

ENGLISH

*What is the apostolic ministry's
"prophetic proposal" for the
Church today?*

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Introduction

Beloved brothers,

We come to this appointment exactly twenty years after that at Grenoble in 1999. That meeting was held on the initiative of the late lamented Pastor Pierre Truschel, a far-sighted and visionary apostolic minister who provided the opportunity for some of us – who, together with him, became the initiators of this process – to get to know one another and share our lives and ministries. In May of the following year, at Positano, we founded the *fellowship*, later to become *koinonia*, in which we are still moving forward. It was on that occasion that we defined the nature of apostolic ministry¹ and of our group² and adopted our *Mission Statement* and the guidelines that have accompanied us over the years.

As we came together, we concentrated first of all on the fundamental value of relationships (*“Life comes before ministry”*): the sort of relationships, based on the God who dwells “within us” and that are part of the nature of the church derived from its Author, that we would need to draw from Him and live out among ourselves.

We then began to explore the “charter” and mission of apostolic ministry, developing a growing understanding of its importance for both the present and the future of the church. In particular, we discussed the essential contribution of this ministry to the *revelation* of the “mystery of Christ and of the Body of Christ” and to its *construction* in the life and experience of relationships between Christians. It was clear to us that there was a great need to “set to work” on the *vacuum* – a major “breach” – caused by the solitary and sometimes merely positional – or even self-referential – behaviour of well-known apostolic ministries, contrasting with the pluralistic (“collegial”), open, humble and relational exercise of the apostolate in the New Testament.

We have come a long way in these twenty years. Deep relationships have been formed. Highly meaningful conclusions have been reached, as can be seen on our web site. Some of these contributions deserve to be more widely known. We have an awareness of having been brought together by a sovereign work of God... We have stayed together... we have gone forward... Our eyes are set on God’s ultimate purpose. We are here to go further.

The foundation of our shared experience – because it lies at the heart of our calling – and underpinning all our relationships, our activities and discussions, is... Christ! The mystery of Christ and of the Body of Christ, explored in different directions, is fundamental. A passionate

1 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.

2 Who we are: A group of apostles in relationship with common values and vision for reconciliation and edification of the Body of Christ.

AFI Apostolic Consultation May 2019/ Caserta

seeking after Christ, a love for the church – the one and only church, His bride – in our day-to-day and inevitably partial experience, amidst the contradictions and challenges of all that we build or experience.

A turning-point in history

In our most recent sessions there has been a greater emphasis – though it was never absent from our thinking – on the theme of the future: the future of the Kingdom in relation to the “burden” of the Church; the future of the church in relation to the “burden” of apostolic ministry; and consequently, also in relation to the direction and future of this *koinonia*.

Someone has remarked that the times we are living through are more and more like the early centuries of the church, a time of decadence and the collapse of the Roman Empire; a revolution in mentality and morals, a historic turning-point. It is suggested that secularisation and globalisation have given rise to a process described as “the end of history”, a process of “destructuring” or “desertification”, which is corroding and attacking Christianity - both from outside and from within - in lethal fashion; a process advancing “from the bark to the vital core”, gradually but inexorably demolishing all legal and social protections and exposing all that has been built over the centuries, the models and paradigms (mentality) passed down to us and rooted in our cultures from past times and seasons, from earlier civilisations. To “force us” (the naked hand of God?) - if Christianity is to survive - to rethink it, re-imagine it³, starting from the *lymph* of the “deep” reasons (the roots) of “being Christian”, and for being Christians.

The historic churches too have gone back, ever more frequently and decidedly, to talking about “*conversion*” and “*reformation*”; about the importance of a *personal encounter* with Christ, about returning to the Christ as the foundation of foundations (“foundational ecumenism!”) and about the life of the Spirit (“spiritual ecumenism!”). In the context of a deep and undeniable crisis, we are “forced” to “denude” our faith of its trappings, re-examine practices and concepts that have been accepted for centuries, re-imagine the church of the future and revise the modes and forms of what is considered “sacred”. This is a historic crisis. The sense of disorientation is powerful. Perhaps I am mistaken: the “monuments” will remain, but I believe that in the long term only the various forms of “Christianity of the lymph”, those that are authentic and connected to the roots, will survive. There is an interesting “prophecy” given by Joseph Ratzinger in a speech made as long ago as 1969:

“From the crisis of today the Church of tomorrow will emerge, a Church will have lost much. She will become small and will have to start afresh more or less from the beginning. She will no longer be able to inhabit many of the edifices she built

in times of prosperity. As the number of her adherents diminishes, so she will lose many of her social privileges. She will begin again with small groups and movements and a minority who will make faith central to their experience. She will be a more spiritual Church, one

3 The title of a Christian seminar at Fribourg University, Switzerland, a few years ago.

Page 2 of 4

AFI Apostolic Consultation May 2019/ Caserta

that will not claim a political mandate, flirting with the Right one minute and the Left the next. She will be poor and will become the Church of the destitute. Then people will see this little flock of believers as something wholly new. They will discover it as a hope for their own lives, the answer for which they have always been secretly searching.”

The salt of the earth and the light of the world⁴

The theme of this Consultation is “The salt of the earth, the light of the world”. This is a subject we have already grappled with in the past. This time, however, we have two particular sub-headings:

1. “The prophetic proposals of the apostolic ministry for the church in the face of the challenges of today’s world” - How to face them?
2. Summing up: “Christian anthropology and the challenge of gender ideology” - How to face it?

The speakers have done a good job in preparation. We shall listen to them attentively and there will be opportunities for dialogue. Allow me, however, to make here one or two preliminary observations: What - or rather, *who* - makes us, or is able to make us, the salt of the earth and the light of the world? We all know the answer: Christ! The *mystery of Christ in us*!⁵ Our immersion in Him, our spiritual union with Him. As has been said:

“The thought of a *spiritual union with Christ* in his death and resurrection, which is at the very heart of Paul’s experience and teaching, is the key here. So close is this intimacy of knowledge and experience with his Lord that he can regard his apostolic career as an inner participation in his sufferings, which has almost the character of identity.”⁶

The apostolic ministry

And to continue: *What is the apostolic ministry’s “prophetic proposal” for the church today?* What is its possible contribution in facing the challenges that present themselves? *“My dear children – the apostle insists – for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you”* (Gal 4:19). It is clear from Scripture that the determining characteristic of apostolic ministry is laying foundation.⁷ The foundation is Christ. *An apostle, before anything else, is the one who lays the foundation*, the foundation that is Christ; in us and among us (the church). In truth, the secret of secrets for Christian life and work in the world is the implanting and shaping of Christ in us.⁸ It is from there, from the place where Christ truly dwells, from the inner man, from within to the outside, that

4 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. 14 You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." Mt 5:13-16 NIV.

5 "To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. 29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me." Col 1:27-29. 6 Ralph P. Martin, The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians, InterVarsity Press, 1976, p.52.

7 "By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1Cor 3:10-11.

8 We are a prophetic people. And the first prophecy is to "repeat", to "incarnate" Christ. The life and style of Christ. A people that "repeats" and incarnates Christ.

AFI Apostolic Consultation May 2019/ Caserta

the world draws its life. The Spirit that dwells in the depths of God⁹ comes to dwell in the depths of our being, and from there wants to visit my brother and my neighbour and to transform society. Let no one think this observation is taken for granted. It is from this truth - lived out, incarnate, practised - that are derived all the possible "influences", including those directed outwards towards the world, that it is given us to exercise.

So an apostle must pay close attention to the foundation, to lay the foundation of the mystery of Christ in the Christian and in the church. This is the bursting in of God's government in man, the "sowing" of the kingdom of heaven on earth. Perhaps some may accuse me of intimism, but it is not true! Of the need for intimacy, of a "hidden way", yes. We most urgently need to live in contact with "the depths" of God, to cultivate an authentic relationship with the Spirit, of intimacy with God. Yes, because that is where the source is. Otherwise we will be exposed to the risk of superficiality and moralism, close to becoming victims of volunteerism, or even legalism itself. It is from there, from Him, that come the salt, the light, the aroma, the *dunamis*, the possibility of fellowship (*koinonia*) that will cause us to reflect, shine forth, emanate the aroma of the spirit and life of Christ, our life. He is the salt that can make us salt, the light that can make us lights, the aroma that can make us a sweet-smelling aroma. Christ is the foundation of our life; Christ is the foundation of the Body of Christ.

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9 "These are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God." 1Cor 2:10.

Juan Varela

**The Creational Identity of Men and Women, Marriage and Family,
In The Light of Gender Ideology**

Probably the most direct and frontal attack from the "new" social movement called Liquid Modernity, whose executing branch in the West is called gender ideology, is the attack on two fundamental aspects: identity and family. Therefore, before we begin, we must define and defend the creational and even biological identity of the human being, we must define and defend the foundations of marriage and the family structure as God established it, including from the cultural and sociological point of view. On the other hand, we have to define and defend ourselves, from this new social reality called gender ideology, which threatens to destroy the foundations of the Judeo-Christian culture and the pillars of Western civilization.

Creational Identity

The issue of identity is a crucial issue in the history of humanity in theology and anthropology. Identity is "the whole" of the person because it answers essential questions about our origin, purpose, and destiny. When man and woman disobeyed God in Genesis 3, there occurred a loss of their identity and a serious fracture in the sense of their existence. While they remained under the cover and in obedience to God, everything was clear, and man and woman were inhabitants in the Garden of Eden. Under sin and expelled from the garden, they became wanderers in the land of Nod and would spend their entire lives in a constant search for their lost identity. Therefore, the first question of the Bible that occurs in Genesis 3 "Where are you?" reveals the beginning of confusion in the identity of the human being. Sin causes an integral fracture, which Francis Schaeffer calls a "referential theological framework": a theological, psychological, sociological, and even ecological fracture.

And so it is that the same thing happens to us as happened to Adam and Eve, as today we are still outside Eden, in a strange land. It seems that the punishment to which our first parents were subjected when expelled, would condemn the human race to live as a contemporary nomad in the ambiguous and liquid global village. The man who does not seek God is still lost, trying to relocate his identity in the modern land of Nod, like a skeptical pilgrim always searching, always changing, always mutating.

This attack to confuse the identity of the human being is apparent in the life of Jesus. At the beginning of his ministry in Matthew 4, when Satan was tempting Jesus, the three temptations begin in the same way: "If you are the Son of God ..." thus questioning his identity. Then in Matthew 16, the confession of Peter takes place as a result of Jesus' question, "And who do you say that I am? That affirmation—"You are the Christ, the son of the living God"—was called the "rock" due to the solidity of what is declared, is the cornerstone of the edification of the Church, upon which fact? On the identity of Jesus, which was being confused by many.

In the same way, at the end of his ministry, while Jesus was being crucified, the same attack on his identity continues: "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross and save yourself" (Mt.27: 40). Satan attacks the identity of Jesus to annul his purpose of dying for humankind, he tempts Jesus both at the beginning of his ministry and the end of it, precisely in this aspect, that is, questioning his identity as the Son of God. Today the same strategy is followed, everything is blurred and mixed in a confusion of identities, unprecedented in history, whose ultimate goal is to divert man from his primary purpose: to know God.

Biblical Anthropology: Design Reveals Destiny

Identity, transcendence, and sociability are three great pillars in the uniqueness of the human being. Every man, male and female, needs to find the answer to the origin of their existence, to know where they come from, what they are here for, and where they are going. Believers have a significant advantage when answering these questions because we are clear on the fact that man/woman is the fruit of God's creation, within an intelligent design where everything obeys a plan prepared from eternity. We do not come from an initial and fortuitous explosion, but from an intelligently planned design.

God created the man from the earth, from the dust of the earth, endowing him with his own image and likeness, while the woman was created from man. "Earth and flesh" mark from the beginning a very different imprint in each one, which we could summarize in this sentence: "The home of man is the world, while the world of women is home." Adam means "red earth," because man, being created from dust, shares the same chemical elements as the earth (oxygen, carbon, and hydrogen). That is why man is more linked to nature, to his vital and ancestral pulse, to the pulsations of the earth, and to the spirit of conquest that we mentioned at the beginning. Adam was formed from the ground and Eve from the very person of Adam. He, of the earth, and therefore untamed and wild, she of his flesh, and consequently relational and close. That is why in the experience of paternity, the mother *retains* (the home) and the father *propels* (the world). She is the security of the home for her children, while the father is the bridge that connects them to the challenges of the outside world. The design reveals the destiny.

The cultural mandate pronounced by God in Genesis 1:22 makes clear that the first assignment that God gives to man and woman is a call to conquest, to adventure, "bear fruit and multiply, fill the earth and administer it." The call is to both; it is a call to the family, but each responds from their primal nature: Adam, who is taken from the earth, therefore from nature, is in charge of conquering, fighting, dominating the environment. Eve, who is taken from Adam, from his flesh, therefore from the human and relational, she is in charge of the harmony in the home, of the relational, of affection. *He*, from the continent, *she* from the content. The necessity of conquest and the need of a home, "roots and wings" are ancestral energies anchored in the soul of each

man and each woman. We cannot deny them, because, in their complementarity nature, they make up the stability of the family structure.

The Family As the First Social Reference System

"A father and a mother united in marriage, holding hands and walking with their children in arms, will be the most revolutionary and intrepid gesture in this decadent 21st century".

With this disturbing statement, we begin the section where we have to reclaim the place occupied by marriage and the family as the guarantor of society. This is because all the involution defended by the gender ideology concerning the negation of the most elementary biology, the history of human civilization and its forms of gregarious social organization end in a frontal attack on the institution of the family, which has protected us physically and emotionally as a species, and which constitutes the central referential social nest, shapes the personality and gives us sense of identity, rootedness and belonging.

As relational beings, we need to be part of a network or system where we can develop significant relationships that give meaning to our lives. Therefore, the social value of the family is undeniable; it is the primary cell of society and the first relational framework of every human being. Its transcendence is absolute because in it people acquire the foundational training with which they will have to develop in society. All the concepts and guidelines for a human being to evolve as an emotionally balanced being, both in their inner world and in their social network of relationships, are learned in the context of the family, to such an extent that we can affirm that the family, as a natural extension of marriage, is the destiny of the individual.

However, the disintegration of the family and the lack of appreciation for the concept of marriage are sad evidence of a social model that is floundering everywhere. We are now harvesting the bitter fruits where the core concepts of education (values, norms, affectivity, discipline) were not planted. We live in a society where we have broken the rules in all these aspects of normative ethics. Opening up to the rights of the "individual" has detracted from the concept of commitment and dedication. As a result, marriage and family are the first victims of this liquid and mutant society more concerned with personal rights and independence of the individual than in the search

for stable and meaningful relationships. Until a few decades ago, the focus of society was on the family, but since the concepts of cultural Marxism and Liquid Modernity have come into the picture, the focus is on the individual, his selfishness, hedonism, and independence.

It is evident, in the face of such a direct and frontal attack, that we must defend and vindicate our values and beliefs, and we must do so with courage, aware that the primary cell of resistance against this tyranny will be the family.

The social value of marriage and family is beyond all doubt; we cannot dissociate family from society. Marriage is an essential part of God's strategic plan for the development of humanity according to the aforementioned cultural mandate. This verse is of great importance to understand that the first divine commission, the primal mandate to man and woman, is the "ministry" to marriage and family. Therefore, within that order and that pre-established plan, one of the first things that God does is establish the marriage institution as the guarantor of that initial call.

Marriage Is Creational Not Cultural

Marriage was not designed or devised by any civilization or culture as the means to regulate or organize society, nor is it any human institution that needs to be changed or updated according to the needs or tendencies of each new generation.

Since marriage is not a product of culture or society, it is a creational and not a cultural issue, which must be seen as an institution that was born before history, and takes place in the context of creation itself within the theology called "the state of grace." The state of grace is the period between the creation and the irruption of sin in Genesis 3 when man and woman lived an existence of full harmony between themselves as well as with God, free from the coexistence of the later consequences of sin (death, fear, pain). In that state of perfection, God established two core institutions that were intended to be the basis of all subsequent civilization: the institution of the Sabbath and the institution of marriage.

Through the institution of the Sabbath, God ensured the permanence of the worship due to His person, and through the institution of marriage, God assured the continuity of humanity and the fulfillment of his commission to be fruitful and multiply. Therefore, marriage is a core and foundational institution established by God to regulate the bases on which all subsequent civilization should be based. These bases, which not being cultural (and therefore subject to change, i.e., adaptive) are creational (and consequently rooted in permanent values, i.e., normative) and serve for all ages and time, not admitting adulteration nor distortion by cultural aspects such as fashion ideologies, passing philosophies, nor trial-and-error politics. What God established within the framework of creation must be normative for all time, cannot vary nor be destroyed by any civilization; it is a creational (normative) and not cultural (adaptive).

So the heterosexual, monogamous and permanent significance of the marriage union and the family is not something that each new generation can redefine freely based on cultural, ideological or political aspects. The exclusive meaning of marriage is defined by God and by the unique and complementary nature he gave man and woman.

Social Reality Today: Liquid Modernity and Gender Ideology

We do not want to be oblivious to the harsh reality that we have to live in a society where marriage, family, and parenthood are not only obsolete and anachronistic aspirations but are options which are openly attacked by the new paradigms as impediments for the new "social model" to be achieved in the 21st century. These structures of thought are what we now have to explain so that knowing their purpose we will know how to defend ourselves and defend the values of our Christian ethics.

Gone are the times of healthy traditions, where the family was still the institution that brought people together and gave a sense of dynasty and generational identity. Today we live in difficult times where the pillars of Western civilization are being removed, the Judeo-Christian bases of Europe and the West, in general, are being denied, while the new concepts of liquid modernity and gender ideology are being imposed the politics in the most of our countries. The decline of our culture is occurring at an over-heated pace. The family in many cases is only a circumstantial fact, and motherhood is seen by a large part of the new generations as something obsolete that must be overcome so that women are not relegated "to the oppressive role of simply being reproductive", using the language of the detractors of the natural family.

Liquid Modernity: The Last of The Social Movements

Liquid Modernity is the cultural movement or the new social worldview that replaces the outdated post-modernity, which promotes vertiginous and radical changes in the historical civilization, facilitating the transition towards a more holistic and universal mindset. This ultramodern perspective favors the resurgence of an increasingly uniform society, where the emphasis is on diluting the identity, gender and sexuality of the person, and in which the traits or differentiating characteristics previously attributed to each sex are apparent indistinctly in both genders, blurring boundaries and creating a strange sensation of serial production and a floating or mutant identity. Within this new "social disorder", submerged in a process of unprecedented individualization and narcissism, the concepts of androgyny and pangender become extremely relevant, since they fulfill the historical claim of "equality of opportunities" in all fields, both for the woman as for the man, generating a rejection to the traditional and monolithic prefixed identities of man or woman.

All this breeding ground makes it difficult for people to become aware of their identity, thus generating disorientation, lack of roots, lack of purpose and sense of direction. There are no ideals, no faith in the future. It is a real attack on the essence of the human being at its theological and anthropological roots. Gender ideology is nurtured by and fused with this mindset, creating confusion, emptiness, uprooting, and fostering the culture of liquid sexuality with its multiple and almost infinite variants. These are the consequences of the lack of moral, ethical and theological foothold.

Gender Ideology and its aspirations

The roots of gender ideology sink into aspects of classical communism (cultural Marxism), of the sexual revolution, radical feminism, and the crisis of masculinity. Summarizing, we encapsulate in 10 points, what could be its main objectives:

- **Radical feminism:** Victimization and exaggerated exaltation of women, together with a culture of suspicion in front of males who are accused of being the root of many evils.
- **Equality:** Denial of biological differences between individuals, in favor of the egalitarian concept and fluid gender.
- **Antichristianism:** Belligerent opposition to the Judeo-Christian roots of the West, accused of repressive morality and of maintaining the "heteropatriarchy" family.
- **Homosexuality:** Promotion to exaggerated limits of homosexual LGTBI culture and victimization before heterosexuals.
- **Ideological colonization:** The necessity to impose indoctrination programs from childhood, to create a new way of thinking about our children and future generations.
- **Moral relativism:** Denial of universal values and normative ethics, everything is admissible and inclusive, anything goes, (except to disagree with these mandates).
- **Ethical liberalism.** Support for and normalization of behaviors that harm human societies, as well as the most elemental ethics, such as free abortion, sexual promiscuity, pedophilia, bestiality, drugs, etc.
- **Hedonism.** Search for pleasure as an end in itself and without ethical, moral or religious restrictions of any kind.
- **Ideological Dictatorship.** A monolithic mindset, frontal and belligerent rejection to all ideas contrary to totalitarian thought. Opposition to any conservative position as homophobic, fascist and repressive.
- **Ontological destruction of the human being.** The pursuit is for an authentic anthropological reengineering for the sake of a mutant individual who can reinvent himself and redefine his gender without any limitations. In this way, the identity of the human being, as a creature made in the image and likeness of God disappears.

No doubt that the coalition of all these movements could well respond to a detailed plan to turn the individual into an alienated being and deprive him of his true identity traits. Yes, it is authentic ideological colonization that, from radical feminism and the gay lobby, aims to give another twist to the already battered concepts of heterosexuality and gender, diluting their identity more in a fusion where everything is relative and changing. This is the social movement and the doctrine that, as we have already mentioned, is prevailing in the political ideology of many political parties and, therefore, of many governments. The virus is loose and in free circulation, it is only a matter of time, and we must be prepared.

It is terrifying to observe where the supposed modern civilization is headed. We are changing aspects that belong to the essence of the created order in the human being. This is sacred ground that we are not allowed to enter. The divine design cannot be profaned; the boundaries of God's ethics cannot be crossed without suffering bitter consequences. With the violation of our true identity, we lose divine paternity and filiation, being left naked and orphans, and thus we navigate towards the destruction of the image of God in human beings and his social and collective character.

Origins of Radical Feminism and The Crisis of Masculinity

As for the feminist movement, it began with so-called feminist equity that advocated equalization of rights and liberties for women, without renouncing principles of their distinguishing characteristics such as motherhood or the constitution of the family, where the figure of the male was not demonized, but well placed in a new concept of man distant from machismo and male superiority. It was consolidated by the end of the 60s with the sexual revolution and the emancipation of women. It began, like the rest of the movements, being something positive and with legitimate base claims, which sought to liberate women from overt historical oppression. It is true that historically the role of women has always been subject to the arbitrary will of man, and their social rights clearly reduced. Even under the Judeo-Christian tradition, due to a legalistic and manipulated reading of the biblical text, women have been undervalued in their dignity as a human being and their worth as a person, which has contributed to greater radicalization of feminist collectives. So the social injustice, that kept women oppressed for centuries, degenerated from the mentioned feminism of equity into hatred and confrontation with the male gender, as well as in a struggle to impose itself as the new strong sex, promoting the gender rivalry and considering man as an opponent to overcome.

These changes favored the idea that women reject certain aspects of herself, typically traits of her personality and feminine nature, to develop aspects more consistent with those of man in an attempt to equal or resemble him, without understanding that equality refers to treatment and consideration, not to the condition of gender, and, of course, without adopting the same erroneous guidelines typical of a historical machismo to be overcome and not imitated. Thus

radical feminism or radical gender equality began to take shape, within the postmodern culture, as one of the main assets of gender ideology and liquid modernity.

At the same time, these fundamental social transformations caused the role of man to become considerably blurred. He had to abandon the rancid stereotypes of a macho and obsolete male role model, to support the just demands of the woman who was struggling to relocate in the new social scenario. All this took place amid the confusion and disorientation of not being clear about the new paradigms. It was evident that the man had to "leave" but where? It should be pointed out now that from the spiritual aspect, and within the struggle between God's plan and Satan's plan to destroy him, the family—more specifically the role of man—has been in the spotlight from the beginning. Let's take a look.

Within the origin and development of the masculinity crisis, it is necessary to mention the subtle strategy of the enemy, which from the passivity of Adam, which relegated man from his essential role of responsibility, to a solitary search for his identity "outside the home", through the loss of authority structures, the loss of his role as husband and father due to labor absorption since the Industrial Revolution, the loss of generations of men—either by death on the battlefield or due to the effects of a more significant emotional isolation when returning from the great world confrontations—the masculine gender arrived at the 20th century of the hippies, the sexual revolution and the feminism as gender, dragging his particular crisis of identity. Since then men have tried to recover their authority from wrong postulates, evidencing authentic disorientation in their identity and an absence of healthy and normative roles of balanced masculinity. From this disorientation, confusion of identity and purpose have nurtured radical feminism and the world of LGBTBI culture in general, together with the ideologues of these modern nihilistic doctrines.

Roadmap and Proposals

The role of the family and the church as salt and light in the face of social corruption

Psalms 11 verse 3 says: "If the foundations are destroyed, what are the righteous to do?" We believe that in the first place and before the evident destruction of the foundations of our civilization, today more than ever, we have to reclaim the role of the family and its undeniable value. For these reasons, solid churches demand the right to think differently, without being judged or accused of the crime of homophobia; we claim our right to be a church that knows how to differentiate itself from a society in which we refuse to become diluted. We want to defend a solid church firmly rooted in the anchor of creational values and not dependent on cultural vicissitudes. And it is this solid church as a column and bulwark of the truth, which, based on respect for the different LGBTBI collectives, disagrees and firmly refuses the imposition of gender ideology doctrines and liquid modernity postulates. The opposite would be to defend secular anthropocentrism, versus the biblical theocentrism that has to characterize us as salt and light.

"A nation sentences itself when its rulers legalize the bad and forbid the good, and when its church cowardly becomes an accomplice through its silence."

(M. Luther King)

Undoubtedly this is a strong statement, one that has to uproot us from our comfort zone and make us aware that we are in a battle scenario. As a collective of evangelical churches in various associations, as local churches, as families and as individuals we must take an active part. Particularly enlightening current times is the content of Matthew chapter 5. The Beatitudes describe the *essential character* of the disciples of Jesus, while the metaphors of salt and light describe *their influence* in the world. In ancient times salt was highly valued for its ability to preserve food from corruption to the extent that commerce was based on it, from which the word "salary" is derived. But what is authentically prophetic for our times has nothing to do with its properties, but with what was done with salt when it no longer was useful: *"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot."* (Matthew 5:13)

The warning is clear and the Word affirms that when we Christians who are the salt of the world—in these times when we are being attacked and bullied by liquid modernity and its doctrines, when we do not fulfill our commitment to firmly oppose the ideological corruption that is being imposed upon us—we run the risk of being trampled underfoot and thrown off from the social scene. If we do not react quickly, our fundamental rights will continue to be trampled upon, and we will continue to be cornered as a marginalized group, because: *"If the foundations are destroyed, what are the righteous to do?"*

Prevention And Intervention As Actions of Social Visibility of The Church

What interests us is relocating and defending the enormous social value of marriage and the natural family as the most threatened institution and as the natural antidote to avoid being swept away by the tide of this liquid, adrift society. The social visibility to which we as believers are called must have two clear fronts of action: on the one hand prevention, and the other the intervention.

Prevention: That is to say, in the face of the ideological colonization that invades us, work on *theological* colonization, which includes the importance of educating on biblical principles, especially thinking about leadership training and teaching in the church:

Leadership training: Courses or training seminars on all topics related to the family and its social reality, so that leaders will first be trained to train their congregations.

Training of the church: Schools for parent conferences on the value of marriage and family, affective-sexual education, workshops on the dangers of today's society, personalized, specialized family orientation services and counseling.

Intervention: Intervention covers two different aspects that we will call palliative intervention and defensive intervention.

Palliative intervention: Creation of Family Counseling Centers, FCC in local churches or in the city which, as a social arm of the church, offer general family counseling. This intervention calls for the preparation of advisors, guidance counselors and family counselors who are trained to provide help for the body of churches in each city, either by the FCC mentioned above or in a private setting, relying on Christian professionals trained in psychology or family mediation.

Defensive intervention: The protest of Martin Luther nailing the 95 theses at the door of the church of Wittenberg gave rise to the Protestant Reformation. Admittedly, for a reform of this society in matters of ethics, morals, and freedom to have an expression, we need to know how to "nail" our protests through current, available means: pressure and social presence is necessary to make our voice heard through declarations, peaceful demonstrations that make visible the presence of the evangelical population, campaigns to collect signatures, declarations broadcasted throughout social networks and mass media in general.

Another critical aspect is legal defense and legal advice that inform, guide and defend us in the face of possible litigations derived from different particular situations resulting from our declarations or actions as believers. Also, this advice extends to the possible inclusion in the Church's statements of faith or statutes, clauses that explain the Church's position on topics of sexual ethics, homosexuality, and marriages between people of the same sex.

In the midst of this battle, the Lord supports our work and service to Him, with the following words taken from Luke 1: 74-75: *"(He will) rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days."*

Soli Deo Gloria!

Juan Varela

Ángel Negro**WHAT PROPHETIC PROPOSAL DOES THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY HAVE FOR THE CHURCH FACING THE CHALLENGES OF TODAY'S WORLD?****How can we make that proposal operational through an action plan?**

Development

- I. The apostles and prophets in the first century of the Christian era.
 - II. The apostolic ministry in the history of the Church.
 - III. What happened with the Church of the West (Catholic Church).
 - IV. The situation of the Evangelical Churches in general.
 - V. The changes that the Reformation produced in society in contrast to what the Church of today does not produce.
 - VI. The proposal of secularism and our apostolic proposal.
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INTRODUCTION

What prophetic proposal does the apostolic ministry have for the Church facing the challenges of today's world? In the face of the following serious situations with which we have to live? Such as:

Gender ideology, forced immigration together with the enormous death toll generated by the same situation, Islamic terrorism, religious persecution, scandalous social injustice that leads many people to live in extreme poverty, family disintegration, corruption of government and the governed, shameful immorality and perversion in the cinema, television and other media, widespread hedonism, drug trafficking, the exponential increase in drug use in all strata of society, increasing economic inequality between rich and poor countries and between citizens in each nation, as well as many other similar situations that arise in today's world.

This paper is not a lecture or talk on all these issues, it's a discussion starter; it is an open window to the world in which we live; it is an invitation for us to collectively think, pray, work and make proposals that we consider necessary for the Church. Each point presented is inconclusive and terminates with questions. What does the apostolic and prophetic ministry say to the Church of our day about all these and similar issues?

I. THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS IN THE FIRST CENTURY OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA

The apostolic and prophetic ministry had a message that permitted the Church to see the state of the world according to God's perspective.

How does God see the world? What does the Lord say about the society in which we live out the gospel? What did Jesus mean when he told his disciples that they were the salt of the earth and the light of the world? Should the Church, in addition to working for the salvation of people, seek moral, political, economic and social justice changes? What does the apostolic ministry propose to the Church concerning the planet Earth which belongs to God?

The apostles and prophets were the eyes of God concerning events both inside and outside the Church. The apostles speak to the Church on behalf of God about the state of the world.

Romans 1.18 – 32 (NIV)

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.” (Romans 1:18-32 NIV)

They also described what the lifestyle of men would be like in the latter days.

2 Timothy 3.1 - 9

“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.” (2 Timothy 3:1-9 NIV)

In addition, they spoke to the Church and the world about the unfair distribution of wealth and denounced rich oppressors.

Santiago 5.1 - 6

“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 NIV)

God always spoke through his apostles and prophets to show the state of world affairs around them, of what society would be like in the future and what would be their end if they did not repent and change their attitude.

They also had a ministry of admonition to the Church, so that she would not meld with the sins of her generation.

1 John 2.15 – 17

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.” (1 John 2:15-17 NIV)

Not only not meld with the world, but that she did not commit the same sins within the Church.

Galatians 5.16 – 21

“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”(Galatians 5:16-21 NIV)

Ephesians 5.3 – 12

“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.”(Ephesians 5:3-6, 8-12 NIV)

2 Thesalonicens 3.6 – 8

“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you.”(2 Thessalonians 3:6-8 NIV)

The message of Revelation

The ministry of the prophet and apostle John, together with the book of Revelation, was of vital importance for a Church under terrible persecution, as was the case in the first two centuries. The Church received a message of faith, hope, encouragement, and justice.

1. In the first chapter, Jesus Christ shows the Church clearly that He is the Lord and that He reigns. The One who has all power and authority, and who has everything under his control.
2. That Jesus Christ knows the state of the Church by telling each one: "I know."
3. He reveals to the Church the celestial reality, the eternal glories, the Lord on the throne as Lion and Lamb, in eternal majesty.

4. He shows that evil will not last forever, that justice will be done, that the martyrs are in eternal glory, that the Roman Empire (Babylon, the great harlot) will fall, that the Lord will triumph over them.
5. He explains that the Church is the wife of the Lamb and will reign for ever and ever.

How glorious was the Apostle John's message to the suffering, persecuted Church! How encouraging it was for the brothers to know that Roman imperialism was going to fall, that God would bring about justice!

The apostles saw the future and anticipated future events. The apostolic and prophetic ministry was of vital importance in the Church of the first centuries.

II. THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

The apostolic and prophetic ministry was very evident in the Church of the first century, as well as during the following centuries. In times of spiritual revival, these offices played a leading role. Before, during and after the Reformation, their participation was very prominent.

At the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, the Pentecostal movement emerged, bringing new strengths, gifts and hope. The Church grew and expanded, as a spiritual awakening reached many denominations. But then, in their eagerness to keep "the sound doctrine", they divided into countless fractions and became legalistic. On the other hand, the rest of the denominations, wanting to preserve their own traditions, were closed to the supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit. That was the condition of the Church around the year 1960. But at the same time, in the decade of the 60's, the prophecy of Amos 8.11 was fulfilled:

"The days are coming," declares the Sovereign Lord, "when I will send a famine through the land— not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord." (Amos 8:11 NIV)

Many, especially young people, begin to look for more of the Lord. Watchman Nee's books led us to a greater search for life in the Spirit. God poured out his Spirit, initiating a spiritual movement that reached practically all denominations.

However, we have observed that the Church in general was losing its prophetic role in the world. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the apostles and prophets were more dedicated to the task of evangelizing and opening new works.

The apostolic and prophetic ministry must teach the will of God to the nations and denounce sin in all its forms. In light of the silence of the Church, the nations are losing their conscience in regard to sin.

Today everything is relative, there are no absolutes and nothing is wrong. Everyone can do whatever they want and can publish it freely before the cameras. Who says "that's wrong"? Who speaks to men and women on behalf of the Lord of the whole Earth? Does the Church not dare, not want, or is she not able to be the voice of society's conscience?

The prophetic function of the Church is not to condemn man, but to point out or teach what God says. The overemphasis of John 3:16 on love, and the exaggeration of a grace without kingdom, dulled the prophetic edge of the Lord's Church. It is necessary to love, but with the truth. We are not thinking of prophets in the style of John the Baptist—that way of prophesying was in accordance with their time—but in men and women who raise their voice in the media, in the political tribune, in literature for popular bookstores, in newspapers or in articles that are clear and understandable for society, that reach the common man and lead him to reflection.

It is time for true prophets of the Lord to rise up and speak in His name. The prophetic voice must be heard among the nations. The Lord, speaking of the Holy Spirit, said: "when he comes he will convince the world of sin, of justice and of judgment". How does this happen? We know that this operates in the hearts of people; however, the audible instrument in the midst of a nation is the Church.

We are all aware of the time when the Church had a message of judgment without mercy, but we also know that this is not what we are referring to. To declare the truth produces a conscious awareness of sin in people. To lift up the cross of Christ is to show that justice was done, that the demands of God were satisfied, which frees men and women from the coming judgment.

III. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CHURCH OF THE WEST (Catholic Church).

The prophetic voice that the Catholic Church possessed has been diluted by the moral scandals that have come to light. The Catholic Church has been discredited, and as a result she has lost authority and credibility as the conscience of society. She lost her spirituality, and from one generation to the next she no longer transmitted a living faith. For this reason she lost her people. To make matters worse, instead of showing heart-felt humility and seeking God, she wanted to seek popularity by relying on popular piety full of superstition, idolatry and paganism. She sought to accommodate the new morality of the world. She lost the trust of spiritual people.

- She lost spirituality.
- She lost authority.
- She lost people.
- She lost God's support.

But there is hope: the charismatic movement and the movements of spirituality within are a new leaven that can bring the emergence of something new. This new life dethrones idolatry, superstition and immorality, and supplants human dogmas and traditions by a life in the Spirit. The Catholic Church today needs apostles and prophets who dare to raise their voices for times of refreshment to come from the Lord.

Questions for analysis and debate

1. How can we help the Church to have a prophetic voice to the world?
2. How can we collaborate with the Holy Spirit to convince people of sin, justice and judgment?
3. People have lost conscious awareness of sin: What should the Church do to make this change?
4. The message of the Church to the world at present is: "God is good; God loves you; God wants to bless you." All this is true, but is it the only thing we have to proclaim? Is this not a mutilated gospel?
5. How can we help the spirituality movements that are working within the Catholic Church?

IV. THE SITUATION OF EVANGELICAL CHURCHES IN GENERAL

What is the situation of the evangelical Churches in the world today?

We all know, but I want to transcribe what some writers have said.

Landa Cope tells in her book "The Model of Social Transformation of the Old Testament" that a British journalist said: "Christians believe that when many of them live in a community they end up influencing it for good". "The greater the Christian presence, the greater the general benefit to society."

The journalist sought a city with a high percentage of believers who attended Church on Sundays. According to this definition, Dallas, Texas was the most christianized city in America. On Sundays, all the temples were crowded with believers.

Upon reviewing the statistics and the social situation of the city, they were amazed. The high index of delinquency, decrepit health systems, contagious diseases, high rate of infant mortality, economic inequality, racial injustice, problems of education, etc. It is the city where none of us would like to raise their children, says Landa in her book.

The most terrible thing was when the journalist presented this data concerning the city of Dallas to the most renowned Christian leaders in the area, and asked them: "As a Christian leader, what do you have to say about the condition of your community?" the answer was: "This does not concern me ... I am a spiritual leader ..."

Something similar happens in Africa and other countries in Latin America. Bob Moffitt in his book "Si Jesús Fuese Alcalde", tells of places in Africa where the Church is growing and society is decaying simultaneously. The Church does not have a strong and visible impact on its culture.

He says that they set out in the 90's to establish new Churches in a country of 11 million inhabitants of southern Africa and managed to start 10,000 new Churches.

They thought that the numerical growth of the Churches would bring a visible transformation in society. But what happened was the opposite. Corruption became uncontrollable, along with a great decline in the economy, health and education. But...there were 10,000 new Churches. 70% of the population considered themselves Christian. There was a lack of connection between the growth of the Church and the transformation of society.

In Guatemala, 40% of the population considers themselves Evangelical Christians. The country still suffers from corruption, poverty and ethnic division.

We could continue mentioning Darrow W L. Miller in his book "Discipling Nations", or Vishal Mangalwadi and his book "Truth and Transformation", as well as other authors.

The conclusion drawn is dramatic, but real: The Church does not impact society.

Why? What happened? In reviewing the reasons, the same conclusion is reached: The gospel that was preached during most of the twentieth century was not the gospel preached by the Lord's apostles in the first century. It is a watered-down gospel, without lordship, without the demands of the kingdom.

- A gospel without kingdom was preached, salvation without lordship.
- A message stating one can be a Christian without being a disciple was preached.
- It was taught that if you have a subjective spiritual experience with Jesus, you are already saved forever.
- People were asked to believe, to raise their hands, and recite the prayer of faith. From that point on, they were considered saved.

There is hope

The hope is that the Church will return to the gospel of the kingdom and live under the lordship of Christ; only then can it impact society. For this we need to re-evangelize the Church with the gospel of the kingdom, and each believer must become a disciple of Jesus Christ.

1. How can we re-evangelize the Church with the gospel of the kingdom?
2. How is it possible to achieve a militant Church that does not conform to the culture of comfort and entertainment of the current world?
3. How can we integrate the Church into small groups of a committed and dynamic discipleship where each one is transformed and outfitted for the mission?
4. How to be a Church formed by stable marriages and families, who live in peace and harmony, and who, having overcome individualism, to be consecrated in unity to serve God and their neighbor? How shall we stop the advance of divorces, even among Christians, which is destroying families and the new generations?

Does the Church have authority to discuss these issues? What action plan does the apostolic ministry propose to the Church regarding these situations?

V. THE CHANGES THAT THE REFORMATION PRODUCED IN SOCIETY CONTRASTED WITH WHAT THE CHURCH OF OUR DAY DOES NOT PRODUCE.

*One of the effects reported was on the **literacy levels** of the "Protestant zones" of Europe. Both Luther and Calvin insisted that all Christians should read the Bible for themselves. In this sense, Protestants promoted universal education. Becker and Woessmann, in a study in 2009, using data from 452 Prussian counties in 1871, report that Protestant areas showed higher levels of literacy. Not only that, the same authors, in a 2008 study, also found that the "Protestant areas" had more literate women. This was the result of Luther's emphasis on "each village must also have a women's school." Both findings are vital to understand the economic progress of Protestants in Europe. The more the education, the more the progress!*

In many countries, the gospel does not impact the average or higher intellectual and economic levels of society. To top it off, in several congregations, especially charismatic ones, little value is given to training and intellectual advancement. Just as academic education brought progress in the countries that embraced the Reformation, so can the same happen today.

Another effect of Protestantism in regard to the concept of work, which became known as "the Protestant work ethic". Both Luther and Calvin understood work not only as something that pleases God, but as a call (vocation) from God himself. The implications of this idea were monumental. On the one hand, this implies that there was no work or employment of inferior dignity. What mattered is not what kind of work it was, but that it was done for the glory of God. In addition, the work is a "call" (vocatio) and implies that God uses each person for His purposes to maintain His creation and serve humanity. Not only the clergy (priests, monks, pastors, etc.) serve God, but every person who works serves Him!

In short, apparently the expansion of Protestantism produced in the worker a "sense of purpose" in his labor that led Protestant areas to be more productive.

(Paragraphs in italics: Pastor and economist Héctor Salcedo)

The reformers not only taught:

Only Christ, Only Faith, Only Grace, Only Scripture and Only Glory to God

They were very practical in bringing the life of Christ to daily life, and they were successful.

Luther and Calvin taught (apart from the five theological postulates), three very intertwined truths that transformed entire nations and could have transformed the entire world. Some of them remain to this day in the countries that embraced them.

The Protestant Reformation made a great impact on the nations in which it was established, in two important areas and a third that honored the Lord:

1. Employment as a service that benefits society as a whole.
2. And that glorifies the name of God.
3. With a moral and righteous conduct in all areas of life.

Each one could say: "I know why I work. It's not only to support my family, but to take care of God's creation and serve my neighbor, as well."

Evangelical Christians work, but how many take it as a vocational service, as a call from God to maintain the Lord's creation, serve humanity and bring glory to the name of our Father God?

What transformations these principles would produce if they were applied in all the nations of the world!

VI. THE PROPOSAL OF SECULARISM AND OUR APOSTOLIC PROPOSAL

1. The proposal of secularism.

We know that Earth and all who inhabit it belong to God; however, the proposal of this secularist age is: "A society without God". What does it mean in practice? Not recognizing the commandments established by the Lord.

This is nothing new. It's something the Psalmist had already said. (Sal. 2.1-3)

"Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, 'Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.'"(Psalm 2:1-3 NIV)

Religious doctrines are based on what is considered to be absolute truth, while secularism is based on reason. This doctrine of rationality was developed during the eighteenth century, by the cultural-intellectual movement.

2. The proposal of the Lord and his Church.

"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and those who dwell in it." Everything has to return to its true owner. Everything has to go back to God. The earth belongs to God, not to the devil.

As King David said: (1 Chronicles 16.28-34)

"Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him. Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness. Tremble before him, all the earth! The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved. Let the

heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!" Let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them! Let the trees of the forest sing, let them sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever."(1 Chronicles 16:28-34 NIV)

For many years it has been said that "Heaven belongs to God and the earth belongs to the devil." "We have to work so that people are saved and go to heaven. Do not worry about everything else. It's all reserved for the fire." But is this true? Do we have to wash our hands of the whole thing and give the world to the devil to do what he wants with people and with God's creation?

That the devil **is** the prince of the power of the air, but does that mean that he is the owner of the earth and its inhabitants?

There is part of a "lying truth" in all this. He is a prince and operates in the air. His influence is exceedingly great. But by twisting the Scriptures and indoctrinating men with the opposite of what Christ said, he usurps God's place and pretends to be God, sitting on the throne of men's hearts pretending to be God. He is an anti-God.

Nowhere in the Bible are we taught not to worry about creation and the people of the world, because all people, from Adam and Eve to our day, were created by God, and for God. Jesus not only healed those who believed in him, but all those who came to him. He blessed the Jew as well as the foreigner. He fed everyone without asking how many of them would follow him.

In the same way the Church was called to do good to everyone, beginning with those of the family of God. Almost all Churches have some social service for the needy: orphanages, nursing home, soup kitchens, assistance to AIDS patients, home for single mothers and assistance to drug addicts; assistance to refugees, schools, literacy programs, assistance to widows and the homeless, and many other similar things. All this is excellent and must continue, it's pleasing in the eyes of God. It is pleasant perfume in his presence.

But the question we must answer is: Does what the Lord presented in the Sermon on the Mount, point to this type of social service or to a greater intervention and participation in the world, so that changes may occur in all of society, changes that benefit all men?

Mt 5.13-14

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden."(Matthew 5:13-14 NIV)

The call is to be salt of the earth and light of the world. The call is to be a city set on a hill.

Mt 5.15-16

"Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."(Matthew 5:15-16 NIV)

The Protestant Reformation managed to make moral and social changes in the countries that accepted that change. It managed to be a city settled on a hill. Can we achieve the same? Can the Church move in that direction and make it known to the world?

What God wants

To seek first the kingdom of God is to know that He loves justice and abhors all evil, even in those who do not recognize His government. God never ceased to be the Sovereign Lord of all nations. The Father always loves justice and abhors all kinds of injustice. He loves peace and not conflict, violence, cruelty, rapes and wars.

At the birth of Jesus the angels sang:

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."(Luke 2:14 NIV)

In addition, God wants all men to be free and enjoy freedom. God is against all kinds of despotism, authoritarianism, but wants order and authority. God wants liberty, not libertinism; freedom without debauchery.

The responsibility of the Church

Jorge Himitian, at AFI 2018 in Fuerteventura, expressed the following:

Does the Church have any responsibility in the transformation of 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 contradictory, depending on the sector polled.

Currently, among the moderate positions on this subject, there are basically two main ones postulates. Both positions affirm that, yes, the Church has a responsibility in the transformation of nations. One maintains that its action must be indirect. The other affirms that the Church must include in its integral mission a direct action for the transformation of 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 or in different areas of government. The contribution made indirectly would consist in preaching the gospel,

making disciples, planting Churches, doing works of mercy and sending missionaries to all nations. As a result of the great numerical growth of the Church in the nations and of the subsequent discipleship, transformations would take place in society.

Those 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 inhabitants of the nation and the world.

Personally, I think that position A and B are not exclusive. If we advance with the wisdom of God and learn from the mistakes and successes taught by the history of the Church during its 2,000 years, I think it is possible to harmonize both positions, because I understand that they are complementary.

Questions for debate

1. Do we have to work for a better world, without neglecting our main responsibility, i.e. the salvation and edification of the people?
2. Should the Church, in addition to working for the salvation of the people, seek moral, political, economic and social justice changes?
3. What can we learn from the apostles and prophets of the first century?
4. What can we learn from the history of the Church up to the Protestant Reformation (positive and negative)?
5. What can we learn from the reformers who made changes in the Church and the society?
6. Our proposals must be from the least to the greatest, so that they do not remain in unattainable ideals.
 - a. What would be the least we can do?
 - b. How can we reach the Church at large with the gospel of the kingdom?
 - c. How can we reach the government officials, judges and legislators with the truth of the Word of God so that they can make the right direction?
 - d. How do we reach the general population?
7. The reality of the accumulation of wealth in a few hands is something unprecedented in the history of mankind.
 - a. How can we reach the entrepreneurs and the rich of this era?
 - b. What do we propose to the professionals and entrepreneurs of our congregations?
 - c. What do we propose to our young people who are in the universities or who will study in them?

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- d. What do we propose to Christian professionals, both Evangelicals and Catholics?
 - e. How do we transmit this vision of the transformation of society and culture to the new generations?
 - f. What do we present to writers, journalists and people in the media?

A personal experience that can help us

In the 90's, I prepared a work, some 20 pages, entitled: "The Christian in the Face of Globalization". I was asked to expound on it in a congress for young people and adolescents with about 2,000 attendees. The teenagers fell asleep, but the young people, mainly the university students, were impressed. Also, some unsaved people who were in the place, among them a teacher who later asked permission to give the document to the students in his school. The members of the congress photocopied the study and took it to their jobs, and people were impressed. In a law office, work stopped as the paper was read. They sent it to all the senators, deputies and people of the provincial governments. I received notes from the Chamber of Industry of Guatemala regarding the article. A deputy and trade unionist invited me to eat in a very good restaurant to talk about the subject. The work was published in its entirety in a quarterly book that reaches all unions, political parties, etc. from the country. A University began to dictate a subject on Political and Social Sciences in the facilities of a union, I was invited to give a talk of 20 minutes at the opening.

On May 25, 2010, Argentina celebrated 200 years of the Revolution against Spain to achieve the freedom of colonialism. The festivities throughout the country multiplied, but that day, in the morning a Tedeum was celebrated in the Cathedral of Buenos Aires in honor of the Bicentennial of the May Revolution. The Catholic Church invited ministers of different religious denominations to raise prayers for the Fatherland. The pastors asked that I be the selected candidate, and they introduced me as a representative of the evangelical people. I was the 2nd or 3rd in prayer. Cardinal Bergoglio (current Pope) presided over the Tedeum. The Cathedral was crowded with people. When I finished praying, the crowd of journalists, political leaders and other personalities started a thunderous applause, many standing, and with shouts of approval.

Why? I am not a lawyer, nor an economist, nor a politician, I am a simple suburb pastor. Apart from the providence and grace of God, I think what caused the reaction was presenting the truth wrapped in a common and ordinary language. With terms that people know and listen to normally. I think we need to get out of our evangelical jargon and speak the truth in popular language. I think we need to get more involved with ordinary people, with a message that is not common.

Will the word spoken by the prophets Isaiah and Habakkuk be fulfilled?

"For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11.9)

"For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Habakkuk 2.14)

THEMES THAT ARE NECESSARY TO DISCUSS

1. Is the transformation of the nations part of the mission of the Church?
2. If the answer is affirmative, how can we reverse the disinterest in the transformation of nations in the evangelical world?
3. How can democracy, theocracy and pluralism be harmonized?
4. How is it possible to coexist in the same country with extreme positions, such as gender ideology and the teachings of the Bible?
5. Does the Secular State exist? Or is it an excuse to impose anti-God ideologies?
6. Biblical morality, natural morality, immorality, amorality, popular morality, traditional morality, who establishes what is right and what is wrong?
7. Is it right to promote biblical morality in the nations? Up to what point?
8. Who should have parental authority over the children? Is it the responsibility of parents, schools or the state to provide sexual and comprehensive education for children and young people?
9. Is the traditional evangelical position of separation of Church and State correct?
10. In what way should the Church fulfill its role of being the salt of the earth and the light of the world?
11. Is it right to encourage our brothers and young people to prepare for positions in the government and in the public service?
12. If yes, what would be the ways for them to get to occupy positions in the three branches of the state?
 - a. Form parties led by Christians?
 - b. Form a Christian party?
 - c. Participate in other existing parties?
 - d. Other options.
13. In the face of the crisis of values and the high levels of corruption in many nations, how can the Church develop a campaign of national and world moralization?
14. In the face of social injustice, should the Church encourage economists, administrators, lawyers, businessmen and professionals from among its members to promote more equitable socio-economic projects for society?
15. Centuries ago the western Church confused the kingdom of God with the Church. God has the sum of knowledge and power; the Church, no. God establishes and removes kings; the Church, no; etc ... What are the limits of the Church in political and social action?
16. How can the Church begin to influence the great centers of education with moral values and with the truth?

IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE THE STAGES THAT EACH CONTINENT OR NATION LIVES
IN RELATION TO THESE THEMES.

Angel Negro