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THE RESPONSABILITY OF THE CHURCH
IN THE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE NATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Darrow Miller, in the introduction to his book *Reformulation of Social Justice* (Editorial YWAM) says:

We live in times of wealth in the West, in juxtaposition with an intolerable poverty. Injustice and corruption continue to paralyze nations, and a majority of the world's population suffers the consequences.

In a world of abundance that has the capacity to produce enough food for all, twenty-five thousand people die daily from hunger. The majority are children.

We violate the environment as if its only reason for existence were human consumption.

Genocide - the systematic, institutional war against women - has wiped out 200 million women in the world. Only in India, a million human beings are killed every year because they are women.

Women and babies are reduced to mere objects, to the point that every year, between forty and fifty million babies are killed before they are born, just because they are inconvenient.

It is estimated that currently, on a global scale, 20.9 million men, women and children are enslaved in forced labor or sex trafficking.

In the US, some 293,000 children are sexually exploited.

More than 50% of Latin American women have suffered violence by men.

Where is justice? Where's the compassion?

To this, I incorporate the following, more current information:

- 1 billion people in the world live in poverty
- 400 million children live in extreme poverty.
- 795 million people suffer from malnutrition.
- 6 million children under 5 die of malnutrition every year.
- 663 million people lack access to drinking water.

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- There are 781 million illiterate adults. 65% are women.
 - 57 million children do not attend school.
 - Almost half of the world's population lives on less than \$ 75 per month.

In the vast majority of nations, there is social injustice, structural poverty, hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, unemployment, labor exploitation, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, gender identity issues, racism, abortions, neglect of the environment and natural resources, forced immigration, refugee camps, unfair profit distribution, inhumane prisons, drug trafficking, drug addiction, insecurity. As well, in some countries we have the scourge of terrorism, wars, totalitarian governments, religious persecution, and weapon arsenal build up.

Bob Kennedy (murdered in 1968, at 42) said: "It is unacceptable that most of us consider as inevitable ... poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, racism, corruption ... Apathy is the acceptance of the unacceptable."

Does the church have any responsibility in the transformation of the nations? Is it part of our mission, as children of God, to fight for a world where there is more justice and peace?

The answers can be quite varied, and some even conflicting, according to the sector consulted.

Currently, there are basically two main positions within the more moderate stances on this subject. Both positions affirm that, yes, the church has a responsibility in the transformation of nations; however, one maintains that its action must be indirect, while the other affirms that the church must include in its integral mission program a direct action for the transformation of the nations.

Those who argue that the church's contribution should be made indirectly do not accept any participation of the church or Christians in politics nor in different areas of government. The contribution made indirectly would consist of preaching the gospel, making disciples, planting churches, works of mercy, and sending missionaries to all nations. As a result of this approach, the great numerical growth of the church in the nations and of discipleship, sweeping transformations would take place in society.

There are those, on the other hand, who believe that the church must be—not as an institution but through its members—involved in all areas of society: politics, economics, justice, law, government, education, science, arts, communications, health, work, sports, entertainment, etc. These maintain that love of neighbor is not confined to practicing goodness and justice only on a personal level but also at the community, social and national level, in order to seek the integral well-being of all the nation's inhabitants and of the world.

Personally, I think that positions A and B are not exclusive. If we move forward with the wisdom of God and learn from the mistakes and successes that church history has taught us

during its 2,000 years, I think it is possible to harmonize both positions. My understanding is that they are complementary.

WHAT DOES THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND ITS JUSTICE INCLUDE?

- God is the creator and Lord of all creation (Genesis 1 and 2). By inherent right, everything that exists belongs to Him. (Psalm 24.1)
- God created man in his image and likeness. This means that every man is valuable and deserves fair and respectful treatment in all areas of society.
- God is good, and desires that all the inhabitants of the earth benefit from the temporary as well as eternal "shalom".
- God, by creating us in his image and likeness, gave us dignity, courage and spirituality to be able to relate to him. He gave us potential capacities that allow for our personal development: abilities to work, to plant and harvest, to imagine, to create projects, to build, to invent. He made us social, gregarious beings and gave us the ability to speak, to communicate and to understand each other. He gave us the ability to reproduce, to marry, to have children, to form a family, to grow and multiply, to have friends, to be a community, a nation, many nations, and to fill the earth and govern it. He gave us different aptitudes to learn, to acquire knowledge and skills, to create culture, to serve our fellowmen. He gave us the ability to teach, to impart knowledge, skills, trades, professions, so that we can all develop, and become a healthy society in which love, justice, and peace reign. God is love, he is righteous, and a God of peace; He wants there to be love, justice, and peace among all the inhabitants of the earth.
- Sin ruined the image of God in us and distorted the Lord's beautiful project for humanity. Personal ambition, greed, selfishness and the arrogance of the human heart generated hatred, wars, inequities, crimes, thefts, slavery, and all kinds of injustices. Perverse and unjust systems were created at the social, institutional or national level. Power structures were created, accumulation of wealth, labor exploitation, corrupt governments and judges, totalitarian governments, economic laws that favor the most powerful, illegitimate appropriation of lands and natural resources, inequality of rights, plunging the majority of the world's inhabitants into misery. God put resources on the planet earth, sufficient enough that, if well worked and administered, there would be food and social well-being for all. The economic market, supply and demand, and invested capital have been deified, and the economy has been structured to benefit a few, to the detriment of the vast majority of workers who produce these riches.
- Although as men we sin and abandon God, he has never disregarded mankind, nor the nations.
- The prophets, over and over, denounced injustice, corruption and bribery.

Your rulers are rebels, partners with thieves; they all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow's case does not come before them. (Isaiah 1:23)

Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees...! (Isaiah 10:1)

Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, saying, "When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?" skimping on the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat. (Amos 8:4-6)

These called the authorities and the nation to repent.

Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. (Isaiah 1:17)

To whom does James address the following in his epistle? (I hope it's the world and not the church).

Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you. (James 5:1-6)

Jesus, very early in his ministry, expressed some very difficult words his disciples—simple men of little education—concepts difficult to understand, in all their dimension, at that moment of speaking:

"You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world ..." (Matthew 5.13-14).

If he had told them, "you are the salt of Galilee", or "the light of Israel", although it would sound exaggerated, it would have been a little more feasible. But to tell these simple Galileans—men of the despised northern province of one of the smallest countries of the Roman Empire—that they are the light of the world sounds almost irrational and outside of all human probability. But that was exactly what he told them.

Also, on the same occasion, when teaching them to pray, he pointed out that the first concrete thing that they should ask of the Father every day is that His kingdom come, that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6.10), not simply in the church but on

earth. This means that they had to pray for his will to be done in all the nations of the earth as it is done in heaven. Jesus would never ask his disciples to pray daily for something impossible to accomplish.

The motivating factor of Jesus' ministry was compassion. This means that he cared for the suffering and pain of his fellow men, to the point that he denied himself and devoted his life to serve, comfort and help those who suffered, both to seek their eternal salvation and their physical and temporal well-being. He did not just teach and preach but also healed, fed, liberated. Peter, preaching about Jesus, says: "*He went about doing good ...*" (Acts 10.38).

His concern was expressed for the poor, the despised, the marginal. Several times he taught and commanded those who had wealth to give to the poor. He told the rich young man: "*Sell what you have, give it to the poor, and follow me.*" Zacchaeus promised to return everything stolen, and give half of his goods to the poor.

Jesus was very clear in teaching that the greatest commandment is to love God and, the second, to love your neighbor as yourself. He did not limit himself to saying that you have to love your brother, but your neighbor, and even your enemy.

He said to his disciples, "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven*" (Matthew 5:16).

After the grand work of redemption, his death and his glorious resurrection, Jesus met his disciples to tell them that he had been given all authority in heaven and on earth, which is why he sent them to make disciples in all the nations, baptizing them and teaching them to live according to the will of God.

The kingdom of God and its justice is the justice that comes as a consequence of the establishment of the kingdom of God—of the lordship of Christ—in a person, in a family, or in a community. The community of disciples, like salt and light, has a powerful influence on the society and the nation in which it is found. This influence is exercised in two ways: (1) by evangelizing and achieving the conversion of many fellow citizens into disciples of Christ, and (2) by being "mixed into", involved, committed, as yeast in the dough, in all areas of society, transforming it by means of the values of the kingdom of God, so that it become a nation in which there is more and more justice and brotherly love.

Another powerful resource is found in what Paul says in 1 Timothy (2.1-2): *I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.*

SOME HISTORICAL DATA

The first communities of disciples understood the doctrine of Jesus very well. The first pages of the book of Acts of the Apostles show us that loving God and loving our neighbor are two sides of the same coin. The poor, the widows, the needy were cared for in their daily needs.

Bob Moffitt, in his book "If Jesus Were Mayor (Chapter 3) writes:

In the course of history, the Church generally understood that social and cultural transformation was part of its task. (Pag.39).

I've summarized some concepts expressed by Moffitt.

A vision, unknown at the time, entered the Roman Empire of a God who is love, and who teaches to love one's neighbor; that a Christian master should recognize his slave as a "brother"; that being merciful is a virtue and not a weakness; that the husband should love his wife as himself. Christians rejected the practice of abortion and infanticide that was widely practiced in the Roman Empire. In times of great epidemics, when doctors still fled from the sick, the only ones who took care of them were Christians.

And despite the decline that came to the Church as an institution by joining with the State in the fourth century, the gospel of Christ was gradually transforming the culture of Europe by establishing customs inspired by the Christian faith. The list is too long to name all the men who influenced the centuries to follow in the construction of a worldview and a basically "Christian" culture in Europe.

Bob Moffitt describes it in this way:

The church developed charitable actions aimed at helping the unemployed, the orphan, the widows, the wounded, the sick, the traveler, the victims of disasters and the poor of the community. The care of the poor was a constant concern among people like St. Thomas, Ignatius of Loyola, St. Patrick, St. Francis of Assisi. (id.Pag.46)

God used the Church and the Protestant Reformation to transform societies in Switzerland, Germany and Holland. ... Although Luther believed that good works could not make atonement for sin, this did not make it any easier for Christians to care for the poor or to influence the world. (Pg.48)

John Calvin visualized the church as a small society within a larger society, as an embryo of what represented a new and total order of the world. ... When in 1550, 60,000 refugees flooded Geneva, from France, Calvin founded a private ministry with bases in the Church that became a model throughout Europe. This ministry served a wide range of needs, serving the sick, the orphan, the elderly, the disabled and the terminally ill. The help was linked to the work ethic. Deacons were trained to find long-term solutions to poverty (job re-training, temporary housing, tools to start a new business); and how to discern between the poor who deserved help and the one who did not deserve it. (P. 48-49)

John Stott, in his book Involvement: Being a Responsible Christian in a Non-Christian Society says: (pp. 23-25)

John Wesley remains the most outstanding example ... The change that came to Britain during this period is well documented in the excellent book by J. Wesley Bready, England Before and After Wesley... where Bready describes the profound savagery of much of the eighteenth century, which was characterized by:

"The torture of animals for sport. The brutal drunkenness of the people, the inhuman trafficking of Africans, the capture of compatriots for export and sale as slaves, infant mortality in the asylums, the general obsession with gambling, the cruelty of the prison system, and the penal code, moral chaos, prostitution ... bribery and political corruption ... the prevailing falsehood and degradation in Church and State ...

Then the situation changed. In the nineteenth century slavery and the slave trade were abolished, the prison system was humanized, working conditions in factories and mines were improved, education became available to the poor, workers' unions began to be organized, etc etc.

How did that movement originate towards humanization, that passion for social justice and that sensitivity to human injustices? There is a response that fits the unshakeable historical truth. It was derived from a new social conscience. And although, as it is admitted, that social conscience had diverse causes, its main source was the evangelical revival of practical and vital Christianity, a gospel that revealed the central postulates of the New Testament ethics, made the fatherhood of God, as well as the brotherhood of men a reality, emphasized the priority of the person over the possessions and guided the heart, soul and mind towards the establishment of the Kingdom of Justice on earth ... It contributed to the transfiguration of the moral character of the people in general, more than any other movement recorded in British history. [Wesley] was the man who restored the soul to a nation.

John Stott continues saying:

The evangelical leaders of the next generation gave themselves with equal fervor to both evangelization and social action ... and the inspirer of them all, William Wilberforce. ... They were called the Clapham sect [a village near London where several of them lived] ... The first issue that brought them together was their concern about the situation of the African slaves.

I summarize a part of what Stott narrates:

Wilberforce, as a member of the English Parliament, in 1787, presented a first motion in Parliament concerning the abolition of the slave trade, established three centuries earlier. His motion was rejected unanimously. It was discussed again every two years, and then every year, until it was approved in 1807, 20 years later.

Wilberforce continued fighting for the abolition of slavery, which was finally abolished in 1833, 44 years later! Three days after, William Wilberforce died. The State had to pay 20 million Sterling Pounds to the owners of the slaves.

Stott writes:

Anthony Ashley Coope was elected member of the British Parliament in 1826, at the age of 25 years. First in the House of Commons and then in the House of Lords as the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, he dealt in turn with the condition of the mentally ill, children employed in factories and mills, the chimney sweeps, women and children in the mines, and children in the slums, among which in London more than thirty thousand were homeless, and more than a million throughout the country lacked education. Most of the great philanthropic movements of the century have emerged among the evangelicals.

The same story can be told in the United States in the 19th century.

Charles Finney was convinced that a powerful impulse towards social reform emerges from the gospel, and that the abandonment by the church of the reformatory social action grieved the Holy Spirit, and was an obstacle to revival. The following statement by Finney is indeed surprising: "the great enterprise of the church is the reformation of the world".

The members of the opposition-to-slavery forces came mostly from those who had been converted at Finney's evangelistic campaigns.

Among them was Theodore Webb who dedicated his whole life to the fight against slavery. He was converted through Finney's ministry, and for a time he was his assistant. However, we cannot take Webb for the American equivalent of Wilberforce, because Webb was not a parliamentarian. In fact, the campaign against slavery in the United States was carried out not so much by heroes of the Reformation but by a large number of unknowns, moved by an impulse of a religious nature, and an evangelical spirit that originated in the great revival of 1830.

WHAT HAPPENED TO US?

John Stott, titled the first chapter of the book mentioned previously: *DOES THE SOCIAL COMMITMENT CONCERN US?* and it starts like this:

It is inconceivable that followers of Jesus Christ ever had to ask whether they were concerned about social commitment and that a controversy had arisen about the relationship between evangelization and social responsibility. For it is evident that in his public ministry Jesus went through the places "teaching ... and preaching" and that "he walked doing good and healing". Therefore, evangelization and social responsibility have been intimately related throughout the history of the church.

In the mentality of the evangelicals, to which most of us belong, there is underlying an inherited theology and eschatology that could be summarized in two phrases (two lies): (1) heaven is from God and the earth is from the devil, and (2) the imminence of the second coming of Christ.

Both thoughts dominate the collective subconscious of many evangelicals. Consequently, they have nullified the action of most churches and Christians in regard to getting involved in the affairs of the world. With this attitude, we have given the nations over to the free action of Satan, so that he can do what as he pleases, while we have concentrated on the "salvation of souls".

It is easy to understand how these two ideas have blocked us for several generations, and how they have managed to inhibit us from a more determined action and participation in the transformation of nations.

For example, according to secular surveys, in Argentina 8% of the population is evangelical . According to this percentage, among the 257 national deputies, there should be at least 20 evangelicals. Do you know how many we have? Only one. And among the 72 senators, we have a single evangelical senator. This disproportion is the result of having a wrong theology.

Consider the first lie: "Heaven is from God and the earth is of the devil."

My Bible, and yours, declares a very different thing: Psalm 24.1:

"The earth and its fullness belong to the Lord; The world and those who dwell therein".

The planet earth, and everything in it has a sole and legitimate owner. All the inhabitants of the world have been created by God and for God. Everything and everyone belongs to the Lord.

God gave the administration and government of the earth to man, created in his image and likeness. The devil is a liar and a thief. When man sinned, Satan usurped what God had given man, but Christ, with his death, redeemed and rescued all that was his. For this reason, the risen Jesus declares to his followers: *"All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth ..."*

This idea that the world is of the devil comes mainly from a misinterpretation of some expressions of Jesus. On three occasions Jesus referred to the devil as *"the prince of that world"*. (John 12.31, 14.30 and 16.11).

The word world in the Greek is *cosmos*. It has in the N.T. five different meanings:

- 1) Universe (Ephesians 1.4).
- 2) Planet Earth (Psalm 24.1; Mark 16.15)
- 3) All mankind (John 3.16).
- 4) The material and temporal (Matthew 16.26; 1 Corinthians 7: 33-34).
- 5) The sinful and diabolic human system of rebellion against God (1 John 2.15-17).

The context of each passage makes its meaning evident.

When Jesus says that the devil is the prince of this world he refers to the sinful and diabolic human system, not the planet earth.

Paul uses another expression to refer to the same thing: "*the god of this century*" (century is *aion* in Greek, and refers to this era). Satan is not the owner of the planet earth nor of mankind. The Bible declares that everything is of God, by God and for God (Romans 11.36, Colossians 1.16). Satan is the prince who heads the worldwide movement of rebellion against God. But he has already been defeated by Christ on the cross.

The second lie is the imminent nature of the second coming of Christ.

The word *imminence* does not exist in the Bible referring to the second coming of Christ. Jesus said that the day and the hour nobody knows, only the Father. Some ask me: Do you not believe that Christ is coming soon? I answer: Yes, I believe it, because Jesus said so: "*I will certainly come soon.*" But...2,000 years have already passed. What does *soon* mean for God? Compared to eternity, 2000 years are nothing.

When I was young, preachers told us: "now, now, Christ is coming. All the prophecies have been fulfilled. Nothing is lacking for the Lord to come. "

I believe that we should live as if Christ will come today or 2,000 years from now. My personal impression is that we have not yet seen the best part of history.

We need to have a multigenerational view, a project that points to the next 100, 200, 500 or 1000 years. There are many prophecies that have not yet been fulfilled, but all will be fulfilled.

In the first century, some brothers from Thessalonica refused to work because they believed that Christ would come very soon. And Paul, in his second letter, among other things, says: *The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.*

Let's go back to our question: What happened to us?

John Stott (much more academically than I can) points out five causes of the abandonment of social consciousness by many evangelicals in the last 150 years. (I've made a summary of his words.

- 1) In the face of the advancement of theological liberalism, many concentrated more on defending the fundamentals of the Christian faith. This gave rise to "fundamentalism". And they neglected the social dimension of the gospel.
- 2) In reaction to a "social gospel" emphasized by liberal theologians, many went to the other extreme.
- 3) As a product of the generalized pessimism that produced the First World War, many concluded that any reform of society was useless.

- 4) This neglect was also due to the influence of premillennialist theory (J.B.Darby, Scofield and others). This theory holds that the world will go from bad to worse until the return of Christ, therefore it is useless to seek the transformation of the nations.
- 5) There were many middle-class people converted, and they were inclined to maintain the status quo and, in general, were indifferent to the situation of the poor and other social issues.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Thank God, since the second half of the twentieth century the evangelical church (the "evangelicals") has slowly awakening to the reality that evangelization and responsibility for the social transformation of the nations are two inseparable aspects of the mission of church.

In 1966, the North American conference on world missions, unanimously presented the "Wheaton Declaration" in which it urged "all evangelicals to openly and firmly defend racial equality, human freedom and social justice in all their manifestations in the whole world."

In 1974, at the International Congress on World Evangelization, the Lausanne Covenant was signed, stating that "evangelization together with social and political action are part of our Christian duty." *

In 1982, the Consultation was sponsored by the World Evangelical Alliance and the Lausanne Committee. The official report was entitled: Evangelization and Social Responsibility: Evangelical Commitment.

The Lausanne pact not only refers to "social responsibility" but also to "social and political action". The latter causes a negative reaction in many evangelicals, who affirm that the church should not interfere in politics. Almost everyone agrees with the humanitarian tasks of the church, especially in health and education programs; however, there are unjust social structures and systems that can only be corrected through political action.

The Pentecostal movement, of great numerical growth in the twentieth century, in general, did not show much interest in social action, largely because of its fundamentalist roots and the emphasis on the "imminence of the second coming of Christ."

The charismatic or neo-Pentecostal movement, for the most part, has concentrated its emphasis on spiritual gifts and worship. Some, in the last 30 years, have turned to the "prosperity gospel", and to a distorted concept of the kingdom of God, in terms of

domination, power, money, mega-churches, great shows, and the "conquest" of the nations. Without a vision of the kingdom in terms of service, love of neighbor, and redemption.

However, a growing sector of the charismatic movement and the evangelical church in general has been awakening and has acquired a new awareness of the responsibility of the church in the social transformation of nations.

In A.F.I., from our beginnings we emphasized the unity of the church, the reign of God, the apostolic collegiality, the mission of the church in the world, the progress of the church towards its fullness (quality, unity and quantity). And in 2008, in Chile, the theme of our Consultation was: Kingdom, Church and Society. In 2009, in Nigeria, our motto was: Transformation: Kingdom of God, Church and Society.

In 2010, in Italy, Giovanni Traettino said: "I would like us to work on a document concerning the principles and values that should govern our actions or approach to politics." I do not believe that we are, at least in our context, capable of producing a document or a proposal on a Socio-economic Project Before producing such a proposal, we would need to have a Social Doctrine of the Church, which serves as the basis of socio-economic projects.

In 2012, in Italy, Mr. Traettino reminded us of a paragraph of the Lausanne Covenant:

Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation; with God, nor social action, evangelization; nor political liberation, salvation; however, we affirm that evangelization and socio-political commitment are part of our Christian duty. Because both are necessary expressions of our doctrines about God and about man, about love for our neighbor and obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation also implies a message of judgment on all forms of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. (Lausanne Covenant 1974, sec.5).

THE CHURCH AND THE STATE

I think we all agree that the church, as an institution, should not have any political party flag. The separation between the Church and State has been convincingly demonstrated throughout the 2000 years of its history. (See at the end note JH Chile 2008) *

But we cannot say the same about church members in their role as citizens. How good it would be for a nation to have among its legislators, rulers and judges holy men and women, children of God, with high quality professional and academic training, to put their skills at the service of the common good. What a blessing it would be to have among its public servants Christians committed to the kingdom of God and its righteousness, filled with the Holy Spirit, with wisdom, with vocation for service, with clear and new ideas of life lived out within a society. We need Christians well prepared to knowledgeably participate in all aspects of national and world endeavors: politicians, law makers, lawyers, economists, businessmen,

executives, scientists, teachers, doctors, merchants, industrialists, legislators, judges, governors, and everything else. This would be a concrete way to love your neighbor.

At the same time, we must bear in mind that we live in nations where there is an increasing ideological, ethnic and religious pluralism. That is why we cannot impose a theocracy. Not even God does that. If in any country, at some time in history, Christians become a majority, they should respect existing minorities. The kingdom of God is not an imposition but a proposal. Our strength lies in being a model for life, family and society. Our task is to teach, educate and convince; not dominate but serve. To be a city set on a hill. We must be able to demonstrate, with solid apologetic arguments, that we have the superior proposal or alternative for society.

For this, it is essential that we change our worldview concerning the responsibility of the church in the transformation of nations. We must impart a new vision to the professionals and entrepreneurs of our communities in the countries of our world (especially the new generations). We must begin today, so that in 20, 30, or 50 years, we will have holy, very well prepared disciples, with excellent professional training, committed and active in the transformation of their country.

THE STATE

Man is a social being. He is designed to perform as a person within a community. When this community grows, it must be organized in order to achieve a harmonious coexistence within a framework of order, harmony, justice, freedom and respect for the rights of each one. To ensure this social coexistence, authorities become necessary in the various areas and functions that insure a well-organized society.

Anarchy prevents personal development as well as development of a society as a whole. That is why the Bible says: *"Let every person submit himself to the higher authorities. Because there is no authority except from God, and those that are by God have been established"* (Romans 13.1). The sum total of that authority is what we call the State.

A nation is not governed by an individual. There are thousands and thousands throughout the country that make up the State. From their various positions, public officials have the duty to serve the citizens of a nation to achieve the common good. In a democratic government, the people elect their rulers.

Unfortunately, many authorities use their positions for personal advantage and gain. Ambition of power, vanity, arrogance, egotism, greed is present in the hearts of many politicians. The Bible says that *"the love of money is the root of all evil."* The ambition of riches leads to administrative corruption, receiving bribes, embezzlement of funds, the promulgation of unjust laws to favor personal or sectoral interests, etc.

We need just laws and just men in the nation. In addition to a fair and just economic system. "*Righteousness magnifies the nation, but sin is an affront to the nations*" (Proverbs 14:34). Thousands of morally virtuous and professionally capable men are needed to occupy the different positions in government.

Blessed is the nation whose rulers are honest and just, who look upon their position of authority as a place of service, who truly love the people and are there to serve them with equity!

POLITICS

EMILIO CASTRO (Uruguayan, former Secretary General of the WCC), at the III Latin American Congress of Evangelization, in Quito, Ecuador, year 1992, said:

- 1. The gospel includes love of neighbor. It is impossible to love God without loving your neighbor. Love makes us responsible for our neighbors. Responsibility, solidarity, in modern societies is organized and manifested through the political structures of society. ... There is no way to love today without a concern for politics. It does not mean that we all have to be militants of a political party; here there are also vocations, specific calls. ... But yes, it means that we all have a collective responsibility for the public, and that we must inform ourselves and we must enter that arena inspired by the love of God in Jesus Christ.*
- 2. There is no Christian political program for society. This is the temptation that permanently assaults us: to create parties that are predominantly Christians or Evangelicals trying in this way to convey a project in society that has the authority of the Gospel. ... Here perhaps we should apply the similarities of Jesus: leaven, salt in the middle of the dough, Christians entering political life to pierce through different structures from within ...*
- 3. While the gospel cannot be reduced to a political program, it implies, because it is the full manifestation of God's love for all his creation and for each of his creatures, fundamental values must be affirmed or offered to the community when looking for alternatives to the present situation. ...*

Politics, on the one hand, is the art of living as an organized society. On the other hand, it is the art of governing. For this, laws, institutions, authority structure, administration, society project, and values are needed. It covers all aspects of life in society. The universal foundation of every society must be the equality of all men, freedom, love of one's neighbor, justice, respect for authorities and laws, solidarity, honesty, etc.

Governing is one of the noblest and most necessary occupations for social coexistence. Governing is a service given in favor of the entire community. But at the same time, it is one of the jobs that most lends itself to personal ambition, abuse of power, vanity, corruption

and injustice. To be a good public official, two fundamental conditions are required: one must be a person of integrity, as well as be suitable for the specific function.

What could be better than have Christ's disciples, with a life of holiness and high-level of professional training, to occupy those positions of service?

ECONOMY

Today there is a great ideological vacuum in the world, the absence of a social doctrine that serves as a foundation for a new socio-economic proposal. We need a new philosophical synthesis of social justice, a new proposal that channels macroeconomics towards microeconomics.

With the industrial revolution, and more recently with the technological revolution, the riches of the world have increased enormously. However, the gap between the rich and the poor is ever increasing. We need a new "Carl Marx" or a new "Adam Smith" to emerge, but full of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of God for the blessing of millions of families of all nations. Capitalism and socialism have already demonstrated their virtues and their great defects. The world needs a superior and surpassing proposal.

It is not up to us, the pastors, to elaborate that project for the nations; we are not economists. But our responsibility is to inspire, challenge and transmit a new vision of the role for Christians within society. We must impart to the professionals and entrepreneurs of our communities, and especially to the new generations, a new vision of our mission in the world, motivated by love for our neighbor. We should encourage them to create circles of professionals and challenge them to meet to study, pray, discuss, elaborate, and propose ideas. This will take years of reflection and preparation.

OTHER AREAS OF LIFE IN SOCIETY

I have mentioned only three of the areas of national life and involvement. Of course, there are many others. It is the responsibility of the church, of Christians, to be light and to enlighten all aspects of life in our nation and the world.

I will add to the three already mentioned at least the title of more potential disciplines (without pretending that this is an exhaustive list)

1. Government
2. Politics
3. Economy
4. Education
5. Health
6. Jobs

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7. Security
 8. Science
 9. Arts
 10. Communications
 11. Agriculture
 12. Industries
 13. Handicrafts
 14. Commerce
 15. Foreign trade
 16. International relations
 17. Environment
 18. Natural resources
 19. Social Security
 20. Social Welfare
 21. Social justice
 22. Entertainment
 23. Sports and physical activity
 24. Etc.

ACTIONS THAT THE CHURCH (not as an institution but through its members) CAN GRADUALLY ADDRESS

1. Pray, intercede for our city, nation and other nations. For our rulers and for all men.
2. Preach the gospel of the kingdom of God. Make disciples of all nations. Evangelize with signs and miracles.
3. Impart to the disciples the vision of an integral mission, in order to be factors of social transformation.
4. Increase the number of disciples.
5. Plant communities of disciples (churches) in all neighborhoods, villages and cities of our country and the world with this vision.
6. Grow in holiness, integrity, love of neighbor, service, generosity, with healthy and strong families.
7. Aspire to excellence in everything we undertake.
8. Encourage young people to excel in their studies and prepare themselves to occupy the most important positions in society, starting with the simplest jobs.
9. Develop service vocations.
10. Detect the most urgent needs of the people of the neighborhood, of the city, of the nation, in order to initiate processes to overcome those needs and to remove the causes that produce them.
11. Sanctify all trades, professions and positions with the conviction that everything we do is of God and for God.

12. Form homogenous groups of professionals, businessmen, merchants, politicians, in all areas, to develop ideas, projects, and proposals for the good of our nation at the local, national, regional and international level.
13. Encourage the development of socio-economic proposals which are increasingly just and in accordance with the values of the kingdom of God. Both capitalism and socialism have demonstrated their shortcomings. The world needs something new inspired by God.
14. Develop scientific and apologetic arguments to make our contribution in all areas of society.
15. Invest in social services and social action.
16. Teach occupational skills and crafts; give training in administration.
17. Grant microcredits for small businesses, and accompany them with training and supervision.
18. Open schools and universities to train new generations with this vision.
19. Form companies with the objective of creating sources of work with decent wages, with possibilities for professional and economic growth.
20. Work with the government in all areas (municipalities, schools, hospitals, marginalized, drug addicts, prisons). Sometimes the government has resources, but they do not have people with a vocation of service to carry out certain projects.
21. Encourage disciples with a political vocation to prepare to serve God and others in a specific area of society.
22. Move towards the unity of the church in each city, in each region, in the nation, in the continent and in the world.

If we unite as one body, uniting our ministries, our resources, our gifts, our congregations after the same goal and the same vision, millions will be converted. We can have the best schools, the best universities, the best companies, the best media, the best hospitals, the best professionals, the best deputies, the best leaders, the best orchestras. If we put everything we are and we have at the disposal of our neighbor and our society, the world will see the glory of God and know his love. And we, like a city set on a hill, will be the light of the world.

Isaiah 2:1-3

This is what Isaiah son of Amos saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem

In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Habakkuk 2:3 and 14

For the revelation awaits an appointed time it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay. For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Jorge Himitian