarters.
- Food, nutrition
- Sexual education
- Family order and harmony
- Use of free time, excursions, diversions, entertainment

The list could be quite long. Not everyone needs the same things. But all need to acquire new habits until they reach perfection (maturity) in the Lord.

These changes will not be produced without the church's help. The deeper and definitive solution is to disciple people and teach them to believe all of God's truths and to obey all his commands through the extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit.

Workers are needed with a true sense of vocation to work with this kind of people and have a special love for them.

Obviously, the first stage is the most difficult; but once some workers are formed in this way and from among them, these will be the best qualified to continue evangelizing and discipling others in the same category. Pastors that emerge from among them will be the most effective.

Isaiah 2.2-4

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.

Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Isaiah 60.1-3

Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.