

Mission Statement

To develop peer level fellowship
To enrich and inspire each other
To support and protect one another
To hear God together and for one another
To encourage cooperation to accelerate unity in the Body of Christ
To provoke the Church to accomplish its whole mission in the World

TEN YEARS TOGETHER

Giovanni Traettino

A brief history

This year is the tenth anniversary of the founding of the *Apostolic Fellowship International*. We met at Positano from the 9th to the 11th May and there were twelve of us. The only condition for the invitation was a recognised apostolic ministry. Among those present were: Abilio Chagas, Jorge Himition, Ernest Komanapalli, Phitsanunart Sritawong (PN), Cristian Romo, Pierre Trushel, Giovanni Traettino and, acting as secretary, Ernest D. Bretscher. There were other brothers with an apostolic ministry who for one reason or another were unable to get there. Pierre Trushel, who the previous year had taken the initiative of calling together a large convention on apostolic ministry in his home town of Grenoble, and who to the end was one of the most determined promoters of this initiative, has since gone to be with the Lord.

In a climate of warm brotherly fellowship, soon to become friendship, the foundations were laid for what from the start we intended to be an international fellowship of apostolic ministries: the *Apostolic Fellowship International*! It was on that occasion that we came to agreement on the “*nature of apostolic ministry*”, on the fact that we were and would continue to be “*a group of apostles in mutual relationship with shared values and vision for the reconciliation and building up of the Body of Christ*”, on the *Mission Statement* which has inspired and guided us to this day; on our shared values¹, and on the simple co-ordinating structure which has supported us until now. In the following years we concentrated mainly on the development of committed relationships as the vitally necessary context for a healthy and balanced functioning of the apostolic ministry.

Our past experience

“On our part, we come to this appointment with a humble awareness of having opened up a new path that offers rich possibilities for the future of the church. We have sought to offer a crucial answer to a strategic need in our generation” (PN), at a significant crossroads in church history (AN). Ten years is not a long time. History progresses only slowly! But what has been born in our midst is, if not unique, certainly precious of its kind and is undoubtedly of great value in the lives of all of us who have walked together over these last years.

Our hearts’ desire has started to become a reality. We have witnessed the birth and growth of a meeting-place for fellowship, a network of “covenant brothers” and friends, a network of networks, a spiritual workshop which, as we have prayed and discussed together, has given rise, *together*, to an increasing understanding and sharing of God’s plan for the church; of the

¹ “We are committed to: The gospel of the Kingdom; The unity of the Church – with diversity; The restoration of the Church as it attains to fullness; Discipleship; Friendship and flexibility; Reconciliation in the Church and the world; Truth and tolerance; Mutual respect and submission and the value of listening”

nature, importance and relevance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, and of the vision in God's heart for the unity and reconciliation of all Christians in order to promote the healing and salvation of the world.²

Our burden has been to call together proven apostolic ministries (*1. with a clear revelation of the mystery of Christ and the body of Christ; 2. leading movements of churches and/or ministries; and 3. recognised by other apostles*³) with the same heart and mind, willing to serve this vision and commit themselves, in a spirit of covenant faithfulness and mutual submission, to promote not only the theory but also the practice of apostolic ministry and *collegiality*.⁴ We are grateful to the Lord that we are already beginning to see some of the fruits of this.

If we look at the objectives defined in our **Mission Statement**, we have learned – even though sometimes only partially, and necessarily in different ways – to *develop peer level fellowship*, we have *enriched and inspired each other*, we have learned to *hear God together and for one another* and to stimulate and challenge one another to fulfil our common mission; we have promoted *projects and channels of cooperation* (e.g. India, Africa) and forms of *mutual support and cross-fertilisation* (e.g. exchanges of ministry, spiritual influence on one another) which have already produced wonderful benefits and opened promising new perspectives before our eyes.

Our guiding vision has been fourfold:

- a) **Relationships**: that as men with an apostolic ministry, we meet together for several days each year in order to get to know each other and build relationships, sharing in the vision, the passion and also experiences; to also share our burdens, questions, expectations as well as revelation.
- b) **Networking**: starting from an inclusive “core group”, that as relationships grow, there is a “knitting together” of heart, vision and effort across the world at this apostolic level.
- c) **Communication**: that through the use of available technologies, communication should be developed.
- d) **Unity**: that through this ongoing relationship and co-operation, the goal of unity in the Body of Christ should be implemented and accelerated.

Over the last ten years, after an initial phase in which we emphasised *the theme of relationships (koinonia, fellowship)* as foundational to the nature of God and of the body of Christ, and therefore also to apostolic relationships, we examined and came to agreement about the strategic nature and role of apostolic ministry, both individually (*personal episkopē*) and in relationship (*collegial episkopē*), for the leadership, upbuilding and unity of the church.⁵

² “We need to create an international forum for reflection, for prayer, for revelation, to hear God and to listen to one another. We need communication and we need to know what God is doing in different parts of the world, as well as what He is saying. We need to renew our covenant with God. It is a covenant of faithfulness and loyalty to the revelation of the mystery of Christ; a covenant of integrity, of self-denial, of consecration as well as a covenant of love, respect, humility, companionship and friendship between each other.” Jorge Himitian. Italy 2000

³ “**The Nature of apostleship**: 1. Revelation of the mystery of Christ and of the Body of Christ; 2. First translocal creative ministry with authority to a network of churches/ministries. 3. Recognition from other apostles”. (Italy 2000)

⁴ “In the New Testament there is a clear indication and understanding of the collegial nature of the apostolic ministry, as a service for the unity and “catholicity” of the Church. The Koinonia of the apostles is necessary to the connection, the coordination and the organic unity of the local, national and trans-continental fellowships over which they preside (episcopè). This allows the recognition of individual ministry but always in bonds of unity and truth with the collective episcopè, the sphere and the responsibility of the collegial apostolic government. The apostolic nature of the Church is the responsibility of the apostles in a mutual fellowship of love and truth. The koinonia and the unity of the apostles is necessary as an authoritative “diakonia” to the universal Church so that it can grow in love and truth (from the truth in love to the truth in unity) in our individual churches, and in the wider Church, with a view to obtaining the fullness already expressed in Christ, and which remains God's unquestionable goal for the Church.” Giovanni Traettino. Brazil 2002.

⁵ IAF documents, Italy 2000.

We then dealt more closely, as was natural, with the subject of the Church. The subject of our discussions from 2004 to 2007 was "*The Church's progress towards its fullness*". We explored the most important aspects of this fullness: 1. Unity; 2. Quality; 3. Quantity.

Kingdom of God, Church and Society

In Chile in 2008 we began to examine the subject of "*Kingdom of God, Church and Society*", and we continued with the same subject last year in Nigeria.⁶

It seemed clear to us – as emerged with particular clarity from the three main papers given at Santiago 2008⁷ – that the two subjects are *interconnected* and *closely joined together*.

"The theme of the Kingdom is basic to the Church and intersects its path *towards its fulness*; because the path towards fulness coincides with the *process* of growth and the increase of the Kingdom; and because *the fulness* is in fact the fulness of the life of the Kingdom, the Kingdom of God fully realised. This is true at the personal level (*the person* being the habitation of God by the Spirit), at the interpersonal level (*the community* as the habitation of God by the Spirit), and at the ecological and universal level (*the earth* and *the universe* full of His glory!). By then God will have healed, inhabited and filled with Himself all relationships and the whole creation! A new creature! A new community! A new creation!"⁸

In the course of these deliberations.... we happened on the theme of "*Transformation*". The subject of *Fullness* and that of the *Kingdom* raise the question, in God's economy, of *Transformation*: transformation of the individual Christian and the Christian community, and – to the degree that they are transformed, however partially (but truly!) – that of *society* and of the nations in which we live.

All this began from God's insatiable, invincible and irreversible desire to live in and possess the heart of man. It is what I like to call – more even than the Gospel of the Kingdom – the *Gospel of Desire*! We must start from the Gospel of Desire in order to understand the *Gospel of the Kingdom*. We must start from the heart of God to understand the heart of the Kingdom. The Gospel of the Kingdom is nothing but the *Gospel of the Desire* which God has always had and continues to have, to *enter and possess the heart of man*!

The *bridge*, the connection between the Gospel of Desire and the Gospel of the Kingdom, is the *Gospel of the Incarnation*.⁹ God's purpose was to inhabit and experience man – the new tabernacle (!) – *from within*. A tabernacle no longer made of walls of cloth, wood or stone, but of walls of flesh. It was inaugurated by God in Christ ("*Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me*"¹⁰), and is continued in Christians through the breaking in and indwelling of the Holy Spirit ("*Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you*"¹¹).

But all this would be incomplete if we did not comprehend that the ultimate purpose of the Gospel of Desire, of the Kingdom and of the Incarnation is *the Gospel of Transformation*! God's desire has always been the complete recovery of man in order to transform him, from within, in his personal life and his relationships, into His own image and likeness!"¹²

Two instruments of transformation

The papers given in Lagos emphasised that from a Christian viewpoint there are basically two possible *agencies* (and also witnesses and guardians!) of the Kingdom to transform the world: *the individual* and *the fellowship* (the natural family and the spiritual family)¹³, transformed in their character and behaviour by the "Gospel of the Kingdom" (*kerygma* and

⁶ For some of these materials in written form, see the web site www.afint.org.

⁷ For a brief summary of these papers, see Appendix A.

⁸ Giovanni Traettino, *Kingdom of God, Church and Society*, AFI Santiago, 2008.

⁹ As has been observed: "The incarnation is the spiritual and theological foundation of commitment to 'action'".

¹⁰ Heb 10:5.

¹¹ 1 Cor 6:19.

¹² From my "Welcome" at the *AFI Apostolic Consultation* in Lagos 2009

¹³ In other words: Christ and the Body of Christ!

didache); the conversion of the individual and the reformation of the fellowship (*Ecclesia semper reformanda!*). As PN has written, "The key is the man and the man is the key". And he adds, "The key is the church and the church is the key to the Kingdom of God". From this we can understand the strategic importance of both the individual disciple and the church *taking responsibility* (JH) for living out ("*incarnating*") and proclaiming ("*preaching*") the Kingdom of God!

Therefore the secret is "seed men" and "seed churches", which hold within them the seed of the life of the Kingdom, the ingredients (the DNA!) needed to "fertilise" society and "make it fruitful", *from within!* This is why the strategy becomes "planting churches, planting the Kingdom".

The "gap" between personal experience and the social impact of the Gospel of the Kingdom is explained by the delay in the lives of many Christians in making room for God's government. *Unfortunately, walking in the flesh is commoner than walking in the Spirit!* The Church's commitment to the Gospel, lived out in holiness and proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit, cannot but bring transformation and joy to the community (Adeboye), including the secular world. There are many examples in both biblical (Abraham, the prophets of restoration...) and secular history (the historical transformation of Europe, the experience of Africa).

The models are the person of Christ (incarnate and glorified) and the fellowships described by Luke (the church of Jerusalem in Acts) and John (the new Jerusalem of Revelation).

The influence of the Kingdom of God on society

Another aspect examined in some of the papers was the presence in society, as well as *personal sin*, of *structural sin* (social, collective and institutional injustice) and the transmission down the generations of negative thought-patterns and deep-rooted destructive habits (JH). What are Christians to do? Alongside the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom and the answers derived from personal and collective transformation, are any other tools available to us?

Can we take on commitments to social projects? Yes indeed! Most Christians are agreed on that. The church is called by its very nature to be visibly, outwardly and politically "*salt and light*" in society, giving a voice to the voiceless and defending the defenceless (EK). Can we engage in politics? Can we contribute in this way too to seeking "the common good" and "good government"? Can we agree with those who say that "politics is a demanding way of living out the Christian commitment to serving others"¹⁴? or that "politics is the social organisation of agape love"?

The general orientation of the papers given has been positive. It seems clear that structural sin requires structural answers. The church must commit itself and/or support people of integrity and ability, but it should also work out and/or support social and economic proposals based on Kingdom principles.

We must therefore live out and bear witness to the Gospel of the Kingdom and promote and support good government by praying tirelessly for those in authority, voting at elections, putting forward proposals, paying taxes, taking care of the civic education of believers, contributing to good government and the promotion of non-partisan (or bipartisan) policies, mobilising honest and capable Christian professionals, and preparing believers for heaven (Obanure/Olowu).

In working out social and economic proposals, some of the Kingdom principles on which to base them are: *1. The earth is the Lord's; 2. Seeking the common good; 3. The fundamental value of work; 4. The State's responsibility for the common good; 5. The fundamental value of the human person.*

¹⁴ Pope Paul VI,

Some further criteria:

1. Against the temptation of power, *a serving church*; as Bonhoeffer puts it, "a church for others".¹⁵ As the motto of our spiritual family expresses it, "*Reconciliation through Service*". "We must react against the idea of a triumphalistic church operating as God's viceroy on earth... by seeking to follow the example of Jesus, who said that he had come to serve".¹⁶
2. Against the temptation of relativism, *a church representing truth (kerygma and didache)*. The early church was a persecuted minority which did not the drawback from preaching as *public truth* (doctrine, teaching) – not as a "private religion" – the Lordship of Christ and the Gospel of the Kingdom. In a society which we may well call pluralistic *par excellence* on account of the coexistence of many faiths and religions, it must challenge the relativism of our times and proclaim as objective truth, even at the price of persecution, the person and work of Christ and his teaching. It did so up to the time of Constantine, when the crisis of the Empire created a vacuum which was filled by a Christianity that progressively surrendered to the temptation to exchange service for power and "to use the civil power to compel acceptance of Christian teaching."¹⁷
3. Against the temptation of individualism, *a church of fellowship*.
4. Against the temptation of materialism, *a church for the poor*.

A critically positive spirituality

A word of warning is needed against the temptation to fall captive to human utopias or ideologies. This danger has been the widespread experience of Christians in past centuries. I am speaking of the risk to which the Gospel of the Kingdom is exposed, in its contact with social and political issues, of establishing "partisan" links with a particular section or group and of becoming transformed into a social or worldly theology (or ideology! or utopia!): as the case may be, reactionary or revolutionary, traditionalist or progressive. There have been liberal Christians and socialist Christians, anarchist Christians and fascist Christians. There have even been Christian political parties (for believers, a contradiction in terms!). As someone has said, "The Kingdom of God is not of this world. Not to conform to the world is the truest way of loving it!" So it is vital to combine our commitments with the biblical criteria of "*as though not...*" and "*as but not of*".

As Alister McGrath has remarked,¹⁸ we need "*a critically positive spirituality of the world*" and, as Calvin expressed it, "*we must face the world as it is to make it into what we would like to be*".¹⁹ Starting from a biblical theology of creation, the fall and redemption, the sound Reformed tradition takes account on the one hand of "*the inadequacy of an uncritically positive spirituality of the world*" while on the other hand highlighting "*the shortcomings of a spirituality of retreat from the world*",²⁰ and arrives at a critical engagement in public life, based on the criteria of the Gospel, in favour of "good government" of the community and "the common good". This is the heritage of the Reformation.

In conclusion, in the words of the Lausanne Covenant,

- We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all people. **We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression...** Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism

¹⁵ "The church is the Church only when it exists for others... The Church must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life, non dominating, but helping and serving. It must tell men of every calling what it means to live in Christ, to exist for others". Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, New York, Macmillan, 1967, p.211.

¹⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. USA, 1989)

¹⁷ *Op. Cit.*

¹⁸ Alister McGrath, *Roots that Refresh. A Celebration of Reformation Spirituality*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1991, 1995

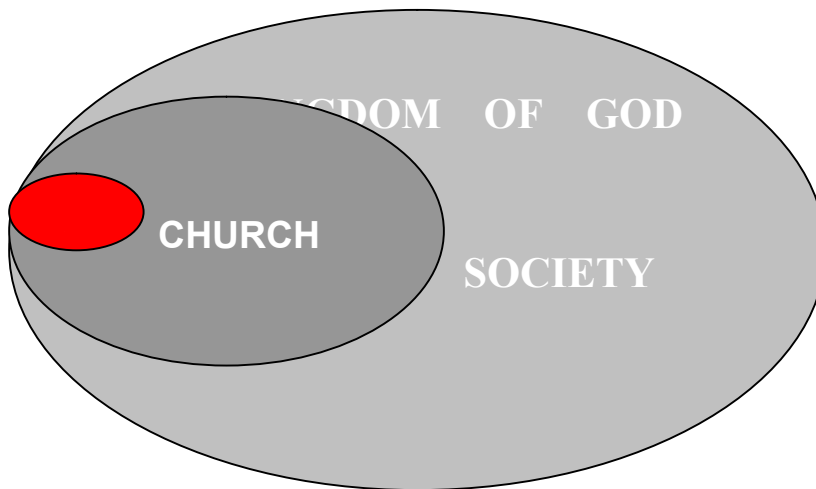
¹⁹ *Op. cit.*

²⁰ *Op. cit.*

and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist.²¹

Moreover:

- **Culture must always be tested and judged by Scripture.** Because men and women are God's creatures, some of their culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because they are fallen, all of it is tainted with sin and some of it is demonic. The gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture. Missions have all too frequently exported with the gospel an alien culture and churches have sometimes been in bondage to culture rather than to Scripture.²²



²¹ Lausanne Covenant (1974), section 5.

²² *Idem*, section 10.

KINGDOM OF GOD , CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Giovanni Traettino

Premise: Continuity and Relationship between Fullness and Kingdom of God. **Introduction:** **The Kingdom of God is the great theme of the Bible** (OT & NT: Gospels, Epistles and Revelation) – **Where is the Kingdom of God?** : A. The Kingdom of God is in Christ – B. The Kingdom of God and the Church – C. The Kingdom of God beyond the Church – **Two key subjects:** The Person and the Community – **Two key activities:** Prayer (Vita Contemplativa) and Work (Vita Activa) - **Towards a theology of work** : need for a theological foundation to the importance and dignity of work – An eschatological perspective.

Jorge Himitian

- A. The Mission of Christ:** the Kingdom – Our Mission – The Mission of the Church – The Conquest of the Nations – The Church in the First centuries – The Church in our days.
- B. The Challenge ahead of us – 1. The Great Commission:**– Make disciples **2. "Ora et Labora":** Pray the Lord's prayer – An intellectual work under the Lord's inspiration **3. Two things required for a true transformation:** 1. Integrity – 2. Capability **3. A socio-economical system** more in line with the principles and values of the Kingdom.
- C. Working groups** for reflection and proposals on different areas.
A historical example: transformation through Wesley's Revival.

Carlos Mraida - Three different styles:

- A. THE STYLE OF THE WORLD:** 1. Feeble thought; 2. Globalization; 3. New Capitalism; 4. The Show; 5. Infantile; 6. Falsification; 7. Hyper-Individualism; 8. Replaces Ethics with Cosmetics.
- B. THE STYLE OF CONTEMPORARY CHURCH:** 1. Feeble Theology; 2. , McDonaldized Gospel; 3. New fictitious Protestantism; 4. Spectacle and Entertainment; 5. Infantile Gospel; 6. Falsified Gospel; 7. Hyper-Individualism; 8. Replacing Ethics with Cosmetics.
- C. THE STYLE OF KINGDOM OF GOD:** 1. Is like good ground; 2. Is like a seed that grows; 3. Is like wheat; 4. Is like a mustard seed; 5. Is like leaven; 6. Is like a hidden treasure; 7. Is like a pearl of great price; 8. Is like a net.

AN APOSTOLIC AGENDA:

- 1. An apostolic ministry that functions primarily for the unity of the church in each city; 2. An apostolic ministry that establishes the presbytery of a city; 3. An apostolic ministry that shepherds the pastors; 4. An apostolic ministry that fills the cities with the didache; 5. An apostolic ministry that understand reality from the point of view of the most needy; 6. An apostolic ministry backed up with signs, wonders and miracles; 7. An apostolic ministry with a strategic plan for the world; 8. An apostolic ministry that constantly seeks the Holy Spirit

TRANSFORMATION: KINGDOM OF GOD, CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Introduction – Giovanni Traettino:

The Gospel of Desire, The Gospel of The Kingdom, The Gospel of Incarnation, The Gospel of Transformation. Transformation of the Person - Transformation of the Church - Transformation of Society - Transformation of the Land

1. *Himitian -The Transformation of the Individual*
2. *Negro - The Transformation of the Family*
3. *PN - The Transformation of the Church*
4. *PN – A Seed Church: A Model for Unity, Quality, Quantity*
5. *Adeboye - The Transformation of Society 1*
6. *Adeboye - The Transformation of Society 2*
7. *Komanapalli - The Transformation of Society*
8. *Himitian – Kingdom of God and Economics*
9. *Obanure & Olowu – The Transformation of Political Systems*

1. The Kingdom of God and the Transformation of the Individual - Jorge Himitian

In his paper on "*The Kingdom of God and the Transformation of the Individual* " Jorge Himitian underlines:

A. *The critical contribution of the individual*, transformed in his character and conduct through the Gospel of the Kingdom, to the transformation of the family, the church and society (employment, profession, business, management...).

B. *The means required to make this transformation possible*: 1. Embracing the "Gospel of the Kingdom"; 2. Repentance, deliverance, baptism in water and in the Holy Spirit; 3. Discipleship (*Didaché*); 4. Taking personal responsibility a. as the key factor for one's personal life and lifestyle, b. Perseverance in self-discipline and self-control, c. Keeping one's heart, d. cultivating close personal fellowship with God; 5. Cultivating a right attitude to suffering; 6. Living in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

2. The Kingdom of God in the family - Angel Negro

Angel Negro, after emphasising that the Kingdom of God must be lived out 24 hours a day, puts forward with great power and authority:

A. *The biblical pattern for the family*, derived directly from the nature of God and the dynamics of the relationships within the "God-family";

B. *The key elements in building a solid marriage*: 1. Receiving Jesus as Lord of one's life; 2. The wife's submission to her husband as head; 3. The husband loving his wife with the love of Christ; 4. Both submitted to the body of Christ which is the Church.

3. Planting the Church, planting the Kingdom for transformation – Phitsanunart

Sritawong

PN emphasises ***the decisive role of the Church as the instrument, hub and agency of the Kingdom***. It is God's plan to reveal the mystery and God's eternal purpose. For this to happen, it is necessary to:

1. ***Plant churches***: a. *Seed-churches* (like the grain of mustard seed); b. *Strong, biblical churches* ("I will build my church", Mt 16:18); c. *"Glorious" churches*, with a lifestyle expressing the quality, maturity and fullness of the life of Christ.
2. ***Planting the Kingdom*** because 1. The Kingdom precedes and exceeds the church; 2. Where God reigns, there is the Kingdom of God; 3. Believers should have positions of influence and authority in every sector of society, and the principles of the Kingdom should be practised in society so that it can increasingly reflect his glory; 4. Believers can climb the 7 mountains (M1. Church, M2. Politics; M3. Education; M4. Law; M5.

Business; M6. Recreation; M7. Mass Media) in order to influence, govern and transform society.

In conclusion:

The key is the man and man is the key. The key is the church and the church is the key.

4. A seed church: A pattern for unity, quality e quantity. - Phitsanunart Sritawong

In Mt 13:31-33, the Kingdom of heaven is compared to a *mustard seed* e to yeast. These two images communicate characteristics from which we can learn how the Kingdom works:

1. *Unity* ("A seed" - v.31): The whole plant with all its characteristics is contained in a single seed. The importance of conserving unity in order to grow and be blessed.
2. *Living* ("A mustard seed" v. 31): The seed may seem dead, but it is alive and represents a *life of quality and intimacy* with God. True quality produces true quantity.
3. *Availability* ("...which a man took and planted in his field" – v. 31): God is looking for our availability to be used, more than our ability. The seed has to entrust itself to the hand of the sower, who is God, and to His representative.
4. *Smallness* ("the smallest of all your seeds" v. 32): The seed, like the yeast, starts off small, but they do not stay small. Like Jesus, who started with a small, humble appearance.
5. *Gradual growth* ("when it grows" v. 32). The seed has the potential to grow gradually, not all at once. It requires faithfulness, patience and perseverance.
6. *It eventually becomes large* ("it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree" v. 32). True quality produces quantity. The church (Zion) is to become higher than all the other mountains.
7. *Productive and reproductive* (It grows large so as to bless other lives - v. 32). The church, like a large tree, can produce more fruit, new fruits, trees of the same kind and be a blessing to many.

A seed-church can become a worldwide church.

Conclusion: *The key is the church and the church is the key to the Kingdom of God.* Let us plant biblical churches. Let us plant churches. Let us plant the Kingdom. Amen.

5. Kingdom of God and Transformation of Society 1 - E. A. Adeboye

Pastor Adeboye's study (at the *Consultation*) on *Kingdom of God and transformation of society* starts with a definition of 1. *Kingdom of God*; 2. *Transformation* and 3. *Society*; and then introduces ***the history of the relationship between the British Empire and its colonies (including Nigeria) as a parable of the relationship between the Kingdom of God and mankind.***

The power and influence of colonial rule gradually introduced considerable **changes** (language, government, laws, culture, aspirations...), together with valuable **privileges** (protection, health, education...) and new **responsibilities** (changed priorities, taxes, submission to the authorities). Everything was affected by a **process of transformation** of the colony which caused it increasingly to resemble the Kingdom ruling over it. The entire process was guaranteed by a **system** and a **mentality of rewards and privileges!** The same is true of the Kingdom of God: it is entered by grace, but the **reward** is linked to obedience and holiness. The law of sowing and reaping. The law of priorities.

6. The Transformation of Society 2 – E. A. Adeboye

The preaching of the Gospel of Christ, as in the case of Philip in Samaria (*At 8:4-8*), produces "great joy in the city"!

- I. **Jesus and joy.** The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ still brings joy to people today through: a. The message (salvation); b. Miracles (healing); c. Deliverance from demonic oppression.
- II. **The age of miracles is not over!** 1. Jesus is still the same (*Eb 13:8*); Isaiah (9:6-7) prophesied that the government and the increase of his rule would have no end; 2. Jesus promised (*Mt 28:20*) to be with his disciples until the end; 3. God promised both the early and the later rain (*Joel 2:23*); 4. The testimony of the *Redeemed Christian Church of God* which has grown from a small group of 12 people to its

present size. **Three keys:** 1. *Practical holiness*; 2. *Dedication to prayer and praise*; 3. *Hunger for more of the Holy Spirit*.

- III. **The gap between individual and social joy.** In answer to the question, "Why does the Gospel save so many in countries like Nigeria, but its impact on society is so small?" we must note that: 1. *There is an interval between the time when we accept Christ and the joy made possible by the habit of an inward walk – both personal and collective – with the Holy Spirit, in humility and full obedience to the Word of God.*

Because it is commoner to walk in the flesh than in the Spirit! But where the Gospel arrives and is lived out practically, light enters and darkness is dispelled.

In the case of Nigeria, the best times have come about from co-operation between churches and government. The church, albeit not consistently, has become one of the largest providers of spiritual, social and economic services to the whole of society. Schools, clinics and hospitals witness to this.

Maintaining Christian testimony and joy in prosperous societies:

In many Christian societies people hold closely to God when they are poor, but forget him when they are blessed. *How to avoid this in emerging nations?* By holding fast to the Holy Spirit and helping the disciples to understand that prosperity is non to glorify themselves, but to promote last-days evangelism. By promoting high moral and training standards for a high-quality leadership.

Joy in families:

Jesus' message brings joy into family life. Trying to run families without the Creator of the family is the reason for the huge crisis in family life in many wealthy nations. The church, alongside its commitment to evangelism, discipling and "Church planting", must invest more in celebrating and supporting the natural family.

Conclusion: *The church's commitment to the gospel, proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit, brings joy to communities tormented by sin, sorrow and Satan. Church history proves it! As apostles, we must renew our commitment to the Holy Spirit, the only one who can convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgement.*

7. Kingdom of God and Society: The poor and persecuted - Komanapalli

In his introduction the author extends **the concept of "poor and persecuted"** to all those who are:

a. *Financially poor*; b. *Generally oppressed*; c. *Lowly in spirit – poor before God*. He then states that it is in the nature of the Kingdom of God, in contrast to the kingdoms of this world, to generate movements for the elevation of mankind, reconciliation and social justice. It is therefore important to preach the gospel offering "the new birth in one hand and a glass of cold water in the other" (Billy Graham).

He then bases **Christian responsibility towards the poor on three foundations:** 1. *The Word of God*, with the particular attention shown by God towards the poor in both the Old and New Testaments;

2. *The Kingdom of God*, with its drive (values) towards the breaking down of ethnic, gender, age and class divisions; 3. *The "cultural commission"* which, based on the "delegated sovereignty" from God to man in Genesis, and on the foundation of love for one's neighbour, calls us to action in the fields of the distribution of wealth, ecological balance, cultural integrity and deliverance for the oppressed.

He then asks, **"Is God on the side of the poor?"**, and answers that the story of the Exodus, the people of Israel in the Promised Land and the Incarnation are all evidence that: 1. *God is the deliverer of the oppressed*; 2. *God disciplines his people (exile and destruction) when it oppresses or neglects the poor*; 3. *God identifies with the poor and makes them the special target of his messianic purpose.*

The **final question is "What must we do?"**, to which the answer is that the church is called, by its very nature, to be visibly, outwardly and politically "salt and light" in society, giving a voice to those who have none and defending the cause of the defenceless.

8. Kingdom of God and economics – Jorge Himitian

Taking as his starting point the Lord's Prayer and the Great Commission, the author argues that God intends to bring in, through the actions of even a significant minority of true disciples, elements of real transformation in the social and economic sphere. A faith which brings us into relationship with God, and takes from Him and from his Word its criteria for evaluating reality, enables us to correctly assess ideologies, utopias and any other human system or lifestyle, bringing to light any elements of escapism, departure from truth, bias or distortion of reality.

Personal sin, structural injustice (i.e. social sins and sinful structures) and generational inheritance are among the major causes of today's crisis in society. Instead of the attitudes of passivity, resignation or negative reaction often shown by Christians, we should seek to develop an attitude of redemptive responsibility which will make us agents of transformation, "the salt of the earth and the light of the world".

The principles of the Kingdom of God inspiring any economic project: 1. The earth is the Lord's; 2. A search for the common good; 3. Work as a foundational value; 4. The State's responsibility for the common good; 5. The fundamental value of the human person.

The intentions needed to remove the main causes of social injustice:

1. To act against the effects of **personal sin**, conversion and transformation of character and conduct through discipleship inspired by the rediscovery of the Gospel of the Kingdom and living out the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount;
2. To act against the effects of **structural injustice** (sin), the church must support (and train!) people of integrity and ability (professionalism) and social and economic proposals based on the principles of the Kingdom.
3. To act against the effects of the **passing down through the generations** of attitudes of defeatism and dependence, it must promote: a. A new mentality by "changing thought-patterns"; b. A new attitude of responsibility which, in aiming at personal and social transformation, rejects all forms of self-pity, bitterness and resentment; c. Forming new habits through deep personal discipleship.

9. Transformation of political systems - Yemi Obanure and Dele Olowu

The Kingdom of God is the archetype of all kingdoms, and all the kingdoms of this world are destined to become the kingdom of our Lord (Rev 11:15). In the meantime the church is called to live out and bear witness to the Gospel of the Kingdom to promote and support "good governance".

The biblical principles (Rm 13) on which to base relations with both civil and church governing authorities are: 1. Submission to authority; 2. Reasons for this: a. All authority derives from God; b. Governments and ministers of God promote good government; c. Those who resist authority are resisting God.

The role of the church in promoting and supporting good government: 1. Pray without ceasing; 2. Take part in appropriate activities: a. Voting; b. Proposals; 3. Paying taxes; 4. Providing civic education for believers; 5. Co-operating in contributing to good government and promoting non-partisan policies; 6. Mobilising honest and capable Christian professionals; 7. Preparing believers for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Conclusion: *The church has a responsibility to influence the public sphere and to prepare its members for good government here on earth.*