

*Christian Mission for the
United Nations Community*
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His Excellency
Sr. Patricio Aylwin Azocar
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Your Excellency Sr. Aylwin Azocar:

Please accept my warmest greetings from New York. Please know of the high esteem which I have for you and the position in which you serve.

Leadership is increasingly more complex, because leaders face problems they cannot solve by their own efforts. God has made it clear that He has created each individual and nation with a purpose and a plan. The problems we face as a global community have arisen in part because we have not tried to discover His plan. My team and I have a two-fold commitment: to strive for God's solutions to problems facing nations; and to serve those in leadership. The hub for our efforts is the United Nations in New York, which is a crossroads for statesmen and diplomats seeking to address the problems facing peoples and nations.

I have enclosed some ideas that I presented at the United Nations dealing with one problem facing leadership. If you will be at the United Nations in September for the meeting of the General Assembly, would it be possible for me to have a 15-minute meeting with you to discuss these ideas with you more fully and to explore ways that we might serve you and be an encouragement to you?

Secondly, we will host a luncheon in the United Nations on Friday, October 1st, for Heads of State/Government and Foreign Ministers to consider a crucial issue facing leaders --- improving the quality of life for our people. We would be delighted to have you as our guest.

Please know that my team and I count it a privilege to serve you in any way that we can.

With my warmest regards,

Gary I. Allen
Gary I. Allen, Ph.D.

THE LEADER'S ROLE IN STRENGTHENING
THE VALUES IN SOCIETY

Gary I. Allen

I would like to pose an idea for your consideration that has captured my imagination. It is a thought expressed by Walter Lippmann, the political essayist. He said that leaders

are the custodians of a nation's ideals, of the beliefs it cherishes, of its permanent hopes, of the faith which makes a nation out of a mere aggregation of individuals (1).

He presents the noble idea that a nation and a society are held together by certain ideals, beliefs, hopes and faith, and that it is the leaders of a nation and a society who are endowed with the responsibility for preserving these. I believe that the consequences of this hypothesis are sufficiently powerful to warrant testing it.

We are well aware of the finite nature of nations. Professor Alexander Tytler has told us that "the average age of the world's greatest civilizations has been 200 years" (2). The historian Arnold Toynbee has told us that of the 26 civilizations he has been able to document since the beginning of time, 16 have already disappeared and 9 of the remaining 10 are showing signs of deterioration (3). Furthermore, we are aware that moral disintegration has always preceded political disintegration. The consequences of Lippmann's statement are severe if, as he says, the leaders are the custodians of the ideals, beliefs, hopes and faith which hold a nation together. Leaders have it within their grasp to strengthen the nation and thereby increase its longevity, or to speed its decline. This is a heavy responsibility.

We hear many of our world's leaders emphasizing the necessity of values as the essential glue to hold our nations together. Deng Xiaoping, facing the unimaginable challenge of welding one billion people together, stated "Without ideals and discipline our country would be only a heap of loose sand" (4).

Indira Gandhi, I am convinced, would agree with Lippmann that public servants have primary responsibility for preserving the values of society. In 1981, she expressed the following:

In the old Greek sense of the word, politics is the essence of life, for it permeates all activities. Unfortunately present-day politicians have made it superficial, as if it were merely a profession. Values in political or professional life cannot be fragmented from those perennial values which are necessary for the unfolding of man's personality. To treat political values as separate and independent of human values is to diminish the human dimension.

She went on to indicate that this problem is not peculiar to certain political systems but is common to all when she referred to "the obvious inadequacy of known systems of government, whether capitalist, communist or even the many hues of socialist systems as they are practised in different countries" (5). In her analysis, the problem is universal and the need universal.

Edmund Burke, the British statesman of the 18th century, argued that it is precisely in the significance which the public servant attaches to these values that the true leader can be recognized:

The great difference between the real statesman and the pretender is, that the one sees into the future, while the other regards only the present; the

one lives by the day, and acts on expediency; the other acts on enduring principles and for immortality (6).

I agree with these analysts. I am convinced that Lippmann's statement was not just nice rhetoric, but that the leader is, whether he likes it or not, a custodian of the ideals, beliefs, hopes and faith that hold a nation together. I say whether he likes it or not, because I am convinced that if the public servant does not take this responsibility seriously, the nation will not hold together in the way God intended it.

Three and a half millenia ago, God made the following statement to a people who were about to form a nation:

If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all His commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth...The Lord will grant you abundant prosperity --- in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your ground --- in the land He swore to your forefathers to give you...However, if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all His commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you...You will be unsuccessful in everything you do; day after day you will be oppressed and robbed, with no one to rescue you (7).

God is speaking here of ideals, beliefs, hopes and faith shaped by Him. Unless these values are preserved, the nation will not prosper and endure. To the leader of this emerging nation, God said:

Be careful to obey all the law My servant...gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful (8).

Clearly, the leader was to be the custodian of and channel for God's purposes for the nation. He was to be the custodian of the ideals, beliefs, hopes and faith that hold a nation together, and they were to emanate from God's instructions. Equally obvious, irresponsible leadership leads to the demise of a nation.

It is important to recognize that God created each one of us out of love. He desires the best for us. He created the nations with our best interests and His purposes in mind. We must recognize that the values we are talking about play a role in the fulfillment of God's loving purpose for individuals and nations.

Government is ordained by God as an institution meant to hold man's selfish nature in check. As such, the authority vested in a public servant ultimately derives from God. God has informed us that "There is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God" (9). Further, "He sets up kings and deposes them" (10). Thus, God referred to Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylonia, and Cyrus, King of Persia, by name as His servants (11).

God has given public servants the responsibility for protecting values --- spiritual and otherwise --- that hold our societies together. The spiritual dimension was the one and only base for the values worth preserving --- the values that would preserve the nation. George Washington, in his farewell address, gave his best advice for the prosperity of the nation on whose behalf he had sacrificed so much:

And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of

refined education, ...reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle (12).

As a part of preserving the ideals, beliefs, hopes and faith that hold a nation together, God has placed upon the shoulders of government officials responsibility for creating an environment where these values may prosper --- specifically, an environment of reverence for God. God has instructed the citizens of every nation that they are to pray "for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity" (13). God's desire is that each human being live in an environment where he or she may "lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity". It is here that the ideals, beliefs, hopes and faith that hold the nation together can be nurtured and prosper. God has instructed us to focus on the leaders for effecting this environment because, obviously, it is the public servants who make decisions that can create or destroy that environment where individuals may "lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity". Public servants have the capability to create an environment where individuals can freely worship and obey their Creator. They also have the capacity to inhibit that walk with God. Those in leadership positions must make sure that they are providing an environment where individuals can freely follow God. Public servants must exercise that responsibility very carefully. God, through Jesus, has given those in leadership this warning:

If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come (14)!

The important question that needs to be considered is this: What is the role of the leader in preserving those values in a society? Is it enough just to create an environment where each individual "may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity", or is there more?

In response to this question, it is clear that leadership must do two things. First, they must apply the spiritual values in their own lives. Secondly, upon this base, they must espouse these values to the citizenry. Alexis de Tocqueville, the French sociologist and political analyst of the 19th century, offered this advice:

What means are then left to the authorities to lead men back toward spiritual opinions or to hold them within the religion thereby suggested? What I am going to say will certainly do me harm in the eyes of politicians. I think that the only effective means which government can use to make the doctrine of the immortality of the soul respected is daily to act as if they believed it themselves. I think that it is only by conforming scrupulously to religious morality in great affairs that they can flatter themselves that they are teaching the citizens to understand it and to love and respect it in little matters (15).

Tocqueville argued that public servants must set high spiritual standards in their private lives and then in their public lives.

It seems to me that at this point there is a serious challenge in leading our people with regard to the ideals, beliefs, hopes and faith that hold a nation together. Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company conducted a study in 1980 comparing the values of leaders with those of the people. Granted, this study was performed within the United States, but I am convinced that there are some lessons which are transferrable. The study concluded that "the majority of leaders are out of touch with the public, especially concerning the tremendously important moral issues" (16). In other words, the leadership places a lower priority on moral values than the citizenry does. According to Lippmann, Burke and Tocqueville, are today's

leaders really leading? Are they really serving as custodians of the ideals, beliefs, hopes and faith that hold a nation together? I am convinced there is a problem.

What is the solution bringing public servants into a position of leadership in terms of the ideals, beliefs, hopes and faith that hold a nation together? What I am about to tell you I believe with all of my heart. I believe the answer for bringing public servants into a position of leadership in terms of the ideals, beliefs, hopes and faith that hold a nation together lies in the words of Jesus when He said:

If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water" (17).

We must come to the Source --- the source from which flows the ideals, beliefs, hopes and faith that hold a nation together --- namely, God --- Jesus. And we must drink from this source before we can understand these values, much less protect them and convey them. Being the guardian of values as God intended them requires being linked with the Creator God who reigns in the affairs of the world, the One who is the source and shaper of these values.

How do we come to God and drink? To do this, we must, first of all, overcome the problem within ourselves which blocks our relationship with God. Let us digress for a moment to adequately consider this.

The God who reigns over nations is holy --- without moral imperfection. We are not morally perfect. We are greedy. We look out for ourselves more than for, if not to the exclusion of, our neighbor. Our moral imperfection --- our unholiness --- excludes us from the presence of Holy God. Think of the problem this way. If you had a beautifully cut, 200-carat diamond, would you display it with a common field stone next to it? Of course not! Clearly, they are totally incompatible. Even more so, our unholiness is incompatible with God's perfect holiness. The problem is insurmountable from a human point of view. By ourselves, there is no way we can come into the presence of Holy God. By ourselves, we are eternally separated from the One who created us and loves us --- excluded from His presence. One servant of Almighty God stated the problem this way:

The arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear (18).

Apart from God's supernatural intervention, we would have no hope. But the God who created all mankind and rules over nations has intervened. He entered human history Himself, taking the form of a man, as Jesus, to pay the penalty Himself for our sins. Jesus made statements such as: "I and the Father are one" (19) and "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father" (20). He also said that He "came to seek and to save what was lost" (21) and "to give His life as a ransom for many" (22). Jesus went on to say "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (23). Jesus said "Whoever accepts Me accepts the One who sent Me" (24).

That God could at the same time rule the universe and become a human being, and that He could die on the cross to pay the penalty for my own sin are mysteries to me. But I know that they are true, because of what the application of these truths has done in my own life. Dag Hammarskjold provided insight for us of what God accomplished through Jesus when He said:

Forgiveness breaks the chain of causality because he who "forgives" you --- out of love --- takes upon himself the consequences of what you have done. Forgiveness, therefore, always entails a sacrifice (25).

What does it mean to come to God and drink? Jesus told one individual "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" --- literally, "born from above". This individual responded "How can a man be born when he is old? Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus then elaborated:

I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at My saying "You must be born again --- born from above" (26).

According to Jesus, then, one part of us comes alive at the time of human birth, while another part of us --- namely, our spirit --- requires a second birth process originating with God. It means to be made alive spiritually so that those ideals, beliefs, hopes and faith can then come alive. Unless we are made alive spiritually, "born anew from above", we are separated from God, spiritually dead --- that part of us is dead from which these values must originate.

It is noteworthy that when Jesus said "You must be born anew from above", it was to a leader. Clearly, God intends for leaders to be "born anew from above".

At the moment we are "born anew from above", all of God comes into our lives to take up residence there, to guide us and to change us into the kind of person He wants us to be. This is the origin of values. We are told in the Bible that we will change as a result of having "put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (27). This change is summarized in the statement "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God" (28).

My commitment to you is a testimony to God's ability to change lives. To illustrate that change, let me share from my past one example that I am not proud of. One time in the middle of an all-day, all-night medical experiment, my wife telephoned me, desperately ill, and asked me to bring her some medicine. I said "No!" and hung up the telephone. Until I let God work on my life, no one mattered to me but myself and my own goals --- not even my own family.

The ideals, beliefs, hopes and faith that hold a nation together stem from a personal relationship --- being linked to God. These values result from being a complete person --- a person completed by our Creator. It is not something we have to strive for. Blaise Pascal, the seventeenth century French physicist, said "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ" (29). Thus, this relationship with God is not something we have to strive for. It comes naturally. All we must do is allow ourselves to fall into God's caring hands.

Thus, before we can be a spiritual source as God intended, we must go to the Source Himself. Recall that Jesus said:

If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water" (17).

It is important to note that in the original language the verbs "come" and "drink" are continuous action verbs. Certainly, one must come for a first drink at some point in time. However, we are clearly instructed that we must "keep on coming" to God and "keep on drinking". It is this habit that will allow us to protect and nurture the values which God designed as the key to holding societies and nations together.

Jesus admonished us:

Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me, and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing (30).

This is a strong admonition to always live in dependence upon God, never to stray from Him by placing our confidence in ourselves alone.

Because of the serious responsibility upon the shoulders of leaders to foster the values that preserve our societies, I believe it is paramount for leaders to be alive in the fullest sense --- spiritually, as well as physically. This has always been the challenge for leaders. The temptation has always been for leaders to want to appear strong and self-sufficient, as if to be dependent upon the Creator God could be viewed as a sign of weakness. In the days of Jesus, we are told "Many even among the leaders believed in Him. But...they would not confess their faith...for they loved praise from men more than praise from God" (31). What a sad commentary this is on us as human beings, that we would love the praise of men rather than the praise of God. I encourage you to avoid this trap.

It is because of my love for you and respect for you that I bring these ideas to your attention. I realize these may not be ideas you frequently come in contact with. However, I am asking God to confirm in your mind and heart the truth of what I have shared. What I am sharing with you is not simply for Christians. Because we are discussing the sovereign God of the universe who created the world and oversees moment-by-moment the affairs of individuals and nations, then this must be for all people. I believe this is what Mahatma Gandhi meant when he said:

Because the life of Jesus has the significance and the transcendency to which I have alluded, I believe that he belongs not solely to Christianity, but to the entire world; to all races and people, it matters little under what flag, name or doctrine they may work, profess a faith or worship a God inherited from their ancestors (32).

I am convinced we are dealing here with a universal truth and that I have a responsibility to you, my friend, to bring it to you. My desire is not for you to change the religious or philosophical label you wear but to bring Jesus --- God --- to the core of your life so that you may function as God designed.

I would challenge you to come to God and drink, and then to keep coming and keep drinking so that the values which God has designed for the purpose of holding our nations together can flow from within us.

This drink is open and available to us with no strings attached and with no preparation other than a sincere heart. Thus, the Bible writer issues this invitation: "Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (33).

I took that step --- my first drink, so to speak --- by praying the following prayer to God:

Holy God, please forgive me for sinning against You. Thank You for loving me enough that You came to this earth as Jesus and died on my behalf so that I could have real life with You. I ask You to come into my life to give me unbroken friendship with You forever. Thank You. Amen.

I issue that same invitation to you, my friend. Join me in drinking at the spring that meets our deepest personal needs and allows us to become a spring that spills over to the rest of society.

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