

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

This document expresses our biblical and theological understanding of the causes and solutions to the phenomenon of sexual exploitation. Each member of the steering committee and volunteer team accepts and subscribes to this document.

THE CREATION DESIGN

God exists eternally in a community of love: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The three persons of the trinity have always been united in a relationship of love in which each is centered on the other.

When God created the heavens and the earth, he made all things good, especially the human being, created in his image and likeness. In fact, man and woman were created with the same relational characteristics as God, able to love each other, and to love God. Thus, there was unity of purpose and values, where each person was concerned for the good of the other.

THE TRAGIC FALL

The creation design was distorted by the Adversary who interposed himself between God and the human being, arousing in the latter a lack of trust, and thus a break in the relationship with God. Adam and Eve disobeyed, and the consequences were devastating. "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people" (Romans 5:12 - NIV)

Our spirit therefore is dead, our inner being sick. For sin distorts the image of God in us, and causes us dissatisfaction, suffering and anguish. Our values are out of balance, or as St. Augustine said, our love is disordered.¹ Instead of loving God above all things, we love people, animals in creation, material things.

Our spirit therefore is dead, our inner being sick. For sin distorts the image of God in us, and causes us dissatisfaction, suffering and anguish. Our values are out of balance, or as St. Augustine said, our love is disordered, in the wrong order. Instead of loving God above all things, we love people, animals in creation, material things.

"Human beings rebelled against God, rejected God's authority and disobeyed God's Word. In this sinful state, we are alienated from God, from one another and from the created order. Sin deserves God's condemnation. Those who refuse to repent and 'do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ will be punished with eternal destruction and shut out from the presence of God.' [35] The effects of sin and the power of evil have corrupted every dimension of human personhood (spiritual, physical, intellectual and relational). They have permeated cultural, economic, social,

¹ Augustine of Hippo, *Christian Doctrine*, p. 27

political and religious life through all cultures and all generations of history. They have caused incalculable misery to the human race and damage to God's creation."²

"Suffering and disease, violence and conflict, pain and death all have their roots in human sin, the pervasive presence of evil, and ultimately in broken relationships between God and humanity, humanity with each other, and humanity with creation. Sin and the injustices it fosters are essentially relational."³

The broken vertical relationship with God caused the breakdown of horizontal relationships, as reflected in the condemnation God pronounced for man and woman (Genesis 3:16-19). Human relationships have remained broken to this day ... where instead of the love, protection, care, respect, justice and trust programmed by God in us, we have hatred, exploitation, indifference, abuse, injustice, deception. The whole social and collective dimension has been affected by sin: families, communities and nations suffer from it. And often the most painful injustices are those experienced at the most intimate level, where the betrayal of trust in the family creates dismay and deep insecurity.

Such suffering then spills over to the broader level, manifesting itself in the structural and institutional dimension: sin thus determines unjust, totalitarian, cruel organizations and structures.

Finally, there is another dimension afflicted by sin; it is the spiritual and cosmic dimension. The angelic world is afflicted by it, and it interacts according to its own evil (Satan and demons) or beneficial (God and his angels) interests with creation, and in particular with the masterpiece of creation, the human being.

Men and women are involved in sexual commerce and exploitation on individual, social, institutional and spiritual levels. This is because our sexuality was the first aspect of our personhood to highlight the effect of sin (Genesis 3:7). While for some people sex has become a demon to be escaped, for others it is a god, but no one has remained unscathed by the effect of sin on sexuality. Some are involved as clients and exploiters, using their neighbors for their own perverse gratification, themselves being victims of sin that wears them down and consumes them and increasingly destroys the image of God in them. Others are victimized, raped, imprisoned, unjustly exploited in their vulnerability, lost in the darkness of their souls, where they find no hope or comfort. At the social level, many accept the phenomenon of the sex trade based on tolerance in the name of individual freedom and established clichés (e.g., "prostitution is the oldest profession in the world"). Others are implicated at the structural level, promoting laws that do not protect the weakest and leave room for the unbridled sinful desire of the strongest, and that systematically allow slavery and violence to recur, giving room for corruption that erodes authorities and does not allow them to see change. Still others are spiritually compromised, often under the direct influence of the Adversary and his demons.

² *The Cape Town Commitment. A confession of faith and a call to action*, The Lausanne Movement, Part 1.8.a, retrieved online <https://lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment#p1-7>

³ Yvonne Mildred and Fiona Hahn, ed., *A Biblical Basis for Social Justice*, SIM, 2010, p. 9, retrieved online https://www.micahnetwork.org/sites/default/files/doc/page/a_biblical_basis_for_social_justice_fiona_hahn.pdf

THE RESCUE OPERATION

From the beginning, God had a plan for deliverance: a descendant of the woman would destroy the Enemy and set creation free (Genesis 3:15). God chose one of these descendants, Abraham, to create a nation, Israel, from which would arise a King who would deliver the world from sin. And so he did! Jesus, the Lord, the Son of God, intervened by becoming incarnate and defeating sin, death and the Adversary through his death and resurrection.

This deliverance of Christ is manifested in the lives of people who, having received by faith the work of Christ, are forgiven and delivered from sin, and enjoy the love, protection, and trust that God has always had in store for us. Transformed individuals then lead to transformed collectivities and societies, where relationships are healed, and harmonious relationships restored. Transformed societies lead to structural and institutional liberation, where unjust systems are denounced, fought against and annihilated, bringing liberation to groups of people and populations. The kingdom of God therefore advances and is manifested on earth through liberation on all levels.

In all this, God works through the church:

The Church exists to worship and glorify God for all eternity and to participate in the transforming mission of God within history. Our mission is wholly derived from God's mission, addresses the whole of God's creation, and is grounded at its center in the redeeming victory of the cross.⁴

The church also manifests to the spiritual and cosmic powers the wisdom of God and deliverance in Christ (Ephesians 3:10-12). This liberation will be totally manifested and finally accomplished only at Christ's return at the end of time, when evil will be eradicated, and relationships completely healed (Revelation 20-22).

OUR COMMITMENT

As liberated people, we are called to proclaim this liberation to others, working for the transformation Christ wants to bring about in all dimensions.

The Bible tells us that the Lord is loving toward all he has made, upholds the cause of the oppressed, loves the foreigner, feeds the hungry, sustains the fatherless and widow. The Bible also shows that God wills to do these things through human beings committed to such action. God holds responsible especially those who are appointed to political or judicial leadership in society, but all God's people are commanded – by the law and prophets, Psalms and Wisdom, Jesus and Paul, James and John – to reflect the love and justice of God in practical love and justice for the needy.

Such love for the poor demands that we not only love mercy and deeds of compassion, but also that we do justice through exposing and opposing all that oppresses and exploits the poor. 'We must not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist.' We confess with shame that on this matter we fail to share God's

⁴ *The Cape Town Commitment*, Part 1.10.a

passion, fail to embody God's love, fail to reflect God's character and fail to do God's will. We give ourselves afresh to the promotion of justice, including solidarity and advocacy on behalf of the marginalized and oppressed. We recognize such struggle against evil as a dimension of spiritual warfare that can only be waged through the victory of the cross and resurrection, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and with constant prayer.⁵

In the specific case of our association, it is useful to point out the following aspects:

Migration on an unprecedented scale in today's world, for a variety of reasons, has led to human trafficking on every continent, the widespread enslavement of women and children in the sex trade, and the abuse of children through enforced labor or military conscription.

A) Let us rise up as the Church worldwide to fight the evil of human trafficking, and to speak and act prophetically to 'set the prisoners free'. This must include addressing the social, economic and political factors that feed the trade. The world's slaves call out to the global Church of Christ, 'Free our children. Free our women. Be our voice. Show us the new society that Jesus promised.'⁶

We are therefore committed to reaching out to victims of sexual exploitation on an individual level, offering the Good News of love, forgiveness and liberation in Christ, accompanied by concrete help that embodies this news. We therefore witness to the work of liberation achieved by Christ, and also manifest it through acts of love, such as accompaniment to medical, legal, economic, psychological and spiritual assistance according to the needs of the victims.

We engage at the social level, denouncing the injustices of sexual exploitation, and influencing public opinion in this regard.

We engage at the systemic level, as citizens in a democracy where we have the opportunity to speak out and take action to foster a legislative and cultural environment where justice and dignity are values that give freedom to both the proclamation and reception of the Gospel.

We engage at the spiritual level, fighting in prayer and interceding for the authorities (Ephesians 6:10-12, 1 Timothy 2:1-3).

⁵ *The Cape Town Commitment*, Part 1.7.c

⁶ *The Cape Town Commitment*, Part 2 IIB.3